

Revealed! ProjectSAM

– The Hollywood Film Composer’s Secret Weapon

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SONIC CONTROL EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW! With more and more music for film, TV and games being produced on computer in private home studios, how DO composers get that undeniable Hollywood sound in their scores? One secret is finally revealed – the three school chums that make up ProjectSAM.

SC — How did the three of you meet and when did you decide you wanted to go into business together?

PS — We met at the Utrecht School of Arts and started sampling during a study project. This was somewhere in 2000. After releasing a free set of trumpet samples, recorded in a concert hall using multiple microphone sets, we decided to release our commercial library in 2002 called SAM Horns.

SC — In Los Angeles, when composers go into business with each other, it’s usually to create a writing team to bring in a lot of business. Why develop and sell sample libraries instead of creating a “writing shop” as they’d do in L.A.?

PS — All three of us are freelance composers. We like the mix of working together at SAM and working on our own on music projects. It is a good balance and keeps us motivated in both fields.

SC — When you look across the years at all the orchestral sample libraries that have been produced, what are you doing that’s so different, that almost every major composer uses your libraries?

PS — We look at the market from a composer’s perspective and what sounds we would like to have ourselves. Our aim is always to keep sounds as natural and lively as possible. Also, every new sample project we do should be fun to create, which is why we are not too eager to record legato intervals, for example.

SC — Because you’ve captured such a unique sound, why sell the libraries instead of keeping them for yourselves and becoming Europe’s Hans Zimmer for your own writing projects?

PS — We would not have the funds to do so. Also, a private library is great, but a relative thing. In the end, it is about how you use the sounds you have.

SC — In your own writing, what other libraries do you use with your own?

PS — ProjectSAM has not sampled every instrument out there, so we are definitely using a lot of other libraries in our own music.

SC — What does the name ProjectSAM mean? And how did you come up with it?

PS — ProjectSAM started as a “sampling project”. SAM is short for “sampling”. It is not romantic, but it works!

SC — Do you record your libraries in the same hall each time?

It varies per project.

SC — Symphobia is in a K2 player, but your other libraries are displayed as Multi Format Installer. Is there an EXS24 version for all your earlier libraries?

PS — Yes. However, we cannot say if we will continue to support the EXS format in the future.

SC — Several of your older libraries are in Kontakt 1.5 version. Will these load with no problem into K2 and K3?

PS — Yes, they will. Any program updates from now on will be in Kontakt 2 format or higher, though.

SC — With several libraries in GS3 format, how do you see the cancellation of GigaStudio affecting your company sales for now through next year’s Frankfurt Music Fair?

PS — We are not too concerned about this, as we do not have any Giga-only products out there.

SC — Have you ever reviewed EmulatorX, and if so, what did you think?

PS — No, we have not yet.

SC — The Vienna Symphonic Library created a high standard for legato and repetitions with their Vienna Instruments player. How difficult was that to compete against when programming Symphobia?

PS — Both libraries offer a completely different concept. Both offer orchestral sounds, but that’s really where any useful comparison ends. Our aims are different.

SC — Tough question for you. You’re a composer and you just ordered and installed Symphobia. What other libraries will you as composers use for articulations you didn’t record?

PS — It is better to ask this to a composer who is not also involved in commercial sample library development.

SC — How long did it take you to plan the concept of Symphobia?

PS — It has been on our minds for quite a while. Because of the project’s scope and intensity it is not something we could have financed a few years ago.

SC — What was the thinking behind the combinations you selected and recorded?

PS — We aimed for common orchestrations, such as the celli and basses playing in octaves, playability and a big, cinematic sound.

SC — How has the US Dollar vs. the Euro affected the way you planned pricing?

PS — Because of the weaker US Dollar, we decided to use separate Dollar and Euro pricing, and compensate US composers. On the other hand, there is a limited margin due to the considerable investments involved in a product like Symphobia.

SC — A question many will soon be asking – will you too, ultimately have your own player?

PS — Good god, no! We want to focus on making sounds, not software.

SC — Last question. Let's say it's the year 2048. You're all rich. You're still young. And being entrepreneurs, you decide, based on your experience as composers and developers, to start your own music school, ProjectSAM University. What's the curriculum?

PS — Six hours of gaming and four hours of movie watching each day, all year long!

Hang with composers at the VI-Control music forum.

This article was previously published at the SonicControl website.