
procastination

Posted by husc.sound - 2012/05/31 18:51

I have been working a deskjob for the past seven months, fulltime, and it has altered the way I use my studio, instead of calm and structured experimentation and production.. I've been doing these short bursts of improvisation and wasting the rest of my spare time sitting on the couch downstairs with the playstation or an acoustic guitar..

..there are no jobs where I live, so I have to feel lucky to keep this desk madness for a while. It pays my bills and keeps life simple and predictable. I want a change, but that will take time and I am too amitious to just shut up and do my job like a drone! :)

My concerns are inspiration and motivation.. I have been reading self-help/procastination tips on structuring creativity and how to combine it with boring mindless office work, but it left me even less motivated.

Anybody here willing to share how their lives work, combining a full time non musical deskjob with their semi-professional homestudio? I need some tips and some power from you guys to keep my head up and back straight for the next year :dry:

thanks, sander

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Re:procastination

Posted by Rusty - 2012/05/31 19:29

Nah, but I can give you tips on how to procrastinate, I'm world class in that regard, like right now for example.

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Re:procastination

Posted by bauer - 2012/05/31 19:50

working 9-5 in an office is just very tiring. i go through periods when i can't be bothered to work on any music too. but i do find that if i force yourself to sit down and start tinkering with the boxes, then i get caught up in it and will usually come away having made something, however small.

also, breaking the 'creative' stuff into small chunks works for me too. i.e "i'm going to make a killer clap tonight". simple and small enough to achieve in one sitting. do this while you don't feel inspired and then when you are ready to make a whole track, you'll have a library of 'new' sounds to work with.

my two pence!

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Re:procastination

Posted by tIB - 2012/05/31 20:00

I work full time, usually 10/11 hour days- my key is to always put in an hour of studio time a day, which in turn has helped me to develop a faster speed of workflow. I also press the record button when Im running out of time and try and complete work in the jam, as opposed to fussing over every minute detail. Learning to enjoy the time you do have in the studio as opposed to being annoyed about the lack of time is another thing that is good but takes some time.

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Re:procastination

Posted by Nils - 2012/05/31 20:08

I just looked up the term procrastination, it seems I have finally found my diagnosis.

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Re:procastination

Posted by husc - 2012/05/31 20:10

tlB wrote:

Learning to enjoy the time you do have in the studio as opposed to being annoyed about the lack of time is another thing that is good but takes some time.

This is excellent advice, one of those golden rules everybody already knows, but you need to see it or hear it to realize it's one of the reasons I am worried. I need to take a more positive attitude! For the first time in over a decade I actually have some income I can spent on gear (guitars) without having to save on food or whatever! :cheer:

And I am still amazed at your body of work, combined with a full time carreer..

@bauer: the risk is, starting tinkering and then.. boom.. bedtime! Time flies with elektrons!

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Re:procastination

Posted by guga - 2012/05/31 20:18

dunno if i can help but i surely understand what you mean...

in my past job i worked as a full-time programmer and the entire day was spent in front of a pc screen, with 'deadline pressure' on and all the office stuff we know...i had no time what so ever to make music and most of all, i was completely drained when back home (the usual 9-19 shift...). after a good year and a half i realized it was time to make a change and decided to quit the job and to move onto something i really wanted to do: make music. it's now almost 2 good years since i quit, and apart from not having all the money i used to have (and that's a bit of a shame, yes) i feel happier now 'cos i can spend more time on my machines and i don't need to rush things up (and yes, i still manage to pay the bills) it's a sort of a 'risky choice' so i'm not suggesting you to quit your job...just don't forget about your life...at the end of the day, you work for someone else who doesn't really care about what you do once you're back home; as long as you deliver what they want, they're happy... money money money...that's all they want... :dry:
gg

...video killed the radio star...

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Re:procastination

Posted by Nils - 2012/05/31 20:21

I live a super straight life with wife, kid and a day job that I'm not really into (hence the procrastination). Music is always far down on my list of priorities, not because of want, but because of need.

