



The [Thimbletron](#) ... fake?

Apparently some think so. On occasion, someone will approach me after a [live Thimbletron performance](#) and ask with a wink, "So, does that thing really work?" Puh-leeze.

In the 1990's I started seeing a problem. Electronic music was taking over, but there wasn't a good way to perform it. Sure, you could go on stage with a [stack of synthesizers](#) but that wasn't as impressive or useful as it used to be, especially as laptops became more capable and less expensive. I could see where that was going. Synthesizers weren't great because it forced the musician to stay put behind them for the whole show, but at least they gave the audience something fancy to look at. Exchange those synthesizers for one laptop, and you can watch a stage show with all the thrills of someone answering email.

I felt this would eventually foster a mistrust of the musician by the audience. There's a long history of people accusing electronic musicians of just "pressing a button" to cause their entire performance to happen automatically; we certainly didn't need the beige wall of a laptop screen erecting itself between audience and musician to breed more mistrust. It seemed like there could be two outcomes: 1) the audience gains faith and trust in the musician, which I thought to be unlikely (especially for non-mainstream, lesser-known electronic musicians, which

in those days was almost all of them), or 2) nobody will want to see an electronic music performance, since it's not much of a performance.



I created the Thimbletron as a solution to that. Since the Thimbletron is mainly two gloves with sewing thimbles on the fingertips, it's wearable and portable. Sure, the wiring to its electronics tethers you, but that's no worse than a guitarist (plus it adds to the mad science feel of the whole thing). It's easy to learn, since triggering sounds is done by touching thimbles together, and you could touch fingertips while drunk in the dark (although I do try to avoid performing under those conditions). Because of that intuitiveness an audience can understand it, at least in that they can watch and learn that certain thimbles trigger certain sounds. You can stage dive with them on. And they just look insane.

And yet some people just don't see it, or are still skeptical, and figure that if they catch me off stage and out of character that I'll let them in on the conspiracy. And you know, I wish I could just tell that it *is* a fake, just a stage prop, and the whole show was prerecorded. It would be a LOT easier than designing and building your own electronic music instrument, repairing it time and time again after wires break, and then having it malfunction anyway in mid-show.

I've heard those comments for years, though not for a little while. Currently we do less shows with the Thimbletron in favor of the [Vidimasher 3000](#). Even still, what I didn't realize until just today is what I wasn't seeing beyond those doubters -- the entire rest of the audience that *didn't* raise their doubts. If my Thimbletron shows were to prove that electronic music can make for a good live show, *those* are the people who prove I succeeded.

And since you are very likely to be reading this because you're in that category -- **thank you!**

Although it's a very different beast, the Vidimasher 3000 has yet to get any audience doubt. A good sign which I hope will bode well for our many future shows this year, and beyond.

- TradeMark G.