

JUNIOR



Interview & Transcript BRUCE TANTUM
Photography TRACY MOSTOVOY Assisted by DAVID BRONSTEIN
for ELLIS "D" "Free Your Mind" 1989

It's comforting to believe that the world evolves in an orderly fashion, that events and ideas build upon each other in a predictable way. The reality, of course, is much different—to a large degree, history is defined by momentous breaks and unruly spasms. An asteroid randomly smacks into earth and put a sudden end to the Age of Reptiles. Einstein comes along and loosens the shackles of Newtonian physics. Within the span of a few years, the internet radically alters the way we interact with each other, for better or worse. Trump gets elected. And on and on and on.

The timeline of nightlife is brimming with such disruptions. Dance-music genres come out of seemingly nowhere; forward-thinking DJs change the way that music is played, and the ways that we relate to that music; scene-birthing clubs suddenly open, and just as suddenly close. In New York, one of the biggest breaks occurred thusly: The Paradise Garage had closed in 1987, and its crowd—largely gay, largely black and Latino—found themselves homeless. Then, in July of 1988, came Sound Factory.

Founded by Christina Visca, Richard Grant and Phil, the massive ex-warehouse space, located at 530 West 27th Street in a then desolate West Chelsea, was helmed by an upstart DJ who called himself Junior Vasquez. Vasquez had already been working with Visca at a club called Bassline, which had opened in the immediate aftermath of the Garage's closure, but Sound Factory was the club that marked a tectonic shift from the love-and-togetherness ethos of the Garage. Even though it drew from largely the same demographic—along with voguers, banjee boys, Chelsea gym rats, dealers, users and various late-night adventurers—the Factory was a new kind of clubbing: It was far darker, druggier, and seemingly more dangerous, in vibe if not in actual fact, than the Garage ever was.

That was largely thanks to the club's resident spinner. Vasquez's sets were marathons, lasting all night and well into the next day. He'd go hard, hard, harder, and then suddenly drop a sweet and soulful classic, sending the dance floor to heaven. He'd hypnotize you with an endless groove, and then suddenly hit the reverse button on a Mariah Carey dub mix. He'd

do whatever the hell he wanted—and along the way, he helped to create (along with a few others, notably Danny Tenaglia) a new, distinctly New York style of house: a dark, dramatic, throbbing, bottom-heavy beast of a sound that resonates to this day.

There was production work as well, having the learned the trade from Shep Pettibone: tunes like "My Loleatta," "Work This Pussy" (both under the Ellis D name), "X" and "If Madonna Calls," and remixes for the Britneys, Whitneys, Chers and (of course) Madonnas of the world. Even those who might shy away from his major-label excursions bow down to his brilliant and bitchy original material—including Kanye West, who appropriated pretty much the entirety of "Work This Pussy" for his 2018 production of Teyana Taylor's "WTP." (Vasquez recently settled a copyright claim against West, and will receive royalties along with writing and publishing credits.)

After Sound Factory closed in 1995, Vasquez went on to brief but successful residencies at the Tunnel, the Palladium (for his Arena party, with its Dolce & Gabbana-designed booth) and Twilo, which inhabited the same space as Sound Factory once had. But eventually, there was a sense of diminishing returns—perhaps fueled by a penchant for controversy and beefs, and definitely by a burgeoning crystal meth habit. Stints at Exit, Discothèque, the second Sound Factory on West 46th Street, Pacha (at the same address), Spirit (like Twilo, at the original Sound Factory location) and the Roxy didn't exactly fall flat, but they certainly didn't have the impact of his earlier gigs. New York had moved on—and by 2013, Vasquez had as well, relocating back to his home state.

But all in all, it was an amazing adventure for a kid from Lancaster, Pennsylvania (born Donald Gregory Mattern in 1949) who moved to the big city in the early '70s with a love of art and fashion, without much of a plan other than to escape the constraints of small-town living. Vasquez continues to deejay on occasion—he played at the PlayStation Theater during last year's Pride Week festivities—but for the most part, he leads a quiet life, far from clubland. Still, he seemed happy to chat when Love Injection gave him a ring.
— Bruce Tantum

VASQUEZ

BRUCE TANTUM: You're back in Pennsylvania now. Are you near where you grew up?