I used to be super stressed about not having enough time for music, and try to force myself to be creative the little time I had in the studio. I didn't feel I had the time to "fool around", but wanted every session to end up with a "product" - a track, a sketch... The result was exactly the opposite - I got nothing done.

It took some time to break free from this, but it helped trying focus on having fun rather than trying to prove something to myself all the time. I also totally changed my workflow. Now I record almost everything I do, even hours of seemingly worthless modular noodling, and save it for later use. Most of my last EP was centered around old patterns, recording etc, that were resurrected and put into a new context.

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Re:procastination

Posted by bauer - 2012/05/31 20:29

Nils wrote:

It took some time to break free from this, but it helped trying focus on having fun rather than trying to prove something to myself all the time. I also totally changed my workflow. Now I record almost everything I do, even hours of seemingly

worthless modular noodling, and save it for later use. Most of last EP was centered around old patterns, recording etc, that were resurrected and put into a new context.

this is great advice. i'm part the way there, and you've just reminded me why i moved from ableton to hardware. must start recording those jams again!

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Re:procastination

Posted by xmit - 2012/05/31 20:38

^

I'm gonna echo exactly what Nils has put here. Sounds exactly like my current modus operandi.

With a business to run, a home to keep & family, including a teenage boy & a (soon to be) 4 year old girl to deal with it became apparent to me that I couldnt keep stressing myself with what I was 'achieving' every time I turned the machines on. And I also had to face up to the fact that unlike when I was 25, doing 8 hours straight in the studio after / before a full day at work is not really viable any more.

The key for me was relaxing it all : for a good while I stopped doing music full stop, though that was partly for other reasons too. But then I had a revelation, sold all my stuff that tied me to working in the luxurious but ultimately stress-inducing confines of my commercial studio & downsized to work out of a cubby hole at home.

Now, even if I have some spare time (rare) but I'm not in the 'mood' to play with the machines, I dont bother...& I dont beat myself up about it.

The downside is that I will be about 87 years old :laugh: at my current rate of production when I've finally got an albums-worth of material together....but the plus side is that I'm not stressed about it , am having fun & am actually quite pleased - mostly -with what I'm turning out in the main.

As for our friend tIB : Andy is clearly a machine ;) How the hell you do a full weeks work & then turn out stuff of such quality with such regularity is simply incredible. Prolific is not the half of it.

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Re:procastination

Posted by Nils - 2012/05/31 21:06

bauer wrote:

this is great advice. i'm part the way there, and you've just reminded me why i moved from ableton to hardware. must start recording those jams again!

Ironically, Live has enabled me to do just this. It has the function of the platform that everything is recorded to, and everything is processed within when I'm turning ideas into tracks. Btu I've always had a firm foot (or ten) in hardware, so Live never gets in the way ;)

xmit wrote:

As for our friend tIB : Andy is clearly a machine ;) How the hell you do a full weeks work & then turn out stuff of such quality with such regularity is simply incredible. Prolific is not the half of it.

This.

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Re:procastination

Posted by Goggleboy - 2012/05/31 21:24

I work full time and struggle with the same thing, last week i had to force myself to get the smallest thing done, i hit a wall so to speak. mostly i find myself wasting time on this forum and a few others:) I want music to pay the bills really bad but its going to take time and hard work so i keep chipping away.

I am always the most creative and focused when i have a deadline or a solid goal in mind. An upcoming gig always gets me in action, the crunch of feeling a performance on the way makes me analyze the set and want to make it better. As already metioned recording really helps me even though i have a block agaist it sometimes. Its sometimes makes the direction of the song much clearer to listen to it while not tweaking the boxes, and new ideas spring out that otherwise would have been missed.

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Re:procastination

Posted by Nils - 2012/05/31 21:34

Goggleboy wrote:

i hit a wall so to speak. mostly i find myself wasting time on this forum and a few others:) .

Hot tip: disable the internet connection in your studio. I have.

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Re:procastination

Posted by cosmosuave - 2012/05/31 21:36

This was posted on livepa.org and I think it should be everyones mantra to watch prior to working on music or any creative project...

