

Mathematics

Mathematics equals a soulful equation

<http://www.socialstudiesmusic.com>



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on 06/08/2008

In the academic world, mathematics is akin to torture for some students. But in the world of drum 'n bass, Mathematics simply means good music.

The New York City-based production duo — dnb producer/DJ James Ronaghan and musician/producer Mike Genato — have been working together under the Mathematics guise since the late '90s.

According to James, he and Mike first ventured into the studio together in '99. "I think around that time ... drum 'n bass went through a really dark period. It was kind of missing where I had come from," he says. "When I met Mike, we kind of bonded over that — that musicality sort of thing. We wanted to bring a little bit more [of] that back to drum 'n bass, and that's basically when we started making tunes together."

But before Mathematics was known for its studio productions, it was known for DJing and promoting events including the respected Physics weekly in NYC. During those earlier years, there was also another member of the Mathematics crew — Roy Dank. Although he has moved on to pursue other projects, Mathematics has continued and so has its brand of dnb music.

Mike and James each bring a different set of talents to the table. James has been DJing since 1992, and has witnessed the evolution of the dnb music first hand. Mike, who opted not to dip into the DJing realm, is a knowledgeable engineer and talented instrumentalist who's been playing piano since the age of 9.

These differences have led both men to pursue various projects, some of which are separate from the Mathematics guise. "We're doing a lot of experimentation individually at the moment," James explains. "I've just been on a tour of Europe for two months. Mike has been writing all sorts of music."

"We do drum 'n bass together, but we write individually as well since we don't always have the time to sit in the studio together," says James. "Mike is involved in making hip-hop and R and B apart from Mathematics. We've also both written music for commercials and short films and video games."

And the list of international A-list DJs playing Mathematics' tunes is long and growing with every release, with people like Calibre, Andy C, Hype, Marcus Intalex, Pendulum, Klute, LTJ Bukem and more supporting the Mathematics sound.

"There's not many of us U.S. drum 'n bass producers that have their own label and have world-wide recognition," says James, adding that although the international support is strong, sometimes the hometown support seems to be lacking. "I feel like I should get a little more respect of where I'm from," he says.

Switching subjects, Mathematics' record label, Social Studies, released its first 12" in November 2003 — "Here and Now" b/w "Backdraft." They are now on to their ninth release with "Treason"/"Rooted Part 1" featuring Tactile while their 10th, "Esprit" (with Tactile) and "Thrill of the Hunt" with Tactile and new Hungarian producers Spinline — is being mastered.

"Our idea was always to have our own label and do our own thing, and that's a very hard task," James explains. "Originally we had lots of support ... [and] when you have support from bigger labels, it kind of puts you in your own light."

As a born and bred New Yorker, James feels that the city has had some influence on the music he creates. "I've lived in N.Y. my whole life," he says. "I feel like N.Y. is my favorite place to travel to. When I've been away from it for a long time I love to come back to New York ... there's just some sort of energy that I feed off of when I'm here."

"I like a lot of East Coast/R and B/hip-hop stuff. Mike and I are both influenced by that, and our production is sort of fusing that sort of sound and bringing song structure to drum 'n bass and more vocals," he says.

The interest in these sorts of sounds and using them in dnb helped drive Mathematics' early musical creations.

"That's really where we started," James says, adding that when they started making tracks it was during the rise

of liquid funk, when selected producers like Mathematics were aspiring to make dnb tunes with some of the musicality, melody and lush sounds that seemed to be lacking in the big tunes of the time.

"But just like everything, [liquid funk] got copied to death and there was no quality control ... everyone was making liquid tunes and they were like a dime a dozen," he says. "So, I think we're trying to step it up and do something different but something sort of along those lines."

Although Mathematics has become known for incorporating the liquid funk vibe into its music, James thinks that from the very beginning Mathematics has tried to be diverse.

"When we were three [members], I think that really helped keep the energy diverse ... we've always been able to make more dark tunes and more fun, musical tracks. I think the backbone of our music is funky," he says. "All of our music has some sort of funkiness to it. And funky can translate into dark and funky, it can be bouncy and funky."

So far, Mathematics has only released singles and hasn't done a full length CD, although the guys are toying with the idea of doing an album.

"We're just making music at the moment," James says. "Mike has been involved with doing R and B as I said before, and he's been working with Peter Hadar. I'm excited to be working with a male vocalist. Basically, they did an R and B album together, and we did a remix of one of the tracks they had done together called 'Fire.' Right now it's getting heavy play from Calibre and Fabio."

Add up all these elements — including working with original vocalists — and divide by these two personalities, and you get the equation for the Mathematics sound.

"We're really trying to focus on bringing the song structure to drum 'n bass," says James, "trying to take it a little bit further than just in the club ... really trying to break that barrier ... to do something that will [be] radio friendly but also work on the dancefloor."