



# TRACK

The INFO Source for Digital Recording

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## RECORDING YOUR CD AT HOME: MAPPING SONGS FOR BETTER MASTERING



The new multi-session CD Recording System for the VS-880 makes it easy and inexpensive to maintain control over the last steps in the production of your song: mixing and mastering. Of course, along with this creative control and freedom comes the responsibility to know what to do. You can save lots of money by producing your CD's at home, but you can also end up with songs that are at different levels, with poor stereo imaging, etc.

Here's a tip that can really help you in the last stage of mixing and writing your CD: choose 10 of your favorite CD's and "map" them out. By this, we mean that you should study each one carefully and create a blueprint of each song. This "blueprint" should contain, first and foremost, the structure of the song. Make a block diagram showing the length of each section in bars and beats. How many verses are there? How long is the bridge? How long is the fade out?

Next, your blueprint should list the instrumentation for each section, including repeated sections. You'll often find that the instrumentation changes as the song goes from the first verse to the third verse. Changing instrumentation gives the listener a sense of "newness"

when he or she hears the third verse, even though the vocal melody and parts may be carried over from the first verse.

Finally, do a three-dimensional map of each section. This map should show the panning of each instrument and also its placement either near or away from the listener through the use of levels and reverb. After you have created your "map", you'll really know not only the song and its instrumentation, but also how it was produced and mixed.

Now, mix and burn a CD with one or two of your own songs. Take these songs to several different listening environments and compare their sound with the sound from your 10 CD choices from above. Go through the same process with your own material, mapping the structure, instrumentation and three-dimensional positioning. Compare notes between your "target" songs and your own material. This process can be a gold mine of information that can really help you get the sounds you want out of your own VS-880 material.

Since the VS-880 gives you the capability of creating CD's very inexpensively, try several different mixes and arrangements of your song and burn each one to a test CD. Take them to different listening environments with some friends and monitor their reactions. Since you are in total control of the mixing and mastering process, you can experiment and learn what really sounds great and moves your listeners.

### -SPECIAL OFFER-

#### New Product CD-ROM and VS-1680 Demo Video

##### ROLAND CD-ROM

Looking for an interactive tour of the future of music and recording gear? Then check out the Roland New Product CD-ROM. This innovative Mac- and PC-compatible CD-ROM gives you a first-hand look at all the amazing products Roland introduced at the 1998 Winter NAMM show, including the mind-blowing VS-1680 24-bit Digital Studio Workstation, the affordable VS-840 Digital Studio Workstation, the MC-505 Groovebox, the SP-808 Groove Sampler and much, much more.



To help you navigate this wealth of information, the CD-ROM features an Internet-style home page and product icons as well as audio demos, product videos and product photos. It's available through the Roland SuperStore for just \$5.00. Call (800) 386-7575 to order your copy today!

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# TYSON'S TIPS\*

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## VS-1680 DEMO VIDEO

For those who desire a more in-depth look at the VS-1680, you can now order the new VS-1680 Demo Video. This 15-minute demo video covers everything from basic VS-1680 features like 256-track recording, 16-track playback and built-in effects to showing you the actual button pushes required for recording, editing and mixing. But beware, after seeing how powerful and easy-to-use this new VS workstation is, you'll be hard pressed not to visit your local Roland dealer for a hands-on demo and it works great with your VS-880 to give you a 24-track system.

Like the New Product CD-ROM, the VS-1680 Demo Video is available through the Roland SuperStore for just \$5.00 by calling (800) 386-7575. And we've even got a special demo offer: get both the New Product CD-ROM and the VS-1680 Demo Video for only \$7.50!

## in the SPOTLIGHT:

Judy Tenuta and Scott May

*The VS-880 has been used for many different kinds of projects, from album creation to songwriting demos to major movies to commercial productions. Recently, we were contacted by Scott May, a talented musical director who has used his VS-880 to create acclaimed comedy CD's. Here are some excerpts from our communication with Scott:*

Dear Roland:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences with the Roland family. The VS-880 has changed everything for me in the most positive of ways. As we discussed in our phone conversation, the main focus of my work is in the field of comedy, and I have served some of the most popular and clever comedians the genre has to offer. In the year-plus that I have had my VS-880, I have had the good fortune to produce, arrange, and record three albums of very different flavors.



Judy Tenuta and Scott May with the VS-880.

I have been comedienne Judy Tenuta's musical director since 1985, and have provided the music for three of her four albums. Our third album, "In Goddess We Trust," was nominated for a Grammy™ award (which, alas, we lost to Jonathan Winters). For the newest one, "The Power Of Judyism," we decided on a different approach: not a typical "stand-up" album, but one in which Judy's narrative would be musically scored throughout.

