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### **37 In Focus: Xerxes of Brainstorm & Darklite**

Magic, Tue 12 Jun 2012

In Focus:

Xerxes of Brainstorm & Darklite

Just before his departure for three weeks to Asia, Hugl had a friendly chat with this fabulous musician from Norway.

Interview done by Magic of Nah-Kolor

#### **Introduction.**

Xerxes is one of the many musicians residing in the demogroup Brainstorm. Known for his music in the musicdisk trilogy called Chillosophy, he also competed at a lot of parties in several music competitions and contributed to other releases like for example the Brainstorm Annual musicdisks, the demo Haxholm and Aurum by Loonies & Brainstorm, the musicdisk Tracked in Time and the Zine #14 Headlines demo. Next to this he performed live with Romeo Knight and Bendyk at Breakpoint 2008 and 2009. Xerxes introduces himself: "Howdy! I am a 38-year-old Norwegian and my first encounter with the demoscene was back in 1988. I got a copy of Soundtracker and started to make horrible songs. I joined Triumph which was a very active group back then. Triumph was responsible for Intuitracker, which is (afaik) the first ever pure player of various module formats. If

you have ever seen the grid (#) sign in old module sampletexts, it is so that credits would be visible when playing your modules inside Intuitracker. In 1991 I moved to Chicago and stayed there for 5 years. During this time I started a group called Night55 with Scirocco, which later went on to make Sonique, another multiplatform player. After I came home, I have been part of several groups, but today I am only active in Brainstorm and Darklite. I can't really remember why I started to compose music, but I was very drawn to the music I



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heard in intros and demos etc, and was curious as to how these things were made."

#### Music Styles and real life work

Musicians change styles or go through a certain evolution throughout the years. How would Xerxes classify his own music? And what styles is it? "Mostly I focus on doing ambient and chillout. I guess this is something that came about around 1995 or so, when I was listening to Vangelis and Mike Oldfield a lot. I spent a lot of time trying to achieve my own sound; I like the idea of someone recognizing an artist without ever hearing the song before. I don't know if I have succeeded in this area, but it is certainly something I try to accomplish", Xerxes explains and continues: "Other genres have been explored too of course -

lots of chiptunes over the years, and some pretty standard demostyle kinda tunes. I really do enjoy that 'tracked' sound, it is something I still aim for even in these modern times."

Hugi found out Xerxes isn't making a living of his music. He has another professional career to earn his living in day-to-day life. Although his music gives him additional income as well! Xerxes: "The last 10 years I have been working with sales and support within IT. It's pretty boring stuff, so nothing that needs to be explained in detail. I also make a fair share of music sales, both from my own site and through licencing / radio play."

#### Brainstorm and Breakpoint

Xerxes has been a member of many groups in the past. These days he is only a member of Brainstorm and Darklite, as he explained earlier. Especially in Brainstorm he has been very active. In the eyes of Xerxes what is Brainstorm really about as a demo group? Xerxes explains: "Brainstorm is a group whose main focus is friendship, fun and discussions about goats. Also we try to make some nice productions every now and then. We have a lot of hard working people in the group, and our main



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goat Alex Strohm (Axel) is an excellent leader. We also try to work alongside other groups in the demoscene as often as possible, since this is a lot of fun and brings together more people with demoscene talent. We are also known to give food to hungry sceners "

As written above Xerxes released quite some tracks in Brainstorm productions. Is there perhaps a new musicdisk on the horizon? What about a 4th chillosophy? What can the demoscene expect, musicwise, from Xerxes in the coming 1-2 years? Xerxes: "There will never be a new chillosophy disk again. Making a fourth one would only result in me repeating myself even more than I have already done. It was planned for a little while, but then I completely fell off the 'oldskool trackers' wagon.

Making a musicdisk with mp3's is not of interest to me at all. In the future I do hope to be part of the demoscene as much as possible. I am open to work with any group that thinks they need some chillout for their production (which I have already done a few times with Rasmus of Loonies). I am pretty sure you will see more live performances at some point in the future. Other than that I spend most of my time just releasing music on my own little label."

In 2008 and 2009 Xerxes did a live gig at the demoscene party Breakpoint. This live performance was with Romeo Knight and Bendyk. Hugi asked Xerxes how he looks back on these performances. We also asked him what he remembers of the preparations for these concerts. "These two gigs were a lot of fun and a lot of work for everyone involved. First of all, we approached these concerts more or less as improvisational gigs. We know which music to play, but we do not know exactly how to do it. There are several reasons for this, but mainly because it is a lot more fun for those involved; and since we live in different countries and can only have one rehearsal. It was our only option", Xerxes explains and continues: "My job, once we get on stage, is the easiest. I make sure what we have planned actually gets played + I do a little bit of keyboard work where needed. Both Eike and Bendik are such awesome performance artists, so giving them center stage to do whatever they like is the only right thing to do. In planning these gigs, we got a lot of help from our friends in Brainstorm, who basically took care of everything but the actual music... like visuals, making sure the crowd isn't sober etc "



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## Epilogue

As this issue of Hugi will be released at Easter we pointed our fingers on the Revision party, which is again held in 2012. What are Xerxes' expectations for this party? Xerxes: "Revision last year was awesome. Loved everything about it... great location and city, the outdoor area was smooth, good food... good drinks etc. So I have rather high expectations this year, yes."

When we were doing this interview, at one point we had to hurry a little bit. Xerxes told me he was going to Asia soon for 3 weeks. In fact the last 2 questions of this interview were asked a few hours before he was boarding the plane. And he is not going on a business trip either. Xerxes: "I am actually leaving in a few hours. It's pure pleasure. Bringing a few good books and getting ready to just chill out in the sun with umbrella drinks and good food. My first long vacation in 5 years, so well deserved if I may say so. Also, it will be nice to get away from computers and cell phones for some time. Those are things I use way too much on a regular day "

So what to do? We sure don't want Xerxes to miss his plane and miss his first vacation in 5 years! We have to cut this interview short. Dear Xerxes, do you want to air some last words before you are boarding your plane? "There are so many people on the demoscene I have met over the 20 years or so I have been a part of it. I must give much love to members of Brainstorm of course, fantastic bunch of people", Xerxes comments and concludes: "Also much love to all the party organizers I know... Thank you for doing it so well year after year (you know who you are). Thanks to you and Hugi for talking to me "

Have a nice holiday Xerxes!

## Links related to this interview

[Official Xerxes Website](#)

[New Album](#)

[Brainstorm Website](#)

[Zine #14 headlines demo at youtube](#)

[Aurum - PC Demo by Loonies and Brainstorm at youtube](#)

[Haxholm - Loonies & Brainstorm at youtube](#)

[Xerxes, Romeo Knight & Bendik in Concert - Breakpoint 2008](#)

[Xerxes, Romeo Knight & Bendik in Concert - Breakpoint 2009](#)

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