

**Interview with Andrew Wright (Delirious Recordings, Chill Records)
by Jason Hockman (McGill University, Montreal)**

Q: Please tell me about the music scenes you were involved in before Hardcore and Jungle. How did you find yourself involved in these genres? How did you come to be involved in Hardcore, then Jungle?

The first music I ever wrote was for the Commodore Amiga demo-scene in the 1980s. In the hacking/cracking scene at the time, the different groups would release demos of music, graphics and scrolling greetings, and it was kind of a friendly competition to see who could push the hardware to the limit. I discovered various tricks to make the old 4-channel 8-bit sampler sound better, including re-sampling layers on top of each other, and rapidly alternating between tracks etc. The music itself was inspired by my musical favourites of the time, Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream, Jean Michel Jarre, and just about every 80s UK synth-pop act of the era. My crossover into house happened in the summer of 1989. By chance, an illegal acid-house party took place in the field next to my house in Dunstable, England. I sat on my bedroom window ledge all night listening to this new sound. To me it was the logical progression on from everything I'd heard before. Todd Terry's "Dreams of Santa Anna" and Corporation of One "The Real Life" stuck in my head for months afterwards.

My Amiga demo-scene music then immediately became heavily house and techno influenced, and eventually fully-blown tracks in their own right. A chance meeting with Tim Raidl (Hardcore Rhythm Team, Sykosis 451) in a local record shop, lead me to Damon D'Cruz of Chill Records in Luton, England, who was looking for UK underground house/techno to follow on from his successes importing the US "Jack Trax".

My first two releases on Chill (as Rotor) were primarily techno tracks, but feature breakbeat loops that I'd sampled from various old records and tapes. On my second release "Kaleidoscope", I was not content with just playing breakbeats in a loop, so I experimented with chopping them up and playing sections in reverse, and layered etc. Even though I thought I was being original, I was not alone doing this, as it was a technique that obviously became pretty common across the board! I realized pretty quickly that the breakbeat sound seemed to be getting more appreciation than the regular "four-on-the-floor" beat at the time, so I kept going with that. The terms "hardcore-techno" and "jungle-techno" were only just starting to be used to describe this sound, and like most new genres, the definition was pretty loose. I released a couple more EPs with Chill/Uproar and purchased a new Ensoniq EPS 16+ sampler workstation keyboard. This 16 bit beast was a big step up from the Amiga's 8 bit sampler, so the sound got a lot cleaner and less grainy, even though it could still only sample in mono. Through Damon, I'd met up with Tony Bowes (Justice), and we decided to put out our own EP. Tony had a great collection of hiphop vinyl, so we had a ton of great samples to hand. Our "Concrete Jungle EP" as Justice & Mercy was a huge hit. We took some pretty big liberties with sampling other work, but everyone was doing it.

Seeing how easy an independent underground release was, my friend Neil Baker and I, decided we should also give it a go, and we created "Delirious Recordings". Our first release "Blitz EP" was a pretty basic sample-fest, sampling "The Tape" by Frank De Wulf. A liberal dosage of samples from the 1980s TV show

“Battlestar Galactica” added to the mix, as they did in a lot of my tracks. We got 1000 pressed, and foolishly decided to try and distribute them to local record shops ourselves. We soon discovered that was a nightmare, and followed Tony’s recommendation to give them to a distributor, Mo’s Music Machine, based out of Waltham Forest, England (I think!) To my surprise, they easily shifted all 1000 copies within a week or two.

Following the success of our first release, I decided to take this more seriously. I quit my university degree at Luton University, much to my parents’ dismay, so I could focus on our record label. Even though techno was still my big love, I decided to write a ragga-influenced breakbeat track called “Jungle Muffin”, based around a shot vocal clip from a Dreamscape live tape of MC Conrad. I didn’t even like the track myself at the time, but everyone I played it to loved it, so I threw it on an EP along with a few other tracks I’d been playing around with. I was amazed at the reaction. 5000 copies flew off the shelves and at every club or rave I attended, DJs were playing it. From that point on breakbeat-hardcore and jungle seemed the way to go.

