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KILLING HEIDI

STEVE VAI

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CONTENTS >>

- 10 **KILLING HEIDI**
- 14 **STEVE VAI AT SOUNDCHECK**
- 17 **EPICURE TOUR DIARY**
- 20 **DRUMMIN UP A STORM**
THIRSTY MERC'S Karl
ONE DOLLAR SHORTS Michael
THE SPAZZY'S Ally
- 23 **HOME RECORDING FEATURE**
Producer interviews, gear road tests, how to record drums, US hip hop star **SHARKEY**, at home with **MACHINE TRANSLATIONS**, product news and more
- 43 **READER SURVEY CHANCE TO WIN ASHTON GUITAR/AMP PACKAGE**
- 45 **XPOSED** Latest indie releases
- 46 **ELECTRONIC WARFARE** with Baz
- 48 **DRUMS** with Grant Collins
- 49 **BASS** with George Urbaszek
- 50 **GUITAR** with Simon Patterson
- 52 **KEYBOARDS** with Allan Zavod
- 53 **SUBSCRIBE CHANCE TO WIN WASHBURN GUITAR/RANDALL AMP**
- 54 **CHECK I.2** Latest gear road tested
- 64 **STORE** Where to get the latest gear



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PO BOX 315 Kangaroo Ground VIC
3097
PHONE: 03 9712 0989
FAX: 03 9712 0989
EMAIL: mediaville@netspace.net.au
WEBSITE:
www.australianmusic.asn.au

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES:
03 03 9712 0989

EDITOR: GREG PHILLIPS

LAYOUT & DESIGN:
Mediaville

PHOTOGRAPHERS:
MARTY WILLIAMS

CONTRIBUTORS THIS EDITION:
BAZ BARDOE
GRANT COLLINS
CHRISTIE ELIEZER
PETER FARNAN
BARNABY GOLD
CRAIG McDONALD
JAMES MANSON
JOE MATERA
SCOTT MULLANE

IAN NOYCE
JAMES OTOOLE
PHIL PARA
ANDRIAN PERTOUT
SIMON PATTERSON
GREG PHILLIPS
GORDON RYDER
GEORGE URBASZEK
ALLAN ZAVOD

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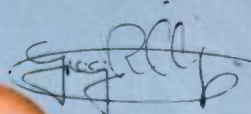
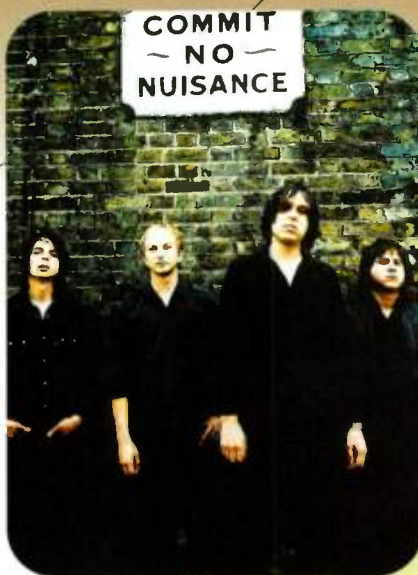
FROM THE EDITOR >>

As a thirteen year old in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, depending on the degree of imagination on any given day, the bungalow that I slept in became either a radio station, concert hall or recording studio.

The recording studio consisted of me placing a Tandy microphone inside the sound hole of my Chinese made acoustic guitar, pressing the record button on my bright orange mono cassette recorder and strumming a few chords. I would then record a bass line with the newly recorded rhythm part playing in the background (on my Chinese made stereo). Next I'd record drums, (the vinyl cushion of my stool made a dazzling drum sound) playing along to the rhythm and bass tape. On and on it went (bit like a Godley and Crème production) until I'd arrived at something resembling a recording of a five piece band. If you're looking for a description of the output, the word mud springs rapidly to mind. That happened to be both the beginning and the end of my recording career. I just wonder however, what might of transpired had I been in the possession of a Tascam 2488 twenty four track recorder or Roland's new VS2000, which records direct to CD? Or what if I had the luxury of cutting and pasting sound files on a computer loaded with Pro Tools and Logic, or even Apple's Garage Band?

Unfortunately I didn't have any of the current crop of whizz bang recorders available to me back then, but thankfully today there are numerous wonderful options at hand (at varying price points) for the home recordist. In this edition we take a close look at some of that gear, talk to several artists who are 'doing it' at home, and also speak to some of the top producers and engineers from both Australia and overseas to get their opinions on what factors go into making a home recording a great one! Funny, not one of them mentions sticking a Tandy inside the sound hole of a cheap acoustic guitar ... what do they know! Happy home recording!

Don't forget you can help shape our huge 10th anniversary edition (out early December) by voting for your favourite musicians in our reader survey (see page 43). You can win a great Ashton guitar and amp package in the process.

ROCKET SCIENCE

Against all odds, local band Rocket Science have found themselves back on tour in support of the release of a new album. Six months ago main singer/songwriter Roman Tucker found himself in a coma in an intensive care ward due to a fall prior to a gig. Not to be outdone guitarist Paul Maybury decided to break his leg in two places. Remarkably the band recovered so rapidly that they were able to meet their commitment to take the stage at Splendour in The Grass at the end of July, then follow up with another impressive performance at Japan's Mount Fuji Festival. Last month the band released their stunning new album "Eternal Holiday" and will tour Australia playing tracks live commencing this October.



NEW 'AMID' AMONG US

The latest edition of the "Most Stolen Book in the Music Biz", also known as the bi-annual **Australasian Music Industry Directory** is ready for thieving! Or you could buy one. Yes, edition 33 of the 228 page book that lists all the people that matter in our humble music industry is available now in print or on-line. From artists and management to publicists, venues and publishers, there are over 70 categories of music business contacts to be found in this invaluable tome. For information visit www.immedia.com.au/.

ESP/METALLICA WINNER



The lucky winner of the ESP guitar (autographed by all four members of Metallica) which was promoted in the Autumn edition of Australian Musician is: **Ken Barber from Victoria** (pictured).

NEW NICK & BAD SEEDS

Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds are set to release their 13th album this month, a double disc titled *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre Of Orpheus*. Recorded in Paris and produced by Nick Launay, the 17 track epic will feature the same band members that toured Australia last December. The first single from the album is "Nature Boy" a dynamic upbeat track which features the London Community Gospel Choir. In fact many of the songs are uncharacteristically joyous, enriched by grand backing vocal arrangements. "There She Goes, My Beautiful World" and "Carry Me" are two prime examples. UK audiences will be the first to feast on Cave's new material when the band plays dates through November.



Pic by Marty Williams

FENDER STRAT'S 50TH CELEBRATIONS CONTINUE!

In May 1954, the first batch of commercially available Fender Stratocasters were shipped out for sale. Ever since, the Fender 'Strat' has become part of rock n' roll folklore with many of the world's greatest guitarists like Jeff Beck, David Gilmour, and Stevie Ray Vaughan making it their instrument of choice. Now 50 years on the music world is celebrating. A huge charity concert will be staged at **London's Wembley Arena** on **September 24** in recognition of the event. Sharing the stage together will be rock legends like **David Gilmour, Gary Moore, Hank B Marvin, The Crickets** (Buddy Holly's band), **Paul Rodgers** (Free, Bad Company), **Johnny Marr, Joe Walsh** and **Paul Carrack** (UK Squeeze). As with many Fender events, proceeds will aid charity, in this case Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy.

Earlier in the year, Fender released two special anniversary model guitars, including the **50th Anniversary American Deluxe Series Stratocaster**. This model is available in 2 tone sunburst and features three all-new single-coil Fender Samarium Cobalt Noiseless pickups and S-1 Switching. It also includes deluxe 2 point synchronised tremolo bridge with pop-in arm, parchment pickguard with commemorative logo and aged plastic parts, abalone dot inlays, deluxe staggered tuning machines, special engraved neck plate and comes in a tweed case with anniversary logo.

The guitar will only be made until December 31st, and is available for \$3,599.

Also produced by Fender to mark the occasion is an **American Series limited edition Strat**. This guitar features solid ash body with polyurethane 2 tone sunburst finish, maple neck and parchment pickguard evoking the classic look of the original 1954 Stratocaster guitars. It also includes the same 1954 replica pickups used on the Custom Shop 1954 model.

The American Series Strat will also cease production on December 31st this year and retails at \$2,999.

For those who may not be in a position to acquire one of these fine instruments, you can still purchase one of many 50th anniversary items released by Fender this year. Visit www.fender.com.au to check out a range of commemorative items such as T-Shirts, Lighter, lunchbox, glass set, mug, cap, key chain or a set of license plates.

Also as promoted in our last edition, there's the magnificent limited edition book, "The Stratocaster Chronicles" which features exclusive shots, a CD with music examples from Fender greats, interviews and heaps more Stratocaster information you won't find anywhere else.



LOOSE GRAVEL

WRIT HITS THE FAN

"When The Writ Hits The Fan," a 308 page book by veteran music industry lawyer **Phil Dwyer** documents some of the most famous legal cases in Australia's music history. The book is packed with anecdotes about shady music identities and shonky deal making. In addition to the often hilarious stories, the book also includes valuable information on music contracts and explanations of music business terms. The book is available for \$50 from www.immedia.com.au/writ where you can also enquire about a digitally downloaded version.

CLAYPOOL'S BUCKET OF BERNIE BRAINS!

The ever adventurous bass freak and Primus frontman, **Les Claypool** is at it again. A new album titled "**Colonel Claypool's Bucket of Bernie Brains**" has just been released.

To explain the origins, we need to go back to the Bonnaroo Music Festival in Tennessee in 2002. At the festival, experimental band **Praxis** were due to perform, when mastermind **Bill Laswell** suddenly became unavailable. Claypool, who was also due to play the festival with Primus recalls that the other Praxis members (**Bernie Worrell, Buckethead, and Brain**) were bummed that they couldn't play. In classic Claypool style, Les took the place of Laswell, and in spite of having no songs, no set list and no sound check, the ensuing gig went incredibly well. Consensus was that the newly formed band just had to do an album, which they did. The experimental funk rock odyssey "**The Big Eyeball in the Sky**" will be released locally through Shock Records on September 21st.

Featured in Australian Musician in 2002 when he was here on tour playing rhythm guitar for Roger Waters, **Andy Fairweather Lowe** has just had a retrospective CD of his solo material released by Raven Records. Called **Wide Eyed and Legless 1974-1997**, the album features 20 tracks from this guitar legend who has backed everyone from Eric Clapton to Van Morrison.



