

# PRODUCER'S EDGE

THE JOURNAL OF HIP HOP AND MUSIC PRODUCTION

## DAVID BANNER

YOU WOULDN'T LIKE ME  
WHEN I'M ANGRY...

Mr Collipark  
9th Wonder  
Don Cannon  
Havoc  
KHAO  
Young World  
and more...



\$9.95US \$11.50 Canada  
Printed In Canada

Don't just read about Music Production  
LIVE IT in the pages of PRODUCER'S EDGE.



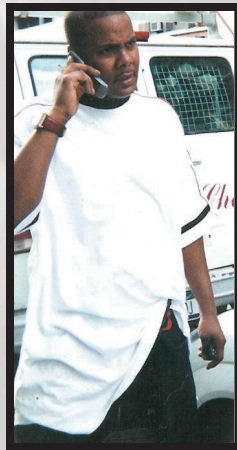
**I** always wanted a record. I meant *I always wanted a record of my own pressed and released.* I dreamt of a huge black disc with a hole in the middle that would sit on my turntable and rotate while my eyes adjusted, trying to read the spinning label. That dream needed adjusting with the arrival of the CD. The idea of an album being immortalized on a bedroom wall was replaced by the smaller canvass of the jewel case. Still, it was kind of fresh to see a CD collection spinning in its stand. Now, at the start of 2008, music is roughly the same [save that thought for the forums], but the medium has completely changed. The CDs great contribution was portability and now; the iPod stuffed to the brim with MP3s is the new record collection.

What does this mean to you as an artist or producer? It's time to rethink the tools and techniques you'll be using to establish a viable music career- especially if a good percentage of it is powered by the internet. In short, you'll need more than a flipped online presence and spam-a-lot marketing campaigns. Digital mediums require digital delivery systems and in this issue we are going to focus on a fresh crop of Digital Content Providers who double as e-commerce solutions.

I'd like to thank all the entities and individuals who helped us put together an outstanding second issue. Right now I'm watching the progress bar fill as my MP3 player tells me how far in the track we are. Get used to the new aesthetic.

Drew Spence  
Editor In Chief

**W**e here at Producer's Edge Magazine had a vision and we delivered. We would like to thank you again for hanging in there with us. We appreciate all of the feed back that we have received from our reader's. Trust; we listen, as you will see all the changes in this issue. I'd like to give a special shout out to some of the people that looked-out for this issue. Big ups' to Syreta of Triple Threat Agency & Universal Records. Producer Don Cannon Aphilliates Music Group. Hen Roc of Bad Boy Entertainment. Thank you to all.  
Crystal J.  
"Work Now, Play Later"



**E**verybody's on the edge these days ...as they say in the south 'unowhatabout'...I'm sayin this is what I'm talking about ...PE mag is curbing beats, sidewalk swag raps and the streets is lovin it! Drew and the team at Producers Edge have once again pulled it "of the shelf!"... while others collect dust. This is not your average one day magazine; no

fancy pic reading and useless gossip columns..."whatabout". I'm sayin ...we have an amazingly informative, smartly entertained double cover issue with explosive video interviews of David Banner, Mr Collipark and all the music production goodies to go along wit it.."That's what I'm talking about."

As you can tell I'm in the "A" gettin my slang on and choppin it up behind and on the scene with sis Richera Jones & Meda ( special thanks for providing exclusive networking possibilities.... you are the best! I know, I know; don't worry I got you) Yeah, 07 has seen me at underground beat battles (Big Russ "Bangin Out Producers") to red carpet events (Vegas VMA's @ the palms, Dirty Awards in the "A") to poppin bottles with super producers @ the ProducersBall (Swole, Nar'd, Liljay, Speedy, Khao and the list goes on ).... oh yeah producers pops bottles too! Most importantly what's really on the table is what PE mag brings...a mag that can smartly entertain and steer your career towards a "carpet other than the one you walk on now".

*Take part in the future of music production...for you are the living soundtrack of a future-sampled musical experience.*

...and if your beats still suck after this ..then stop using those cheap Qtips ..get a Ptip and get the wax out ya ears!...start beat boxin!..get ya beat right! .."uno whatabout".

Special thanks to (video crew) Mello & Dubble vision, Atlanta's underground artist and beat battle host Dres the Beat Nic, DJ Fia, Mz NYC, Todd 1, and Big john. The Dirty Awards (Tahira Wright always lookin out for the press... appreciate ya) David Banner (the after party at Caesars Palace was crazy!)Mr Collipark (with his hip hop orchestra) Swole, John boy, CTE. Barkley (thanks for the sanity check) Cant forget all my family members that truly want to see me succeed through all I've been threw....and last but not least to all the acid rain niggaz that try to cloud the inevitable shine on the rise ...Producers Edge Magazine... "uno whatabout". Big P



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Don't just read about music production, live it in the pages of Producer's Edge Magazine.



Producer's Edge Magazine is The Creative Journal of Hip Hop, R&B and Rap Music Production. It is a quarterly print magazine shipping with a DVD-ROM full of extended features including video, audio, software demos and tutorials.

Producer's Edge Magazine is dedicated to the creative aspect of music production with a focus on the tools we use to bring ideas into reality.

For the Winter 08 Issue 02- Producer's Edge is focused on Distribution. Presenting your music to the masses of music lovers is a key obstacle facing the musician with unique challenges in this Modern Age of Digital Information. We will be conducting interviews and gathering information as we deal with this important topic.

PRODUCER'S  
EDGE  
THE JOURNAL OF HIP HOP, R&B AND RAP MUSIC PRODUCTION  
DVD  
ROM



# NEAR GEAR

## HARDWARE

NEAR GEAR NEAR GEAR NEAR GEAR



### The Prophet '08 Dave Smith Instruments

Most of us who have been following Dave Smith, the creator of Sequential Circuits and the father of the Prophet 5, are aware of his contributions to the synth world. Including his accomplishments in the world of musical hardware design [see box out] and the establishment of MIDI as the mainstay communication method between studio devices.

You would think he'd be delighted enough to just revel in his former glory and watch the modern ROMpler workstation reign supreme. No. In early 2000 Dave Smith Instruments (his new company) released the Evolver [monophonic synth followed by the polyphonic version Poly Evolver and desktop]. The units were firmly placed in studios as *another synth*; a fine compliment to the common bread and butter sounds in any modern composition. Set for a push in 2008 is the 8-voice Analog Prophet '08.

They say: The return of a legend or the beginning of a new era? The Prophet '08 is an eight-voice synthesizer with a 100% analog signal path. While the Prophet '08's overall sonic character will be familiar to anyone who knows Dave's work from the '70s and '80s, it is much more than just a vintage reissue with a few new bells and whistles. Of course, it includes features we now take for granted, like velocity and after-touch. Add to that performance features like an arpeggiator, gated step sequencer, and the ability to split and layer sounds. The modulation possibilities are much deeper than anything Sequential ever produced; making it capable of producing sounds the "classics" simply could not. Dave has always said that he is only interested in moving forward. The Prophet '08 is the product of evolution, not nostalgia.

#### Spec sheet:

- 5-octave keyboard with semi-weighted action, velocity, and aftertouch.
- Spring-loaded pitch wheel and assignable mod wheel
- 256 fully editable Programs (2 banks of 128) with 2 Layers (2 separate sounds) in each Program.
- 16 x 4 gated step sequencer
- Arpeggiator
- 2 digitally controlled analog oscillators (DCOs) per voice with selectable sawtooth, triangle, saw/triangle mix, and pulse waves (with pulse-width modulation), and hard sync.
- White noise generator
- 1 Analog Curtis low-pass filter per voice, selectable 2- and 4-pole operation (self-resonating in 4-pole mode).
- 3 Envelope Generators: filter, VCA, and assignable (four-stage ADSR + delay); Envelope 3 can loop.
- 4 LFOs
- Glide (portamento): separate rates per oscillator.
- Analog VCAs

LEADS AND BASS



## Pre-sequel Sequential sequence



The Prophet 5 released by Sequential Circuits in the late 70s and early in using...presets! That is patch memory allowing you to save the internal settings.



The Pro-One was an affordable 3 octave monophonic synth meant to bring the power of the Prophet 5 to your desktop. Analog baby beastie for Leads and Bass.



Korg Wavestation was built upon the ideas found in the Prophet VS and brought us wave sequencing which used PCM Waveforms to create evolving and moving sounds. You were actually moving back and forth between sound sets and morphing a multi-timbre patch.

Beyond the promising specs and legendary lineage- it's about what freshness this hardware brings to the table. It's going to be the raw sound and power that distinguishes this unit from all the very usable VAs available today. It's a bold step forward in terms of using the past to shape the future. We are going to keep an ear out for this one. Should every beatsmith own a unit capable of producing classic synth tones? No, but the ones that want to add something beyond Banded Instruments to their compositions should consider the analogs... and this will be a good one. You can find audio examples and extended information on this modern beastie-master at [DaveSmithInstruments.com](http://DaveSmithInstruments.com) and video on [keyboardmag.tv](http://keyboardmag.tv)



Digital Sound Factory has reissued the original Proteus sample content for use with Cakewalk's Dimension Pro and Dimension LE synthesizers. The E-MU Proteus Pack consists of over 3,500 sound programs. Sounds from the Proteus 2000, Mo' Phatt, Planet Earth: World, Virtuoso 2000: Orchestral and PX-7 for drums and percussion. [Cakewalk.com](http://Cakewalk.com)



De La Mancha, who gave us the FREE random drum pattern generating VST erratic is back with Basic 64, a synth aimed at 8 bit retro video game sounds. If you ever wanted Timbo-Timberlake arp swirls without clearance issues, this is your download. He's got lots of cool toys on his site. [delamancha.co.uk/](http://delamancha.co.uk/)



Yellow tools releases Independence 2, the soft-sampler workstation with a 70 gig library. Redesigned audio engine and 3rd party VST support for effects and instruments. Check the [Yellowtools.com](http://Yellowtools.com) site for cross-grade pricing. The Independence FREE (with 2 gig library) also updates to 2.0.



NEAR GEAR

## Roland Sonic Cell



Video: Sonic Cell + MV 8800 !

Expandable Synthesizer Module with Audio Interface

If you own any Roland gear then you are probably familiar with the SRX series of user-installed expansion cards. A flagship like the Fantom-X holds up to 4 cards and the middle child; Juno-G takes only 1. The ultimate solution for expandability would be the Fantom-XR (rack unit) capable of hosting 6 cards. That would be a quite a beast- and also cost you around \$2,895 for all that Roland goodness. The XV2020 (table top box) is still a nice piece and has room for 2 cards, but what would I consider for an updated sound set, modern features and a little room for expansion? Here comes the Sonic Cell.

The Sonic Cell features a new bank of over 1,000 patches delivered through Roland's 'next generation' sound engine. It's driven by a new chip for increased clarity and presence and basically picks up where the Fantom series left off. It's a desktop unit that fits nicely in your bag and functions wonderfully as your on-stage back up band. The Sonic Cell connects to your PC/Mac (via USB) and becomes your audio interface! With inputs for mic (phantom powered), line/instrument you won't need much else to record full songs. Expect to pay somewhere around \$795 for this table-top beast.



### Specs at a glance:

- 2 slots for SRX Expansion cards
- 128 voice sound module (polyphony)
- USB audio interface and USB memory stick compatible.
- PC/Mac software editor- functions like a plug-in.
- Cakewalk SONAR LE included
- 3 Chorus types and 5 different reverbs
- Live input effects (takes the burden off the processor) and 3 band compressor for mastering.
- Streams audio (WAV, AIFF, MP3) and can be run by full MIDI compositions.



# SOFT-FOCUS

123<sup>rd</sup> AES Convention  
 Audio Engineering Society  
 JACOB K. JAVITS CONVENTION CENTER  
 NEW YORK, NY, USA  
 Oct. 5th-8th, 2007

POWERED BY THE 123<sup>RD</sup> AES



## ARC

Advanced Room Correction System

The First Acoustic Room Correction System in a Plug-in

(1) ARC System allows the measuring of the acoustics of your studio with the included calibrated measurement microphone and measurement software



K Multimedia was on hand showing several new products at their booth. Along with the Stomp 2 and Apmilube X-Gear were two new releases that had everyone buzzing. The ARC (Advanced Room Correction) system is a combination of hardware and software designed to compensate for monitoring your mixes in an acoustically challenged room. How so? It's a plug in that slides in on your listening channel and adjusts the output to balance out frequency, phase response and even stereo imaging.

"When monitors are placed in a room, the surrounding walls, ceiling, furniture and other objects reflect and absorb their sounds; creating complex distortions specific to the room-causing them to lose the accuracy they have been designed for, and you end up hearing more of the sound of the room than the music actually being produced. ARC features the revolutionary Audyssey MultEQ® technology, which measures acoustical information throughout the listening area in your studio. It then combines this information to provide an accurate representation of the room's acoustical problems. The equalization solution then corrects for both time and frequency response problems."

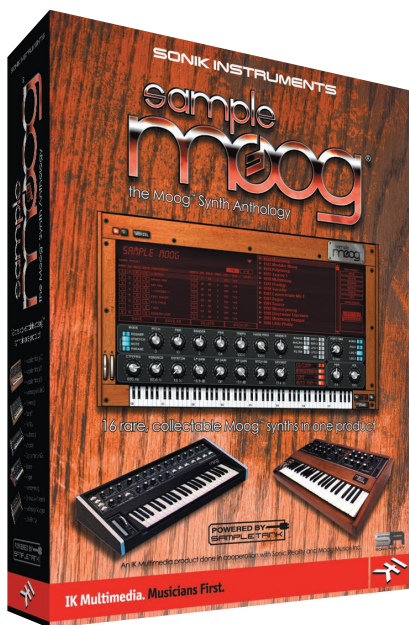
What do I actually do to make this thing work? Install the software and the set up wizard will easily walk you through the included microphone placement and take different sound measurements in your studio. The Plug-in emits a tone which is the basic data used to create the compensations. This package is essentially a step-by-step, room measurement software solution for Mac/PC.

**The Hard Facts:**  
 VST, RTAS, AU correction plug-in for Mac/PC most popular DAWs (such as Pro Tools®, Cubase™, Logic™, Sonar™, Live™, etc.)  
 Professional measurement microphone  
 Type: 1/4" precision measurement condenser microphone. Polar pattern: omnidirectional, free field  
 Capsule frequency response: 20-16,000 Hz  
 Calibrated frequency response when used with ARC: 16-20,000 Hz, +/- 1.5 dB  
 Output: transformerless, electronically balanced, 200 ohms output impedance  
 Sensitivity: 50 mV/Pa Noise Equivalent Level: 22 dB  
 Max SPL: 130 dB for 3% THD



The cost of the fix: Full price: \$699 and reduced cross-grade pricing for previous product owners. Available by the time you read this.

AUDIO ENGINEERING SOCIETY



# IK Multimedia Sample Moog

16 Moog synthesizers in one VST!



Video: Drew Spence and Sample Moog  
Software: Demo and sounds!!!!

The 'other big one' was Sample Moog, a VST ROMpler featuring over 1,700 sounds from 16 Moog synthesizers. This moog beast is powered by the Sampletank 2 engine with additional options for how any instrument plays back its sounds (Resampling and STRETCH). It's loaded with sound sculpting tools beyond the standard ADSR and filters. You can use 4 internal effects and since it has 256 notes polyphony [16 part multitimbral] you can stack/layer multiple patches and get some heavy sounds going. This one is an office favorite and Drew Spence has done a video feature on this issues' DVD-ROM. We also have the Demo for Mac and PC.

Yes, the **Minimoog Voyager** and **Little Phatty** are in there too. For once it's nice to use a piece of software and not have to question how much it sounds like...it's supposed to. For more information check out [Ikmultimedia.com](http://Ikmultimedia.com) for MP3 demos and more.

### Synths on blast:

1. Modular Moog 3C
2. Modular Moog 15
3. Modular Moog 55
4. Minimoog® Model D
5. Polymoog
6. Taurus™ 1
7. Prodigy
8. Multimoog
9. Vocoder
10. Concertmate MG-1
11. Source
12. Rogue
13. Memorymoog
14. Etherwave® Theremin
15. Minimoog® Voyager®
16. Little Phatty®



### Hard Facts:

- 16 part multitimbral sample-based synth
- Stand-alone and plug-in for VST, AU RTAS on Mac/PC
- 2 synth engines (Resampling and STRETCH™)
- Built-in multi-effects with 4 effects per part selectable on 32 high-quality DSP effects, with BPM sync
- Over 50 synth controls with Mono/Poly/Legato modes with selectable Legato, 2 LFOs, 2 Envelopes, syncable LBF/BPF/HPF Filters, Velocity, Range and Macro controls
- Sounds can be read by SampleTank
- 256 notes polyphony

Expect to lay down \$299 to bring the moog sound to your studio.

# SOFT-TECH

## Adobe Audition 3.

by Drew Spence

If you ask most producers about their favorite app for editing samples most will say Sound Forge or Adobe Audition. It's the straight forward simplicity of the interface and the robust and accurate tool set that have placed AA in a special category of all around studio workhorse—that's.. not ...a sequencer. It handles multi-tracking, works with video for soundtracks, final preparation and mastering, burning and ripping CD audio and even supports REWIRE and VST effects. All of this and no MIDI recording or virtual instruments.

All of that is about to change as Adobe Audition 3 steps into the arena of full-fledged DAW. You'll have to forgive me for taking this feature so personally, but Cool Edit-er I mean Audition was the first music software application I installed. Since then I've learned my way around every major sequencer, but there is always a special affinity for my first love. Version 2.0 changed the interface to the dock-able windows system more familiar to the other Adobe heavy hitter- Photoshop. The change wasn't exactly welcomed as the interface presented more information than most early users were accustomed to.