JUNIOR VASQUEZ: This is the place, but I wouldn't really say I grew up here. New York is where I did my growing up. Here, it was just the typical high-school stuff, hooking up with my friends in the playground to smoke cigarettes. I knew, by the time I was six, that I had to get out of here.

It must have been exciting for you when you finally did hit the big city.

Yeah, it was, but didn't have any kind of plan. When I got off the train with my old suitcase and got a place at the YMCA, I had forty-six dollars. I figured out how to get down from where I was to Christopher Street. It was easy; it only took an hour, walking straight down Seventh Avenue. I would hang out there, waiting for that white knight on stallion to come and save me—but since I was just a newbie, I was basically hiding behind trees and watching. On the walk back up, I would stop and get a hot dog and an Orange Julius and a Tastykake—and maybe an apple here or there. That became my ritual for a little while.

You were getting involved with the fashion world before too long, right?

Well, I used to illustrate everything, like my mother's clothes, and get ideas from that. And when I moved to New York, the primary goal was to do fashion design. I did do that later on at FIT, and I even won a couple of awards for illustration. And I was also doing making jewelry and all kinds of art.

But before all that, within a few weeks of when I got to the city, I knew I needed a job. The first place I went into was Serendipity [restaurant], and I got a job there, bussing and stuff. I sure had a lot of hot dogs there! That was a great job. I worked there for a while, probably a year and a half, and I saved up some money, and I had gotten my first apartment, which was on 11th Street.

Then one day, I was walking home down Lexington Avenue, and there was this store by Bloomingdales that was selling turntables, and they had this little mixer. I had my eye on that. I actually put it on layaway.

Were you thinking about deejaying at that point?

No, I didn't really have idea of becoming a DJ. But I had been going out to clubs.

Do you remember which ones?

One of the first was Tamburlaine [a Village club that later counted Steve D'Aquisto among its residents]. I don't know why, but I was

fascinated by the DJ, and I would just stand there and watch him.

Do you know who that DJ was?

No, and there wasn't really any mixing. There would be breaks between songs. But it was still cool, and by a little bit later, I was going everywhere, I wasn't dancing or anything at that point; I was just fascinated by it. The music, the lights, people's clothes...I would go home and sketch what I was seeing. I was buying a lot of records, too—I would spend all my money on albums.

Didn't you work at Downstairs Records at some point?

Yeah, but that wasn't until the early '80s...or maybe the late '70s, I'm not quite sure. I was working for two designers at that point as well. Fashion, music, art—it all ran together. A designer I was working for, Giorgio di Sant' Angelo...there was a girl there named Lisa Hazel who ran the desk, and she'd give me these lists of 45s she wanted, and I would go to Downstairs Records and pick them up. And it kind of started with that.

I eventually stopped working for the designer. Lisa had actually started working at the record store, and since I was pretty close was her, she got me a job there. I loved that job, and I ended up being there for maybe nine years. At that point, my life was pretty much that, going to FIT and going to clubs.

What were the clubs you were going to at that point?

It was the Loft, Nicky Siano at the Gallery, 12 West—I remember seeing Divine perform at 12 West, which so much fun. A club called the Inferno, and big parties at Roseland. And then a little later, there was the Garage. I was going to local bars, too—and as a gay man, I was curious about stuff like the piers, where everything would be anonymous. Deal or no deal! [laughs] You can't find that anymore, obviously—for a lot of reasons.

It wasn't so long after that that you started to get involved in studio work, right?

Yeah, that was after I move to 89th Street and Second Avenue. That's when everything really started to percolate—doing mix shows, editing nonstop...and changing my name. Arthur Baker was a huge influence, and Shep Pettibone really helped me jump into things. I was like almost

envious of Shep—I was so impressed by what he did—and I thought I better buckle myself up to this guy. To take those pop songs that he did, and make them work? That's the hardest thing to do.

