

Weblog

All great things to come.

Monome!

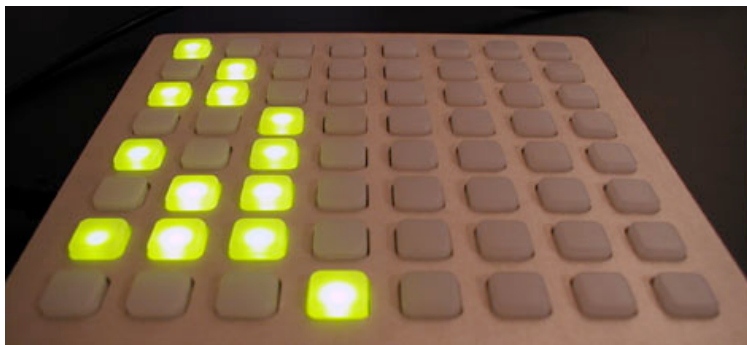
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On April 21st I attended the **Monome** Release Party at **Asphodel**.

Sonification came by way of performances from the Monome crew. **Tehn** cultured us all with a set including a beautiful version of the infectiously structured Mancini sample track you hear in the recent **Monome demo video**; the **Gowns** flowed out gorgeous, droning somnabulance; **Daedalus** brought epic anarchy to the lab and the **Portable Sunsets** rocked out the ultimate funktronic lo-fi. All used the Monome as an interface. If anyone had any questions regarding the Monome's fitness to purpose, they were most surely dispelled.

A Friday well spent for the music alone, but a skyride when I brought a Monome back to my studio.

A shot of the startup pattern, 1 through 8 in binary representation:



The Monome is a deceptively simple device. An 8 x 8 grid of rubber pads lit by green LEDs, communicating and drawing power over USB. The unit is a little over 17 centimeters (6.75 inches) square, with the pads measuring a perfect finger width. This control density is one of the Monome's greatest strengths, packing 64 points of manipulation into the active spread of two hands.

Brushed aluminum front panel, inviting soft-touch pads, rubberized housing to minimize surface slips while performing... the quality level is much higher than most mass-production commercial endeavors. Designed to be *used*, this device is light but solid. I feel no worries packing it into my already zipper-testing **travel backpack**.

A wonderfully refreshing experience: there are no markings of any kind on the device. Its functions are left to the user, and so need no labeling. Even the single USB port has no indicator: the developers assume you can think for yourself. There is no corporate logo or company name silk-screened into your mind with each and every use. The Monome is pure, minimal functionalism at your fingertips.

A blank canvas for your controller desires, the pads and indicator lights are decoupled for access to the full range of this device as both manipulator and indicator. Two-way communication with musical applications is accomplished by **Open Sound Control** messages. Several purpose-specific Max/MSP patches are already available at **Monome.org**, with more to come. The developers have open-sourced their personal Max performance patches under the Gnu GPL, such as Tehn's *mlr* (a loop dividing beat breaker) and *step* (a fun take on xox style rhythm

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Fight corporate ownership of culture:
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programming). Once the May 1st ship date arrives and more Monomes find their way into the larger world, I've a feeling the Max action will go crazy. I've already started customizing my own Monome environment, and will release it back to the developers and other users once it matures. I'm sure many others will do the same. You won't need Max chops to take advantage of the Monome's endless possibilities, though. *Mapd*, an application to facilitate Maxless mapping of the Monome to other apps like Live, Digital Performer, Reason, is forthcoming.

The Monome was created by a small group of people who actually make music with it, not a corporation intent on profit margins and planned obsolescence. Care was obviously taken to create a device of the highest quality, using the most environmentally sustainable and economically sound practices. Local suppliers and tradespeople were employed when possible; the devices are assembled by hand and are **RoHS compliant** to ensure a greener world. The Monome's software, firmware and hardware are all open source.

I've known for some time this interface would revolutionize my musical creation, both in studio and out. It is. After two days, I've leapt into my sonic future and love what I hear. Isn't moving us forward the purpose of well-wrought design and sustainability?

Built by forward looking people, the Monome is a future device available right now.

Related: [Waiting For Monome](#), [Monome Coalescence](#)

Update: This post was picked up by [CreateDigitalMusic](#) and spawned [excellent discussion](#) of the Monome and its makers, planned obsolescence versus sustainable design and doing the right thing.