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Monday December 21, 2009

## Exclusive Dynamix II CM blog interview

In CM147's Focus we take a look at how you can create your own electro masterpiece. As part of the feature we interviewed DJ Scratch D (Dave Noller) from veteran electro pioneers Dynamix II, who have been making banging beats for more than twenty years.

The full interview was too big to fit in the magazine, so here it is in its entirety.

How did you get into making music?

"I got interested in music a very early age. I was 13 when I began to DJ for a local skating rink. I was always intrigued by the music I would hear early electronic dance music on the New York radio stations KISS FM & WBLS. It was the Mastermixes by The Latin Rascals, Shep Pettibone and Dynamic Duo that both stations were playing that peaked my interest in electronic dance music. I attended Full Sail School of the Recording Arts in Orlando, Florida and after graduating signed a deal with Bass Station Records to release the first bass records to come out of Florida that featured a TR-808 kick drum played like a bass line over a record, with vocoder and familiar electro classics sprinkled in for good measure. This record went on to sell over 600,000 units selling "gold" status. We had also been a catalyst in the car audio bass scene in the 90s and were an instrumental force in helping to sell hi-wattage car audio systems to the car audio enthusiasts who were looking to reproduce the extreme low frequency sub bass that we were selling on our CDs. From that point forward we have been remixing and releasing underground electronic music

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and touring the world for well over a decade as Dynamix II.”

What your tips are for compressing, EQing and generally working with 808 kicks and subs?

“We start by EQing out the unnecessary bottom end that steals valuable headroom. The de facto Miami bass TR-808 kick has a sweet spot at 60 Hz so we begin to roll off below 50 Hz. Lately we've been using an SPL Transient Designer to bring out punchy attacks on our drums and it works great for 808 kick as well. We always add subtle amounts of distortion/saturation for added tone on our subs so they can be heard on smaller speakers, not just massive club systems.

The other 808 sounds are all sweetened up by varying degrees of EQ/saturation and layered to taste. We'll often add additional drum sounds to thicken up their overall punch with various use of HP and LP filters until the magic happens and it all sits in the mix.

Hint: have a track up on your DAW with a mastered song off a current CD to do an A / B comparison against. This is the most valuable lesson I can teach because you can constantly filter and tweak sounds all day into varying versions of the original sound which could all sound great but until you compare your music against a mastered song how will you truly know if your song has enough punch, warm low end or if it is getting way to bright without a point of reference?”

How did Dynamix II become involved with the Togu Audio Line TAL-Vocoder project?

“Necessity truly is the mother of invention.

I wound up meeting Patrick Kunz from Togu Audio Line by fate. I had contacted him to report a bug in the way his TAL Bassline (a VSTi emulation of the Roland SH-101) was handling portamento. This reporting back to Patrick lead on to a few tweaks to the filter section of the TAL Bassline. I have a real SH-101 that I have used for years so I was able to do all the testing and reporting back via emails and attached audio examples.

The TAL Bassline could potentially replace one of my pieces of hardware gear for shows, so I thought to myself if I could convince him to make a vocoder to replace my SVC-350 this would be fantastic. I told him of my live rig, explained my credentials and offered to make some patches for it and put together the English operating manual. After a few more emails we came to the end result. A clone of my live rig's vocoder section. The SH-101 and SVC-350 could finally rest after all those years of abuse on the road. They now sit where they belong, in the Dynamix II Studio. Patrick had made my vocoder rig into a VSTi/FX that had incorporated the TAL Bassline as its instrument in carrier source, but he didn't stop there, he also made it able to accept routing of other synths as carriers too. This took the TAL Vocoder to another level because it wouldn't be locked into a specific sound.



After a month or so of testing and reporting back and forth I found myself staring at the TAL vocoder in utter awe, the same way a caveman would marvel at the sight of a Bic lighter. I remember thinking to myself "At last, no more hauling my SVC-350 vocoder through airplane terminal checkpoints" (insert huge sigh of relief here). Any artist who travels knows and loathes this drill. You present your gear (which looks like a bomb) to the airport security officer who hates his job and you. He escorts you and your gear over to a special line to place it into a machine that checks your hardware for any sign of explosives to make sure they are flight safe. Then you have to repack your gear back into their cases and proceed to the next checkpoint line (usually about a mile long). So you can imagine how overjoyed I was when I first saw it on my monitor. The only thing I could say that made me happier was hearing the sound it produced. The TAL Vocoder is amazing and the programmer is an insane genius! Did i mention that it is a *free* plug-in?"

[TAL-Vocoder by Toqu Audio Line](#)

Do you have any tips for getting a good vocoder sound?

"When I am live and testing the vocoder at sound check I make the sound of the letter "S" as I slowly bring up the vocoder output level until I can hear it to make certain that it is not going to feedback. Some people tend to get to far back from the mic. You almost have to have it as close as possible to avoid feedback issues in a live situation. The stronger your signal in the better. Remember saturation is your friend and to over-pronounce your syllables."

What you think of current music software/hardware?

"I am completely blown away an amazed on a daily basis. The amount of audio DSP development is astounding. The current music software we use has completely replaced a museum's worth of audio gear and best of all no servicing analogue synths ever again! LOL! I used to have Preston Smith of RTISC service my analogue gear over the years. There was always downtime and long waits while various small micro components were located and installed. For example I used to have a Memorymoog that was constantly breaking down. Now I have a Memory Moon to replace my Memory Moog by [www.memorymoon.com](http://www.memorymoon.com). No drifting unstable oscillators, no repair bills, and the patches all saved with my song to be recalled years later for future remixes.

What stuff do you use for production these days?

"We use software from NI, Synapse, Ableton, Digidesign, Ohm Force, TAL Audio, IK Multimedia and Propellerhead Software. We sculpt our sounds in NI's Reaktor and sometimes pull out an old synths or VSTi for source material as well. I find myself constantly pulling up my Ohm Force plug-ins to destroy/crush sound and love their Symptom Melohman. As for hardware, I use Sonic Core Scope Platform for my primary audio card and I also use UAD. Scott Weiser uses UAD all plugs, SSL Duende, ATCxi



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Quad and SE-1 analogue synths. He uses Nebula 3 with 3rd party libraries from [analoginthebox.com](http://analoginthebox.com) and [Alessandro Boschi](#).”

For more info on Dynamix II, check out their websites:

[www.myspace.com/dynamixii](http://www.myspace.com/dynamixii)

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