

1 [0:00:00.0] producer and engineer Andrew chefs has
2 an incredible list of credits including
3 work with Adele Black Sabbath Lana Del
4 Ray Johnny Cash and Beyonce we caught up
5 with him at the recent AES show to get
6 his view on in the box mixing how to get
7 started in the industry and also to find
8 out about his unusual approach to using
9 compression well I had actually in 1985
10 I just started studying at University of
11 Miami Wood for recording so that's I had
12 made my decision that I really wanted to
13 make records and my parents said well
14 you're gonna go get a four-year college
15 degree in something and I managed to
16 find a place to do both at the same time
17 so 1985 was my second year in Miami so I
18 was finally starting to be allowed to
19 use the studio I'd been avidly reading
20 mix for years leading up to that since I
21 discovered it and and actually sound on
22 sound I got aware of it very quickly
23 because the the US and the UK seems very
24 different and I was always a huge fan of
25 English bands all my favourite bands
26 were English and so it was great to all
27 of a sudden get this sort of technical
28 insight into what was going on over
29 there it really felt it felt very very
30 different you know but yeah I was just
31 getting started at Miami we had a 2 inch
32 24 track which was our main record
33 machine and then there was a smaller
34 8-track analog studio but while I was

35 there we got a sync lever in which was
36 you know very early digital sequencer
37 sampler and then disc recorder
38 monophonic sampling so a one voice
39 sampler and a small FM synthesizer and I
40 was always a bit of a geek so that was
41 more technology to learn like I was the
42 guy who you had to run the synchronizer
43 for the tape machines and things like
44 that because figure like that's a way to
45 get in the room is to know how the
46 technology works and when I graduated
47 from Miami my first job was working for
48 New England digital so I was a field
49 service tech for the Cinco beard in Los
50 Angeles and then I was actually based
51 out of London for
52 about a year and a half so what that did
53 for me was I was the guy who knew how to
54 fix the thing that cost half a million
55 dollars that was holding up the session
56 so I was kind of you know the bastard
57 and the Savior all at once you know I
58 was a bastard until it worked and then I
59 was a savior and usually people would
60 ask me to stick around just to make sure
61 that it kept working so I would get to
62 sit in on all of these amazing sessions
63 all over the world that I had no
64 business being in because it was
65 everybody who had money you know so
66 Michael Jackson and Stevie Wonder and
67 those were the kinds of sessions you
68 ended up having to go like save so it

..von Auftraggebern erwartetes E

..Recall-Möglichkeit

..bessere oder gleich gute Klangc

..Recall-Möglichkeit

69 was a good situation

70 [0:02:57.4] it's interesting, um, I mean, I've been [a] large-format console

71 guy and analog guy for years. And that

72 came out of a very specific situation of

73 mixing a Red Hot Chili Peppers record,

74 where they said it had to be mixed on a

75 Neve. And that just sort of turned into a

76 thing and I ended up owning a Neve and

77 basing my studio around that. And moving

78 back in the box was something I've been

79 thinking about for a few years, because

80 of the logistics of mixing on a console.

81 It's a disaster with recalls and having

82 to leave a mix-up, because, you know, no

83 matter how meticulous you are about your

84 recall, it's not going to come back

85 properly. Things like that. But really,

86 again, it was a very specific thing. I was

87 traveling, I'd just done a seminar in

88 France and I got an email about doing

89 some work and the only way I was going

90 to be able to do it was in the box. And I

91 always have a rig with me. And I just

92 decided to do it and see how it went and

93 I sent it, saying "Look, I'm doing this in

94 a different way". It wasn't too specific.

95 "But if you hate it, just let me know and

96 we'll go for a plan B. And if you like it,

97 you know, that's great and we'll continue".

98 And I just got back mix comments that

99 were normal. So I said "well, okay, I guess,

100 this is working. You know? As soon as I

101 got it to kind of work sonically. You

102 start to reap the benefits of the recallability

..Recall-Möglichkeit

103 and the flexibility is the main
104 thing. I love the fact that I'm never
105 only mixing one thing
106 now. I love mixing five songs at the same
107 time. I'm able to cycle through them and
108 cycle through them. And I actually spend
109 less time in total, but I feel like every
110 song has really gotten so much more
111 attention, because you're always focused,
112 because it's always fresh. As soon as I
113 kind of get bored or lose focus, I just
114 open up another song instead of having
115 to sit and play solitaire or have lunch
116 or there's a huge amount of nostalgia
117 for analog tape and it's a bit of a line
118 because I've said it more than once now
119 so I feel a little subconscious about it
120 but I really do believe most of the
121 people who are nostalgic for a nylon
122 tape have never worked on analog tape
123 it's a nightmare it's amazing but it's a
124 nightmare and there are times when I
125 love the constriction of it and the
126 confines of it and the decision-making
127 of it but there are very very few
128 projects that have a band capable of
129 working on tape properly and doing it
130 well and if you're going to work on tape
131 and then dump it into Pro Tools I'm not
132 I don't see the point of that why slow
133 yourself down to then just do what
134 you're going to do in the first place.
135 [0:05:22.9] So, if it's purely a sonic choice then
136 absolutely .. I mean, it's another piece of