DALLAS CRANE HIT THE ROAD

Melbourne four piece rockers **Dallas Crane** earned their tag as one of the finest live acts in the country when they recently played to packed houses on their national "**The Filth & The Grime**" tour.

The band has just released a self titled album on the Albert label (home to AC/DC). It's actually the band's 3rd album, but first with major label backing. Dallas Crane now joins **Living End** on their tour which will take them through to October. However there's no rest for the band as they then pick up support for **Jet**. For information on when Dallas Crane comes to a venue near you, check out www.dallascrane.com/.



EC WAS HERE!

No **Eric Clapton** has not released his own range of exfoliating hand creams for guitarists' delicate fingers. He has in fact just been inducted into **Hollywood's RockWalk**. RockWalk was established in 1985 to honour musicians who had made significant contributions to the history of music. Other inductees have included **Elvis, Robert Johnson, BB King, and Jimmy Page** among many others. www.rockwalk.com

LIMITED EDITION STRAT BOOK WINNERS

Winners of last edition's "Stratocaster Chronicles" limited edition book competition are:

Glen Westwood, Murwillumbah NSW (Fave Strat Player- Jeff Beck)

D Begg Surry Hills, NSW (Fave Strat player-Stevie Ray Vaughan)

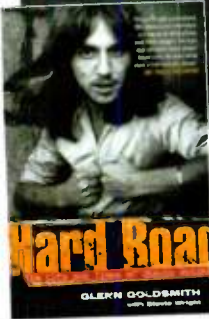
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Binding: Quadruple inner, White Outer
Nut: 42mm
Scale: 25.5 inch
Total Length: 997mm
Width: 355mm
Depth: (from tailpiece to base): approx. 90mm
Pickups: Bridge: Maton JHB
Neck: Maton JHN
Controls: Two volume controls, one tone control
3 way toggle selector switch, two coil tap switches
Hardware: Tonepros nickel stop tailpiece and bridge
Chrome Grover machine heads

Disc



THE WRIGHT STUFF

On a cold winter's night in early August at Melbourne's Moser Room, a packed house consisting of media, friends and fans of ex Easybeats front man **Stevie Wright** were on hand to help launch the local legend's biography, **Hard Road** (Random House). A band featuring You Am I's **Dave Lane**, Grinspoon's **Phil Jamieson** and biographer **Glenn Goldsmith** among others, relished the opportunity to back Wright on several Easybeats' classics like "Wedding Ring", "She's So Fine", plus "Evie" and "Hard Road" from his solo albums. *Hard Road* documents the dramatic international success The Easybeats enjoyed, through to Wright's amazing solo career and his on-going battle with drugs. Despite Wright's less than squeaky-clean history, all present on the night agreed that the 'voice' was still well and truly intact.

(Pic by Marty Williams)



RUSH 'FEEDBACK' TO THE 60S

Canadian power trio Rush has just released a brand new album **Feedback**, full of classic 60's covers such as "Crossroads", "Shapes Of Things" and "Summertime Blues". To celebrate 30 years of Rush, Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and Neil Peart dusted down their lava lamps and recorded eight of the songs that originally inspired them to pick up instruments as teenagers. It's been a busy year for Rush who disappeared from the scene for several years due to personal tragedies effecting drummer Neil Peart. The album follows the release of their live DVD **Rush In Rio**. Peart has also collaborated with Sabian with the release of **Paragon**—a new range of signature cymbals. The Paragon range was created using automatic AA-style hammering and an innovative mix of sound-defining features from three SABIAN series, AA, AAX, and Hand Hammered. For more information on the cymbals visit www.dynamicmusic.com.au

ANNE McCUE

Roll (Cooking Vinyl/Shock Records)

The roots infested "Roll" from Sydney born, LA based singer/songwriter and mighty fine guitar picker, Anne McCue shouts genuine new talent. Tales from a deep and sometimes dark side of life are delivered with a passionate vocal performance oozing over her laconic electric slide and swaggering, jangling guitar chords. The former Girl Monstar guitarist's organic brand of rock shares a kindred spirit with the likes of Lucinda Williams and Syd Straw, but stands on its own as an example of an individual's quality work, devoid of the pretension that permeates much of 2004's chart dross.

MAEDER

Business In Me (Warner)

There's no doubting Maeder's conviction to power and volume, however I'm not as sure that there's enough vocal variation within their derivative theme. The impressive full on pub rock assault of the Melbourne band's four track EP is relentless, yet it remains to be seen whether they have the creative smarts to sustain an entire album. I hope so, because if successful, the combination could prove to be explosive.

JEBEDIAH

Braxton Hicks (Redline Records)

A good Jebediah album rather than a great one, but even so enough fine, down-and-dirty pop to please the harshest of alt rock fanciers. Self produced since leaving the giant Sony Corporation, when loyal fans (and there are many) look back misty-eyed at their back catalogue decades from now, it's fair bet a couple of tracks from Braxton Hicks will trigger much emotion.

LITTLE BIRDY

Big, Big Love (EMI)

With debut album **Big, Big Love**, Perth band Little Birdy show that they're all grown up. Twenty year old lead singer Katy Steele's mesmerising vocal performance transmits an air of innocence, yet at same time an aggressive and assertive command of the microphone. Then there are the songs, which feature a wonderful sense of melody presented in a variety of contrasting pop/rock packages. The level of musicianship and creative nous applied to the album should ensure that when released on October 4, this could become one of the albums of the year.

JOE SATRIANI

Is There Love in Space? (Epic)

Joe Satriani makes me sick! It's not that I don't enjoy his music. But as a hack guitarist myself, I just can't fathom someone whose fretboard fingers do absolutely whatever he wants them to. The new album from 'Satch' displays a ridiculous command of the guitar. Not that his other discs haven't too, it just seems that on the various styles offered here, the licks just flow like lava. The sounds Joe conjures range from funky and heavy to sweet and other-worldly, he's so comfortable he even throws in a vocal or two.

NATURAL **REBORN** KILLERS



KILLING HEIDI'S BASSIST WARREN JENKIN DISCUSSES THE BAND'S NEW ALBUM WITH AUSTRALIAN MUSICIAN'S GREG PHILLIPS

Killing Heidi's rock solid bassist Warren Jenkin has just pulled into his St Kilda driveway as our interview commences. Two months have lapsed since the completion of their third album, one they've decided to self-title due to their belief that it's the first true representation of the band's music. Jenkin is relishing any time that can be spent at home. An album release is fast approaching (officially out August 23) and a huge national tour will take them away until the end of November. Then it's back to the US to talk release details and all going well, the consequent promotion and touring in support of it.

It's an important release in the context of the band's not so long but brilliant career so far. The first album debuted at number one and sold over 300,000 copies. The follow up 'Present' only found its way into 50,000 homes. Now I know many bands would be over the moon at selling 50,000 copies of an album, but the investors in Killing Heidi's third album are banking on a return to the tremendous chart activity of 'Reflector'. The unexpected inclusion of their first single "I Am" on the international soundtrack to the Spiderman 2 movie has certainly got things off to a flying start.

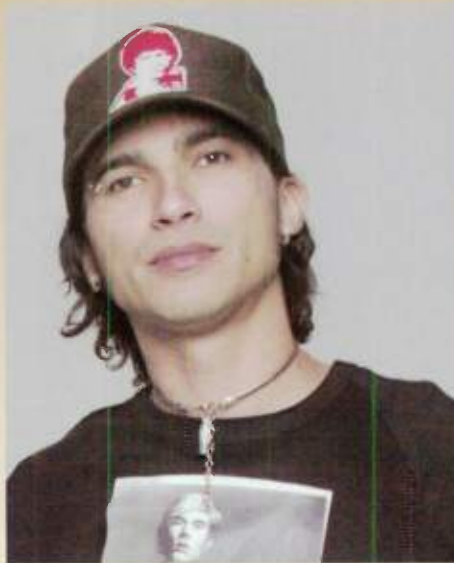
However, the new album is a different kettle of fish to the first two. Like many new young bands thrust into the limelight, external forces played a large part in the group's decision making process back then. With the new "Killing Heidi" disc, the band claim they have taken control of the reins.

"We wanted to try different things this time and different ways of recording" said Jenkin. "I wouldn't say we weren't allowed to do those things before, but it was kind of frowned upon. We felt we really wanted to do things our way and the producer we found loved everything we brought to the table, and he was happy to accommodate us."

The producer Warren refers to is John Travis, who has worked previously with Kid Rock, Buckcherry and Sugar Ray. Travis and his electronic boffins transformed a guest house in LA into a state of the art studio. The guest house was part of a three storey mansion in a secure compound which formerly belonged to a convicted drug lord. More importantly for Jenkin though, was the fact that Travis was an old bassist himself and had some cool ideas for recording Jenkin's bass parts.

"I had about 15 different basses to choose from" recalled Warren. "But I ended up getting an artist endorsement deal with a company in Chicago called Lakland. They sent over a couple basses for me that just destroyed every other bass I've played. They just sounded so much better. They are actually just the Korean made Skyline models (with cutaway on the high register side of the neck that allows easy access to all 22 frets up the neck) that they assemble in Korea and send back to Chicago to complete. I tried all these full-on American models but liked the sound of this one better ... more aggressive. The pick ups are Bartolini MK-1's (split-coil soapbars coupled with the MK-1 preamp). It's more bitey than the other basses, they make the mid range more aggressive. John was over the top about them, he had recorded them before. Pretty much we ran through a 1968 Ampeg SVT amp, all valve, and we used a couple of other little gadgets but most of it was through the Ampeg."

The first sonic impression listeners will form with this album is that it rocks, however subsequent dissection will reveal a band working hard at creating interesting grooves and thoughtful musical notions. For example the bass line that hangs behind the verse of the song "Your



Hands" is a dark, moody feel Jenkin found under the influence of listening to a lot of Tool's music. "That came about as an amalgamation of two songs that we put together. I do a lot of playing by myself where I'll hold a momentum or feel and that came out of that sort of thing," explains Warren.

On the breezier "Summer Long" the approach was different again.

"That's the only bass that is different to the others on the record. It's my 69' Jazz Bass. We wrote it in the lounge room and it's more of a demo song. When I started playing it, I was playing more like The Strokes. It has that drone bass line through it and it also reminds me a bit of New Order. I played it on the front pick up and right up the neck. For recording it, I used the POD Pro as a double line. I would have an Ampeg line going to the desk, a DI line going to desk and Pod line to the desk. These were all timer lines that match up together. My sounds on this album were a

result of the different combinations of each of those. Some are straight Ampeg, some are thru the POD."

