



NETSINE 3, 15 Nov. 2000

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1) Netsine status

Today I'm a happy man. I have just picked up a Synthi A with the Keyboard and Sequencer (KS). According to Robin Wood at EMS, the ABS plastic briefcase version have been taken out of production. The VCS3 will still be available from EMS but there is a 40 week time of delivery. It's not strange that a company like EMS is going strong today. I have lately noticed the need among musicians individualizing their instruments. Year 2001 will be the year of masscustomization and it will belong to the small serviceminded synthesizer designers, most certainly. And why use the same synthesizer like everyone else?

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<http://www.analogue.org/network/memberform.htm>

THE SYNTHESIZER NETWORK

Morgan Karlsson

enthusiast and founder

2) Short News

There will be a three-day MOOGFEST in Buffalo and Rochester. Moogfest is a series of public lectures and concerts in Buffalo and Rochester, New York. The series runs from November 29 to December 1. It has been organized by Olivia Mattis, the Executive Director of the New Music Alliance, and will feature illustrated presentations by Bob Moog.

JoMoX have announced that their delayed synthesizer -Sun Sun- is now in Beta-test, and they will send out first units hopefully beginning december.

Technosaurus have developed a flexible Analog Multi Effect Processor

offering various sound effects such as Ringmodulator, Dual Parametric Equalizer and Overdrive, all combined in the compact design of the Small Monster series.

Doepfer Musikelektronik is planning a reproduction of the legendary EMS VCF with 18dB/oct. slope.

Analogue Solutions is working on a professional 16 step, multi-channel, analogue sequencer called SQ2000. The Sequencer is a fully fledged sequencer providing plenty of control outputs/inputs and with some creative features never before seen.

3) FUTURIST MUSIC 1910-1920

Text by Caroline Tisdall

Edited by Morgan Karlsson

Noise was Futurism's contribution to music, The principle of noise was not introduced by a musician but by the most eccentric of the Futurist painters, Luigi Russolo. He was one of the few Futurists who actively dared to branch out into another field, and he explained his temerity in the following way: "I am not a musician, I have therefore no acoustical predilections, nor any works to defend. I am a Futurist painter using a much loved art to project my determination to renew everything. And so, bolder than a professional musician could be, unconcerned by my apparent incompetence, and convinced that all rights and all possibilities open up to daring, I have been able to initiate the great renewal of music by means of the Art of Noises."

Russolo's aim was to widen the accepted definition of music in much the same way as Futurist Marinetti's Words in freedom and Destruction of Syntax had challenged the traditional boundaries of literature.

Music, and preconceptions of beauty in music, had traditionally been confined to the invention of pure sound, artificially made and predictably ordered. But beyond invented sound, as it was known and recognized, there lay a whole world of noise, an untapped source of energy and acoustic enrichment. Noise did not mean just din and cacophony, though this too held its attraction.

The wealth of sound in the world ignored by the conventions of music ranged from the primary noises of nature to the roar of life and machines in the modern city, and was being added to daily. The recognition of the potential of brute noise as a source of art was a radical departure, still advocated by the musical avant garde more than sixty years later, and still generally unaccepted.

Russolo's attempts to put some of the Futurist theories of music into practice brought about some of the most extraordinary musical experiments of the pre-First World War years: the Noise Intoners or Intonarumori. The Noise Intoners reproduced some of the novel noises of the modern world, and added others besides. As signs of the new will to experiment beyond the accepted bounds of music, both the Intoners and the theory behind them belonged to the innovative climate

of the first two decades of the century which extended well beyond Futurist activities in Italy. In terms of more traditional forms of music, this spirit of change found major expression in the works of Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg and Erik Satie.

But since the late nineteenth century more eccentric researches had been made into the possibilities of creating completely new musical instruments and forms. Usually they were to perform the dual function of interpreting both colour and sound: Bishop Bainbridge's Colour Organ was one example, and Alexander Wallace Rimington's Colour Music was another. Both were later superseded by Scriabin's Colour Organ, and his attempts to capture the nature of abstract values in colour and sound, and by the poet Léopold Survage's theories of Coloured Rhythms. All these experiments had one feature in common they were the result of an enthusiastic belief in music produced by machines of one kind or another, and it would have been surprising if the machine-mad Futurists had not come up with some form of mechanical music too.

The official Futurist musician was not Russolo but Francesco Balilla Pratella (1880-1955). He was at heart a fairly conventional composer, though he was to incorporate Russolo's machines into some of his Futurist works. He later became best known for his extensive use of the folk songs and themes of his native Romagna, and remained firmly attached to the peasant traditions of that most earthy of regions. His 'Manifesto of the Futurist Musician' of 11 October 1910 was one of the earliest signs of Futurism spread into other fields.

The future lay in 'The liberation of individual musical sensibility from all imitation or influence of the past, feeling and singing with the spirit open to the future, drawing inspiration and aesthetics from nature, through all the human and extra human phenomena present in it. Exalting the man symbol everlastingly renewed by the varied aspects of modern life and its infinity of intimate relationships with nature.'

The conservatories should make way for areas of 'free study'. Reactionary critics, rigged competitions, imitations of the past, the belief in "well made" music, the reign of the singer and the nauseating repetitiveness of Neapolitan songs and sacred music all this belonged to the past.

Pratella wrote two more manifestos, the 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Music' and 'The Destruction of Quadrature', and all three were published together in 1912 in a volume which contained the piano version of Pratella's Futurist Music for Orchestra, and which carried a splendid cover drawing by Boccioni. The Destruction of Quadrature was very much a musical parallel to Marinetti's Destruction of Syntax, and the 'Technical Manifesto' recommended rhythmic irregularity, atonality and micro-tones.

The Technical Manifesto inspired Russolo to the invention of a mechanical means of interpreting 'the musical soul of crowds, great industrial complexes, transatlantic liners, trains, tanks, automobiles and aeroplanes, the domination of the machine and the victorious reign of electricity'. One of Marinetti's useful maxims was that originality is often as much the product of will as of genius, and the invention of the Noise Intoners was certainly an act of will. Once again, theory came before practice. Russolo's manifesto 'The Art of Noises', which calls for a vast battery of Noise Intoners, appeared on 11 March 1913, but when the great new invention was unveiled to the public in Modena three months later there was just one of them there: an Exploder

reproducing the noise of an internal combustion engine with a range of ten whole-tones.

In 'The Art of Noises' Russolo described the passage through history from silence to sound and on to noise-sound and musical noise. He argued that the limited range of musical instruments could no longer satisfy modern man's acoustic thirst. Orchestras had grown in size since the eighteenth century, but that only made the situation more laughable: 'Do you know of any sight more ridiculous than that of twenty men furiously bent on redoubling the mewing of a violin?'

Russolo's manifesto was refreshingly lyrical and constructive, partly because he was arguing for the acceptance of a new awareness of beauty in which the perception of the primary sounds of nature was balanced with the excitement of city noises: 'To convince ourselves of the amazing variety of noises, it is enough to think of the rumble of thunder, the whistle of the wind, the roar of a waterfall, the gurgling of a brook, the rustling of leaves, the clatter of a trotting horse as it draws into the distance, the lurching jolts of a cart on pavings, and of the generous, solemn white breathing of a nocturnal city, of all the noises made by wild and domestic animals, and of all those that can be made by the mouth of a man without resorting to speaking or singing.

