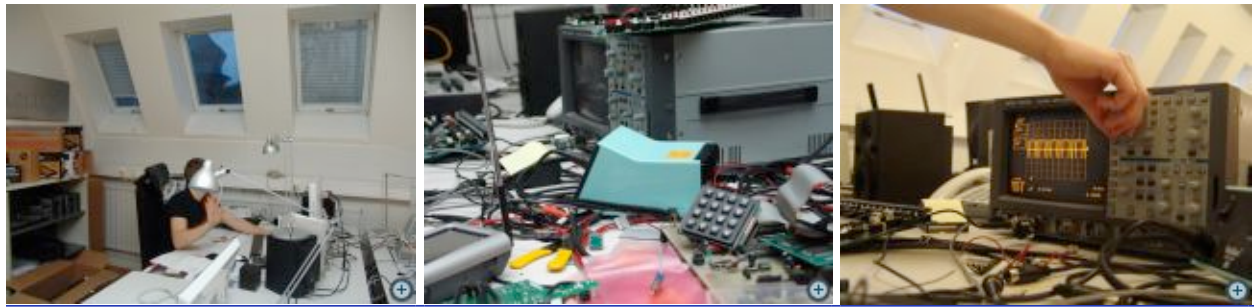**How do new ideas for products develop? For instance, how did the idea for the UW upgrade develop?**

We are in constant develop mode. Our backgrounds enable us to play around with different ideas. Everything is discussed and when we hit the sweet spot, we work from there. For the Userwave, we basically wanted our old customers to enjoy the benefits of sampling in the Machinedrum environment because it was a much asked for feature which we could offer it at a reasonable price.

What kind thinking and what procedures were done when designing the samples for both MD and MnM?

We wanted to offer samples as a complement to the synthesis. The samples were carefully picked with both transparency and character in mind. We were not interested in copying any classics although it soon became evident certain factors automatically created a certain feel and sound. Exactly how the samples were made I can't say, but it involved a lot of old machinery and effects units. Initially, samples from real drums were intended to be used, but the project was scrapped due the samples not being good enough.

A little known fact is that the drum samples found in the Monomachine are 8 bit, a little nod to the old school legacy C64/Amiga tracker scene and the feeling of the tunes produced by those means.

It seems, from the leaflets included in with new purchases, that the md and the mm went through several iterations prior to arriving at the version that we know and love – is that the case?

The images seen on the back of the product sheets are concept sketches of products that in the end evolved into the current line. As with any product development, the product you purchase is rarely the manifestation of the initial idea. It's a very very long way from the concept to the finished product.

As your designing, do you look at other pieces of gear and think, ok, that works well or wow, that was a terrible design decision?

Of course we take a look hard look at the market, not only the synthesizer market, to find inspiration. This also works in the opposite direction, no need to invention the square shaped wheel again. The X0X-style sequencer is an example of a technical solution we didn't come up with but thought would function well with our machines. Then we tried to apply the Elektron twist to it and really integrate it with the sound engine.

Do you ever design with particular musicians in mind?

We try to design stuff that everyone can use, no matter what music they make. Designing for a particular crowd wouldn't be very wise as trends in music, as with everything else, comes and goes. Elektron gear should adapt to the music, not the other way around. Timeless machines, oblivious to the new black… Ah! That said, to get the most out of our units the person buying our stuff should maybe be interested in going beyond the preset-level of things.

What is the focus/drive behind design – interface? Ease of use? Flexibility?

Interface and ease-of-use are very important aspects of Elektron gear. Too many submenus and options can hamper creativity, that's at least what we think. Flexibility is important as well, but not necessarily in the way of offering a sample library containing every sample known to man or sporting 5 billion voices of polyphony. Instead the Elektron flexibility lays in the way our gear work. One could maybe compare it to Lego. The basic building blocks are quite simple, yet they can be combined in various ways to form everything ranging from space stations to medieval castles.

How do you guys approach OS improvements, new features, etc.? It seems that you concentrate first on bug fixes than implementing new features – is that a conscious decision by the company?

Fixing bugs has a higher priority than adding new stuff. It is better to have a stable and slimmed system than a crash-prone system with a thousand bells and whistles.

How much do existing users and requests influence decisions on what to include?

If someone suggests an idea which we think would fit the concept we discuss it. Implementing a new feature is not something that is done quickly though. It has to be very well thought out and mustn't disrupt the workflow or be illogical in use. A lot of criteria need to be met.

The user base is of course very important to us. Many bugs are discovered by users and we very much appreciate those bug reports. Keep them coming!

As a small company, it seems that everyone wears many different hats – is that true?

Although we all have a primary function at Elektron, a lot of different and brightly colored hats are indeed worn by everyone. A lot of decisions are taken after discussions involving everyone. That is a good thing as everyone comes from a different field, often pointing out things others weren't aware of. We all bring different notes to the scale and thus sweet music is made.

What's a typical day at Elektron like?

There isn't really a typical day as no day is like the other. There are some things that need to be done on a daily and weekly basis though, like answering support emails and shipping stuff. The last months the MKII-release has been taking up a lot of time. OS's needs to be programmed, hardware has to be modified, retailers and the music press have to be aware of the release, manuals needs to be updated, new graphic profiles have to be thought out, etc. etc. Apart from all this, occasionally somebody discovers a nice Youtube-clip and shows it to everyone. Oh, and on Fridays we clean the HQ.

