

# Dreamwave Made Simple

HOW TO NAIL  
THE NOSTALGIC 80S VIBE  
IN YOUR MUSIC



*SYNTHWAVE DOJO*

# HELLO, SYNTHWAYER!

Born in the glow of the 80s, I grew up obsessed with music and driven by a deep desire to master it.

After years of struggling in the dark to create synthwave — with no clear path, no mentors, and no results — I made a vow to figure it out or die trying.

I reverse-engineered the genre, trained with intensity, and built a repeatable system that now allows me to create powerful, emotional music on demand — and teach others to do the same.

Through my YouTube channel, group programs and 1:1 mentoring, I've helped thousands of producers close the gap between the sound in their head and the tracks they actually finish.

I believe everyone has music in their heart — and with the right process, they can finally release it.



[www.Synthwavedojo.com](http://www.Synthwavedojo.com)



# WHAT IS DREAMWAVE?

Dreamwave is the nostalgic and romantic side of Synthwave. It's all about capturing the magic of the 80s—the dreams, the wonder, and the cinematic vibes. Think lush pads, shimmering leads, and reverb-soaked melodies that transport you to another world.

The best part? You don't need expensive gear or years of experience to create this sound. With a few simple techniques, you can start making Dreamwave tracks today. This guide will show you how.



# IT ALL STARTS WITH THE RIGHT PALETTE

Dreamwave thrives on warm, lush, and analog-style sounds. Here's what to focus on:

- **Pads:** Use soft, evolving pads to create a dreamy atmosphere.
- **Leads:** Go for smooth, melodic leads with a touch of vibrato.
- **Basslines:** Keep it simple and warm—think rolling basslines that sit in the background.
- **Drums:** Use retro drum machine sounds like the LinnDrum, Roland TR-707 or Simmons SDS-V

## Quick Win:

If you're just starting out, try these free tools:

- Synths: [Vital](#), [Dexed](#), [TAL Noisemaker](#)
- Drums: [Synthwave Dojo 80s Drum Machines](#)

**Pro Tip:** Layer your pads with a subtle arpeggio for extra movement.



# CREATE THAT DREAMY ATMOSPHERE

Reverb and delay are your best friends in Dreamwave production. They add space and depth, making your tracks feel cinematic and immersive.

- **Reverb Settings:**
  - **Decay:** 3–4 seconds.
  - **Pre-delay:** Low (10–20ms).
  - **Mix:** 40–50%.
  - **Pro Tip:** Roll off the low end (below 200Hz) on your reverb to keep your mix clean.
- **Delay Settings:**
  - **Type:** Tape or analog delay.
  - **Time:** Quarter-note or dotted-eighth.
  - **Feedback:** Low (15–25%).
  - **Mix:** 20–30%.

## Quick Win:

Use free plugins like Valhalla Supermassive (for reverb) and Deelay (for delay) for additional inspiration. Just don't neglect your stock plugins!

# ADD THAT RETRO SHIMMER

Chorus is the secret sauce for getting that lush, 80s sound. It adds width and movement to your synths, making them feel alive.

## Chorus Settings:

- **Rate:** 0.5-1 Hz
- **Depth:** 50-70%
- **Mix:** 30-50%

**Quick Win:** Download [TAL-Chorus-LX](#) (free) for an authentic Juno-60 chorus sound.

**Pro Tip:** Try adding chorus to your basslines for a subtle, dreamy effect.





# POLISH YOUR MIX

EQ and compression help you clean up your mix and make it sound professional.

