

Michael Thom
LAMP Summary
Spring 2008

Purpose of Unit

This unit was intended to teach the students in Mr. Fletcher's Music Theory class how to use the computer program Sonic Cakewalk Home Studio. I told Mr. Fletcher at the beginning of the semester that I would need to teach a unit of some sort, probably to his theory class; a couple weeks later, he asked me if I was familiar with programs like Cakewalk. I am, so he asked me to learn the specifics of the program and then teach it to him and his class as my LAMP project. Thus, I started by spending a couple weeks reading the manual and playing with the program during my prep period. I then typed up a project overview (which is included below), including some specific ideas that I wanted to teach and how I would go about accomplishing these tasks.

LAMP Project

Michael Thom | Student Teacher | Highland School Band

Sonar Home Studio

Objectives:

Students will learn how to record MIDI data and live audio, edit the recorded sounds, modify their arrangements, and produce a final mix.

Terms to be learned:

Track, MIDI, Channel, Mix, Path, Patch, Input, Output, Audio, Master, Fader, Record

Overview Procedure:

Day 1

- Give pre-test.
- Explain concepts and allow them to play with factory-created (me-created?) samples.
- Explain MIDI and the difference between MIDI and audio.

Day 2

- Describe software interface, different parts of it, how they're used.
- Demonstrate recording (both audio and MIDI).
- Give them time to record their own stuff.
- Explain simple edits (copies, overlaps, etc.).
- Offer to them to bring in guitars/basses if they want.

Day 3

- Review previous days' work.
- Answer any questions.
- Explain detailed edits (notes, patches, channels).
- Give time to work (completing whole process again).

Day 4

- Demonstrate final mixing procedures (faders, outputs, masters, staves, saving).
- Describe final project.
- Give time to work.
- Remind of post-test tomorrow, take any questions at end of class.

Day 5

- Give time to work on projects (half of class), answer questions.
- Take volunteers to play their projects.
- 10:00 – Give post-test.
- If any time left, play more projects.

Preparations and Materials

To teach the lesson, each student already sits at a computer for class, and each computer had Sonic Cakewalk Home Studio pre-installed (although I did have to go around to each one and “Activate” the software before we could use it). These computers were also all equipped with MIDI keyboards and headphones (as well as speakers in the monitors and keyboards). Finally, we borrowed a high-output LCD projector to use in the front of the room, so that I can more effectively demonstrate the program to the students, which we were able to keep for the week. Otherwise, there was no further preparation or materials needed.

