

MINSTREL

Kuma
Amstrad CPC Series

MINSTREL

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INTRODUCTION

MINSTREL is a musical display editor for the Amstrad CPC range of computers. It enables the user to type music into the computer using standard musical notation and then to play the music and edit it or store it for later use. Minstrel will accept and play music on three voices simultaneously, using the Amstrad's ability to create polyphonic sounds to the full. It can also store long tunes, space is available for 2400 three-note chords (about 10 minutes of music on average).

Before continuing, with the instructions, you may like to listen to a musical piece already typed in using Minstrel. To do this follow the instructions in the next section - LOADING MINSTREL

LOADING MINSTREL

If you are using a Cassette-based system run the program by pressing CTRL and the small ENTER key simultaneously. When the program has loaded hold down the CTRL key and press 'L'. Press the large ENTER key when the machine asks for the filename, and the tune will start to load from the tape. When the tune has loaded press the large ENTER key again to listen to the tune in the memory.


If your system is disc-based then run the program by typing RUN"MINSTREL" [ENTER]. Once the program is running press the CTRL key and 'L' together. When the machine asks for the filename type DEMO [ENTER]. The tune will now load and can be played by pressing the large ENTER key.


The demonstration tune is "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" by J.S. Bach.

When you have finished listening to the tune press CTRL and 'R' to reset Minstrel so that you can type in your own compositions.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

When Minstrel has loaded, a blank manuscript will appear on the upper part of the screen together with seven 'WINDOWS' at the bottom of screen (See Fig 1).

On the manuscript the CURSOR symbol -  is visible this can be moved horizontally or vertically by using the arrowed keys on the cursor pad. Pressing the COPY key will place a copy of the note in the left hand window at the cursor position and the note will sound on the internal speaker. Pressing SHIFT and COPY will make the 'stick' on a note point downwards instead of upwards. CTRL and copy produces a rest with an equivalent length to the note displayed in the left-hand window.

Below the windows the POINTER symbol -  can be seen, it is moved horizontally using the 'number pad' on the right of the keyboard. The key 4 (F4) and the key 6 (F6) move the pointer left and right respectively. As you move the pointer, the 5th window will change indicating the function of each pointer position.

Each window contains either text or a symbol. To change the contents of a window the keys 2 (F2) and 8 (F8) are used to move 'down' and 'up' the menus for each position.

Move the pointer under the 3rd (Command) window and change its contents until they read 'Reset' and press the large ENTER key. Minstrel will now clear its memory and is ready to accept a new tune.

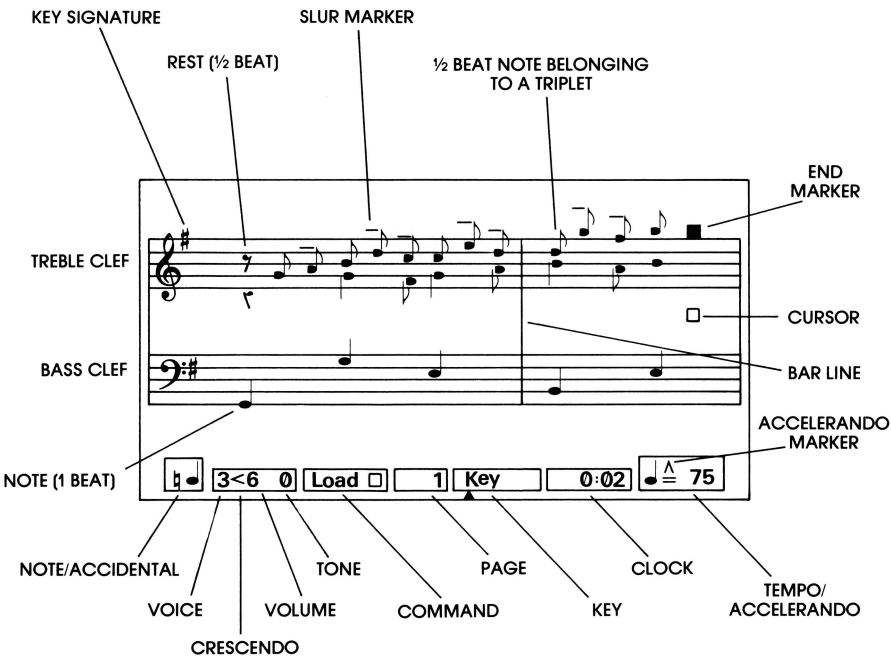
Now move the pointer so that it is directly under the note symbol in the left-hand window. If you are in the correct position you will see window 5 has now changed to read 'Note'.