"Let us cross a great modern capital with our ears more alert than our eyes, and we will get enjoyment from distinguishing the eddying of water, air and gas in metal pipes, the grumbling of noises that breathe and pulse with indisputable animality, the palpitation of valves, the coming and going of pistons, the howl of mechanical saws, the jolting of a tram on its rails, the cracking of whips, the flapping of curtains and flags. We enjoy creating mental orchestrations of the crashing down of metal shop blinds, slamming doors, the hubbub and shuffling of crowds, the variety of din from stations, railways, iron foundries, spinning mills, printing works, electric power stations, and underground railways."

Russolo raised a number of points that went beyond the usual Futurist cataloguing of urban excitements. The possibility of a form of expression 'made by the mouth of man without resorting to speaking or singing', which is hinted at in 'The Art of Noises', has continued to fascinate philo sophers and linguists involved in the study of expression beyond words and Ian guage, and it is regrettable that Russolo did not pursue it further.

Later on in the manifesto he introduced another prophetic note: the 'Futurist Ear' would be the stage at which 'the motors and machines of our industrial cities will one day be consciously attuned, so that every factory will be transformed into an intoxicating orchestra of noises'. The implications of this bring to mind Walter Benjamin's condemnation of the aestheticization of politics, which he saw as a Fascist tendency, but the prime example of Russolo's aestheticization of city life took place, not in Futurist or even Fascist Italy, but in the hopeful days of young Soviet Russia. In 1920 the Concert for Factory Sirens was performed: work was beautiful, and the sweetest noise for the workers was the orchestrated unison of the sirens that summoned them. This was certainly carried out quite independently of anything Russolo had written, but it illustrates the complexity of both the aesthetics and the politics of those years in which a shared experimental enthusiasm could inspire tendencies which were later to emerge as political polarities.

4) The Analogue Solutions Biography

By Tom Carpenter

Been into keyboards since 1984. Howard Jones sparked my interest in keyboards. At that point I didn't know too much about the differences in analogue and digital keyboards. My First keyboard was a Casio CZ5000. First drum machine was DR110. Of course I dreamed about owning a Jupiter 8 and other cool keyboards, but being a school kid I had no money! My first analogue synth was an SH101.

My musical tastes then went onto Depeche Mode, other Mute artists like Erasure, I Start Counting, Nitzer Ebb, and other forms of electronic and industrial music, like, Kraftwerk, Telex, Front 242, Front Line Assemble, Aphex Twin, Autechre, Komputer, to name a few. Listening to these styles of music influenced my tastes leaning towards analogue sounds hence analogue keyboards.

I did 2 years electronic engineering course, then a 2 year Music Technology course. This involved aspects such as studio techniques, digital and analogue electronics, software programming etc.

Due to the fact I was a poor student I had very little money to buy the gear I really needed. So I used my gear to the max programming the hell out of everything and doing everything possible to extend their usability. It was during this time I bought my first MIDI-CV converter to control my SH101. This is where I made my first modification, designing and installing my own filter cut-off and pulse width control voltage inputs. This gave me the extra control I needed to imitate the sounds of the electronic bands I like so much. As I bought more analogue synths, I increased performed more and more modifications.

During my Music Technology course my course project was building a MIDI-CV converter. The spec' for mine was higher than most, even by today's standards. Even though I never got a chance to finish the project, I gained valuable information about digital and analogue circuits.

Through my Music Technology course I got a Saturday job at The Synthesizer Company, a pro-audio music outlet in NW London. There I learnt all about ADATs, Digital Desks, sampling, but more importantly started to make contacts and learn vital information about the music industry.

From there I went on to work for Din Communications, a company that specialized in Analogue Synthesizers and other musical equipment. I joined the company from the outset, and stayed with them for 6 months. At Din, I had a lot of contact with modular and rare analogue synth's, as well as more modern studio equipment. I also had the opportunity to help out in the studio and at gigs with the boss's electronic band 'Shining'. At Din I continued to gain contacts and inside information that would later help me set up Analogue Solutions (as well as knowledge of how to approach record labels for music deals).

Whilst at Din, I designed a prototype analogue sequencer that even by

toady's standards would have been the most versatile, but I lacked enough knowledge to get it 100% working. This original prototype was what I have based our current new range of analogue sequencers on, but in cut down versions. The full initial vision of my first sequencer will become a reality soon when I release the SQ2000 pro-analogue solution later this year.

After Din I worked for Kenton Electronics for a year. They specialize in MIDI to CV converters. After about 6 months there I started formulating ideas about working for myself. I was selling a lot of analogue synth's in my spare time through free ads in papers and magazines, and thought it may be possible to do this full time. I could supplement the business by performing simple modifications to synth's. Working for myself would also give me more time to work on my own music.

So I stayed with Kenton for about a year, then one day decided to take the plunge and go self-employed. I didn't have a business plan, take loan or anything. I had several big German music stores that specialized in analogue synth's all lined up to purchase used analogue synths. With contacts I had gained through the past several years, I had a large list of analogue that I could purchase and ship abroad. One of my biggest contacts in the UK was Adam Dancey. Between us two alone, we must have shipped about 20,000 pound worth of analogue synth's to Europe alone in one year. Ironically I also sold a lot of Roland analogue back to the Japanese! Selling synth's abroad was my main source of business 2 years ago, during the height of the analogue revival. I also started to sell to several other European shops, as well as end users in Europe and across the globe.

A very small part of my business was to do simple modifications to synth's. I started to develop them to give as much control possible to the synth. I then gradually developed new type of mod's, like turning monosynths into modulars, adding extra controls to drum machines to change the sounds, and big mod's like the Borg mod for the TB303. I basically can do any mod that people asked for, as long as the mod didn't require too much extra circuitry, and that it is economically feasible.

The analogue boom did not last. Gone are the times when I got continual inquiries for TB303s (which pushed the price right up to 1000 pounds! Demand well-outstripped supply), TR808s and TR909. These days it is hard enough to sell a 303 for 500 pounds. The inquiries just aren't there like they used to be.

There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the strength of the pounds over the last year has made it too expensive for companies and individuals abroad to import synth's from the UK. Secondly, the recent wave of digital modeling and software synth's that emulate analogue, as well as the new analogue synth's, has diverted sales for the originals. It has to be admitted that the modern digital equivalents are far better value for money and do a good job at emulating them. But there will always be those who prefer the originals. There is nothing like the nostalgia of owning an original analogue synth. Also, arguably the digital modeling synth's still don't sound as good as those they are trying to emulate and of course analogue synths will always be more hands-on. I personally use both modern and old equipment. Though I would love a set-up of mostly originally analogue equipment, space and money usually means a compromise with digital.

Luckily, I realized that the analogue boom would not last and have kept an open mind about new business directions. These included an analogue sample CD we have released (Sounds Of Old), T-Shirts, LED

digital watches, increased the range of synthesizer mod's, and increased range of new equipment.

Working for myself has all the pleasures of being under your own controlled, but always with that worry if you can afford to pay yourself. One great advantage is spending more time writing tunes!

