24 TECHNO

THE INVENTION OF THE THERAMIN and Ondes Martinot in the 1920s and 1930s ushered in the era of "electronic music." This new electronic approach remained largely confined to classical composers (e.g., Stockhausen and Messiaen) until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when pop ensembles such as Beaver & Krause in the U.S. and Kraftwerk in Germany began to replace acoustic and electric instruments (guitar, bass, etc.) with electronic instruments (synthesizers) producing "electronic music" (essentially proto-Techno).

Kraftwerk was the most popular and longest lived of these early groups. Formed in 1970, their 1975 hit "Autobahn" gave them a fan base throughout the world. Their 1977 album "Trans-Europe Express" inspired "The Belleview Three"—college students Juan Atkins, Derrick May, and Kevin Saunderson—to begin creating electronic music in Detroit, where it became known as "Techno." The electronic music scene continued to flourish in Detroit in the following years, spawning such works as the 1981 release by Afrika Bambaataa and Soulsonic Force, "Planet Rock."

In the 1980s, Techno's influence reached a mass audience through artists such as Devo, The Buggles, Human League, Yaz, and Erasure, all of whom combined Techno's electronic instrumentation and robotic beats with melodies and (more or less) conventional song forms.

Techno achieved its most widespread popularity in the 1990s (especially in Britain) through hard, "dance driven" music. During this time the term "remix" became associated with Techno. It refers to adding new tracks to a popular song, subtracting original tracks, (especially drums), and then "remixing" the result. This process usually results in a faster feel and a heavy, repetitive drum beat.

Currently, Techno has a large variety of substyles, including House (with a non-deviating "four on the floor" beat), Trance (emphasizing dramatic crescendos and use of dynamics, breakdowns and buildups, and sometimes sampled vocals), and Breakbeat, (which led to the emergence of the "Jungle" style). All are modern branches of electronic, dance-driven music using constant, repetitive harmonic/melodic figures. Recent Techno artists (called producers) include Moby, The Crystal Method, The Chemical Brothers, and Fatboy Slim.

TECHNO CHARACTERISTICS

BASS GROOVES: As early Techno used drum machines like the Roland TR-808 and bass sequencers like Roland's TB-303, the use of live musicians (especially bass) is the exception rather than the rule. Because Techno music is usually played by machines, a bass player wishing to create an accurate Techno sound must play perfectly in time and be able to play with loops. As with Techno drum patterns, Techno bass lines are generally not intricate, but require great consistency, and usually follow a "four on the floor" bass drum pattern. Techno's tempos are slightly slower than those of Drum n' Bass /Jungle. The bass "pattern" often consists of simply playing the tonic in unsyncopated patterns.

TONE: Bass +9 to + 15 dB, Mid -15 dB @ 500 Hz, Treble -15dB. The use of effects pedals helps simulate the synth-bass tone endemic to Techno, with both extreme bass boost and extreme mid and treble cuts. When using typical instrument/amp setups, an option is to add a sub-harmonic synth effect one octave below the line being played. Distortion can be used. A muted sound with little sustain is typical.

GEAR: Techno is computer and loop based. The sonic range of 5-string, 6-string and other extended-range basses helps the electric bass to mimic keyboard bass. Upright could be used if amplified and with a lot of effects, but it would not be easy. What's important is to have plenty of power and to be able to cover the wide frequency range of Techno without unwanted distortion. Then add digital effects pedals or rack mounted effects. MIDI pickups to synthesizer or onboard synthesizers can be employed.

TECHNIQUE: Finger style or pick, depending on the tone required. The ability to play with a click track is imperative. You must play with perfect, unwavering tempo.

PROGRESSIONS: Minor keys are the norm in techno as are very simple progressions, with step-wise motion being common. But the progressions are relatively unimportant as the music relies almost entirely on repetitive drum and bass lines with repetitive melody lines on top.

1) i - bvii/bvi
2) i - ii - i - biii

QUARTER NOTE = 110 – 184 BPM

TECHNO EXAMPLE 1 (CD 2 TRACK 93, DVD TRACK 91)

Techno Example 1 Variation 1

C

Techno Example 1 Variation 2 (CD 2 Track 94, DVD Track 92)

C

Techno Example 1 Variation 3

C

TECHNO EXAMPLE 1 VARIATION 4

TECHNO (DISCO/HOUSE) EXAMPLE 2 (CD 2 TRACK 95, DVD TRACK 93)

TECHNO EXAMPLE 2 VARIATION 1