



25 - Interview with Purple Motion

Axel, Sat 25 Aug 2007

Interview with Purple Motion

by Axel of Brainstorm

We were lucky enough to get a chance to chat to Purple Motion of the legendary PC demo group Future Crew, to catch up on what he has been doing lately, what he did back in the days when the PC demoscene was just starting out, and how he feels about his own work compared to that of other well-known composers of that time.

ZINE: Where did you grow up and how do you feel about it looking back now?

PM: I grew up in Kaarina, which is a city located near Turku (which was the capital of Finland before that title went to Helsinki). My childhood was a happy one. My parents were very supportive and both me and my kid brother (who I am close to, even though we live over 200 KM apart nowadays) were free to try out new things that we found interesting. My parents were very supportive, though since they had quite regular professions (my father was an engineer and my mother a secretary) I don't think that they quite understood how one could live off composing music full time.

ZINE: At what point did you notice that you had a talent for music?

PM: I don't think I just woke up one day and just knew I could do music. I've sort of always just had the urge to play and create music. I've had that feeling about music for as long as I can remember.

ZINE: Do you remember your first song?

PM: I remember one of the first ones, yeah, but I can't recall what it was called. I composed it using something called "Music Studio", which was a piece of notation software for the Commodore 64. I worked on it for a long time and I remember that was really excited about it when it was finished, because it was so rewarding to finally finish it. The song itself was a bit of a pseudo Bach/Mozart kind of thing, and when one of my friends mother played it back to me on the piano, I was amazed that something I wrote could be played live like that.

ZINE: How would you describe yourself?

PM: Hmm, I think I'm quite social, really. There are times however (for example when I am really concentrating on



http://www.bitfellas.org/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.427

Page 2/5

composing/orchestrating /working) that the world around me seem to fade out into a sort of a blur. I guess that can be a bad trait sometimes.

ZINE: How did you first get in contact with the scene?

PM: Back in high school I was in the same class as a guy called Tomi, who turned out to be PSI/FC's little brother. We used to hang together after school and one day I noticed that his older brother Sami was working with a piece of music software for the PC. It was a tracker called Scream Tracker 2 and since I never had the money to buy an Amiga I was naturally very curious about it. PSI asked me to create a test piece for it because he didn't want the beta version spread. I wrote my "first tracker tune" on a piece of paper (the note data only) and PSI then fed the data into the editor. It sounded pretty horrible, but it was a start. I eventually got the beta version of the tracker to test it out and made some songs using it. One of the songs was a pretty bad ripoff piece meant for the "Mental Surgery" demo by Future Crew. When I got the demo I noticed that I was mentioned in the member list, and that is basically how I got into both the demoscene and Future Crew.

ZINE: Was the PC the first platform you got involved with or did you do anything else on other platforms at the time?

PM: I never had an Amiga myself, but we watched A LOT of Amiga demos for sure. They were lightyears ahead of anything running on a PC at that time. I did have a PC to toy around on, my father's work computer which was a x86-based PC with a lovely 16 color EGA graphics card.

ZINE: Who were your composer idols at the time you started with tracking?

PM: I loved Uncle Tom, Jogear Liljedahl, Heatbeat, Dizzy and a whole lot of other people. Way too many to list here, but yeah - I listened to A LOT of MODs.

ZINE: How do you feel about tracking vs MIDI? Many musicians seem to have a hard time juggling the two.

PM: It's different, but I think tracking has its advantages. When comparing to MIDI, you can have a lot more exact results (vibrato, slides, etc), but then again I've also gone back to MIDI at the moment, because I feel that it gives me more control over the expression of things.

ZINE: What about mixing/mastering? It is much more vital when working with MIDI and longer digital recordings, compared to tracking.

PM: In my opinion a mixing job done the wrong way can utterly destroy a piece of music. The original melodies and harmonies might be there, but a bad mixing job can really mud things up. Mastering can also ruin a recording, but this does thankfully not happen so often these days. You know, in the old days pieces were compressed due to restrictions in the LP format (to fit more songs onto the vinyl), and when CDs came along there wasn't really any physical reason to keep doing heavy dynamic compression. They still kept



on doing it though, and like with everything else, people tend to go overboard. You can hear this in a lot of dance/electronic music nowadays.