Some well know artists I have dealt with over the last 5 years: Add N to X, Black Dog, Kenny Dope (Bucketheads), Candy Girls, Norman Cook, Gareth Jones (works with Depeche Mode), K-Klass, Liquid, Mood Swings, N-Trance, Pig, Richie Hawtin, Hans Zimmer, The Orb, Funki Porcini, Billy Nasty, Tim Simenon (Bomb the Bass/Depeche Mode Producer), Human League, Luke Slater, and a million and one small dance acts.

One major new investment I have made for the future is we are releasing an analogue electronics percussion modular system called CONCUSSOR. With all the new analogue modulars now available, the 2 main ones being Integrator and Doepfer. They are very similar to each other, not offering any major benefits to each other. I wanted to release a modular system, but there would have been little point in bringing out a third similar product. The aim with the CONCUSSOR was to release a system that was significantly different from the rest, that would offer a real alternative, or that could be included into an existing system (all CONCUSSOR modules will fit into A100/Integrator cases and our modules offer power sockets for both systems). We cannot re-invent the wheel, but what we can do is offer modules that come in a different format and offer different groups of features than the others. Our initial set of modules concentrate on analogue percussion. Although there have been drum voice modules available in the past (like Simmons SDSV for example), nothing gave the versatility that ours do. We have a whole range of sounds. Just about all TR808 voices are available, plus some CR78 and TR909 sounds. All modules have more controls than the original so a wider range of sounds can be made. There are plans to introduce more drum modules soon. Since then, the CONCUSSOR range has been expanded. A whole range of unique analogue sequencers and associated modules are available, a spring reverb, mixers and the like, and now an expanding range of synthesiser modules.

There are continuing plans to expand the CONCUSSOR range. There is a queue of modules waiting to be released, plus plenty on paper waiting to be tested. (We are open to suggestions of any dream-modules you are waiting for). Soon we will be releasing a range of non-modular stand-alone analogue products to cater for any studio, to be used by keyboard players, guitarists, DJs etc. More information will be available on the AS web site as information becomes available.

www.analoguesolutions.com

5) Vintage review Synthi AKS
By Norman Fay

From Voltage Magazine 1988

When I heard the recent news that much of Keith Emerson's collection of old keyboard instruments was to be sold at auction, it got me thinking about the phenomenon of "celebrity owned" instruments. It seems to me that to wish to own an instrument once owned by a well-known musician

is quite a strange thing. It isn't something I've often aspired to, I must confess, although there are exceptions, of course. For me, I'd love to own Brian Jones' Mellotron, as played on the Rolling Stones' "2000 Light Years From Home". I do own, though, an instrument which has passed through the hands of two of my favourite keyboard players, namely Tim Blake of Gong and Simon House of Hawkwind, and though I didn't know this when I bought it, I wasn't half pleased when I found out.

Back in the early-to-mid eighties there was a rather good, and rather weird rock band doing the rounds of small venues in Britain. Called "Inner City Unit", they were in part the brainchild of one Nik Turner, who had previously been the saxophonist/vocalist for Hawkwind in the seventies. I had the good fortune to support them a couple of times, and the first time I did this, I was most interested to note that Fred Reeves, the band's keyboard player, used a EMS Synthi AKS as part of his keyboard rig. Now, like many readers I'm sure, I had in the past been completely freaked out by the film of Roxy Music on "Old Grey Whistle Test" in which the band played, I think, "Ladytron" with Brian Eno manipulating an EMS VCS3 to great effect. It's a great piece of footage, and despite all that's happened in music since, the band still sound totally far out today.

Since originally seeing this footage, I'd got into groups and musicians like Hawkwind, Gong, Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schultze, Tim Blake, and on reading the sleeve-notes of their records, had noticed that they all used EMS instruments as part of their sound. As you can then imagine, once I began playing synthesiser, I was very keen to have a go on one of these strange instruments, but as I'm sure you're all aware, though, there aren't a lot of them around, so ICU's instrument was the first one I'd ever seen!

About eighteen months after I'd first seen the band, they split up, having got fed up with trudging around the country in their transit van.

Their road manager contacted me, and asked if I'd be interested in buying the AKS, as Nik Turner, to whom it belonged, had no more use for it.

- "How much?" I asked.
- "Ahh, about 250 pounds"
- "Done!"

In this age of inflated prices, this may seem cheap, though it certainly wasn't to me at the time. The instrument was pretty battered too, although everything worked. I bought it from Turner several weeks later, but Fred had the manual and I had to wait a couple of months until he was playing in the north before I could get it. When he gave it to me, it was with the words "From Tim Blake, to Simon House, to Nik Turner, to you". As you can imagine, this made my day!

So what had I bought? A most unusual instrument, that's for sure. The SYNTHI AKS lives in a little ABS plastic briefcase. The SYNTHI A is the sound-producing half, whilst the KS is a digital sequencer, with an awful (though very space-efficient) touch-plate keyboard, similar to that on the WASP. The SYNTHI A was available on its own, if you didn't need the sequencing facilities (early versions can not power the KS, morgans annotation)

Electronically, the SYNTHI A is identical to the cash-register shaped VCS3, and although the VCS3 is easier to use due to its shape and layout (it also looks cooler, if you're daft enough to worry about such things ...) I prefer the compactness and easy portability of the A(KS). As far as sound-producing facilities go the AKS isn't really like other electronic instruments one encounters, old or new. You get three oscillators, each of which is different. VC01 has controls for frequency (1Hz to 10KHz), level controls for two waveforms, sine and sawtooth, and a shape control for the sine wave. This sounds rather good. and varies the waveshape from a rounded W shape, through sine shape, to a rounded M shape. VC02 has an identical frequency control, but the waveshapes are now variable pulse and variable triangle (sawtooth-triangle-reverse sawtooth), with the shape controls effecting both waveforms. VC03's waveform controls are identical to VC02's, but the frequency control now goes from 0.5 to 500Hz, so VC03 is mainly for LFO/control rather than audio duties. The oscillators on EMS gear are notoriously unstable, and the tuning on my AKS is very prone to drifting. (Norman 2001 note - I checked recently, and the oscillators have been "stabilised", but I believe this was a long time ago) I don't see this as a problem though, if you want stable tuning, there are plenty of other synths to choose from, both analogue and digital. It is possible to get the oscillators stabilised by EMS, if you feel the need.

The other signal source in the AKS is the noise generator, which has controls for level and "colour" i.e. white and pink noise. The pink noise sounds fantastic, very powerful. To process your sound sources, the AKS has a ring modulator and a low pass resonant filter. Apparently, several players have modified their SYNTHI A's and VC3's by replacing EMS's filter with a Moog filter. This baffles me, I must admit, as one can easily patch the EMS to the external input of a Moog. The EMS filter sounds very nice to me, and why anyone would want to make different synths sound the same, I don't know. The AKS also has a reverb built in, obviously not a digital reverb, but the old spring type. It sounds really good, actually, in a "forbidden planet" kind of way. Finally, there are two control voltage sources, the joystick, which thanks to Brian Eno's escapades with Roxy Music, is one of the best-known features on EMS' instruments, it has controls for horizontal and vertical range, and it's great fun to use. Beside the joystick is the trigger button for

the other CV source, the envelope generator. This certainly is a weird one, it has four controls, "attack", "on" i.e. hold time, "decay" i.e. release, and "off" which when turned fully clockwise has no effect, but which as you turn it anticlockwise causes the EG to retrigger at an increasing rate.