That became one of your skills as well.

Well, when I was working with him, I was always thinking, oh, I could have done this song or that song better [laughs]. But we got along so well, and I ended up spending years and years in the studio with him.

How did you originally hook up with Shep?

I belonged to some early record pool, and Shep would come in to do Q&As for us, like we were students. He invited five of us over to his house



to see what it's like to edit reel-to-reel and do all that stuff, and I was one of the people who got to go. I was told later that he picked me because he had a little thing for me! But musically, I learned a lot from him.

At around the same time, or maybe a little earlier. I was going to beauty school, and I became a top hairdresser. When I was first getting my license, I was still at the record store, and I was jumping back and forth between the two. I actually ended up cutting hair on and off

for around nine years. And I was still working at restaurants a lot, in the Village. I was really good at cracking clams. And I was still drawing, so I was pretty busy.

When did you begin to think about deejaying?

Well, at this point I had tons of albums, but I only had one turntable, so it's not like I was mixing yet. And I never thought that I would become a DJ; that wasn't even an idea yet. It was never on my radar. But I think that maybe subconsciously, the idea was originally coming at me through the record store. Then, later on, it was because of Bassline that people really began to find out about me.

That would have been around 1987, right? Isn't that around the time when your production career really got going as well?

Yeah, "My Loleatta" came out around then.

How did you get the Bassline gig?

That was because of Christina Visca. She was doing this party right after the Paradise Garage closed—I don't think it was called Bassline yet. I'm pretty sure David DePino played the first night, but he didn't want to play the next one or something, so she asked me. But before Bassline, can I tell you about the last night at the Garage?

Sure!

Larry was rocking it, even though it must have been very tough on him. I know, because it happened to me later. Anyway, the last song he played was [Inner Life & Jocelyn Brown's] "Make It Last Forever." He played that song for like 30 or 45 minutes. When that ended and the club was emptying out, he came down and turned the speakers around. And then he went back up, and that was that. But I looked up at the booth, and said to myself, "I'm going to have this someday." And sure enough, not too much later, I did.

Was Larry much of an influence on you as you later began to develop your style?

I had been going there for ten years, so a lot of what he did probably did sink in with me, and I did learn a lot of stuff that I was able to use later. Not really copying, but you can't help but pick stuff up.

But prior to Bassline you really hadn't been deejaying all that much, right?

I had actually started doing some mobile-DJ stuff at some point before then, and I had actually played at the Garage for a charity thing. And Christina had heard me play at Keith Haring's party at the Carmine Street pool. [Note: The party was celebrating the unveiling of a Haring mural at the pool.]

Hadn't you befriended Keith Haring while you were at FIT?

Yeah, I was good friends with Keith. I would go and watch him paint, and I would make him these cassette tapes with Brazilian music and all kinds of stuff. Anyway, I became Christina's DJ for this party, which pretty soon turned into Bassline in another space. Everybody was like, "Who is this fucking blond-haired kid? Where did he come from?"

To tell you the truth, I didn't really expect much to come out of Bassline when we started it. But that's when I really began to hone in on what I felt inside, what I felt about playing records—stuff like my choice of music, the way I'd play them, the sampling and whatever. I was figuring all that out, and Bassline ended up lasting for around a year or so. It would get so crowded, and the fire department eventually closed us.

Sound Factory opened up soon after that, right?

Well, what happened was Phil Smith had been at Bassline, and he decided he was going to find us a bigger space. It took a while to find that space, but when he did, that's what became Sound Factory.

And that's when you entered your peak Junior Vasquez period.

Yeah! [laughs] But first, it took a long time for them to get the space up to code. It had been an old warehouse, and needed a lot of work and a lot of money. But eventually it did open.

What was it like to suddenly be playing in one of the biggest and hottest clubs in New York?