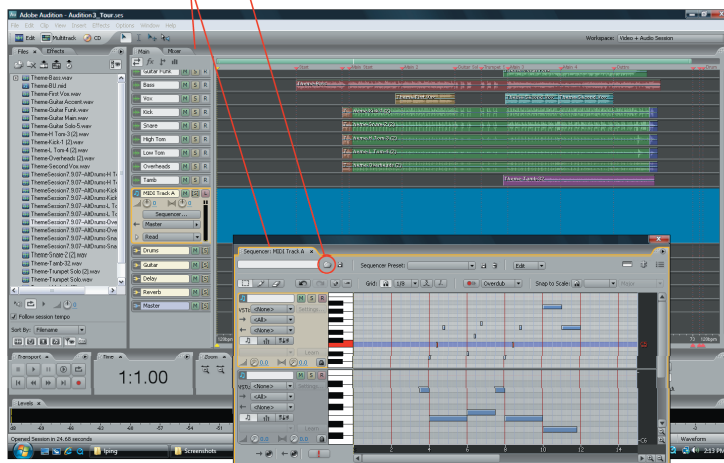
With the addition of MIDI sequencing comes the obvious questions; how easy is it to set up and how much functionality do I obtain and is it at the expense of ease of use and stability? The initialization is very similar to today's most popular sequencers. Insert a MIDI track, choose sequencer tab to choose from a menu of all the relevant settings and away you go.

The speed edge Adobe Audition has over working with other apps increases with the ability to edit grouped clips as one single entity. With version 3 it will be easier to dive in and clean your samples beyond the standard Remove Noise and eliminate pops and clicks with enhanced spectral analysis. Rounding out the effects are the additions of Convolution Reverb, Analog Delay and a Mastering Chain. Be sure to check out the new Guitar Suite and Tube modeled compressor. It does wonders for drums too.

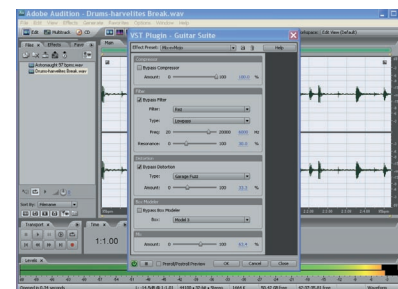
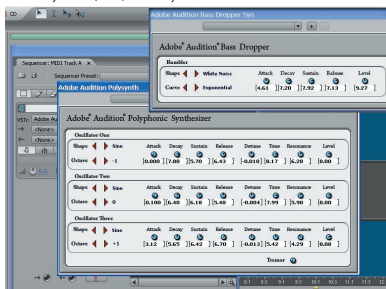
The reasons to update from version 2 to 3 are quite obvious, but the addition of MIDI recording, enhancements to an already stable and powerful engine [yes, it's true old 1.5 sessions sound even clearer, fuller and more defined in version 3- GA] and an improved workflow make the idea of sticking with 1.5 ridiculous. A minor complaint about the simplicity of the two included VSTi – Bass Dropper Syn, which best functions as a supporting tone underneath another bass module and the Polyphonic Synthesizer which actually made me check the Task Manager to see if the Polysix from the Korg Legacy Collection

Drag the Sequencer panel so that it docks behind the Main panel for easy access.

Open MIDI files from inside the Sequencer

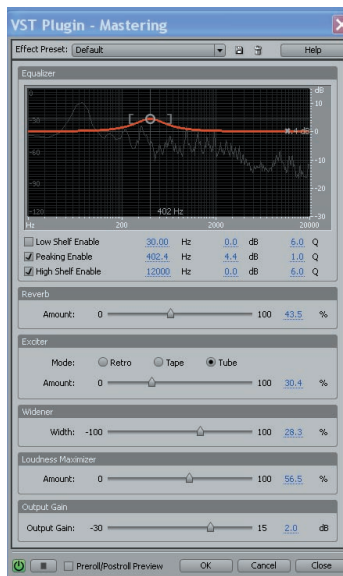


The Sequencer and Main views stay conveniently locked in time so that you can work in both panels and stay oriented while you zoom, scroll, and move your current time selector.



was running somewhere by accident. There's enough quality and control to justify another selling point, but the simple GUIs of the newest plugs are a bit of a surprise since they are Adobe.

I spent a heavy amount of review time trying to reverse engineer



by sound the VST plugin Mastering. It is a fixed audio chain of Reverb, Excitation (to attack and bring out the high end), Stereo-widening a Loudness Maximizer (a Limiter [that can be made to pump if abused right]) and Output Gain. Although there are a few presets included, you'll certainly need to roll your own for any passable results and most likely be sent back to the multi-track window as your mixing flaws are exposed here.

Overall, Adobe has pushed the Audition multi-tracker out into the arena of full-fledged DAW and singular recording solution. It is a bold move in an already crowded field of sequencers, but Audition is sure to

differentiate itself with its intuitive interface and feature set based on the practical needs of your recording studio.

# SOFT-TECH

The Virtual Drummer is back and loaded with features.



The original Groove Agent was pitched as a stand-in drum player and was a perfect tool for creating a backing drum track to practice other instruments over. It offered a wide range of playing styles, ranging from Jazz to Modern Pop with Hip Hop and R&B workings thrown in for good measure. You could choose among the drum kits representing the genres by decade along a musical timeline and vary the business of the drummers' performance with the intensity slider. A ½ tempo feel, switching from snare to sidestick and inserting drum rolls were additional options for flavorings on the fly. Groove Agent worked as advertised and gave producers a loose sketch pad to the get on with the composing end of track construction. This was a program that was begging to be flipped and so it was. Drum hits were sampled out of the kits. The host sequencer was brought in to layer, scramble and mix the MIDI and audio to create an ever wider palette of patterns and sounds. Drum machines triggered Groove Agent 1 and 2 while the instant drum rolls (with full control over complexity here too) and accents were easily inserted at the end of 8 bars clips to stop the repetitive drum- yawns.

Producer's Edge was able to catch a few words with Groove Agent 3 designer Helge Vogt



## Double Agent

Added in are the Percussion Agent: straight loops captured for GA 3 - and the Special Agent: live drum styles recorded as loops and controlled by the original interface. Dual Mode is basically two instances of any Groove Agent set up running together. I find this to be the most versatile configuration where experimentation can be very rewarding. Let's talk about the heavily requested new ability to rock your own samples. The Import & FX page is clearly laid out with slots for using your own kits, adjusting the compression, EQ and audio routing.

**What was the goal of the design team in creating a third part to Groove Agent?** The main ones would be the two new additional drummers: one uses specially recorded audio material and is called Special Agent. It sounds even more realistic than the original, or Classic, Groove Agent from previous versions, but is more streamlined in terms of styles. And the new Percussion Agent is specialized on accompanying percussion with a large range of styles and instruments. Plus we've got things like user sample import for building your own specialized kits, more drum kits, more styles. There's also new playback functions that make the virtual drummer sound even more real like Alternate Hits, which avoids that really annoying "machine-gun" sound when you repeat hits on a part of a kit. And much more...

## Get Smart

Covering such a broad spectrum of music meant an artist working primarily in a single style was left with only a few choices for 'fitting' drum kits and working off the basic grooves. The workarounds included running GA in Cubase and editing the MIDI data and then using it to trigger other modules. We wanted more styles, more variation, more sounds and well....more Groove Agent. Version 2 was more of an expansion pack, but 3 is a different beast altogether. It's been rebuilt from the ground up by a new team and a fanboy's list of features were added.

## The Drop Off Point

Groove Agent 3 was one of the most anticipated releases this year not only because of the long delays and confusing information about the release date, but also for what it promised to deliver. I could on and on about what you can do with Groove Agent but instead I was able to grab some time with GA3 head designer Helge Vogt. We'll dig in for the science behind an incredible alternative to tapping pads, although GA3 works fine in this capacity also.

**What did you think of the original before you decided to strip it down and rebuild it from the ground up?**

We already faced big challenges in V2 because the code wasn't written with a modern modular approach to software

SOFTWARE SOFTWARE SOFTWARE



development. Our experience was that the software was doing what it should very well and efficiently but it simply wasn't written to be expandable.

For Version 3, we wanted to rebuild the code to make it expandable for the future. And, of course, we wanted to come up with some really great new features. Also we liked and wanted to keep the easy User interface of Groove Agent 1 and 2 but make it a bit cleaner. So the Groove Agent 3 interface has also been reworked, making it even easier to navigate and use than the original.

**We were told the original intention of Groove Agent was to create a percussion backing track for a performer to practice along with. When musicians became aware of the overall drumming potential it was adopted as a drum module. Groove Agent 2 added more sounds and functionality, but how will version 3 satisfy the demand to actually replace a drummer in the production task?**

We know that it is a difficult task to replace a drummer by software in the studio. But we did our best and I think we met our goal very well, especially when you factor in the amount of time you'd need to setup a real drummer

for a recording session. All styles were performed by real drummers and that's how they sound, especially the new Special Agent, which sounds extraordinarily real. There is not a single other tool available that allows you to setup a complete drum track in less than a minute like you can do with Groove Agent 3 while sounding real right out of the box.

**Why was there such a heavy programming revision and what remains from the previous versions?**

A lot of the V2 concept has been ported over to Groove Agent 3, but there are also completely new concepts, like the Percussion and Special Agent, which are in fact 2 completely new engines. The main reason for the complete reengineering from scratch was to extend the functionality of the software, and give Groove Agent 3 extendibility for the future. Now we will be able to develop much faster and we already have several very exciting ideas for future versions.

**If I am comfortable with version 1 and 2 how easy will the transition to 3 be?**

If you know how to use GA2 you are all set with GA3, you can immediately

use the Classic Agent like you did in GA2 and enjoy extended features and styles there. The organization and selection of styles might be even easier in GA3. Of course there is new functionality and new pages like SA, PA, FX and import but GA is well-known for being very easily learnable with a very shallow learning curve. That's mainly thanks to the very intuitive user interface and workflow. Because we completely reengineered the software, Groove Agent 3 doesn't import Groove Agent 2 programs and projects. So if you're updating from an older version, you should keep Groove Agent 1 or 2 installed to finish off or play old projects. However the projects can be translated to GA3 relatively easily because GA3 has all the sounds and styles that GA2 had (and much more).

**What went into capturing the sound set for version 3? The Acoustic sounds and the Drum Machines...**

There are new kits in there that recreate certain very distinctive sounds. One is modelled on famous kits played on many Swedish pop classics, another features recordings from a lovely old 60s kit that really takes you back a few years, while the third is a powerful, clean and punchy kit that's got quite a modern, radio-compatible sound. They're all recorded with a lot of attention to detail, as the content guys really took painstaking care to get the feel of these kits just right. And we've added 42 new styles on top of the ones we already had in version 2. It's really great to explore drum beats from styles you've never really heard on their own before, including all sorts of weird styles that you'd not normally say, "that's my sound", but that can really inspire you to try something new for a song.

**Could you tell us more about how you captured the (MIDI) performances of some of the included drumming styles?**

Yes: the majority of MIDI Styles were played by a drummer on an E-drums kit and later edited in Cubase. There are also styles which are entirely programmed in a sequencer, like the

non-acoustic ones. Throughout the entire creation process for the MIDI grooves, we paid meticulous attention to keeping the feel of a real live drummer, which came quite naturally for me, for example, because I play drums myself.

GA3 are based on an emulation of real circuits but are not modelled with a strong bias towards vintage emulation, giving them a lovely sense of character but without limiting you in the sonic options available. So it is a very good mixture of analogue and modern sound aesthetics.

systems such as Cubase, for our instruments range we are very focused on supporting all major platforms and integrating them into all relevant sequencers. It is a lot of work for the whole team as it means supporting a dozen sequencers compatible to VST, AU, DXi and ReWire under Windows XP, Windows Vista, as well as OSX for PPC- and Intel-based machines. We did our best to ensure that it will install smoothly on different platforms and work in different sequencers without any hitches.

Did you ever take inspiration or consider the other drum related products available like BFD, Jamstix, Stylus RMX. Is there a conscious effort to out do these other programs by stuffing Groove Agent with features and abilities?

**"Groove Agent has successfully created its own niche, with its own approach. Groove Agent 3 is designed to be very versatile, so it's for anyone who either doesn't want to or can't program their own drum tracks, or doesn't have the space, equipment or time to record a drummer."**

We've got over 120 styles in there, so there really is something for everyone. It's all about recreating those nuances and dynamics you get when you're playing with a real drummer in one piece of software. Now with Groove Agent 3 we actually have a total of three drum performers in one VSTi, and you can get any two of the three performers to play alongside each other! And apart from using Groove Agent 3 to create drum tracks in any situation when you can't/won't program or record your own, it's also great for jamming or practicing your instrument when you don't have a drummer but want more than just a metronome.

Thank you for supporting Producer's Edge and good luck with the release.

<http://www.steinberg.net/>

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**Why does the Special Agent 'break the rules' and use audio loops instead of MIDI ?**

Special Agent is an all new module in Groove Agent 3 which adds live drum styles. It does not rely on MIDI sequences and triggered drum samples but rather on drum and percussion audio loops played live and recorded especially for this application.

The best thing about having recordings of a live drummer inside a drum machine is *the Feel*. The Groove Agent approach of using MIDI-controlled samples is great, because you can compose and edit patterns any way you want. Patterns recorded live are not as flexible, but they intuitively feel very dynamic and emotive.

**What went into designing the effects section? Are the modules based on vintage designs or modern plug-in style effects and filters?**

Our development partner db-audioware was one of the very first companies to offer third party VSTplugins, so they have lots of experience in designing effects. Their current main product QuantumFX is actually a completely modular FX building set with high quality algorithms. The ones used for

**keep Groove Agent a self-triggering VSTi?**

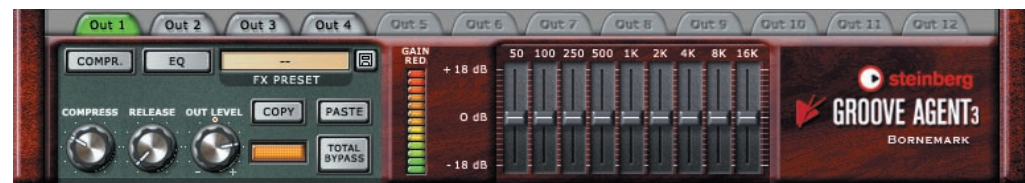
That's why we added three top-quality studio kits in GA3, all with a highly polished, refined sound. All three kits can be widely used in many modern pop and rock productions and they support the new alternating hits feature to avoid machine gun effects on repeating notes. The other highlights of the GA3 content include the all-new percussive sounds and in Groove Agent 3 we also spiced up the sonic palette with some very well known digital drum machines from the eighties, such as the Linn LM-1 Drum Computer.

**Were there any ideas TOO ambitious to pull off that might arrive in a near update and further up the ante?**

Yes, definitely. Of course I can't tell what we plan for the next major version but one thing's for sure: we're very much looking forward to extending Groove Agent even further!

**As a Steinberg product did your team have any special concerns during the development in regard to the compatibility and functionality of Groove Agent 3 across the broad palette of sequencers?**

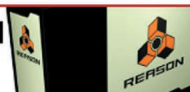
Oh, yes! Though Steinberg is most famous for digital music production



## SOFT-TECH



propellerhead



Reason version 4



Software/Sounds: demo and Free REFILLS

Reason 4 is still on your mind. The same questions still circulate about recording live audio and supporting VSTs. The same answers arrive right after. REWIRE and....so what. The Props may be right for staying with their winning formula. A closed app that simulates a hardware rack loaded to the top for music production. The legions of users- fans I dare say, are content to keep churning out good music using their own ingenuity and creative skill to workaround whatever shortcomings you can level at Reason. The addition of the Combinator in V3 was a nice move to simplify the workflow and GUI, but in version 4 –a brand new sequencer ,a synth powerhouse called Thor, a ReGroove Mixer and the RPG-8 Arpeggiator takes the Reason experience to another level. We dig in with Producer and Sound Designer **James Bernard** for more reasons to check for Reason.

#### Was the changeover from creating sounds in hardware to software problematic?

**James Bernard:** It was actually not too difficult of a switch. Towards my last years at Korg when I was still working for the company, I wasn't really using hardware. I was using software for most of my music production. So the only hardware I was using back then was my collection of everything Korg ever made. But I did so much travel for Korg with doing trade shows and things like that that I started to mess around with software. And back then for me it was Rebirth, Reason, Recycle and Reactor as the main programs I was using to get different kinds of sounds. And then I was starting to mess around more and more with software, the only hardware I held onto was my TB-303, TR-606 and then a couple of odd little synthesizers.

I wasn't even using them that much. As I started to make more and more music using software, I saw this benefit that I was able to get the sounds I wanted out of software. Even though the sounds were still not quite there. A lot of the software for emulating analog synthesizers wasn't quite as good as the originals. As time went on I could probably guarantee if anyone heard the tracks I'm putting out now without knowing where the sounds came from, they would not be able to pick out

which sounds are software and which ones were hardware. And they're all software at this point.

**Drew Spence:** I kind of find that surprising because as far as Reason itself is concerned, one of people's favorite aspects is the Redrum Module. So I figured that would have been the first thing to replace your hardware and the drums would have been the first thing to go.

Yeah. It was one of the concerns for me. Doing drums was always difficult on hardware for me because I wasn't as good at programming drums as I would have liked. And I always found there were limitations in the hardware because there was a lot of . . . not so much visualizing on the screen, but visualizing using numbers where hits should be and how things should be programmed. And I wasn't as good at visualizing where a snare should be on a numeric base as when I might see it on the screen graphically.

And using things like Cubase or any other kind of music recording software didn't really help me as much because you have to play in it and then tweak it a little bit here and there. But when I went over to Reason where everything was self-contained; where I could program a pattern on the Redrum and then export the pattern to a track and see where the parts that I programmed existed on

the grid. It made the whole process of learning drum programming easier and I started to create my own texture, my own sound in drum programming. It was like being educated while making music.

#### How does the opportunity come to work with Propellerhead?

It's funny. Doing all these trade shows and guys like Sonic State and people doing features and showing me doing my thing on the Electribes, I've known these guys, Ernst and Toddy [Propellerhead founders- DS] and a bunch of the other guys at Propellerhead. We see each other at every trade show. And I was on the beta [testing] list for Rebirth and Reason one. From the get go, we always just enjoyed what each other did. When I was done with my demos, I'd go over to the Propellerheads booth and watch them do their thing and just sit there and be like wow, this stuff is amazing. And they may come over by the Korg group and see me doing my stuff – the little things with Electribes and they dug what I did.

