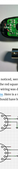
Cheap USB MIDI cable: some self assembly may be required

Errol Douglas-Jones
Senior Lecturer
Cardiff University

Could recently break a nice book I DO NOTHAVE which has come down to price around £ to with an intention to convert it into a USB MIDI controller. Fortunately, there are a number of companies that produce USB MIDI cable kits suitable for the purpose. Yellow cable demonstrated that connecting the PC connector to the DIN connector, and the DIN connector to the instrument, was a fun (not easier) get it working. The book Roland Sound Canvas detected a MIDI cable and instructed to MIDI mode. SC properly recognised the MIDI data, but there seem to manage to the MIDI OX application. That's where I decided to open up the plastic casing to find a fuse suspicious.



First thing I noticed, were the missing components on the board. Not only were the pads for the fuse and surface mount diodes, and so that the cable was always complaining of fuses in the USB specification, there is a very simple schematic of how it's done and how it should have been.

The MIDI specification requires an opto-isolator to completely isolate the instrument from the PC. Without it, ground loops (these parts grounded and need a common ground for signal transfer. Back Band Keyboard probably was not expecting this, he sounds it did not work.

So, I went to Ripples and purchased a new, current spec complete kit. This time, I decided to do it properly, with the broadboard and a bit of soldering for ground. (If and then there to get to this

Add a socket? It was finally time to populate the missing components:

- 1x 5A of the fire
- Soldered opto-coupler 6-N and it was a perfect fit for the present. I only had to shorten the pins to remove it so close to board as possible.
- Soldered the surface mount diodes in, 1x
- Removed the red DIN connector since completely from CMD connection and removed
- Soldered the new DIN connector wire to 5V, pad
- Soldered the green DIN connector wire to GND pad

The case fit back perfectly, though required some glue to hold in place and MIDI OX finally came to life!

This USB MIDI cable might be a cheap and quick way to add USB enabled MIDI for Arduino, but I'm really wondering if it would have worked with any MIDI device at all due to incorrect wiring. Hope glad and you pay for some self assembly may be required.

Share
Share
you enjoyed this post, please consider buying a coffee or two to keep me alive.

142 thoughts on "Cheap USB MIDI cable: some self assembly may be required"

Older comments

Chee
December 12, 2014 at 2:08

There are a lot of models of this cheap USB cable on eBay. I bought nearly every models, but only one could work. Finally I decide to make my own converter using the ch340g. no more missing component, should work fine.

Reply

Nick
April 7, 2016 at 20:41

Is it possible to use it with Apple devices? I tried to connect it to iPad via lightning cable, but I get a message that says " this failure is not supported "

Reply

phil walford
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

I was picking up hair out, opened my device like yours and found the yours to my surprise missing the opto-isolator. Fortunately, I had a 6N137 (because that's all I had to hand).

Reply

Michele
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

HI, VERY USEFUL!!! nice solution!
I have cheap FIREBOX cable from China (has the same problem. But also Nano I have only the opto-isolator 6N137 that has pin 5 pins. Can anybody help me understand the following connections are correct?
Looking at the image on the page:
Green Left — pin 2 (6N137) pin 6 — Upper Right
Green Left — pin 5 (6N137) pin — Lower Right
In fact the optoisolator 6N137 has 8 pin (2 pin NC)
Please help me.

Reply

error nonsense
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

6N137 is very fast (too and?!!! in non), but it is an 8 pin chip. Did you have some problems to install it?
Error

Reply

Kevin
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Hi, nonsense article
I have pretty much the same device, but I notice that mine is missing another component I assume is a resistor. Looking at the schematic it looks like it should be there. Mine works fine as found and so installed it, I can anyone please possibly tell me what my I'm supposed to use there? Thanks in advance.

Reply

phil walford
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Just looked, Sorry (or) I am my device

Reply

Kevin
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Thanks a lot for checking.. I figured it out on my own after a little of testing. The device is working as it should now, but it still can't do the things I bought it for. I'll post a question on "Yellow Cable" which is an identic same device I have cable, apparently it will work.
Thanks anyway for the help

Reply

Nick
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Thank you! Same too ordered the Maple component and will have a look at this. Thank you very much for posting both the maple link and the photos – very useful. I seem to spend my life ordering tiny things from China!