Warren was not only happy with the sound of this album but also the fact that there were no conditions governing who or where the songs came from. With previous recordings, contractual obligations dictated that songwriting credits needed to be perceived in a certain way. No such smoke screen was required for album number three. Jenkin explains. "There's a funny way we represented our music on our last record because of all the deals that went down. Adam and I had a lot to do with a lot of the songs and we just listed them as Elle, and we had a different deal going on with that privately. It had a lot to do with the publishing deal they were tied into. On this record we have been able to list a lot more of what we have done with our own names."

Jenkin believes he's become more of a "meat and potatoes" kind of player since joining this band. His background prior to Killing Heidi was hard core funk and soul, so he's had to pull his head in with respect to his playing style. However while his musical tastes might have differed from Ella and Jesse, Warren believes his childhood exposure to music was not at all different to that of the Hoopers. Jenkin spent much of his childhood on Thursday Island where it was not unusual for people to be walking around playing ukelele or an old acoustic guitar. "People were always singing. It was funny when I met Jesse and Ella's mum because even though she looks nothing like my mum, she's a lot like her in spirit," said Jenkin. "When I went to Violet Town for the first time, their mum told me how people would come around and play music on their front porch, and that's a lot how I grew up."

Catch Killing Heidi live at a venue near you. For dates and news go to www.killingheidi.com.au/.

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MARKBASS ARRIVES IN OZ

CMC Music announces the imminent release of **MARKBASS** an incredibly successful line of bass amplifiers and cabinets in Europe. Already, after only 3 years in the market, Markbass holds a fantastic 60% of the Italian bass amp market, with huge gains also in other major European markets such as UK, Germany and France. The US market is now top priority, with high profile bass player, **Matt Bissonette**, as a major endorsee. Matt is well known as the bass player in **G3** (Steve Vai, Joe Satriani, Robert Fripp), plus many other projects including **Ringo Starr**, **David Lee Roth**, **Don Henley**, **Boz Scaggs**, plus his own band **The Mustard Seeds**.

Some of the unique features in Markbass equipment: Natural sound, allowing your sound to be heard; Highest quality components used, plus superb build quality; Very fast power amp design, with massive headroom. One particular product of note is the **Traveller 104 cabinet** – a 4 x 10" cabinet, 800 watts and weighing just 25kg! It also features B&C 10" speakers.

For information phone (02) 9905 2511 or email cmcmusic@cmcmusic.com.au.



DOUBLE MUFF

The original plug-in Muff Fuzz from 1969 had a touch of overdrive and sounded like a vintage amp with a slightly worn speaker. The people at Electro-Harmonix paired two of these classics together in one box to create a brand new innovation—the Double Muff. Guitarists have the option of using just one Muff for a hint of milky distortion, or cascading the second Muff for over-the-top overdrive that turns their milk into rich, savoury cream.

For more information contact **Lamberti Bros.** info@lamberti.com.au or phone 03 9376 8111.

"DREAM MACHINE" FOR LIVE VOCALISTS

TC-Helicon has released **VoiceLive**, the latest addition to their range of leading-edge vocal processors. Rack-mount TC-Helicon models such as the VoiceWorks & VoiceOne are already industry standards as vocal-specific processing & correction tools for critical recording applications. VoiceLive delivers the same level of performance & flexibility in a floor-pedal package for on-stage vocalists. Fast & simple to use, it can massively expand a vocal performance with stunningly real 4-part harmonies, pitch correction and lead voice thickening plus true TC reverb & dynamics technology.

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STEVE

It's just gone 6.00pm and Steve Vai meets me in the lobby of an inner city motel prior to heading out for his sound check at Melbourne's Palace. Vai only arrived in Melbourne a few short hours earlier and though he's on a hectic schedule, and with only a few moments of sleep grabbed in between, he still oozes with enthusiasm and energy.

Vai spends a tremendous amount of time on the road. He's just finished two months solid touring the world as part of the G3 bill. This Australian visit sees Vai, and his backing band that includes Billy Sheehan on bass and Tony MacAlpine on guitar and keyboards respectively, playing theatres and club shows around the country to many guitar enthusiasts, fans and musicians alike. Vai is definitely a musician's musician. First up I ask him, with so much touring does he ever find that time on the road is limited in regards to practicing and keeping his chops up?

"I don't practice when on tour but I do warm up before each show for an hour or two" he explains. "There's a whole different set of rules when you're on stage, like in regards to the way you put the energy behind your fingers and everything. And though the fingers do get stronger, I still have to be careful because the calluses hurt if I play too much. And sometimes they do hurt too much. Because we've just started the tour, I'm not in my element just yet, because it takes a while. Like it would take another few weeks on tour before I'm actually at my peak."

areas. I write the music, produce it - which in itself is a daunting task - engineer it and mix it myself. And sometimes I even master it. In all of that, and if you listen to my records, there is some dense stuff occasionally, there is a lot of time spent on other things besides playing the guitar. If I only focused on playing the guitar in my whole career, I would be much better than I am. I do enjoy all the other elements of being a musician besides just playing the guitar. So to really balance that, I pick up an acoustic guitar and just sing. I just play some Tom Waits songs or some acoustic songs that I've learned or even some Joe Jackson songs."

To this day, Vai continues to harbour enormous respect for his former employer Frank Zappa. After all, Zappa was the guy who introduced the then nineteen year old Vai (Zappa often called Vai "his little Italian virtuoso") to the guitar playing community at large, helping to mould him into the legendary guitarist and artist he has become.

"Frank made his music in the face of all sorts of adversity" remembers Vai fondly. "And when you're an artist like Frank there are always obstacles. I guess when you're any artist really there are obstacles."



And what about those well documented 10-hour workouts he's been known to do?

"I do put aside the time to focus on improving or playing" he begins. "But you know as the years go by, you develop different techniques to explore your own potential more and more, so that's what I utilise. I don't do the same thing as I used to, like I don't do exercises and scales anymore. That was more in the early days. If I want to master a particular riff or approach or a weird technique now, then I make an exercise out of it and I do it. And that's really an important thing to think about especially if you're a young musician. Besides just learning a new riff, you can break it down into pieces and make little exercises out of it. And so when you go play it, it will come out naturally."

Vai hits the stage for his sound check. First up he grabs a triple neck Ibanez and runs through some scalar runs whilst checking the sounds emitting from the venues PA system. Happy with what he hears, he downs the triple neck and grabs several Ibanez JEMs standing in a rack beside the stage. He begins to play several musical examples before leading the band through a rendition of Juice. An hour later, the sound check is over and we're now sitting in the comfy but small confines of his dressing room at The Palace. I begin to ask him how he manages to keep a balanced perspective on his music after all these years?

"My balance is to just sit and play, that's what I like to do the most" he affirms. "My energy as far as being a musician, is dispersed in a lot of

But when you're trying to carve new ground and investigate different things that are outside of the circle, you really have to have courage. I saw Frank do exactly what he wanted and that had a big influence on me. He didn't compromise at all with his music and that had a profound effect on me."

With a his own label Favoured Nations, Vai has also seen the need to become business savvy. I asked Vai if he found a conflict in trying to be an artist whilst at the same time making business decisions that at times can infringe on those artistic liberties.

"There are compensations you have to make" he admits. "Like there are budgets you have to work within... I'd love to put together a performance light show with the works, but I just can't afford to do it. Like I'm not playing in an arena, I'm just playing in a club or theatre, so I'm not that kind of artist. So yes there is a compensation made there. But you just have to work within the parameters you have and do your best".

With my time finally up, Vai and I exchange goodbyes with Vai adding "enjoy the show tonight". And that night Vai delivered an awesome sounding show that lasted over two hours. And he showed that the passion and warfare that is Steve Vai, is still very much evident.

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WAI

STORY: JOE MATERA
PIX: MARTY WILLIAMS

World Radio History

AT SOUND CHECK

Australian Musician Spring 2004

11

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George Washburn Lyon

TOUR DIARY: EPICURE

Ballarat based rockers Epicure have been incredibly busy since the release of their critically acclaimed debut album *The Goodbye Girl* in early 2004. The band has played to packed venues nationwide, with crowds keen to hear faves like "Armies Against Me" and "Life Sentence", songs which had entered our consciousness due to heavy rotation on the national radio network Triple J. Keen to find out what life's like for a band on the way up, Australian Musician asked guitarist Dan Houlihan to document a couple of weeks in the life of Epicure on tour.

The following are some dates from our National "Firing Squad" tour when we were on the road to promote the latest single "Firing Squad". In between dates we had to come back to Ballarat to work!

SYDNEY - 5TH JUNE

The long, long, long, long, long drive to Sydney. Oh how we enjoy it! Twelve hours in the van, yippee!! It's not that bad really, lots of laughs, not much sleep, lots of toilet stops, not much sleep. We are all looking forward to the gig at the Annandale.

Finally we arrive in beautiful Sydney. This time we've got a hotel with a heater, very nice! All sound-checked, fed, showered, and shaved. Time to play! Fantastic crowd. Sold out show. We have a great time playing to the Annandale audience. Shit, have to drive back to Ballarat tomorrow for a few days work.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA 10TH, 11TH, 12TH 13TH JUNE.

Rise out of the gloom of Melbourne bound for the west where we hope it will be a little bit warmer. Arrive in Perth to find that the Victorian weather has followed our plane.

Into the trusty Tarago head down to Dunsborough, which was a little farther than anticipated. It did take a long time but that may have been due to the fact that were travelling at the breakneck speed of about 50km/hour because of the rain absolutely pissing down.

Arrive in Dunsborough, eat and then watch *Fourth Floor Collapse* knock out a great set. They continue that form for the whole leg of the tour, great to play with those guys again.

Drive back to Perth the next day for a show in Sorrento.

Saturday go into the fair city of Perth for a spot of shopping. Everyone goes their own way. Lots of money spent on records. Tim and Dan spend the afternoon following visiting second hand shops where Tim enjoys the various pieces of deco furniture and oddities.

Off to the gig at the Amplifier Bar, we have a great time and the crowd enjoys themselves. We continue to enjoy ourselves after the show. Dan may have enjoyed himself a little too much. He pays for it the next day on the drive down to Fremantle. Maybe the Fremantle doctor can fix him up?

Play to a fantastic Freo crowd and then have to high-tail it to the airport to hop the redeye back to sunny Melbourne.

Continued over page



TOUR DIARY: EPICURE



Juan Alban. On the road again. How does he read in the car?

