

Where are they now?! - KevinDDR

Written by DarkTetsuya

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Hoping you guys are digging these, I recently got a couple more people to do them so this'll be going on at least two more days from now... but today I talk to KevinDDR about what he's been up to and some of his favorite games of the note-smashing variety, so hit the jump to take a look!

1. So tell us about yourself. What are you up to these days?

1. Throughout my whole life, since I was 6, I've been playing music games. I started out with DDR, but then moved onto others like Drummania, Pop'n Music, and beatmaniaIIDX. Around 2007, though, I kind of lost interest in music games.

After stopping playing Bemani for a while, I switched over to playing a Japanese arcade version of Tetris called Tetris The Grand Master. I got really into this game, and eventually became one of the top ranked players in the world. Just last year, I graduated from high school and am now attending University of Washington studying Computer Science.

In the last year or so, I've now become extremely involved in the competitive pinball community, which has provided me with something awesome to do in my spare time as well as helped me meet a lot of cool people, much like music games did for me originally.

I've recently started playing music games again, and am mostly focusing on Drummania, Pop'n Music, and DJMax Technika, which are all available to play on location in Seattle arcades.

2. Favorite BEMANI game?

2. My favorite Bemani game is Drummania. It's the closest any music game ever got to being

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realistic, while still being an extremely enjoyable, deep, yet accessible experience.

3. Favorite mix from said series?

3. My favorite mix from Drummania has to be 5th Mix, mostly because it contains a lot of amazing songs and was also the mix I literally grew up playing. V5 and V6 recently have come pretty close.

4. Favorite song/artist? (doesn't have to be from your favorite game/series)

4. I don't have a specific favorite song, but I love pretty much everything Thomas Howard Lichtenstein has ever contributed to the Bemani franchise. What a great guy! Some old school Slake tracks are great too, and anything by Mutsuhiko Izumi is guaranteed to be awesome in DM. *(ED: totally agreed! I mean FIRE? gtfo its awesome! :P)*

5. Any tournament memories you want to share? (also, PA or Freestyle?)

5. I've never done freestyle; I'm too shy! That said, I remember most of my tournaments as great social experiences. Even though I was somewhere between 10 and 15 throughout that era, people were still incredibly nice to me and made me feel very welcome at community events.

I also recently drove down from Seattle to California for Best of the West, an event at SVGL consisting of tournaments for every Bemani title. That was pretty great! Lots of cool people and lots of "IRL meetings" with people I had only talked with on the VJArmy forums years ago.

6. Proudest accomplishment?

6. My proudest accomplishment was probably my first S on the song Over There (EXT) in Drummania, which is one of the hardest charts in the series. I had played the song literally over 500 times, and when I finally did it I couldn't contain myself.

7. Any memories from OLR you'd like to share? / Or, memories from playing DDR/BEMANI?

7. When I was listening live, I remember the chatroom as being pretty cool! At the age I was at, I couldn't believe that there was a podcast dedicated to games that people like me enjoyed! I also fondly remember listening to OLR in-person at PAX 2008 (I think?) and meeting the OLR crew. Good times!

8. Do you still play DDR/IIDX/etc. nowadays? / If not, what ARE you playing?

8. I do still play all the games I used to, although DDR a bit less (despite it being in my username) since I'm quite out of shape. My local arcades are very easy for me to get to from

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school, so I'm down there quite a bit.

9. If you've seen what DDR is like now, do you feel it's 'jumped the shark'? Share your thoughts on that.

9. I don't think that DDR has "jumped the shark", but the quality of the machines available for the new mixes really leaves something to be desired. I haven't played anything past SN2 seriously as it is impossible to find a DDR X or X2 cabinet in working condition, despite all of them being newer than the well-built older cabinets.

10. Obligatory 'your first time playing DDR' story

10. My first time playing DDR was at a friend's birthday party when I was 6. It was held at Illusionz, an arcade in Seattle which would eventually go on to become the beta test site for In The Groove. Anyway, I stepped up to DDR USA, played a game, loved it, and never looked back. I would come a few times a month to play the game, and I think my parents must have got sick of how much I would ramble on about the game to them!

11. Final thoughts?

11. Congrats on 10 years, OLR! Here's to another 10 coming! Never underestimate the positive impact you have on people's lives!

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Special thanks to KevinDDR for the interview! Tune in tomorrow as I catch up with one of our spinoff shows' former hosts, djTyrant! (*And he actually opted to answer all the questions in both versions, so this one's a long one!*)