

A Supa Dupa Mixer

Duro has a long history of mixing tracks for such artists as Jay-Z, DMX, Ja Rule, and Will Smith, plus many other hit records. His mixing style is hard-edged, combining a serious club knock with an edgy, urban street feel. Yet his mixes still manage to translate well to radio. The Beastie Boys chose him to mix *To the 5 Boroughs* based on a few projects he'd worked on that they liked, particularly the Fabolous album, *Street Dreams*, which Duro had recently mixed.

"I'd pretty much worked with everyone that I could have wanted to," says Duro. "But I hadn't even thought about working with the Beastie Boys, because it seemed so far beyond a possibility. You know, it never even crossed my mind, because I've been a fan."

When Duro got to the studio, the Beastie Boys let him work his magic. "They were totally cool and totally receptive to trying different things," he says. "They pretty much just put the ball in my court and let me do whatever I wanted to do. They'd put their comments and ideas in, too. If they thought anything was too far left, or wanted it to go a little more left, they'd let me know. But for the most part, they let me do what I wanted to do with the mixes."

The Evolution of the Beastie Boys

To the 5 Boroughs is the Beastie Boys' first self-produced record since they began charting. Although the band started long before the digital audio workstation revolution took over, the Beastie Boys have long used technology for their music — dating way back to when they recorded prank calls and sampled the voices into their songs.

The Beastie Boys originally descended on NYC in 1981, shocking and confusing the masses as a hardcore punk band. After catching the attention of producer Rick Rubin and Run-DMC's manager, Russell Simmons, the band took over the rap world. In 1986, Rubin produced the Beastie Boys' *License to Ill*, which quickly topped the charts with hits like "Brass Monkey," "She's Crafty," and "No Sleep Till Brooklyn." *License to Ill* became the first rap album to hit #1.

Soon the band's hit tracks, combined with heavy rotation of the "Fight for Your Right to Party" video on MTV, secured the Beastie Boys' title as one of the most successful rap bands ever to assault the airwaves. The three core members, Adam Yauch (MCA), Mike Diamond (Mike D), and Adam Horowitz (Ad-Rock), followed up their early successes with several more releases, including *Paul's Boutique* in 1989, *Check Your Head* in 1992, and *Ill Communication* in 1994.

In 1998, the band released *Hello Nasty*, which delivered the hit singles "Body Movin'" and "Intergalactic." These hits also came out on their greatest hits collection, *The Sounds of Science*, in 2001. The Beastie Boys' longevity can be credited to their continuous reinvention of themselves — the overt eccentricity of their lyrics and musical style keeps their energy fresh and their fans interested.

Even though they've been kicking down hits for almost twenty years now, the Beastie Boys continue to put out records, headline tours, and devote energy toward humanitarian causes like the Tibetan Freedom Concerts. Falling in line with modern times, the Beastie Boys recently turned to Pro Tools|HD when setting up their own studio in NYC.



Mixing *To the 5 Boroughs*

When the Beastie Boys finished writing, recording and arranging *To the 5 Boroughs*, they asked Duro to mix 20 songs for potential inclusion on the release. Fifteen of these made it onto the album. All of the songs were recorded at 24-bit/44.1 kHz with Pro Tools|HD 3 Accel and a Power Mac G4. Duro mixed the tracks through Genelec 1031A monitors.

"It was all synth stuff," says Duro. "You know, programmed drums, loops that they chopped up, beats, lots of instruments. They'd programmed pretty much everything in Reason, and used ReWire to get it into Pro Tools." There were about 30 tracks in each song.

"All my favorite songs made it onto the album," says Duro. "The songs we struggled with ended up not being on the album, because there was usually something lacking in the production that was making it difficult. We'd be trying to force those songs to work." So the final track choice came somewhat naturally.

As a whole, Duro thinks *To the 5 Boroughs* is a great record because it has something for every type of mood. "If you're in a goofy mood, there's 'Shazam!' or 'The Brouhaha,'" he says. "If you're in a more serious mood, there are others. Some songs are more political and serious, while others are more b-boy. Whatever mood you're in, there are two or three songs on that record where you can say, 'Yeah...that's what I want to listen to.'"

Duro Gets Into the Plug-in Groove

Duro had used Pro Tools before, but he was not at all used to mixing with plug-ins rather than outboard gear. But one track into the project, he was a changed man. "I liked the sound of the record," he says. "And I ended up pretty much using all plug-ins instead of outboard gear, except that I used a Lexicon 960L for the reverbs and a few dbx 902 de-essers."

Duro particularly liked the sound of the Focusrite d2 EQ. "They weren't super warm, but they weren't thin and tinny either," he says. "They have a really natural feel to them." He also liked the Bomb Factory plug-ins. "I was using the BF-2A and the BF76 plug-ins," he explains. "I also used some of the Oxford EQs, and the Digi EQs as well."

Duro ended up using plug-ins on all the tracks, including both instruments and vocals. "I used the Focusrite EQs and the BF76 plug-ins especially on the vocals," he says. "The switch took a little getting used to, because I'm used to having lots of knobs to turn, and I was still trying to adjust to using the plug-ins with ProControl. I used a lot of the keyboard and mouse functions, and used the ProControl mostly for the faders at first. But as I went along, I started to get more and more comfortable with it."

Pro Tools Liberates the Mixing Process

Duro's experience mixing the Beastie Boys' *To the 5 Boroughs* was relatively low pressure, as the band owns the studio where they were mixing. For Duro, who normally works under severe time constraints while mixing, it was a totally different environment than he was used to.

"I usually don't spend a whole lot of time mixing. I'm the type of person that will hear something and feel something and then commit to a sound really quickly," he says. "I don't EQ a kick drum for three hours. I know how I want it to sound, what I want to achieve, what to pull out of it, and then I do it. The vocals and stuff, for me, usually get done in the first hour. Everything after that is just playing around with ideas."

Pro Tools and ProControl gave Duro and the Beastie Boys the option of experimenting with mix ideas for a while, then coming back to them later. "Because we were working with the ProControl — with all its options — we'd jump around from song to song a lot," he says. "Since it's so easy to recall sessions, I wouldn't commit to a final mix right away, like I usually do. I'd probably end up very close to what I thought was the final. But then I'd be like, 'Oh, I don't have to print this now.' I'd go mix five more songs, then come back to listen to the first one before printing it."

Supa Excited about ICON

Now that Duro has sunk his mix teeth into Pro Tools|HD, he's supa excited to start using Digidesign's new ICON integrated console. "I just got an ICON," he says. "I work with a lot of people, and sometimes you're just sort of waiting around for them. But with the ICON, I'll be able to just switch to a different song on the fly. With a separate console, it's not like that. With the ICON, I can just open my session and boom! It's there."

