



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**EVALUATION OF CURRENT MUSIC SYNTHESIS SOFTWARE FOR
RENDERING OF VARIOUS SYNTHESIS ALGORITHMS**

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FEM 2000 6

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**MASTER OF SCIENCE
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

2000



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By

JULIE TAN LEE MEI

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
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September 2000



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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September 2000

Chairman: Minni Ang Kim Huai, Ph.D.

Faculty: Human Ecology

The ability to distinguish the usefulness of currently available music synthesis software for the application of various synthesis algorithms is the main focus of the research. The amplitude modulation (AM), ring modulation (RM), frequency modulation (FM), additive synthesis and granular synthesis algorithms were used and applied into the WaveCraft [specialised graphical user interface software], Cool Edit Pro [digital audio editor software] and Csound [command-prompt type software] synthesis software. These softwares were chosen and categorised according to the software interface. Cool Edit Pro, a commercial or digital audio editor and not specifically a synthesis software, can however be used for this purpose. Due to the accelerated development in music synthesis software, there is an increasing number of new software now with no precise definition of



software characteristics to determine their usefulness has been described. Thus, in this project, a Music Software Evaluation (MSE) metrics table with exact definition and criteria in determining the usefulness of music synthesis software was designed and used to evaluate the usefulness of these softwares. Questionnaires were designed based on the MSE metrics table to gauge information on the different features available in the three music synthesis software and also from individuals about their expectations and experience with regards to the softwares. Results from these research findings indicate that different music synthesis software provides users with different features. The results also showed that, from user expectations point of view, Cool Edit Pro is the most preferred software. For experienced users, Csound is preferred over Cool Edit Pro. Conclusions drawn from this research finding is that different software approaches fulfil different kinds of user expectations depending on user experience.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains.

**PENILAIAN PERISIAN SINTESIS MUZIK SEMASA UNTUK
PERLAKSANAAN PELBAGAI ALGORITMA SINTESIS MUZIK**

Oleh

JULIE TAN LEE MEI

September 2000

Pengerusi: Minni Ang Kim Huai, Ph.D.

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Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kegunaan perisian sintesis muzik semasa untuk pelaksanaan pelbagai algoritma sintesis muzik. Modulasi amplitud, modulasi gelang, modulasi frekuensi, sintesis penambahan dan sintesis granula telah dilaksanakan menggunakan perisian WaveCraft [perisian antara-muka khas], Cool Edit Pro [perisian penyunting audio digital] dan Csound [perisian jenis prom arahan]. Perisian-perisian ini telah dipilih dan dikategorikan berdasarkan kepada antara-muka perisian. Walaupun Cool Edit Pro adalah perisian komersial atau penyunting editor dan bukan perisian sintesis khas, ia boleh digunakan untuk tujuan ini. Perisian muzik sintesis telah berkembang dengan begitu pesat di mana tidak ada satu definisi yang tepat mengenai ciri-ciri perisian yang boleh digunakan untuk menentukan kegunaan perisian sintesis muzik. Oleh



itu, satu jadual metrik Penilaian Perisian Muzik (PPM) dengan definisi dan kriteria tertentu telah direkacipta dan digunakan untuk menilai penggunaan perisian-perisian sintesis muzik yang digunakan di dalam projek ini. Borang soal selidik berdasarkan kepada jadual PPM telah direkacipta untuk mengumpul maklumat mengenai ciri-ciri perisian sintesis tersebut. Borang lain digubal untuk mengkaji respons pengguna dari segi kemampuan perisian sintesis; dan satu lagi borang digubal untuk menyelidik respons pengalaman pengguna terhadap perisian-perisian muzik ini. Keputusan yang diperolehi daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa perisian muzik yang berlainan mempunyai ciri-ciri yang berlainan. Keputusan juga menunjukkan bahawa, daripada segi kehendak pengguna terhadap perisian-perisian sintesis muzik, Cool Edit Pro lebih dapat memenuhi keperluan yang dikenalpasti. Keputusan daripada pengguna yang berpengalaman pula menunjukkan bahawa Csound lebih disukai daripada Cool Edit Pro. Kesimpulan yang diperolehi daripada kajian ini adalah bahawa perisian yang berlainan memenuhi kehendak pengguna secara berlainan dan bergantung kepada pengalaman pengguna dalam menggunakan perisian sintesis muzik.