<http://youtu.be/3ResTHKVxf4>

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Re:procastination

Posted by oldgearguy - 2012/05/31 21:44

I went from a large home studio space with tons of gear and a lot of time and no productivity to a new smaller space in addition to getting (re)married and having a fulltime+ job as well.

Dealing with kids, house, spouse, and music is challenging. A couple things might help -

I try to carve out time in the mornings when I first wake up, before work, before the kids get up to do work in the studio. It's not every day, but 2 to 3 times a week. Not a lot of time, usually it ends up being 45 to 90 minutes. Initially I hated it because it was never enough time to get anything done. I didn't have the luxury of spending 30 minutes creating a patch on the PPG or reading up on trigless trigs or something.

What changed was partly attitude and partly workflow.

Attitude - I am happy for spending any time there and getting anything accomplished. I find the rest of my day is better when I do get time and instead of getting frustrated with not finishing, I am happy I was able to work on a chunk of music.

Workflow - I can turn on 3 power strip switches and all my gear is powered up and ready to use. Audio patchbays with normalled connections and a MIDI patchbay with all the default routes are set. I don't need the computer up and running to play around or to record work in progress (I have an Alesis HD24 for that). If I want to burn an mp3, the computer powers up with the audio interface software running and I start up Tracktion with a default 'record a stereo track' project loaded so it's a few clicks of a mouse to record and then save to mp3.

Also - not every day I go into the studio results in audio. Sometimes I'm really not feeling like working on any music so I take out my other list of studio tasks and try to knkock off one or two items. I'm sure everyone has a list like that for their setup. All the drudge work like backing up files, creating templates, updating OSes, reading a manual and learning more about an effects unit, rewiring stuff, fixing broken gear, etc. Keep a 'left brain' list of things to do when your right brain isn't feeling engaged.

Finally - even though you may have the funds to buy gear, resist as much as possible. What you need is a streamlined workflow that aids productivity. Bringing in too much gear too quickly will completely shut down the creative process.

Instead, work on setting up what you have in an ergonomic way and *after using the setup for a while* figure out what the

weak links are and upgrade/buy those first.

Always be able to record quickly - you should be able to record anything in your studio pretty much on demand. if you can't or if it takes a lot of recabling and booting up and fiddling around, that's an area to focus on first.

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Re:procastination

Posted by cosmosuave - 2012/05/31 22:15

OLDGEARGUY great advice for those of us with kids... I have thought about getting up early as well... Currently I get up at 6:00 AM to get ready for work and the kids to daycare... How early do you get up and how do you do it so your not waking up your wife?

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Re:procastination

Posted by xmit - 2012/05/31 22:38

^
my little flower tends to like to get up at around 6am....I don't fancy getting up at 5am to do an hours music personally !!
:laugh:

Think we're all different - I tend to grab a few hours over the weekend when the rest of the family are out doing typical weekend stuff. Plus I prefer the quiet of the night - yeah it means working on cans but that's ok for programming, pulling stuff together etc.

I've always been a night person - I like all the darkness outside & the lights blinking on my machines...
This is where changing to working from home has helped - if at 10.30pm or something I suddenly have an idea, or get the urge to power the gear on I can...when I used to work in my commercial studio it had to be pre-arranged & is a 20 minute drive from home for starters - this added the pressure of having to 'complete' something when I was there. Of course the plus side was that I was using a beautiful, air-conditioned, acoustically accurate control room with Â£2,500 - worth of monitoring...loads of lovely outboard....& now I'm working in a cupboard, literally :laugh:

Wouldnt change it for the world though. B)

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Re:procastination

Posted by oldgarguy - 2012/05/31 23:14

cosmosuave wrote:

OLDGEARGUY great advice for those of us with kids... I have thought about getting up early as well... Currently I get up at 6:00 AM to get ready for work and the kids to daycare... How early do you get up and how do you do it so your not waking up your wife?

Alarm goes off at 5:30am, my wife heads to the shower, her daughter (when she's with us) sleeps until 6:45.

I head down, turn on the coffee, go into the basement and power up the gear and figure out what I'm going to work on. Go back upstairs and pour coffee #1. Head down and typically work/play until 6:45 (with headphones), then head up to shower and go to work.