In late '97, '98 or so we would see each other at the shows. In 2003, I got an email from Ernst looking for a demo guy. But he wasn't looking for me particularly. He was kind of saying do I know anyone that does what I do demo wise. And I kind of put it to him like *anyone or me?* Even though he didn't really approach me directly to do the job I put it out there that I might be interested. And that's where we started off.

#### How did they break the news to you that there was a new module coming- meaning Thor?

I've known about Thor about a year and a half now. I'm part of the company. When we know about products and things that are being worked on, it's the ultimate silence policy. We've got to keep it to ourselves. I mean

everyone in the company signs a non-disclosure agreement. We all make sure that anything that's happening in the company well prior to anyone knowing about it, we know about it, but no one else can.

For me, getting on Thor was nostalgia in a way because it was producing and capable of producing all of these sounds from synths that I've long since sold off. It sounded just as good. The only difference being that it didn't have

that's where the beauty lies. So even the basic straight up sound of Thor is easy to get and sounds great. It's when you start doing the advanced stuff in the bottom modulation matrix where things come to life, all these other types of sonics start coming out.

**Where does Thor fit in comparison to Malstrom and Subtractor? Does Thor make the other modules fall off?**

For Malstrom, it doesn't make it obsolete because the Malstrom is graintable based. It has a different sound source. Thor cannot do graintable; it uses wavetable. They're 2 different sound sources. Malstrom still is unique for what it does and the way that it allows you to get sounds by picking very small grains of a loop or waveform. Subtractor has a classic sound to it and I think there are sometimes when I go to Subtractor rather than Thor when I want a low-fi type of a lead sound or something very simple and take advantage of its unique texture.

Much in the same way I might still use an old synth that's lying around here because it has a certain texture. And maybe it's not capable of producing a wide range of sounds. It's something about the square wave inside Subtractor running through its filter, a character Thor probably could mimic, but... Another reason why we don't delete synths is 'coz we don't want to break compatibility with older songs. Say I've created a song in Reason 3 and I use a lot of Malstrom or Subtractors in it. I want to still be able to open it up in 4. And besides, well maybe this bass sounds better in a Thor and maybe these lead sounds still sounds good as a Subtractor. It keeps the original essence of what I was doing.

**How do you feel about the other changes in the newest version; Reason 4, the Arpeggiator, the changes to the multi track?**

When you first start using it with all of the new editions, it makes you forget what you used to do in three. You start getting into this new paradigm. I mean the sequence is a huge, huge change



Reason users rejoice over the addition of Thor, the Polyphonic Synthesizer!

**But you had to have been on forums and these blogs and chat rooms where that was the demand. "We want another synth. We want another synth." That must have reached you.**

Of course. Yeah. People have been asking me in all of my travels and forums and what not. I never let on.

*I can't. I can't do it.*

**What was your first impression of Thor then?** Immediately I loved it. Immediately. I mean the first time I saw it and got my hands on it and started to tweak it, I knew what it was capable of. I mean it's a monster. And having come from analog synthesizers and coming from module synthesizers... I've owned the ARP-2600. I've owned pretty much...you name it, I've probably had it in my possession at one point in my studio.

the noise, the hiss or anything like that. But the texture and the depth of the sounds that I could get out of Thor, I mean even the simplest thing like the square wave going through a low pass filter sounded spot on to anything that I had in analog.

**That's pretty high praise. When it comes down to it, how easy was the actual programming in creating these new patches?**

Basic programming is extremely simple. I mean doing the simple thing of picking an oscillator, running it through a filter, applying an envelope and things like that to create a basic patch: extremely simple. It's very well laid out, very well thought out. So getting your basic structure or timbre of a sound is a very, very simple process. The benefit is that you have this modulation matrix at the bottom. So if you want to explore beyond the basics and start to get into the types of sounds that are impossible on many hardware synths, and many other software synths for that matter,

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from 3.0. And initially, there was that 30 minutes or so of just using it for the first time, going what the hell is going on? Nothing is the way it used to be. But after using it, it's like I can't go back to 3. I mean the way that we're working in 4 now is so much more musical and so much faster and efficient. I'm actually able to do a lot with automation that in 3 would have taken forever.

I mean things like small, slow feeds or cutoff feeds or changing things inside of modules...changing oscillator types during a song. I mean that can be done by just drawing it in the automation. And then things like the patterns. The biggest problem for

**the VST support or live recording of audio?**

It's the beauty of Reason. Rewire is there and I use it all the time. I use Logic and Ableton Live as my Rewire hosts. So anytime I want to add in . . . let's say I've got a 303 plug-in that I want to add in on top of a track, I'm doing it in Reason. I just open up Live, open up Reason, and I'm good to go. I think keeping the simplicity of being able to have it as a closed system and never have a worry that I load in a plug-in that's going to crash Reason or recording audio inside of Reason would open up a whole new can of worms.

sound engines alot. And it's actually something that doesn't exist in audio software. There is no such thing as a sound engine per se. When you're dealing with audio software, it's code. It's 1s and 0s. And audio out is a simple code that says audio goes out. The only difference I've noticed from Reason 3 to Reason 4 is a much wider range of sound I'm hearing. So my lows are really low and I'm getting a lot of punch. My highs are really high when I'm talking about synth sounds and things. But to me, the biggest issue that people have had, when people say that I can't get a good sound out of Reason, I always go back



to that means that they're probably not doing the right thing when it comes to mixing and mastering.

Reason is a very flat sound output and it requires that when you want to get a good punchy sound out of it, you need to do some work. You need to work with

most people is changing patterns in Redrum during a song. That has been very tedious because you go into edit mode and do it in there. But with the new sequencer the pattern changing is all done right in the arrange window. It's a dropdown menu. Just pull and create a cleft and then decide what pattern is playing for that length of time.

It's really easy. And it's going to make using patterns in a song much more musical and much easier to do. The Arpeggiator is great. It's something I've been wanting for a while and a lot of people have been wanting for a while. And the Regroups mixer, I think that's the biggest thing people will start to use and see what it will do for their music. The swing, the feel, the groove and the timing - it's going to be totally different. I mean I've already got a couple of Hip Hop guys now that have gotten to play with the Regroups and they're like, "I'm done with my MPC 60. Don't need it anymore 'coz the beats are all in there." And now Reason can groove like an MPC 60 and then some.

**What are your thoughts about Reason 4 coming out and it still remaining a closed system without**

I mean that makes Reason something else. It makes it the sort of quirky program it is. It would be great to be able to have a VST plug-in inside a Reason and record audio in Reason. But because I don't have that option in Reason, it forces me to create in a new manner. It forces me to create like back in the hardware days, which is, **I've got these pieces of equipment and I'm going to work them to get a song done.** And I think that's the problem with people that have VST plug-ins and audio recordings, when you have a lot of options . . . I've talked to so many people; how many tracks have you written this week? Oh I'm still working on this one. But I've got 25,000 plug-ins. Where I can write 5 songs in a week in Reason. To me the paradigm of having a lot of options almost equals not as much music. Whereas within Reason I know what I've got. I know the devices. And I know that if I want to get a certain sound, I tweak them, I work them, and I get lot more music done.

**Have you noticed any differences in the actual sound engine between 3 and 4?**

No. It's funny people mentioned

things like multi band compressors or some mixing using the M class EQs on individual channels. And you almost have to have a little bit of an audio engineering background. Because there's a lot of guys, myself included that do all of our music in Reason. And when you hear the finished produced piece of music, there's just no way you'd be able to say oh that was all done in Reason. You couldn't hear the difference.

Songs I hear from people with Reason; I can hear right away when someone hasn't done more than just run through the default mastering suite for example. I know the sound. Unlike when you go in and do some really, really intense tweaking . . . I made a refill just recently called a multi band toolbox. And anyone who's looking to get Reason to not sound like Reason should download that. It's free. What you get is all these multi band processing tools for usage on individual tracks or on the whole mix. Reason is going to sound like something you've never heard before whether it's Reason 3 or 4.

**The Reason sound was really the accusation of how it handled digital**

summing and also the number of users with the default patches and the included sound set. The harshest criticism was that everyone was using whatever came in the box- as is.

**What are some of the good resources or books a totally new Reason user should have or maybe a Reason 3er going to 4?**

There are a couple of books in the works. I know that some of the people

if you've never had your hands on a modular synthesizer, you can learn the basics of modular synthesis and control voltage and things like modulating devices using controlled voltage. I mean it's a great learning tool. It's actually expanded and become even more of a learning tool.

**What about your patch design? Did you have any goals in your mind when you sat down to create those patches?**

When I came in on Reason 3, we used a similar system as when I was doing sound design through Korg. We usually designate upfront the categories of patches that we're looking to do. We'll want synth based sounds and then maybe acoustic based sounds, synth leads and rhythmic directions. We'll lay out a general guideline of the types of sounds that we're looking for in the next factory sound bank. We'll break down a rough estimate of the numbers.

I've already got it in my mind that I need to make 10 of these sounds and 10 of these sounds. I'll put it in my head in for a day or two I'm making bass sounds. I see what's in the factory sound bank already where there are places we can do better or fix deficiencies. I'll do those off the bat. Get that out of the way.

Once I've gotten that covered, I'll go into some other places and experiment. And a lot of times when it comes to the more experimental sounds, I don't necessarily have a sound in mind. I sometimes name the sound first. I'll come up with a name. This sound is going to be stretching metal. And so then what I'll do is I'll try to create the sound that goes with the name of the sound. It takes me into another place. We're creating by painting a picture first and then making a sound that sort of fits that picture.

**Do you feel any sort of burden when you create a sound- to be able to use it in a musical way yourself? Or do you feel that it's really about I'm going to make an interesting sound and see where they take it?**

I don't necessarily think every sound I make is something to use in my music. A lot of times I make a sound strictly as a sound. And then I'd like to see



When you buy a hardware piece and strip off all the effects and all the EQ and everything they do on a patch and you just listen to the raw patch itself without all that extra sweetening- you would not have the same sounding synth at all. So these days when you hear hardware synths, they've already done all of that post production stuff for you on a sound. In Reason, we haven't; we've given you the raw sound, which is really the way you want it. Because when you're doing a mix, if you use all these sounds that have all these effects and all this post processing on it in a mix, it's not going to sound good in a mix. And you're going to have certain sounds, which stand up way too much.

If you were to pull up any of the mixes of songs that you hear on the radio now and listen to individual sounds when they're pulled out of the mix, you probably think that sound sounded like garbage by itself. But when you hear it in the scope of an entire mix, it's a whole different thing. Sounds have their certain points in the frequency spectrum that they sit in or they lie in. And so like a kick drum that would have been queued to accentuate a certain frequency where the base sound has that frequency rolled off. But you don't hear that in the mix because now the base sound and the kick sound are playing with each other. It's a whole different paradigm when you take in mixing and arranging. You almost have to have 2 different hats when you're mixing a track or you're arranging a track.

that have made Reason 3 books and videos are already working on Reason 4 resources. That's going to enable people to make the switch over a lot more efficiently and know what's going on and see all the new features and be able to use them very effortlessly. When it comes to things like mixing, I think anyone that is interested in getting a better sound out of Reason should definitely look into a book or two on audio dynamics and all that you need to know about mixing a track, audio engineering, mixing compression; the basics.

'cuz it is totally a different hat when you're thinking about arranging final mixing to get it out there. It's taking your track to the next level and mixing it and applying outboard effects even though there are internal things like dynamics or signal processing. All of that I think is knowledge everyone should strive to get. I have an unfair advantage because that was where I started in the audio engineering side of things. I took a course in it.-I taught it.

**Earlier, Reason was touted as being a great first application to learn because it had all the modules, it simulated so many different processes. Has it grown too far now to be considered a great first app to get into?**

Not at all. I think it's a great app. There are a number of schools that use it as a way to teach things like signal flow. You would connect a drum machine into a mixer or put a compressor as an inserter...as a send effect. Even

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how people play it and use it and twist it and make it something that sings in their track. I may already have in my mind how it can be used in the track. I'll inevitably hear it in a musical piece being used the opposite way. There's beauty in someone taking what you've done and twisting it in their own way.

**Now I'm going to ask you for a moment of honesty and truth. Have you ever created a patch you like so much you pulled it off and kept it for yourself?**

[laughs] Of course. I've got folders of them. I'll make a patch and I'll be like nah, this is just too much of my fingerprint on it and too much of me to let it go. Other than being a sound designer-as someone who also creates and writes music, it always comes up where I'm working on something and this sound is just too good. *It's just me.* It's screaming for a track I have in mind. So I'm going to not put this one in the pot right now. I'm just going to keep that one off to the side.

**What's next for James Bernard ?**

I've got a few things actually going on. Right now, my wife and I just had our third daughter so that's going to hold my production for just a bit I'd say. [laughs] But after that, I have a number of albums that are in the works for release. There's a label I'm working with on the West coast called 360 Records. They're releasing more of my esoteric IDM sort of glitchy down tempo stuff. There's one album coming out in August entitled *Flashback*. They already have another album done and completed which is going to come out sometime either later this year or early next year.

And I think that one is going to be called Introspectives. So they're sitting on right now 2 albums worth of material. I've got another moniker I'm using called Diego Bernardini which is a minimal techno sort of vibe which is sort of like '20s, '30s swing music if computers wrote it. It's very minimal, but melodic at the same time. It's all synthesis. I'm resurrecting an old project which was the first release I ever did as a project called Influx. And this was on a label that was back in the

mid '90s called Rising High Records.

It was a huge, huge electronic label back in the early '90s. And I released a lot of music on that label. And it's been about 10 years since I released anything as Influx. And I just over the last 2 weeks started writing some tracks as Influx and actually created a MySpace page now and I've hipped a couple people to it. Not too many yet. I've got few tracks up there that I'm previewing. And I've got a label interested. It's going back to the roots of Acid Techno. When you hear the songs, you'll hear the Arpeggiator bass lines. I guarantee you'd think I went back to my old analog stuff. Coz I did some stuff with Reason 4 where the pitch isn't perfect. So every once in a while, the pitch sort of drifts out on the melody line. So it has that analog feel where the oscillators are slightly drifting once in the while in the tracks. So it really feels analog but it's all software.

**Anything else you want to share with us about Reason 4 and yourself and your involvement in the project?**

It's a monster man. When you get it, I think the biggest thing for people is definitely placing the patches that have been created for it in the factory sound banks by both me and the other sound designers and the signature patches that were created by the well known artists. After you've done some investigation and seen how we created some of the patches and have some fun with it. Go in, initialize a patch, and just start messing around with different oscillator types, different filter types, and definitely mess around with the modulation matrix.

Because it's software...you can't break anything. You can only just learn as you go along and do something to a sound that modifies it in a way that you'll go huh, never thought of that. Have an oscillator modulate itself. Sure, why not? There's so much experimentation that's allowed within 4 that it really is going to make a lot of waves in the industry for sure.

**Producer's Edge thanks James Bernard for sharing.**

We were able to get James to open up about his hardware kit list...These are the former tools of his trade.



**Roland:** SH-101 with MIDI Retrofit Juno-106, MKS-30 with PG-200 Programmer, MKS-10, TR-808, 909 TR-606 & TB-303 (Still have them)

**Korg :** MS-20, MS-50 Korg Electribes (all of them) Wavestation A/D, Trinity, Triton Studio Karma, Kaoss Pad (KP1 and KP2) Monopoly, 01/Wfd, X-3, 1212 i/o MS-2000, microKorg, DSS-1, DSM-1 (2 of them), Poly-800, DW-6000, EX-8000. A *Korg Prophecy Prototype..* (still have it, but it doesn't work)

**Oberheim:** Matrix 6R, Matrix 1000 (Still have it), OB8 with MIDI (Still have it), DMX (Still have it... busted!) Arp 2600

**Sequential Circuits** Prophet 5 Rev 3 with MIDI Sequential Circuits Pro-One

**Akai:** MPC-2000XL, S01, S-950

**Kawai** K5000S

**Ensoniq** ASR-X

**Quasimidi** Raveolution 309 with all the updates/kits

**"Now... I use Reason version 4 rewired into Ableton Live 6 and occasionally Logic 7."**

And as we kept pushing, we amassed all his profile sites and producer aliases.

myspace.com/jamesbernardmusic  
myspace.com/diegobernardini  
myspace.com/influxreturns  
threesixtyrecords.com/jamesbernard.  
lulu.com/jamesbernard



Sounds: Field Recorded samples



## Sony PCM-D50

### Linear PCM Field Recorder

Have you even been out somewhere and heard an ill sound and wished you could use it? Ever walked by a construction site or machinery and heard a rhythmic pattern sitting in the noise? Sure a personal recorder could get the job done, but I'm talking about a sample quality where the captured element remains a musical option and not just an ambient bed or backdrop atmosphere.

I saw the AES video of the Sony booth (now on our YouTube channel) and was pretty impressed off jump. In fact, when I heard we would be featuring the newest field recorder from Sony I had to come up with a slick idea for Griffin Avid's corner to beat out the other resident producers and specialists (sorry Nate!).

The PCM-D50 is the kid brother to the PCM-D1. The D1 is the high end solution for capturing live audio like a concert or seminar. It's the real deal and already has one of those "You should get one" reputations. The question now is *Can the more affordable PCM-D50 hold up and not embarrass the good family name?*

## Brand new Tricorder?

The construction is flawless with its solid metallic frame perfect weight ratio. It has an internal memory of 4 gigs and also takes memory sticks. It records PCM 44.1/48.0/96KHz, 16/24 bit and plays back (Drag and drop supported) MP3. The left side hosts the Line/optical Out (3.5mm), USB and remote jack to control the unit without it being in your palm. The right side is for the Line Ins, memory stick bay and record level dial. There is a housing on the underside for a tripod (I love serious gear) and switches for the limiter (yes) and microphone Low Cut Filter.