ZINE: In what ways would you say that your composing skills have developed over the years?

PM: Hm. I think I can safely say that I have become a better composer all around. Quite a lot better, in fact. Next year I start my last year at Tampere Conservatory, where I study music theory and classical (modern) composition. Due to the studies (self and conservatoire) I have become a faster composer as well. I can get down my ideas on paper much more efficiently now than before. I plan on working full time with

ZINE: Do you have a special genre of music which you think is most suitable to your skills?

PM: At the moment I am concentrating on orchestral (live) music. I have always done a lot of different things, even since the very beginning of my "career" I have always done as much musical work as I could. That is pretty much how I got to study different genres of music, and try them all out. All together I have done all sorts of things with music, from full orchestral pieces to theatre and television scores, serious classical composition for smaller ensembles as well as my electronica work. Pretty much anything goes as long as the project is interesting. I do try to do as much orchestral work as I can though.

ZINE: Are there elements of composing you appreciate more, such as the rhythm section or the melody?

PM: I usually start out with the harmony and work my way from there. This is probably due to my piano background. If the piece I am working on is based around the need for a strong theme then I start with that.

ZINE: Do you think that composers are only as popular as the demos they write the music for?

PM: I don't know - I think the popularity is just a side effect. You do the things you love and if somebody else likes it, then that's great! You know what they say; for every composer there is at least ONE person out there their work.

ZINE: Have you ever been annoyed of how popular you have become in the scene?

PM: I don't know. I don't really feel popular or like a "scene celebrity", so to speak. For me it's about the love of music and trying to make compositions that other people enjoy. Pretty much as long as I can keep working with music I'm happy.

ZINE: How did your change from demo scene work to game music change the way you wrote music, if at all?

PM: The main change was switching from tracking to using MIDI. It is structurally very different (unless you want to work with the event editor, but the basic components of composition theory remain the same. Rhythm, melody, harmony, color etc. There are some contextual differences as well. When doing music for games you constantly have to keep in mind that a game is dynamic and not a



http://www.bitfellas.org/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.427

Page 4/5

1:1 experience for every viewer. This means that the music must be made in a way that makes it easy for the game engine to fade between pieces of music when the player moves around in the game world. In addition to this, the music of course has to fit the mood of the game.

ZINE: Why didn't you stay at Remedy like Skaven did? Not enough room for two composers?

PM: Actually, as I understand it, Skaven works mostly with motion capture and graphics now. My time with Remedy was mostly spent as a freelance artist while I was working on starting up my own company.

ZINE: Are you currently working on any game projects?

PM: Not really - not right now at least. I did the orchestrations for the PLAY! Game Music Symphony Tour (C64 and Amiga game medleys) just this month, and I also finished the orchestrations for Sega WWWC, which was recorded with a live orchestra in Prague. In addition to that, I decided to dedicate this summer to my own personal music projects; a piano sonata and an orchestral piece.

ZINE: Was it a hard transition from the slow-paced scene musician days to working on full orchestral scores?

PM: It was hard, yeah, but I think it is just the way it is. Like everything in life where you want to be good at something, you just have to learn, study, and work hard.

ZINE: You released your first album "Musicdisk". How long did you work on it?

PM: Around three years, all in all. I did a set of new pieces for it, trashed everything and then started all over again. The way I picked the already known tracks was really simple; I searched the internet to see which tracks people liked and from there I chose those who were doable. I also found it hard to do the remixes of the known tracks since people knew them so well and also my own expectations were quite high. Of course, I didn't slave away day and night for three years, but I worked whenever I had the time and the energy to do so.

ZINE: Are you going to stick to composing for a living?

PM: Yes. That is probably the reason why I haven't done any major scene work for the last four years, because I really want to make the most out of my current studies.

ZINE: You regularly attend Assembly. What do you personally associate with the party?

PM: Well, Abyss / FC is the main organizer for Assembly so it's nice to see him at least once a year. We also have this unofficial FC sauna at ASM where we can meet up to get an update on what everybody is doing. I really do love Assembly, since that is what my life was all about when I was younger.



http://www.bitfellas.org/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.427

Page 5/5