I do find other one-off times like when my wife and the neighbors have a book club meeting or her daughter has a track meet or something. I also have some time in the evening when they are getting ready for bed and she's putting her daughter to bed.

One word of caution I will advise to married people - do not take away from any alone time with your wife for music. Do not work in the studio when she's ready to settle down or go to bed in the evening. That time is precious for you and your marriage. Music is great and important and makes you feel good, but your marriage is more important than that. (I learned from the first time around...)

Re:procastination

Posted by Goggleboy - 2012/05/31 23:48

Relationships throw a bad kink into my workflow. Never been tied the knot but girlfriends have pulled me away from music worse than anything (at least anything thats legal...), though i have been very inspired by my list of ones gone wrong haha. I feel for all you married ones and think its amazing and awesome that you are still finding time for music along with family. I always tell myself im married to my gear:)

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Re:procastination

Posted by kirlian - 2012/06/01 03:11

i'm going the easy route and suggesting some very good, short reads on the subject:

<http://the99percent.com/tips/6585/10-Laws-of-Productivity>

<http://the99percent.com/tips/6736/The-Top-5-Qualities-of-Productive-Creative>

<http://the99percent.com/articles/7168/In-Praise-of-Slow-Mastery-10-Great-Ach>

if i could add or echo anything it would be show up everyday and make music... everyday even a little. it's as much about being habitual as gettign something done. getting up earlier is a profound way to guarantee you will get work in and your mind will be empty and fresh.

also, take action. the minute you think of it, go to the studio, sit and begin making sound. don't hesitate.

one famous author wrote that inspiration magically appeared at 9 am everday. meaning he went to his studio and sat down and started writing at 9 am everyday.

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Re:procastination

Posted by dubathonic - 2012/06/01 03:13

IIRC Tarekith had a blog post awhile back on this topic, or something close to it. He's pretty good at time management so it's probably worth reading through his entire archive for tips.

I fall into the same lifestyle category as a lot of previous posters -- wife progeny house dayjob etc. -- and lots of advice I'd give has already been said. A few other points I'd underline:

Make an agreement with your S.O. that you'll spend certain times doing things together, and certain other times in your studio. Mutual respect makes a good relationship. :)

Once you do carve out those time periods, use all your time management skills during the rest of the day so you can go into the studio feeling like you are free to be there, with no mental distractions.

Have a goal every time you start to work with your gear. If that goal is "play and have fun and not worry about finishing/writing anything", so be it; the word 'play' has more than one meaning. ;) Other times, look at how much time you have and think of a piece of a project you are working on that you can reasonably finish in that time period. Even if it's just an hour or so and all you can do is get the levels balanced between your drum tracks on a 4-bar loop, you'll feel like you got something done. Little accomplishments add up over time, and the good feeling motivates you to do it again.

Lastly (and one reason why Elektron gear appeals so much to me): I recommend carrying a playable piece of your gear around with you at all times. Invest in a really solid carrying case (Pelican etc.) and make sure you never go to work or on a trip or anywhere without it. Maybe you won't get a chance to use it, but if you find a free hour here or there, grab it and get something else done.

It amazes me how many tracks I've sketched in cafes sitting with an espresso... ;)

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Re:procastination

Posted by Indigo333 - 2012/06/01 03:24

Thanks for this Dub, I just sold a bunch of gear due to the neglect of my OT. It's a dee deep machine and I have "Procrastibated" long enough. I think the OT will forgive me but may beat on me a bit along the way to get even:laugh: cheers...eddy

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Re:procastination

Posted by husc - 2012/06/01 06:02

Great advice in here.. learning a lot and I'm recognizing things in your stories.

I remember some quote I read, it said "when you are young, you have all the time, all the energy, but no money. As you get older you'll have money, energy, but no time and as you age you'll have money, more time, but no more energy." you can never have all at the same time.

It stuck in my head for a while. I complain, but did some good studiowork, recorded some music and played great shows looking back over the past 7 months. I enjoy time with my girlfriend not thinking about, work, sound and music and I should turn my limited time spent home alone into pure studiotime! (and offcourse time to help clean the house ;))

Ooh, and the tip about no internet in the studio is pure wisdom..