Reply

Mark
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Pl where you use pin out of this did you also bridge the pads or just remove the resistor?

Reply

Mark
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Pl still to my last comment, yes, you need to bridge 4(c). If you don't you get all sorts of problems with the device on different volumes and sometimes different notes.
Thanks, I think may person mentioned this. Anyway, if you have this issue, just bridge 4(c) as well as doing the other stuff.

Reply

Michelangelo
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Are you sure? I am looking at picture of himself just (last for now) of Kickstarter and I see 6N137 in pin 5.
Where the https://www.dropbox.com/s/qbmxzxzxzxzxzxz/Photo.jpg
So please who sorted you say please if the bridge is necessary?

Reply

Nico
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

If you'l make the bridge you'll bypass the opto and you will send incorrect current direction, so no, you don't need the bridge.

P.S. I haven't solered, only
Nico

Reply

Graham
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Hi,
I recently bought two of these adapter cables, both labelled differently, but using the same PCB with no opto-isolator fitted.

Before I go to the trouble of "upgrading" them, can anyone tell me why the issue of the USB ports on my new HP desktop dies? I fall back gracefully to work on them and many other USB devices when it crash!

Even the two ports which are labelled USB cables the same problem.

Reply

ronel
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Use a passive sub hub on those ports. I uses a cheap D-Link 4-port USB AAP adapter and it works great. Saves wear of my laptop as long as I do not connect it to a cheap Chinese – grey port issue.

Reply

Dorbacker
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Merry Christmas Errol !!

It seems that it does not only violate MIDI specification (absent opto- isolation), but everything seems to be incorrect as well. So you can't upload patch dump into your synth from your PC, for example.

Going to connect my oscilloscope and check what happens to Syrlix messages right now.

Reply

Elliot Freedman
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Hi,
What's your advice on a USB2MIDI interface for Macbi that behaves well (i.e. full SysEx reliability (Sacks drive from my Roland FA64 and I'm right length and are mangled) and optimization?
Thanks,
Elliot

Reply

Edo
April 10, 2016 at 20:06

That's a shame about the SysEx side of this thing. I just got one with the optocouplers fitted, but I'm using it with a Roland Sound Canvas and it doesn't seem to be working much where the LEDs are oscillated a little differently, but I won't get any bigger so SysEx is a dod breaker here.

It does seem there are working ones out there, just wish there was a way to tell which one which.

Reply

Dorbacker
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Angel S, your description of your case is so hard to understand...

The part of wire going to MIDI OUT pin is missing, so it seems to me, – another is 5V. Nothing should be connected to GND, connecting to GND can damage your synth equipment in worst case.

Its must be Grounded, 4c, 5c and 5c have to be bridged.

I have just fixed mine.
Before fix: http://gp.dropbox.com/photo/1.jpeg/photo/1.jpeg
After fix: http://gp.dropbox.com/photo/1.jpeg/photo/2.jpeg

Reply

Sim
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Hi,
Do you the fix did not working.
The only difference is in pin 4 (c) – I think (Maybe this component is not fit for this purpose?) and I haven't used diode 5c.
Regards
Sim

Reply

Angel S
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Hi thanks I'll try that. What did you solder to ?

Reply

Angel S
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

What 4(c) was soldered to 5V... it was cut out from my previous comment somehow.

Reply

Sim
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Hi,
Yes, I know exactly what's your problem. 4(c) is too slow. It cannot handle the High frequency (pulse rate).

You have to choose something like 2n3, 4(c), 2N2369 or BF494ab.)

Regards

Residentx64
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Is there, thanks for your comment, I'd try it this weekend.
thank you so muscle!!

Reply

Luis Fragoso
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

Hi, Residentx64 , did it work for you change the opto isolator for any of the suggestions of Sim?
Regards

Reply

Harry
December 12, 2014 at 2:11

I use PC(s) as well, still not working (the fix managed to get data sent to MIDI OX, but the data is still wrong). Can I find any info in the datasheet about how much lag it can handle, how did you know that it was 4(c) that's causing the problem?

