C16 MIDI CONTROL UNIT

The high-tech music-making gear that most of us can afford gets ever more powerful. However, you may have a struggle accessing some of the fabulous features, because of limited or difficult user interfaces. The Philip Rees C16 MIDI Control Unit could help you get to grips with the hidden potential of your equipment.

Sixteen sliders

The C16 gives you no less than sixteen slider controls, with respectable 60 mm travel. The sliders may be assigned to a wide variety of MIDI control functions.

The assignments are held as one hundred target presets, built-in to the C16. As the C16 is a preset device you avoid the brain-ache of having to program it yourself, and you can quickly get stuck in to using it creatively. The large number of target presets means that is ready, out of the box, to do most of the jobs that you are likely to want it to do.

It is very easy to recall one of the target presets. First, you look up its number. Then, you hold down the TARGET SELECT pushbutton, while you move sliders 4 and 5 until the two-digit seven-segment LED display shows the correct target number.

You can use the sliders on the C16 to control volume, pan, effects sends, and many other parameters of many popular electronic musical devices (old and new). The C16 is preprogrammed with the MIDI Control Change, MIDI Parameter and MIDI System Exclusive codes for manipulating the sound on a wide range of popular synths, sound modules, sound cards and software.

A complete list of target numbers and slider assignments, current at the time of going to press, may be found on the chart on the next page (overleaf or opposite).

The versatile C16 can act as a hardware front panel for a synthesiser or as a compact MIDI mixer.

In a typical MIDI setup, you might place the C16 between the MIDI OUT of your master keyboard and the MIDI IN of your sequencer (hardware or computer). In this way, your sequencer can record the movements of the sliders. This feature gives the user easy access to expressive effects such as trendy filter sweeps.

The C16 automatically merges the MIDI data from the keyboard with that generated by moving the sliders. This means that you don't have to swap around MIDI cables, and you don't require an external merge unit. The diagram below indicates where you might place C16 in a simpler setup, without a sequencer.

Downloadable target profiles

There is also the option of user-programming two target settings (target numbers 98 and 99), each consisting of sixteen sliders. You can transfer the settings for these thirty-two sliders to the C16 via System Exclusive messages. These settings are held in non volatile-memory, so the information is retained when power is removed from the C16. This feature means that, when used in conjunction with a computer, the C16 could become a fully programmable MIDI control unit. It also means that, in the future, new profiles may be provided for existing users, for example, via our website.

A sixteen-position rotary switch is provided; it is usually used for selecting the MIDI channel, or sometimes the device number.

Target number 7 is called Quick Mixer, it provides easy access to volume, pan, reverb send, chorus send, variation effect send, balance and expression across sixteen MIDI channels simultaneously. The channel numbers correspond to the slider numbers. When this target is selected, the sixteen-position rotary control is used to change functions, so you can simply and rapidly switch between them.

Send All button

There is a SEND ALL pushbutton, which updates the target device with all the slider positions - you should use this with care! A lamp in the display window flashes to clearly indicate when MIDI data is transmitted by the C16. The lamp flashes for data being transferred from the MIDI in port, as well as that generated as a result of movement on the front panel controls of C16 itself.

Space is provided on the hardy polyester front panel to name the slider assignments; a permanent overhead projector pen is a suitable marker.

The unit is compact at 210mm x 135mm x 55mm, so it doesn't take up too much space on a crowded work-surface. It has one MIDI IN and one MIDI OUT port.

The C16 features a built-in power supply and is supplied with a detachable mains lead (ac power cord).