BRISBANE - 17TH JUNE

Ahh sunny, warm Brisbane, damn we seem to have towed that shitty weather with us again. Check into motel, have a bit a rest then off to the shops in search of more records, what a great way to pass the time. Head back to the motel for a bit of a siesta.

Playing at the Zoo tonight and looking forward to it. Crowd behaves like a pack of animals. The night was a great success and the Zoo keeper very happy. Party on with a few Brisvegans, hit the hay pretty late.

Early morning flight back to Melbourne Dom, Tim and Dan a little worse for wear.



Left-Dom warms up before the Adelaide show. Right-Heath performing in Melbourne

MELBOURNE - 25TH JUNE

The very familiar drive down the highway from Ballarat to Melbourne. Tonight we play in our adopted home at the Corner Hotel in Richmond. Everyone's excited about playing the Corner, if not a little nervous. Spend time watching *Love Outside Andromeda* make their way through a shit hot set. Crowd has definitely exceeded our expectations, what a buzz to play to a sold out Corner Hotel. Our new keyboardist Heath McCurdy sure picked a good gig to start with.

What a great night!

TASMANIA JULY - 2ND & 3RD

Tim and Dom depart for Tassie on the boat with the van and all the gear.

They eat a lot and don't get much sleep poor bastards. Juan, Heath and I fly over the next day and meet up with them. Hobart is such a lovely place even if it is a little cold but we are from Ballarat so we are used to it. Looking forward to having a bite to eat at the Republic Bar, they always have great food there. After everyone has their fill, it's onto the stage to play to a very, very excited crowd, it's always a good night at the Republic.



Dan signing for fans in Adelaide

stays on for a spot of sightseeing and to bring the gear back on the ferry. Dom decides to take the back roads to Launceston, and ends up stuck in a blizzard for hours. Luckily he makes it to the ferry with minutes to spare!



Tim at sound check in WA

Saturday we head off to the Salamanca Markets for some bargain hunting and gourmet snags in bread. We spend some time on the waterfront doing some new band photos. Back at the motel we spend the rest of the afternoon in front of the T.V. We were pleased to discover the video channel at the Motel, but not so happy to find that it's playing *Toy Story 2* and *8 Mile* on repeat. We end up seeing sections of both the movies about four times over the weekend. It's off to the Republic for a repeat performance of the previous night. Good food, great people. A sold out venue and we have lots of fun performing to the Hobart fans. One fan even asks Juan for the T-shirt that he's wearing! Tim, Dan, Juan and Heath fly back to Melbourne the following day, while Dom

ADELAIDE - JULY 9TH

Saturday morning. We are on the way to Adelaide for a gig at the Governor Hindmarsh Hotel. Left the van at home this time in favour a more comfortable ride, a Holden commodore wagon. We must be moving up in the world! It's a pleasant drive and we are very much looking forward to playing to the Adelaide fans as they are always great. After a quick sound check and a few games of 'hackey sack' we head back to the motel for some rest and a bite to eat before the show. We spend some time watching the Aussie Rules game on T.V, then off to the Gov. There to watch *Love Outside Andromeda* rip it up again.

Unbelievable! Another awesome crowd and sold out show. We play a great set and hang around afterwards to meet some of the friendly Adelaide Epicure fans. A very fun and long night. We attempt to continue the party at the motel but fail miserably when half of us end up falling asleep. Not looking forward to the long drive home!



Dan waiting it out in Hobart

Elin Jnr
song writer and performer



Mark Williams



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ALLY - THE SPAZZYS



KARL - THIRSTY MERC



MICHAEL - ONE DOLLAR SHORT

Michael Smith is the drumming firestorm for **One Dollar Short**. The band has released two Eps, *From the Start and Press and Hold* and a highly successful full-length album, *Eight Days Away*, which was released in 2002. The band's new CD, *Receiving Transmission* (which includes a bonus 11-track b-sides disc), is packed with energy-charged, melodic, punk-driven rock. Michael's all-out drumming doesn't let up. While playing with great power and speed, he also provides a supportive canvas for the songs of ODS.

Karl Robertson from **Thirsty Merc** has known three quarters of his band since he was knee-high to a grasshopper. Originally from Dubbo, NSW, Karl went to primary school with bass player, Phil Stack, and guitarist, Matt Baker, more recently meeting guitarist/singer, Rai Thistlethwayte. Though the band is only two years old, they have performed abundantly and eventually attracted the attention of Warner Music Australia. Their catchy, clever, and sometimes cheeky songs give them an original stamp and a very Australian attitude. With two identifiable chart singles, *Wasting Time* and *Emancipate Myself*, they now release their self-titled debut album. Through the different grooves and colours of the songs, Karl plays with authority and a strong commitment to the song.

A band conceived at a tram stop by three teenage girls in the rainy city of Melbourne, **The Spazzys** have attracted great attention for their punk attitude and energetic shows. They never do anything by halves. Their debut gig was supporting the veteran punk-rock girl band, Japan's 5, 6, 7, 8s. More recently, appearing in the video of their latest single, *Hey Hey Baby*, is Marky Ramone of the famed Ramones. Wholeheartedly encouraging the band, Ramone has said to those who doubt their sound, "I like it. I endorse it. F@#! you." The Spazzys have been likened to The Ramones' little sisters with Attention Deficit Disorder. Ally chose the drums because her brother had shown her a few beats on his kit. An undeniable 'drummer for the song', Ally also

THREE VITAL YOUNG DRUM GUNS SPAWNED FROM THE POP INDUSTRY MELTING POT.

Article by Barnaby Gold

Three of Australia's hottest young bands have just released new albums. While **One Dollar Short** has released their second full-length album, **Thirsty Merc** and punk rockers, **The Spazzys** deliver their first offerings in a competitive and constantly changing popular music scene. Barnaby Gold interviewed the drummers from all three bands, asking them about the role they play in their energetic music, the touring lifestyle, and their taste in drums.

penned several of the band's first tracks, *Paco Doesn't Love Me* and *Marky Ramone*. These and other punk rockin' tracks are on their debut album, *Aloha! Go Bananas*, due for release in September.

So, what gear do they play on their records and for live shows? Michael uses primarily DW drums, as he explained: "On the album I used my own kit, which is a DW: 22x18, 12x9, 16x14. We were having some troubles getting the tom sounds we were after so I also used some shallower DW toms that I borrowed from Damien at Billy Hydies. I had a lot of different snare drum options available for this recording. I had a Brady, some nice DW's and a Ludwig Black Beauty. I ended up using the Ludwig on all but three songs on the record.

"On tour I stick to exactly the same set up. In terms of cymbals and hardware I keep it to a minimum on the road. Two crashes and a ride. That's it. I use a DW 14x5 snare drum for live playing.

"All of my cymbals are Zildjian. I run 14" A Custom Projection Hi-Hats, a 19" Z Custom rock crash, a 20" Z Custom Medium Crash, and a 22" A Custom Medium Ride."

Karl's weapon of choice is a Sonor kit.

"The gear I used for the album was basically the one kit: a Sonor Designer Series (standard sizes) with a steel Gretsch snare. I would vary the tom sizes depending on the track. On a couple of tracks we used a wooden Pearl snare that we borrowed

from the engineer. This is basically the same kit I use on tour, unless we have to hire gear."

Ally spoke to me at great length about her prized 1970s Pearl Maxwindrum-set. While she had saved a pretty penny for her first pro kit, a close friend instead recommended reconditioning the shells of the kit her Dad paid \$200 for at a garage sale. She uses a Pearl 14x6.5 steel snare drum that was given to her by Japanese punk drummer, Shoe San, from Teengenerate. Cymbal-wise Ally uses "wicked, awesome psycho trash UFIP cymbals!!!" Her set-up includes hi-hats, crash, and ride, with an extra crash in the studio.

In terms of musical study, each drummer has a different story to tell.

For Karl, it was playing in a range of musical contexts that helped him cut his drumming teeth.

"I grew up playing drums in the local brass band in Dubbo and also jamming with Phil [Stack, bassist] and Matt [Baker, guitarist] in various rock bands. In terms of study, I had lessons for a while at the start, but then I just taught myself by listening to albums. I think playing in lots of different bands growing up was probably the best learning curve for me."

Ally has always been involved with playing music. While she plays several instruments, including a couple of years learning the piano as a kid, the drums were the easiest for her to pick up. After her brother brought home a drumkit one day and taught Ally and her sister how to play some basic beats, Ally secretly practised on pillows before building the confidence to sit back on the kit to practise for real. From then, she learnt to play drums from listening and playing along to CDs. She credits Marky Ramone and Clem Burke (Blondie) as big influences. Ally calls herself a 'grid drummer', like Marky, a 4/4 solid time player. However, she gets out to see many live acts in Melbourne to get a visual on how other drummers shake it down. She cites Jaws from the Casanovas, Totty from the Powder Monkeys, and Toshi from Mach Pelican as some of her favourite local players. A big fan of melodies, Ally is currently inspired by country music, having seen a documentary featuring the music of Gram Parson.

Michael's father is a jazz drummer.

"He studied at the conservatorium for 6 six years, so I guess that's what started me playing. When I was young I didn't capitalise on having a drum tutor 24/7, which is a shame. I never had any lessons, I am pretty much 100% self-taught. When I was growing up my dad would sit me down and teach me rudiments and stuff, but I wasn't really interested. All I wanted to do was save enough money to buy a double pedal and try to emulate Dave Lombardo from Slayer!"

"My first band was a metal band. All I wanted to do was play the most technical and fast stuff I could. It's funny, I listen back to our old demos now and laugh. The drummers who have influenced my playing are Dave Lombardo, Travis Barker, Stewart Copeland, and Dave Grohl. If I could play half as good as any one of those guys I would be stoked!"

On the song-writing front, the drummer in an original band can serve several purposes. As a timekeeper, they can provide a solid groove so the other members can thrash out and work shop riffs and melodies. As a co-writer, a drummer can have great ears for the song arrangement because they always listen to the melody and phrase their time around it. Then, of course, they may be composers in their own right.

Ally says that she writes most of The Spazzys' tunes. She writes on bass and also writes lyrics. She then gets together with guitarist, Kat, and bassist, Lucy, to jam out the songs, fleshing out the music with riffs, melodies, and chunky chords. Ally says that this band doesn't go into the studio to write tunes. Instead, they rehearse and then polish the material by playing it at lots of gigs, laying it down in the studio after this process.

Michael plays a co-writing role.

"I can't write my own songs. I have never really tried. I will work with whoever has an idea or riff. I really try to make the songs dynamic where they can be.