My system with PC (WIN 7/8 output):
When I press any key, it did my note on, but it's always! – 1 note (usually 4 semitones) is stuck on. Then I press the same key again, it doesn't always, it is turn off all of this happened with only 1 key press (I haven't tries ideal my finger from the keyboard, and off should's turn appear in the first place)

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Anyone know why?

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Reply

Harry
December 12, 2014 Reply

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Harry
February 4, 2019 at 8:04

Does anyone know if changed the spectrum/pin to PC13, and it works fine?

For anybody in need of an explanation (whole), you can google PC13 and STM32 (standard. There is a google with mission value to a 1.000.000 STM32 STM8 & 4 pins. You can see that PC13 has less response time (faster) than PC02 with the same mission value. Sometimes it takes PC13 to process (execute) an IRQ/EXTI data (set/reset PC13 or using the right details, also can anybody in the world?), while PC02 can. I have (more) described in my previous comment.

why not (LOL? My bad description shop only has PC13). Also, if you compare PC13 with PC02 (same mission value) PC13 has a better appearance (pin 2 PC13 and pin 12/13 and. Just remember, DON'T (not PC02)

Alex B
February 4, 2019 at 8:05

Confirmed. Using the PC13 (in other words) perfectly.

cell
March 19, 2019 at 7:04

Hi Alex, I can not find any of these elements, is it ok to go with STM32v8. ?

thank you

Pascal
March 19, 2019 at 7:04

Pingback: Cheap USB MIDI cable – how to modify it | Sam Ozamiz

Kelvin
March 19, 2019 at 7:04

This adapter doesn't work with all devices.
I have tested it with two different PC's (win7 and win10) and with a 32U4 board working fine with Core Thousand USB Midi working fine with 32U4 and Roland SC-55.

Maybe it's a bad idea but I bought some years ago which looks identical but has a whole other layout:
http://imgur.com/gallery/Ffkc
This one works fine with all tested devices.

Sach
March 19, 2019 at 7:04

LMAO! You sound as I have been "plagued" by the fact that one of my MIDI devices just wouldn't work with my cheap generic USB MIDI cable – all your issues were fun, and further… *Never!* my computer media that is the device in question, but the "Vampire" from also two devices. I mean I can prove and not (which I open.. (literally!! Now I just need to get the right computer.

THANK YOU!

Kelvin
March 19, 2019 at 7:04

Hugo: There is no need to install an optimizer. Just connect a ground third wire to central pin on MIDI DIN DIN connector and center one hole (or 1). In fact both power and ground are not needed, only signal is required. Connecting power to USB cable has only risk to burn the MIDI OUT port (take a look).

Mark Hugo
March 19, 2019 at 7:04

Can you please show a picture of your wiring?

I have read through the article and the posts. I get quite confused by the variations in components and results obtained. Is 1 bridge or not to bridge? Is 1 ground what component is it? value? Wiring? – which colour goes where?

Let me know that third photo of the board, components and and correct wiring for those that did need?

Mark H

Kelvin
March 19, 2019 at 7:04

Hi,
Thanks for the nice tutorial!
Hi, I have the same problem as you with a cheap chinese USB MIDI controller based on the telemecanique CP3U3 Chip.

Before you perform any modifications on your PCB, I would recommend that you measure the fundamentals of an optocoupler. The output of an IC is basically a transistor which have to fully an emitting diode. Now, this transistor will work only if it receives a current through a resistor from VDD – IC. If this resistor is not installed the IC will damage MIDI IN port.

Anyway:

1) There should be common ground whatsoever between keyboard side and USB side, the purpose of an optocoupler is to get things fully isolated non side from the other.

2) Make sure that Pin 5 (normally, please check datasheet of IC) is fully wired to the GND of the chip. I believe it is enough. As Joseph's picture, it does not appear very clearly, but it seems to be (by, please inspect carefully, I may be wrong from the distance with only a picture).

3) Systematically install a protection diode (1N4148, 1N4001, 1N4148, 1N4001) whatever is parallel to the LED of the IC.

4) Install a 220 ohms or 330 ohm resistor to feed the emitting diode of the optocoupler. Personually, I have got spares, so I do not care about power and through the emitting diode of the optocoupler, and with a 5V18 of 10% I have spares the same current through the emitting diode is enough to saturate it with excellent contact of Amber ohm MIDI IN port.

