



http://www.bitfellas.org/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.211

Page 1/4

Obarski, Karsten (00.00.1992) musician

Mattias Dahlberg, Wed 06 Jun 2007

Interview with Karsten Obarski arranged by Mattias Dahlberg

Pupblication: AM/FM Diskmagazine

The same day as I'm writing this I recieve a copy of Protracker 3.0 by Cryptoburners, and yesterday I got a look at Protracker 2.3 by Noxious. Protracker, Noisetracker, Startrekker, the list of different trackers is getting extremely long. But how did it all start?

I'm proud to present an interview with the man who created the very first Soundtracker. Of course the trackers have changed a lot during the last six years, but without SoundTracker 1.0 by Karsten Obarski your favorite tracker wouldn't look like it does.

If you didn't know it, the SoundTracker was once a commercial program, and Mr. Obarski owned the copyrights. About that, and other issues related to the Amiga and music, is what you'll find below.

Short Facts:

Name : Karsten Obarski

Age : 27 years (born 1965)

When did you get your first Amiga?

About seven years ago. One night there was a big thunderstorm in my hometown. A stroke of lightning hit the ground somewhere in the neighbourhood and my beloved C-64 was gone. I decided to buy a brand new C-128D, but a few days later I got my Amiga 1000 with 256 KB RAM instead.

What made you start programming the SoundTracker?

A short time after that I went to the Amiga I realized that everyone used large sample loops instead of coding music.



http://www.bitfellas.org/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.211

Page 2/4

I couldn't understand why no-one used samples as instruments. So I sampled a few sounds from my Yamaha DX21 and programmed my first music routine.

When was your first SoundTracker ready?

It was in December of 1987. About ten months after I had got my Amiga, the first SoundTracker was completely finished. But I'd already made music with it some months before that.

When and why did you give up the SoundTracker project?

After I'd sold my copyrights to a company named EAS for a few bucks, and the Soundtracker clones started to come from all directions, I didn't have the inspiration to code any more on that program. Because I always like doing new things, I started coding for the diskdrive instead...

Did you feel bad when other people stole your idea/program?

If you're interested about something special in your computer and can't get any information about it, you'll start to examine other programs. Due to the fact that my SoundTracker was the first in its kind, the other guys began to study my code. I did the same in other cases. But it wasn't funny when people made some patches on the SoundTracker and then thought of it as their own program, removing my name completely. Even today's trackers work in that same way, and still use the tone-event data structures which I invented. (Which is a very simple one.)

Would you have done a SoundTracker differently today?

The SoundTracker was my first stand alone computer program. Of course I would code in a better, and completely different, way today. For example, one year after the release of the SoundTracker I began to program a totally new music composer with MIDI support and synthetic sounds, in addition to modulated samples. This program has never been released though, and I only use it my-self.

Have you used any of the new trackers?

No. I have always used my own versions of the SoundTracker or its successor, the SynthPack. Some features of these new SoundTracker clones are very good and neccessary too, but most of them are still chewing on a user-interface with a standard of the 80th.

What's your reaction to the huge success of the SoundTracker?

Considering the software situation of that time I knew one thing for sure before I released my SoundTracker - a program like this will



http://www.bitfellas.org/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.211

Page 3/4

impact like a rocket. And so it was. There simply wasn't anything that compared with the SoundTracker, except for Aegis' Sonix. But try to build any Sonix music into your game.

Any favorite composers during the years?

Because of the huge amount of modules, a lot of them are very bad. But there are some brilliant tunes among them. I don't remember the names, but a while ago I listened to some music by a guy in the demo-group named Phenomena. Some of the tunes were the very best I've ever heard, so I've made cover versions on my keyboards.

How do you think the music has changed, since you started?

Instead of hearing the typical nice-game-tunes you'll hear the techno sound everywhere - that's bad. The all over quality of the music and samples is better - that's good.

Do you make music yourself today?

Yes, of course. But in the last time I've made music using my MIDI-equipment only.

What kind of a music equipment do you own?

I am using an Ensoniq SQ-80 keyboard, an SR R plus 19" expander, a Kawai K1r 19" expander, a Roland M120 19" mixer, an Alesis HR16 Drum-machine and an Alesis Midiverb digital effect.

Any opinions on the DSP (16-bit sound) the Amiga will use?

Digital Signal Processors (DSP) offer a lot of possibilities and realtime modifications of any digital input. Because of its speed you'll be able to emulate much more voices and several digital effects.

Finally, do you have anything to say to the programmers of new trackers?

Just try to find new ways by yourself and do not spend so much time making the same things others have done before you. Support the new OS2.0. The times change and the demands of a good user-interface too.

That was the last question I had for Karsten Obarski this time. If you would like to see more of him, he promises a big surprise for soundfreaks who own an Amiga, SEGA MegaDrive and the SuperMagicDrive Backup-System. What could that be? One never knows...



http://www.bitfellas.org/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.211

Page 4/4
