

*Talkmaster's Choice* is a computer music installation that processes speech. According to a precise schedule lasting 17 minutes, selections of a series of spoken sounds such as words that are input into the installation, live or pre-recorded, are played back in ever new combinations, first in larger blocks, then in ever shorter phrases, passing through rhythmic chains of consonants and vowels to electronic-sounding sounds no longer reflecting their human origins. This output is transmitted in real time directly to the sound system of the listeners.

*Talkmaster's Choice* is realized by four Atari ST computers working simultaneously. Two of these run a program called *Autobusk*, which composes and outputs MIDI notes and other events in real time. The input is a 16-pulse meter and an 128-pitch chromatic scale that are shaped by various parameters such as “metric clarity”, “pulse length”, “event density”, “tonal clarity” etc. to form an output of MIDI events. The other two computers run a program called *Simpler* running in parallel to *Autobusk*. This program stores a sound wave that is input into memory and locates and numbers a total of 128 moments in it at which the amplitude increases the most markedly – the steeper the increase, the lower the number allocated to the moment. Terminologically dividing each of the *Autobusk*- and *Simpler*-pairs into “left” and “right”, “left”-*Autobusk* sends “left”-*Simpler* MIDI events, and the same for those on the “right”. Each *Simpler*, exactly on receipt of a same-side *Autobusk* MIDI-note, releases audio signals starting at the sound wave moment indicated by the number of the MIDI-note. These signals respectively form the left and right channels of audio stereo. It should now be clear that the chromatic scale in *Autobusk* is not for pitch but for MIDI-number purposes to trigger specific sound excerpts.

The left audio channel is characterized by sound excerpts shortening from phrases through syllables to clicks. The right channel does the same, except that the excerpts are increasingly frequently time-reversed and/or looped, forming continuous tones at the end, tones reflecting the phonetics of the samples in the excerpt. The effect can be likened to concrete poetry slowly transitioning through “rap” to rhythmic electronic sounds.

*Talkmaster's Choice* was created in 1992 as a live installation on behalf of Rotterdam Art Foundation. Performances have taken place in Rotterdam, The Hague, Groningen, Bourges, Darmstadt, Cologne, Bremen, Warsaw and Kobe. The four Ataris were at some point built into a box called *Talkmaster's Chest*, replete with a red button, a stereo microphone, two 8-bit A/D converters, a stereo amplifier and two loudspeaker chassis. After pressing the red button, one can speak into the microphone and be recorded. When the memory in each *Simpler* is full, the recording stops and the real-time process starts.