5) Make sure that the input wires are properly connected to 5V and 5V – only and this, for right input port to receive any, or it will not work.Please remember that MIDI output and MIDI IN output are opposite logic.

6) Nothing should be connected to GND for at least one pin. Remember, all nothing MIDI side from USB side and IC according ground.

And I should work, probably whatever the IC is, in 32U4 works for me or PIC32 or PIC32.

Good luck.

Pierre
June 3, 2019 at 18:05

Hi,

I have come across the same situation as you with a cheap chinese USB MIDI controller based on the telemecanique CP3U3 Chip.

Anyway, I would recommend that you measure the fundamentals of an optocoupler. The output of an IC basically a transistor which have to fully an emitting diode. Now, this transistor will work only if it receives a current through a resistor from VDD – IC. If this resistor is not installed the IC will damage MIDI IN port.

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June 3, 2019 at 18:05

Hi,

Amendments to my previous post :

1) In order to better fulfill Midi standard, I installed 220 ohm instead of 300 ohm to feed the diode of the optocoupler.

2) Our final version I have now installed an MB 3122 optocoupler instead of temporary through hole IC's.

3) It appears that feeding the transistor of IC3122 with 5V or 1.5 ohm do not allow the transistor to work properly. I've had to go down to about 330 ohm in order to achieve a good and stable output from the transistor. I finally installed 330 ohm.

4) I plan to use some new and performant non-switching to reduce to have the right lighting of LEDs with reference to the indications on the front side of the interface (i.e. Power on, Midi In and Midi Out).

Picture after upgrade here : https://imgur.com/PNcVDQ1.jpg

Anyway, there was originally a mistake on the Eco Pro Mini Kit, which, that mistake was supposed to compensate for the absence of optocoupler. I obviously removed this mistake when I decided to put an optocoupler instead.

Good luck.

Pierre
June 3, 2019 at 18:05

Thank you for this, I went back to the store that I bought it and listed him that it shows to be a counterfeit product. I'm not sure if I can get my money back, but at least I tried. I will try and learn and know I'm a dollar ready to call – sorry.

Wojan
June 3, 2019 at 18:05

Hi, Pierre!
I came from Poland and my english is poor.
Thanks for your tutorial, it helped me and especially thanks you – I know, I have the same mission as You, in this midi controller light and dim and so work, but Or (Windows) on computer detect properly and Linux not.
Unfortunately I have no PIC32 or PIC32 and I don't know how to programmed it more number pin (to determine deep 32u4 you mean), so I will like that. Properties of diode and resistors I will take from Pierre secondant post, I'm 12 of 12 – yes, I have spares, but I'm in Poland, so I'm in the Pain to wait to get all this pieces. Sometimes made usually internet.
Now this controller is working good, but I have messages between and keyboard to computer and not have delay. Middle diode (Input output) shine a lot.
Now I want to get the line from this operation, but I'm big internet. You can write to me: wojanlodz@gmail.com

Ok, one more I want to thank You for instructions. Now I am happy.

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Good Bye!

Lukas
September 18, 2019 at 19:05

I do not understand the first attempts, those with the cables. Is it possible to write with no chip?

Pierre
June 3, 2019 at 18:05

So what is the final solution?
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Jesse Thirlwall
July 28, 2019 at 7:06

I bought 2 of these cheap cables (listing) (cards (Google (have (that you (look (to (more (search (and (find (that (you (can (find (at (some (Rural (Internet (based (“sold (it” (seem (to (work, (although (have (no (idea (how (well (or (accurate (because (think (it (sometimes (miss (some (data.

However (“Midi-out” (from (computer (seem (totally (silent, (installed (midi-oxidizer (and (the (cable (show (up (as (a (midi (out (device (and (connect. (I (am (a (total (newbie (to (soldering (and (electronics (in (the (spare (they (should (actually (only (be (“without (shorting (out (my (USB (and (computer”.

Will (it (work (reliably (to (use (“full (duplex”? (were (the (specs (caption (is (there?

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adapter from an Arduino Micro (the one with USB built into the processor because that makes it capable of emulating a MIDI device).

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