For our next few releases we switched distributor to Jack in the Box, who partially funded the Micky Finn remix of “Jungle Muffin”. I think they sold around 10,000 copies, but then went bust, taking some of our profit with them! A year or so after that we decided to quit while we were ahead, and get “real” jobs! We’d had a good run for three years, but sales of underground vinyl were dropping, and the distributors were struggling more and more.

Q: I’d love to hear more about your experiences [in the demo scene]! How old were you? Have you always been a tracker user then? Which others have you used? Have you seen the attached flowchart of trackers? Why trackers vs. sequencers?

My memory is a little hazy, but I think it was 1988, so I was 16. I was using Soundtracker, but I don’t recall which version. I loved how visual the trackers were. It felt so hands on. I’d never used any other kind of sequencer at that point, and when I did, I remember wanting to go back to a tracker! Being able to see and edit note for note was a big advantage compared to some of the “blind” MIDI sequencers that simply recorded MIDI events and played them back with a bit of quantization. Also the popularity of the trackers meant there were a lot of instrument disks out there, as well as other tracker tunes that you could easily rip the instruments out of, even if the module had been compiled into a demo. I also loved that it was a simple complete system. The hardware and tracker was one piece of equipment, with no mass of cables and other hardware to worry about. It all saved as one mod file.

Q: So the success of Jack Trax brought about an interest for more in this/similar style in the UK. How did breakbeats enter into the music? What genres (or even releases) most directly brought about this integration?

It’s impossible to say how and when the breakbeats appeared. I’d really starting using them because they added an instant fuller sound to the track, and it took just one of the four channels in the tracker. I was never really into funk or hip-hop back then, so my decision to use the loops was really only technical rather than a love of breakbeats. I learned to love the sound more later on. Guys like Renegade Soundwave had been writing great stuff with breakbeats for a while, but I think I really personally noticed the use of breakbeats getting more and more popular from the days at the Camden Palace nightclub around 1990/1991. Tracks from 4-Hero,

“The Gonzo” by Lost and Under Cover Movement’s “Moonstompin” come to mind, but there were many more.

Q: Do you remember who else at the time was using breakbeats in techno? and using chopped up breakbeats? Also, do you recall when this was? Also, why? was it related to the speed of the tunes increasing, or were the breakbeats first?

By late 1991, in the UK rave scene at least, almost everyone seemed to be using breakbeats. I’m not totally sure why it caught on more in the UK, compared to the Belgian scene etc., but I suspect it was because of the crossover appeal for people who were into late 80s hip-hop. Chopping up the beats just added variety. Most tracks were still around 120–125bpm at that point. Things started to speed up a lot the year after.

Q: Do you recall why you chose the Ensoniq over others?

I’m not totally sure. I think it was the best value at the time for a 16 bit workstation. Damon at Chill organized for both me and Neil Rumney (NRG) to get one at the same time, using an advance on royalties. I remember being really excited waiting for the thing to get delivered.

Q: This was under the thrillseekers alias, right? How fast was the Blitz EP in relation to other techno at the time?

That’s right. I think the tempo was comparable to other releases around that time, however when we did the Blitz remix EP for the German market, we sped things up considerably, as the German scene had some pretty insane tempos!

Q: Do you see a division between Breakbeat-Hardcore and Jungle?

I’ve always hated sub-genre definitions. People get so hung up on it all. We were just writing music for ecstasy-fuelled clubbers and it was getting labeled as “hardcore”, “jungle” etc. by DJs, magazines, and marketing folks. I guess the only difference in my mind at the time was that jungle was using more Ragga influenced sounds, but again, the definitions were pretty loose. I didn’t really care what people called it, as long as they liked the music and bought the vinyl! Saying that, I guess I was guilty of jumping on the genre bandwagon with “Jungle Muffin”. The term was being used so much by 1992 that I just went with it.

Q: So far you’ve mentioned tracks on the Blitz EP and Jungle Muffin. Would you say these were your breakthrough tunes?

Before those, I guess the first big one for me was Rotor - “Kaleidoscope”. Along with the chopped up breakbeats, I also used a manually keyed amplitude tremolo effect, cutting the volume from zero to maximum while the string was playing. I’d used the technique before, but it sounded perfect this time with the lead string sound sample. I also used an Amiga speech synthesizer to create the “Kaleidoscope” sample, as well as some random garbled phrases. This was the first track I’d written that I was totally pleased with. To my amazement, it even made the UK Top 40 Dance Chart. My first Chill Records release, “Purely Rhythm” had also charted, but I felt like this one had more underground appeal, which was important to me.