It felt comfortable. I knew I could do it. And it was the best period of my life. I've never felt anything like that room. It's like, when the Garage closed, people didn't have anywhere to go, and I feel like Sound Factory absolutely replaced the Paradise Garage.

It had a different vibe though, didn't it?

Well, I would describe Sound Factory as simple and raw, with what was the best sound system at that time. It didn't have liquor, and there would be things at the bar to eat. But of course, I'm at the helm, so that's the difference. I could just do what I wanted to there, and I would just bleed out all my feelings. The intensity of controlling that dance floor was amazing. There would be a lot of mistakes. Records would skip, or I'd put on the wrong side, turn the volume down, flip the record over and start the right side. But made it human. I was really putting myself out there.

One of the things you became known for was

playing those super-long sets there.

I would open at 1am and close at 1pm. They were marathons, and it was every week. Nobody wanted to leave, and as long as they wanted to be there, I was willing to keep going. But as time went on, and the more I went up the fame ladder...it just wasn't as cool. I loved working there the whole time through, but I was kind of thinking that I was more at home in the studio.

And you ended up being in the studio quite a bit during that period, right?

Yeah, but not so much right away. I had thought that as soon as the doors of Sound Factory opened, I'd be remixing every single artist there was within a month. That didn't happen. [laughs] It didn't really begin until a year or so into it. I had been doing tracky things all along, but after that first year, that's when people started getting in touch. And it just went from there.

Did Sound Factory have many problems with the city?

Every club did back then! There was this one cop who absolutely wanted us closed. What we did was put security guards with walkie-talkies on each end of the block, and I'd have another walkie-talkie in the booth. Whenever they'd see a cruiser with this guy in it, they'd let me know, and I'd turn everything off. Everybody would be sitting on the floor, quiet, and the front doors would be shut. The cops would drive by and think we were closed, then we'd start up again. And when we finally would start up, it was like an orgasm.

One time, we did get shut down on a Labor Day weekend. It was jam-packed that night, and everybody had to go out on the street. Cars couldn't get through because there were so many people. The cops were out there trying to keep order. Richard Grant came over and said, "Junior, this is your crowd. You need to go out and tell them to chill out." I went out and stood on a cab. I forget what I said, but they did begin to disperse—but as soon as I got down off the cab, a cop came over and put handcuffs on me, for being disorderly or something. So I guess I was a martyr! They actually got pissed off at me when they were trying to fingerprint me.

Why?

I used to pumice my fingers to get calluses on fingers, so I could get a grip on the records. They asked me, "Why are your fingers like that?" I said, "I used pumice to get calluses...but I'm not

LOVE INJECTION

gonna tell you why.” They didn’t like that, but I didn’t care. I just wish I had been locked up with somebody hot. [laughs]

You mentioned how you felt that Sound Factory took over from the Garage when it opened. I can also remember that when Larry Levan passed away in ’92, there was some talk that the torch had been passed directly from Larry to you, which stirred up a bit of controversy. How did you feel about that?

Well, it was true! And I still have that torch. There’s no one else I could have passed it onto, really. But I think Larry really accepted me. He came to hear me at Sound Factory four or five times, and never criticized the way I played. He never said “Do this, don’t do that” or whatever. And he could have. I knew how he felt. He lost his baby that he had for ten years, and was kind of homeless after that.

Did you and Larry remain friendly till the end?

We did. And when I heard he passed away...I mean, he was my teacher, just like Nicky Siano and Walter Gibbons were. To me, Larry’s a genius.

Who did you consider your competition to be back then?

I never thought about that back then. None of the other DJs played like me. David Morales, Frankie Knuckles, then people like Danny Tenaglia and Peter Rauhofer—I respected all of them, but we were operating on different wavelengths. We all stood out in different ways.

Didn’t you have a weird feud with Danny a bit later on, when you were at Twilo and he was at the Tunnel?

No! The only thing we did was ignore each other.

So that beef story wasn’t true?