But wait! Producer's Edge doesn't do reviews and we a mag for Producers...

Yeah, so this is about sound design and bringing real world sounds into your production palette. If you are looking for custom sounds to separate your work from the herd- then a field recorder becomes a perfect option for creative sampling. Now. I got permission to visit a factory, laboratory and mechanic shop (and a few points in-between) to capture live ambience and other interesting sounds. The factory was so loud they made me wear headphones and the roar was STILL deafening. The Sony PCM-D50 did great under these conditions and the samples on the DVD-ROM will express just that. It has a signal to noise ratio of 93dB or Greater @ 24-bit so I took the levels down as low as barely registering for some recordings.

One of the issues I've had before with field recorders is having to turn the unit up so loud to get a good signal- my hand movement noise is captured too! Thankfully, the adjustable dual mic (inverted; right mic captures left stereo field) signal is clean enough to eliminate that problem. When I was done I was able to quickly Drag and Drop the files onto my PC.

Sony is not alone in the affordable field recorder market. There is the Korg MR-1 (~899.00 great sound, smaller hard drive and shorter battery life), the Edirol R-90 and the Zoom H4. Among this field of Recorders, the Sony PCM-D50 is a great option worth exploring further.

Additional notes: The Sony PCM-D50 has a mode called Pre-recording that continuously captures a rolling 5 seconds of audio before you start a manual recording. This is useful for getting the entire clip if you're late on the trigger. The XLR-1 is an add-on option for recording external mics and has phantom power. Expect approx. 12 hours of recording time using 4 AA batteries.

FUTURE Gadgets + Features Apps



# VINTAGE SERIES: THE EMU SP-1200 REVISITED



BY SEAN MARU

It is hard to overstate the impact that the SP-1200 has had on hip-hop production. It has inspired countless classic albums, it was THE go-to machine for a great many "Golden Era" legends and there is a good chance that if you make hip hop beats you owe at least a little bit of your style and/or a few of your tricks to this little Gray box. This edition of Vintage Series will explore the SP-1200 and its contributions to hip-hop production. We will also examine how this piece might fit into the modern studio. Finally we will address the tortuous rumors of an updated SP-1200 (usually known as the SP-1600 or SP-2400).

## Pre-History

First, let's set the stage. It's the summer 1987 and if you make beats there are not a lot of options if you want to build sample based tracks. You have the uber expensive and hard to find Farlight CMI series but they are incredibly bulky and you don't have Peter Gabriel money so forget that. The Casio SK-1 is at the other end of the spectrum but its specifications

make it feel like a toy. Its sample "engine" offers 1.4 seconds of sample time at 9.38 kHz. It has no midi, no effects, and did I mention that its memory is volatile (i.e. your lose you work when you turn it off). Moving right along, you have the Sequential Circuits 440. Now we are talking. Its got a 12 bit, 8 voice sampler and a relatively full functioned sequencer. It will hold 50,000 notes across 8 tracks and has adjustable swing (50 - 75%). To top is all off it has a SCSI port so you can transfer data between machines. You are sold, right? Wrong! It only has 512kb of memory and it costs 5 grand! Besides, you just heard that Sequential Circuits is about to go bankrupt so why hitch to a sinking ship? Finally, the Emu SP12 looks nice but even the turbo model only has 5 seconds of sample time and the even though you have heard great things about the sequencer and you have a feeling those 5.25 disks are on the way out, so no thanks.



Enter the SP-1200! < Cue Dramatic String Sample >

Its game over! This beast has 10 seconds of 12 bit sample time at 26,040hz (albeit in 4 chunks of 2.5 seconds), 32 user sample slots, a flexible 5000 note sequencer with input quantization, midi in/out/thru connections, smpte sync, analog filters, and 8 individual 1/4 inch outputs so you can break things out on a mixing board. To top it off you can save everything to 3.5 floppies! Now you have a self-contained way to sample, sequence, mix and save your tracks. Then you realize this thing is just small enough to take with you just about anywhere which means you will be that much more productive (no pun intended). You can work on beats whenever

Video: Overview and Samples

you have spare time (and a few records) and you won't have to deal with a lot of bulky equipment. Having an essentially mobile studio means you can track, collaborate or perform with more people in more places. The possibilities are endless.

Not so Fast! <Cue sound of a needle being brutally removed from a record>

Not so fast you say. It is almost 2008 and your phone has more memory than this thing! And just about any recent computer has enough horsepower to provide a virtually unlimited number of tracks, many Gigabytes of storage and a sea of effects to choose from that Magellan wouldn't cross. Okay so maybe endless is a little strong. The SP-1200 was a great update but it still had plenty of limitations. However, there is something to be learned from this machine and the producers who mastered it. That something is the art of "less is more". The history of hip-hop is often the history of artists doing a lot with very little. Don't have a canvas? Find a train. Don't have a drum set? Use Dad's record collection. As we will see, the SP-1200 embodies this concept completely and it does it with style.

In-Use <cue the smell of a dusty record sleeve>

### Lay of the Land

The SP-1200 is a very hands-on machine. You get 8 buttons that are used to select sounds for editing and also to trigger sounds when sequencing. The bank select button lets you step through each of the 4 available banks (A, B, C or D) providing quick access to all 32 user sounds. Other function buttons are dedicated for important tasks. There's also a global switch to toggle each trigger's velocity sensitivity

on or off. The tap/note repeat button allows you to quickly set sequence tempo or input notes automatically at the currently selected quantization value.

You also get 8 sliders that can be

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used for data entry in various edits. Their function changes depending upon which mode you are in. You

sequencing. For example, you can also use slider 1 to adjust sequence tempo. Overall, the user interface of the SP-1200 is very efficient, especially when considering it was designed over two decades ago. Its thoughtful design and hands-on approach made it easy for producers to put down ideas quickly and that rawness was evident in the music that resulted.

Sampling

As we said, we are only talking 4 banks of 2.5 seconds so you will have to plan carefully to make the most of this beast.

Most of us by now are aware of the trick of playing the record at 45rpm and detuning the sample at playback.

Well, this machine (along with the original SP12), were the initial inspirations for that technique. By playing the record faster, you could sample longer phrases and make better use of your meager sample time. Do you remember what I said about doing less with more? An added benefit is that when you pitch the sample back down to regular speed the interpolation that takes place often yields pleasing results. An almost ring modulation-like artifacts color the sample.

The SP-1200 does not allow for extreme precision

when editing samples. When adjusting sample start points, for instance, you will find that the smallest adjustment you will be able to make will be about 25 samples. The upside for some styles is that this can prevent you from sucking the soul out of your beat by being too "on". One man's slop is another man's funk. Additional limitations include the omission of things we take for granted today, like time-stretch. On the SP-1200 there isn't any. Also, the pitch adjustment allows you to only tune in semitones, as opposed to cents, so



can use them to control the pitch, volume, decay or loop point of selected sounds. They are especially handy in truncation/loop mode. Sliders 1 and 2 controls control sample start points. Slider 1 is coarse adjustment and slider 2 is fine adjustment. Sliders 3 and 4 control sample end points. As you may be able to guess slider 3 is for coarse adjustment and slider 4 is for fine adjustment. Sliders 5 and 6 give control over coarse and fine loop point adjustment, respectively. The sliders can also be used to make edits while

RETRO GEAR IN VOICES

## The SP1600, SP2400 and Other Urban Legends

Over the years there has been much speculation about the possibility of a new generation of SP. These fantasies are not totally unfounded. For a time, there was talk at EMU about producing such a machine. Rumor has it that the new machine would be called the SP1600 (or SP2400) and would, depending upon who you listen to, would utilize the 16-bit sampling engine from either the Emax II or the ESI-32 samplers or even a new 24 bit sampling engine. Sadly, the project was supposedly killed because Emu felt it was too much of a niche product. And so the story goes, one of the chief architects of the new SP project jumped ship and went on to produce another sampling drum machine you might have heard of: the AKAI MPC 2000. Ouch. To make a long story short, it is highly unlikely that we will see a hardware update of the SP-1200.

matching samples require a good ear and a little luck. The multi-pitch feature allows you to pitch one sound across 8 pads and each of those pads can be tuned independently. This allows you to play your samples in different pitches and come up with melodic/rhythmic phrases as you would on a traditional keyboard. As an example, you can have one pad trigger the sample at original pitch, one at the fifth interval above or below original, and maybe one at the third interval. This can be very useful for creating basslines, etc.

### Sequencing

Sequencing on the SP-1200 generally involves recording a handful of segments and then chaining them together in song mode. While building segments you can save time by using auto correct to align hits to a selected value (1/8, 1/16, etc.). After your parts are laid you can add swing at the desired value. They are entered in terms of percentages. In case you are wondering WHICH percentage is the key to achieving perfect bounce, don't ask. Just feel it out for the song at hand. If you are interested in gross generalizations, then think of the highest percentages as more "Jazzy" and the lower settings as more "rockish". Right in the middle is hip hop territory. It is important to note that many get great results from not quantizing or adding swing at all. Find your own path Grasshoppa! Experimentation is the key and it lead to one of the most widely use tricks in hip-hop, namely the double tempo trick. That is if you are working on a beat that is 90bpm, simply set the tempo on the SP to

180bpm. This effectively doubles the sequencers resolution, giving you twice as many places to put your hits. It allows for more nuanced patterns and enhances other programming tricks like ghost notes, etc.

Other sequencer features include the ability to erase notes on the fly which greatly speeds things along. The note repeat button can also be useful for drum rolls or for laying down a quick hi hat line. As you assemble your segments you can save additional time by copying or appending them to each other. Once you have created segments for your intro, verses, hooks, variations, etc. you are ready to chain them together in song mode. Song mode is essentially a list of segments. You can specify how many times a segment repeats or you can insert/delete segments at will until your song is fleshed out.

While working you may need to make detailed edits that are tricky to do in real time with the note erase feature. In these situations, you will want to enter step edit mode. In this mode you can move through each note in the segment and insert or delete as desired. Think of it as microscope mode where you can slow things down and find that flam or that bum hit and fix it.

### Fast Forward to 2007

So the SP-1200 was a very capable machine in its day and it enjoyed a pretty good run until it was finally discontinued in 1998. The question that remains is how it fits into a modern studio. First of all, the SP-1200 could be a killer tone module. Its 12 bit sound and warm analog filters can

be a nice color to have on the palette. Before you even bring up the cute little sample rate conversion provided by your DAW, just stop. It is not the same. Sorry. As for the filters, you buy a nice hardware filter module but it won't be cheap and it will do only one thing, unlike the SP. Next, the sequencer makes the SP-1200 a valuable addition to most studios. Even if you don't buy into the hype surrounding its "magical swing", this machine is still one of the fastest ways to set a tempo, bang out a beat and hook up a song mode. Right click that. Really the whole package is a great first draft engine. You can throw on records, hook up quick ideas and if you want to get really surgical you can send dump the midi and/or audio to your DAW and enjoy the best of both worlds. Finally, there is an intangible reason to include the SP-1200 in your arsenal. It is hip-hop history. It is hard not to be inspired by a machine that spawned so many great ideas.

### Final Thoughts

On paper, its specifications are not impressive by today's standards, you get very little sample time, a relatively primitive sequencer and your storage options are limited. Nevertheless, the SP-1200 still draws high bids on eBay (about 1300 as of September 2007) and has the respect and admiration of producers young and old school. The enduring fascination with this machine is one part idol worship, one part nostalgia for the Golden Era sound, and one part appreciation for its "do a lot with a little" personality.



## SP 1200 Production Timeline

1987	1990	1993	1998
SP-1200 Launched	Original SP-1200 discontinued (Partly due to limited Availability of SSM Chips)	Reissued (Black Version) w/updated electronics to meet regulatory standards	Final batch of SP- 1200s produced

### Pros:

- Grimy 12 bit sound that CANNOT be achieved by sample rate reduction
- Hands on feel (Sliders can be used for mixing, tuning and editing functions.)
- Flexible sequencing and input quantization
- Limited sample time-forces you to be creative
- 8 mono outputs for mixing flexibility

### Cons:

- Very pricy (still)
- Limited sample time forces you to need additional gear for some ideas
- Discontinued and thus parts and repair options are limited

Pioneers and Masters: Pete Rock, The Bomb Squad, Large Professor, DJ Muggs, Marley Marl, Da BeatMinerz, Lord Finesse, Pharaoh Monch (Organized Konfusion), etc.

Hear it in Action: Pete Rock & CL Smooth "Mecca & The Soul Brother" (1992), Cypress Hill "Cypress Hill" (1991), Public enemy "It takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back (1988), Organized Konfusion "Extinction Agenda" (1994), etc.

### Fun Facts:

- The SP-1200 was the first sampling drum machine with integrated floppy. This encouraged use of it as a portable studio.
- The longest run product in Emu history
- One of the first drum machines to utilize smpte synchronization

## Summary of Specifications

### Sample Memory

10 seconds at 26,040 Hz in four 2.5-second blocks (12-bit linear resolution)

### Filters:

SSM Analog Filters

### Sequence capacity

5000 notes minimum (depending on density of parts)  
Patterns (referred to in the manual as "segments")  
100

Songs 100

Tempo Range 40-240 BPM

**Auto correct with values of:** 8th note, 8th triplet, 16th note, 16th Triplet, 32nd note, 32nd triplet and high resolution mode

### Outputs

Mono mix Individual channels, (eight, programmable. tip = unfiltered. ring - filtered). MIDI out. MIDI thru, SMPTE, Metronome/Clock

### Inputs

Sample, MIDI, SMPTE/Sync, Footswitches (3)

### Interface

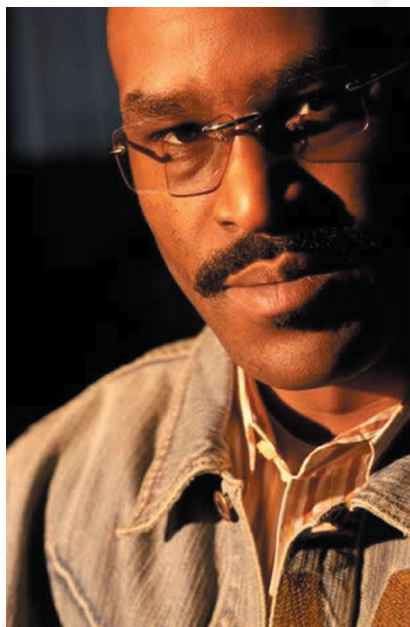
MIDI, SMPTE, 24 pqn clock

Data and Sound Storage

3.5" floppy diskette

Optional accessories

Additional sound library diskettes, footswitches



## VINTAGE SERIES

### Artist Connection

E-MU SP-1200

Producer

Easy Moe Bee

**P**roducer and PE writer Sean Maru gave us a list of producers he wanted connected with the SP-1200 VS article. Easy Moe Bee was at the top so we got at him. Simple as that. We begin with the placement that lands the gear... instead of the other way around!

Easy Moe Bee: We gained another victory in "Calling Mr. Welfare", but I actually did it on somebody else's equipment. And the money that I earned from that, back then, that wasn't a whole of money, but it was the first money that I ever received. He gave me \$1500 a track, so that is \$3000.

**And that went straight to buying the SP?** Straight to the SP. I bought that first SP1200 when we were recording with him on the *It's A Big Daddy Thing* album, we did that at a studio called Libra Digital. I do not even know if it still exists in Astoria, Queens. They were done on a Synclavia.

**Going back that far? Was it just sitting there in the studio or you actually know it was going to be the tool?**

I bought all my records and all of my sounds to the studio. I had my little pad laid out with all of the sounds that I wanted to sample, whether it was kick and snare, or loops, little pieces, or

whatever, and we did it that way. As a matter of fact, I was right there. I watched them do "Smooth Operator." "Smooth Operator" was done on the Synclavia too. Then I am sitting there and I am watching the whole process of keyboard sampling. I already had it in my mind this is the machine I wanted. I was just saying to myself "Wow; this is the process of keyboard sampling. What is it going to be like sampling on the SP1200?"

**So how did that process hold up in the age of the MPC and the ASR-10? How did that still remain a tool?**

I bought the SP1200 a couple of months into '89. The SP1200 was still a really popular machine. I understand what you are saying with the MPC that came along and everything, and a lot of other people gravitated, but I don't know, there is something about the 1200 that I was stuck on. Probably still to this day, it is the sound that I keep implementing. That sound would be a comparison between analog and the first digital.

**Was it also in the sequencing, the timing structure or just the raw sound you couldn't get away from?**

It was a nice clear sound but just not as crystally clear as the digital MP series that they were coming out with and everything. Like I said, the difference in the sound is probably between dropping the needle on an old 45 versus playing a CD. And if I had a choice of what my sound should be, I would rather it be the nice, full body sound of dropping the needle to an old

45. I like my stuff to sound round and warm like that.

**Let's talk about your record digging process. What kind of samples are you attracted to and why is that?**

I love guitars. I love keyboards, sounds- like pad sounds from just about anything or anywhere. Of course drums, I am really into the acoustic drum sound. But I will sample electronic drum sounds too. But I am *really big* on guitars. I still use a little bit of horns even though that might not be really popular but I still deal with them. And I love any kind of futuristic sounds. People got the best of that in "Flava in Your Ear" with Craig Mack.

**When you are actually doing your digging process, do you have the catalogue in your head of what bands, what kind of instruments and what kind of sounds, or are you a record cover-type digger where if the cover looks interesting, you are going to scoop it?**

Well, first of all I got a basement. Just picture my basement. It is full of records. I have been collecting records since I was 8 years old, and some of the things that I loved as a kid in records are some of the same things that I love as an adult now. And when I buy a record, a lot of times, it can be an artist that I never even heard of. A lot of times, I buy albums by just the personnel alone.

**Who played drums? Who played bass?** When I see *Harvey Mason is playing drums, Bob James is playing keyboards, Idris Muhammad is another alternate drummer* on the album, and *Leo van Doeselaar is playing organ*, I think I need to have that album, you know what I mean? I will look just at the personnel alone.

