



BLOG ENTRIES

Spark of Being and the Mojo

November 1st, 2010 | Author: [Geoff Countryman](#)

When Dave came to me about making Spark of Being happen live (and knowing that DJ Olive was on sabbatical) I was presented with quite a predicament. Olive's sounds are inseparable from the film and performing it live didn't change this fact. The band, however, wasn't going to be tied down note for note to the original soundtrack – there is interplay and interaction written into every one of Dave's pieces. To simply run Olive's tracks as originally recorded would end up falling short. This is where the Mojo comes in.

After asking around a bit I was turned onto a new movement happening called Controllerism. Simply put, Controllerism *"is the art and practice of using musical software controllers to build upon, mix, scratch, remix, effect, modify, or otherwise create music."* ¹ This is exactly what I was looking for. As it turns out, the very term "Controllerism" was coined by a musician known as Moldover...who also happened to make his own controllers. The Moldover Mojo is, I think, the ultimate controllerist's controller and after the Mojo and I made our stage debut last week with Keystone, I think it is the only one suited for this project.

Let me tell you a bit about the Mojo. It's intensely complicated and awesomely simple all at once. More so than anything else, it is a USB bus powered midi controller best suited for use with Ableton Live. As you can see from the photo, there are knobs and buttons everywhere. What makes the Mojo so unique in a world of grid based controllers and seemingly random backlit rubber buttons is its intuitiveness.

Let me get into the nitty gritty for a second and give you a layout. On the right side you have 5 clip launch buttons (blue), 5 override buttons (white and black), 5 faders, 5 touch sensitive strips, 5 effects sends etc. Why 5? Because we have 5 fingers. The ergonomics of the Mojo are no mistake or accident. Everything is laid out to be comfortable under your hands. The best way to envision playing the Mojo is to look at each finger's space as a channel strip, looking vertically up from the blue launch button. An example work flow would be to press the blue button to start your sound file playing, turn the fader up to the desired volume and then manipulate the sound by either moving your finger along the touch strip or turning on your effects sends with the switch etc. You can then launch 4 more clips with your other fingers and kablamo, you are making sound.

Now, let's talk a bit about the left side of the Mojo starting with the large master knob at the top left (I have mine midi mapped to be a master volume control). Again, looking vertically will help understand the layout. Underneath your master volume knob are 4 black knobs. The 2 on the left control the sound coming out of the left side of your computer, the 2 on the right control the right. The left most knob functions similarly to a DJ scratching a record, the second knob controls a delay, and the other 2 knobs are a mirror image and do the same things to the music coming out of the right side. There are 4 arcade style buttons for your left and 4 for your right, each a different level of stutter delay – from half note to 16th. The

touchstrips are bitcrushers and EQ filters.

Ok – sorry to get so technical there...and I know I left some things out; I just didn't want to go into jargon overload. More important than how the Mojo works is how it is starting to integrate into the Spark of Being live show. Because of its versatility and open-ended nature, as well as its ability to creatively manipulate sound in musical and sonically interesting ways, it is the instrument best suited to the demanding and complex nature of this project. My goal is to bring you into the film and create an environment, alongside DJ Olive, that gives you the full scope of Dave's music. The Mojo allows for a full range of integration into the live setting, from subtle to extreme, all while giving me the control to interact with the band and audience.

I'm more than happy to answer any questions you may have as I know we just scratched the surface of the Mojo. For additional info on controllerism and the amazing Moldover please check his site: www.moldover.com.

1 – <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Controllerism>



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