There are also two controls for signal level and "trapezoid" i.e. control voltage level. It's a shame though that the AKS has only one of these envelope generators. As well as this lot you also get two inputs for control voltages or audio signals, so you can process external sounds through the AKS's filter, ring modulator and so on. There is also a little stereo amplifier built in with a tiny speaker in each top corner. Handy if you want to mess about with the AKS without switching everything else on.

I've left the best till last here, the heart of the AKS is the patchbay, a 16 by 16 matrix of tiny little sockets, into which one pushes patch pins, which look like miniaturised stereo jack plugs, to connect two functions together. For example, if you want to modulate the VCF cut-off frequency with the envelope generator, find the row marked "trapezoid", follow it until it intersects the column marked "filter frq", insert a pin there, then adjust the trapezoid level knob until you get the effect you want. It's easier than it sounds, honest! The best thing about the patchbay is that you can connect anything to anything else, a good one for really weird sounds is to have VC01 modulating VC02, VC02 modulating VC03 and VC03 modulating VC01 - a different meaning for the term "ring modulation"! I once got an amazing sound this way, a kind of electronic warbling, which built up in intensity for about two minutes, before breaking down into noise, and starting again. I wish I'd recorded it, because of course, I've never managed to get it exactly the same again. The patch pins come in several different varieties, white, grey, green, yellow and red. Unfortunately, my manual doesn't tell you what the different pin colours signify, though the green ones seem to attenuate the output of the device they're connected to. (norman 2001 note: the red ones have more precise resistors in them than the white ones) Although the patching system of the AKS is neat and compact, I do experience some problems with crosstalk. No doubt this is repairable by replacing the pin matrix though, and my instrument is a very old example. Watch out for this if you're looking at a second-hand EMS instrument, as I don't know how much it would cost to repair - I suspect it could be expensive! Another problem with the patching system is the patchpins themselves, which are very fragile, and not easily repairable.

I've owned my SYNTHI AKS for about eight years now, in which time I have found it useful in the following areas:

General goofing about - this instrument has fun potential like no

other
synth I've ever owned, you can just sit and make weird noises for
hours,
none of which, of course, have any musical value at all! highly
enjoyable, though.

Sample Fodder - if your sampler has good sound Processing functions,
then the AKS is an excellent source of unusual waveforms, which you
can
loop inside the sampler, and use to make your own unique sounds.

Processing other instruments - a wide variety of unusual effects can
be
added to any sound source, the best-known example of this being the
"dalek" voices from "Doctor Who", created using the ring modulator.

Space-rock/Weird post-punk music - If you play in a band influenced by
Hawkwind, Gong, Ozric Tentacles, Pere Ubu, Metal Urbain, Cabaret
Voltaire, Stereolab, (2001 - add N to X) etc, then an AKS should be
right up your street.

Weird electronic music - If your into tape loops, musique concrete,
Stockhausen and so on, then the chances are you probably already own
one!

Where the Synthi AKS falls down is in the production of more "normal"
music forms, it's almost impossible to play a tune on one, for
example,
and if you're looking for "good bass sounds", forget it, because this
synth wasn't meant for such mundane chores!

It's a shame there aren't more of these instruments around, they were
usually quite expensive second-hand anyway, and now that they are
considered "rare" and "collectable" they are obviously even more so.
The

last one I saw for sale, a VCS3, had a price tag of £1400 attached to
it, which seemed much to me, as it was a rather tatty example, It
eventually sold for £1200, which perhaps is a bit more reasonable. If
you are looking at one, and the seller is asking a very high price,
then

contact EMS as they can still offer newly built VCS3's for £1800.

(norman 2001 note - this was the case when I wrote this. Check with
EMS

for current prices and availability) If you already have a VCS3 or an
AKS

then it's well worth contacting EMS for their list of modifications
and

service charges, as commendably, they still support their instruments.

Finally, if you want to hear EMS sounds on record try the following:

Tim Blake - "New Jerusalem" - Mantra 068 (CD)

Hawkwind - "Space Ritual" - United Artists UAD60038 (LP)

Gong - "Angels Egg" - Virgin (CD)

Franco Battiato - "Clic" - Island IILPS9323 (LP)

EMS VCS3/Synthi A Modifications:

Oscillator stabilisation - minimises drift (priced per osc)

Metal-can dual transistors for oscillators (priced per osc)

Oscillator Sync - variable via potentiometer (priced per osc)

Voltage Controlled Shape (priced per osc)

Hi/Lo frequency range - switchable (priced per osc)
Portamento/glide
Attack time extension - increased to 5 seconds

Voltage Controlled Filter Response ('Q')
10-turn pots on input channels - for easier tuning (each)
Centre-zero trapezoid gives bipolar output
External Gate input socket - uses one Control Output socket
Patchable Voltage Inverter
Extra Input Channel

6) Brian Eno talking live at Garageband.com

Edited by Morgan Karlsson

Garageband: Welcome, Brian!

Brian: Of course, I don't know any of the people who are calling in, and I don't know your particular interests, but I would like to state my particular interests.

Brian: For me, the most exciting problem in music at the moment is also one of the oldest problems. What is it that humans specifically can do, which the technologies we create can't yet do? Of course, this translates itself into a problem of songwriting. Songwriting is the only thing I'm interested in, of course. But it is the one problem to which there have not been any interesting technological solutions. So, when I listen to people's tapes, I always ask myself, are there any interesting new solutions to the problem of songwriting?

Avatar-guest: Two questions. You have pushed bands like U2 into the BIG league with masterpieces like "Unforgettable Fire". Do you dream of doing it again soon? Second question. What types of effects would you typically use on Bono's voice or is this a trade secret?

Brian: The answer to the first question is, U2 has a new record coming out soon in which I hope you will find that they are pushed into another direction. Regarding Bono's voice, well the fact is that Bono likes singing in the control room, with the speakers as loud as are humanly bearable, so we end up using the cheapest microphones that you can get, which is the Shure 58, and we spend a lot of our time trying to defend his microphone against all the other noise in the room. With a singer like Bono, you don't need to do very much to the voice. Just a bit of compression.

plan9-guest: The new U2 project seems like a very BIG production - does this get in the way of the music creation process? How do you deal with the creative pressure that is placed on the band from internal and external sources?

Brian: The only interesting thing about production is trying to make the best music that you can imagine. That is always my only agenda. If I feel other considerations are getting in the way of that, I fight them. I consider that my position in such a project is to speak for quality. I consider that it is the job of other people to worry about how you sell the results. I also respect that talent! I just don't have it myself.

david: It appears that ambient music has gone in a different direction in the past few years, in that it has mutated into a form of

club/dance music. Where is ambient going since something like your 1992 Shutov Assembly?

Brian: Well, it's a little bit like having....suppose you were an astrophysicist, and you had a little child, and the child turned out to be a great swimmer, you would be a little bit surprised! Perhaps not disappointed. So, the seed called ambient, which I sowed in the late '70s, turned out to give rise to a lot of different plants. Some of which I don't really recognize as my own, but that's OK. I suppose I like a certain darkness to music, which perhaps is not everybody else's taste. I always want more darkness.

spam-guest: How did you first come to work with Roedelius and Moebius? And would you say that work influenced your work with Bowie on Low?