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Re:procastination

Posted by tIB - 2012/06/01 15:53

Ooh thanks for the nice words in this thread. :blush:

Lots of what is in here is my way- fun... internet less studio... record everything...

As for the initial problem, just focuss on the top half of this picture...

http://profile.ak.fbcdn.net/hprofile-ak-snc4/50352_298364282390_1781097_n.jpg

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Re:procastination

Posted by stiiiiiiiive - 2012/06/01 18:33

I'm in a similar situation myself. Well... let's say I've been learning for 3-4 years now how to overcome all that. GREAT GREAT advice here. I especially felt my strings vibrating when reading OldGearGuy and Nils but others too.

My personal current experience:

For years I've learnt about myself and I now know that my favourite time are the 10pm-2am hours. BUT... with the daily job etc, I often feel the need to rest in the couch in front of a movie or slack off on the internet or.. well. This is frustrating because I've spent the whole day planning a musical evening.

However, I feel I've found a solution, which has been mentioned here. A guy I sometimes play with once told me: "I'm more of the 'beginning', I prefer spring, morning etc". As I had pain to start playing at night because bed time etc, two months ago I tried to go to bed earlier -no matter I've not been playing. The aim was to be able to get up at 1am, play a couple of hours and get back to sleep. But as a result, I just wake up earlier in the morning and either don't feel I'm

already running after my day or I take time to do cool things: play music for example.

Advantages: morning is way underrated!! When getting up, your brain is... muddy, ok. Coffee really helps to focus. Now, your brain is: empty. No troubles yet. No daily hassle from your boss, etc. You are NOW ready to create.

BTW I tried once that creativity stimulation exercise: once you've just gotten up, take a pen and some paper (or laptop) and have a 15-20 minutes page rush. Write WHATEVER gets in your head, don't correct, don't erase, don't think. Write what you receive, not what you (think you) create. Just try it. Anyway.

The experience I had with morning music is that it does not matter if I don't finish things. No as much as at night. Plus it has me more motivated to continue when getting back from work.

And finally, I leave home smiling, thinking how lucky I am to have music, to have a passion, to have the time to fulfill it before going to work... to know how valuable are the morning hours. And no kidding: my whole day is better!

You should try it, really.

Now, I'll throw some important ideas -important to me at least- that have become my "mental shelter" (easy to say, not always easy to do... but worths being said :)).

- There's a time for having things done, and time for having simple fun.
- Reading manuals, installing OS, selecting samples, achieving a great clap tonight: this is not necessarily properly "making music" but this is certainly "doing something for your music", and THAT may be what makes you feel better.
- If you won't play for a while, it does not bother your gear.
- PLEASURE FIRST.
- Don't ever feel guilty.
- I find myself more at ease in a light set-up: keep it simple.
- The record-ready is important as said earlier: when jamming around, at least, record a 3 minutes stuff, or a couple of riffs, patterns etc. You may shoot the frustration down that way.
- PLEASURE FIRST.
- Would you sell all of your gear and give music up?? Naaaaah! So be conscious you have the flame, even if you are not playing every day.
- huh... lower expectations?...
- and finally: PLEASURE FIRST.

My two grands (as weigh, not value). Sorry :)

Oh: please take a look at Lev Ylmaz' Tales of the Mere Existence - Procrastination clip on the tube ;)

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Re:procastination

Posted by Tarekith - 2012/06/01 23:40

A few tips off the top of my head:

- Lower your expectations. Sounds bad, but it's not. Seriously, sometimes setting too high of goals when you don't have the time just sets you up for disappointment, and leads to more procrastination because you feel like you never get anything done. Break down any tasks you have into smaller chunks and just focus on a couple each day. Moving

forward a little bit is better than not moving forward at all.