A lot people buy records for different reasons. A lot of people are drawn into an album by the album cover. That gives me a lot but I have to read who the producer is and who the

personnel are. That usually gets me to pick an album out whether I know of it or not.

The personnel can almost tell me whether I need that album or not. And sure enough, like the kind of lineup that I just gave you, I will bring that kind of album home and I will play it, and sure enough, I will love it. And at that point, it becomes of use to me. There is something in there that I can do something with.

**What shaped your producer's ear? What do you use when you are going with your sound design? What gave you your musical ear?**

What shapes my sound? A lot of everything that I do is based around the drums, but I do not always have to start with the drums. Sometimes, it could be a keyboard line. Sometimes, it could be a stab or something. I will start to build from there and build drums around it, then I start to decorate the beat, the same way you would a Christmas tree, you drape the bells and other stuff around it and then you come with the tinsel. I am the same way with the tracks, but I have to get that first main groove going, you know what I mean?

**Have you been impressed with keyboards at all?** Oh yes. It is kind of old now, it is like 10 years old, but I have got a Kurzweil K2500. I still use a lot of sounds from there. There are sounds that I love that I have no idea where it came from, and I just sample them and do it all for records.

**And built your own library?** From the unit itself. A lot of times, you get a different effect if you hook your keyboard to your 1200 as opposed to sampling that padded voice. And then once you get it into the machine, into your SP1200, or if you use an MPC and then you transpose it, then you start copying, and key grouping it, and creating harmonies.

I have done things with the SP1200 that a lot of people have never ever done. Some people tell me I

make that machine sing. I have played keyboards on it. I have arranged horn sections on the SP with full harmonies and everything.

**Let us talk about the actual recording industry itself and your involvement there. You have been around quite some time and have been very prolific. What are your keys to survival?**

Just keeping the love for the music. It all comes home for me and what I use musically, like you asked me before... what shapes my ear or what gets me going, what would start me off and get me to actually making a track, and I

"...what pisses me off in this day and age, you have younger people who come into the business and they expect to be renowned as a hip hop producer but yet, they have not done any research."

find myself instead of moving forward, I keep going back to everything that I loved the most in the beginning.

In other words, all the things and all of the records, all of the sounds, and everything about music that originally influenced me to do this and come up with the tracks that I did, that is the stuff that I will make sure that I will continue to listen to in my leisure time.

The way I used to sample drums, I still do it that way. The way I used to buy records and the types of records that I used to buy, I just maintained that whole part about it. Everybody has their own specific qualities. I have mine. I have what works for me and what I love. That is what makes me tick.

**Who is it that you are looking to work with now? Who are you looking at right now as worthy of your music?**

I would love to work with Common. Believe it or not, that never happened.

Out of all the people that I have worked with, I have never worked with him. It is kind of hard to say because a lot of the people that I could work with, I might not be compatible with because my sound is not necessarily, how would you call it, a dirty, dirty sound?

It is the 808 sound. I have never really been big on that. In any type of tune, I like to hear acoustic kicks, the snares, drum sounds, and band samples. I like to hear real keyboards, pianos, horns, you know what I mean?

**You are into real instrumentation.** Yes. So anybody out there right now in '08 that is still cool with that, Easy Mo Bee can get with you.

**Nice. Aside from the 808, what else have you noticed as far as modern music is concerned? I am not going to even ask you about the poppy stuff that is on the radio. I am going to say: the change in the underground or what the most talented**

**spitters are using for their backing tracks now.**

Okay, one thing that I noticed about today's current underground is that a lot of the underground artists are doing what a lot of the mainstream artists are doing. So it makes me wonder how much of the underground we still actually do have.

And do not get me wrong, there are still some classic genuine hip hop out there and what we will call the underground. But there are so many people that are just trying to be mainstream. There is a lot of following right now. There is not enough originality like it used to be. They are like *De La Soul versus the Big Daddy Kane versus the Poor Righteous Teachers versus the KRS-1* album or record. Each of the records that I just said, each of the artists, and each of the producers for those albums, they all had their own individual quality. Right now, everybody mostly sound the same, and I work hard not to try to

get caught up in to that.

**Take us back to the history of “Flava in Your Ear.” Take us back to the day that song was created?**

Okay. I was still living in Brooklyn maybe about two years. I moved out from my mom’s house and out of the projects and got my own apartment. I woke up one day, and this is the honest truth, I remember it like the back of my hand, I woke up, walked over to the machine, clicked it on, and started playing some records. And I was not even dressed yet and did not even take a shower. I made “Flava in Your Ear.” I made that beat in my drawers.

**Did you know? At what point did you know it was special?**

While I was making it. A lot of producers talk about how long it takes them to make a track. I do not put a specific time on it. I have taken six hours and I have taken three days to do a beat.

**Sometimes it is easy, sometimes it flows.** I even close it off, come back, and do little more. I have taken three days to make a track until I finally get it where I want it to, and then there are some other things that happen in just 15 or 20 minutes. “Flava in Your Ear” happened in 15 or 20 minutes.

**That was a pretty chaotic time, I am sure, working with Craig Mack, and you had the Biggie work that you were putting in. Was that probably the busiest and most hectic work schedule you have ever had?**

Yes, it was man, I definitely would have to say that. Especially because of the work that I had done with Craig Mack and with Biggie. Yes, that was the start of what we would call the heyday. Yes, it was real, real busy for me back then.

**And how were you able to maintain focus?** It was real busy, and I do not care how busy it gets still to this day. The accountants can call me on the

phone. The lawyer can call me and need me to come down and sign this or do this or do that, and I would have to run around to meetings and play beats for people, but sanity for me is being able to play my records.

**That is your relaxing time?**

Yes, because you got to think, you only get to sample after you have the chance to listen. That is a big part of my recreational leisure time. It is listening to my records.

**Let us go over to some actual audio processing. What kind of outboard are you using?**

I know this is going to trip you out, but at home, in the studio, we had a bit more of a set-up. Of course, over there, we are using Pro Tools and stuff. But at home, you are not going to believe this. **Okay...**

I have my SP1200 to my Akai S950. **Right.** My SP1200 goes into the line one of my DJ mixer....that’s it.

**What?** My DJ mixer. My 950 goes into the line two of my DJ mixer, and I basically sample sequence and just do a whole lot of programming. At home, I view home as the programming station. After that, after we drop it and track it, then I get all fancy and get into the whole engineering process.

But while I am making a track, I do not want to deal with anything but the actual sequencing, sampling, and programming part of it. I do not want anything else interrupting me. So you could say at home, what I am doing is a lot of dry sampling. But a lot of the dry sampling beats that I have done, people think they are better than some of the engineered stuff out there.

**You think it lost something in translation on the mix board?**

That is exactly what I am trying to tell you, it is what happens a lot of times. You have a lot of these dudes who got a lot of the best of the latest equipment and then they are making beats, and while they are making beats, they keep chewing while they are making the track and all. I do not need any of that.

You give me my records or my sampler sources and what I am going to be sampling. I have my machines in front of me. I sample. I truncate. I loop or whatever. If necessary, I add keyboards to it. Everything is done dry. And then after that, then the engineering process starts. To me, if you cannot get it going on a dry level, it is not even going to be worth anything once you start engineering it.

**So there is no computer in your setup at home?**

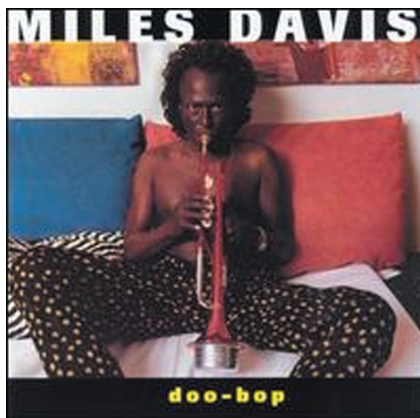
“No computer. No mixing boards. I know your magazine. This is good for your magazine. I know most of the people who ever knew Easy Mo Bee and my love for this music, they are gonna bug out for all of what they have. And that is right. No multi-mixing boards. No outboard gear of any kind. Straight, dry sampling.”

**Let us talk about the S950 since that is a pretty popular combination. Have you been using the filter section on the S950? Is that its primary role?**

Oh yes. I used them much less than I used to, but I still do use them. Filtering used to be a really big thing back in the early to the mid-90’s. A big shout to my man Lord Finesse, Large Professor, Pete Rock, and so many more, but those dudes, and Diamond D, These and the other producers are friends of mine, I respect their work. All of us together kind of popularized that whole filter thing.

**What about Miles Davis in 1991?**

Miles Davis’ album called *Doo-Bop*. Actually Miles Davis came to Russell Simmons and told him “I want to do some hip hop.” Russell referred Miles to Francesca Spero who was the manager for Rush Producers Management at that time. Russell had Rush Artist Management and in the end, Rush Producers Management.



He had a girl named Francesca Spero who was my manager at the time, and she took the call for Miles. She put together a reel of several different producers under the management over there and somehow, Miles gravitated towards me. We started recording on the album and just from the beginning, he declared that he wanted me to finish it and do the whole thing.



Miles Davis and Easy Mo Bee

**What did that do to you mentally to have that happen? Was that the end? Did you say "Okay, this is all I need to have done. My place in history is confirmed?" Did you feel there was still something beyond that? Is that a blessing?**

There was so much more that I still could do. That is an interesting question that you asked because it happens like in the beginning of my career. You got to think in 1989, I just finished producing Big Daddy Kane.

The second biggest project after that was, me and my brother LG, we produced the entire pre-Wu Tang...The

Genius album, *Words from the Genius* on Cold Chillin'. I did 10 songs and my brother did four.

I was with Big Daddy Kane and then two years later, I am producing Miles Davis. I might have felt like I was doing it all, but in my mind, I still knew there was so much more to be done, and I am happy that I was not a victim at that time of what they used to call the Grammy jinx.

**I sample. I truncate. I loop or whatever. If necessary, I add keyboards to it. Everything is done dry. And then after that, then the engineering process starts. To me, if you cannot get it going on a dry level, it is not even going to be worth anything once you start engineering.**

Because Miles Davis' album, it won a Grammy for a Best R&B Jazz Instrumental album. So after that happened, I was worried. Man, I hope I would not catch the Grammy jinx because most people who got a Grammy back then, they were finished and done. *Think Young MC, think Will Smith, you know what I mean?*

**Let us go back to the keyboard thing. Did you have formal music instruction?**

No. Everything I have ever done has always been by ear. There is a special process to the way I produce. With the SP1200, I do something which, for years, I have called play samples. What I mean is harmonically in the end, everything is in tune and it can be a brand new creation. It does not have to be a loop or original. What I mean is it is original but it is all in tune harmonically. I form horn sections and form chords. If you listen back to the things that I have done, I will give you an example, like Busta Rhymes' "Everything Remains Raw". Also, the other record on that album, "It's A Party" featuring Zhané, if you listen to the things that I was doing with vibes

on that record, like creating harmonies and all of that and everything, nobody has ever done that. Nobody. And I have heard a couple of copycats out there who try to do it but nobody does it like me. Do you know how that came about? That came about from working with what you have. That came from wanting and wishing that I had more but just working with what I got. In other words, I wanted people to always think that I had all these keyboards in my crib but I did not.

And when you get to the studio and you see how I do it, people are like "What? Wait a minute. That beat that you have been playing all this time in the car... that is how you have made it? Everything is in tune at once?" And they would look to me like "Dude, you are crazy, man. How do you do that?"

**Pretty amazing. Can we talk about The Lost Boyz for a second?**

Oh, okay. Let us talk about *Jeeps, Lex Coups, Bimaz & Benz*. That was supposed to be for Craig Mack but he...**You are lying.** Yes, he turned it down. **No...no..**It is crazy. About a month ago, me and him talked about that too.

**He heard it over the phone and turned it down, or are you saying he was there live and turned it down?**

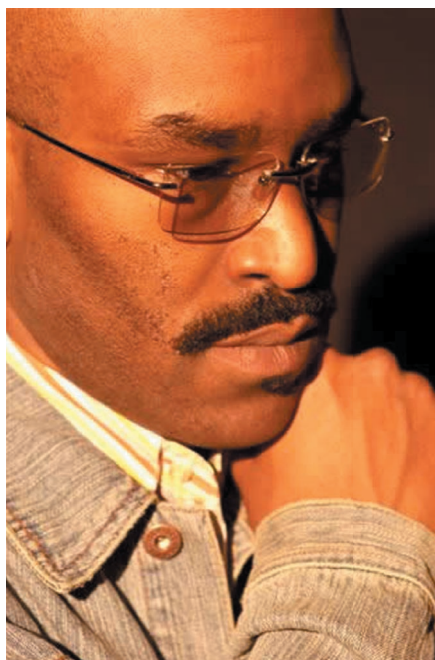
No, live in person. I remember I played the track for him, me and Aaron Ross. He was at Uptown at that time, "Butt Naked" Tim Dawg, me and him, we were seriously trying to push that track on Craig and he did not want it.

**Maybe he just did not feel like he had something for it.**

The same thing with "Warning" on Notorious BIG, where I sampled Isaac Hayes' "Walk on by." That was made for Big Daddy Kane. I had made that

for him not because he asked me to. I was like "Okay, this is for you." He said "Play the next beat." I said "Are you sure?" He said "Play the next beat." I asked him one more time. I said "Yo, are you sure?"

He said "Yo man, just play the next beat" and I said "Alright, man", and the next time he heard that beat, it was on Notorious B.I.G.'s album.



**I remember hearing a lot about the production team behind Bad Boy and everything else, but I actually was not aware of how key your actual sound was when added into their mix?**

Well actually, my sound was not added into their mixes. As far as the timing of releases on Bad Boy, you can call me one of the firsts. There were no Hit Men yet. The Hit Men concept came a little later towards the *Life after Death* Album. That was something they formulated. But in the beginning, something else a lot of people do not know is that I am the first producer that Biggie worked with in a real studio.

A lot of people also do not know that I did what was considered almost like half of that *Ready To Die* Album. That is 6 songs. Hey, that is half of somebody's album.

**So let me ask, how do you walk away from that? Why not make that**

**your signature, why not just stay in that groove, and just flow with that movement?**

Because at that time, I kind of liked being independent and being able

**"I would love to be remembered and recognized ... right now as one of the greatest producers to ever sample and make beats for hip hop and for rappers, because I know for a fact that I have not gotten all of my props like I should have."**

to move around the way I did. Puffy approached me too. He had offered to manage me and I was managed by Francesca Spero at that time and I was like "Yo, what are you doing, man? I am already managed by her." I told him and I said "Listen. Let me get back to you on that." I think the problem was I never got back to him on that.

So to this day, I always wonder if he liked that or if he did not like that. But if you noticed, I did not have too many producer spots over there in Bad Boy after that.

**Yes, I can see that would be a problem.** Or it might have been a problem for him. There was something that he wanted that he did not get, and that was me. Nobody can deny that the Easy Mo Bee sound was like the foundation...the foundational structure of a sound at Bad Boy. My sound kind of defined the beginning, and I even watched how a lot of the work that The Hit Men were doing after, the stuff that was done in the beginning, was designed, and based around the work that I did. Yes. Do you notice when it comes to Bad Boy, I do not really get

talked about a lot, right?

**No, that is why I did not know. I thought maybe...** That is because I was not a Hit Man. So that did not sit well with them.

**So what is it that you want then? What do you want from this industry?**

What I want is to be remembered, after it is all said and done...that I was a dude who cared so much about the music and everything that I did. Think about Curtis Mayfield. Curtis Mayfield was an artist, but he also was a producer. Now when you listen to the body of Curtis Mayfield's work, it was uncompromised.

He stood for a certain something in his music, and every time, he embodied that. He put that across and that is what I am trying to do. I am happy that a lot of the stuff that I have done has sold gold or platinum or whatever, but at the end of the day, I want my body of work to be remembered as something that has some integrity to it. That is how I want to be remembered.

What do I want out of this industry? I would love to be remembered and recognized even currently right now as one of the greatest producers to ever sample and make beats for hip hop and for rappers, because I know for a fact that I have not gotten all of my props like I should have.

What does make me proud though is there are a lot of technical parts in the process of how I made tracks. When I look to date, there are a lot of people that do what I did, and it only could happen because I did it first, you know?

**Alright, can you give us a gem for that up-and-coming producer, the guy who is still working it out, trying to find his sound, and trying to find his way?**

I would tell any producer that is up-and-coming and that is trying to find his sound...first I would ask him, if I had a one-on-one with him, I would ask him what kind of music does he love, because maybe he does not want to be a hip hop producer. Or for the

music that you love, do the research on it. Study it. If it is rock, you know what I am saying? Study it.

If it is hip hop, first of all, this is what pisses me off in this day and age, you have younger people who come into the business and they expect to be renowned as a hip hop producer but yet, they have not done any research. When it comes to hip hop, it is almost like a class that you take up in college. I have taken the personal time to experience and even still now, to go back and study the origins of not only the artist but producers. If you want to be a producer, study the origin of the producer.

If you are in hip hop and if you consider yourself a hip hop producer today, even regardless of your age, there is no reason why you do not know who Herbie "Luv Bug", Howie Tee, Marley Marl are? Jazzy Jay, one of the premier early hip hop producers, was more like a teacher. If you call yourself a producer, it does not make sense that you do not know who Norman Whitfield, Bob James, Curtis Mayfield, and people like that are. Want to be a producer? Study the origin of the producer, especially in the genre that you are doing.

Marley Marl is my mentor. I eventually got the chance to meet him, but before I got the chance to meet him, I knew everything about this man, to where he lived, the type of records that he loved and that he sampled, everybody that he had worked with, and the equipment that he used.

You got to do your home work and you got to study. A lot of people look at DJ Jazzy Jay as just DJ Jazzy Jay. No. If you did your homework, you would find out that Jazzy Jay was one of the earlier premier hip hop producers of our time. [pauses and gets lost in this thoughts...] I wonder how many producers out there, besides myself, are still using the SP1200.