Brian: I met them in the mid '70s, in Germany, when they were a band called Harmonia. We became friends, and as friends used to do at that time, we made a record together. I was very influenced by the German scene at that time, because I felt that there was a kind of rigor and discipline to that music that I personally enjoyed. I was especially keen on Can, and of course Kraftwerk, because I heard in them a sort of interesting alternative to the African root that most other music had taken. I like the fact that it was a music that seemed to come from Europe, rather from America. And I still like that. I'm pleased that the European infection that they represent has taken root in all forms of popular music.

babybluewheels-guest: Hi Brian. I've been enjoying your music for over 20 ears. I don't know why, but I sense a rejuvenated interest in pop music from you. Is this true, and if so, what is triggering this happy rush?

Brian: Well, I've always liked pop music, it's not new for me to like it. This affection isn't new. I suppose that I was educated as a fine artist, but as time passed, I started to like more and more the things that came from the community of popular taste. I like things that grow from the bottom up, rather than from the top down.

aftersun-guest: Why has popular music taken such a turn for the worst? Why do the vast majority of people always ignore quality innovative music?

Brian: I don't think anything is any different from how it has always been. If you want to prove that statement, just look at the charts from 20 years ago, or 30 years ago, or at any point you choose. You will find in there two or three songs that you remember that are great songs, and then you will find 37 songs that you remember as absolute crap. It has always been that way as far as I can tell. It's in the nature of a casual conversation, and pop music is a casual conversation. Most of what is said is forgettable, some of what is said is truly memorable, you need all the forgettable stuff, because it is the way in which the vocabulary is formed and exercised.

spam-guest: Are there any plans to re-master/re-release your 1970s catalog a la the recent King Crimson reissues on Virgin? Perhaps throw in some bonus tracks?

Brian: Yes, Virgin are planning to start releasing those re-masters starting next year. With some previously unreleased tracks.

Antoine_poncelet-gue: How do you think other forms of media influence modern music and songwriting?

Brian: Well, I know when I am working with people at the studio, I often draw their attention to films, or books, or television programs, to anything else that is going on, and say, why can't we make music like this? So I think what I'm doing when I do that is articulating the process that people do all the time. They look at one medium, and they look at the new possibilities that are opening in one medium, and then they think, why can't we do that in our medium?

boram-guest: I've heard the 30 sec. clips of the songs on ATYCLB and they are spectacular. It seems that you and Lanois are the magic touch. Coming from a very different angle than Danny's, how do you manage to work together? Have you ever had a major disagreement with him on the making of this album?

Brian: We have a very good working relationship, because we have an area of overlap which is that we both respond to the same thing in music, and that thing is passion. We both want to hear something deep in music. However, we both get to that in completely different ways, and in these ways we don't overlap at all. I was trying to explain this to somebody the other day, and I said, you have to imagine Danny is like the train driver, he will keep the train running, in the most difficult circumstances. I'm like the guy who operates the switches on the track, so I'm much more likely to say no, I think it should go in a completely different direction. So these are two separate talents, to be able to put something in a different direction, and to be able to keep something running, those are two different talents. When those two talents are combined, that's a very strong medicine.

toni-guest: What did you think of the film "Velvet Goldmine"? What was your involvement in it?

Brian: I had no involvement in it. They used some of my music, which I was very pleased about. Well, it's very funny, looking at a period of history that you were intimately involved with, as seen through the eyes of somebody who wasn't. Of course, they miss out all the boring parts, of course no one remembers the boring parts! So in that sense, history is always a distortion. In that it just sees the highlights. It's a little like looking at a Raphael painting, and seeing only the little touches of white that he added after all of his assistants had filled in the background. But I think that is the process of history. It leaves out the everyday experience of somebody. For example, my strongest recollection of that period is not the fabulous stage clothes that we wore, but how much they stank after two months on tour!

estlin-guest: I believe I read in your diary that you were "beginning to believe that background vocals could solve anything." I think that's the thing I struggle most with is coming up with good background parts. Any suggestions?

Brian: Well, ask me! That's my method, that's my strongest point, I think. Background vocals. I was just saying to a friend this evening, I was having dinner with someone in Frankfurt, where I am now, and I said "I think I would be happy if I was never asked to do anything else but arrange background vocals for people." When I'm doing that, I

feel as if I'm possessed by some other personality. I don't know where these ideas come from, and I feel like another person when I'm doing them.

Brian: When you are trying to speak about background vocals, you have to think, what role are these vocals supposed to play? So I can suggest a few roles. One is the voice of society. An example of that is in the Shangri-La's song. "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" "I don't know, let's ask her!" So in that case, the background vocalist is in the counterpart to the main voice, it's another opinion. It is outside the head of the singer. It's a comment on the singer's position. Another role for the background vocal is the voice of conscience. So the singer is saying, this is what I am thinking, and the background vocals are saying, this is what you know is really true. So I'm always thinking of background vocals as the possibility of another voice in the song, another point of view.

hanil-guest: Many imaginative recording artists/producers make quite good

chefs, IMHO. Would you ever consider working on and publishing a cookbook?

Brian: I'm quite a good cook! But my style of cooking is let's see what's in the kitchen, and think of something imaginative to do with it. Which is exactly the same idea one has as a producer. So as a producer you say, let's see what is in the studio, who's there, what they can do, what tools we have available, and let's see what we can do with it. The other way of being a chef or a cook, which is not the way I like, is to have a recipe, to get all the things that the recipe suggests. To carefully measure them out, follow the program, and then to end up with the expected dish. That's sort of the opposite of what I do. Both as a cook and as a producer. I like the chemistry of the present moment, and that chemistry has as much to do with the limitations of the present moment as with its strength.

Later: My question is, do you think a more organic backlash to programmed music is inevitable (i.e. 'song' structure vs. 'linear' grooves a la current dance music)? PS. Do you still use Oblique Strategies?

Brian: There is always an interesting tension in pop music between linear, groove-based music, and shall we say harmonic, chord-based music. The first kind is very satisfying, because it has a lot of forward energy, and it's relatively easy to make in the sense that it gives you the chance of immersing yourself in a particular musical landscape, and really exploring the details of that landscape. The second kind, however, the chord-based kind of music, song-ish music, if you'd like, allows a much more interesting geography for a singer. It allows much more adventure for a singer to embark upon. So, this distinction pretty much divides current music, I think. Although this distinction is blurred, there are two kinds of music. There is groove-based music, which is the kind of music that computers tend to produce, because it is easy for them to do that, and there's chord-based music, which guitar players tend to produce, because they like moving their fingers around. The interesting future for me is when these two things reconcile, and one good example of that, I think, as a matter of fact, where you get all the energy and the strange space of groove-based music plus the ability to support an interesting singing adventure.

Brian: I still like Oblique Strategies, and I still keep adding to them. And I am planning soon to publish the fifth version of them.

martin-guest344: First saw you live with Roxy in the '70s. Have you ever worked with or considered working with Phillip Glass?

Brian: I've known Philip Glass since the '70s, actually. But we've never worked together. And I suppose it's because the interesting reason for working with people is when they do something that you couldn't do yourself, so there has to be some overlap of territory, but also a fairly big difference in territory. And perhaps we didn't feel there was enough difference for that to be a fruitful event.

jdk-guest: Interested in alternative ways of getting a group mind-set for both studio and live improv. &127; Oblique strategies, games, etc. Do you have other suggestions?

