



When you're one of the most in-demand talents in the ultra-competitive remix field, you can't settle for anything less than the most powerful, high-tech tools, right?

Well . . .

Jason records with the DJX, the DJXII and the CS6X.

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PHATNESS IS WHERE U FIND IT!

WHILE LONG ISLAND-BASED REMIXER JASON NEVINS boasts a formidable collection of synthesizers, samplers, sequencers, and drum machines, one of his signature pieces of gear is the Yamaha DJXII, a low-cost DJ box. He's also a fan of the box's predecessor, the DJX. "I've used the DJX or DJXII on most of my recent work," says Nevins, 30. "For example, you can hear it on my remixes of Kelly Price's 'Mirror Mirror,' Robbie Williams's 'Rock DJ,' and Britney Spears' 'Lucky.'"

"In a sense, the DJXII is a toy," says Nevins. "But even though the onboard synth tones are very simple, they are just total dance-pop sounds. For example, I use patch #13, a sort of detuned sawtooth-wave sound, on practically everything. I use the percussion sounds too, though sometimes I record them into my computer and then manipulate the audio files. The boxes are also cool for live playing. They're very simple and fun to use, and I like how you can turn things on and off on the fly."

Nevins is known for remixing both current chart-toppers (Madonna, Ricky Martin, Backstreet Boys, Missy Elliot, Garth Brooks) and for crafting hip audio makeovers of '80s hits. In fact, a revisited '80s song, Run-DMC's 'It's Like That,' has proved to be the biggest success of Nevins's decade-long career.

"All I can say is, I took a great song and I made it better," says Nevins. "Run-DMC are legends, the guys who first brought hip-hop into the foreground. And then I came along, took their old 12" out of the crates, and remixed it into an uptempo dance tune. I filtered all the lows and low-mids from the original record, so all that was left were the vocals and higher-pitched effects. Then I combined that with a new, all-original track. As soon as I put the two together, I thought, 'Whoa - this is hot!'" Nevins pitched the results to Run-DMC's Profile Records, who promptly released it, crediting it to "Run-DMC vs. Jason Nevins."

"Soon after that, Europe just took the ball and ran with it," recounts Nevins. "It sold five

million copies in a year and a half. It was on every single dance and hip-hop compilation. I know I have 30 or 40 compilations that include it, and my collection is far from complete."

Nevins says he isn't surprised to have scored his biggest hit in Europe: "Europe has always been my biggest fan base. I just seem to have a European ear, though I find it difficult to define exactly what makes something 'European.' It has a lot to do with the type of synth sounds that are used and the way parts are layered, but it's also this indescribably European vibe. Anyway, that sound is spreading — now everything in America is starting to sound European. So I was definitely ahead of my time for the U.S."

It was in Europe, in fact, that Nevins first caught the DJX bug. "I was on tour in Monte Carlo," he remembers. "I saw the DJX in a small keyboard store and started playing with it. I was blown away. At the time, a lot of the synth-dance-trance sounds that were popular in Europe were not widely available in the States. I bought the DJX for an incredibly high Monaco retail price and started using it immediately, thinking it wasn't available in the States. Then I came home and found out that it had been released here, and that the suggested retail price was ridiculously low. When the DJXII came out, I bought one after about five minutes."

The DJXII's strong suit is simplicity, says Nevins: "Sometimes a simple sound is much better for a remix than a complex tone from an expensive sound module. Some higher-end modules can sound over-effected. The architecture of the sounds is too built-up, as if the programmers were trying to show off the power of their machine. But sometimes you don't want so much detail or so many effects. You just want to come up with a cool sound and play it. The fact is, I am not an editor. I am not a tweaker. I like to just spin the knobs and get the sounds."

JASON NEVINS
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