Let Easy Mo Bee know by checking him out at [www.easymobee.com](http://www.easymobee.com)

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# DAVID BANNER



**M**ulti-talent/Multi-task. Wear many hats. Don't get Angry. I wonder if any of these thoughts roll around the head of David Banner; Rapper, Producer, Actor, Activist and any other title befitting a man who lives his words. Point of note, the name David Banner is based on the television series "The Incredible Hulk" starring Bill Bixby. Bruce Banner is the comic book character. It's the same cat so stop asking about it.

The album that put him on the map was Mississippi: The Album with the hot single: "Like A Pimp". We caught up with Banner during downtime for a talk about the game. Hope we don't make him angry.

**The first question is about the transition from actually being an artist yourself, to producer and how that came about?**

**David Banner:** My people always ask David Banner, how did you make it? I never thought I was really dope. I used to always compare my music to my favorite artist. At the time, I liked Redman and I liked OutKast and Goodie Mob a lot. Before I was putting CDs out, I would be honest with myself. I'd ask "Is my music as dope as these artists' [beats]?" If the song didn't match up to my favorite artist, then I wouldn't put it out. You know what I'm saying? I started rapping in the late '80s and my thing was no excuses. I still live by that. Don't make excuses of why you can't make it. If somebody is not going to give you dope beats, then you got to go out and make your own.

**So what's the first piece of equipment you leaned on then?**

The ASR-10.

**And you started out with a sampling matrix. So how did you go from sampling to actually playing most of the sequences yourself?**

When people start cracking down on samples and charge too much, like people know they charge too much for samples. They do whatever the fuck they want to and just charge us really wild prices. How are you going to get 50% on the song when I didn't use the whole sample? I just used pieces of a sample. It's better to play and you're going to have to learn how to do it. Made me more of a man.

**Even in your collaboration with Lil Jon, a lot of those songs are really on that *super high energy* end of being anthems. What brings that out of you?**

I really like rock music. You know what I'm saying? If you listen to me and Lil Jon's stuff, it's really just rock music. It's a thing. You want to touch people. I really want to affect people's lives and

music is a way that you can do it. I tell people I like to make movies. When I make a beat, I want it to be a movie. I want it to have a thing. I want you to be moved by it. Regardless if it's a slow song like "Cadillac on 22's" or some other song, of course you know I want people to be moved by my music.

**What about your personality? You've actually taken a pretty huge risk and you exude a personality way beyond just being a gangster or just being a tough guy. Do you ever feel that your personality of being so engaging is possibly hurtful to your career... of being taken as seriously and maybe in some other circles where gangster music is so appreciated?**

eah. But I think you know that's good for the cheese. I really used to hurt people for real. I don't have to act like a gangster, I am. And that's the problem with a lot of people. They're trying to be something that's [not them] - all that gangster [bravado] about what you were doing. When the time comes...? I really don't walk around like a gangster.

If you're black or you're white, you ain't going to walk around acting like you're black and just being showy...same thing about being gangster. If you're a gangster, your skin is showing. Gangster is something [you are] because you have to be. That ain't cool. That ain't funny. It ain't something to be proud off. You're a gangster. So what? That ain't funny. You're selling dope. That ain't cool. That ain't something I wanted to do. When I hustled, and I did it all, I would move at night. You risk everything for the greater good. Kids need showing that you don't have to be no one . . . you don't want to be. Be yourself.

**Kanye West has truly leaned on the college swagger. He's borrowed some of the aura of fraternity folks when you're actually the real deal several layers deep. So how does that affect you when you see someone else sending out the image of the college educated cat**

**when you're actually living it so many steps beyond just a swagger? [David Banner belongs to Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity]**

I mean he's a smart kid. He's carved up a network being that type of college dude. I wasn't that type of college cat. I walked around with a backpack and a hood over my head and some headphones on. People didn't even see my face. My thing is I really don't care what nobody else does. I think that's what's wrong with the Hip Hop dudes. What's wrong with rap music? [Sighing] I honestly don't care what another man does. I'm happy for TI and 50 and [Kan]Ye and Tim[baland], but that's not my business. That's what girls do. Girls sit around and look at what other girls are doing. They talk about their clothing. *Ooh, I hate that bitch cause she...*

I don't give a fuck what another nigga is doing. What Kanye is doing don't make me shit. If anything, lot of niggas need to learn from him. That's all we do. They're turning Hip-Hop into the WWE. I hate that dude. They're trying to shoot him. Other cultures are looking at us and laughing at us right now. When I say nigga, I don't mean black people. I mean just Hip Hoppers period. They're acting like niggas, dawg. It's so stupid and childish and so predictable. I don't give a fuck man. How he dresses? The nigga makes good music. That's it. Apparently he's doing the right thing 'coz people buying the shit out of him. He can act like an asshole and everybody loves it. So it's fine.

**Now that culture has sort of seeped over even into the music production realm where now it's about what kind of music this guy makes vs. what kind of music that guy makes, what are your thoughts production-wise and how that's affecting people? There's a Down South sound. There's a West Coast sound. There's an East Coast sound.**

Oh man, I just make hit records dude. I told somebody one time. I said, Do you think 50 cent is worried about what

type of music Timbaland is giving him. He don't give a fuck. Do you think Jay-Z gives a fuck? Nah, he don't give a fuck. Just give me good music, something that really matters to me. We're getting into the wrong shit. That's the problem with Hip Hop. People are worrying about their image. They're worrying about all of that shit and not making hit music. Make a good album my nigga. That's what I want. I haven't heard a good album in a long time. That's why I made The Greatest Story I Ever Told. Now this is a fucking album.

If you like David Banner and the type of music that I make, then you're going to love this. If you don't like David Banner; you'll still think it's a cool album . . . 'coz it's just good music. Whether you like what I do or not. Where I'm at right now? I'm about making money, doing it for my people, doing my thing. 'Coz I think that was one of my problems . . . I stepped away. Have you known in my production, I never really just sat on the type of music that made me hot? Everybody else took my shit and ran with it, but me. That was my fault.

You notice Lil Jon, Timbaland, The Neptunes and Jazzy Pha once they found their sound and ran with it. You sit on it. I didn't do that. And now I understand: you find that sound that people like and it's what they want. Fuck what everybody is saying, the critics: their beats all sound alike. McDonald's they always number one. People talk all that shit about McDonalds, but when you go in there you know what you want.

**You do tend to exude this aura of not caring. But you actually do care way more than a lot of artists even in your position. You actually have a lot to say about what goes on in the political arena and what happens to your people. So you're not concerned . . .**

What happens to poor people, period. I used to be on the pro black shit. It ain't really . . . you're looking at me 'coz you want some more. Poor people are like dogs. They make us think it's about

black and white dudes. It ain't about black and white. It's about rich and poor. It ain't about nothing more than that. And the truth is; I can honestly say I don't care as much as I used to because people don't truly give a fuck about me. I sacrificed dude. I don't talk this shit. I live what I talk about. You know what I'm saying? Do those same people turn around and help you in your time of need?

Last year was the worst year of my life dude. Muthafuckas left me out there bad. And do you think if I hadn't came back that a person would have really given a fuck about me? Hell no. And that's the cold truth. So understanding that my dude, I want my money now. I want my motherfuckin paper. That's what I'm all about right now. Do you want to know what David Banner is about right now? I'm about cold hard motherfuckin cash my nigga. Because if you even look at politics, if I make money, then I'm able to really help the people of Katrina and not talk shit about the government. I can do something. So that's what I'm about. Stop bitching and make paper nigga. Make money.

**What is your goal then for 2008? I mean let's say you do get where you want to be career wise, money wise, what exactly is your ambition then? What's driving you?**

My ambition, first of all, is to stand on Gods' Law and truth. And then you'll be okay. But really I'm trying to take everything I do, my dude. I really want to be feared. When I step in the studio, I want motherfuckers to say damn, that nigga raw. I'll give you an example. Puttin names at the beginning of a track. Who started that? You don't have to say it; I did. They didn't start putting names before tracks until David Banner. Will I ever get credit? Will a motherfucker bow down to me as one motherfucker that really influenced? You listen to a lot of this R&B shit that sounds like "Rubber Band Man." You know what I'm saying? From putting the hard beats over, the 808s making that shit fashionable and cool.



Powering your digital music world.

If you've been surfing profile sites with built in stores then you have certainly come across the SNOCAP embedded music player. It auditions your entire catalogue and functions as a direct link to the MP3 retailer. It's the nice neat all-in-one package synonymous with MySpace. Recently a deal was worked out with CD Baby bypassing all the red tape of having multiple outlets selling your releases. We sat down with **Bruce Taylor**, the Vice President of marketing and PR at SNOCAP who joined on last year.

**How do you feel about the impact MySpace itself has had on musicians in presenting their music?**

**Bruce Taylor:** MySpace is an incredible platform. It is allowing artists to connect directly with the fans and giving them all the tools that they need. I mean it's pretty amazing when you have somebody like Snoop Dogg that's got over 500,000 friends on their MySpace page and with the push of a button Snoop Dogg can send a message out to all those people and it doesn't cost him a cent to do it. That to me is an incredibly powerful tool for someone at Snoop Dogg's level or even for somebody that's just getting started with their career. It has really given them all the tools in which they can communicate directly with their fans. SNOCAP has given them an opportunity to sell their music directly to their fans.

**As an artist or a musician, where should I be before I begin to seek out SNOCAP as my distributor?**

It doesn't really matter to be honest with you. We work with artists at all levels. We're really all about empowering artists. I don't think it's ever too early in your career to start using SNOCAP.

**What is a good strategy along with SNOCAP to widen my audience? Once I've signed up with SNOCAP, what do I do now?**

Once you've signed up with SNOCAP, you upload your tracks and you set the price for your tracks in your store. You bundle the tracks together into what some term an album, what some call

an EP, or what some people just call a bundle. We've got some people that bundle together a \$3 bundle pack or a 3-song bundle pack. And they'll put 3 songs in there for a \$1.99. But once you've set up your store, then it's a matter of doing the marketing. And there's no substitute for hard work when it comes down to marketing, particularly on MySpace. So once you've created the store, then you need to send a bulletin out to all your friends on MySpace telling them that the store is there.

**With SNOCAP, you can actually embed the store directly into the bulletin. So every time that friend is opening up their bulletin to read up your new tracks that you're promoting in the bulletin, the store pops up right in front of them. So that's really a way that you can really grab an impulse purchase very quickly.**

With SNOCAP, you can actually embed the store directly into the bulletin. So every time that friend is opening up their bulletin to read up your new tracks that you're promoting in the bulletin, the store pops up right in front of them. So that's really a way that you can really grab an impulse purchase very quickly. So the bulletin is important. Making sure that you're blogging about your activity. If you go into the studio and you record a track there and you upload that into SNOCAP, write a blog about that. Really give your fans an inside look into what you're doing as an artist, what the creative process is. The more you get the fan involved and engaged and in the creative process itself the more



they're going to feel attached to you and ultimately the more tracks they're going to buy from you.

The field of video distribution is so wide and open with so many services. It's a huge ocean. SNOCAP is quickly rising to the top tier of that. Do you feel pressure from the industry?

No, we really don't feel pressure from the industry.

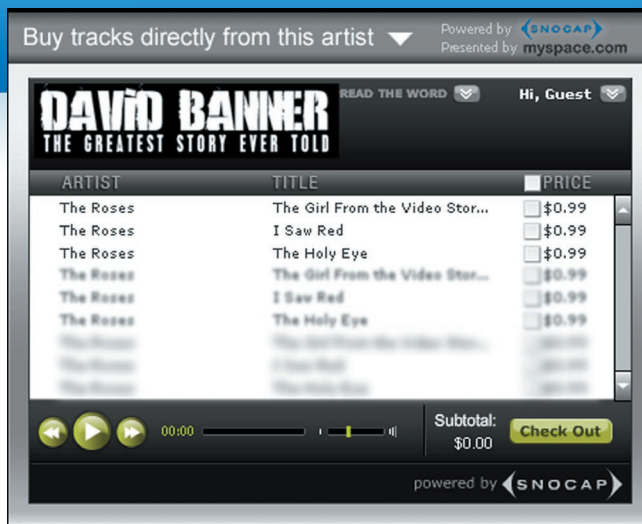
We're trying to support the industry. We're trying to do everything we possibly can to make sales on the Internet easier for the industry. We're making deals with labels everyday because they understand the importance of MySpace and they understand the importance of connecting directly to their fans. The industry has really accepted us with open arms.

**How do you feel about video in this context?** We think video is great. And video is certainly on our roadmap for future releases of our product. But right now, we want to nail audio distribution first.

**What about an artist who already has several albums out and is making the conversion to digital**



Powering your digital music world.



A general idea for your store design

**and the album has already been in the marketplace?**

We recently announced the deal with Warner Music Group and recently put up stores for Diddy and TI and Notorious B.I.G. All these stores are selling that catalog content. So it doesn't just have to be about new releases. We really want the SNOCAP store for each artist to be a repository for all their content. And one of the neat things about the store as an artist, you have the ability to manage the order in which the tracks appear in the store, how the different bundles appear together. So it's really your store to merchandise the content in the way that you want to.

**Whose idea was to make the embedded player? Like that was a stroke of genius not only from MySpace, but I've seen the SNOCAP profiles on many, many artists' sites and many other sites that aren't even the artists themselves.**

Sure. Sean Fanning who was the founder of the original Napster several years ago, he was the one that came up with the idea for SNOCAP and for our digital registry. And I have to be honest with you...I can't attribute the specific embeddable store concept to any one individual at the company. We have a really great development and creative process where we do a lot of brainstorming together. And it wouldn't be right to give any one person credit for that idea because it's really a group and team creative process among all

the folks at SNOCAP. One of the cool things about SNOCAP is almost everybody that works at the company is an artist themselves and a musician. So it's just a really cool creative group of people at work who come up with the concepts.

**What do you see for the future of SNOCAP**

**besides implementing video?** There are other aspects of revenue in which we want to empower artists to be able to sell direct to their fans. So you can imagine things like ring tones, things like merchandise, ticketing, and video of course.

**Are there any thoughts to branch off from MySpace and perhaps make your own SNOCAP profile site, which is based on basically only musicians and artists?**

Not currently. MySpace has been a great partner for us. And we're doing everything that we can to make MySpace even better than it already is for musicians and for artists and for fans. It's definitely not our intention to create our own SNOCAP retail environment. We're really trying to put the power in the hands of the artist and the power to the people that are creating the content and the power to the labels and enable them to sell direct to their fans on the websites that they control.

**How do you feel about the overall direction going into the digital sales distribution idea and moving away from vinyl and also now moving away from the CD medium?**

Well, I think it's inevitable as we continue to progress through the 21st century, digital is going to become more and more important. I think you're going to see things. In addition to downloads, you're obviously seeing a lot of streaming right now. There have been some interesting

discussions about people doing away with their CD and actually just selling a USB key, which has the songs already uploaded onto the USB key itself. So then you just slide that in your USB slot on your laptop or your mp3 player. I think you're just going to see a lot of different strategies in the digital world. And we've really built SNOCAP to try to capitalize any place where digital distribution is happening. We think the SNOCAP registry can be a central hub for that.

**Well, I certainly congratulate you on your business. I think SNOCAP is a wonderful resource. Many of my friends and affiliates are already using it. Is there anything else you'd like to add and let people know about SNOCAP?**

Well, I think it's all about empowering artists to be able to take control of their own careers. There is clearly a role for the record label. Once an artist builds up a solid fan base, running the business and the marketing side of being a major artist takes a lot of time. And so I think there's always going to be a place for the record label in this business. What we've done with SNOCAP is just really give an artist all the tools that they need to manage their careers themselves and also sell directly to their fans.

So there are some cool things you can do with our store. You can set your own price for your tracks. And we've seen some artists that are selling their tracks for 59 cents because they're just starting out and they want to try to reach many more people with our lower price point. And then we're also seeing rap artists that are selling instrumentals for \$500 a track. Again, just as another distribution channel as a way to sell tracks. So we're seeing lots of different creative things out there. And we're just really proud to be a part of the whole revolution that's happening. And the revolution that's happening on MySpace is certainly a major force to be reckoned with in the industry. [snocap.com](http://snocap.com)



# PRODUCER'S EDGE

## 9th Wonder



"...if I want to make beats with the same snares and kicks; people say that I use... you know what? I'm going to do it . . . that producer or dissector or whatever can keep downloading my beats. It's up to them to keep doing it. 'cuz that's what they do. It's like they say *ah, you sound the same. I'm getting tired of them and they download everything I do.*"



Video: 9th displays a **best of** behind the wheels!

**What should your diehard fans expect out of the *Dream Merchants* album?**

**9th Wonder:** The 9th wonder...classic 9th wonder. I make a style of music that's not really for the mainstream marketplace like that.

**What about on a lyrical front? What's going on there?**

The lyrical front is just raps, man. Just straight metaphors and similes. It's rap that's not in the mainstream place either. So I guess that's the lyrical front.

I know you said that you're going to basically ignore any sort of criticism or pressure from your fans. But you know in particular, and I will say, you in particular, your sound- every bit of audio quality, the high hat, the snare, the kick, anywhere you chop your loop- is being dissected by the diehard core producer fans. The guys on the come up are really listening to every single thing you do and using it as a model for them- in their sound and their aspirations. Is there anyway you can ignore that while you're making your tracks and really tune that out?

I do it all the time. I ignore it all the time. I mean I'm 32 years old man and I'm not easily influenced. I mean as far as what I want to do in my everyday life. I got other beats ,that's made with different hats, snares, and kicks. But if I want to make beats with the same snares and kicks; people say that I use... you know what? I'm going to do it . . . that producer or dissector or whatever can keep downloading my beats. It's up to them to keep doing it. 'cuz that's what they do. It's like they say *ah, you sound the same. I'm getting tired of them* and they download everything I do.

**You are the legendary producer still using Fruity Loops when so many other people are building these multi-million dollar studios and not getting as far as you are in the game. There's got to be some envy and jealousy. But, is there pressure for you to switch up your workflow? Are you still being hit?**

It's easy. It's like Basketball man. Either you can play or you can't. I mean if you could dunk, you could dunk with Jordan's on. You could dunk with Chuck Taylors [on]. It's the same thing with music. If you can make music, you can make music on Fruity Loops, Cubase, a Triton, the Starship Enterprise, whatever. It doesn't matter.

