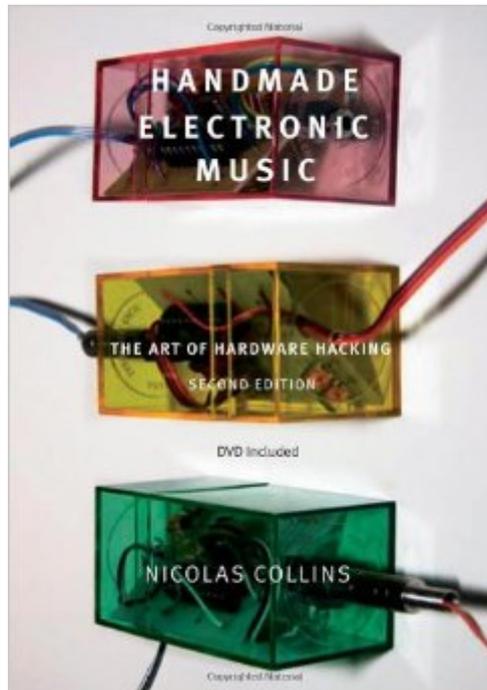


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Handmade Electronic Music: The Art Of Hardware Hacking



Synopsis

Handmade Electronic Music: The Art of Hardware Hacking provides a long-needed, practical, and engaging introduction to the craft of making - as well as creatively cannibalizing - electronic circuits for artistic purposes. With a sense of adventure and no prior knowledge, the reader can subvert the intentions designed into devices such as radios and toys to discover a new sonic world. At a time when computers dominate music production, this book offers a rare glimpse into the core technology of early live electronic music, as well as more recent developments at the hands of emerging artists. In addition to advice on hacking found electronics, the reader learns how to make contact microphones, pickups for electromagnetic fields, oscillators, distortion boxes, and unusual signal processors cheaply and quickly. This revised and expanded second edition is extensively illustrated and includes a DVD featuring 87 video clips and twenty audio tracks by over 100 hackers, benders, musicians, artists, and inventors from around the world, as well as 13 video tutorials demonstrating projects in the book. Further enhancements include additional projects, photographs, diagrams, and illustrations.

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Customer Reviews

Ever since products such as GarageBand took over the low-level tasks of producing electronic music and turned us all into application users, much has been forgotten about making music with low-level electronic components. In the case of younger electronic musicians, this may be an art form they never even knew in the first place. Although there is an advantage is computer musicians

speaking a common language through a common application, something fascinating in the realm of experimentation has been largely lost. This book returns to the days of yesteryear with some projects in making your own electronic music with basic devices. The book starts with some brief information on the tools you'll need plus the author's seven rules for experimentation. Part two is dedicated to listening. He shows you how to use radios and coils to find hidden electronic music, how to use the speaker as a microphone and vice versa, and how to use piezo disks to pick up tiny sounds, among other topics. Part three, on touching, shows you how to transform a portable radio into a synthesizer, change the clock circuit in toys to produce new sounds, and use photocells and pressure pads to "play" the modified toy. Part four, Building, shows the reader how to breadboard up some oscillators along with some controlling circuitry and produce gating, ducking, tremolo and panning effects. Part five, Looking, concerns translating video to audio using commonly found devices. The final section goes into depth on mixing circuits, how to build a good but cheap amplifier, connecting sensors to computers via game controllers, and a section on power supplies. The book is written such that you should proceed from beginning to end, since the devices in earlier sections are used to assemble the devices in later chapters. By the time you finish you should have entire experimental musical instruments that you have assembled yourself.

Circuit Benders - if you are ready for something different get a copy of Collins' informative book. It covers a wide variety of approaches for creating unusual sounds (and sights) in a low tech, user friendly manner. For example, the chapter on making an oscillator uses photos of the breadboard as well as schematics. As someone who finds electronic diagrams intimidating, Collins' approach made construction a snap. It also helped me better understand how to read schematics. Creating visuals with LCDs and by altering video cameras further expand the realms of hacking. The included CD features work by artists and musicians using devices found in the book. What a great idea. Very inspiring. I wish the Ghazala book (which is also great) had a similar CD. Sources for parts, websites and additional information galore make this a must have item.

Quite simply this book is fantastic. It starts off very simply, each project is explained in a way that is easy to understand. There is a logical progression and there is enough information provided that you can start experimenting yourself - I combined and modified some of the designs to make something of my own. The chapters are interspersed with inspirational descriptions of artist's related projects, and the included DVD allows you to see many of these. This book has given me enough basic skills and inspiration that I have caught the bug. I have been to a few electronics/music

workshops over the past couple of years and if the tutor does not recommend this book a fellow student does. I have since honed my skills and I am now running my own business designing and building guitar effects pedals and synthesizer kits. Get this book, you won't regret it

It's like this book was written for me. Fun, simple, incredible experiments and ideas for playing around with home-made electronic sounds. I'd spent a year playing with 555-style oscillators from the Forest Mims playbook to make synthesizers; but Forrest has musical circuits as an afterthought for his more practical electronic projects. I was at a complete standstill, full of ideas, but doing them incorrectly and getting nowhere. This book has exactly what I need to go up a few levels. And while it's at it, tons of really fun ideas for the sound devices themselves. Put loose change in a speaker cone, hook it up to a nine volt battery, dangle some leads and see what you get! Who knew? And Nicolas writes pretty funny as well; I'd never seen a resistor/capacitor setup compared to a Monty Python sketch before. I have one complaint about the book. There's too much cool stuff. I finish a chapter, ready to try everything, and then the next chapter has even better ideas. And then I look at all the chapters remaining and wonder where I'll find the time to do it all. I've got an online order for Jameco for which I'm afraid to hit "send" until I re-read it all again. Meanwhile, I've had a blast doing the projects from the first few chapters.

This book is, apparently, compiled from course materials for what must be a very fun class. It mostly covers two broad topics. First, producing unexpected sounds from radios and the circuit boards in toys, and modifying those devices in simple ways, such as adding photoresistors or new circuit board connections. Second, building simple synthesizers from scratch. The skills taught are basic, and form the building blocks for infinite exploration. The tools and parts needed are all inexpensive (often costing mere pennies). The included CD is great fun, but best saved for later listening, since it contains "spoilers" of what some of the projects might sound like. Because of the book's origination in a class situation, the explanations and pictures are not always ideally clear. There are a lot of typos. However, the writing is so engaging and the book is so much fun that it still deserves 5 stars. Where the book is incomplete ("how to I de-solder something?"), the Web is there. The book is clearly aimed at musicians without any electronics experience. Nonmusicians might still enjoy it, but a joy in playing with sound is absolutely required. I suspect the book would be way too basic for people with any significant experience in electronics. As sidebars, the book includes a considerable amount of history of electronic music -- who's who and what they've been up to.

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