## USING THE VS-880'S SCRUB FUNCTION

The VS-880's editing features are one of its great advantages over other self-contained recording workstations. These editing features allow you to try different ideas and sculpt each take to sound its best. The SCRUB function is crucial to editing because it allows you to precisely locate edit points. However, to correctly use the SCRUB function, you must first do two things:

- 1) Calibrate the movements of the TIME/VALUE Dial
- 2) Calibrate the Scrub Direction

### CALIBRATING THE DIAL

In order to adjust an edit point such as the START or END point for an ERASE command, you must first calibrate the TIME/VALUE Dial so that small movements of the DIAL result in accurate adjustments to the edit point. To do this, use the [<] and [>] cursors to calibrate the Dial.

Press the [<] cursor about 5 times. (In the display, the value under the MEASURES indicator will be flashing.) Notice the Dial has clicks when you turn it. With the Dial calibrated to MEASURES, each click of the Dial will advance the play position by exactly one measure. (If you try this on a song where a tempo map is not set up, it won't work.)

This Dial setting is great for Bar/Beat editing, but not very helpful if you need to use SCRUB to find an edit point that is not exactly at a measure boundary.

Press the [>] cursor about 5 times. Nothing in the display blinks, but you will notice a tiny arrow at the right of the time display. The time display is now indicating MINUTES, SECONDS, FRAMES, and HUNDREDTHS of FRAMES. With the Dial calibrated to this setting, each click of the Dial will advance the play position by about 10 hundredths of a frame. Notice how the counter jumps by about 10 with each click. Now try the same thing, but this time press and hold SHIFT as you slowly turn the Dial. Now each click moves the edit line by exactly one

hundredth of a frame (fine enough resolution to split hairs!). See page 29 of the Application Guide for a more detailed description.

### CALIBRATING THE SCRUB DIRECTION

When using the Scrub function in the VS-880, it is possible to scrub both forward and backward. That is, you can turn the Dial both clockwise and counterclockwise to find an edit point. If you are trying to find the **beginning** of a note or a kick drum, you will most likely be turning the Dial clockwise. If you are editing dialog, and need to find the **end** of a spoken word such as "ketchup," you would likely locate just past the spoken part, and scrub backwards until you hear the "p" sound which indicates the end of the word "ketchup." This type of backwards scrubbing is somewhat rare, except in editing dialog and doing radio and TV spots.

Whenever you use the Scrub function, you must tell the VS-880 in advance whether you plan on scrubbing forward (clockwise) or backwards (counterclockwise). Here's how to do it:

Forward Scrubbing: Press the PREVIEW TO button once.

Backwards Scrubbing: Press the PREVIEW FROM button once.

### CONCLUSION

The Scrub tool is essential for accessing your VS-880's powerful editing capabilities. Before using Scrub for most applications, just do the following:

Press the [>] cursor 4 times.

(Look for the arrow to show up in the Time Display.)

Press the [Preview To] button once.

Happy editing!

\*Sorry, you won't find any tips on knock-out punches or ear-biting in this column. These tips come from Laura Tyson, Roland's very own VS-880 champ.

Judy's very full and changing schedule keeps her moving about the country at a dizzying pace, and blocking out time at a conventional studio was quite out of the question. The perfect answer was for me to pack up my VS-880, an ART Tube-MP (which is just the perfect match for the VS-880), and a few favorite mics, and go set up shop in Judy's fine Tudor house in the Hollywood Hills. I would record Judy's spoken parts, then come back to my studio, Happy Pig Kitchens, and sync up the score via MIDI. It was less expensive to fly me out to LA from Chicago and provide lodging than it would have been to book a studio. And the added convenience of working at home could not be bought elsewhere for any price. Recording the album was a breeze, but I was sometimes responsible for holding up production due to the fact that I was laughing so hard that I missed some cues! The record has been completed and is in the stores, and we believe it is her best yet...

Tim Cavanagh has been a favorite musical comedian for over 10 years, but never released a full album of his witty and whimsical songs. I have had the pleasure of producing and arranging most of his recent recordings that he uses for his radio appearances, but none of these were available for purchase. Tim came to us early in '97 to say that he was finally going to take the big step and release an album. Tim and his wife Chris decided to start an independent label, "Hits and Giggles Records," and go for it. The fact that they were going to fund the entire operation themselves made each decision important, so that each dollar spent was done in the wisest manner. When I told them that I could sequence and record the entire album in my studio for considerably less than a commercial studio, they were most pleased. When I told them that my fiancée, Chris, could do the graphics here as well, they really jumped for joy (although I could hear an audible sigh of contemplated exhaustion from our beleaguered Macintosh!). In production, the COSM options for guitar were especially helpful for Tim's acoustic, and for my electric. The sessions were wonderful, and the album "Sounds Like Fun" has been warmly received.