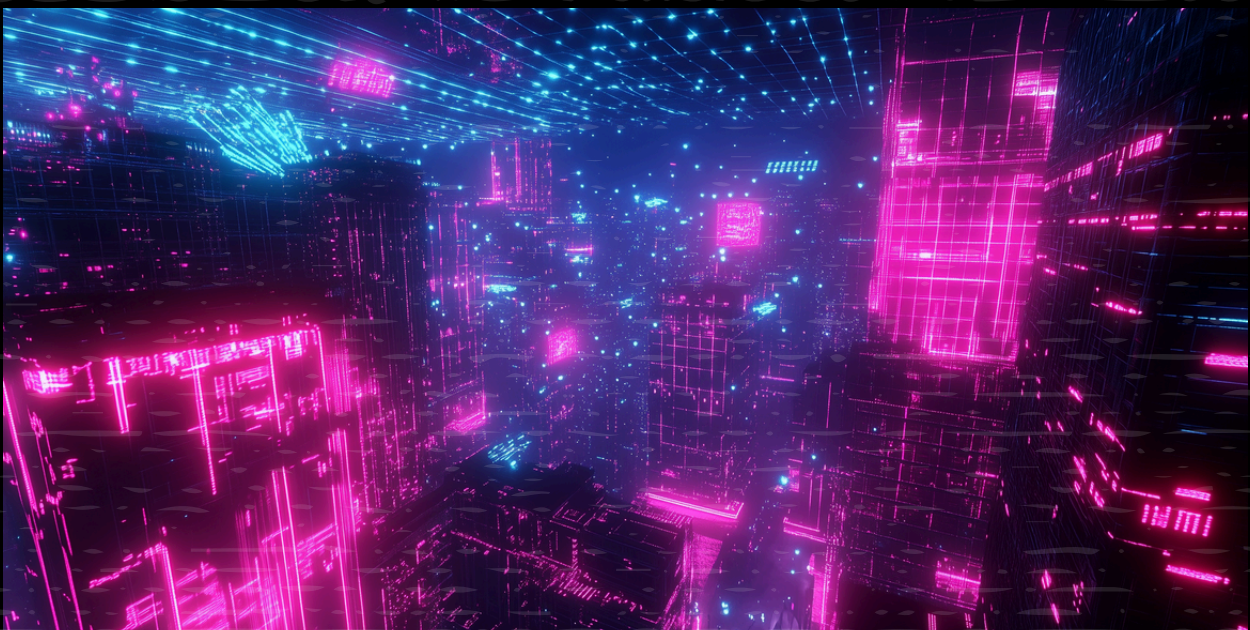
## EQ Tips:

- Boost the highs (8–12kHz) for air and sparkle.
- Cut the mids (300–500Hz) to reduce muddiness.
- Roll off the lows (below 50Hz) to avoid clutter.

## Compression Tips:

- **Ratio:** 2:1 or 3:1.
- **Attack:** Medium (10–30ms).
- **Release:** Medium (50–100ms).

**Pro Tip:** Use sidechain compression on your pads and bass to create that pulsing, dreamy feel.



# LESS IS MORE

Dreamwave isn't about cramming your arrangement with sounds. It's about creating space and letting the melodies shine.

**Focus on Simplicity:** Start with a basic chord progression (e.g., I-vi-V-I) and build from there.

**Melody Tips:** Use soft, expressive leads with plenty of reverb and delay.

**Practice Restraint:** Limit yourself to 4-5 elements in your track: pads, bass, lead, drums, and maybe an arpeggio.

**Pro Tip:** Mute elements as you go to see if your arrangement still works—it's a great way to avoid overloading.





# DRUMS, BASSLINES, AND ARPEGGIOS MADE EASY

## DRUMS

Dreamwave drums are simple and steady. Here's a basic pattern:

- **Kick:** Beats 1 and 3.
- **Snare:** Beats 2 and 4.
- **Hi-Hats:** Closed hats on every 8th note, with an open hat on the "and" of beat 4.

**Pro Tip:** Add reverb to your snare for a dreamy vibe.

### Tempo Reference:

Dreamwave tracks typically sit between 60 bpm and 130 bpm, but most fall below 120 bpm for that relaxed, dreamy feel.

### Quick Tip:

Start with a tempo around 100 bpm—it's a sweet spot for beginners and works well for most Dreamwave tracks.

# DRUMS, BASSLINES, AND ARPEGGIOS MADE EASY

## ROLLING BASSLINES

Use 8th or 16th notes for a rolling effect.

Follow the root notes of your chord progression, with occasional jumps to the 5th or octave.

### Example:

Chord Progression: Am - G - C - F

### Bassline:

A - A - A - A | G - G - G - G | C - C - C - C | F - F - F - F





# DRUMS, BASSLINES, AND ARPEGGIOS MADE EASY

## ARPEGGIOS

Start with a triad (e.g., A Minor: A, C, E).

