Fame," where high scores are documented, may motivate some students.

The software's sounds, which use a piano timbre, can be heard through any computer with a sound card and speakers or headphones. It is also possible to listen to the audio through an attached MIDI keyboard.

While this program doesn't have the multimedia richness and variety of options available in other software with similar content (for example, Music Ace), it is a serviceable tool that may be exactly right for certain situations. Teachers interested in evaluating the program can visit the ECS Web site (www.ecsmedia.com) and download a demonstration version of the software.

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Books


  *Software for Loop Music* delves into an area of computer music that holds great potential for music teachers. Loop-based composition tools, such as those addressed in this book, make composition accessible and fun for students of all ages.

  Francis Preve begins with two particularly informative chapters. The first explores the history of loop-based music from its origins as a natural phenomenon, through the dominance of tape-based music creation, and into the modern age of samplers and synthesizers. Next, Preve discusses various types of currently available software sample libraries. He includes a careful discussion of the legalities of sampling and tips on avoiding common copyright pitfalls. This discussion makes the book a valuable primer for anyone concerned about the extent to which electronic composers can use others' creative products.

  The heart of this text is a series of chapters dedicated to particular pieces of loop-based music composition software: Propellerhead Software's ReCycle, Sony Media's Acid, Ableton's Live, and Apple's Soundtrack. (Note that Apple's Garage Band, perhaps the most popular of this type of program in the education world, is not included.) These programs are described thoroughly in reprints of reviews that appeared in various industry magazines upon their releases. Preve also includes a compilation of tips and tricks for each application. The book closes with a section about mixing (finishing) a project using a loop-based tool.

  *Software for Loop Music* devotes little attention to explaining how to get started in loop-based music composition. This book is clearly intended for readers who have some experience in computer music and are seeking a comparison of several loop-based composition tools. The book is not necessarily written for an education audience and does not approach the idea of using the technology in the classroom. These connections would be better explored in educationally oriented books such as Rudolph's *Teaching Music with Technology* or Williams and Webster's *Experiencing Music Technology: Software, Data, and Hardware.* Also, each of the applications described in this book has been released in an updated version since the book's publication. So, if you are interested in learning details about a particular program, this text will provide them only as they pertain to a past version. This is, of course, a common challenge in the computer-book industry—the computer programmers are always a step ahead of the reviewers. (You can find details about upgraded versions at the manufacturers' Web sites.)

  The book comes with a useful CD-ROM that contains demonstration or "lite" versions of the applications it describes. (Again, keep in mind that the CD provides old versions of each program.) The CD-ROM also includes over 250 megabytes of digital audio samples and loops that can be used with any of the applications. This is certainly a valuable feature for those who wish to try out the programs before they decide which is right for them.

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  This aptly titled softcover book covers the process of producing dance music on a personal computer. The material is presented in a well-thought-out, logical sequence that progresses from finding songs to remix, to choosing the right software, to the various steps needed to create, produce, and market a hit single. While following Hawkins's instructions won't guarantee you that first platinum record, it will give you the opportunity to learn the process that remix artists use daily.

  Among the highlights of this book are the specific recommendations for software to use and what hardware is required to run it. Hawkins explores useful features and potential drawbacks of several popular sequencers, digital-recording software at the heart of this type of music. The section on setting up your computer for producing music is excellent. It covers not only operating systems and memory requirements, but also more detailed areas such as choosing sound cards and ergonomics.

  After covering the basics, the book explains step-by-step how to produce dance-floor music. For those who have little experience in this area, Hawkins explains the differences between different types of dance music, from trance, to house, to ambient, and more. Most music teachers know how difficult it is to define a musical style, and Hawkins does a good job explaining the basics of each style and how to differentiate between them.