Q: Do you remember your workflow from those days? What types of sample manipulations did you use? Did your experience with these tunes change how you approached making subsequent ones?

Every track led to new ideas for subsequent ones. My big favourites on the Amiga were the volume tremolo on strings, as described above, as well using sampled chords to give the illusion of more sound channels. Being a huge fan of

Commodore 64 SID tunes by Martin Galway and Rob Hubbard etc., I also liked to use rapid arpeggios to simulate chords from a single channel. I always admired the genius solutions those guys came up with on that old hardware.

On the EPS 16, I liked using a technique of sampling an evolving waveform, and using a controller wheel to move the start point on the sample playback. This enabled the sampler to sound like it was producing a resonant acid-type sound, although it was really cheating.

Workflow started with lot of time spent looking for samples, from any sources. Tapes, vinyl, movies, TV shows, news broadcasts etc. The ITV News samples about ecstasy on "Rush Hour" were a huge hit with people. I even got my mom to do the "Holy Shit" sample in "Kaleidoscope". After sampling everything, came trimming, and editing. The inbuilt sequencer on the EPS was nowhere near as visual as the Trackers, so there was a lot of blind experimentation. I was more track- based with the EPS, and would write a one pattern section of a track at a time, and then see what went with it. On the Tracker I would think in whole patterns at a time, as you could see it all on the screen. To record the end results, I used to hook up an old reel-to-reel tape machine, and then we moved onto DAT, which was a big improvement.

Q: After you purchased the Ensoniq, did you start to collect more gear? Did synthesizers play into your workflow at all or did you continue to do mostly everything from within the tracker and/or sampler?

The sampler was king. Rather than hook up MIDI equipment, I would just borrow synths and drum machines off friends, and sample the sounds I liked. It wasn't as flexible as having the real equipment, but it was a lot less hassle. I'd do anything to avoid having a tangled mess of cables everywhere. I can't remember exactly what I'd sampled, but there was definitely a Roland SH-101 in there somewhere.

Q: Since you began writing music, do you think technological development has affected your music over the years? What about in relation to production techniques?

I think some of the technological advancements made me lazier! When you had to squeeze every last bit out of old hardware, it felt more inventive, and I would approach things in different ways. I still think my most creative work was on the Amiga. As sampler memory got bigger, it just became too easy to sample huge sections and loop them. I stopped writing tunes around 1994, but then had another surge back in 2005-2006, when we released the Moog album "Dials to Maximum", and "Saw Jaw" by Obviously High. A lot of that was done with Reason. That was a great piece of software, as it had that hands-on experimentation, but without all the tangled wires and patching issues of real analogue studio.

I haven't written anything since, so I can't really comment on current software, but judging by the hundreds of new tracks on Beatport each week, I'm guessing there's a lot of easy to use software out there now, that can be run on affordable hardware. Great for creativity, but it's hard to stand out when there are so many new releases each week. It was much easier for us back in 1992!

Q: Using a limited setup also might end up creating an edgier sound, since it might not be exactly perfect, which somehow can add to the mood of the track.

Like anything, a bit of random imperfection can add to the character, and stop things being too clinical.

Q: When you say sample huge sections and loop them, do you mean of other tracks?

Yeah, as soon as you could record several minutes of 44.1 kHz stereo, ripping the heck out of other people's work was just too easy. When you were limited by short mono samples, you had to put much more thought into it.

Q: So your last piece of gear was the EPS 16+, then you used Reason?

I also wrote some patterns using an AKAI SG01v module, but I never released anything. I then moved to Reason, running on a standard PC.

Q: We touched on some of your collaborations earlier. Were you ever in a teaching role during your career? Were you self-taught completely, or did someone show you the ropes (e.g., even during your demoscene days was there someone that you looked up to and learned from)?

I've always liked taking things apart, so I taught myself everything. I would hack the music out of demos on the C64 and the Amiga, using a disassembler, and see how it was written. I also got a lot of ideas from listening to the underground anthems of the time, and guessing how they created sounds. When I did work as a co-producer with the guys from Obviously High, Stop Press, Justice etc., I'd like to think some of the things I learned were passed on, but I've never really tried to sit down and teach anyone the ropes.

