

Subject: Electronic Soundmaker interview, 1983? (Excerpts)

The following is part of an interview published in the European magazine "Electronic Soundmaker".

Kate Bush and the Fairlight

The Fairlight isn't just capable of instantly replaying a given sampled envelope (wave shape) at a different frequency: it can be used to modify the shape. Kate, however, finds it infinitely preferable to retain the natural envelope.

"Quite often there's very little that needs doing to it. Occasionally I quite like reversing it -- quite an interesting example of that was when I was working on "The Dreaming". I wanted a dijeridu, and as the Fairlight is an Australian instrument, it happened to have a dijeridu as one of its present samples." This was used as the basis of a loop, which illustrates another aspect of the <Fairlight> CMI: it can construct a sound that lasts longer than its maximum sampling period, by looping sections of the original envelope together.

"There's a page <commands for modifying or setting up sounds are presented as pages on a display screen> where you can loop your sound up, and you can vary the length of the loop according to what you want. Other pages have different functions. For instance, page two is the voice page, so that's where you actually call up the sound. You can actually create sounds by drawing your own waves, but the problem is that they do tend to sound very synthetic, and I haven't found any use for them. It's very hard to draw something that sounds natural -- it's a very complicated thing."

We then rounded on the visual dimension of the CMI.

"That's something that's very useful: you can actually see a sound. Incredibly ugly sounds can look really beautiful. It's really like another dimension: visual interpretation of the world rather than audial."

And again Kate enthused about the "human element" of the Fairlight.

"I'm very into natural sounds -- particularly taking them out of their range, and maybe sometimes putting them backwards. I suppose I like distortion of natural things. I like to still feel there's something natural in it."

The main employment for the Fairlight -- certainly as far as Kate Bush is concerned -- is as a tool for filling gaps in the music.

"When you've already got the song, and there's a gap in there, and you know that there's some kind of instrument that will fit it, you know that it's gonna come out of the Fairlight, and just can't find it, it's incredibly frustrating."

Most of Kate's songs are "demo"ed before the Fairlight is put to use, and in the case of "Sat in Your Lap" and "Get Out of My House", the demos were responsible for deciding the mood of the finished song.

"For demos, I'd use the Yamaha CS80 because what happens on it seems quite nice <the synth has independent touch sensitivity on each note>, and it was just a matter of setting the same sounds on the Fairlight. The bell sound on "Sat In Your Lap" was originally done on the CS80 and we thought at the time that it was a good sound, but when we did it on the Fairlight it was much better." Kate finds that it is possible to come up with a new song using the Fairlight, but this very much depends on her mood.

"I don't think I could ever write with a group of musicians sitting around -- I always have to write alone. I've got an eight-track system at home, and I'll put a rhythm from the Linn Drum down and then put one or two pieces of Fairlight on it. Then I put on a lead vocal and some backing vocals. Sometimes I just can't find a sound to inspire me; I find it's very exciting to use natural sounds rather than using a synthesizer though, and getting the Fairlight has been revolutionary for me and my work."