



## Osman Kent Biography

Osman Kent's impressive entrepreneurial career in technology businesses during the past twenty years is an unsung British success story, mainly due to his desire to remain private.

As the founder and CEO of 3Dlabs - at one time one of the fastest growing companies in Silicon Valley, whose products were used in the making of films like Titanic and The Matrix - Osman pioneered and revolutionised 3D computer graphics on the PC.

Since 2004 he has embarked on a mission in music with the birth of Songphonic Records, fulfilling a life long ambition after an intermission of thirty years.

Osman was recently elected to become a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in the UK and is a Barker for the Variety Club of Britain.

## **Early Years**

Born in Turkey in 1958, Osman's strongest childhood memory was playing the piano spontaneously at the age of six during a visit to relatives – his first encounter with the instrument. A year later his parents, who were of modest means, had saved up to buy him a second-hand piano and invested in lessons, starting a lifelong love affair with music.

Despite being dubbed a child prodigy in both music and sciences, Osman's parents insisted that he receive a regular school education, resisting attempts to place him at a school for gifted children. By the age of 14, Osman harboured dreams of becoming a force in music, sometimes pretending to be Cat Stevens at gigs or when performing his own compositions at school concerts.

In the summer of 1974 a three month hands-on survey of pianos in Brighton pubs convinced Osman that his future was indeed in music and he made plans to return to England to study music. Sadly, these plans weren't shared by his parents who cunningly bought him a second hand computer hoping that it would distract him from the seductive lure of music. The strategy worked and it wasn't long before Osman was hooked on computers and programming.

At 18, Osman graduated from high-school with top science marks and won a coveted place at Istanbul Technical University to study aeronautical engineering. Still, his passion for music led him back to England hoping to study composition at the Royal Academy of Music. Alas, with his parents' strong encouragement (not to mention control of funds) to study 'something proper', after only a year, Osman enrolled at the University of Birmingham for a double degree in Computer Science and Electronics Engineering, where he met his wife Sue.

At the tender age of 22 and while still at Birmingham, Osman invented the worlds' first real-time graphical music transcription machine, sowing the seeds for a long and illustrious career in computer graphics. Graduating with a First Class Honours degree, he also received the Young Engineer of the Year prize and his music transcription machine was featured on Tomorrow's World (ensuring its rapid demise).

## **First Business Years**

In 1983, at 25, Osman and his compatriot Dr Yavuz Ahiska started benchMark Technologies Ltd from a bedroom in Kilburn, London and a year later, launched the world's first real-time MS-DOS machine with high-resolution graphics. Their products were deployed in Scotland Yard fingerprint stations and in workstations for graphic arts and animation. benchMark delivered the world's leading computer graphics products, enabling companies like Computer Film Company (CFC) to achieve supremely realistic film animation. In subsequent years, CFC won Oscars and Bafta awards using this equipment.

In 1988 benchMark was acquired by the giant DuPont corporation for \$12M. Dr Ahiska temporarily retired but Osman stayed with the company - now called DuPont Pixel Systems, - as its VP of R&D and refocused its efforts on the emerging field of 3D graphics.

## **Billion Dollar company on Nasdaq**

Much to everyone's surprise, in April 1994 Osman, together with his partner Yavuz Ahiska engineered a management buy-out of DuPont Pixel in a move lauded by the industry at the time. Osman became the CEO of the new company and Dr Ahiska became a non-executive Director. Hence 3Dlabs was born.

The following year, 3Dlabs, a fabless semiconductor company, introduced the world's first workstation class graphics chip for PCs (called GLINT), thereby starting the 3D revolution on the PC. Osman relocated the company headquarters to Silicon Valley in California and started commuting between the US and the UK on a bi-weekly basis. The R&D operation remained in Egham, Surrey.

A year later 3Dlabs went public on NASDAQ stock market at a valuation of \$220M – the first 3D chip company to do so and the company's products were being incorporated into computers by Dell, IBM, Compaq, HP and Sun. In 1997, 3Dlabs became the fastest growing company in Silicon Valley and reached a market valuation of almost \$1bn.

That year Osman bought the famous modernist house / studio complex of Roxy Music from guitarist Phil Manzanera. The house and studio were totally refurbished in a landmark project which took over two years to complete. The house - now a national monument - has become an icon of modernism in this country and has been featured in countless books, magazines and films.

## **Change of Direction**

After September 11 and with the downturn in technology markets, Osman, like many business leaders the world over, was re-evaluating his priorities and trying to decide what was best for his shareholders, employees and customers. He soon came to realise that the best interests of all concerned would be served if 3Dlabs were to become part of a larger and stronger organization.

So in May 2002, 3Dlabs was sold to Creative Technology Ltd (of SoundBlaster fame) in a deal valued at \$170M, and Osman left the company after almost 20 years, giving him the time and the resources to put his heart and soul into his first love – music.

## **Songphonic is born**

The next natural step for Osman, an accomplished and passionate musician and producer himself, was to launch his fiercely independent record label. Incensed by the 'factory produced' and disposable nature of popular music in recent years, he decided to incubate young singer-songwriters and produce music in a more organic way.

Hence Songphonic Records was born, attracting an initial funding of \$2M from sources outside the UK and with a mission to incubate genuine artists. Incubation is a common activity in technology businesses for growing new stars – a concept which Osman re-applied to the music business.

The label is currently incubating a number of artists and so far released an album and two EPs to critical acclaim. Osman also produced for other artists (including Sezen Aksu and Sertab – two of Turkey's leading divas) and even mastered a classical recording in his spare time.

Hailed by the Turkish media as the next Arif Mardin (the veteran Turkish-born record producer whose credits include Aretha Franklin, Dusty Springfield and more recently Norah Jones) Osman, humbled by the analogy, is focused on becoming a better all round producer.

In fact, Osman's favourite recent accolade came from What Hi-Fi magazine which praised the production of the label's debut CD ('And How' by Xanda Howe) as being 'faultless'.