Q: Apart from the downside to the increase in possible sound sources/samplers/modulations—that is, too much to choose from—do you see any drawbacks to an all software environment?

The software environment is great. It's neat and tidy, simple to load and save patches, and backup work. If I were to write music again, it would be all software based, with some external controllers. My love these days is screenwriting though. I've gone off on another creative tangent, but the screenplay I'm writing is still very much about the rave scene.

Q: Was there a major change that caused the shift (musically) from Breakbeat Hardcore to Jungle? Was it related to technology? Earlier you mentioned that you and some hardcore producers were already cutting up and rearranging breakbeats (e.g., Kaleidoscope), but it wasn't the norm. Was this enough for people to start using a different genre name?

I don't think there were any defining moments in many of the subtle changes in sound. It happened over a longer period, in the background, until standout tracks appeared. I think the ragga sound sneaked in more and more. I threw in some raggastyle samples in Jungle Muffin, as I love the laser-shots effects in ragga. I made my own by sampling the Cylon's guns from Battlestar Galactica, and also the game Green Beret from the Commodore 64.

Q: Was there a specific context in which people used the term Jungle as opposed to Hardcore (or Breakbeat Hardcore)? To your recollection, what were some of the earliest "jungle-techno" and "jungle" tracks? To that end, what about the term and musical characteristics of Hardcore, vs. Acid House?

I'm not opposed to new genres when they're warranted. To my mind, the only electronic dance music styles that deserve their own genre names are house, acid house, and maybe techno and drum & bass. Everything else is just a slight variation. Acid house is probably the most deserving. It's the punk rock of the electronic music world. The TB-303 being used so heavily, along with the TR-909 and TR-808s and spoken-word vocals really were a new phenomenon, musically and culturally.

As much as the term EDM is overused now, I agree with its overall view of everything as electronic dance music. Sub-genres form cliques, and it's also fodder for marketing. For me, it's about the music first. I hate it when the "new" sound just turns out to be the "old" sound, with a new name. For someone like yourself who's analysing the music, it's interesting to pick out differences, but to the wider audience, I'd say just appreciate the music! Anyway, that's just my view. Each to his own though eh!

To actually answer your question, I think the first time I ever heard the word "jungle" was when my pilled-up friend was yelling it on the dancefloor at a club called Milwaukeees in the appropriately named town of Rushden in England, around 1991. I suspect he'd just heard the term on a Top Buzz tape or something. It was termed "jungle-techno" back then though.

The boundaries were blurred so much between breakbeat hardcore and jungletechno around that time that I couldn't really tell you when they terms were being used more exclusively. I think they were pretty much the same thing for a while. I don't even recall what tracks first used the terms. I think a lot of the classification is actually retrospective.

Q: Can you tell me about your live PAs? What were they and how did they originate? How were they done (equipment, sequence triggering)? How does a live PA compare with DJing? with in-studio mixdowns? Do they occupy the same sort of performance space as a DJ set? How has this form of performance changed over the years?

I only ever did one live PA, and it wasn't exactly "live". Everything was presequenced on the EPS, and I just triggered patterns. I came on for about 30 minutes in between DJs at a small rave event of about 500 people, and played a few unreleased tunes. I was never a fan of live PAs for that kind of music. A guy pressing buttons on stage didn't really seem to go with the rave vibe in my mind.

Q: Also, in the course of these interviews, I've heard the club name Milwaukeees mentioned a few times now. It seems to be an important cultural reference point. Can you tell me more about this place? What nights were held there, and who attended? What music was played?

Milwaukeees was a club in an old converted truck stop in the middle of nowhere, that became a rave legend. It was my first experience of a real rave drug-den. As you walked into the place, you'd be hit by the smell of Vicks Vaporub, as it was customary at the time for Ecstasy users to smear themselves in the stuff. The music was full-on hardcore, with DJs such as Fabio, Grooverider, Carl Cox, Clarkee, Ratty, and almost all of the big names from back then. I think the promoters were Helter Skelter, ESP and Equinox. The capacity can't have been much more than 500 people, so it had an amazing intimate atmosphere, with a low ceiling, fog machines, thumping sound system, and decent lights. The central dance floor was surrounded by chill out booths, strewn with "gurning" ravers who could no longer co-ordinate themselves. Everybody has their special nostalgic venue, and that is ours. When you were there, you just knew that nowhere else in the future would ever come close to matching that whole experience. Good times.