Brian: Well, I published a book about five years ago which was my diary for the year 1995, and in the back of that, I included some role playing games that David Bowie and myself used in some of our recording sessions. Those are, I think, worth looking at if you want to think of some new ways of creating different mental conditions for recording in. But there are other techniques as well. For instance, starvation, sleeplessness, extreme financial pressure, social oppression, the very strong desire to change the world, all of those can create a group mind-set.

estlin-guest: Do you have a favorite project you've worked on? Also, what is out there now that inspires you?

Brian: One of the favorite projects I worked on was my own record "On Land". I mean, I hate to blow my own trumpet here, but that record really, for me, stands alone, I don't know anything else like it. And I made it in a mood of complete isolation. I had no idea at all whether anybody in the world would be interested in this music. In fact, I really thank Robert Quine, who was the guitar player in The Void Oids, who was the first person who heard this music, who said, it's great! That's the first inkling I had that anybody else might find it at all interesting. So, I suppose that project means a lot to me because I know it came from me. It was like that story of the Ugly Duckling, which one day said, I am a swan!

Digital_Angel-guest: Since you were one of the originators of electronic music, what do you think of the electronic music being produced today, from the dance stuff to things like Nine Inch Nails?

Brian: Well, I'm very flattered to be called one of the originators of electronic music, but I think that I should point out that there were people doing it before me! From Edgar Varese to Jimi Hendrix, there was a lot of it about. I think there is some fabulous stuff going on, and I am particularly keen on the kind of music where people start to use the failures of digitalism as the language of their music. The sorts of distortion that are characteristic of digital equipment, for example. But as I said in the introduction, to me, the most interesting problem doesn't have to do with electronics, electronics is sort of easy for me. What's really hard, what's really interesting, though it is very old fashioned, is songwriting. That's the tough nut to crack.

MR_Soffil-guest: Speaking of new things, do you have any desire to take the ambient/space music concept into the realm of 'Mind Synch' technology? What I refer to is creating a 'score' that is linked to a

light synching brain wave system. You know those 'masks w/earphones' in the sharper image catalogue, that flash lights in synch to brain waves, etc...?

Brian: My experience with such technology, which is quite an extensive experience, is that they are so far very uninteresting. Because the relationship between what the eye does and what the ear does, for example, are very complex. They don't translate linearly, and they don't translate in any simple fashion at all. For example, you might decide to rganize the notes of the scale as different colors, let's say, to represent the notes of the scale by different colors. If you do that, the melody will manifest as a sequence of color experiences. The only thing I can guarantee for sure is that the emotional experience of those colors will have no discernible connection whatsoever of those notes. Brian: So, the problem with those kinds of translations is that they ren't really translations. They are translations at the most basic evel. It's a little bit like saying every four letter word will be represented by a loud sound. So, in that sentence, the word "love" and the word "kill" and the word "dial" and the word "link" would all have the same value. Whereas a person knows in any meaningful sense, they won't have the same value. So, this is a whole long answer, but basically, I have no faith in these technologies. But I am willing to keep looking at them.

scotchy-guest: What do you think of the use of "loops" in modern music? o you use any computer programs to help create layers of music when ou produce? And would you ever consider letting someone use a loop from your music - say, from "Warm Jets" in their tunes?

Brian: I'm slightly bored with that. There was a time when I really loved that kind of repetition. And I loved it better than hearing a musician play the same thing over and over. This was during my German period in the '70s. Then I discovered that I liked hearing, I preferred hearing, what happens when a human being tries to act like a loop. I liked hearing the way they failed. Well, people have used loops from my music. I don't really think about it.

spam-guest: What was the inspiration for the lyric to "Burning Airlines Give You So Much More"?

Brian: That lyric started out as "Turkish Airlines Give You So Much More". I wrote that song just after the crash of Turkish Airlines DC-10 outside Paris. Someone left the cargo door open on the plane, and there was depressurization, and they ended up in a field outside of Paris. This is all history to me, I don't think about it. I write songs, they are like conversations I have with myself, after, I can't remember much about them. I just remember a feeling. It is the feeling I remember of that, that someone from our world, from the West, shooting across China in a plane. And meanwhile, down below, in a rice paddy, is some old guy with long mustaches, thinking about the things that humans have been thinking about for the last 5,000 years. And, I think that was what that song was about, the difference between flying at speed through the modern world, which is the same world that this man inhabits.

Michael_Benson-guest: Brian, I'm wondering when we'll see a new release from you. It seems there has been a real scattering of interesting limited release material -- white cubes (Come to think of it, I wonder if Apple stole that idea? But their cube is allegedly silent), double CD theater music import-only's from Japan, etc. But

what about a more widely-released work, whether ambient or (maybe I shouldn't go _there_) vocal?

Brian: Yep. Well I should go there. I am working on something new, and something vocal. But, since I have set myself some very interesting problems of revolutionizing songwriting, it is taking me a little time to do it! But anyway, thank you for asking about it, thanks for reminding me that is what I ought to be doing.

estlin-guest: Do you think that music has a responsibility to culture and society? Or is it all art for art's sake?

Brian: That's a very deep question. Because those two things may not be opposed. You know, one of the interesting things about mathematicians, I mean research mathematicians, is that they work in the most obscure and archaic areas of number theory, which often have no imaginable connection to any human concern whatsoever. And then, it always turns out, twenty years later, or two hundred years later, that their mathematics have a way of solving a problem we really want to solve. Those people are just doing math for math's sake, and in that respect, a lot of the more obscure things that artists do often seem to connect in a very strange way with the things that people need to help them think their way through, FEEL their way through, the new world.

Brian: My problem with artists in general, myself included, is that we don't feel sufficient responsibility to articulate what we are doing and why we are doing it. We are lazy. We are incoherent. We are over-romantic. We love the image of ourselves as incandescent balls of passion, burning a hole through a world of bureaucracy. I hate that image! We've really got to start taking ourselves more seriously. Which is to say, we've got to start trying to figure out what it is we are about. This means asking a very difficult question. That is, what is the point of art? Why do people want it? What difference does it make to their lives? We need to ask that question because we can't coast along any more on the assumption that because we are artists we are automatically important. Perhaps we are not. Or, if we are, in which way are we?

Garageband: Brian, thank you for being here today. What final thoughts would you leave with the audience?

Brian: I just told you, those were my final thoughts! I can't think of any better ones than that.

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7) The Synthesizer Network historik/biografi

Article written in swedish.

Frågor: Kristofer Ulfves

Svar: Morgan Karlsson

Varför startades Synthesizer Network? När? Var det ett företag redan från början, eller har det gått från organisation till företag?

Jag skulle vilja gå tillbaka till året 1983 och berätta om hur intresset för elektronisk musik och synthesizers började.

På den gata där jag växte upp hade jag en granne som brukade spela Thompson Twins och Alphaville. En dag 1983 plockade han fram en mycket märklig skiva. På dess omslag fanns 4 rödklädda gubbar som stod vända mot öst. Denna layout i kombination med sin mekaniska musik var en närmast andlig upplevelse. Min Machine blev min allra första vinyl skiva som jag köpte för min veckopeng. Då detta var min enda skiva, så "snurrade" den ett antal ggr på mina föräldrars skivspelare. Om musiken var lika andlig i deras öron som mina, betvivlar jag starkt. Till min stora förvåning så köpte faktiskt min mor -2 månader senare- Computer World till mig i julklapp.

