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Brimble, Allister (Team 17) (00.00.1992) musician

Mac Panther, Thu 07 Jun 2007

Interview with Allister Brimble of Team 17 by Marc Panther/Soundwave.

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Could you let us know what exactly do you do.

I am a freelance musician, composing music and creating soundfx for computer and game console games. Any company can write to me with details of what they need in their game, and the memory allocated to music + fx. If they're happy with my quote then I write the music and soundfx for it. As well as computer music, I now compose real synthesised music using my home recording studio which I am hoping to get released on CD this year.

Allister, is piracy really killing the industry, and if people did not crack and train games do you think the prices would be a lot lower than they are now ?

Although I can't agree with piracy, especially when done for a profit, I do not believe it is killing the industry. Most people have received a pirated game at one time or another and I'm quite sure this doesn't effect the number of originals they buy. People who receive large numbers of pirated games would probably never have bought an original anyway. Also a number of games I've worked on, especially Full Contact by Team 17 have been cracked and spread several weeks before their release and still got to number one in the charts !

Have you ever been in a demo group?

No, and although I would like to be in one which deals only with demos (no pirated software) I don't really have the time.



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How did you start making music on computers ?

I started long ago in the times of the good ol' Spectrum, playing around with a program called WHAM! THE JUKEBOX which allowed a speccy 48K to play three channels of sound. I then bought a speccy 128K and heard the music for a game called Glider Rider by David Whittaker. It was absolutely awesome. This made my mind up, I wanted to write music for computer games. Later I purchased the Commodore Amiga, mainly because I had heard much about its sound quality on a programme called Micro live on BBC TV. I used the old favourite, Aegis Sonix to write a couple of tunes and sent them off to a new company called 17 BIT software who ran a PD library. They wrote back saying (to my great surprise) that it was the best music they'd heard and wanted to include it in their library. This was the start, however the company who really started me off were CODEMASTERS. I sent them my PD tunes and they asked me to write some tunes for a couple of games. Nitro Boost Challenge was one of the first. Writing music for countless CODEMASTERS games, gave me the experience I would need when dealing with the whole Industry.

Do you have ANY FAVOURITE Computer Musicians? If you have, please tell us!

There are many Great Musicians on the demo scene right now, all of whom I rate very highly indeed. I wouldn't however like to list these, in fear of leaving someone out. Nevertheless, I will tell you who I rate in the computer GAME music industry (and for which tunes):

Current GAME MUSIC Scene on the AMIGA

Tim follin - Ghouls & Ghosts

Led storm.

Chris Huelsbeck - Turrigan II.

David Whittaker - Shadow of the Beast

Mathew Simmonds - A variety of pieces

Music 5 years ago on 8 bit machines

Rob Hubbard - For countless games

Martin Galway - For countless games

Ben Daglish - Last Ninja, Trap

and many more.

David Whittaker - For many games.

What sort of music are you into?



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Mostly instrumental, especially Jarre. Vocals have always put me off so I quite like the current RAVE music which is often instrumental. Art of Noise is pretty good. Being a musician though, I can listen to any piece of music and appreciate it.

Do you ever get to see/read any disk mags ?

I used to receive Newsflash (17 Bit) on a regular basis as I was also a contributor. I've seen a couple more mags and am quite impressed, However, I don't have time nowadays to do anything other than write music.

When your not composing music, what do you do ?

To relax, I play pool for the local Pool team, in the village pub. I also like to play Jimmy White's Snooker, the best game in ages. I often listen to Jarre, Art of Noise and the CD, Enigma.

Could you tell us what other equipment you use to make music.

I use a standard 1.2 Amiga 500 with 100 MB harddrive and 2.5 megs of RAM. I take all my samples from a number of synths; A Roland D110, Kawai K1, Akai S950 (for sampling), and Yamaha SY77. I add special effects to the samples using an Alesis Quadraverb unit.

Do you play any instruments ?

Only the Piano on which I have reached grade 7. Without this, I could never have composed music.

When you have completed a selection of tunes for a game, does the company send you the complete game free of charge ?

They should do, however I usually only receive a copy if I ask. Team 17 is though an exception to this rule. They always send a couple of copies on the day of release.

What is your favourite chocolate?

I like all chocolate, especially Cadburys.



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Do you have a favourite drink ?

Coffee, Rum & Black.

Do you have a favourite game you like playing when you get the time?

Yes, I play pool for the village (Lapford) Pool team. I also like to play squash every week.

What do you think of the CDTV? And do you think it will expand your talents as to music ?

The CDTV should be great once programmers start to learn all the new tricks. It could do with a few new graphics modes (256 colour?), but I have read that it is to receive a 24 bit graphics chip built in to all new CDTV's. For sound it is really great for me. I can produce CD quality music using my synth equipment via Music-X which can then be recorded onto my Casio DAT recorder. It would give me a chance to really show off! Games companies will have to choose though between having CD music and Amiga sound effects or CD effects and Amiga music. Both should sound excellent.

Can you tell us how you get the inspiration to do a particular tune.

Many people ask me this and I always find it hard to answer, because I don't really know. I always seem to be able to compose straight away on the computer, without having anything to inspire me. My theory is that whenever I listen to a piece of music, be it on the computer or on a CD I absorb part of it subconsciously, then when it comes to composing a tune, my brain chucks out a mix of all the tunes I've ever heard.

You are part of Team 17. Is there any other software house you've worked for.

Yes, I am freelance so I work for an increasingly large variety of companies. I started off with Codemasters and Grandslam and now also work for the Sales curve, Mandarin, Ocean and US Gold. I get a lot of other work via the actual development teams who write the games.

Do you get a long time to do a piece or pieces of music for a game?

It varies a lot depending on the company I'm working with and the time of year. Near Christmas, I often have to turn out music for the Amiga and ST in 2 days. I prefer to have about a week to really polish off a piece of music. Some projects however require masses of soundfx, such as Alien Breed by Team 17 and I'm given a number of months to work on them, making changes on the way as required



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by Team 17.

If you get very little time to complete a tune, could it have been done better given more time ?

In most cases, yes.

Are you a millionaire yet ?

Not quite I'm afraid! I do earn a good living from computer music though and this has helped me to buy my synthesiser equipment. I'm currently attempting to branch out into the REAL music business with a few new age type tunes. If I am successful, perhaps then I will be a millionaire!

Do you have a favourite tune that you have composed yourself ?

Alien Breed. NOT the version on the game but the FULL version, which is about 25 minuits long and contains many differnt sections. I think this is currently being spread (with my permission). I was also quite pleased with my Project-X rave tune.

Do Team 17 have any new projects ?

Yes, the next game to be released will be Project-X, an amazing shoot- em-up which should really get people talking. We have at least 5 new games to be released this year although I'm not allowed to talk about them yet! There will be an Alien Breed II in about a year which should be miles better than the first one.

Why does Mr Brown call you "Mr shoes"?

Erm, well about a year ago I had these really massive old leathershoes which I wore everywhere. Infact I'm wearing them right now !

Will you donate your next pay check to me Allister? And the royalties.

No.

Oh well I tried.... I did ask Allister (in a long phone conversation) for ANY TIPS for Musicians who would like to break into the



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Freelance world and he told me simply bombard software companies with your music. (Simple but effective).