

Dennis Ferrer

By [Merrick Angle](#) | June 2007

New York-based deep house DJ/producer Dennis Ferrer — the artist widely known for the production prowess evident in his work on *Sandcastles* and *Underground Is My Home* — has delved further into his long-running dance floor odyssey on the brand new album *The World As I See It*. Intrigued by what we heard, we decided to track down the man behind the mix for a brief chat about building home studios, the pros and cons of going digital, and how to keep ahead of the game when you've already been on the cutting edge for the past 15 years.

EQ: I hear you decided to go the home studio route.

Dennis Ferrer: Commercial studio time is really expensive [*in NY*], so you have to make do with what you've got. We asked our landlord if we could rent the garage, and he said, "Give me a \$150 a month, and do whatever you want."

EQ: Uh-oh!

DF: Next thing you know there's shipments of panels, 2x4s, and wool fibre flying in. We did the whole thing properly: Built a room within a room, floated the floors, installed double doors — all for a 500 sq ft. studio in a garage. The next time the landlord came over he nearly fell flat on his face!

EQ: With what kind of gear did you outfit the studio?

DF: When I used to work at a music store, I had a lot of gear — every keyboard you could conceivably want. But this time, because of the space, I went mostly digital — working with software and plug-ins, but with really good "front end" equipment.

EQ: Like what?

DF: For mics: a Soundelux E47, Neumann U67, and a Shure SM7B. I love that mic [*SM7B*]; it sounds great on male vocals. I used it on *Underground Is My Home* because Tyrone Ellis has a real raspy voice. . . .

EQ: And it smoothed everything out? In this genre, a big, warm vocal is key.

DF: Every time we put that mic up, it sounds better than everything else. Anyhow, I went completely digital using a [*Apogee*] Rosetta 800 at the front end teamed with a Big Ben. Inside, I have every plug-in I could possibly need. I mainly use the UAD-1 for my EQs. The 1176LN and the LA-2A emulations are amazing as well. They are dead on. The only thing that I want right now is something I know won't be emulated, or at least emulated for some time: the [*Roland*] Juno-106. So I kept that.

EQ: There were no problems going "into the box" other than not having a 106 soft synth?

DF: Not for 3–4 years, when my CPU becomes worthless [*laughs*]. What happens when it doesn't all work with the 25th version of Windows?

EQ: So you're writing primarily in that studio then?

DF: Yeah, but when I'm on the road I'll take the battery-powered [*Aka*] MPC 500. Everybody laughed at that little thing and said it wasn't for pros, but when I'm on the plane all I need is six AA batteries, and I'm banging away on the next record.

EQ: Would you say your work as a DJ directly influences how you operate in the studio?

DF: If you had asked me that question five years ago, I would have said "no." But they really work together. When you go into a club you watch people's reaction to records, you work out pretty quickly what's going to work, and what isn't. You develop that and then, in the studio, it works like a sixth sense. I think you have to DJ out in order to get a sense of what's really going on. Otherwise you get too caught up in yourself.

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