"It's hard to be positive all the time, but that's something that I try to do. I don't always share a vision that someone else has for a song, which can be frustrating. If I can't get into a song at first, I will just play a beat and hopefully let it work its way into something. I don't think we really have a set formula for writing songs in this band."

In Karl's band, the singer writes with input from the other members: "At this point in the band our singer [Rai Thistlethwayte] basically writes most of the songs, but we all have input and everyone is open to suggestions and ideas from each other. I keep a tape at home with ideas for songs or guitar riffs that I like to jot down, but generally, to be honest, they aren't that strong. It's something I would like to work on though..."

Touring is the roller coaster ride of fun and spills that accompanies the launch of an album. Every musician has a million stories to tell about their experiences playing heaps of gigs, partying, getting very little sleep, and meeting some amazing people along the way. I asked each drummer how they enjoyed the touring lifestyle and whether they could share a few stories.

Michael said, "Touring is great fun. It's also a lot of work and involves very little sleep. I get all of my enjoyment from playing. If the show was crap or if we played crap, I will be bummed out. I hate walking off stage after a show and feeling like we played bad. I really hate it. Trent [Crawford, guitarist] and I put a lot of pressure on ourselves and the other guys to play well, so when it doesn't happen it's shit. Haha. Preparation for the tour is usually minimal. I don't need to do a lot to prepare. I try and sleep as much as I can. That's about it."

Thirsty Merc is new to the Australian tour circuit. Karl said that, "The relatively small amount of touring we have done so far has been great. Of course, there's times when we all need our own space, but we all get along pretty well. We've played with heaps of really cool Aussie bands too."

Ally lapsed into a fit of ecstasy as she talked about touring. "It's every Rock 'n Roll kid's dream come true... It's the way we want to live our lives!" she said. But, with a cautionary tone, added, "Touring isn't for everybody, though. Being on the road, constantly meeting people, drinking, and partying is heaps of fun. But, it's definitely a challenge, and the bottom line is that the Spazzys are about making music and expressing ourselves creatively. The touring [lifestyle] is really a bonus. It's the music that counts."

As for stories, it wasn't such an easy task to draw them out of this crew. Perhaps, 'what happens on tour stays on tour'. Well, with a little prodding, Ally had a Rock 'n Roll tale to tell.

"We were at the Gaelic Club [in Sydney] and we were hanging out with Marky Ramone after doing the video that he was in with us [*Hey Hey Baby*]. He was telling us these awesome stories... The [film] projector in the room broke down and while we were waiting for another one, Marky turned to me and said, 'How about we throw this projector out the window?' I just said, 'YEEAAHH!!' and he chucked it out the third floor window!"

Destruction seems to go hand in hand with some of the most infamous bands and touring stories. Michael had another classic.

"There are so many amusing stories to tell. The best one I have ever [experienced] would have to be when we were staying at the Medina in Melbourne. Trent and I were sharing a room. We came home kinda late, and we'd possibly had one or two beers after the show. Anyway, I'm sitting on the couch and Trent was taking a pee in the toilet with the door open. So I hear this really loud smashing sound, and Trent looks around the corner with a seriously guilty look on his face... He had slammed the lid of the toilet down so hard that it had completely shattered the entire dunny bowl! I was laughing so hard and when I asked him what he did, he said 'Nothing man, it was like that when I went in.' You had to be there or at least see the photos. Seriously funny stuff."

Karl, on the other hand was a much harder nut to crack. "There's a few funny stories... I'll just leave it at that..." he said.

What's next for these guys?

The new Ore Dollar Short album, *Receiving Transmission* is out now on Festival-Mushroom records. Michael looks forward to more touring "then another album, for sure."

Thirsty Merc will have released their debut, self-titled album with Warner Music by the time of printing. Look out for their tour dates through September.

The Spazzys' *Aloha! Go Bananas* is due for release on September 13th on Shock Records. Check it all out, especially the beats!

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HOME RECORDING

TIPS, TRICKS, & TRADE SECRETS

Welcome to Australian Musician's Home Recording feature. Since we last explored the theme of home recording in great depth, the goal posts have shifted dramatically. The quality of product you can now produce in the comfort of your own home studio was a merely a pipedream a decade ago. The gear available is far superior, much more affordable and in most cases, easier to use. However with the fantastic advances in technology, comes a wider range of choice ... what gear is required for the type of recording you want to do? In which manner will you achieve the results you are aiming for? Will you record digitally, analogue, or mixture of both? The answers to questions like these basically come down to personal choice, but before decisions can be made, a certain amount of knowledge needs to be gained. We felt that the best way to approach this subject was to ask the experts what they think helps to create a great recording. We tracked down some of the finest producers and engineers both locally and internationally to offer their own tips, tricks and trade secrets. We also interviewed several artists who are enjoying the creative freedom of 'doing it at home'. Plus there's news on latest recording product and a whole bunch of recording devices road tested by our experts specifically for the feature. We hope you gain something useful from the following pages, and we'd be happy to hear back if you do. Enjoy!

THREE LOCAL PRODUCERS OFFER THEIR ADVICE ...

Australian Musician's James Manson (a home studio convert himself) sat down three local producers, Mark Stanley, Kye Thomas and Troy Trigwell to obtain their views on the experience of recording at home. He then called up US producer Roger Sommers (kd lang) for another perspective.

MARK STANLEY RECORDING TIPS



A basic PC recording set-up can cost under a grand. I personally use one gig of RAM and a 2800 processor which allows me to record at a higher sample rate. I record at 96k which I personally feel makes a big difference in quality but also takes up more harddrive space and processor power. I would generally advise on recording at 48k/24 bit as opposed to 44.1 and 16 bit and this is more than achievable on a mid range computer.

There are lots and lots of mixer options with Behringer and Mackie to name a few brands that provide affordable quality. My advice is to use your mixer only for monitoring and keep your signal path as clean as possible. I like to avoid using the pre-amps on my mixer even though they are quite reputable and prefer to use a stand alone pre-amp which I think can really improve the overall sound.

From my point of view, two amazing microphones are better than eleven crap ones. Many's the good drum sound that has been recorded with just two mic's. Microphones are a subjective thing based on budget, places like Factory Sound and Billy Hydes have incredibly competitive prices on microphones and fantastic staff, so it is a matter of outlining your budget and your recording requirements and they will steer you in

continued over page

TROY TRIGWELL RECORDING TIPS

Back up everything, all the time, everyday. Data does not exist unless it is in two places.

Have a good knowledge of file formats for when you need to transfer to a pro studio or mastering studio

Listen to the subtlety of compressors, really attack the signal with high ratio and low threshold so it is really slamming then adjust attack and release. With compression, look at the dynamics of the needle so it looks like it is dancing to the music.

With vocal compression watch fast attack times so they don't enhance sibilance or make it worse.

If you are gating a signal adjust the attack so it is maybe 0.5 milliseconds long but make sure it is not 0. This is because many plug-in gates pop with a short attack. A gate is a processor that you don't necessarily need in the digital domain. it is better and more accurate to edit plus you save CPU power

Another basic tip to save CPU power is to route your plug-in effects such as reverb to a group buss.

TROY TRIGWELL
Currently In House
Engineer/Manager
Woodstock Studios

Credits include
John Butler Trio
and The Pictures.

Troy's home studio
pictured right.



MARK STANLEY CONTINUED

the right direction. The Sure Beta series are great mic's and if you are taking baby steps a 58 and 57 would be the way to go and Rode make brilliant affordable condenser microphones.

Reverb is an effect that can make something sound absolutely amazing or absolutely dated. Generally if you listen to music that sounds really dated nine times out of ten it is because of the particular reverb applied on the track. The music I gravitate to is what you would call "organically recorded" and I kind of tend to use reverbs to a bare minimum. Generally if I am using reverbs on a particular drum sound or vocal, I tend to use them very subtly. I tend to find a reasonably generic reverb and bus it slightly over 6 or 7 tracks rather than using on just one track and this will save you a heap of cpu power.

I use Emagic Logic Audio as my main recording software and I get really good results on vocals using the Tape Delay Plug In and I also find some interesting results using the Sample Delay on Drum room mic's and some guitars. I generally use plug ins because of the nature of my studio and the quality of the hardware I have available. I prefer using plug ins simply to keep the signal as pure as possible as opposed to compromising the path through a crappy pre amp or effect unit. A really interesting tip I got a few years ago from a guy at Steve Albinis studio was that when you are using a program like Logic Audio the track EQ's can tend to be a little brittle and that the plug ins like something out of the Waves pack would be a far better option if you have a little bit extra CPU power. So if you can, avoid activating the channel EQ's and use a reputable EQ plug in for a better result.

"two amazing microphones are better than eleven crap ones"

When recording acoustic instruments, say an acoustic guitar, I run the risk of looking like a bit of a weirdo because I actually get down on my hands and knees and move my head around within a 30 cm radius of the instrument and try and find a sweet point to put the close microphone so I actually listen with my naked ear and try and find a nice spot and use that as my start point. Recently I have been using Rode NT 5 microphones as ambient room mic's as well so I am using say on an acoustic guitar, one mic close to the hole and a stereo pair out in the room probably about two and a half meters from the guitar. So I get a triangular stereo spread configuration. So it is great having the choice of the ambience of the room and the direct sound of the close microphone and blending them. The great thing about this technique is that you capture the natural reverb of the room, especially if it is a nice room and you really don't need to artificially process the signal with reverb plug ins and the like.

Phasing is one of those things that I didn't hear for years but since I learnt this tip in Logic I have gone back and checked heaps of my recordings and realised that I was serial offender. Phasing is a tricky one, it can occur in a grand fashion or quite a subtle fashion. If you have a snare drum and you have the luxury of having a mic on the top of the snare drum and another on the bottom of the snare drum then you will almost certainly encounter some phasing. What Logic has which lots of equivalent programs have as well is the gainer plug in which is found in the helper menu and underneath the gain fader you will see a small box that says NORM or if you click underneath that small box it will say INV which stands for invert. What you can do there is check the phasing on the microphones that you have just recorded and sometimes you will be absolutely astounded at the difference if something is phasing or not phasing. If your signal seems to be thin or lacking in body it probably is phasing, so this a great and easy way to check.

I personally think that a really good pre-amp can make an enormous difference, especially to a vocal so if you are recording something that may end up on a final cd it is worth considering hiring a pre-amp and there are places around that hire amazing pre-amps out at very, very affordable rates and it can make an outstanding difference to the end result. You can get pro quality vocals at home for a hundred dollars a day outlay and get yourself a \$20,000 signal path.

