Cheatography

Subtractive Synthesizer Basics Cheat Sheet
by Bill Smith (Naenyn) via cheatography.com/21154/cs/3960/

Basic Waveforms		
sine	purest; single harmonic	
saw	edgy; buzzy, thin low-end	
pulse	artificial sounding; heavier low-end	
triangle	quiet; bigger, rounder low-end	

Doubling & Transposing

Mix	determines balance between OSCs
	usually 50/50
Semi	one octave = 12 semitones
	fifth = 7 semitones

Waveforms usually set the same

For better bass, favor lower-pitched OSC (especially for triangle wave)

Sub Oscillator

Pulse edgy weight

Triangle big, round weight

quieter than pulse

often has attack transient; remove with increased attack env.

Filters	
Mode	high pass, low pass, band pass
Cutoff	frequency that sound is attenuated
Resonance	provides volume boost at cutoff frequency



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Filter Types

low- pass	cutoff controls brightness
	lower cutoff decreases volume
high- pass	cutoff controls bottom-endl
	increase cutoff to make thinner, lighter sound
band- pass	cuts off highs and lows
	thinness of high-pass, roundness of low-pass
	at extreme settings, can sound like low-pass/high-pass

LFO

TODO - outline section 11



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Envelope Stages

attack	amount of time for control to change from initial to maximum	
hold	amount of time control remains at maximum setting	
	Not always present; ADSR, AHDSR	
decay	amount of time for control to change from maximum to sustain	
	short values can create attack transients	
sustain	level of control after decay when key is held down	
release	amount of time for control to change from sustain to initial	

Common Envelope Targets		
Amp	modulates synth's volume over time	
	low/fast attack = string "swell"	
LPF	Brightens -> Darkens	
	fast value = "fat", "horn-like" attack	
	Env. Amount controls how bright sound gets at end of attack	
HPF	Cutoff = fullest state	
	Env. Amount = thinnest state	
	Sounds with more low-end seem closer	
BPF	Cutoff = fullest/darkest	
	Env. Amount = brightest/thinnest	
If decay and release are equal, sound will be the same no matter how it is played		

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Common Envelope Targets (cont)

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Set amp release > filter release or filter release will be inaudible	
Dulue	
Delay	
Mix	controls wetness of sound
	usually not set above 50/50
	at 50/50, volume reduction will be noticable
Delay Time	determines how far apart the echos are apart
	typically expressed in rhythmic values
Delay Feedback	determines how many echoes are created
	min = 1 echo, max = infinite echos
Delay Spread	spreads echos across stereo field
	0 spread = delay down middle
	medium spread = dry middle & wet stereo extremes, rhythmically tight
	max spread = dry middle & wet, rhythmically-off stereo extremes

Smearing and Pulsating

Two OSCs doubled & "fine" detuned in opposite directions		
The farther they are detuned, the more pulsating there is		
Fine control	expressed in cents; 1 semitone = 100 cents	
OSC Start: ON	OSCs starts when key pressed	
	pulsating always the same	
	pointy attack transient	
OSC Start: OFF	when off, OSCs are free- running	
	softer, rounder attack transient	
	pulsating changes with every keypress	
	most obvious with 1-cent detune	
When doubling, use same waveform and pulse width for both OSCs		
For a slow flanging effect, detune 1 OSC only, by only 1 cent		

Typically set mix, then time, then feedback, then spread



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