Both of the above albums were recorded entirely on the VS-880 V-Xpanded, and mixed on the VS-880 with no outboard gear. [For mixing,] I brought the VS-880 to TrackAttack studios in Chicago, and hooked it up to the Genelec monitors there. I enlisted Larry Millas, a top engineer and producer with "golden ears," to preside over the mix. At first, [he was] a bit skeptical, because all he did was sit there, listen, and dictate all the changes to me... [But] he gradually came to the conclusion that these sessions were great because his focus was on his ears, not knob-turning—more like conducting an orchestra than mixing a record. He was surprised that so much flexibility was available in such a small box! And the COSM mic models really blew him away. We used not one piece of outboard gear in the recording or mixing of any of these albums, with the exception of the ART Tube-MP mic preamp. Kudos to the VS8F-1 effects card! I can't wait to get the VS-880 CD burner package.

The payoff of this whole experience is the airplay that these projects have received. Doctor Demento has been especially kind to us, playing at least one of the cuts from these albums during 18 of his weekly shows in 1997. The week of August 3 saw five cuts in one show, and many weeks, our cuts were in the "Funny Five" most requested nationally. We are certain at least one of our cuts will make the "Funny Twenty-Five" top comedy songs of the year on the Demento Show. All three of these albums have been big hits on morning radio all over the country, and the sales keep climbing.

My future projects include contributions to a weekly series of comedy bits syndicated to radio stations to be written and recorded with Len Austrevich, the score to a new movie starring Judy Tenuta, and another GO-GO Boys record, "The GO-GO Boys Head West."

All of this comes courtesy of a small but mighty box full of circuits, wires, chips, and stuff that only God and electronic geeks know, but a box that listens really well, and always does what I tell it to do.

Thanks again,  
Scott May



## INTRODUCING THE VS-1680

Yes, the rumors are true! Roland's VS recording family is growing once again with the new VS-1680 24-bit Digital Studio Workstation. At press time, these great 16-track workstations were just starting to ship. So for those of you who have yet to see one at your local dealer, let's address two questions: What is it? What might it mean to you?

### What is the VS-1680?

The VS-1680 is a 16-track compact digital audio workstation that features:

- 8-track simultaneous record, 16-track playback, 256 Virtual Tracks
- 4 onboard stereo multi-effects processors using two optional VS8F-2 Effects Expansion Boards
- 26 channels of automated digital mixing
- Large backlit screen for waveform editing and easy parameter access
- New 24-bit MT-Pro recording mode
- CD burning and archiving software built-in (CD Recorder optional)
- Inputs: two XLR mic inputs with phantom power, plus six balanced analog inputs and a stereo digital input
- Outputs: eight analog outputs and two independent stereo digital outputs addressed by six stereo (12 mono) busses

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## How can you use the VS-1680?

The great news is that the VS-1680 is compatible with your VS-880. You can link the two systems together in the same way you would link two VS-880's: connect an RCA cable from the Digital Out of one unit to the Digital In of the other, and a MIDI cable to transmit MMC from the master unit to the slave.

The combination of the VS-1680 with your VS-880 will give you: 24 tracks of digital audio playback, 12 channels of simultaneous recording, six stereo FX processors, 38 channels of automated digital mixing, and lots more. Plus, the VS-1680 will read your VS-880 files and can work with your VS-880's CD Recording System. So you can use the VS-1680 to archive your VS-880 projects as well as burn CD's from the full mix of your 1680/880 studio. Check out a VS-1680 at your local dealer today!

## EDITING VS-880 AUDIO ON YOUR PC

Want to control your VS-880—including editing phrases, viewing waveforms of your audio, cutting, pasting, moving and looping—from your home PC? Then check out the program "Music Masters" from the Australian company Datasonics. This innovative company and their groundbreaking software can be found through their Website, [www.datasonics.com](http://www.datasonics.com).

## Internet Connections

As always, the Internet has been bustling with VS-880 activity over the past few months, and we at *Track Notes* have found a few cool VS-related sites we thought we'd pass along to you. These sites are a great way to connect with other VS users like yourself, sharing "real world" experiences and opinions.

For some humor try, <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/triplej/convert.htm>. This site documents—in detail—how to convert a VS-880 to a VS-1680. (Warning: this stuff is satire; don't even think about trying it at home or anywhere else...)

On a more serious note, take some time to surf by [www.virtualstudio.org](http://www.virtualstudio.org). This site is a great resource for lots of helpful VS-880 info and user tips and tricks.

Finally, check out the "Liquid Songs" page on Moonlight Cafe's Website: <http://www.mooncafe.com/>. A good chunk of these songs were created on VS-880 workstations, attesting to the great sound quality of the 880, even under Internet-download conditions.

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