..Workflow (allgemein)

137 gear. But the the workflow side of it ..
138 either commit to it or don't bother, in
139 my humble opinion.
140 you know not really I mean obviously I
141 love the wave stuff I love you ad
142 plugins I think without those two sets
143 of plugins I don't know that I would
144 really be happy with what I'm doing but
145 there are a ton of other things sound
146 TOI stuff there's a plug-in called low
147 ender which is absolutely genius for sub
148 I'm a big fan of having lots of choices
149 I don't like to do the same thing all
150 the time
151 and the way I set up my mix is all of my
152 compression is parallel I'm never
153 directly compressing anything which
154 means all of my compression can be
155 brought in from a template because it's
156 all on auxes so I have way more
157 compressors set up in a session than
158 I'll ever use and I just mix and match
159 and try things quickly and so I love
160 more that I've got a hundred things and
161 used 20 of them on the consoles as well
162 all of my compression is parallel so it
163 really allowed me to just have different
164 chains on busses and sends and you just
165 hit a button up don't like that oh
166 that's awesome and I don't even know
167 necessarily which one it is that I've
168 chosen but it's like oh great that's
169 inspiring and you move on yeah
170 absolutely I mean I know there are some

171 people who have very hardcore theories
172 about whether you should or should not
173 they're people on both sides of spectrum
174 I think I'm somewhere in between and
175 it's very much about reading the
176 situation if the band has a vision then
177 I'm just there to help them realize
178 their vision even if I'm not necessarily
179 just the engineer but even as a producer
180 you're only there to facilitate but
181 there are other times when the band
182 either has multiple visions or they have
183 no vision or they sort of kind of have a
184 vision and it needs to be crystallized
185 and it's just my theory on it is I
186 always want to help the band make the
187 best record that they can make at that
188 time and sometimes that means a lot of
189 input and sometimes it means very little
190 and it's the ability to sort of read
191 that situation I'm never trying to make
192 my record and there's some producers are
193 making their record over and over with
194 different musicians on it and I'm I'm
195 actually I like the fact that I don't
196 think I have a signature sound or
197 I'm sure some people would say I do it's
198 like super loud and distorting there you
199 go but I don't feel like I have a
200 signature sound I'm always trying to
201 just sort of amplify what's going on in
202 the first place
203 it really changes project to project
204 some things come in that are just

205 brilliantly arranged some things come in
206 that aren't necessarily brilliantly
207 arranged but you realized early on that
208 the band
209 believes that they are and so you really
210 go with what they give you I mean
211 obviously as a producer I spend a ton of
212 time and arrangement think we're talking
213 just mixing really I guess and there are
214 times when I will completely rework a
215 song including recording stuff on it and
216 say hey I think when I heard the song I
217 was so inspired that I wanted to do this
218 I hope you think it's better and it
219 changes when I'm producing it's all
220 about the arrangement I mean that's 99%
221 of the gig to me um I feel and obviously
222 things change but really I feel like as
223 a mixer I'm being presented with the
224 version of the song that the band
225 thought was finished so I'm supposed to
226 just mix what I'm given and in a lot of
227 cases there's a rough mix that goes
228 along with it which is the reason they
229 thought that that recording the song was
230 done so I really my approach is really
231 to kind of keep the spirit of the rough
232 mix and make it sound like a record
233 that's my goal is to really not change
234 too much but again sometimes there'll be
235 something where I really like hear
236 something and I feel like oh my god it
237 would be so much better and I'll sort of
238 go into more of a producer role because

