

40th Anniversary

CASIO Electronic Musical Instruments
since 1980

Extract from our upcoming Casio 40th anniversary Fanzine

"The philosophy of Casio's musical instrument business is to expand the musician population. To extend the fun of playing music to as many people as possible around the world. Even if your performance skills are low, you can still have a desire to participate in music. I am really happy if those wishes help people to become musicians.

Toshio Kashio's strong wish, as one of the founding four Casio brothers, was to create a musical instrument that everyone can play. I think that thought captured the hearts of many people who wanted to learn a keyboard instrument. Casio's musical instrument business begins with the Casiotone and it expanded from a friendly mini-size keyboard up to a synthesizer for professionals in only a few years!

Today, 40 years later, Casiotone has evolved again, and I am grateful for the wide acceptance from entry-level musicians to professional Grand Hybrid pianists. Now, with the timing of this anniversary, I have reaffirmed our determination that we truly want to continue to provide electronic musical instruments that are loved by all musicians in the next 50 to 100 years."

**HITOSHI ANDO, GENERAL MANAGER,
CASIO ELECTRONIC MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS**

p4 The evolution of Casio
Instruments - Timeline

p12 1990s
Blips, beeps
and big hits

p6 1980s
The Birth of Casio
Instruments

p14 The story
of Pulp's
Common People

p8 The story of
Sleng Teng

p16 Noughties and
beyond - the
present and
future of Casio

p11 Classic
Casio Tracks

p18 Interview:
Jodie Abacus

WHAT'S INSIDE



THE 1980s

"CREATING SOMETHING FROM NOTHING, SOMETHING NEVER SEEN BEFORE"

Toshio Kashio
CASIO



THE BIRTH OF CASIO INSTRUMENTS

Casio co-founder and music-lover Toshio Kashio had a vision! That everyone should experience the joy of making music - *with no barriers*.

In January 1980, this vision birthed the Casiotone CT-201 and a new dawn for electronic instruments. Cased in wood it looked like a "traditional" synth, but did away with the traditional complexity and unpredictability.

Kashio's ground-breaking vowel-consonant synthesis recreated 29 different instruments, all playable on one keyboard. With no complicated knobs and patches like traditional synths, it was easy to use and heralded as a "third type of instrument."

With each step the technology created by Casio has been a game-changer in music production, achieving things thought impossible. But the real story is how these changes inspired creativity and some of the greatest music ever made.

With the explosion of DIY music production in the aftershocks of punk, the CT-201 opened up musical possibilities to everyone - skilled or not! It wasn't long before Casio were making hits.



Casiotone CT-201
FIRST ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD

By 1981, The Human League were using the VL-1, the small synth/calculator hybrid, on mega-hit album *Dare*, on the song 'Get Carter'. Trio's 'Da Da Da' had chart success in 30 countries (number 2 in the UK) the following year using rhythms and presets from the same instrument. Despite the limitations and child-like quality, the VL-Tone range of instruments found their way onto tracks by Devo, Talking Heads, Stevie Wonder and Beastie Boys.

In the video for Thomas Dolby's 'She Blinded Me With Science' three children can briefly be seen playing VL-1's. The instrument is not confirmed to be on the song itself, but the futuristic look fit the aesthetic for this forward-thinking synth hit.

During their early live performances Depeche Mode used a MT-30, with the words "Fairlight" written on it (perhaps a sarcastic nod to the desirable and expensive Fairlight synthesiser that few people could afford). They were getting the same results with a Casio.

And five years in, another MT would change the face of popular music and be responsible for a brand-new genre. The 'Sling Teng' rhythm, adopted for Wayne Smith's smash-hit 'Under Mi Sling Teng' was a preset on the MT-40, revolutionising reggae and dragging it up-to-date. The genre changed overnight, birthing digital reggae and laying the groundwork for modern dancehall. Music culture was changed by a Casio preset.

"Five years in, Casio was hanging the face of popular music and responsible for a brand-new genre."



Salt N' Pepa Push It (Single)
1987

Originally a B-side in 1986, 'Push It' by Salt N' Pepa, exploded to become one of the defining songs of the era on its own release in 1987. Utilising the CZ-101 the rap trio, alongside uncredited producer Fresh Gordon, created the synth stabs and rhythms that still make the song sound fresh in 2020.

Casio instruments, often undocumented, were weaving the sounds across popular music and by the end of the 80s, the Sling Teng rhythm was spilling over into other genres. 'Reggae Joint' by 2 Live Crew sampled the Wayne Smith original and the 'riddim' started to find its way into rave culture.

As acid house took over as the decade merged into the 90s, Casio was pivotal in the new sounds emerging. The 'Reese Bass' created by Kevin Saunderson on Reese's 'Just Want Another Chance', which is integral to the development of drum n bass, dubstep and bass music, was crafted on a CZ-5000. This Casio model's Electric Organ pre-set with tons of reverb also created the lead synth sound Psychotropic's 'Hypnosis' a big club tune in 1990.

In a decade, Kashio's vision had created new genres, infiltrated the biggest hits and been part of a huge shift in youth culture. **That was just the beginning.**



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