

Akai S5000

BY ALEXHORNBAKE ON SEPTEMBER 7, 2008

On Arizona's last tour I was using our macbook pro running Logic's Mainstage 1.0. A very cool app, but unfortunately like all computers, it makes me nervous. It's gonna crash eventually (it did once or twice), and even just knowing that it might just die, puts out bad vibes on stage. The macbook pro, while awesome in the studio, and for all kinds of other applications, just isn't my ideal extra bandmate on stage.

In an effort to replace the macbook on stage I tried to find something to run keyboard samples that was affordable, sounded good, and was reliable.

I found an Akai S5000 on ebay for about \$300, a piece of gear that would have cost an arm and a leg in 1997 is now obsolete, but it has a a USB port (the older S series like the s3000, seen in some of the pics is SCSI only), hot output, decent D/A, and like it's MPC brothers has been on countless platinum records. So is it good enough for the stage?... hells yea. Okay, one problem though. How do you make it totally bombproof. For me the weakest link was the internal SCSI hard drive (which my unit did not have, but is a must have unless you want to lug around an external SCSI device like a hard drive, cd-rom drive, zip drive, jazz drive (oh yea they made those...)).

Solution:

1. Internal Flash Drive... Enter the Transcend 2GB IDE drive, I think I found mine through dealmac.com for \$70. So this eliminates any moving parts.
2. IDE Laptop 44-pin to 40-pin Desktop connector.
3. Acard AEC-7720U 40-pin IDE-> 50-pin SCSI adapter. I found through some of the Akai forums online that this piece is a cheap substitute (I think mine was under \$50) for the \$200 Akai adapter.
4. Akai Power Cable, connects power from the samplers power supply to the new drive.

Below: Open Sampler



Below: Modified 40->44-pin IDE adapter, shown with power connector attached.
I had some trouble getting the small 2-pin clip to both stay on the adapter, and clear the circuit board on the Acard scsi adapter, so I soldered the connector directly to the adapter (see the yellow heatshrink on the top left item).



Below: The whole assembly.



Below: Temporarily hooked up, testing before securing drive.



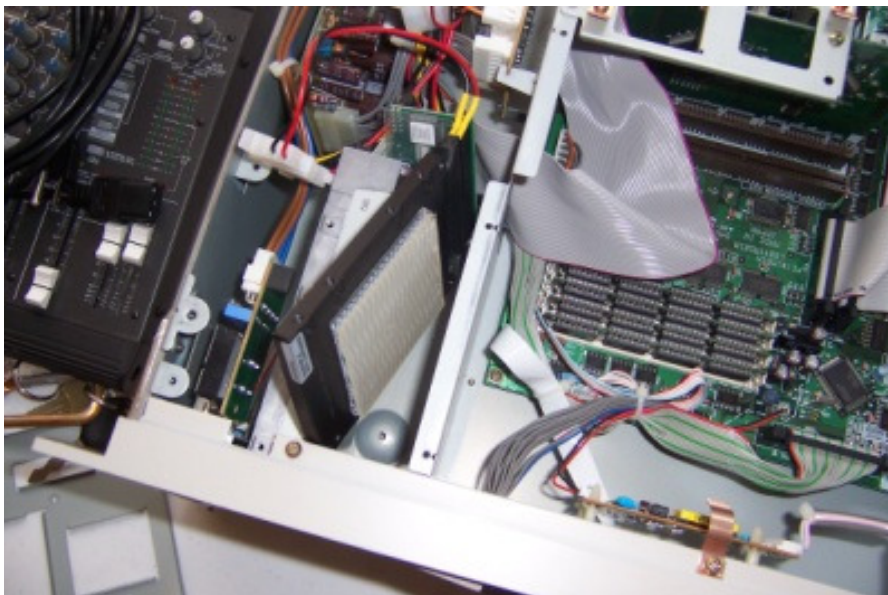
Below: Barely visible, but after powering up the unit, it recognizes the IDE as an Internal SCSI drive, and is showing 1.96GB free. Success!



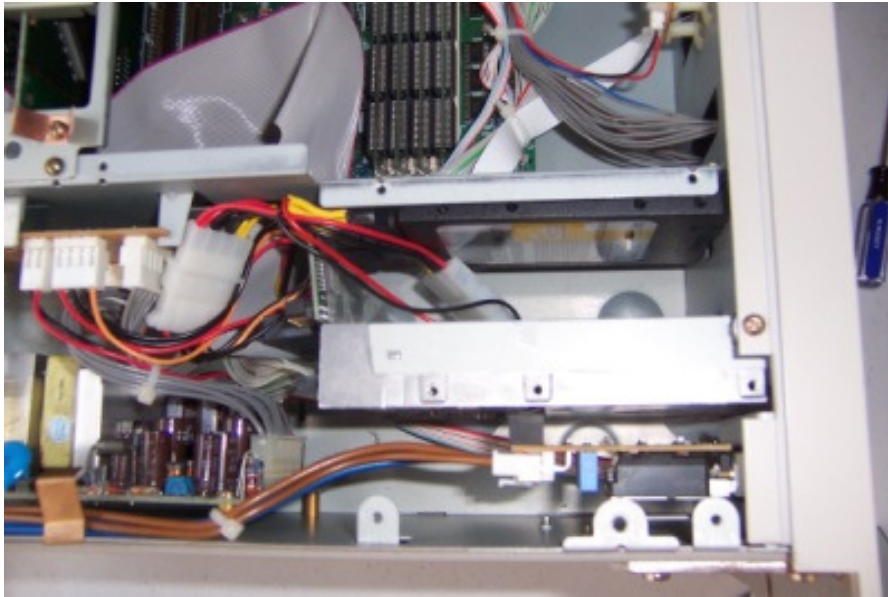
Below: That's how it's getting secured, velcro?!?! Yes, but keep in mind, this is 3M's Dual Lock. This is the stuff they give you with your EZ-Pass, the adhesive stands up to baking on a car windshield, so I'm pretty confident it will be okay with the heat of a hard drive. I always keep this stuff around, it's sooo useful.



Below: Connected, cables routed. The laptop drive does not have the same screw spacing. You could buy a proper mounting adapter, but I'm impatient on this one.



Below: Installed, taking up not nearly as much space as it should. Put the lid on it.



So, this project was completely about a month ago, and so far so good. No crashes in rehearsal. I'm happy with the ability to edit Wave files on my laptop and transfer them over USB to the device. Surprisingly enough the large screen and controls on the S5000 are pretty quick once you get the hang of it, and now I edit programs and samples directly on the unit.

Source: <http://hornbake.com/2008/09/akai-s5000/>