So I'm going to still continue to do what I do. There's jealousy and envy and you know what jealousy and envy does? It gets you nowhere.

**What about also the statement that people want to see you back with Little Brother again? What are you going to do to pacify those fans that want that combination?**

I mean we've got the deal that's going on right now. Hopefully, we'll get back together. But one thing is certain. I'm going to continue to put out good music. And Phonte, Big Pooh are going to continue to put out good music.

**Even in that sense you've worked with a lot of big name groups, I mean a lot of really hugely established artists. But yet you still find time to break those artists around that middle level of our consciousness. Why are you still reaching back to artists that are on the cusp of being known?**

Because I was an artist on the cusp of being known. One thing I learned from Jay-Z is *I'll put you on so you can put your boys on*. That's a pay it forward type of situation. That's my thing. It's like he put me on to millions of people. The best thing that I can do is put somebody else on to millions of people...whether they feel like they need my help or not. There's something



# PRODUCER'S EDGE

about being on that middle cusp area that's more honest. I don't ever want to lose that. I never want to be considered unreachable by anybody.

**A lot of other name producers including Just Blaze have really been dropping your name in their interviews saying *who's worth listening to*. How do you think that came about? Or what music do you think they're listening to that's saying 9th Wonder is the next guy to pay attention to?**

I guess for Just Blaze to be a fan of my music means a lot to me 'coz I'm a fan of his. And that just goes to show you we can all coexist as far as different producers. There's not enough love being shown between artists. And that's one thing rappers don't really do. Producers do that. We always show [love]. It's like a brotherhood man. We band together, stick together to the hinge. I don't know exactly what Just Blaze said . . . I know he called me and told me about the "Let it Go" [Little Brother ft. Mos Def] joint that I'm in. And he said *that's crazy man, that's crazy*. And for him to say that is equitable of what he puts out there. For him to say that about me means a lot. So we do got to love each other like that.

**Let's go a little bit over your workflow when you begin to actually start producing a joint. I'd have to assume it's going to be sample first.**

Yeah, sample first.

**When you're laying out the drums, are you still into the tapping it in or can you actually visually see the sequence in your head before you start laying out the drums?**

Well, it's kind of it's like you listen to it

and you know kind of what drums go where and whatever. You can see it on the screen as far as Fruity Loops is concerned. But I see drums in my head and then do what I do after that.

**And then what are you using for all the swing settings? You're doing that by ear? You're doing it by numerical value saying I know a round here gets me where I want to go?**

By ear.

**As far as processing goes, how much happens between what**

babies. So where I live, I'm around soccer moms all day who don't listen to 9th wonder. So I'm with soccer moms who shop at Wal-Mart. There's just this whole other family man in me.

**Where do you draw that line between respect for the MC and appreciating the money and commercial success that comes from working with the Rapper?**

It's not about that you're a Rapper or MC. It's accessibility and non-accessibility. That's the two things.

Either we can find you or we can't. There's a guy in San Francisco by the name of Jay-T that did this. He's a Rapper/MC/whatever. And he just sold...this guy is a millionaire. Nobody has ever heard of him.

*"The producer sees the song, whether he gets the idea for the song or he sees the total duration for the song, whether he's in the studio or not. A beatmaker does his beat and he can do whatever. No concept. No nothing. And when he gets the song back, he doesn't know about where to drop [elements] or anything like that or effects or anything like that. That's the beat maker."*

**What about that distinction**

**between producer and beat maker then...do you see a line there?**

That's a big difference. The producer sees the song, whether he gets the idea for the song or he sees the total duration for the song, whether he's in the studio or not. A beatmaker does his beat and he can do whatever. No concept. No nothing. And when he gets the song back, he doesn't know about where to drop [elements] or anything like that or effects or anything like that. That's the beat maker.

**actually leaves your door and gets finally sent out for mastering? Are you a big plug-in user? Are you more native? Do you do a lot of tweaking? Do you leave that to the mix board?**

I leave that to the mix people. I leave all that tweaking and stuff to the mix people.

**What's the reaction in your own neighborhood about your production? Like are you able to go outside and be unknown or is it a lot of dudes hitting you up with propositions and ideas?**

No. I mean I'm a family man.

**So you'll still accept a beat CD? You still accept a guy coming in with just him rhyiming on the mix tape saying I want to work with you someday?**

No, I'm not . . . see the thing about me is I'm a family man. I'm married with

**How do you deal with the producer block? You're sitting in the studio and spend a couple of hours and you just haven't been able to put something together that you're feeling for that day. How do you get past that?**

Go get something to eat and come



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back. I don't do too much on that man. Go somewhere. Walk away from it and come back.

**Do you listen to other people's music for inspiration at all? Do you ever listen to someone else's old stuff, modern stuff and say oh this is another way I could take it?**

Yeah sometimes. I listen to a lot of early '80s R&B. The SOS band, midnight songs stuff like that. I found that by kind of doing it, taking it that particular direction inspires me.

**Where are you going for your crate digging? Do you still enjoy crate digging?**

Yeah, I still enjoy the crate digging man. I go to A One records in New York right now, their sound library...it's down in Manhattan. I go there a lot. I go to a guy by the name of Gene Brown that sells me a lot of records. He travels the countryside collecting records. And he sells it...and I go to Q Records in Philly. I go there. I go to Earwax in Atlanta...some different places I definitely frequent.

**Are you actually listening to the newer crop of beat makers coming up? Are you listening to unsigned music stuff- maybe from MySpace, dudes making the beats on YouTube?**

Yeah man. I listen to those beats man. There's a lot of good beat makers out there man just doing their thing, making names for themselves, ones after me. Like I'm a big fan of Black Milk [myspace.com/blackmk]. He's doing his thing. I definitely like a lot of the beatmakers.

**Have you ever thought about getting an apprentice? Or maybe do you have one, someone that you bring up along underneath you?**

I have a kid that I influence, not necessarily an apprentice. I just have kids around that like to learn.

**Well in that regard, how do you feel about ghost production? Would you ever let someone else push a**

**track forward under your name to get them in the door?**

It depends. I wouldn't do that. Doesn't make me feel good. Some people coming onto me and be like *ooh, you did that beat*. I'm like *I didn't do it though*. I can't. I couldn't live with that. I really want to be known doing my beat. Now I would give proxy if I knew somebody that found the sample. But as far as me doing the beat, I want that person to get his . . . now, it maybe a situation where some people do ghost production. And that's what they do. And that's their way of doing it. There's nothing wrong with that. I just can't do that man.

**There's been a lot of talk on what tools producers are willing to cosign and stamp on and which ones they won't. So I'm going to ask you what are your feelings on the loop libraries or the sample packs, commercially available sample libraries, loops, drum kits, all of that? Are those tools considered taboo? Or is that ok to be part of your arsenal?**

I mean I don't use them. But if you got to use them . . . I mean you got to think man. What if I live in Montana or Pocatello, Idaho or some far off place in America who don't have record stores? But I want to make beats...and I can get these sound libraries off the net man. I mean you can't deny the kid who got the hunger to do something. He ain't just sitting out there. He wants to do something man. So I don't use them. But those things are creative . . . I don't get into that man. *I don't get into all of that what you use, what you don't. I like to pump it in my car and listen to it. If I like it, I like it.*

**How do you feel then about virtual instruments? There's a great debate going between the studio being all virtual or should it still be based on old hardware. I know you've embraced the soft sequencer. What about the sounds themselves if you're going to add some instrumentation?**

Same thing. For me, I got bit man. I've been a fan of Hip Hop man. Before

9th wonder came along, I was a fan of hip hop for 16 years man. 16 years I knew nothing about that stuff. I didn't grow up in a studio. I wasn't around a studio. None of that. All I wanted to do was put my CD in and play it. If it bangs, it bangs. So all that extra what you got in your studio, I don't care. I really don't care. If I found it out later, I found out later.

'coz there was a lot of people that got these big studios. They paid \$200,000 to buy all this stuff. And then when you hit play, it's hot garbage. Why did you buy all this stuff for? What are you doing this for? You know what I'm saying? I really don't care daddy-o. I want to hear the final results, the end result. Does it sound good? Can I play it in my car? Can I play it at my cookout? Can I ride home at 4 in the morning and listen to it? Can I do that? If I can't do that, all of what you got in your studio means nothing to me.

**Nice. Well what do you want to say for the supporters, those that are sitting there, hanging on, waiting to see you go to that next, next, super level, and crack that tier where we have a summer where every song is a 9th song on the radio?**

Man, just hold tight. Hopefully that day is coming. But if it don't come, it just don't come. And I don't make music for that. I make music to make people feel good. And my goal is not to be the ruler of the radio. My goal is to make music that people can enjoy and play for their kids and play it for their friends. That's my goal. And if I happen to still make some money, if I'm making money because of that, then fine. If I don't, then I don't. And just keep listening 'coz there's definitely more to come.

**What projects are next throughout the rest of the year and early next year? What else are you trying to get into?**

**9th wonder:** Buckshot's *Killer Formula*. *Sweet Lord* by Murs, *Jeanius* by Jean Grae, *The Wonder Years*. And that's it for right now man.

**We thank 9th Wonder for sitting down with us.**





## HAVOC Words by Will Loiseau *The Kush* and more.



Audio: Sample the Kush

### How much of yourself is injected into this album?

Havoc: I felt that being the producer myself and lyricist...it's a lot; I did everything. It's me. I didn't feel that I needed help [guest appearances] to make it what it is.

### Some people have said that after the release of the *Murda Muzik* album you went to an inspired lyrical phase. What caused you to be noticed more for your lyrics?

As an MC I always pushed myself. I'm my own worst critic so whenever I rhyme I always had to be good. It kind of surprised me that people did say that. At the same time like I know what kind of work I'm throwing myself so it's sort of expected.

### When can we expect another Mobb Deep album and how will your solo projects affect the chemistry?

I don't think it's really going to affect future records like that. If anything, it's going to be affected positively. Know what I mean?

"I like the people who constructively criticize what I do because it makes me better. Anybody could get mad at criticisms that come up when they have an album -whether it's bad or good. We use that as a tool. It will be used to help my next business venture."

**For this *Kush* album, you decided to go solo with the production duties- although you make tight tracks, why not follow the trend and load it with all-star producers?**

Because I'm an all-star cat myself. I have confidence in my music so I took on this project...all me.

### Why Koch/Nature Sounds as opposed to staying under the G-Unit umbrella?

That decision was made because I wanted more focus on my own. This is me and what I do. Major labels are busy. If you want hands on then you have to go the independent route. This isn't something manufactured.

**What tools were used to make this album?** I like software, it's good. It's almost the same thing as using hardware, keyboards and all that. But you know I'm still stuck using the MPC and the keyboards that I use. Of course Pro Tools with a little bit of that analogue touch. I still mixed through the Neve board.

**In putting together the songs...Was it beats first, rhymes second or did you come up with a topic and then make a bunch of beats and match the verses?** It's half and half for me. Sometimes I come up with the idea or sometimes I come up with a track first. So it's like there's no method to it. It's like either or.

**What do you feel is your trademark or your overall contribution to the production world? What's different sound wise for the production on this venture?** They will say I'm pretty much stuck in the same vein; that original dark gritty sound. People say it's my trademark.

**Do you get input from Prodigy or just work in isolation?** All the time. He previewed the album. He'll listen to my music and be one of my harshest critics.

**Every great artist strives to create that indisputable masterpiece. Do you feel you've grown as a vocalist and a producer?** I always try to outdo myself. I feel every time that I lay it down that I'm outdoing myself. If I'm becoming better...at the end of the day, the fans are going to decide.

### Out of all the tracks you've laid down over the years, what's the one you've always liked best?

I don't know. I listen to all the music old and new. But one favorite that I always listen to..."Shook Ones Pt II". That could be taken as a benchmark for what I'm doing in the future, you know what I'm saying? It's good music when we build from our foundation. We love what we do. I want timeless music.

**Any new tools out there you might have your eye on?** I got my eye on a few pieces. I can't say I have favorites, but I am definitely seeing what's new [in production].

**MPC 2500?** That's great- they [AKAI] should keep on coming up with more gear like this so we have more choices for production.

**What did you learn from this album? Is this meant to take your awareness to another level worldwide or set the**



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## **stage for another business move?**

I'm looking for the responses, good or bad. That's how I approach this whole situation like. You know somebody comes at you like, "That was like this. It was like that." I don't get mad at that. I like the people who constructively criticize what I do because it makes me better. Anybody could get mad at criticisms that come up when they have an album -whether it's bad or good. We use that as a tool. It will be used to help my next business venture.

**Is there anything from your *Free Agent* stage that taught you about dealing with pressure in this industry?** I had to use the same format I've always used. I stick to the idea of good music and deal with the rest day by day.

**You guys have been doing this since you were kids. What keeps the passion going?** Love for music. I love music. It just puts me in a certain mood. So I love to make it and I'm going to make it until I can't anymore.

**You've had your share of the industry beef and you've always chosen to stay on the business side even when other rappers have been able to capitalize off the buzz. Why do you steer clear?**

Because at the end of the day that's what it's all about. It's not about who can beat who up. It's about who can make you feel a certain way with the music that they make. That's what we're doing. We make music. It will put you in a certain mood. I'm not going to cook beef for this rapper or that artist. For me personally, my beef is with the music. Can I make a dope song. Let the music...beat me.

**I heard you recently completed a software product deal with Voxonic. Do you think in some ways it's easier to communicate through music with fans overseas even if they might not exactly understand the concept of what you're saying?**

It depends. But I can tell you this one thing, when you go overseas, it's because you're not over there all the time that they tend to kind of appreciate

the music more. Here? It's in front of our face so we take this for granted. It's in abundance. So we take our artists for granted. We take the music for granted. They don't get it as often. You go over there they love it because they're not producing those kinds of artists over there.

**What do you define as your production day? Start with sample digging or you just work on beats?**

Sometimes I start playing the keyboard or I'll play the drums that's in there already, or I'll go to the records, put the record on and see if anything bubbles. I may listen to a record a hundred times, but I may still come up with a new idea.

**You keep a pretty tight group too. Like you don't do too many collabos, so how do the guest appearances with a M.O.P. or a Tribe Called Quest happen?**

Those are like our favorite artists, you know what I mean, so we going to make things like that happen. We'd always reach out to people that we consider our friends. We get up with them- especially with Tribe being from Queens. You know what I mean, like they was right there.

**I know your original reason for getting into production was a lack of worthy tracks. You knew that if you didn't do it yourself, no one would see where you were trying to go. Did that transition help your beatmaking skills...knowing you can't just lay down a track that's nice to listen to and can't be spit over?**

It definitely has! If somebody else gave me a track and it was bad, I don't want to be on it. So if I'm making it for myself, of course, I want to make it hot. When I'm making the track, I'm making it not only for me, I'm making it for the world to listen to it has to be...utterly crazy.

**Ever been intimidated by one of your old tracks and froze up? Like you need three weeks to write to it?**

All the time. [Laughter erupts]. All the time! I just recently made a track and I can't come up with hook! It's too dope

to me so I called Prodigy to come up with the rest since he's so dope. The track was just too retarded.

**Is there still internal competition between the two of you? Like he comes up with something sick and you got to come back?**

All the time because --Imagine rhyming along side Prodigy as your partner-how hard that's going to be. That's what made me a better lyricist. I'm trying to go at someone who's the best lyricist in the world. Do you understand what I'm saying? A lot of people don't have that level of competition.

**So now who do you think is on your plane lyrically? Who do you say out there is tight?**

A lot of people, I can't just pick on one person. I don't see myself as the nicest lyricist in the world. But I do my job. I like Jadakiss, The Lox, Fabolous gets down.

**Who musically?** These days I'm looking at the old school producers. I met someone recently who is related to Gamble and Huff, I was like...wow [pauses and looks out the window thoughtfully]. I like the producers that are out there now like Swizz Beatz and such. I love them to death, but I'm looking really deep to come up with that sound.

**What do you do to give back to that new cat trying to get on? He bought that first module, he's messing with something. He's trying to get that sound. He's trying to get to that level. What would you give that guy as advice to get to where he wants to go?** All I say is work on music 24/7. Make beats in your sleep. I make 5 to 10 a day...from scratch.

**Do you get producer's block? Doing the same thing over and over again and you need to take a break for some fresh ideas...**

Yeah, I've been in the studio many times. When I've thought I can't make anything. I don't try to force it if it doesn't fit.

**You've matured in this game. Are you thinking more about the legacy**



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**behind you and the message you're sending with your lyrics?**

I'm just into making music. Whatever people get from it... I'm not trying to be a preacher, but I do want them to see my work ethic. The title *Kush* is about inspiration. You don't have to smoke, But you're definitely gonna zone out with this one.

**What's next for both you and Prodigy- business wise and also creatively?** The Mobb Deep album. You can't really look to the future like that. It's something that's not in the making but we're not going anywhere.

**A lot of your fans would feel that the association with G-unit might water you down or change you. Could all that money make Mobb Deep go Hollywood. Was there a risk?**

Any business move that you take in your life is always full of some kind of risk. It has some kind of risk or it wouldn't be a business move. When we did that with G-Unit, I felt to this day it was a good move on my behalf. I love it when critics criticize us good or bad. They might have said *"Oh, we loved Mobb Deep better before..."* Whatever it is they are going to say, say it. I aint mad at you. I know that we're making this music with good intentions. This album is a breath of fresh air. "Blood Money". The only difference was we had extra elements that we didn't have before. Whether you like them [50 and G-Unit] or not, that's on you.

**In the end, what do you feel like you learned from that association - something creative you didn't have before, maybe you rediscovered something that you lost earlier?**

You know what I learned from it, it's learning how to work with other people. For a long time we worked with just me and P and a collective few. We don't work with other people. 50 is a smart brother. Aside from just music; sitting down with him was like a learning experience. I like being around people like that as opposed to people that's not good. Company rubs off on you.



