

**AES PNW Section
February Meeting Notice**

**New Wave Modular Synthesizers
Meet the Seattle Area Modular Manufacturers**

**Wednesday, February 17, 2010 - 7:30PM
Microsoft Studios
4420 148th Ave NE, Redmond WA 98052, Building 127**

DIRECTIONS...

Our February meeting features some of the rising stars of the new wave of Modular Synthesis giving demonstrations of some innovative new products as well as showing off some of the more tried and trusted, but never completely predictable, modular delights. This will be a great opportunity to play catch-up for those of you who may be new to the world of modular synthesizers - a world of infinitely variable possibilities that started in the early 70s when modular synthesis was pretty much the only way to go. If you're old enough, think back to the Buchla, Moog 900-series, and the ARP 2600 synthesizers. If not...

In the beginning, there were several separate modules, each responsible for a specific aspect of sound creation: Voltage Controlled Oscillators (VCOs), Voltage Controlled Filters (VCFs) and Voltage Controlled Amplifiers (VCAs). It wasn't too long afterwards that Low Frequency Oscillators (LFOs), Sequencers/Arpeggiators, and Envelope Generators joined the party, creating a broad range of wonderful synthesized sounds. The flexibility of such a system was tremendous - primarily because the modules were connected together by patch cords, encouraging sound exploration and design. That flexibility came at a cost - complexity and price. The modular synths of the day were well out of range of all but the most serious musicians and academia. In addition, the different manufacturers had proprietary sizes and interfaces for their equipment.

This complexity led to an integration of functionality - the standard modules and patches that create sounds were put together and pre-patched, with control mainly of the parameters of the components, but not their order/configuration... These units incrementally came down in price until the pendulum swung furthest in the mid to late 80s. Here we had synthesizers whose human interface consisted of a couple of 7 segment LEDs and a data slider. The majority of the "patches" (named for the earlier use of patch cables to build a sound) were pre-set and canned. Much of the joy the synthesist derived from creating and manipulating their own sounds in real time evaporated. On the other hand, for live performance, a synthesizer with presets was really the only practical solution, because there was no way for a modular synthesizer to change patches quickly during performance.

Fortunately, with lead of several visionaries in the field, modular synthesis has been revived and the costs have dropped enough to become accessible to the general audience. There are new modular standards that provide opportunities for many manufacturers to make modules that interoperate seamlessly and inexpensively. On February 17th, we'll meet several of those manufacturers. Come and learn the history, state of the art, and future trends in modular synthesis.

Confirmed guests include:

- George Mattson, Mattson Modular www.mattsonmini modular.com
- James Husted, Synthwerks www.synthwerks.com
- Kevin O'Neill, Flight Of Harmony www.flightofharmony.com
- Scott Rise, Division 6 www.division-6.com
- Sebastian Jaeger, The Harvestman www.theharvestman.org

Interviews with the featured guests and more information about the new wave of modular synthesis can be found on electronicmusic.com

Steve Turnidge

AES PNW 2009-2010 Section Chair

n.b. *The material presented at our meetings is the opinion of the presenter and not necessarily that of the Society. You are encouraged to conduct your own research and to form your own opinions before adopting the presented material as Truth.*

Our meetings are open to anyone interested in Audio. AES membership is NOT required for you to attend our meetings.

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