



ARTIST INFO

T-MASS

T-Mass is a rising EDM producer and DJ in the SF Bay Area. He is known for making dubstep that blends melody with hard-hitting bass, releasing free tracks online, and talking to his fans at every opportunity. His songs have been featured on UKF Dubstep, mrsuicidesheep, HypeM, Dubstep.net, and many more. His long-awaited Modulus EP was recently released by Seeking Blue.

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My relationship with music; I guess it really is a relationship when you think about it. There are ups and downs, and sometimes when a production really isn't working you've gotta break up with it. My music truly is an avenue for expression, although I've found some interesting things about myself through producing. When I'm really focused and alert, my productions can go ok, but I find I do the best when I'm really out of it and tired. Not on drugs or anything, just plain sleepy. I like to get up early in the morning when my brain is still in that dreamy place; when my subconscious is not quite done creating fake worlds and stories. At this time, I have nothing holding my creativity back and I can lay down something dreamlike almost automatically. Another thing I've found is that over time, I've stopped trying to be other people with my music, and started being myself. The reason artists can't do this right away is because they don't know who they are yet, at least musically. Although as a beginner it made sense to copy Skrillex via YouTube tutorials, over time we all know that artists gain a certain original essence and style that can be recognized. Sometimes you hear a track and you instantly know who made it, and that's a good thing.

Interview

Home Town: Bay Area, CA

Currently Living: Bay Area, CA

Origin Of Name: When I was in fifth grade I used to be a b-boy (breakdancer). Before my very first battle, one of the other kids asked me what my b-boy name was. I had no answer and then he said “T-Mass!” out of nowhere. Not only did I win that little breakdance battle, I ended up using that name from there on. Turns out the kid who asked for my name is now a famous dancer under the name “Kid David.” I only learned that recently while talking to another DJ at Beyond Wonderland who's friends with the guy. Small world.

Weapon of Choice: Mixing in key. Overlapping songs to drive the mix higher or deeper.

Source of Power: My most current influences are Seven Lions and Adventure Club, although Pretty Lights and Mt. Eden initially inspired me to start producing.

Was there one particular moment in the recording or mixing process for your Discovery Project entry that made you feel like you were creating something pretty damn special?

Yes. My original track I submitted was “Modulus” and as I was recording my mix, it ended almost exactly at the 30-minute mark. It felt like it was meant to be.

What do your parents think of what you are doing?

Well they know the word “dubstep” by now, so that's progress I guess.

What's the strangest part of your job?

It's always strange to imagine who listens to my stuff. Often they have no idea who I am, or even what my name is. One time my music ended up on the equivalent of *American Idol* for South Korea. There's a bunch of uploads of this dance performance on YouTube that each have hundreds of thousands of views. Most people who saw the show and heard my song, never even knew I made it. Although largely uncredited, I'm stoked that my stuff ended up on Korean TV and blew the audience away. Hopefully America will catch on soon, haha.

What's the biggest misconception about being a DJ?

Bluntly, they think we are stupid, ignorant, and get paid a lot. I'm not one of the lucky ones...I'm not any of those things. I guess because I was a producer before I was a DJ, I got to take a careful step into the DJ world. I observed it critically before blindly jumping in.

How does what you do for a living affect you on a day-to-day basis?

It's not that music affects my other life, it's that my other life gets in the way of my music. Also, I don't DJ for a living. Not yet at least. I work many hours as an event lighter and take various under-the-table production projects. Secretly, I've made Indian dubstep for Bollywood films, although I've never actually watched them.

What is your ultimate career dream?

Honestly, it's to be on the play main stage for Insomniac events. I'm ready now, but know I'll have to keep

proving myself to get the recognition. That's the life I'm meant for and I would never take it for granted if I got the opportunities to do so.

Are you impulsive with your work or do you have a sketch in mind before you start?

Before I started producing and DJing, I would get a song stuck in my head. Now I get multiple songs stuck in my head, all mixed together at the same time with added melodies. This is what happens when I daydream. Sometimes I think of a cool melody, and record me singing it (terribly I might add) with my phone so I can try to make something out of it later. This sometimes works, but yes, being impulsive also has its place. Getting up at the break of dawn and just laying notes in the fruity piano roll has worked wonders for me personally.

How, if at all, does listening to music figure into your creative process?

I haven't had the "I want to make that sound!" moment in awhile, not because I don't want to, but because I'm trying to consciously avoid that to a certain degree. What happens when people end up having the "I want to be like him" mentality is we hear "Animals" played 47 times in one festival. With that said, Seven Lions has been a big influence in my music not because of simple gimmicks in his formula, but because of the amazing amount of complexity. Simply stated, good melodic dubstep is a very tricky thing to get right. Of course I'm biased because this is what I currently enjoy producing the most, haha.

What's the most important piece of gear in your studio?

My brain. I produce with a \$600 desktop PC that's a few years old, so it's all gotta come from creativity and not through expensive extras.

How important is it for you to experiment and take on the risk of failure?

Very important. There are plenty of tracks people will never hear. You've never heard a T-Mass moombahton track (and never will), only because I've never put one online. It's fun to get into production mode and experiment with new genres in order to learn about my abilities and myself. Keep in mind that I started out making hip-hop beats, so clearly risks have been paying off for me. Also, as many say, the only thing worse than failing is not trying.

If we pressed Shuffle on your iPod while you went to the bathroom, what would you be embarrassed to come back to us listening to?

I don't own an iPod. Does that say something? I'm not sure haha.

What sound or noise do you love?

Every sound heard in *Zelda 64: Ocarina of Time*. This has nothing to do with my music, but it's the first thing that came to mind. Musically, I love sub drops and layered synths. I love when a sub, a growl bass, and a bunch of saw waves all work at the same time in some epic chord. My song "Beauty in Thirds" is all about that.

What should everyone just shut the fuck up about?

If I answered, I wouldn't be shutting up about it, now would I? In other words, if you don't like something, move on. There's a lot of stuff out there and let's not argue about artists you don't like. Also, everyone needs to stop being music historians about the origins of genres. Every time I read some YouTube comment telling someone what "real dubstep" is, I feel sick. This isn't taxonomy—this is music. Genres

blend and change over time and it's nothing to be upset about. If they didn't, we'd still be cavemen banging sticks together.

What gets you excited when you think about the future of electronic music and club culture?

That I'll hopefully get to be a part of it.

When you look at electronic music and the surrounding culture, what worries you about the future?

I'm worried that big stages will eventually only have artists that drop thumpy repetitive hits. I'd love to see some amazing melodies and chilled out sections half way through a set. I want music to warp people's emotions and bring them places that they haven't been before. I want music to not only amp people up beyond belief, but know how to catch them when they come down.

What are your weaknesses?

Positive networking. I don't have 1 million connections and I don't know people who know people. I'm working on that side of it, but right now I'm just some guy with some talent, doing my thing from my computer.

How would you describe your sound to a deaf person?

With colors. Turn on spectrum mode in Traktor and you'll see what I mean.

What's the hardest professional lesson you've learned thus far?

The show has to go on. I've played gigs with almost no audience, but I still bring the energy as if it's a stadium. Step by step.

Tell me about your most memorable night out.

Beyond Wonderland. No joke.

What advice would you offer someone thinking about entering the Discovery Project competition?

Make it personal. I think one of the reasons I won and ended up with the late timeslot is because I used a good amount of original content and created a mix that overall captures the style I'm about. I also encourage DJs to understand harmonic mixing and the importance of builds/space. A drop only works if it is lead into correctly. If you fire the bass cannon 110 percent of the time, you just tire your audience out.

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