239 I feel like the producer role is
240 sometimes to do nothing you know in the
241 Steve Albini model of you're just there
242 to document what the band is doing but
243 for me I really feel like I'm there to
244 make sure the band does their best
245 version and they may not know how to do
246 that themselves so it's a way to
247 make them give their best performance to
248 help with the arrangement to make them
249 realize what is sort of important about
250 the song and what isn't important about
251 the song and to focus on what is and
252 also just to help them realize the ideas
253 they have in their head because a lot of
254 times they'll have something in their
255 head they're having a hard time doing it
256 and hard time describing it and it's
257 figuring out what that is and a lot of
258 times it's the opposite of what they say
259 but it's sort of figuring that out and
260 getting to the point where it's ready to
261 mix and sometimes that's just setting up
262 microphones and getting out of the way
263 and sometimes it's really completely
264 turning inside out what they thought
265 they were gonna do and you end up with
266 something else like there was a song for
267 a band fava it's a Swiss man that I was
268 producing that the way they were playing
269 it was like a really fast Ramone song
270 and it ended up being this incredibly
271 slow crazy almost ballad that we cut a
272 hundred percent live including the vocal

273 all from me wanting the guitar player to
274 show the strumming pattern of what he
275 was doing to the bass player in the
276 drummer because they weren't just sort
277 of weren't lining up and in the course
278 of doing that he played the song really
279 slowly on acoustic and I realized like
280 oh my god this is incredible and it just
281 it's being that outside perspective to
282 be able to realize stuff like that
283 because there's no way someone in the
284 band was going to realize that the song
285 might be better that way because they
286 knew that it goes like this you know so
287 it's just that ability to always sort of
288 be there and be present and be just sort
289 of an undecided third party to kind of
290 notice things the ability to be in a
291 room with creative people and keep them
292 happy and creative because there's
293 nothing that will make a band play badly
294 more than being uncomfortable
295 I just get bored you know I'm I'm lazy I
296 don't want to spend a ton of time on
297 things that don't require the time but
298 at the same time I will recognize when
299 let's say someone in the band is unhappy
300 with the way something feels I mean if I
301 don't understand what it is they're
302 unhappy with or what they're trying to
303 fix I will work for a week on it to make
304 them happy at least to understand what
305 it is but I'm I hate busy work and I
306 hate spending way too much time on

307 things so I don't know you just kind of
308 get a sense when it's done and when it's
309 not going to get better just different
310 it's hard because you kind of need to
311 know everything all the time I mean I
312 think the thing to keep in mind though
313 it's and I absolutely made this mistake
314 when I was starting out is because you
315 know how to use the gear and you know
316 the technology you assume you should be
317 the engineer and the engineering isn't
318 about that
319 at all the engineering is the ability to
320 translate what's going on in the room
321 into a recording and a lot of that might
322 have nothing to do with using the gear
323 but using the gear is a given and just
324 because you might be more proficient
325 than the engineer on a particular piece
326 of gear absolutely doesn't matter so I
327 think that's a really really important
328 concept to get in your head that you
329 should know how to use everything better
330 than everybody else in the room but that
331 doesn't actually matter that's just the
332 thing that will keep you in the room as
333 long as you're not arrogant about it and
334 I think you need to know that you can
335 learn something from every single
336 situation you're in even if it's just
337 that you learn what you wouldn't do and
338 I've learned there's plenty of stuff
339 that I've seen producers do I'm like
340 okay I will never do that and when you

341 think about it you think you know what
342 if I hadn't seen it I probably would
343 have done that and then realized after
344 the fact and felt bad or you know just
345 thought it was a mistake but you can
346 absolutely learn from every single
347 situation you're in
348 from what I was saying earlier knowing
349 how to use the Cinco beer and how to fix
350 it that was what got me in the room on a
351 lot of things but that's not enough to
352 keep you in the room like that's your
353 little business card we're like okay
354 yeah you can come hang out but if it
355 turns out you're a dick then you're not
356 going to stay in the room so I don't
357 know we're allowed to say that on this
358 yeah all right perfect good I didn't
359 have family-friendly we need to be but
360 that is what will get you kicked out of
361 the room whether you know stuff or not
362 so you need to know lots and lots of
363 stuff but you have to be able to read a
364 situation and it's I mean a good example
365 of it is working vocalists some
366 vocalists you need kid gloves and you
367 need to be incredibly encouraging and
368 just let them sort of steer the session
369 do what they want other ones you tell
370 them add do it less like this time
371 you know but come on man you can do
372 better than that and that's what will
373 really get them going and some of them
374 really want to be challenged and some of

375 them really need to be left alone
376 there's some singers where I will not
377 say a word in between takes and I wait
378 until I hear them kind of rustle a
379 little bit and then you realize okay now
380 they're ready to do the next take and
381 I'll go 20 takes without ever saying a
382 word and there are other singers that
383 you talk to constantly in between and
384 then you sort of convince them I came in
385 let's do another one so it's the ability
386 to understand the difference and to pick
387 up on that immediately because as soon
388 as you screw it up a little bit you're
389 done for the day if not the session and
390 that's to me it's probably 80% of the
391 gig