

Introduction

When you buy a new cassette-player, synth or fx (effects) box, it comes with a manual. How many times have you groaned at the words 'It is important to read all the instructions before operating the equipment'? Well, this manual is different.

You are hereby *forbidden* to waste your time trying to get this whole book into your head before you start the real job of putting musical ideas into action. There's no need: you can operate this equipment now. YOU KNOW ENOUGH ALREADY to do good arrangements.

And on the other hand, naturally, there are things – techniques, methods, info – that you may need to access as you become an experienced arranger. That's what this book is for.

It is laid out so that you can get to single bits of information quickly, without having to wade through oceans of text. It will tell you how to write out a drum part or a chord sheet, what notes you can and cannot write for a sax or a violin, how to use the various sounds on a synth, how to do a 'routine' for a song or number, and much more.

It's a mixture of solid facts and recommendations based on experience. The facts you should obey; the recommendations you can take or leave. They work, as it happens. But you may have better ideas than me. Times change, and so do fashions. Madonna didn't get where she did by following the recommendations of Diana Ross.

How to use this book

1 To get a fact (e.g., how do I write a trumpet part?)

Flip through the book until you find the chapter you need (e.g. Brass and Reeds, Chapter 10).

Go through the section headings until you find the right topic (e.g. 'Trumpet').

Run your finger down the subheadings until you come to the precise info.



Strings

a) Writing for strings is dead easy. Just write something down and they'll play it.

b) Writing for strings is a skilled craft. Great composers have spent a lifetime perfecting it.

Both these statements are true.

Ranges

1 There are four instruments in the string orchestra.

The **violin** (or fiddle) is the highest in pitch. A string orchestra usually has two lots of violins – first and second violins. A string quartet also has two violins (plus a viola and cello). Abbreviation: vln.

The **viola** is lower in pitch but is still small enough to be held under the player's chin. It has a nutty, wiry-but-warm sound. Abbreviation: vla.

The **cello** (pronounced 'chello', full name violoncello – double-check that spelling!) has a deep velvet sound and is played held between the legs. Abbreviation: vcl. Plural: cellos or celli.

The **double bass** (or string bass, or contrabass) is so big that it is played standing up, or sitting on a high stool. Abbreviations: cb, db.

2 Violin

The diagram shows two musical staves in treble clef. The left staff, labeled 'range*', shows a line from the bottom line (G4) to the highest harmonic (B7), with a note at the 8th fret (E6) and a note at the 8th fret (B7) labeled 'highest harmonic*'. The right staff, labeled 'open strings', shows the notes G4, B4, D5, and E5, each with a '0' above it indicating an open string.

* See 9 below for an explanation of harmonics and their notation




















Appendix 2: Chord Symbols

Chord symbols are easy enough to learn, but there are one or two tricky little rules which might catch you out.

True to the spirit of this book I'll give you the hard info first and deal with the theory of it all at the end of the chapter.

The chords

1 Here are the most usual chords, in their simplest voicings, in four keys.

C open 	F open 	G open 	E open 
C 	F 	G 	E 
Cm 	Fm 	Gm 	Em 
C6 	F6 	G6 	E6 
Cm6 	Fm6 	Gm6 	Em6 