Type in a simple one-line melody. Select the symbols for the length of the note you wish to enter in the 1st (Note/Accidental) window by using the number pad and COPYING them onto the manuscript. After 16 positions the cursor moves to a new page and the number in the centre window will increase by one.

To choose the correct key signature for your tune move the pointer to window 5, which will change to read 'Key' when you are directly underneath it, and select up to 7 sharps or flats as necessary.

You may modify the pitch of a note by attaching an 'accidental' (Sharp, Flat etc.) to the note by selecting the correct sign at the left hand pointer position in the 1st window. Move the pointer until it is at the far left of the screen, changing the contents will show the musical symbol for the accidental. The selected note and sign can then be COPIED in the usual manner. Unlike standard musical convention the accidental applies only to the note it is attached to and does not relate to later notes in any way.

Figure 1: The MINSTREL Screen Display



When you have finished your tune, look at the 3rd window. If it does not read 'Play' then move the pointer underneath it using the '6'(F6) key and change the contents of the window to 'Play' using the '2'(F2) and '8'(F8) keys.

Now you are ready to play your tune. This is done by pressing the large ENTER key. You will hear your tune being played (provided the external volume control is correctly set).

CHORDS AND EDITING

Three sound channels are available for playing different notes simultaneously. The number of the current voice appears in the left of the 2nd window. On running Minstrel the voice is initially set at voice 3, this is the recommended voice for the melody line as it is best to use a particular voice consistently for this purpose, for ease of editing. Voices 1 and 2 can be used for harmonies.

In order to understand how chords (when more than one note is played simultaneously) are created, begin by typing in a simple one-line melody on voice three. Then whilst you are still on voice three, move the cursor to a position below or above an existing note and press COPY. This will cause the note on the screen to change (rather than adding a new note). This is the standard procedure for altering an already existing sequence on a particular voice.

Now change the voice number by moving the pointer under the current number and pressing `2' (F2) on the numeric pad. Inputting a note will result in both notes being displayed on the screen and being sounded when the music is played. The same can be done for the remaining voice.

Changing from one voice to another causes the note on the new voice to flash. This is an easy way of identifying the voice that a note belongs to.

The DELEte key allows you to remove a symbol by deleting and closing up. To delete on one voice only the cursor must be placed over the offending symbol. Otherwise the whole of the corresponding column (chord) vertically in line with the cursor is deleted. Similarly CLR introduces a space on a single voice or a blank column depending on whether or not the cursor lies on a symbol.

DELEting a note or inserting a space on a single voice will cause all the notes on that voice to move one space to the left or right respectively so care must be taken to ensure that the notes rendezvous correctly with their harmonies.

N.B. DELEte and CLR do not always respond immediately, especially when a long tune is being edited, so please be patient and do not repeatedly press the key as you will certainly end up deleting or inserting more chords/spaces than you originally intended.

Bar lines can be inserted on any column by pressing the SPACE bar. These are stored within the machine as though they were notes on the current voice. They have no musical significance on their own and are used simply to make the music easier to read.

TEMPO

The overall speed of a piece of music is governed by setting the 'Tempo' and 'Beats' values in the right-hand window. The 'Tempo' setting shows the length of the note in which beats are to be counted, whilst the 'Beats' setting gives the number of beats (of the specified note) to the minute. This combination represents the initial setting for a piece of music and can be altered using the 'accelerando' facility explained under the 'Advanced Features' section.

VOLUME

The initial volume on each note is set at the second position in window 2. The range is from 1(low) to 7(high). The melody line should be set one or more volume levels above the harmonies, in order to give it the necessary prominence. The volume can be altered within a piece by using the 'crescendo' facility explained in the 'Advanced Features' section.

TONE

The tone control is at the right hand side of window 2. It has a range from 0 to 9 on each voice. Zero produces the machines natural sound whilst 1 to 9 provide vibrato effects of increasing rapidity.

Note that the machine's music chip has only one oscillator on each voice. Consequently it is not possible to synthesise a musical instrument on one voice.

THE COMMAND WINDOW

Commands are executed by preselecting the required command in window 3 and then pressing the large ENTER key. Alternatively certain control keys can be used directly.

Some commands make use of the end-marker - ■. This can be moved to the current cursor column by pressing TAB and appears on the top line of the manuscript. Pressing TAB again with the same horizontal cursor position causes the end-marker to return to its initial position at the end of the last page. Moving the cursor to a new position and pressing the TAB key again moves the end-marker to the new column.

The commands available will now be explained in detail.

