

1 [Owsinski, Bobby (2014). „Andrew Scheps“. Interview. In: *The Mixing Engineer's Handbook*. 3. Aufl. Boston: Course Technology (217ff).]

2 **Andrew Scheps**

3 ANDREW SCHEPS HAS WORKED MEGA-HIT ALBUMS for a who's-who of superstar artists such as Red Hot Chili Peppers, Metallica, U2, Justin Timberlake, Jay-Z, the Rolling Stones, Linkin Park, Jewel, Neil Diamond, and Adele.

4 Even though he's working out of his pretty outstanding home studio built around dual Neve 8068s, a massive wall of outboard gear, and dual Studer A800 24-track tape machines, amazingly Andrew is not one still living in the analog past, as the DAW is an integral part of his workflow. To find out more about Andrew and to see pictures of his great studio, go to punkerpad.com.

5 ***Can you hear the final product in your head before you mix?***

6 If I know the song, then I already have a pretty clear picture of what I'd like it to be. If not, I'll usually get that the first time I listen through a track. It's not so much for the sonics, but more in terms of size, like figuring out how big the chorus will be. Sometimes I'll get really specific ideas about effects that I'll try as well.

7 In terms of starting a mix, I think the main thing, especially if it's a song I haven't recorded, is that I go through instrument by instrument to see how it sounds, but what I'm really doing is learning every single part so that when I come to build my balance, I know where everything is going to be.

8 ***Do you have a template for your effects before you start to mix?***

9 Kind of, although I don't use a lot of effects. I use a lot of parallel compression so that's more of what I have set up. In terms of what gets sent to those compressors, some of it is consistent and some of it changes with every mix, but they're ready for me at the push of a button, which on an analog console is great because I just leave that part of the patchbay alone.

10 In terms of effects, sometimes I'll have one kind of chorus-spreader kind of thing and one reverb and that's it. I don't tend to use many effects because a lot of the stuff I mix is straight-up guitar rock, and it's more about the balance and making things explode.

11 ***Do have an approach to doing that?***

12 You're never really as aware of your own process as you think you are. I'll think that I really didn't do much of anything, and then I'll look at a mix and find that I'm using 50 things on it.

13 Also, because I mix on a console there's the whole process of laying out the outputs of Pro Tools to see where everything is going to come up on the console. There are things that always live in the same place, like channel 24 is always the vocal, so I'm usually figuring out how to lay out everything between the drums and the vocal. I do that while I'm finding out what everything is doing, so there's a long discovery process where it doesn't seem like I'm getting much done, but then everything happens really quickly after that.

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..(Un)Genauigkeit der Klangbearb

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Where do you build your mix from?

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It depends. I'd love to say that I always build it from the vocal, but usually what I'll do is deal with the drums to get them to act like one fader's worth of stuff instead of 20 or whatever it is. Once I've gone through that process that I just described, everything seems to come up at once. I'll have listened to vocal and the background vocals and know exactly where they are, but I'll get the band to work without the vocals first, which I know a lot of people don't think is a good idea.

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I think it's the same thing when you're working on a particular instrument in solo. After 20 years, my brain sometimes unconsciously knows what an instrument will sound like soloed, so I'll tend to get the tone on things separately, and then it's all about the balance. I almost never have to go back and change things once I get the vocals in. My brain seems to know what that balance is going to be when the vocals are inserted.

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How much do you do in the box?

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I always think that I do nothing in the box, but I really do a lot of the technical things. The EQs on the Neve are very broad and very musical; they're not good for anything surgical. If there's a nasty frequency in the overheads or the snare is ringing too much, I take care of all of that in Pro Tools. Usually I'll have the background vocals coming out of one stereo output pair, so I'll deal with them in the box. Sometimes I might split a couple of them out, but I don't want 20 tracks of background vocals on the console; it's just a waste. A lot of the crazier effects can come from plug-ins there as well.

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There's quite a bit that goes on in Pro Tools, but it's more about shaping things before they get out into the console. The console is much more of an organic balance thing, while Pro Tools is more for making things sound the way I want them to sound. The console is more about putting it all back together and mixing it.

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I actually mixed in the box for years in this same room. I had a [Digidesign] ProControl in here, and that was great. In fact, there are some things that I mixed in the box that I listen to now and go, "Wow, that sounds really good." I don't have any philosophical differences with mixing one way or the other way. It's more of once you have the console, as much of a drag as it is to document everything, it's such a joy to mix on it. When I'm mixing, it doesn't matter whether it's coming off tape or Pro Tools; it's just faders and speakers, and that's it. I love that because sometimes mixing in the box makes you so precise that you then fix things that don't really need fixing. I like the sloppiness of doing it on the console.

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Do you find that you're using your outboard gear less?

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No, not at all. When I document every mix, I wish that was the case because it's a lot more to write down, but because a lot of it is parallel processing and stays patched in, it's so much faster for me to hit a button on the console than it is for me to set the same thing up in Pro Tools. I may send the bass, the guitars, and the background vocals to a stereo compressor, and in doing that in the box, it could change the balance on the board, so that doesn't really work for me at all. It's less of a sonic thing than a convenience thing.

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What do you use the parallel processing on?