Yeah. I mean, we’re long past it now...but I guess we did have a mutual dislike for each other back then. Victor [Calderone] was kind of an enemy, too. I’m not like that with anybody now, but I didn’t have much comradery with any other DJs, to tell you the truth. I didn’t follow them and I didn’t click with them. It was me, all alone. [laughs]

You were one of the main proponents of that punchy, tribal kind of house that became synonymous with New York clubbing in the ’90s. What’s the appeal of that sound for you?

It just sounded good! I will say that I think I’m the one who started that whole thing. I actually think I’m a pygmy or something—I just have that sound in me. I still do. They used to call it pots and pans! But me playing tribal is how I got a lot of those early big remixes, with people like

Madonna, John Mellencamp and Cyndi Lauper. Rhythm-wise, it was just a good backdrop for the songs that I was doing.

One of your strongest artist-remixer relationships was with Madonna. You had known her for quite a while, right?

I did. I think I might have originally met her through Shep. But that relationship didn’t end so well.



Wasn’t there friction between you two after you released “When Madonna Calls”?

That’s supposedly what pulled us apart—but that’s not really it. The problem was that she takes all of your good stuff for an album—but then she moves on. And then she gets very angry if you use her name for anything.

Which you certainly did on “When Madonna Calls.”

Yeah. The bitch. Whatever. [laughs] Madonna always steals, but if you steal anything from her.... One time, she came to Sound Factory because she had this idea to do “Vogue,” which she got from my dancers.

From the House of Xtravaganza? They were Sound Factory regulars, right?

Yeah, definitely She was scouring the crowd for dancers, and actually picked out Jose [Gutierrez Xtravaganza] and Luis [Camacho Xtravaganza], and then the others came along. But they were all my dancers. “When Madonna Calls” came after that—and, of course, she was so pissed that I had capitalized on her name.

It must have been a major blow for you when

Sound Factory closed for good in ’95.

Well, especially since my partners said that it would never be a club again. There would never be another Sound Factory. Then, I go to Tunnel—and then they open Sound Factory again at another place!

The 46th Street space, that eventually became Pacha.

Right. I was furious! That’s why I played so aggressively, so pots-and-pans, at Tunnel. I was kind of pissed off the whole time there.

You’ve said in interviews that your favorite post-Sound Factory residency was the Arena party at the Palladium. What made that so special?

It was my favorite place of all of them. When Peter [Gatien, the impresario who also ran Limelight and the Tunnel, among other notable spots] brought me in for Arena, he gave that whole room an overhaul to my liking. They gave me everything! An amazing booth, a runway, catered food...there’d be comfortable Gucci shoes waiting for me in the booth. All kinds of stuff...I even got to audition the dancers. And the crowd was so diverse. It was a circus. I think that’s the favorite thing I’ve ever been involved with. I ended up being there for a year, and then I went to Twilo, and then Exit.

It felt like your later residencies never really reached the same heights at Sound Factory and Arena did. Did it feel that way to you?

Well, Twilo was awesome. But yeah.

Do you think that was because you had changed, or because New York had changed?

I know I wasn’t changing. But you could see what was happening with New York—and now it’s all polished up. Nobody can even think about moving there now. I know I wouldn’t.

I’m not sure if you want to talk about this, but weren’t you getting kind of heavy into crystal meth by that period?

That started while I was as Arena. I don’t regret anything—I think it’s what comes with being a movie star. [laughs] But it’s kind of funny how it first started happening. I had these assistants then, and when the night was around three-quarters over, when they thought I was slowing down—which I wasn’t, I was usually just trying to find a groove—they’d go, “Okay, somebody get him a coffee.” They’d go out and get coffee...but

they’d put meth in it.

Without telling you?

No, I didn’t know it. I’d was like, damn, this is good coffee! I didn’t find out till much later that they were doing that.

So you acquired your habit by accident?

