



LINKIN PARK'S JOE HAHN:

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Chart-busting rap-rock group Linkin Park is practically a genre unto itself. In the past five years, they’ve released two mega-platinum albums on Warner Bros., 2000’s *Hybrid Theory* and 2003’s *Meteora*, plus a full-length disc of remixes from the first album and a joint release with rap giant Jay-Z.

But according to Joe Hahn, the band’s DJ, Linkin Park almost didn’t get signed. “Everyone knew who we were, but we didn’t really fit in with what was going on in the music world,” he explains. “So people didn’t want to take a risk on us.” Even Warner Bros. passed on the band several times before finally agreeing to a deal in 1999.

For Hahn, who contributes many of the rhythmic ideas, samples, and atmospherics of the band’s signature sound, Linkin Park’s success has enabled him to continue taking creative risks—with very positive results.

“We wanted to do something melodic and heavy that had hiphop in it,” he says. “But that music didn’t exist, so we got together and made it. The core idea is to combine those sounds, plus things drawn from electronic and classical music. It’s our goal to bring in all those elements and make it sound like its own thing.”

Linkin Park isn’t Joe’s only project. A former art-school student, he’s directed a dozen music videos and several commercials, including a recent spot for MTV2, and has three film projects in development. With such an intense schedule, Hahn doesn’t always have as much uninterrupted time as he might like to create music. “It’s good that I’m on a computer,” he notes. “I can start a session and work for a bit, then come back to it whenever I have time, instead of locking myself in for a whole day.”

Joe is currently assembling a new home studio, where he plans to work on music for Linkin Park and other projects. “I have everything laid out,” he says. “I have my turntables, CD players, samplers, and keyboards with Pro Tools, and then everything runs through a Yamaha O2R96 mixing board.”

Joe chose the O2R96 in accordance with a time-honored gear acquisition strategy: asking around. “People seem to like it a lot,” he notes. “I wanted something that’s very compatible with Pro Tools, and that I can run a bunch of equipment through. Something that I can easily control with the touch of a button, without having to rewire everything.”

RISK AND REWARD

Joe grew up playing violin and guitar but became interested in turntables in high school. “The idea of being able to manipulate any recorded sound was really cool,” he recalls. “You can do something rhythmic or melodic, or just create atmosphere.”

From there, he says, it was an inevitable journey into the realm of digital audio: “I had no choice! I started off with drum machines and turntables, laying down demos on a four-track tape recorder. But with my desire to fully develop sounds and create more atmospheric music, it became obvious that I’d have to turn to computers.”

In fact, digital audio is central to Linkin Park’s songwriting process. Band members typically pair up to work on song ideas, capturing their loops and melodies in Pro Tools. Then the band gets together to sort through the material and decide which pieces to develop. “On our last album, we had something like 80 different song ideas,” Joe says. “Everything from simple loops to fully developed songs. From there, we narrowed it down to about 20. And after we got to a certain point with those ideas, we narrowed it down even more.”

Though he’s accustomed to working with a mouse and keyboard, Joe looks forward to using the O2R96 as his primary control surface. “I really like the hands-on feel of this board,” he says. “I scratch records, so there’s something nice about being able to move my hands on it. Things can start to feel stale when you’re just clicking buttons. I like getting more of a human feel.” He also digs the board’s digital display. “The LCDs make it easy to understand—you touch something, and it immediately shows up on the display and tells you what you’re doing.”

For someone who never intended to become a professional musician, Hahn has carved out an impressive artistic niche for himself with Linkin Park. “We’ve taken a lot of risks, and they’ve turned out well,” he reflects. “The way we see it, music is music—genres don’t matter. I’d love to see new types of music grow and different sub-genres develop. People always want to be inspired by art and music. And if that keeps on happening, the world is a better place.”