- 24 On this mix right now there's a parallel compressor on the kick and snare, then there's another just on the snare. There's a stereo one on the toms and overheads, a mono one on just the dirty bass (this song has three basses), a stereo one on the guitar and vocals, and then a couple of different ones just for the lead vocal—one that's sort of spitty and grainy and one that's sort of fat. That changes from mix to mix. In fact, it changes a lot.
- 25 ***Are you tucking the parallel-processed channel just underneath the unaffected one?***
- 26 Yeah, although sometimes the parallel one ends up being pretty loud, in which case it's almost like using an insert compressor, but it's across a few things. Sometimes it's just tucking it in to add power or weight.
- 27 ***Do you EQ the parallel processing as well?***
- 28 Not much, because everything is post-fader, so it's only the EQ'd stuff that gets in there. Sometimes on the drums that will start to really bring out a badly ringing cymbal, so I'll go in and do something surgical to fix the problem, but most of the time it's the same tone as the uncompressed
- 29 ***Are you using buss compression as well?***
- 30 Yeah. I used to never compress the mix because I could never find one that I liked that didn't take away from everything else that was going on. Then a couple of years ago I started using the 2264s [the onboard Neve compressor modules] that are in the console. I also learned the lesson that if you're going to compress the mix, you begin your mix with the compressor already on. You don't get your mix and then put your compressor on, because that doesn't work. You have to mix to it.
- 31 I don't use heavy compression, though. I don't think I ever add more than 3 or 4 dB, so I'm not really smashing it. It is a pretty aggressive setting, though, like a super-fast release. I've tried printing uncompressed mixes and bringing those to mastering, but you can never re-create the sound, so I always mix to it now.
- 32 ***How many alternate versions of mixes do you do?***
- 33 If there's nothing specific that comes up during the mix, I'll do a full mix, an instrumental, sometimes a TV mix just because people are used to getting it, a vocal up and a vocal down, and an a cappella. If there's been a lot of talk about the balance of the backgrounds, I'll also give them an a cappella lead and an a cappella background. If there's been talk about any particular instrument that the band doesn't agree about, then I'll print them an alternate of the other variation they're considering and then strongly label the one that we think is the right one.
- 34 ***How long does it take you to do a mix?***
- 35 It really depends upon the material. If it's well recorded and I've already done a song for the album, then it can come together in as little as three or four hours. The first one on an album usually takes longer because there's a lot to sort out, so it will usually take a full day. I'm usually ready to play something for the band by late afternoon at the latest.
- 36 ***What are you using for monitors?***

..von Auftraggebern erwarte

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..(Un)Genauigkeit der Klangbearb

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I love the old Tannoy SRM-10Bs. One of the first people I worked extensively with had these speakers; then I borrowed a pair for a gig and just fell in love with them. Since then I've tried seven or eight times to find something else to use beside them, but their midrange and top end are different from most other speakers, which makes it really hard to go back and forth. Now that I work mostly in my own room, I've gotten to the point where I don't have to listen on anything else. I never switch speakers and I never listen in the car when I'm mixing, yet almost never does anyone say, "Ah, there's a problem with the low end." At this point I own three pairs here and another pair in Europe, and that's all I'll ever use because I know that I can walk into any room and be safe with what I'm hearing. I power them with an old Crown DC-300A, and they just match well. Whenever I take the speakers somewhere else, though, I just use the amp they've got, and it's usually fine.

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How loud do you monitor?

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When I'm getting the mix together, I monitor pretty loud and for longer than I probably should. Once I get the balance, then I mix really quietly, but still occasionally check things loud every once in a while. Mixing is such an emotional thing. You're trying to get it to seem exciting, especially on the rock stuff, so you have to hear it loud to know that the kick and the snare and vocal are hitting you in the chest.

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There are things that you can't judge when it's loud, though. You can't judge the vocal level properly because the vocal will sink into the mix more when it's loud, but in terms of impact and emotion, you've got to crank it.

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You said that you mixed in the box for a long time. How did you get back into using a console?

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For *Stadium Arcadium* [by Red Hot Chili Peppers], the band wanted the record mixed on a Neve. It was tracked on a Neve, and they wanted it mixed on one, too. I tried all of the available Neve rooms in town, and it just wasn't working for whatever reason, so I ended up renting a console and realized that this room could easily accommodate it. The other thing is that I just loved having a console, and as an investment, it's not going down in value—unlike an SSL, whose values are still plummeting.

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The first desk had 32 inputs, but when I knew that I was going to be mixing Metallica, I knew that I needed more. Thirty-two inputs plus the other 10 on the BCM-10 [the small Neve broadcast desk that Andrew uses as a sidecar console] wasn't going to cut it, since their drums alone had around 30 channels. They weren't all going to be coming up on the board, but 32 just wasn't enough inputs. I was going to rent the console that I used for *Stadium Arcadium* again, but in the process convinced them to sell it to me. As far as the outboard gear, studios keep closing, and that's where most of that comes from, since it tends to come in batches.

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Where do you do your automation—in the box or on the desk?

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Most of the automation is done on the desk. The only thing done in the box is for extreme fixes. Once the mix is pretty much done and we're adjusting something like background levels with the band, it's easier to do that in the box because sometimes it's just a certain word that they want louder, and then you don't want to be sloppy with a fader ride on the console. It's more precise in the box.

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Do you ride the rhythm section for fills or is your mix fairly static?

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I still do ride things because the compressors are sucking out some of the natural dynamics of how the instruments were played, especially on some of the louder rock stuff. I'm only adding it back in, rather than creating something out of nothing. I don't turn the whole mix up at every chorus, for instance. Some people can do that with success, but I always hear it when I do it. I do definitely push the drums for the downbeat of the chorus and really try to accentuate anything that might be cool in a guitar performance, as well as some of the idiosyncrasies. The rides aren't drastic, but most things are moving.