What did you guys study in school? Do most of you come from a technical background?

Our backgrounds are very diverse. In general, the developers have studied programming and electronics. We also have sound engineering, mathematics, human-computer interaction,

journalism, new media and graphic skills spread out amongst us. The list is quite long. The school of hard knocks is not to be underestimated either!

How did the Elektron team members get into this field of work?

One of us is the remaining original co-founder. Others have joined at various times, when there was a need for their competences. Another guy made his M. Sc. internship at Elektron and stuck around afterwards.

Have any of you worked at other instrument companies?

No.

What kind of music do you guys listen to?

We have a server at the HQ stuffed with music. Normally we shuffle the ever-growing playlist and since everyone have their own musical preferences the variations can be exciting. One second Cyndi Lauper is singing about girls wanting to have fun, the next second Whitehouse is shouting about torture and death. Noisy Basic Channel dub followed by the esoteric mumblings of Current 93. You catch the drift… A mixed bag for sure!

How many of you are musicians in your spare time/hobby/second job?

Almost all of us actually. It's important to have an understanding of the musical process, even though it surely differs for everyone at HQ. Often you discover things that would be useful to implement, especially when playing live.

As a small company, do you feel that you guys receive more scrutiny when you release a product?

The fact that we don't release new stuff every year contributes to new releases getting a lot of interest and therefore scrutiny – which we're glad for. It is a healthy sign that people do care.

Where does Elektron see itself within the music gear industry? In comparison to companies like Korg, Roland, etc.

As a company we try to retain some kind of punk attitude, meaning doing things in our own way, but with an agenda. We want to make products that bring out the creativity in a user and at the same time we try to head for those white spots of the sonic map. Sound, creativity, visual impact, usability and – last but certainly not least – fun are all vital parts of the Elektron experience.

Does Elektron identify more with boutique companies like DSI and Jomox or does it feel like it occupies a unique position within the broader synth market?
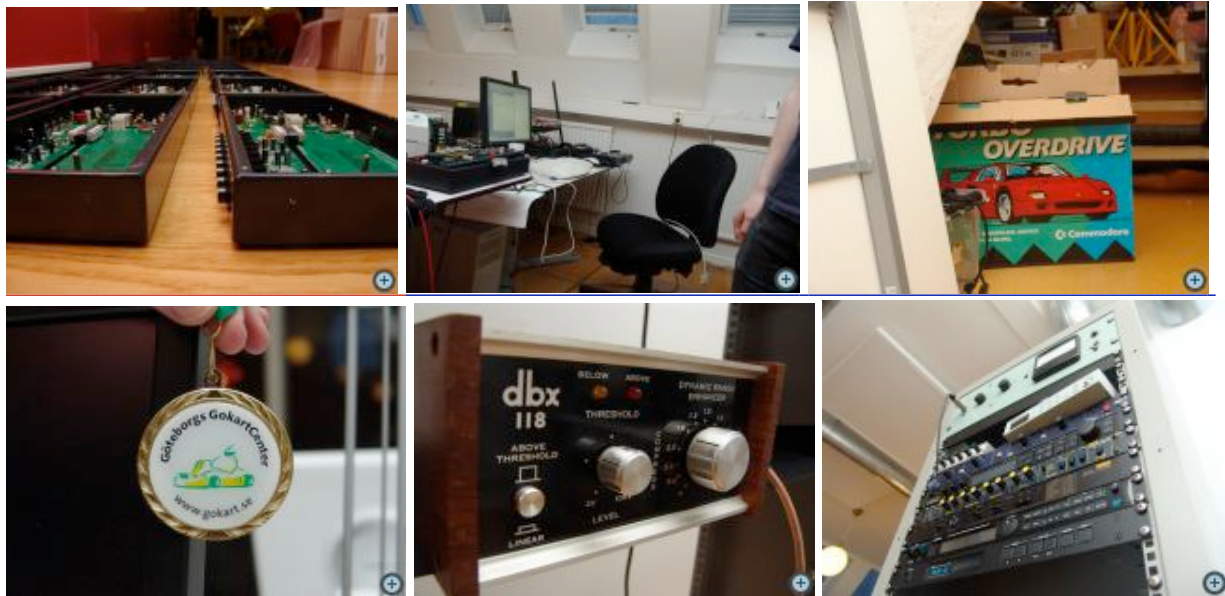
It seems like a lot of the companies operating in the more niched segments of the electronic music industry are driven by a genuine interest in what they do and have a lot of compassion for the gear they bring out. That is very much the case with us too.

Do you guys feel pressured to produce the same volume of new instruments as other instrument manufacturers?

Quantity is not the most important thing for us. Instead we try to focus on quality.

What's in store for Elektron in the future?

Unfortunately we can't spill those proverbial beans, but the future is going to be exciting. We have a clear image of future products. They will complement the current lineup nicely, but that's about as much as can be said of these mystery machines. As always, stay tuned!

[Elektron](#)