Att jag idag håller på med synthesizers är till största delen en persons förtjänst: Krister Svensson. Han grundade bla Frontmusic (skivimport och skivbolag), Energy Records (skivbolag), Electric Beat Association (skivbolag och konsertarrangemang) samt tidningen New Life.

Av en tillfällighet så började hans och mina föräldrar att umgås. En kväll 1984 så följde jag med till familjen Svensson. Detta var nog min andra religiösa upplevelse: Kristers vägg var tapetserad med enbart Kraftwerk skivor -3x3 meter med Kraftwerkskivor - med allt från japanska utgåvor av Pocket Calculator/Computer Love till spansk utgåva av The Robots, Braziliansk utgåva av Neolights och många andra rariteter. Änglar började plötsligt spela harpa, ackompanjerad av en salig vocoderstämma, och plötsligt infann sig himmelriket.

Krister importerade skivor genom sitt FrontMusic och han hade 1000-tals synthskivor i lager. Förutom Kraftwerk, så fick jag möjligheten att lyssna på andra elektroniska föregångare bla: Neu, La Loora, Mau-Mau, Der Plan, Logic system, Kowalski, YMO, Bal Paré, Amon Duul, Push Bottom Pleasure, Portion Control, Tangerine Dream, Boytronic, Cluster mfl, mfl.

Krister hade vid denna tidsperiod även startat ett band (Vogue) som spelade elektronisk popmusik. Replokalen fanns på ovanvåningen och den utrustning de förfogade över var bla: Korg MS20, Roland JX3P, Boss DR110, Yamaha DX7 samt Casio VL-Tone. Detta sammantaget grundlade mitt intresse för synthesizers och den musik som var möjliga att framställa med dessa instrument.

Synthesizer Network började så smått ta form 1994 när jag jobbade på musikaffären Boogie Music i Växjö. Kunder som var intresserade av analogsynthar brukade växla adress med mig. Andra entusiaster kom jag i kontakt med när jag försökte utöka min samling genom olika annonser. Därefter höll några av oss sedan kontakt, bytte synthar och idéer mm. Vid samma period började jag arrangera träffar för att utbyta "analog" information.

Jag ville inkorporera denna synthverksamhet i Boogie Music och utöka

utbudet av vintage instrument. Jag vill också skriva avtal med diverse utländska tillverkare av analog synth -och ljudutrustning. Eftersom jag hade byggt upp ett kontaktnät genom mitt intresse för dessa synthar, så tyckte jag det var en logisk utveckling som skulle gagna Boogie Music. Jag var ganska trött på alla digitala hemkeyboards (E86) och Rolandsynthar (D10, D20 etc.) som jag tyckte saknade den värme som de analoga syntharna har. Genom en vintage- och analogexpansion, så såg jag också en öppning till att påverka marknaden i en viss riktning. Jag ville också påvisa att den sanna potentialen i de modulära synthsystemen aldrig uppnåddes. Min dåvarande chef delade inte mina visioner vilket gjorde att jag bestämde mig för att dra igång på egen hand.

Till den här historien skall också nämnas att jag fyra och ett halvt år tidigare hade jobbat på IKEA. Där fick jag möjligheten till att reflektera kring existensbetingelser och arbete. En dag när jag var som mest trött på arbetet så skrev jag en "tung" dikt på toaletten som tom fick högsta ledningen att göra besök på vår avdelning. Det var då jag lovade mig själv att jag skulle ha en egen firma/verksamhet innan jag fyllde 25 år.

Synthesizer Network övergick från att i början av 90-talet varit en lös sammanslutning, till att bli ett företag 1996. Firman startades 2 månader innan jag fyllt 25. Jag åkte till Frankfurt och kom överens om ett Sverige-avtal med Doepfer Musikelektronik GmbH. Jag visste att Doepfer samarbetade med KRAFTWERK -Dieter Doepfer och Florian Schneider är privat mycket goda vänner- och har gjort många intressanta ljudexperiment. Vid denna tidpunkt så hade Doepfer Musikelektronik inte någon svensk representant, detta sammantaget var mycket lockande.

I dag arbetar vi även med EMS, JoMoX, Kenton Electronics, TBS, Technosaurus, Spectral Audio, Electron, Forefront Technology, Analogue Systems, Analogue Solutions och ett japanska företag kallat Seekers.

Som jag ser det så är det enbart inom ett eget företag som man har beslutanderätten/bestämmanderätten över sig själv, och där man verkligen kan förverkliga många av sina drömmar.

2. Hur stort är företaget? Finns någon reell "butik" eller säljs allting via webben?

Jag har ingen musikaffär i vanlig bemärkelse men tar gladeligen emot besök. Eftersom jag har jobbat i butik så vet jag hur stressigt det kan vara. Genom min smala analoglinje så får jag möjligheten att jobba med likasinnade musiker och slipper således att sälja digitala Roland Keyboards. Jag vill satsa mer på kvalitet än kvantitet, gå djupare in i de olika musikaliska problem som elektronmusikern kan tänkas ha, diskutera noggrant igenom setup/ljudbild, synthfilosofi, eventuella moduler mm. Detta är nästintill omöjligt i en vanlig butik där man hela tiden måste sälja på volym. Jag har numera en väldefinierad demohörna i en lokal där entusiaster/intresserade kan släppa loss sina modulära/analoga drömmar.

När internet började ta form såg jag det som en utmärkt form för min firma/nätverk. Alla mina gamla analogkontakter skulle här kunna mötas

på en virtuell arena. Med internets hjälp så skulle mitt syfte med Synthesizer Network dessutom lättare uppfyllas (se nedan). Jag tyckte också att internet gav mig möjligheten till att sudda ut gränsen mellan arbete och fritid. Ibland jobbar jag tex på natten med att svara på brev.

3. Vad var syftet med startandet av Synthesizer Network?

Att tillhandhålla ett alternativt utbud av synthesizers och att påverka marknaden i en viss riktning. Idag finns det företag som gör instrument som jag tycker har lite gemensamt med synthesizerns ursprungliga idé. Jag ville dessutom återuppväcka Mr. Robert Moogs definition av synthesizern och visa att den sanna potentialen i de modulära synthsystemen aldrig uppnåddes. Eftersom historia inte skapas av sig självt, så är Synthesizer Network mitt bidrag/ställningstagande i synthevolutionen. Jag har dessutom arkiverat allt mitt material för framtida bruk.

När jag studerade antropologi så funderade jag ett tag på att använda det modulär tänkandet och objektorienterad programmering som en underliggande teoretisk modell till en C-uppsats: identifiera/isolera olika "moduler" i olika kulturella samhällsorganisationer.

Jag hade besök av en synthkonstruktör som nämnde att han hade ett flertal patent i regler och styrteknik och det var tack vara att han hade patchat modulsynth i sin ungdom. Att blottlägga/styra olika flöden med hjälp av VCA:er är mycket intressant. Ett samhälle kan utan problem betraktas i modulära termer.