Q: So Helter Skelter, ESP, and Equinox would host nights at Milwaukeees then? How was this different than raving in fields? What caused the shift from outdoor raves to indoor parties?

Yes, they promoted Friday nights at Milwaukeees, between 1991 and 1993 I believe. I

don't remember there being a shift from outdoor to indoor as such, as they both happened in parallel, but I do recall that illegal raves in fields and warehouses became increasingly more difficult due to the government crackdown. More regular clubs started doing underground nights. Nothing beat raving outside though, as long as the temperamental British weather co-operated! My favourite ever event was Fantazia: One Step Beyond in Donnington, back in 1992. I think there were more than 25,000 people dancing in a field, and this one was actually legally organized. The atmosphere was electric, and to top it off, the second from last tune of the night played was one of ours, "Soothe My Soul" by Justice & Mercy. I was right as the back, on a small hill, watching 25,000+ people going crazy to one of my tunes. You can't beat that!

Q: Was Milwaukee one of the first venues to hold indoor parties? What others were notable? Did you ever play at these venues?

There were many more in London before Milwaukee, but that was the first place I remember that was closer to where we lived. Others of note in London were Camden Palace, Orange @ The Rocket, Labyrinth, and a whole bunch that I can't even remember the names of. Outside of London, the most popular illegal raves were Proper Stuff (Cambridge) and Exodus (Luton). Milwaukee and a small club in Luton called The Grid were the main weekly indoor clubs we went to. The early Dreamscape warehouse events in Milton Keynes were also an awesome time.

Q: Can you tell me about how [Soothe My Soul] was made?

I initially had mixed feelings about Soothe My Soul. It's a great track, one of my all time favourites, but like Blitz, it was very sampled loop heavy, which is something I'd usually tried to avoid. It was all written on the EPS, and it really came around because Tony (Justice) found the amazing synth and vocal break from [source removed]. Adding the "Soothe My Soul" sample from [source removed] just finished it off nicely! It still sends tingles down my spine 21 years later, and I consider it the best track Tony and I did together. It was one of those tracks that just fell into place. It's always nice when that happens!

One of the interesting things in the track is that a bug in the EPS sequencer timing produced an interesting side effect. The bug affected the duration of notes randomly, as the EPS was not very precise. The lead instrument had a bit of noise after it, that should have been truncated off, but on some of the notes, it played a fraction of the noise, creating what sounds like another deliberately played instrument behind the lead sound.

Q: When I started making music, I would take a breakbeat, then make a copy of it, and cut off the first note of the copy. Then I would copy this copy, and cut off the first note of the copied copy. I'd continue with this until the end, and this way I could access any point of the break and connect and parts of the break (by adjusting the release time of the held note and triggering a different note) while preserving the original feel of the break. Later on, I started to use recycle, which outputs individual slices and a midi file.

How did you go about this? Why? Were there constraints due to the gear?

I did very basic breakbeat slicing, mainly due to the fact that it was pretty laborious, especially on the EPS, with its non-visual sample editing. On the Amiga it was much easier, but rather than isolate individual sounds within the break, I would generally just have the standard break, then the break starting at its first snare, and maybe a reversed copy. I would then sometimes add my own bass drums to the mix. I would also layer the break over itself at half volume and at a 1/16th note displacement, to

produce pseudo drum-rolls.

Q: Do you recall where this kind of technique came from? Did you do that from the moment you started working with breakbeats? Or did you learn it from watching/listening to someone else?

It was self-taught, as I didn't want to be playing a standard loop that sounded identical to others. I didn't want it to just sound ripped from another track. I think I used it on Kaleidoscope first, as the breakbeat was distinctive. I wanted people to think that others had sampled it from me, and not the other way around. I doubt that was ever the case though!

Jason Hockman's full paper can be found here:

http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=121313&silolibrary=GEN01