DIGITAL PERFORMER - the basic deal*

Twiddly.Bits - short musical 'motifs' recorded directly in MIDI by real musicians - can be imported into Digital Performer very simply. They will appear as a series of short MIDI phrases, on individual tracks, that you can loop or combine to form complete tracks.

The Twid libraries cover everything from drums, to synths, guitars, brass... and in styles ranging from dance to funk, country, reggae, and jazz.

Once loaded into Digital Performer, a Twid can be viewed as musical notation, as event data, or simply as regions of data you can freely kick about the screen. It's up to you.

You can simply call up some Hip Hop MIDI drum loops and use the Twids like a human drum machine, or you can edit, mix and match, transpose guitar strums, basslines etc. until you get the exact performance you want.

Finally, using the Twids to generate cool MIDI performances and effects from your synths, samplers and/or effects processors, you can record the output of your chosen sound source (synth, softsynth, sampler etc.) back into Digital Performer as an audio file (AIFF). You can then use them as SOUNDBITES or tracks for final processing and assembly.

You will find a small collection of Twiddly.Bits on your Performer Install CD, saved as Clippings.

Even though Clippings are a proprietary MOTU format, regular Twiddly.Bits can be imported into Digital Performer and saved as Clippings, plus new Twiddly.Bits products now offer Clippings as an additional file format.

First, here is a quick Step by Step tutorial that'll give you a good basis from which to explore and use regular (.MID file) Twiddly.Bits in Digital Performer.

• Loading Twiddly.Bits

1. Load a Twiddly.Bits library onto your Mac and open up Performer.

2. First making sure you are looking at the .MIDs with Performer icons, simply drag and drop a Twiddly.Bits file into the Performer window. Or, you can go to FILE, OPEN, and load in a Twiddly.Bits file. You may be given the option to Merge or Ignore the conductor track. *[Twiddly.Bits files will default to a tempo, and Digital Performer gives you the choice of choosing the default tempo of the Twiddly.Bits file, or retaining the tempo of your current song.]*

3. The Twiddly.Bits .MID file will load as a series of MIDI tracks, with each groove or loop on a separate track, i.e. each track will contain one "Twiddly.Bit."

4. Select the output/device you want to use from the track Output column, then solo one track, and hit PLAY.

• Sounds

Twiddly.Bits are MIDI data. They have no fixed 'sound.' As a default, Track one in a Twiddly.Bits .MID file will contain a GM Program Change message that will call up an appropriate sound. If you do wish to use this sound, erase the Program Change message in event edit.

In some Twiddly.Bits .MID files you may find a SetUp track. What's this? Well, when we record guitars, bass, fiddle, etc, we often use a wider-than-normal pitch bend range, say, +12, or +7. This produces far greater expression and sensitivity in the part. The SetUp track automatically 'sets up' the required pitch bend range for you.

Solo it, and play it once, and it'll configure the MIDI Channel on your connected sound source/device to the necessary pitch bend range. You'll know if this hasn't been set correctly because the parts will sound very strange indeed!

• Looping & Compiling

You can move a Twid anywhere you like by clicking on the file and dragging it to another location.

To loop a Twid highlight the Region (i.e. from bar XXX to bar YYY) you wish to loop. [Click and drag across the measure bar at the top of the screen].

Select/highlight a track. Then go to the CHANGE window, and select Set Loop.

The Set Loop box gives you options of infinite or loop length you can set an actual number of bars manually. You can also adjust the start and end point of the loop from this box. The looped length will appear as a grey line in the track.

Digital Performer lets you set different internal loop lengths per track. This is a very Twiddly.Bits friendly feature as it means you can set, say, an infinite loop for a drum track, and an eight bar loop for a keyboard pad, a two bar loop for a guitar figure etc. etc.

To transpose a Twid: highlight the part you want to transpose, then go to the REGION window, and select Transpose. Here you will find many variables in terms of offsets and intervals. This is another extremely Twiddly.Bits friendly feature as most parts will default to the key of C and you can create an entire part out of a single Twid with judicious use of transpositions.

• Importing Twids into an existing song

A collection of Twiddly.Bits is essentially a library of musical clips and beats. Sometimes you simply need to import a particular drumloop... or guitar phrase... or sax lick... into a song you are already working on.

Here's how:

Open a Twid file. Select the track/part that you want to use in another song. Apple C will put the selected part into the Clipboard. Apple V can then paste it into your pre-existing song.

- Converting a Twid to audio (AIFF)

Route the audio output(s) of your sound source/device to the input of your soundcard. Select an audio track, and select the input as your sound source/device's output. As the (MIDI) Twid plays you can now record the data as an audio AIFF file.

If you want to record, say, individual instruments within a drum kit, use the Z file version Twids (where individual drums are saved on separate tracks), and record each instrument separately. Now you can process the snare AIFF file independently from the kick, hats etc.

CLIPPINGS

Clearly the easiest method of using Twiddly.Bits in Digital Performer is to drag and drop individual Clippings.

Clippings are now provided with *some* the Twiddly.Bits libraries. Where Clippings are provided they should be installed in the "MOTU Clippings" folder located in your Preferences. Clippings can either be dragged and dropped into the main Performer screen, or you can load them from WINDOWS, and select Clippings.

Handily quick to import, each Clipping contains just one item, and also carries a brief written description.

As mentioned earlier, Twiddly.Bits libraries on CD now come with data saved in additional Clippings format. If you want to use Twiddly.Bits material for which Clippings are not yet available, you will find it is only slightly tedious to compile your own selection of Clippings by saving each Twid in a .MID file separately, as a fresh Clipping. You can even write your own description, or change key to suit the key you normally work in. Though a little time-consuming, this is an excellent way both to learn the material on offer in a Twiddly.Bits library, and to personalize it.