MARK STANLEY

Red Room Recording Studio/Red Room Records 0407 521 405
Played drums in many Australian bands in the eighties and early nineties
Moved to Ireland in 1995 and joined the Mary Janes and released acclaimed cd's and toured extensively. Worked with people such as Kevin Maloney, David Ohdham and the Frames.

KYE THOMAS TIPS

It is important to learn the fundamentals of sound engineering which will help you make more use of your own equipment more efficiently. Put the concept you use on your computer into context and understand the origin of the concept you use all the time.

A few basic pointers about the basic principles of sound engineering can make all the difference. (Gain structure & EQ etc.)

Learn the rules so you can have fun breaking them. Creative sound engineering is all about breaking the rules but you need to learn them first.

Many domestic users will find that learning audio engineering theory merely consolidates what they have already discovered themselves. It is better to know why you are getting a good result and to be able to do it again and again.

A good understanding of theory helps in decision making about equipment purchases.

Learn about hi-end gear by using it, and experimenting. Hiring microphones, pre-amps and outboard processors can be a good option.

Ultimately, the best sound engineers are people who are good motivators and can get the best out of a recording session. These skills come with time and experience working with musicians on a recording session, whether it is a home studio or major studio. Audio skills go without saying, they are expected. Knowing the technical stuff well makes it easier to fulfil this role, and give your client due confidence in your abilities.

There are a lot of audio engineering training providers in the market place, and can be quite expensive. But the benefits to your audio skills by knowing some basic theory is priceless.

Areas in which a little theory can go a long way include

- Gain structure
- EQ
- Compression/Limiting
- Monitoring
- Mic selection and placement
- Mixing Techniques
- Mastering

Audio training providers costs range from \$500 at TAFE to \$10,000 with private colleges. (Certificate Level)

KYE THOMAS

Head trainer - audio department JMC Academy Melb
Freelance engineer/producer
Singer/songwriter performer (The Otherwise)
Manager/ In House Engineer Woodstock Studios (2001-3)
Manager/ In House Engineer Revolver Recordings (1999 - 2001) Live sound Engineer
Studio credits include Joe Camilleri, Stephen Cummings, The Fauves, 28 Days, Pre Shrunk, Crash Palace, Augie March, The Otherwise, The Zero Edition

ROGER SOMMERS RECORDING TIPS

When you learn from the masters, you've got a fair chance of becoming one yourself. Modesty would prevent US producer, engineer and mixer Roger Sommers from declaring himself as such, but his track record certainly puts him in the big league. In the eighties and nineties, Roger worked under the wing of acclaimed producers like Bob Rock, Bob Clearmountain, Ron Nevison and Neil Dorfsman, where it's fair to say he learned a thing or two. Some of the artists he has worked with since include Metallica, Ozzy Osbourne, KD Lang, Don Henley, Rod Stewart, Ry Cooder, Van Halen and Alanis Morissette. Australian Musician's James Manson was thrilled to have the opportunity of asking Roger his thoughts on the humble process of home recording.

How important is monitoring for a home studio? Can good reference speakers make your mix sound more professional?

Good reference speakers can make a significant difference in the quality of one's work absolutely. But regardless of whether you have the bread for a great set, it's still a good idea to use several different reference platforms (Car, boom box, other person's hi fi, a really good set of headphones, etc). That way, you stand a better chance of finding big tonal imbalances or realising that what sounded good on one set of loudspeakers may not translate as well on to another.

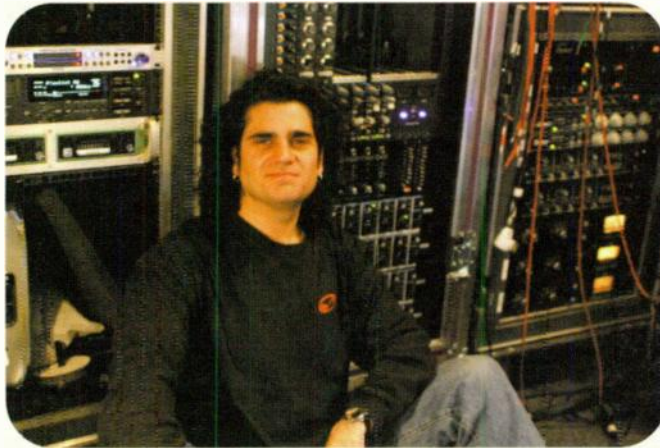
I got turned on to the Sennheiser HD 600 headphones quite a few years back and they have saved my ass more times than I can remember. I don't do much actual mixing with them on, but when I think I have something feeling pretty close I will always listen to a pass with the HD 600's, and invariably end up better off as a result. I also get good results mixing through a Sony boom box with a line input on it, which I feed from the desk output through a nifty little +4 db balanced to -10 db unbalanced conversion device. It's way more representative of what most folks will end up listening on, and I can listen to other people's work which I admire on the same rig as a check to see if I need to fire myself and find another career, or if I can keep mixing.

I don't think it's absolutely necessary for folks working at home to blow a small fortune on a set of expensive monitors as long as they have several sources they can reference on, and a good enough level of familiarity with what they've got, so they know how to compensate. If you think about it, we've been using NS-10's for twenty years or so now, and the whole time we have all contended with the fact that they're too bright, have somewhat inadequate low frequency response, and tend to accentuate the presence of things like vocals and snare drums more than other systems. After you listen on them long enough, you just get used to them and involuntarily compensate somehow.

I realise that vocal talent is more important than the actual hardware, but what's your take on microphone choice?

It's always nice to have a lot of good tools to choose from but it really is way more about the person standing in front of (or holding) the microphone than it is about the microphone. With all due respect to all the wonderful singers out there, I haven't come across many people in my particular travels who actually know how to sing into a large diaphragm valve microphone, it's a skill unto itself and the last person I worked with who could truly do it was kd lang. She was amazing and knew exactly how far to stand and how to move in relation to the mic to create her own dynamic changes; skills that people had to have when those microphones were first widely used and compression wasn't as widely used. I always carry a Shure SM-7 around with me and that is almost always where I will start when recording a vocalist, they can grab it, they can shout into it, they can swallow it, and I don't have to de-ess the daylights out of the results like I would if I had put a C-12 or a 251 in front of most of the folks I encounter.

I think the biggest advantage of an SM-58 in the control room is that it's less intimidating, the foldback balance is usually much more exciting for the artist, and the communication between artist and producer is infinitely better. A lot of singers really feel uncomfortable with



headphones and not being able to get the right foldback balance; it can make an enormous difference in the quality of the performance if they're comfortable and inspired. If you set it up properly, the spill into the vocal track is usually not too bad.

What is your opinion of Amp simulators such as Amplitude etc? Your thoughts on microphone techniques for Amps?

I think all of the simulation plug ins are worthwhile on some level but, I still prefer to record something that actually moves air with a transducer that responds to those movements. I often use Amp Farm to change the character of a sound, or "put some hair on something" but I have yet to

record a D.I. guitar and only use the simulator to get the results I'm after (I actually use amp simulators way more often on drums and vocals than I do on guitars). Maybe I'm not approaching that technique properly, as there are folks out there who swear by it, but I haven't yet gotten it to work for me.

Taking bad mixes to get mastered is like hiring a great house painter to come paint your manure hut gold

Microphone techniques? The most important one is to first use the microphones strapped to the side of your head and stand in front of the guitar/amp combination to see if the source is doing what it needs to be doing. If the tone coming out of the amp is sub standard, no microphone or clever placement technique will salvage the sound. I will mess with guitars, amps, and pedals, etc for a while to get an interesting/appropriate/exciting tone before I start grabbing mics and stands. Having said that though, I love ribbon mics on guitar amps and own eight Royer 121's which have proved invaluable to me in the last few years. They handle lots of SPL and always provide something worthwhile (though I do sometimes cover the back of the mic with something as they are, by nature, bi directional and sometimes I want better off axis rejection). I also still lean on Sennheiser 409's, Audio Technica 4050's, AKG 414's, Neumann fet-47's when they're around and (here it comes again...) the Shure SM-7. I tend to use mostly close miking and just move the mic (s) and try different combinations of mics until it feels right. Look, if the part is right, the guitar player can play it well, the instrument is properly set up and intonated, the amp is dialled in properly, it really isn't that hard to get good results.

Tape vs Digital? Hardware vs Plug Ins?

Tape still has the sonic edge in providing desirable non linearities and "glue" but it's really quite costly in today's world of ever shrinking budgets. It's a digital world we live in now and it provides us with a level of flexibility that we have all come to rely on (sometimes too heavily). I have cut my fair share of 2" tape and I really don't miss it to be honest (I still have a few good scars on my left hand from the blade jumping out of the splicing block and me slicing my hand open all over somebody's master.....), Pro Tools is an incredibly powerful creative platform and it has enabled me to make cost effective records with young bands (and especially their drummers) that I probably couldn't do if I was still working exclusively with analog tape. I still have yet to find a plug in that surpasses the efficacy and sonic integrity of the

Continued over page

ROGER SOMMERS CONTINUED

hardware box, but it's wonderful to have both, and to be able to combine them if necessary. I'm still a firm believer in getting it right at the front end, before it goes into the box; treating the DAW like tape recorder and using the plug ins further on in the process; maybe that's just my archaic old school thinking getting the better of me, but give me a pile of transformer based mic pre's, limiters and equalizers any day rather than an unprocessed signal and a bunch of software emulations of ... er ... um ... transformer based mic pre's equalizers and limiters.

Your favourite compressor? Should novices attempt to use compressors? Any hints on simple compression use?

I've been monkeying with compressors for a very long time and I still learn new things about compression all the time, which is simultaneously very exciting and very frustrating. Every time I think "okay, now I really know how to work all these silly boxes", I come up against something that puts me back in my place and I feel like I know nothing all over again. The thing about using compression is you really need to listen to the attack and release (especially the release time) times and it's a skill that not everyone naturally possesses; it takes time and patience for many of us to tune in to what a compressor does. A good rule for simple compression use is to remember that you can always compress more later but, if you apply too much "squashing" you can't really reverse the damage. Sometimes it's best on individual instruments to do some pretty gentle peak limiting and then apply more later if necessary.

How important is mastering for the final product?