Basically, yeah. After Arena, when I went to Twilo, they’d give it to me in a glass of water, and I would just sip it over the course of the night. That’s how I did it for a while, and of course it just became more and more. But I was making 20 grand a night back then, so it was okay—I could just sleep later. And it made me feel like my authentic self. I liked it.

But that feeling didn’t last, I’m guessing.

Eventually, coming down off of it got really bad. Then I started taking Adderall, and then I was taken off of that, and then I would still dabble with things. At one point, there was nothing that I wouldn’t put in my mouth or snort up my nose.

Didn’t you have a major health scare because of drugs sometime around 2005?

What happened was I went off my Wellbutrin, and that made everything kind of weird. I got really sick on a flight, and they actually had to land the plane in Houston for me. I started having seizures in the airport, and they took me the hospital. I actually checked myself out because I was supposed to play the Black Party and had to get back up to New York. I was not gonna miss that!

Are those days pretty much behind you?

I’m much better now, but I still struggle with it. I bought a house out here in 2013 but I hardly ever leave unless I’m going to the doctor or going to the supermarket with my sister, or something like that. That’s pretty much been the way it’s been for going on six years now. I need to get to the point where I want to go back and forth to New York more often. There’s nobody here for me.

Do you talk to your old New York cohorts very often?

It’s hard for me to talk to friends who are in the city. It hurts too much, because I was kind of tossed out of there because of things that happened to me. I feel like I have to just to live with the memories.

Well, you have a lot of them.

Yeah, I am lucky. And I’m hoping there are things that will open up for me. The only way I really talk to people is through music, and I think I still have things to say.

CLUB CHARTS

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Brandon Weems
musclecars,
Coloring Lessons

Vinnie Colaiuta,
“Momoska (Dub Mix)”
(Stretch Records)

This is the perfect end of the night record for me, a hidden gem off of Vinne Colaiuta’s self-titled album. The bass line, percussion, piano and quirky intro made it an instant favorite the first time I heard it.

The Carlos Sanchez
Movment, “Flying High
(Joe And Boyd’s Heard
& Mind Mix)” (Maxi
Records)

I was five years old when this one was released and it still sounds so fresh to me. Joe Clausell on percussion, Carlos Sanchez and Boyd Jarvis (rest in peace) on the keyboards, makes 12 minutes and 30 seconds of pure bliss.

Joe Sample Featuring
Lalah Hathaway, “When
The World Turns Blue”
(GRP)

Joe Sample’s talent on the keys meets Lalah Hathaway’s mesmerizing vocals. I can easily listen to this record five times in a row.

Javen Souls, “Where
Are We” (BubbleTease
Communications)

One of my favorite producers, Maurice Fulton, released this one under the alias “Javen Souls” on his label BubbleTease Communications. Everything about this record is perfect to me, but most importantly, the steel drum!

Sherm-Anians, “Wear A
Condom (Dirty Verb Mix)”
(Night Club Records)

I really love the humility and importance of the message in this record, especially considering the AIDS epidemic that spread through the 1980’s and 90’s. What’s ironic is that this was released the same year I was born, hahaha!

CLUB CHARTS

Craig Handfield
musclecars,
Coloring Lessons

The Chocolate Jam Co.,
“C” of Chocolate (Epic)

1979 is probably my favorite year for music. The instrumentation sounds so crisp on this track, and the intro leads into such a jam. This album is actually one of the last pieces Dorothy Ashby played Harp on before she passed- definitely worth the listen.

The Thomas Whitfield
Company, “Brand New (Set
of Teeth)” (Sound of
Gospel Records)

This one sends me every time I hear it. For some reason, I relate all gospel music to dance music (and vice versa), and so playing this in the club is a no brainer. They recorded this in one take, and the original version is only 2:57min long- they’d usually play it live all the way through, and then play the piano solo again from the top. So special.

Dazzle, “Dance With Me
(Miquifaye Boogie Vox)”
(Clairaudience)

Out on one of my favorite labels, Clairaudience, this track remains a favorite and we play it at almost every one of our parties. The percussion + piano solos really make it for me. Anthony Nicholson (who’s a legend in his own right) wrote this with his lovely wife, Michelle, making the lyrics all the more meaningful.