4. Ni säljer både till privat-personer och distribuerar till musikaffärer; Vilken är er huvudmarknad?

När jag tidigare jobbade med distribution, märkte jag att en del butiker hade dels dåligt intresse, dels svårigheter med att förklara/demonstrera modulära synthar. Jag upptäckte att problematiken var mest ett utbildningsmässigt problem. Detta gjorde att jag själv började ta hand om slutkunden vilket numera är min huvudmarknad. Men jag har i dagsläget ett 10-tal butiker som jag regelbundet samarbetar med och förser med analog ljudutrustning. Tidigare var det 70% distribution och 30% privatförsäljning, numera är det tvärt om.

5. Har ni ensamrätt för distribution av de synthesizer-märken ni säljer inom Sverige, d v s är ni generalagent för dessa märken (Doepfer, JoMox, MaM, m fl) ?

Just nu så kommer flertalet utländska företag till mig och vill att jag skall börja jobba med deras grejor. Flertalet av våra samarbetspartners har förstått att Synthesizer Network vet hur dessa instrument fungerar. Om man dessutom har en filosofi "en mission" så lyser det kanske igenom. Synthesizer Network har aldrig haft några kommersiella övertoner även om det i dagsläget går att försörja sig på det. Om man är ärlig mot sig själv, och andra, om man lägger ned sin själ i någonting -oavsett vad det är- så kommer pengarna förr eller senare som ett brev på posten. För att återgå till frågan: vi har exklusiva avtal för Sverige (ensamrätt) på de flesta produkter som finns på vår hemsida.

6. Vilka är de största fördelarna med näthandeln? Nackdelar?

Fördelen är att jag får beställningar från världens alla hörn. Jag håller tex precis på att sätta samman ett större "blandat" modulsystem till en kille i Grekland. Jag kan dessutom planera/strukturera mitt jobb helt efter eget huvud. Jag slipper förklara samma saker om och om igen via telefon och kan hänvisas intresserade till hemsidan. Jag brukar även säga att servern "moog3c" (analogue.org) är min bästa medarbetare. Tekniken skall användas till att avlasta människan och inte till att skapa mer arbete. Tekniken gör dessutom att man kan jobba smartare, eftersom den kan ta hand om repetativa moment och beräkningar.

Nackdelar är att man inte får samma kontakt som vid "face-to-face" kommunikation. Det är dessutom svårt att skapa sig en rättvis bild av en synth via nätet. Köper man en synth för 10000-20000.- vill man inte helt oväntat testa den. I Sverige är nu detta inget större problem då de mer professionella butikerna valt att ta in våra produkter. I exempelvis spanien och italien där en del av mina kunder finns så är det däremot svårare med demonstrationer.

7. Kommer er näthandel att utvecklas ytterligare (mot online-betalning etc i framtiden)?

När det finns några kraftfulla, billiga betalningsalternativ så kommer säkert näthandeln blomstra ännu mer. Jag har tittat på lite olika alternativ, men i dagsläget är det ganska dyrt för företag av min storlek att ansluta sig till dessa tjänster. När säkerheten, enkelheten och prispbilden är i balans med varandra så kommer jag garantera att annamma denna nya funktionella betalningsteknik.

8. De produkter ni säljer är relativt nischade musikinstrument; tror ni att ni enbart genom näthandel skulle kunna konkurrera med "vanliga musikaffärer?

Nej. Jag skulle inte kunna konkurrera med traditionella musikaffärer på deras villkor. Att nisha sig kommer vara alltmer avgörande framöver. Idag säljer man inte bara en vara utan man säljer sitt kunnande och indirekt sig själv. Om man dessutom har ett sortiment som vanliga musikaffärer saknar så fyller man ett stort tomrum. Jag konkurrerar inte med vanliga musikaffärer utan kompletterar dem och förser dem med alternativa instrument.

Jag tror att priskonkurrensen kommer att skärpas ännu mer framöver med internets expansion. En nätbutik med samma sortiment som traditionella musikaffärer skulle säkert fungera men skulle kräva stora inköpsvolymmer. Marginalerna skulle bli små och man skulle tvingas till att sälja på volym. De stora distributörernas roll kommer att förändras med internet.

Jag har deltagit i olika undersökningar från SCB där man frågat mig om expansion osv. En expansion kan ibland visa sig vara mycket olönsam då kostnaderna i vissa fall tenderar öka exponentiellt. Min filosofi är ha ett meningsfullt jobb och att få ihop till brödfödan. Jag tycker dessutom om devisen "litet är fint".

9. Skulle Syntesizer Network finnas och upprätthållas utan Internet?

Jag drev mitt företag i mer än ett år utan nätet. När jag jobbade på Boogie Music lärde jag mig branschen och lärde känna alla aktörer: butiker, distributörer, specialister, skribenter, privatpersoner mm. Utan dennas kunskap och detta kontaktnät hade jag haft mycket svårt att komma in på den svenska marknaden.

Om vi blott för sekunden antar -ändrar på förutsättningarna- och föreställer oss internets frånvaro och existens, så tror jag ändå att Syntesizer Network skulle finnas till. Att driva det som en lös sammanslutning hade inte varit några problem, som företag så hade nischrollen och framförallt distributörsrollen behövt utvecklats betydligt mer. Jag hade då behövt "utbilda" vissa butiker i mitt analoga sortimentet och det modulära tänkandet.

Jag tror mycket på kreativitet och ser väldigt många kreativa komponenter i Internet och i den "nya" värld som sakta tar form. Feodalismen ter sig som en tämligen lugn samhällsutveckling jämfört med inträdet i den datoriserade globala byn. I denna "nya" värld är kreativitet detsamma som strategi.

10. Marknadsför ni er enbart via nätet eller annonserar ni även i konventionell media?

Jag har tidigare annonserat i MM men slutade med det eftersom det var alldeles för dyrt. Numera sponsrar jag olika grupper och olika teknoklubbar/kulturevenemang. Jag får en del redaktionell reklam via olika tester i olika musiktidningar. Min senaste satsning är den egenproducerade e-tidningen NETSINE.

11. Vad tror du om nätets betydelse för musiker?

Små obskyra band får större möjligheter att nå ut med sin musik med hjälp av nya distributionsformer via Internet. Grupperna får också större kontroll/beslutanderätt över det producerade materialet. Mailinglistor och nyhetsgrupper har skapat intressanta mötesplatser för musiker, där idéer och tankar utbyts.

12. Tror du att Internets framtid som relativt "fritt" medium kan vara hotad av den fria marknadens intressen i det?

Spindlarna i näten är idag de olika internetleveratörerna. Deras roll/makt kommer troligtvis stärkas när fler och fler tjänster introduceras i näten, de kommer exempelvis koppla ett starkt grepp kring e-handeln. Just nu så fusioneras ett antal telebolag/operatörer för att stå väl rustade inför 2000-talet. Om dessa globala aktörer inte missbrukar sin makt så tror jag att internet kommer vara ungefär lika fritt som vårt övriga samhälle. Frihet är ett mycket intressant begrepp, det som är den enes dröm kan vara den andres mardröm. Personligen så tror jag inte vi behöver vara speciellt oroliga för att internet kommer att hotas av marknadens intresse i det. Jag tror dessutom att konsumentens makt kommer stärkas framöver.

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