Okay, let me start by expressing my opinion that too many people confuse mastering with mixing, but more on that in a minute! I'm of the opinion that you don't call the plumber to work on the electrical even if he wires up houses in his spare time; you need to call the specialist in for the important tasks. When I've obsessed over a record for a number of months I want someone with an objective opinion to weigh in, especially if I trust them and admire the work they've been associated with. Mastering folks (at least the handful of good ones who just do that style of work and began by cutting vinyl) sit in the same room every day, in front of the same set of loudspeakers, with the same really expensive signal chain, listening to pretty much nothing but two channel stereo mixes of records. If those guys don't know when something comes out of their speakers that does or doesn't sound "like a record" than I don't know who would.

With all due respect to all of the wonderfully talented mastering folks out there, all the mastering prowess in the world is not going to fix bad mixing and improperly balanced tracks. Taking bad mixes to get mastered is like hiring a great house painter to come paint your manure hut gold; underneath the gold paint, it's still made of manure and will collapse once it encounters a heavy rain. I find that a great many people are confused about what the mastering process can, and can not achieve.

Mastering is really just about the last chance for 2 channel (unless it's multi channel surround) EQ and limiting, as well as getting the individual songs to match in level and feel so they hang together as a coherent body of work. I would strongly advise against people deluding themselves into thinking that mastering is going to save lame performances/production and especially, bad mixing. ANY worthwhile mastering engineer would agree with that, it's really just common sense once you understand how the pieces all fit together.

The moral of the story/diatribes? Preparation and pre production are crucial, spend your \$\$\$ on tracking solid drum/basic tracks, do your overdubs somewhere less expensive, and get your stuff mixed by someone who knows what they're doing (and has the experience to tell you when you need to re-record something or leave it alone) and can hand you a mix that the mastering engineer barely has to mess with except to make it a bit more exciting and add a bit of sheen to it.

Due to space limitations, this interview was heavily edited. For the full transcription visit our website www.australianmusic.asn.au



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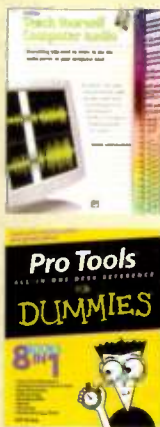
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BOOKS ON RECORDING

There are many books out there covering all aspects of recording. Two of the better ones out at the moment are: **Teach Yourself Computer Audio** - Alfred Publishing. In this book you'll find everything you need to know to create, record and play from your desktop, and **Pro Tools for Dummies** (Wiley).

As the title suggests, this book takes you step by step through the world of Pro Tools.

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1 Okay technically this 24-track recorder is circa 1987 but you get the point.
2 Reasonable estimate. Your mileage may vary depending on the length of your songs and the number of virtual tracks.

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DW NORTON

DW Norton is fast making a name for himself as a producer and engineer, particularly since scoring an ARIA nomination for Superheist's *A Dignified Rage* single. Recent recording projects include his new band *Walk The Earth* and the new *Mindsnare* album. James O'Toole spoke with DW about his take on digital home recording.

O'Toole: What made you get into recording in the first place?

DW: I started with a four track, a drum machine and a guitar. I did the Superheist demo in 1992 at Backbeach and the owner Mark offered me a job as an engineer. I was thrown in the deep end and eventually I got to the point where I was producing albums for other bands.

O'Toole: What's your home set up at the moment?

DW: A 1ghz Macintosh G4 running OS X 10.3.2 and Pro Tools 6.4. I have some NHT Pro powered 6" monitors and a pair of Sennheiser HD580 headphones, another very important tool. You want a few different environments to listen to your mixes. When you're finishing a CD throw it in the home stereo, the car stereo and when it's sounding good in all those different environments you know you're on the right track. I think it is very important with home recording to aim to mix it in a studio on an analogue desk. The colour an analogue desk will give it is the icing on the cake.

O'Toole: What are the key points in getting a good quality home recording?

DW Norton: It's all about whether the instrument and the recording path are good, starting with the microphone and the mic preamp. They're the three fundamental elements of a good recording. For the *Walk The Earth* album we hired G & L mic preamps, some API lunchbox mic preamps, Distressor compressors, Sennheiser MD421 microphones for the toms, a Beyer Dynamic M88 kick drum microphone, Shure SM57s for the snare and some AKG C3000s as overheads and it sounds like it was recorded in a very expensive studio.

O'Toole: How do you get a good guitar sound?

DW Norton: The guitar and the amp are paramount for the sound. If the original source sound isn't right it's never going to be right. Don't rely on making it sound the way you want with Pro Tools or whatever you're using. Use one microphone or you'll run into phase problems. I've discovered an excellent guitar DI called a Cab Tone and I don't use a microphone at all. It works for me because I'm doing heavy, upfront guitars ninety percent of the time and it gives the true amp signal.

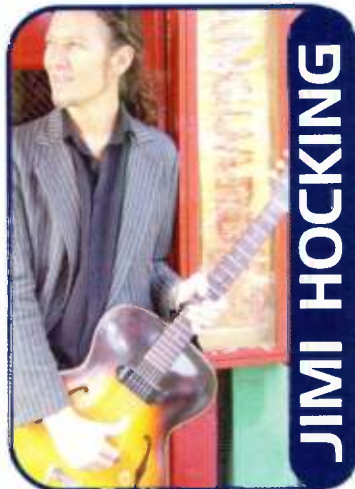
O'Toole: How about recording bass?

DW Norton: I take a DI from the back of the bass amp and I'll also mic the bass cabinet, because with bass you're relying a lot on the air movement of the cabinet to get the bottom end.

O'Toole: And vocals?

DW Norton: I use a good microphone, I have an AKG3000. I chose that over a Rode valve mic, it's a bit more zippy in the mid range and top end, especially with aggressive vocals which I deal with most of the time. Again, use a good mic preamp and compressor.

For information on DW check out www.dwnorton.com



Jimi Hocking, an old friend to this magazine, creates his roots based rhythms in the comfort of a home studio. We asked Jimi about his recording experiences ...

Explain the gear involved in your recordings ?

I use modern technology with old school mentality. I keep it very simple so my focus remains on the music and the creative process. The sound goes from the mic or line, into a valve preamp, then a valve compressor (very light) and direct into my D-160 digital hard drive recorder. I mix it back through an analogue Mackie desk and a pair of Bose monitors.

In what order do you record and why?

I record everything to click, I am more often than not playing multiple parts on my projects, so I need a strong reference. I usually record a rough demo or guide track first up, just on one track, usually just a room mic, with me singing and playing guitar. Then I'll do a good rhythm guitar part, bass, and rough vocal, then if it's a band thing, I get a drummer in at this point. The drummer plays to the existing parts, I'll have a bass handy to change things where necessary. After the rhythm section is established I may re-do the rhythm guitar, then do vocals and solos.

What's the process of recording your guitar parts and which guitars did you use on your album 'Give Jimi Some Love'?

I really spent a lot of time getting the right sounds for GJSL. I love the Blues approach but I want those natural swingin' jazz sounds. I'm really into the sound of a hollow body arch top guitar these days. I want to hear the acoustic sound from the instrument as well as the pickup through the amplifier. I had one mic about two feet away from the f hole of the guitar and another mic facing the amp, not too close though, I want to hear the wood of the amp too, not just the speaker cone! I played mostly clean, a little overdrive here and there. The main guitar on the album is my 1952 Gibson L4-C, it looks like an ES-175 but it has a solid spruce top, so it sounds good acoustically. I think there is only one song that has an alternative guitar set up, for that I used a 1964 175-T and my old faithful Les Paul Gold Top, I try to put Goldie on all my recordings for luck.

What about recording your vocals, do you have a reasonable 'dead' sounding room?

My studio is quite dead, I have learned a lot of techniques from David Briggs over the years, and in keeping with one of his concepts, I try to use good distancing techniques on the mic itself, ie: main vocals are closer, and backing vocals are further away.

What do you do in regard to bass and drums?

I usually DI the Bass through a Sans Amp for some edge, sometimes I run it through a small amp, but not often. Drums are rarely close miked at my place. I put a mic in the Kick drum, one between the snare and hats, then I use the NT-2,s as left and right room mics, I move them around till I find the sweet spots. I want the kit to sound like a holistic instrument, not like 8 separate channels of compressed sounds, let's get some vibe in there!

What's Jimi Hocking up to for rest of 2004?

The last 12 months were pretty full on for me, I have done a lot of playing interstate, some great festivals, and spent more time over in the USA once again, playing in New York City and down in Philadelphia. I want to go back over soon, but I have some recording projects on the slab right now. I'm writing and recording demos for a new Blues album to follow up GJSL.

I am also closing up a long time pet project of mine, a Mandolin album titled *VooDoo Grass*.

For more information on Jimi and tour dates visit www.jimihocking.com

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World Radio History

SICK OF MEAT AND THREE VEG FOR BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNER? THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES TO PRO TOOLS.

Pro Tools is the audio world's staple diet. But do we have to acquiesce to its pre-eminence? Many music producers have found alternatives. Peter Farnan reports.

Doug Roberts, ARIA award-winning producer and engineer, has worked with The Badloves, Mick Jagger, Diesel, Chris Wilson, Jack Jones, Nick Barker and Mick Thomas. After leaving Metropolis Audio he built his own recording facility in a rural setting near Melbourne. Clam Shoals provides a large drum room, a collection of beautiful amps and guitars, a pristine signal path and Doug's quiet, assured bedside manner.

'Til now I have been recording on Mackie HD because of its bullet proof stability.' Doug also runs a PC with Sonar 'because it is the most intuitive. It's set out like a console. I never had to look at a manual'.

The gunpowder in Doug's cannon is a pair of UAD-1 DSP cards: 'I'm absolutely in love'.

UAD cards run powerful plug-ins emulating classic gear. Previously mixing on his Mackie console through outboard gear, Doug now uses the PC which allows him to instantly flit between projects. Significantly, he can massage audio the way he could with big budgets and antique gear at Metropolis Audio, specifically EQ, compression and issues of punch and fidelity. He loves the emulations of the LA 2A and Pultec.



In the end we all do the same 10 to 20 things: engage record ready, cut, copy, paste etc

'UAD cards match the capacity of Pro Tools in all regards except latency when tracking. The dream is to be able to track on the PC. They've never been stable enough...but Sonar has been rock solid and I'm giving it some serious thought.'

Willy Zygyer (songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, engineer, producer) approaches production from the compositional end. Deborah Conway's collaborator across six albums, he also composes for film and TV. He moved from Logic on a Mac to Nuendo on a PC for the latest Conway/Zygyer opus, Summertown. The guitar player laments 'being thrust into the position of being an odd job man, ...having to engineer when it's not my specialty'. Summertown's engineering credit goes to 'whoever wasn't playing an instrument.'