Play the notes in a sequence (e.g., up: A – C – E, or up and down: A – C – E – C – A).

Use 8th or 16th notes for rhythm.

**Pro Tip:** Add delay to your arpeggio for extra depth.



# GET INSPIRED BY THE PROS

One of the best ways to understand the Dreamwave sound is to immerse yourself in the music of the pros.

These artists have mastered the nostalgic, cinematic vibe that defines the genre. Use these tracks as a reference when producing your own music.

Pay attention to their use of pads, leads, basslines, and effects.

- **Dreams by TimeCop1983:** A quintessential Dreamwave track with lush pads and emotional melodies.
- **Los Angeles by The Midnight:** A perfect example of combining cinematic storytelling with retro synths.
- **Cruise by Crockett:** Smooth, rolling basslines and shimmering leads make this track stand out.
- **Time Lapse by Kalax:** A dreamy, atmospheric piece that showcases the power of reverb and delay.
- **Magic by FM Attack:** A track that blends catchy melodies with a nostalgic 80s vibe.

**Pro Tip:** When listening to these tracks, try to reverse-engineer the production. Ask yourself: What instruments are they using? How are they layering sounds? What effects are creating that dreamy atmosphere?



# 5 DREAMY CHORD PROGRESSIONS

Dreamwave thrives on simple, emotional chord progressions. These progressions set the foundation for your track and evoke that nostalgic 80s feel.

Here are five tried-and-true progressions to get you started:

<b>I - VI - IV - V (C - Am - F - G)</b>	A classic progression that feels uplifting and cinematic.
<b>I - V - VI - IV (C - G - Am - F)</b>	Perfect for creating a sense of longing and nostalgia.
<b>i - VI - III - VII (Am - F - C - G):</b>	A slightly darker progression with a hopeful resolution.
<b>I - IV - V - IV (C - F - G - F)</b>	Great for creating a steady, driving rhythm.
<b>VI - VII - v - i (F - G - Em - Am):</b>	A more unique progression that adds a touch of melancholy.

**Quick Win:** Start with one of these progressions and build your track around it. Add a simple melody, some lush pads, and a rolling bassline to bring it to life.

# DREAMWAVE TOOLBOX

Here's a quick list of free tools to help you get started making Dreamwave ([click to visit the website](#)):

- **Synths:**
  - Vital
    - Synthwave Dojo FREE Vital Soundbank
  - NoiseMaker
  - GR-8
    - Synthwave Dojo FREE GR8 Soundbank
  - TyrellIN6
- **Effects:**
  - Deelay (delay)
  - Valhalla Supermassive (reverb & delay)
  - Spacer (reverb)
  - TAL Chorus LX (Juno-style chorus)
  - OSL Chorus (Juno-style chorus)
  - Chow Tape (tape saturation)
  - GSatPlus (saturation)
  - OCS-45 (tape, lo-fi)
  - TDR Kotelnikov (compression)
  - TDR Nova (EQ)
- **Tools:**
  - TDR Prism (spectrum analyzer)
  - STFU (sidechainer)
  - mvMeter2 (multivaluable meter)
  - dpMeter 5 (multichannel meter)
- **Drum Samples:** Synthwave Dojo 80s Machines

[www.Synthwavedojo.com](http://www.Synthwavedojo.com)



# DREAMWAVE TUTORIALS

These videos will help you understand and give you an insight into the production techniques for Dreamwave (click the title to visit the video):

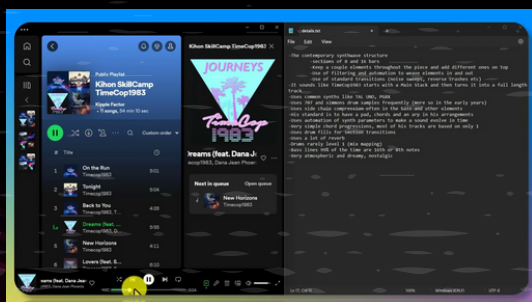
- [Dreamwave Like TimeCop1983](#)



- [Dreamwave Like MPM Soundtracks](#)



- [TimeCop1983 Musical Analysis \(Unlisted Video\)](#)



# VISIT US ONLINE



**Website**



**YouTube**



**Instagram**



**x/Twitter**



**Facebook**