



# BIT SHIFTER

Brooklyn, NY

**OT05: I particularly enjoy when chiptunes feature lyrics, vocals, or voice synthesis. Do you have a favored way to include words in your chip music?**

**BS:** Almost all of my stuff is instrumental, but every now and then I'll do a track where I'm singing. Usually a cover of a song I like & want to "try on." But I've done one or two originals with vocals too. With covers, you've got a preexisting template which makes it straightforward, although there's always room for creative reinterpretation. With originals obviously you're starting from scratch, so there are more challenges. In terms of a favorite way to do it — I guess there are pros and cons to each. I find doing originals more creatively satisfying, but sometimes the temptation to do a particular cover song can be irresistible, and it's fun to find ways to put your own spin on a song you like. These aren't the only two ways a person can put lyrics / vocals into a song of course, but they're the only ones I'm any good at.

**OT05: Do you have any programs that you like to use alongside Nanoloop or LSDj?**

**BS:** Not really. I think every track I've done has been either nanoloop alone, or LSDJ alone. I've done dual-Game-Boy synched tracks with two copies of nanoloop or LSDJ, but I don't think I've ever incorporated any other programs.

**OT05: In your history with Game Boys as an instrument, are there any modifications that you've found you will always add, likewise are there any that you would never add again?**

**BS:** So far I've only really ever worked with the same two unmodified, off-the-shelf DMGs. At one point I thought I'd dip my toe into the waters of Game Boy mods, which ended up being a bad experience. A modded DMG I bought had a power irregularity (introduced by the mod) that ended up crashing it, and corrupting an LSDJ song I was working on. I recognize it was an isolated thing, but all the same it soured me on the idea of mods for a while. That was a long time ago now, and I know some of the mods that people are doing nowadays seem fantastic. Might splash out for a DMG with an IPS display someday. Don't think I'm gonna modify my two performance Game Boys though. They've been reliable, trustworthy tools that have been with me a long time. I like those two how they are.

**OT05: Are your consoles exclusively instruments or do you ever play any video games? If you do, what are some titles you enjoy?**

**BS:** My DMGs are mostly instruments. I've owned other consoles for gaming — Nintendo DS, Game Boy Micro, etc. — but never really got fully immersed in games. Off the top of my head some games I've enjoyed on those platforms: Castlevania: Dawn Of Sorrow; Gunstar Super Heroes; Metroid Fusion, a few others. I did recently pick up a Nintendo Switch (obviously I'm not what you'd call an "early adopter") and have been really enjoying Sea Of Stars. Absolutely incredible music by Eric W. Brown, who chipmusic folks might know better as Rainbowdragoneyes.

**OT05: 8BitPeoples.com is an absolute treasure chest of music for any new chiptune fan. Are there any future plans for 8BP?**

**BS:** Nothing specific at the moment. However Jeremiah (Nullsleep) reminded me recently that 2024 is the label's 25th anniversary, so who knows?

**OT05: How does the chiptune scene of the twenty-twenties compare to that of the noughties?**

**BS:** This is a big question and my observations here are of course entirely subjective. I think things now are a little more spread out, with fewer epicenters of activity (either geographically or online). Which is fine and probably the result of a number of influencing factors, not least of which being the pandemic and lockdown, which of course stifled live activity and led to the loss of a lot of DIY-friendly live venues. The nature of online communities has also changed over time, moving away from standalone websites & forums (like 8bitcollective and chipmusic.org) to the sort of turnkey ease of social media platforms, and more recently, to Discord it seems. I think the move away from forums and toward social media platforms had the unforeseen effect of fragmentation. Not everyone who's on Twitter is on Facebook, vice versa, and meanwhile the platforms themselves keep shifting in terms of the manner in which algorithms either promote or stifle visibility and communication, which can seem really arbitrary. Standalone forums / websites had their downsides too, but in hindsight I think they were probably better suited for cultivating a community.

Another important difference is that I think there's much greater awareness now of the importance and nuances of inclusion and the necessity of active effort to promote and maintain that inclusion. In hindsight this was not nearly as much of a conscious priority in the '00s as it really should have been. I'm glad these things are part of the open conversation now in the chipmusic community.

**OT05: Can you share any exotic or surreal experiences that have come from performing music with Game Boys around the world?**

**BS:** I'm indescribably fortunate to have had the opportunities I've had with this silly project. I'm just so, so grateful that chipmusic, and the wonderful people in it, enabled me to have what are truly some of the best experiences of my life. Frankly that alone is borderline surreal, to get to your question. Some specific standouts: doing a month-long world tour with Nullsleep (I still can't believe we pulled it off). Getting tossed in jail for posting flyers in Manhattan's East Village. Getting inadvertently locked inside a pizza place in Barcelona. Oliver Wittchow saving me from a hostile passerby in Vienna who was angry about George Bush (wish I'd known the German for "dude, believe me, I'm with you on this"). Playing an unexpectedly and intimidatingly quiet show during daylight hours in a small clothing boutique in Kobe Japan. Malcolm McLaren showing up at a tiny show me and my friends organized in Manhattan — that was a big one. He ended up conversing with us for a while about chipmusic — he was intently and genuinely fascinated by it. My memory of hearing him tell us "this is going to blow ahp" is so crystal clear it may as well be an audio recording in my brain. Not sure it ever did blow up — although that's open to interpretation — but his enthusiasm for it was really both heartwarming and thrilling. Rest in peace, Malcolm.

**OT05: Are there any chiptune artists that you're currently excited about?**

**BS:** I've been less plugged-in recently than I used to be in terms of knowing who's out there doing what. Firebrandboy recently released an EP of gentle chipbreak that I love. Another consistently great artist is nmlstyl, I'm constantly knocked out by each new release. Nishioka Diddley is a really unique artist whose releases I've been enjoying a lot. There's an artist by the name of checs whose album Geometropia knocked me out. Chipzel continues to absolutely slay. I don't know if they've released anything recently but I find myself revisiting .sylCMYK's chiptune releases a lot. I get the sense there's a lot more awesome stuff out there from newer artists that I haven't heard yet, I really need to dive in and I'm sure I'll discover new faves.