Ink (<CTRL> I)

This reverses the ink and paper colours.

Metro (<CTRL> M)

This produces a metronome sound at intervals corresponding to the value labelled as 'Beats'; no reference is made to the 'Tempo' note. Therefore if the value is set at 120 then a beep is sounded every half-second.

Pressing any key will abort this command.

Play (<CTRL> P)

This plays the music from the beginning to the end-marker - ■. Pressing any key will abort this command.

Play □ (<SHIFT> P)

This will play the music from the current cursor position - □ to the end marker - ■.

Pressing any key aborts this command.

Quit (<CTRL> Q)

Quits the program and completely resets the machine.

Time (<CTRL> T)

Resets the session time to zero. The elapsed time since last resetting the time or running Minstrel is shown in window 6. This does not include time when the cassette recorder is running or the disc is being accessed.

Save (<CTRL> S)

Save will save the current tune in memory from the beginning to the end-marker - .

Save ☐ (<SHIFT> S)

Save will save the tune from the current cursor position to the end-marker - ■ .

N.B. These commands require a filename to be typed in. The filename can be up to eight characters long and can be edited using the DELEte key. Repeated use of the DELEte key causes the command to be aborted.

The save commands should be used as often as is conveniently possible to prevent large amounts of time being wasted should you make a serious mistake. In addition, if a piece of music contains a sequence which is repeated, then the sequence need not be typed in again but should be saved and appended at the appropriate place using 'load ☐'.

Reset (<CTRL> R)

Reset will erase all the music stored in the computer irreversibly. There may be some delay in the execution of this command if a significant amount of data is to be deleted.

Reset ☐ (<SHIFT> R)

Reset ☐ erases all the music from the current cursor position to the end.

Load (<CTRL> L)

This performs a 'Reset' and loads a new sequence into memory.

Load ☐ (<SHIFT> L)

This performs a 'Reset ☐' and appends a new sequence onto the remaining tune in memory. It can be used to merge with tunes and append repeated sections of music to the passage already stored in memory.

N.B. These commands should be used with great care since it is easy to make a serious mistake which could have catastrophic consequences. Check that the filename you enter is correct before pressing ENTER and check (in the case of Load ☐) that the cursor is in the correct position. For total safety always save a back-up copy of your existing sequence.

ADVANCED FEATURES

Triplets

A triplet is a sequence of three notes which take up the same time value as two notes. Therefore each note in a 'triplet' is two thirds of the length of the corresponding note. For example, a triplet of quavers has the same length as a crotchet.

A note belonging to a triplet is shown by masking off one third of the 'blob' (See Fig 1.). Notes belonging to triplets are selected the same way as normal notes, the masked-off symbols are available in the second pointer position of the left-hand window.

Changing Key

It is perfectly acceptable to change key within a piece of music, providing that the change takes place at the beginning of a page. Blank spaces can be used to fill out the previous page before changing key. The change is made at window 5 in the manner described previously in the 'General Instructions' section.

Crescendo and Accelerando

You will already know (if you are reading this manual properly i.e. forwards, from start to finish), that on their own bar lines have no musical effect. They may however be combined with 'crescendo' marks which are picked up from the second position in window 2 (See Fig 1.). These will increase (<) or decrease (>) the volume on all voices by one half of a volume 'unit'. Multiple bar lines can be used to increase this effect.

The volume on a particular voice can be adjusted relative to the others by using crescendo marks together with individual notes. For this purpose select the required crescendo mark from window 1 before COPYING the note onto the manuscript.

Bar lines can also be used in a similar fashion combined with 'Accelerando' marks picked up from position 2 in the right hand window (No. 7), in order to increase (^) or decrease (v) the 'beats' value by 5 units. Multiple bar lines can be used to enhance this effect which only acts on all three voices for obvious reasons.

Slur

Notes can be made to run smoothly together without a break in volume by including them in a 'Slur'. To do this a 'Slur' marker is added to the note (See Fig 1.), this takes the form of a short horizontal bar. This marker is preselected and shown in Window 1 by pressing the 5(F5) key. The complete symbol is then copied onto the screen in the standard manner. The 'Slur' toggle is from window 1 removed by pressing the 5(F5) again. Slurs are particularly useful for removing the effects of loudspeaker 'clicks' which are sometimes audible in faster moving sequences.

OVERPRINTING

When a symbol on the screen is overprinted by another, the second symbol will rub out the overlapping part of the first. However, when two symbols, identical in every respect, are stored on two different voices, the effect of printing the second will be to totally erase both notes from the manuscript but they will still be played, as they remain stored in memory.