Procedure

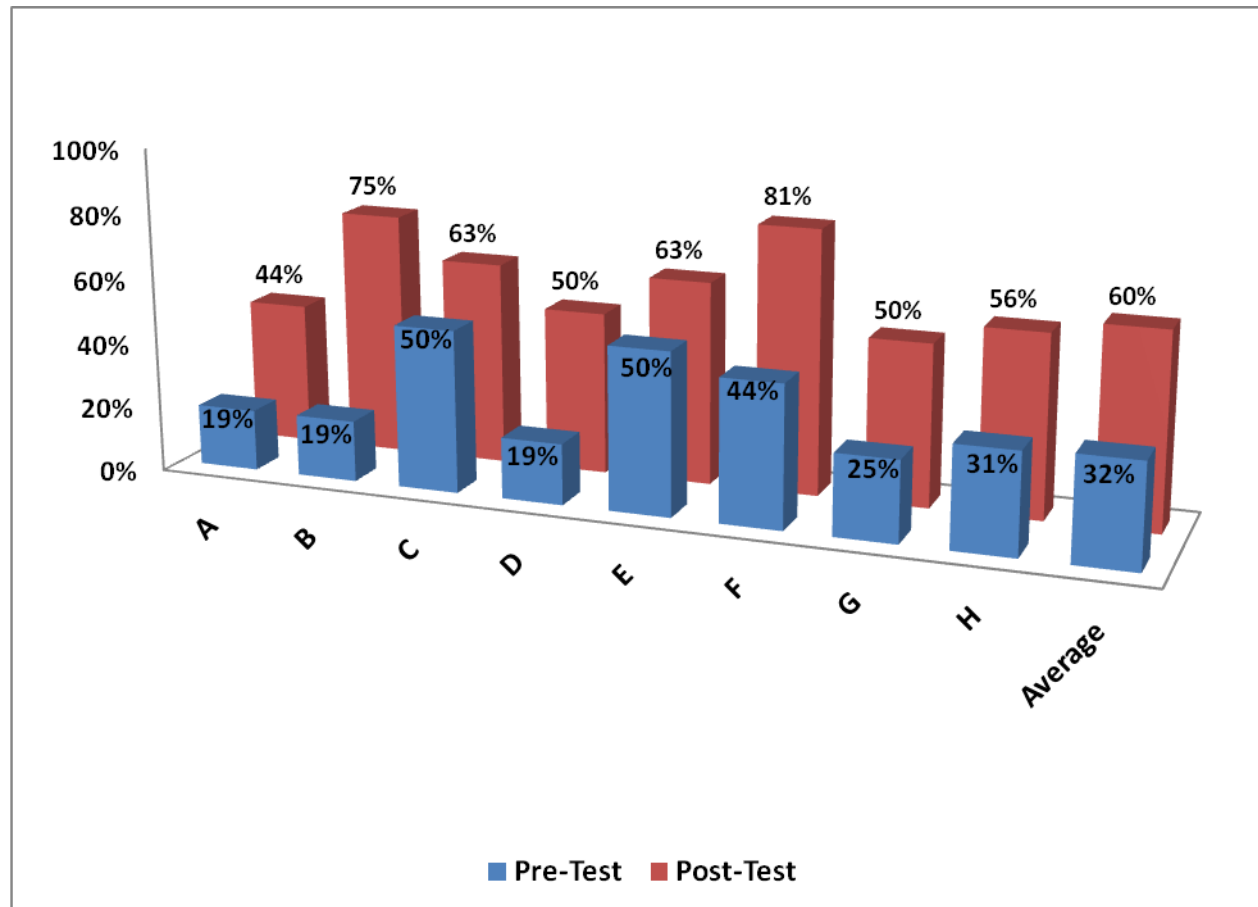
Each day I ran the class about the same way. I’d start by introducing what we were going to talk about that day, giving the students an idea of what we were going to be doing and learning. I would then spend a couple minutes (literally, I tried to keep it to under five minutes each time, knowing the students had very short attention spans – and the ability to play on the internet without me hardly knowing, even though I did walk the room nearly constantly) “lecturing,” in order to convey the necessary information about the day’s topic(s). I would also use the projector and the computer at the front of the room to assist in my instruction (the main reason why I couldn’t be walking the floor the whole time, looking for students who may not have been paying attention).

The rest of the time I basically gave to the students to work. I gave them specific instructions, to keep them on task and learning what they were intended to learn. They then spent at least half of each class period just working, learning by doing. I would walk the class the whole time, answering any questions that came up (there were always several), and even just walking up to students and saying “Show me what you’ve done so far” to keep tabs and interact. This allowed me to 1) engage in one-on-one teaching and 2) keep tabs on the students’ progress.

Assessment

Before beginning to teach, I administered a brief Pre-Test to the students. I then gave the same test after the week of teaching, but I renamed it to “Post-Test.” The improvement was marked. The average percent of correct answers went up to 60% on the Post-Test from an abysmal 32% on the Pre-Test. I was not exactly thrilled by the 60% average score at the end of the teaching, but it *was* a significant improvement, so that has to mean something. Also, it should be mentioned that there were

only eight students (out of 10) who were present to take both the Pre-Test and the Post-Test, so the bad scores very easily pulled down the class average. Below are the results of the tests.



Analysis

I felt that this teaching went fairly well. The content was unlike anything that I've had any training to teach, so that made it a bit of a struggle. However, as many of the students are garage-band musicians, they were anywhere from interested in learning recording software to already familiar with such programs. Thus, several of them were actually very interested in using the software, even if not in listening to me talk about it. I feel that, while not quite what I was expecting to teach, this unit went pretty smoothly and was a good experience.