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 18th September 2000 to conduct the final examination of Julie Tan Lee Mei on her Master of Science thesis entitled "Evaluation of Current Music Synthesis Software for Rendering of Various Synthesis Algorithms" in accordance with Universiti Putra Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Putra Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulation 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

signed



Candidate

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	ABSTRACT	ii
	ABSTRAK	iv
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
	APPROVAL SHEETS	vii
	DECLARATION FORM	ix
	LIST OF TABLES	xiii
	LIST OF FIGURES	xv
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xxi
 CHAPTER		
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Statement Of Problem	3
	1.2 Objective Of The Study	3
	1.3 Significance Of The Study	4
	1.4 Design Of The Study	4
	1.5 Project Scope.....	6
	1.6 Organisation Of The Thesis	7
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	9
	2.1 Computer Music	9
	2.2 The Development of Software Synthesis	10
	2.3 The Theory of Sound-Synthesis Algorithms	17
	2.4 The Significance of Sound Synthesis Algorithms	27
	2.5 Software Metrics	34
	2.6 The Significance of Software Quality Characteristics ...	39
	2.7 Conclusion	43
3	METHODOLOGY	44
	3.1 Overview of Research Methodology	44
	3.2 Selection of Synthesis Techniques	47
	3.3 Selection of Music Synthesis Software	48
	3.3.1 Specialised Graphical User Interface Software: WaveCraft	51
	3.3.2 Digital Audio Editor Software: Cool Edit Pro 1.1	51
	3.3.3 Command Prompt-type Software: Csound version 3.48.....	52
	3.4 Determination of Software Metrics	54
	3.5 Perform Survey.....	56
	3.5.1 Checklist Evaluation Form	57
	3.5.2 Survey Form	58



3.5.3	Online Questionnaires	59
3.6	Determination of Various Synthesis Technique Parameters.....	63
3.6.1	Additive Synthesis	63
3.6.2	Amplitude Modulation	64
3.6.3	Ring Modulation	65
3.6.4	Frequency Modulation	66
3.6.5	Granular Synthesis	67
3.7	Perform Synthesis	72
3.7.1	WaveCraft	73
3.7.2	Cool Edit Pro	82
3.7.3	Csound	89
3.7.4	Central Processing Unit (CPU) Usage Process..	100
3.8	Comparative Data	101
3.9	Data Analysis	101
3.10	Conclusion	102
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	103
4.1	User Expectations.....	103
4.2	Features of Music Synthesis Software	108
4.2.1	Handling Ability.....	108
4.2.2	Learnability	113
4.2.3	Expandability	119
4.2.4	Accuracy	120
4.2.5	Traceability	122
4.2.6	Sound Timbre	125
4.2.7	Number of Resources	128
4.3	Users' Experience	142
4.4	Discussion	150
4.5	Conclusion	152
5	CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY	153
5.1	Summary of the thesis	153
5.2	Conclusions	155
5.3	Suggestions for Further Study	159
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	160
	APPENDICES	168
A	Table 3.1: Music Synthesis Software System Requirements	169
B	Checklist Evaluation Form	170
C	Survey Form	176



D	Online Survey Form	178
E	Figure 8: Source Code Part 2 for One Part of Question 1	184
F	Example of Feedback Produced Through the Online Questionnaires	186
G	Survey From Results	187
H	Checklist Evaluation From Results	192
I	Figures of Processor Usage Results	197
J	Table 34: Total Respondents for Each Synthesis Techniques with Respect the Different Synthesis Software	230
K	Definitions	233
L	Publication Arising From This Research Project	239
BIODATA OF AUTHOR		240



LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Music Synthesis Software System Requirements	168
2	MSE Metrics for Music Synthesis Software	55
3	Details for Each Software Characteristics.....	56
4	Interval Scales Used in the Checklist Evaluation Form.....	57
5	Parameters for Additive Synthesis Technique.....	63
6	Grains Parameters for Sequential Approach.....	70
7	Grains Parameters for Scattering Approach.....	71
8	Parameters used for Additive Synthesis.....	74
9	Connection between Additive Synthesis Modules.....	75
10	Parameters used for AM Synthesis.....	76
11	Connection between AM Modules.....	76
12	Parameters used for RM Synthesis.....	77
13	Connection between RM Modules	78
14	Parameters used for FM Synthesis.....	79
15	Connection between FM Modules.....	79
16	“Three-stage linear” envelope for Sequential Approach	80
17	Connection between modules for Sequential Approach.....	81
18	Summary for the Two-Interval Scale Survey of User Expectations	105
19	Summary for the Three-Interval Scale Survey of User Expectations	107
20	Summary for the Five-Interval Scale Survey of User Expectations	108
21	Summary of the Features Available for WaveCraft, Cool Edit Pro and Csound Synthesis Software	110
22	Handling Ability	112
23	Web-based Help URL for WaveCraft, Cool Edit Pro 1.1 and Csound	114
24	Various Csound Examples URL Addresses	114
25	Various Csound Tutorials URL Addresses	115
26	Website Support URL Addresses for WaveCraft, Cool Edit Pro 1.1 and Csound	116
27	Email Addresses for WaveCraft, Cool Edit Pro 1.1 and Csound	116
28	Newsgroup and Mailing List Website Support Addresses	117
29	Learnability	118
30	Expandability	120
31	Accuracy	121
32	Traceability	123
33	Results for Similarity of Sound Synthesised by Different Types of Synthesis Algorithms	126
34	Music Synthesis Software Preferences According to the Sound Quality Produced	127
35	Most Preferred Software	127



36	Results of the number of Listener Preferences towards WaveCraft, Cool Edit Pro 1.1 and Csound Synthesis Software.....	195
37	Details of Hard Disk Usage	130
38	Total Hard Disk Space Used	130
39	Summary of Feature Details Fulfilled by the Software According to User Expectation Survey	141
40	Total Respondents for each Synthesis Technique with Respect to the Different Synthesis Software.....	229
41	Description of Each Short Forms Used in the Online Questionnaire.....	231
42	Summary of Users' Experience Results for the Different Types of Music Synthesis Software	144
43	Total Average Responses Results Extracted from Table 42 for the Different Types of Synthesis Algorithms	149
44	Summary of User Expectations According to Specifications with Respect to Users' Experience Results	150



LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		Page
1	Summation of Sinusoids to Form Specific Waveform for Additive Synthesis	19
2	Amplitude modulation (AM)	20
3	Ring Modulation (RM)	21
4	The Carrier Frequency and Two-Sideband Frequencies of a Simple AM which are Present in the Resulting Spectrum....	21
5	The Two-Sideband Frequencies of a Simple RM which are Present in the Resulting Spectrum.....	21
6	Instrument Implementing Frequency Modulation.....	22
7	The Spectrum of FM	23
8	A Granular Synthesis Instrument	24
9	McCall's Quality Model	36
10	Boehm's Quality Model	37
11	ISO 9126 Quality Model	38
12	Overview of Research Methodology	46
13	WaveCraft Software Interface	51
14	Cool Edit Pro 1.1 Software Interface	52
15	Overview of Csound Process	54
16	An Illustration of the 4 Bipolar Adjective Pairs	59
17	Source Code Part 1 to funform.cgi	61
18	Source Code Part 2 to funform.cgi	61
19	Source Code Part 2 for One Part of Question 1	
20	Source Code Part 3 to funform.cgi	62
21	A Simple Instrument for AM	64
22	A Simple Instrument for RM	65
23	Multiplication of the Carrier and the Modulator Signals	66
24	A Simple FM Instrument	67
25	A Simple Granular Synthesis Instrument	69
26	Sequential Approach Distributed Grains	70
27	Scattering Approach Distributed Grains	72
28	WaveCraft Interface for Additive Synthesis	75
29	WaveCraft Interface for Amplitude Modulation	76
30	WaveCraft Interface for Ring Modulation	78
31	WaveCraft Interface for Frequency Modulation	79
32	WaveCraft Interface for Sequential Approach Technique Using "Oscillators"	81
33	WaveCraft Interface for Sequential Approach Technique Using "WAV sample inputs"	82
34	Cool Edit's Additive Synthesis Interface and Result	83
35	Cool Edit's Amplitude Modulation Interface and Result	84
36	Cool Edit's Ring Modulation Interface and Result	85
37	Cool Edit's Frequency Modulation Interface and Result	86
38	Cool Edit's Sequential Approach Interface and Result Generated at different Frequency Rate	87