**Also, you started out being so young, how do you guys stay level headed, how do you still maintain - you're not in jail, you're not strung out on drugs, you don't look like you've aged. How do you survive?** Being humble, I mean you got to be humble. I feel like I'm not better than anybody, no matter what's his situation is.

**"I'm just trying to be me at the end of the day. Like, I know I should be selling the product but at the same time I'm selling me, me as a person. I'm conscious of what I say. When people read it I'll let them get me, not just Havoc. That's how I talk. That's it."**

**How has being on Nature Sounds affected your outlook?** It's a record company at the end of the day so you got to stay on top of whoever that you sign to. It could be Loud Records, Koch, whoever. You can't trust anyone more than anyone else and take your business for granted. You got to really

stay on top of it.

**Why still live in New York if you could live anywhere?**

Because I'm a New Yorker, born and raised in New York. I can't see myself moving across the water to Jersey. I'm a New Yorker!

**I'm digging in the archive for this one. When the West Coast beef kicked off, why were you the only group that stood up?**

It is what it is and like I said, I'm a New Yorker. I love New York. I'm going to stand up for New York. I know that I had to go to Cali but we still did that

song. Stand up New York and make a statement. We did it. They criticized us but where were you when New York was getting kicked on?

**How is Prodigy's health right now?** P is doing good, you know what I mean? He's more conscious of his health. He just loves life.

**Where do you expect yourself and the Mobb Deep name to be in a year from now? One year, twelve months, you can count it. I know obviously you know what's coming out. You know what videos will be released. What's your projection in a year?**

Projection in a year, all the way to the top. That's how I always think, all the way to the top.

**Can we have one production related gem? Man, that's hard. No secrets. Something you used before and don't now? No.**

**I know you got something dusty in the rack and you haven't plugged in- in a minute. C'mon admit it. [laughs]** Alright. I still got my EPS plus. Every now and then I plug that joint in. That's it! [nods head]

Make sure you pick up the next Mobb Deep album and thanks for the support Producer's Edge.

**Thank you Havoc and continued luck with the Nature Sounds release *Kush*.**



## Mr. COLLIPARK

**H**ow nice do you have to be at what you do to take the name of your city and rock it as your stage name? Enter Mr. Collipark, the Atlanta based Florida export, who dropped heavy with Miami Bass and lifted Crunk. Collipark has settled into a production family setting in these years following his great success with the Ying Yang Twins. Oh Snap! He's also sharing his insight in Music Powers, a book and production resource aimed at music business education. Let's go in.

**What made you to decide to go with a camp idea as opposed to going it alone, production-wise?**

**Mr. Collipark:** Well, I have always been alone and actually I just started finding myself being surrounded by other producers who enjoy working with me, so instead of fighting that, I just embraced it and with the help of my brother Derrick, we formed 'The Package Store'. It was time for me to get my own studio and everything, timing wise, worked itself out.

**What are you doing as far as picking producers for your camp? What would it take to actually become a part of The Package Store?**

I'm not really looking for any more producers, because I wanted to notice the talent that I have now. I have four very talented guys and I have learned not to take home more than I can handle. For me to keep adding on

producers right now... I would have to neglect the ones that I have and I do not want to do that.

**Do you feel any need for separation between the different gear everyone has access to? Are you worried about producers leaning on the same sounds?**

Everybody pretty much has their own stuff. We have two separate rooms in my studio, and two of the guys work in one room and me and one of the other guys is working in another room and then Tom Slick, he kind of bounces back and forth. So when everybody works alone, they use their own stuff, and when we come together we kind of share stuff.

**In regards to 'Soulja Boy', what did you first hear about him?**

I thought it was some silly shit that some kid was doing, that was my very first impression and that was without

me knowing absolutely anything about him. The first song that I heard from him was [judged] basically from the quality of the recording. I just didn't take him seriously.

**What caused the turning point?**

When I looked at his MySpace and really saw what was going on then I started listening with a different ear.

**So now you are actually saying the profile site is what clinched the deal?**

Yeah, the MySpace page when I saw that, and then when I talked to him... the first time I talked to him the charisma and just how he came off to me was like I got this and that kind of impressed me. I usually get a lot different response when I meet people like that and he kept his cool man and he was very confident, and very secure in where he was and what he was doing. That made me want to bring him in even more.

**Why the direction of 'Feel Good' Music, of all the kinds of music you could be making or might desire to make, why "Feel Good" music?**

Well I come from a bass music background, so that's all that was, but what's crazy is another advantage of having a production team such as "The Package Store" and a lot of people don't know... when I am in my zone and not worried about pleasing the industry, I do a lot of different kinds of stuff and I don't have an opportunity a lot of times to get that out but through 'The Package Store', I will get to introduce that side of me through them.

Unfortunately, once they get stuck on something, you have to give them what they want; but I am kind of marketing "The Package Store" as sort of a separate entity.

**I see! Now, what about keeping the egos in check among the camp?**

There is no ego, none. I probably have got the biggest ego and I don't have an ego. For real, everybody that's around me right now really truly loves what they do. When you truly enjoy and love music and you are really talented at it

AND you get paid... no egos man.

**Who would you consider an early influence on your production style?**

On my production it was like a lot of Magic Mike, Mr. Mix was very, very influential, the way they were putting their songs together because it was scratches and stuff the DJs would do. So, I was a DJ in the beginning. That's what brought me in and got me interested in what they were doing.

**What would you consider your number one or main production tool?**

Probably Motif, no, no; it used to be the SP-12. I have transferred my drums from the SP-12 to the MPC, but all my drums out [now] are the still the ones -- the basis of all my production still comes from those basic sounds I started producing with back when I was rapping. I still use the same 808 that I used on "Whistle While You Twurk" on something that I do now.

**How does your MC background and also the DJ**

**adjust how your production style comes out?**

Really, I produce with the end in mind meaning that my ultimate goal is going to always be to move people like in a dance manner, because that's where I come from. So if you don't move people, if you don't move me, then it's just there- I am not moved.

**So you are basically seeing the record being played in the club and hearing it in that mentality as you are creating the track.**

Right and that's the sound that you get man, like there is a record that myself and Swole out of 'The Package Store' just did for Mike Jones "Drop & Gimme

50" and I haven't done a record like this since "Ying Yang" and it just had that sound man, and when I play it for women, you just know it when you hear it. Probably the last record I did, that moved the club like this is "Ms. New Booty", because I haven't really been inspired to do those types tracks since "Ying Yang" but I originally did it for "Hurricane" and my "Ying Yang" sound that I had with them, kind of, came from New Orleans and Miami Bass combined.

So, when I got with Hurricane it

Motif and I still use it.

**Are you interested in after processing like using eternal Rack Units, vintage pieces?**

Old school man, I leave that to my guys; now they are more into that kind of stuff, but me I am still a drum machine and keyboard man.

**No software going on, no plug-ins?**

I do a lot of stuff with Swole, and he does that. He will get in there and start messing with all of that stuff, but me personally I don't get into it.

"...these rappers can't even write songs. They are getting deals off swag now, like they can't even make records by themselves. They can fill in songs. They need a beat with a hook, and that's how they get down. See, when I came into the game, if you can write a song, you run the f\*\*\*\*\*g rapper.

Today, you have got people getting deals of how they look... you could be a street dude, but be a real artist..."

**How does your production day work?**

I don't have a set any more man, most of stuff that I have done that you guys know of I did at home by myself. The luxury of doing stuff at home is I could start on something today and leave it alone and if I want to and get back to it when I'm inspired to mess with it. When you are in sessions with artists or when you are working with other people, you just have got to go in and do what you do. That usually

starts with a bottle of Patrón and we just go for it, we just bang it out.

**What about writer's block or being stuck on an idea, how do you get around that?**

Aww *shit*, if it ain't there man, you just call it a day and move on man.

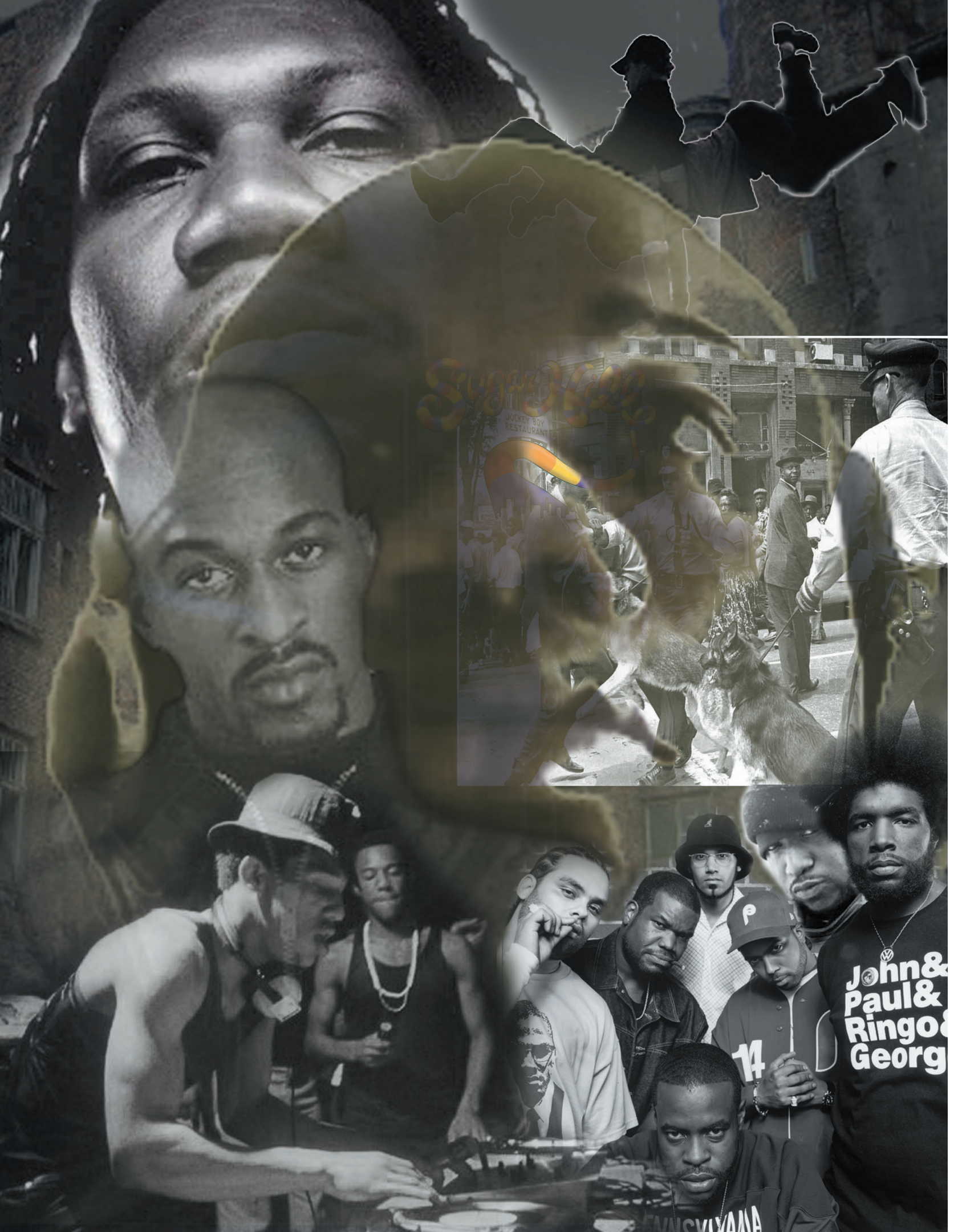
**With producers like Kanye West and even the Neptunes turning back to rapping, what about you turning artist over your own production?**

The only reason I can see is to just put my idea of how I see the music game out there for people to see. You have got the Kanyes and the people who listen to "Kanye West", then you got

kind of brought that back out and we originally did it for him but we called up Mike Jones and gave it to him, and it's featuring Hurricane so it's Mike Jones' first single.

**What about the Yamaha Motif Sound or the tone that attracted you to it?**

I think the live instruments, that's the keyboard that I did "Track Star" on. I wasn't really into playing stuff when I got that. I used a couple of old sound modules, but I didn't really take it seriously but when I heard the live instruments, the horns, the flutes and stuff like that, it just caught my ear, I guess from the band background I have, and that's what got me into the



Sugar Hill



John & Paul & Ringo & George

MICHIGANA



## WRITERS' BLOCK: THE POLICE STATE

Words by Fine Print

I was a youngin' when hip-hop formed and went from being on the corner and parks to the first mainstream hit from Sugar Hill Gang. Growing up with Hip-Hop watching it start as an infant and growing into the experimental stage, it felt like you were getting information regarding a wide array of different topics. If I wanted to know what life was like and what struggles were being experienced on the West coast I could throw on some Ice-T or N.W.A. For the east there were established pioneers with "The Message" like Melle Mel; and also the original new generation of emcees i.e. Kool G Rap that brought the streets to life on wax.

Suppose I was tired of hearing violence or negativity and felt like laughing, I could easily swap out my cassette and pop in Biz Markie; and hear "Pickin' Boogers" or "The Dragon". The first time I heard Biz say: *"Now what I'm emceein' might not seem kosher to you, but it's still something' we all have to do. So go up your nose with a finger or two, and pull out one or a crusty crew"*. And if you could imagine being a kid and hearing that on a record? Hilarious! Slick Rick's "Indian Girl" (An Adult Story) had me and my crew laughing for days.

There was time when I felt like hearing an emcee kill a verse and be lyrically creative. For those occasions when I wanted to hear that next level new flow I could play Big Daddy Kane or Rakim for classic lines like:

*"Standin' by the speaker, suddenly I had this fever, was it me or either summer madness?, cause I just can't stand around, so I get closer and the closer I get the better it sound. My mind starts to activate, rhymes collaborate, Cuz when I hear the beat I just had to make..."*

However, there were times back then when I yearned to gain an updated perspective of what was going on and how black people fit into the situation, not only in America, but the world. I never got that direct connection from listening to Martin Luther King Jr. nor from Malcolm X speeches; and definitely not from school textbooks. That is where Public Enemy and KRS-1 came in and gave us all information, not only about being black in America but also in respects to all of humanity, globally. From "911 Is a Joke" and "Black Steel in The Hour Of Chaos" to "Self-Destruction" and "Stop The Violence".

My question to YOU the reader is; where has the versatility, the need to inform people, and the backbone of hip-hop and M.C.'s gone?

No doubt hip-hop and our culture have come a long way from the days and times when the fore mentioned hip-hop legends dominated our tape decks and on the shoulder boom boxes. However, the need for information and innovation never gets old.

From one perspective it seems that the more popular our emcee's got the more involved big budget labels were. It felt like they almost controlled what we were hearing. When "Gangsta Rap" got a lot of heat, the pro-black movement came to the limelight. If you rhymed "Gangsta" you couldn't get a deal.

On the other hand, labels can only put out what we present to them and they magnify it from there. Hip-hop is a reflection of our culture and us. There has never been a time in history when it was actually cool to be perceived as uneducated and still, somehow, rich from some anonymous hustle. And this is shown in today's music. Since it seems that we don't want to laugh or be informed through

music anymore ( or that's at least what major labels think) I guess we won't be blessed with raw creative hip hop presented and supported by THE INDUSTRY on a mainstream level for a while.

Artists like The Roots, Common, Talib Kweli, and Kanye West are not enough. Although they are needed, they are a handful of artist that represent that type of perspective and/or genre that has always been with hip hop. But where are the other factions? There are vast amounts of emcee's that have innovative flows, are lyrically/musically creative, and are informative from every angle. My question is who doesn't want their voices to be heard? THE INDUSTRY or US?

Recommended listening for further Gems and Jewels/Discography

The Sugar Hill Gang: (Rappers Delight) 12" Released 1979 Grand Master Flash and The Furious Five: ("The Message") 12" Released 1982 Produced by: Duke Bootee

Slick Rick: *The Great Adventures Of Slick Rick* ("Hey Young World") Released 1988 Produced by: Ricky Walters

Ice-T: ("Colors") 12" Released 1988 Produced by: Afrika Islam

Kool G Rap & D.J. Polo: *Road To The Riches* ("Poison") Released 1988 Produced by: Marley Marl

Public Enemy: *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back* ("Rebel Without A Pause") Released 1988 Produced by: Hank Shocklee and The Bomb Squad

Boogie Down Productions: *Criminal Minded* ("9mm Goes Bang") Released 1987 Produced by: Ced Gee, DJ Scott La Rock, and KRS-One

Catch me on the forums for my full list.

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"I'd rather be a flawed original than a perfect copy." -Producer's Edge



A new year has just arrived and all of us have had a chance to be reflective of what we have (Thanksgiving), what we want (Christmas)

and what we want to do next (New Years' Resolutions). For the producers I've talked to it's been thanks for my skills, the nice gifts from x-mas and a promise to hustle harder/network and get more records (placements). I've also heard a lot of complaining about the music industry, the radio and rap politics. I ask you on behalf of the staff at Producer's Edge magazine to do something about it. We don't need any more talk. Artists with concrete plans, filled with logical steps, have the best chance of advancing and making a difference. We all need to have realistic and definable goals since our resolutions will only be met when backed up with physical action. Don't make a list of vague ideas and situations. Create a blueprint for your career with a list of things to do and how you will get them done yesterday. -Darius 'Big Heav' Hubbard



Hardware or software, analog or digital, CD-R or MP3, singles or the mixtape, an EP or an LP, collaborations or

solo efforts, Mac or PC, laptops or the desktop, mono or high-resolution stereo, presets or tweaked sound-patch designs, reverb or dry sound, self-programmed patterns or drum loops, 85bpm or 120bpm, sample based or original production, classic techniques or modern toys, follow the leader or trail-blaze a new path (that's a whole subject for another issue)...These are all questions that eventually flow through the minds of anyone thinking of making a musical odyssey this year and beyond. Whatever direction today's beatsmith decides to take, one thing is for sure, the mighty consumer has already begun to speak with their waning support for easily accessible, uninspired music. Our genres have become stale. It's time to come with radical and creative twists that can power a new generation of producers. If you're out there; the floor is all yours, go get em! - Proof Editor Will Loiseau



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