



building regulations but the rules are more flexible for areas used as work-spaces and if Steve wants to go ahead, it's an easy job to fit a swing-down loft ladder and the floor could be covered without too much trouble with tongue and groove chipboard flooring boards which you can get at Homebase or any DIY superstore.

Steve already seems to have electricity up there but the big job is to fill in and insulate the sides of the space. There's a really good section on this (plus fitting flooring and loft ladders) in *Collins Complete DIY Manual* that Steve should find in his local library.

Sorting out the gear

Getting on to the subject of equipment, Steve seems to be in two minds as to whether to sell his Korg M1 and get a newer synth or not. I'd advise not to sell it, partly because he may have difficulty selling a broken synth but mainly because the M1 has a nice range of sounds he may find hard to replace.

You can never have too many sound sources in a studio. Each synth has its own sound and the Korg does pads and atmospheres particularly well. My inclination would be to keep the M1 and, if Steve wants another hardware synth, to buy one that will complement the M1 by having a completely different type of sound as and when funds allow. If there is any money to be spent I would use it to upgrade the computer so it could run as many soft synths and samplers as possible.

Final points

Steve must have read previous articles where we've advised using duvets to deaden the sound of the space where vocals are recorded. Fair enough, it can look a bit crap and seem amateurish but the good news is that it's not always necessary.

You can record decent vocals in the middle of a room. The natural acoustics of the room, if picked up by the mic, might be just what the track needs anyway. The important thing is if you have several spaces in the house where it is possible to record vocals (and your

mic and headphone leads will reach), try them all out and see which one sounds best (probably the bathroom!).

Finally, Steve mentions he often has a tune in his head but forgets it in the process of working it out. This is something that plagues many of us. You have to be an exceptional musician to be able to instantly play what you hear in your head. I'd advise getting a small voice recorder or dictaphone (less than £20 in Argos) so he can quickly hum his melody into it and have a record of it to refer to when translating it to his keyboard. Good luck! **FM**

STEVE'S REACTION

"I'm still doubtful about converting the loft, although there is the possibility of moving into a three-bedroom house soon, so I'll keep *FM* informed on this! The idea of castors under the bed is something I never thought of and I'll check around for some... the other alternative was a futon but it's hard to find a decent one.

"We're going to redecorate the bedroom soon and I'll put up the new shelving – I'm going to use kitchen worktops – and some new lighting. The speakers are on wall brackets at the moment, but if putting them on the worktop surface would be better, I'll do that.

"I found a 2,000MHz and board for my PC upgrade for £128. I'll also add a new soundcard with front ports and a DVD/RW drive later on. And I've been trying various demos of soft samplers and synths – ReBirth is good, although more complicated than Reason – but any other suggestions?"

"The new chair will have to be bouncy with arms and not something that'll bust in a few months... I've had those before. And as for the dictaphone, I do actually have one at my mum's house. But, as I used to work in an electrical retailer, I'll have a word with my old boss to do a deal on a new digital one!"

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This month, it's a simple solution and Steve's happy