39	Cool Edit's Sequential Approach Interface and Result Generated from a Sound Sample	87
40	Cool Edit's Scattering Approach Interface and Result Generated at Different Frequency Rate	88
41	Cool Edit's Scattering Approach Interface and Result Generated from a Sound Sample.....	89
42	Overview of an Orchestra file	91
43	Example of a score file	92
44	Steps Used to Generate Sound using Csound Synthesis Software	92
45	Orchestra and Score files for Additive Synthesis	93
46	Orchestra and Score files for Amplitude Modulation	94
47	Orchestra and Score files for Ring Modulation	95
48	Orchestra and Score files for Frequency Modulation	96
49	Orchestra and Score files for Sequential Approach at Different Frequency Rates	97
50	Orchestra and Score files for Sequential Approach using a Sound Sample	98
51	Orchestra and Score files for Scattering Approach at Different Frequency Rates	99
52	Orchestra and Score files for Scattering Approach using a Sound Sample	100
53	Data Analysis Process	102
54	Processor usage for Additive Synthesis in Cool Edit Pro.....	133
55	Processor usage for Additive Synthesis in WaveCraft.....	133
56	Processor usage for Additive Synthesis in Csound.....	134
57	Processor usage for Amplitude Modulation in Cool Edit Pro	134
58	Processor usage for Amplitude Modulation in WaveCraft...	134
59	Processor usage for Amplitude Modulation in Csound.....	135
60	Processor usage for Ring Modulation in Cool Edit Pro.....	135
61	Processor usage for Ring Modulation in WaveCraft.....	135
62	Processor usage for Ring Modulation in Csound.....	136
63	Processor usage for Frequency Modulation in Cool Edit Pro	136
64	Processor usage for Frequency Modulation in WaveCraft...	136
65	Processor usage for Frequency Modulation in Csound.....	137
66	Processor usage for Sequential Approach using Different Frequencies in Cool Edit Pro.....	137
67	Processor usage for Sequential Approach using Different Frequencies in WaveCraft.....	137
68	Processor usage for Sequential Approach using Different Frequencies in Csound.....	138
69	Processor usage for Sequential Approach using Sound Sample in Cool Edit Pro 1.1.....	138
70	Processor usage for Sequential Approach using Sound Sample in WaveCraft.....	138
71	Processor usage for Sequential Approach using Sound Sample in Csound.....	139
72	Processor usage for Scattering Approach using Different	139



	Frequencies in Cool Edit Pro.....	
73	Processor usage for Scattering Approach using Different Frequencies in Csound.....	139
74	Processor usage for Scattering Approach using Sound Sample in Cool Edit Pro.....	140
75	Processor usage for Scattering Approach using Sound Sample in Csound.....	140
76	Processor usage (1) for Additive Synthesis in Cool Edit Pro	199
77	Processor usage (2) for Additive Synthesis in Cool Edit Pro	199
78	Processor usage (3) for Additive Synthesis in Cool Edit Pro	199
79	Processor usage (4) for Additive Synthesis in Cool Edit Pro	200
80	Processor usage (1) for Amplitude Modulation in Cool Edit Pro	200
81	Processor usage (2) for Amplitude Modulation in Cool Edit Pro	200
82	Processor usage (3) for Amplitude Modulation in Cool Edit Pro	201
83	Processor usage (4) for Amplitude Modulation in Cool Edit Pro	201
84	Processor usage (1) for Ring Modulation in Cool Edit Pro...	201
85	Processor usage (2) for Ring Modulation in Cool Edit Pro...	202
86	Processor usage (3) for Ring Modulation in Cool Edit Pro...	202
87	Processor usage (4) for Ring Modulation in Cool Edit Pro...	202
88	Processor usage (1) for Frequency Modulation in Cool Edit Pro.....	203
89	Processor usage (2) for Frequency Modulation in Cool Edit Pro.....	203
90	Processor usage (3) for Frequency Modulation in Cool Edit Pro.....	203
91	Processor usage (4) for Frequency Modulation in Cool Edit Pro.....	204
92	Processor usage (1) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in Cool Edit Pro.....	204
93	Processor usage (2) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in Cool Edit Pro.....	204
94	Processor usage (3) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in Cool Edit Pro	205
95	Processor usage (4) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in Cool Edit Pro	205
96	Processor usage (1) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in Cool Edit Pro	205
97	Processor usage (2) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in Cool Edit Pro	206
98	Processor usage (3) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in Cool Edit Pro.....	206
99	Processor usage (4) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in Cool Edit Pro	206
100	Processor usage (1) for Scattering Approach (different	207



