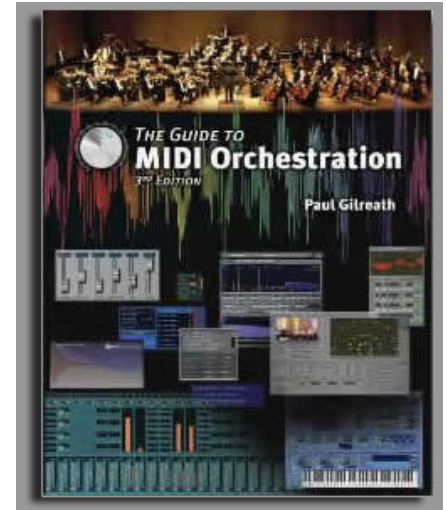


# SOUND ON SOUND

The World's Best Music Recording Magazine

John Walden

With orchestral sample libraries getting ever more sophisticated, composers now have excellent tools for putting together convincing sample-based orchestral arrangements. These tools have many obvious applications — from the teaching of orchestration through to creating demos of compositions during the writing process. While a MIDI orchestration is never likely to better the results from a well-recorded live orchestral performance, budgets for TV and film music are becoming so tight that a sample-based orchestral score is sometimes all that is feasible. Although there are a good number of formal text books on the subject of writing and arranging for an orchestra, Paul Gilreath's *The Guide To MIDI Orchestration* approaches this subject in a fashion that is not only very accessible, but also more likely to appeal to the average SOS reader, inasmuch as he discusses the hardware, software, and sample libraries required to do the job well.



The book is massive — it runs to over 700 pages, split into some 25 chapters — and the materials fall into three main sections. Chapters one to seven provide an introduction to the orchestra and deal with each of the major sections in turn. For those with no formal background or training in orchestral music, this offers a simple introduction and helps put much of the later material into context. For those wanting to learn how to arrange for the various instrument sections within the orchestra, chapters eight to 13 form a second section and provide sequencing examples to illustrate the most common ways to use, and write for, each major section. For example, chapter nine discusses how to write convincingly for the various elements of the string section, including how to build chord structures.

The final section — chapters 14 to 25 — is perhaps more familiar SOS territory. It covers the various equipment (hardware and software) required, the use of reverb, software samplers, and effects plug-ins amongst other things. This section also includes a comprehensive round-up of the current crop of orchestral sample libraries although, of course, this material will have a tendency to go out of date a little faster than the regularly updated coverage provided by SOS! This said, it is good to see direct comparisons of the major products all in one place. Also tucked into this final group of chapters is a small collection of interviews, mainly with composers and sample-library developers (the latter including Eric Persing and Gary Garrigan).

Throughout, this book is beautifully presented, and Paul Gilreath writes with an easy, amusing, and informative style. It ought to appeal to those with a knowledge of music technology who also want an accessible introduction to the craft of orchestral composition — there is enough theoretical groundwork laid down here to get people started. Equally, those with a formal training in orchestral work wanting to learn more about the technology are also well catered for, and plenty of the advice will apply whatever brand of software sequencer you might be using. Overall, this book offers an easy route into MIDI-based orchestral composition, and at just over £30 in the UK it is also very good value for money.

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