Velly Joonas, “Käes On
Aeg” (Frotee)

Found this in a youtube hole lol. This is a lovely rendition of Roberta Flack’s Feel Like Makin’ Love by Estonian Skiing Champion turned Artist Velly Joonas. I think it’s such a fresh take on the track, and feels even more dreamy than the original.

Solu Music (Feat.
Kimblee), “Fade” [Wave
Music]

Another jam that we play at all of our Coloring Lessons parties- this might be one of my favourite tracks of all time. I found it digging around the crates over at A1 Records a year or two ago (it released in 2002), and it’s been in heavy rotation ever since. It’s so funny because Brandon and I are in our mid-20’s and so we’re always finding music from years ago that we missed, but still remains new to us.

RANT CONTROL: I THINK I'LL DO SOME STEPPIN' ON MY OWN



Hello Apple Inc.,

As I type this article on my trusty eight-year old antique 17" MacBook Pro (a display size that you chose to discontinue outright in 2011 since your users can now magically get more done with less screen real-estate) it has dawned on me that I've been faithfully supporting your fancy computing hardware with most of my purchases for now 35 years. (100-day Club member here) ^[1] This maxed-out machine here is one of the very last of its breed, an ancient but valiant warrior that has steadfastly been supporting me through hundreds of DJ gigs and over a million miles of travels without fail. Outfitted with a souped-up 2TB SSD and a secondary internal hard drive, double the amount of RAM it was designed to support, lots of ports of all types, it is still is what I bring along while on the road... but for how much longer?

Count me among those who never seemed to object to your allegedly obscene profit margins, because you somehow kept making stuff that no one could touch, gear that addressed the needs of professional media users and content creators better than any of your competition. **You had that 'vision' thing, and we supported it because it helped us thrive as well. What an astounding synergy that was!** We kept religiously buying your machines, even through the lean mid-1990's when you were teetering ever so close to bankruptcy and had by most accounts lost your ways without Steve at the helm to inspire you.

While I can sympathize that in all likelihood your board of directors currently doesn't give a rat's ass about what any of us professionals think anymore as you are rumored to be sitting on close to a \$1 trillion pile of cash from handset and App Store[®] sales, I am slowly resigning myself to the idea that my next few machines are not going to be yours unless there suddenly appears an incredibly compelling reason for them to be.

Rumors from insiders indicate that Apple may soon start making their own processors, thus unceremoniously dumping Intel and there are many who speculate that iOS and OS-X might then inevitably get merged into a single-branch software ecology which would most likely mean zero compatibility with the outside world and with any legacy but very mature and mission-critical software we've spent thousands to buy; and probably lots more of that sweet walled-garden // locked-down // nanny-state environment many users have come to love (or really hate) you for. One could bet that this time no one will probably be able to install any software unless it's exclusively the 'approved versions' downloaded through the App Store, which obviously guarantees you that sweet 30% cut of the sale.... Being that this last part would appear to be far more important in your eyes (and those of your stockholders) rather than the flexibility, freedom and convenience we lowly creative users may need, I'd rate these chances of me wanting to buy your next boxes as getting ever closer to zero. Besides which they've clearly fallen a couple of generations behind when it comes to specs and delivering competitive performance.

Obviously, I am quite conscious that there is a vast chasm separating pro users who everyday dabble with custom scripts and arcane scientific-grade bespoke software or must interface with exotic peripherals, when compared to the majority of people using your devices who have never had to think about what files are, where they are stored, or how critical low-latency is.

Is it inconceivable that you should be able to nimbly cater to both markets, making a foolproof device that even a grandmother can use without worries of getting hacked, while also allowing those experienced users to get on with what they are doing? That is: without having to be made to jump through a thousand cringe-laden hoops of frustrating inconvenience and arbitrary roadblocks (for the sake of the first and larger group of users)? Given the general direction of your recent product offerings, I am not banking on it to happen at all.