	frequencies) in Cool Edit Pro.....	
101	Processor usage (2) for Scattering Approach (different frequencies) in Cool Edit Pro.....	207
102	Processor usage (3) for Scattering Approach (different frequencies) in Cool Edit Pro.....	207
103	Processor usage (4) for Scattering Approach (different frequencies) in Cool Edit Pro.....	208
104	Processor usage (1) for Scattering Approach (sound sample) in Cool Edit Pro	208
105	Processor usage (2) for Scattering Approach (sound sample) in Cool Edit Pro	208
106	Processor usage (3) for Scattering Approach (sound sample) in Cool Edit Pro	209
107	Processor usage (4) for Scattering Approach (sound sample) in Cool Edit Pro	209
108	Processor usage (1) for Additive Synthesis in WaveCraft.....	209
109	Processor usage (2) for Additive Synthesis in WaveCraft.....	210
110	Processor usage (3) for Additive Synthesis in WaveCraft.....	210
111	Processor usage (4) for Additive Synthesis in WaveCraft.....	210
112	Processor usage (1) for Amplitude Modulation in WaveCraft.....	211
113	Processor usage (2) for Amplitude Modulation in WaveCraft.....	211
114	Processor usage (3) for Amplitude Modulation in WaveCraft.....	211
115	Processor usage (4) for Amplitude Modulation in WaveCraft.....	212
116	Processor usage (1) for Ring Modulation in WaveCraft.....	212
117	Processor usage (2) for Ring Modulation in WaveCraft.....	212
118	Processor usage (3) for Ring Modulation in WaveCraft.....	213
119	Processor usage (4) for Ring Modulation in WaveCraft.....	213
120	Processor usage (1) for Frequency Modulation in WaveCraft.....	213
121	Processor usage (2) for Frequency Modulation in WaveCraft.....	214
122	Processor usage (3) for Frequency Modulation in WaveCraft.....	214
123	Processor usage (4) for Frequency Modulation in WaveCraft.....	214
124	Processor usage (1) for Sequential Approach (different	215



	frequencies) in WaveCraft	
125	Processor usage (2) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in WaveCraft	215
126	Processor usage (3) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in WaveCraft	215
127	Processor usage (4) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in WaveCraft	216
128	Processor usage (1) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in WaveCraft.....	216
129	Processor usage (2) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in WaveCraft.....	216
130	Processor usage (3) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in WaveCraft.....	217
131	Processor usage (4) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in WaveCraft.....	217
132	Processor usage (1) for Additive Synthesis in Csound.....	217
133	Processor usage (2) for Additive Synthesis in Csound.....	218
134	Processor usage (3) for Additive Synthesis in Csound.....	218
135	Processor usage (4) for Additive Synthesis in Csound.....	218
136	Processor usage (1) for Amplitude Modulation in Csound...	219
137	Processor usage (2) for Amplitude Modulation in Csound...	219
138	Processor usage (3) for Amplitude Modulation in Csound...	219
139	Processor usage (4) for Amplitude Modulation in Csound...	220
140	Processor usage (1) for Ring Modulation in Csound.....	220
141	Processor usage (2) for Ring Modulation in Csound.....	220
142	Processor usage (3) for Ring Modulation in Csound.....	221
143	Processor usage (4) for Ring Modulation in Csound.....	221
144	Processor usage (1) for Frequency Modulation in Csound...	221
145	Processor usage (2) for Frequency Modulation in Csound...	222
146	Processor usage (3) for Frequency Modulation in Csound...	222
147	Processor usage (4) for Frequency Modulation in Csound...	222
148	Processor usage (1) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in Csound.....	223
149	Processor usage (2) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in Csound.....	223
150	Processor usage (3) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in Csound.....	223
151	Processor usage (4) for Sequential Approach (different frequencies) in Csound.....	224
152	Processor usage (1) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in Csound.....	224
153	Processor usage (2) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in Csound.....	224
154	Processor usage (3) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in Csound.....	225
155	Processor usage (4) for Sequential Approach (sound sample) in Csound.....	225
156	Processor usage (1) for Scattering Approach (different	225



