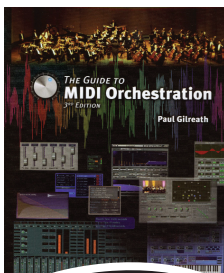## BOOK CLUB

The Guide To MIDI Orchestration (3rd Edition) Paul Gilreath

Publisher **MusicWorks Atlanta**

Price **$70**

Web **www.musicworks-atlanta.com**

MUSIC TECH RECOMMENDED

Due to reduced budgets in the film and advertising world, the MIDI orchestra is increasingly used as a substitute for the real thing. Virtual orchestras are also popular with music students wanting to audition scores. However, scoring music for a 'real' orchestra is a mammoth task in itself. Add to that the complexities of MIDI and samplers and the job takes on gargantuan proportions.

Despite the onward march of music technology, there are still many

Teachers, students and composers alike will find this a valuable resource.

conventional composers with little knowledge of computer music. Conversely, there are music tech-savvy musicians, who don't know how to write for orchestras. So, where do these people go for advice? Well, a few hours spent reading *The Guide To MIDI Orchestration* is a good place to start.

Now in its third edition, Paul's book is packed with expert advice on the art of creating computerised emulations of the orchestra. In fact, with over 700 pages, this weighty hardback is something of an encyclopedia on the subject.

If your knowledge of the symphony orchestra is sketchy, reading the early chapters is sure to enlighten you. Paul introduces the instruments of the orchestra one by one explaining their playing ranges and tonal characteristics in an easy-to-understand manner. The following chapters are more technical and delve deeper into the basics of orchestration. However, unlike a pure textbook on the subject, he stops short of setting projects and exercises.

Following an excellent chapter on the pros and cons of DAWs, notation software and orchestral templates, Paul returns to the subject of instrumentation. But this time it's the art of sequencing under the microscope, with detailed examination of the techniques involved and a chapter on creating tempo changes.

It's not until you reach chapter 16 that the emphasis switches to recording techniques. Top of the list is reverb, a major consideration when recording orchestral music. Paul

knows this and devotes a whole chapter to the subject.

Just as in other forms of music, processors have a role to play in orchestral music production, but selecting the right one isn't always easy. Fortunately, Paul points us in the right direction, with 70 pages of in-depth discussion highlighting every major plug-in suitable for the task.

Software samples players and samples libraries are subjected to similar scrutiny before the author moves on to the tricky business of mixing a virtual orchestra. Do we use stereo or mono samples? Where do we place the instruments in the stereo picture? These considerations are discussed in detail.

Most books would stop here, but not this one. Top film composers, sound library creators and mastering experts reveal their secrets in ten exclusive interviews with the author. Is there anybody Paul Gilreath doesn't know in the world of film music?
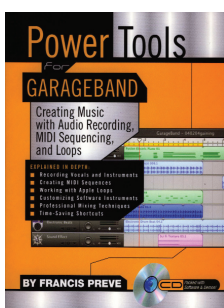
VERDICT

A fascinating read. Teachers, students and composers alike will find this a valuable resource. Buying further, future, editions may prove expensive, though.

Power Tools For GarageBand Francis Preve

Publisher **Backbeat Books**

Price **£12**

Web **www.backbeat.com**

GarageBand is probably the most accessible music software on earth. Even without previous recording experience, if you buy a new Mac (GB is bundled with OSX), you'll be writing and recording music in no time. That's because GarageBand is so easy to use. However, despite its simple interface, many powerful features lie beneath the surface. How best then, to get started?

Dance music producer Francis Preve assumes you've already conquered the basics of GarageBand.

So, instead of rehashing the Help files, he's written a book which will help raise your existing experience of the program to a higher level, using professional engineering and production techniques. For example, perhaps you've exhausted your collection of Apple Loops and purchasing Apple's Jam Packs at £69 each is plainly out of the question. No problem. Francis shows you how to make the most of your existing loop material using such techniques as track sharing, loop cropping and beat slicing. He even lets you in on the secrets of 'rolling your own' loops using the free Apple Loops Software Developers Kit. That's the kind of stuff you'll find here. And you'll not find it in the online Help files.

Francis tackles other important aspects of GarageBand just as thoroughly with chapters devoted to audio, MIDI, software instruments, effects and mixing. To round things off, he explains how to upgrade the program using affordable third-party plug-ins and loop collections.

We've just one grumble: 124 pages seem a little short for £12. However, it's certainly an entertaining and essential read for serious GarageBanders.

VERDICT

A great read for GarageBand users looking to raise their skill level, perhaps prior to upgrading to Logic or Cubase.