- Slow down. It's not a race, making music is about having fun, so there's no need to feel you have to rush to get a song done. Take your time, enjoy the PROCESS of making music, and don't put all your emphasis on how the end result will make you happy.
- Use your lunch breaks wisely. I would often use my lunch breaks to read new gear manuals, study music theory, research future purchases, check for software updates, etc. Use that time to get as much of the tedious and non-artistic parts of music making process out of the way as you can.
- Go portable. Get an iPad, iPod Touch, or some other portable device that will let you record ideas when you find yourself with some free time throughout the day. Look for simple apps that let you export the midi or audio files you create when you get back to the studio. Great for lunch break music making too.
- Get rid of gear that is distracting you, use only the items you know well and truly enjoy using regularly. Having options is great but it can be distracting as well, too many choices can be almost as bad as not enough. You don't have to sell the gear you're not using (though I do), instead maybe just box it up and put it in the closet for now. Out of sight and out of mind, leaving you to focus on the tools you know really well.
- Start a collaboration with someone. Having a project in the works where two minds can contribute to the song is great for keeping yourself from getting stuck in creative ruts. It also helps to force you meet certain deadlines too, if you know the other person is waiting for you to finish your part of the song. Emphasis should be on bouncing the song back and forth often, with each of you contributing small parts on each go around. That way you're not feeling overwhelmed, and in my experience that kind of back and forth interaction gets things done faster.
- Set aside time. For a lot of people setting aside an hour each is just not practical, or perhaps they just don't get inspired that often. Instead try to plan for maybe an hour each week where no matter what you get your own studio time. Arrange it with your significant other, and make that time sacred. Have a plan mentally about what you want to try and get done during that time. It'll give you something to dream about while at work, and eliminate that feeling you get when you first get into the studio of "now what?".

Hmmm.... I think I know what my next blog post will be :)

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Re:procastination

Posted by xmit - 2012/06/01 23:54

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excellent as ever T :)

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Re:procastination

Posted by stiiiiiiiive - 2012/06/02 00:38

Tarekith wrote:
- Start a collaboration with someone.
True, I forgot that one though I've just started something new :)

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Re:procastination

Posted by Tarekith - 2012/06/02 00:55

Expanded a bit on some of my ideas above:

<http://tarekith.com/finding-time-for-music/>

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Re:procastination

Posted by Big Bang - 2012/06/02 01:34

Spend less time on forums, and more time honing your craft and learning your instruments. I come here to gather info and sometimes give some insight when I can. I've been on forums where some people have over 9000 posts...then you listen to their music and it sounds like it's from the early 90's. Ain't hard to tell why.

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Re:procastination

Posted by zfigz - 2012/06/02 04:09

oldgarguy wrote:

Finally - even though you may have the funds to buy gear, resist as much as possible. What you need is a streamlined workflow that aids productivity. Bringing in too much gear too quickly will completely shut down the creative process.

wise words...

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Re:procastination

Posted by Goggleboy - 2012/06/02 04:30

Big Bang wrote:

it sounds like it's from the early 90's. Ain't hard to tell why.

hmmm, I try to sound like the early 90s on purpose, I guess i should post on forums more to refine my sound

=====

Re:procastination

Posted by Nils - 2012/06/02 05:22

Goggleboy wrote:

Big Bang wrote:

it sounds like it's from the early 90's. Ain't hard to tell why.

hmmm, I try to sound like the early 90s on purpose, I guess i should post on forums more to refine my sound

:laugh:

I think there's some degree of truth in the negative aspects of too much forum activity, but personally I have quite a few "dead spots" during a work day where I can spend two minutes reading the latest posts on EU. I wouldn't be able (nor would it be acceptable) to pull out my Octatrack in those dead spots and start programming. Most of my forum activity is spent when I'm unable to work on my music. I'm not saying that time is very productive though ;)

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Re:procastination

Posted by Big Bang - 2012/06/02 05:29

Goggleboy wrote:

Big Bang wrote:

it sounds like it's from the early 90's. Ain't hard to tell why.

hmmm, I try to sound like the early 90s on purpose, I guess i should post on forums more to refine my sound

Yeah, that's all fine and dandy if this is just playtime for you...I like 90's music-who doesn't, but why should I be trying to do what's already been done? Everything has to evolve. You can make little waves, or bring the tsunami. I'm working on an earthquake

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