	frequencies) in Csound.....	
157	Processor usage (2) for Scattering Approach (different frequencies) in Csound.....	226
158	Processor usage (3) for Scattering Approach (different frequencies) in Csound.....	226
159	Processor usage (4) for Scattering Approach (different frequencies) in Csound.....	226
160	Processor usage (1) for Scattering Approach (sound sample) in Csound	227
161	Processor usage (2) for Scattering Approach (sound sample) in Csound.....	227
162	Processor usage (3) for Scattering Approach (sound sample) in Csound	227
163	Processor usage (4) for Scattering Approach (sound sample) in Csound.....	228



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AM	Amplitude Modulation
ADSR	Attack/decay/sustain/release
CGI	Common Gateway Interface
CPU	Central Processing Unit
dB	Decibel
FM	Frequency Modulation
HTTP	Hypertext Transfer Protocol
Hz	Hertz
IRCAM	Institute ce Recherche et Coordination, Acoustique/Musique
kHz	Kilohertz
MIDI	Musical Instrument Digital Interface
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
PM	Physical Modeling
RAM	Random Access Memory
RM	Ring Modulation
ISO	International Standard Organisation
SIMD	Single Instruction Multiple Data
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
VCA	Voltage Controlled Amplifier
VCF	Voltage Controlled Filter
VCO	Voltage Controlled Oscillator
WWW	World Wide Web



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sound synthesis is the generation of a signal that creates a desired acoustic sensation (Dodge & Jerse, 1997). According to Tan, Huang, Wong and Nguyen (1998), sound synthesis is not only confine to computer context but also has a wide and varied technology dedicated to the high quality recording and sound reproduction for the sole purpose of creating and manipulating sound. Generally any sound can be reproduced but it is only possible when a computing procedure or a synthesis algorithm is present. The sounds produced are differentiated by the parameters provided by the synthesis models where basic parameters produce basic sounds of a particular class with richer sounds requiring more well-calibrated parameters to be utilised. Similar to sound synthesis, music synthesis mimics all musical instruments using a microprocessor. Throughout the years, many music synthesis methods have been developed and used worldwide. These techniques include Additive Synthesis (Cahill, 1897; Douglas, 1968), Frequency Modulation (Chowning, 1973), Granular Synthesis (Xenakis, 1960; Roads, 1978; Truax, 1987) and Physical Modelling (Smith, 1992; Lehman, 1996). In the history of music synthesis methods, synthesis algorithms have been implemented through hardware, leading to fixed sequences of numerical operations. According to Gosnel (1997), the arrivals of Pentium and equivalent microprocessors in computers have changed the musical world. Synthesis is now starting to be more software based. This software-based synthesis will take advantage of the full capabilities of a general-purpose processor. The most important thing of software based is its capability to

move synthesis away from mathematical conception to more computational ones to perform logical tests. With this capability, controlling the synthesis will be easier to handle. These have attracted wide range of musicians who wish to create their own instruments. In addition, music software developers are also working towards producing more software according to the demand in the market. Thus, a variety of music software with different interfaces is available for users to purchase. Subsequently, users can also get freeware or shareware version of particular software through the internet. With a wide variety of software to choose from, users will usually question themselves on the quality and type of software to use. Thus, the evaluation of music software is very important in helping users to solve this problem.

The aim of this research includes the design of a quality model for comparing different types of music synthesis software. According to the International Standard Organisation 9126 (ISO 9126), there are a number of such quality models in the literature and applied in practice. The maturity of the models, terms and definitions however does not yet allow them to be included in a standard. According to Bache and Bazzana (1993), the software quality characteristics are a necessary step towards quality measurement. This has led to using the McCall *et.al* (1977) quality model as a referenced model by other researchers to develop new and better quality models. Much research has been done on the various types of quality models for comparison of different software in accordance to the software characteristics. These include McCall (1977), Boehm (1978), Perry (1987) and ISO 9126 (1993). Because research in this area is still fairly new for music synthesis