I'm quite confident you'll do fine without this annoying and loud minority of grouchy complainers such as myself who are never satisfied and prefer more ports, options and upgradable architectures instead of your glued shut, soldered-on un-tinkerable but exceedingly pretty products. And I am equally sure that I'll do just as fine without your gorgeous-looking and sleek hardware that keeps sacrificing more pro-friendly features, power and expandability for the sake of appearances and design.

It clearly is an amazing feat of engineering that your laptop just got 0.1" slimmer yet, but is losing another two ports in the process what's helping me play better at my gigs or in creating better music?

You recently seem to have taken the concept of 'forced obsolescence' and elevated it to the level of an artform, as it constrains users to purchase new hardware instead of being able to upgrade what they own, and all the while feeding us PR about how ecologically conscious your practices are. To be fair, most of your competitors are also using similar tactics, and your stockholders wouldn't expect anything less out of their quarterly earnings reports.

It's certainly easy to understand that given that meager \$1 trillion pile of cash you're sitting on, you have to be especially thrifty as you can ill-afford to waste precious design and engineering time as well as resources by creating cutting-edge industry-leading flagship computing products. After all, such models may only help this small group of those of us creative professionals who kept supporting you through thick and thin, and still would today and tomorrow if you even bothered to make stuff that was relevant to our current needs in the ultra-competitive desktop and laptop marketplace. But as many have noticed, you've fallen hopelessly behind in that department and one can only assume that it isn't a mere accident. So from all appearances, that particular ship set sail a long time ago.

Of course, and very logically Apple could just license OS-X (the operating system) to third-party vendors who would probably jump at the opportunity to build the absolutely kick-ass speed demon expandable boxes to run it on, since they don't seem willing to design and make in-house anymore. But we can all guess chances of that happening are quite slim, as it would put a dent in that indestructible brand image the company famously cherishes and cultivates so much. And that's certainly fair enough.

... So will it be Hackintosh ^[2] on PC hardware for the more adventurous among us who dearly love OS-X and want to keep using it then? Possible, but sort of very unlikely as it is technically quite daunting; even though doing this does have that sweet scent of freedom and spirit of individuality attached to it.

The same freedom and individuality your famous ad from '1984' alluded to ^[3], when that courageous underdog was seen smashing the corporate evil PC behemoth into pieces. Some of the more cynical among us could note that you may well have become a variant of the very thing that you didn't profess to be? I'll let others be the judge of that.

But in the meantime I think I'll put "Think Different" (the very words from another one of your more recent ad campaigns) ^[4] into practice by getting non-Apple hardware for all my mission-critical work stuff. As a matter of fact, I've been testing a Windows 10 machine and 90% of the software I need already runs on it just fine. Oh, and by the way this new hardware came in at half the price and with such a dazzling plethora of options... wow!

So it was nice while the love affair lasted, glad you're currently doing so well with the handsets and other locked-down one-way 'media consumption devices'.

As Douglas Adams famously put it: "So long...and thanks for all the fish!"... and if you'll excuse me I now have to get back to what I was planning to create (with a PC).

— François K.

[To the reader:] What are your impressions of the evolving landscape of personal computing for music; has it impacted your workflow or how you use software tools to create and work?

^[1] One Hundred-Day Club: people who bought an Apple Macintosh during the first 100 days after the machines went on sale <https://bit.ly/2GEgq0i>.
^[2] Hackintosh: <https://bit.ly/2T8hUnS>.
^[3] Apple's famous '1984' Superbowl TV ad: <https://bit.ly/1G5Fxeu>.
^[4] 'Think Different' ad campaign: <https://bit.ly/29LK7Z>

"Rant Control" is a somewhat regular column in Love Injection by acclaimed record producer and DJ François K. Please forward any hate mail, triggered comments, love letters and other assorted memes to: rantcontroller@gmail.com