Willy believes that all audio and sequencing packages do roughly the same things. 'Unlike Logic everything is on the main window. I can do most things from there. There is no tempo list with Nuendo, however, which I would sometimes like for matching events to pictures.'

He also uses Propellerhead's Reason, the nifty emulation of a rack of synths, loop players, drum machines and effects. 'Reason and Nuendo run seamlessly together via Rewire. It's as if they are the one program. I do all my sequencing in Nuendo using Reason's sounds.'

All-rounder Adrian Hannan has the ears and expertise of a studio engineer, and the chops and compositional skills of a trained multi-instrumentalist. His production and engineering credits include Taxiride and the Androids. Pro Tools is his mixing and recording medium of choice but his work is diverse: 'Guys who do lots of different kinds of work are forced to use different kinds of material for different kinds of jobs. You need a pretty big arsenal.' Adrian runs Logic as his sequencer into Pro Tools via the Emagic esb bridge. 'If it's dancey...I hook up with Reason' for 'a good selection of synths. I also like...Beast, which has a really gritty sound. Stylus is...another fabulous loop based tool.'

For Jacks-of-all-trades, Pro Tools' options are perhaps limited. A highly evolved non linear tape recorder, Pro Tools' strength is its audio. Logic, Cubase, Sonar, Digital Performer et al are compositional tools evolved from midi sequencers. These distinctions are gradually blurring.

As for myself, I'm a Logic Pro user, I enjoy an immensely powerful midi sequencer equipped with an array of virtual instruments. My work in theatre, film and TV calls for anything from abstract sound design to convincing representations of traditional instruments. Logic, augmented by Reason, enables me to work efficiently in all areas, although I haven't achieved the seamless integration of Willy's Nuendo/Reason setup.

I chose a high end signal path and a/d converter (Focusrite ISA 430) over Pro Tools TDM or HD hardware. I record one thing at a time, assuming that if it 'goes in' at high quality, it will 'come out' the same. Projects

can be mixed by me or transferred to bigger Pro Tools rigs. I tracked Rachael Kane's album Appetite on Logic at my place, recorded drums with Kalju Tonuma on Pro Tools and then handed the files to Adrian Hannan for mixing.

I need the compositional and musical generative power of Logic. PT's midi implementation is basic, lacking the transformers, hyper editors, event lists, midi environment objects Logic provides. Adrian's Logic Screenshot displays the same data in the Event List, Matrix Editor and Score Editor.

However, many regard the Logic learning curve as quite steep. Logic audio now zooms in to sample level on the arrange page. To move audio around, however, I must use a gradient of ticks. This is a major limitation: sample based editing on the main arrange page is essential for comping drums or groups of instruments. Willy's Nuendo achieves this. For Adrian, 'Nothing beats Beat Detective in Pro Tools. I've watched guys comping drums in Logic and I shudder.' Logic would benefit from PT's 'tab to transient' feature.

For comping vocals, however, I prefer Logic, which allows multiple tracks to address the same output channel without requiring voice allocation fiddling or dragging out regions. I can mute/un-mute tracks and/or regions across many tracks, creating a visual patchwork of regions for auditioning. I then drag my favourites onto a comp track.

Logic has, at the time of writing, been recently dumped by local distributor Electric Factory, not auguring well for the ongoing viability of a sophisticated music program requiring informed, specific retail support.

The final word belongs to bass player Mick Girosole, former member of The Black Sorrows and a rapacious music software user who configures PCs for music production. 'In the end we all do the same 10 to 20 things: engage record ready, cut, copy, paste etc. It comes down to your own attempts at making music. When is the last time a program actually inspired a new way of making music for you?'

Peter Farnan, former member of Boom Crash Opera, is an independent composer, producer and performer.

Adrian Hannan c/o songstr@bigpond.net.au

Doug Roberts c/o Clam Shoals

Willy Zygyer c/o www.deborahconway.com

Mick 'Mr Computer Man' c/o mickeeg@aonet.com.au

Peter Farnan. PlayPlay P/L c/o jcryring@vicnet.net.au

MACHINE TRANSLU

Somewhere between the major label polish of singer songwriters like John Mayer and Pete Murray and the remnants of a true underground sound, is the output of one J Walker, better known as the force behind Machine Translations. A multi instrumentalist his biography also describes him as a 'home recordist', so naturally we were interested in talking with him. Signed to the influential indie label 'Spunk' his five albums and an EP have attracted the most over the top praise. Rave in Queensland for example is quoted as saying, 'brilliant new album from Melbourne genius'. Rolling Stone said, 'a peculiar and wonderful album'. You get the idea. He combines an eclectic range of organic instrumentation to create tunes that are simultaneously pop and something a little deeper. His lyrics in particular display a level of maturity a bit beyond what you'd associate with pop. Having toured extensively supporting top international acts such as Lloyd Cole, Catpower and Badly Drawn Boy, as well as Australian acts such as the Church and the Dirty Three, J Walker has even collaborated with Icelandic producer Valgeir Siggurdson who has worked with Bjork amongst others.

J Walker was once an analogue tape guy but he now uses an Apple D4 running Pro Tools and has very much 'come around to using a computer.' A huge part of this has to do with the sheer logistics of running tape. You see he likes to experiment with sounds, which means lots of recording, and lots of tape needing to be stored with all of the problems of deterioration as well. 'I've got crates full of half inch tape!' he states. With his current setup he explains that he can easily back up sessions onto CDR. Being someone who also produces other bands this is especially important. As well as a range of organic instruments he mentions some microphones such as the Neumann U87 and AKG 451 as well as Rode mikes. Eyebrows are raised when he produces the Sony 'lapel mike' in a session but he says it can be great for vocals. His recording philosophy now is that 'you've got to spend a bit more time getting the actual sounds right with digital' before you get to the mixing stage. It's especially important in his view not to rely on too much EQing too late in the process. The power of Pro Tools is such however that there is vast scope for sound alteration, which is another benefit, as well as 'much better results for a smaller outlay'.

I asked him what his favourite piece of kit was and how he tended to generate his sounds.

'I generate a lot of my sounds fairly organically, I tend to use guitars a lot, drumkits.....and then I'll sort of manipulate them afterwards.' He talks for example about making a drum loop using real drums and then overlaying it with other percussive elements whilst still retaining the live timing feel. It is 'perhaps a more time consuming way of generating sounds but they tend to have their own character.' His palette of musical sources is also quite extensive. During the interview he mentions using strings. Arabic drums, Chinese instrumentation,



ATIONS' J.WALKER



classical music and much more. This diversity of musical influences has a subtle effect on his music, making it stand out from a more straight forward pop rock kind of sound.

I asked him how he came to do a track with the Icelandic producer who had worked with Bjork and Sigur Ros. 'That was actually through Mushroom, my publisher.' He explains that every couple of years or so they do a writers' workshop where some of the people on their roster are teamed up with people they perhaps wouldn't ordinarily get to write with. 'You basically work with someone for a day and at the end you've written and recorded a song together, and I found that to be really, really good...' A lot of people apparently go into it slightly apprehensive, but he found the experience and the result to be great.

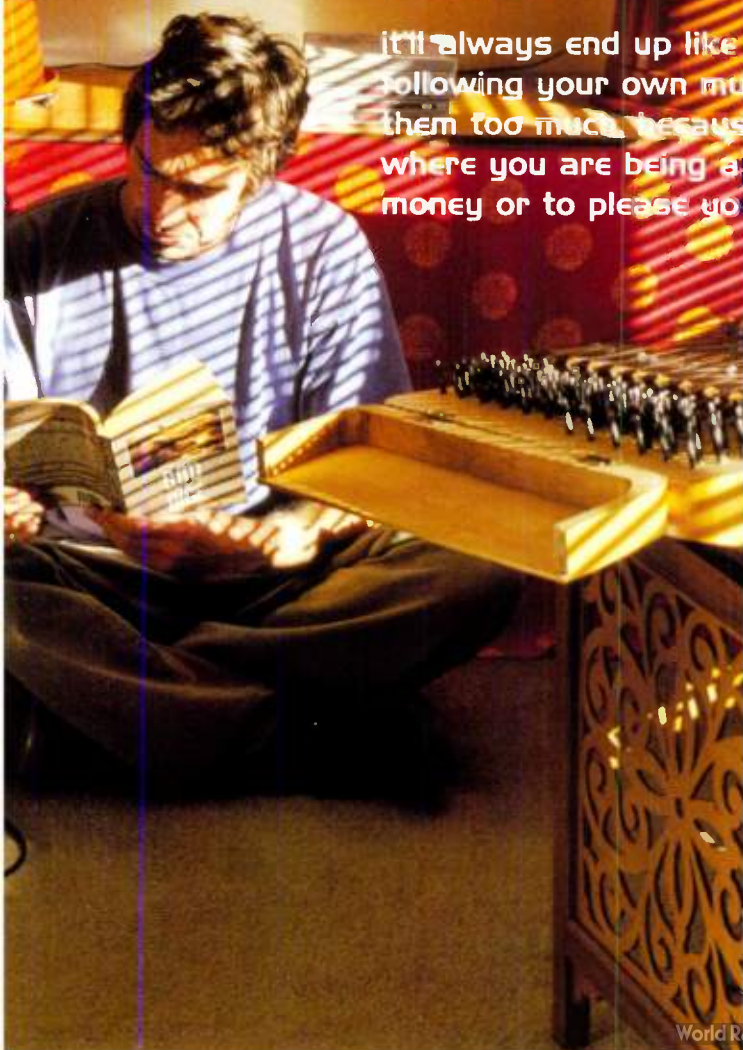
it'll always end up like a cliché but it comes back to things like, following your own musical ideas and trying not to compromise them too much, because you inevitably end up in situations where you are being asked or forced to compromise ... to make money or to please your record label

I posed the always difficult one to him, namely what ideas, advice or wisdom does he have for people who are starting out on the path of creating their own original music.

'Gosh....I think I've got fairly useless advice to give but I think it always comes back down to...it'll always end up like a cliché but it comes back to things like, following your own musical ideas and trying not to compromise them too much, because you inevitably end up in situations where you are being asked or forced to compromise ... to make money or to please your record label. But ultimately I think there is a lot of music being played in Australia that is unoriginal at the higher end of the charts at the moment, but the really interesting stuff kind of bubbles along underneath that. If you've got a strong musical vision that is really quite unique then you should cling to it.'

Which is exactly what J Walker has done with Machine Translations, an act that is really quite incredibly successful in its own unassuming way. Check out the website at: www.machinetranslations.org

Story by Baz Bardoe
Photos by Warwick Baker

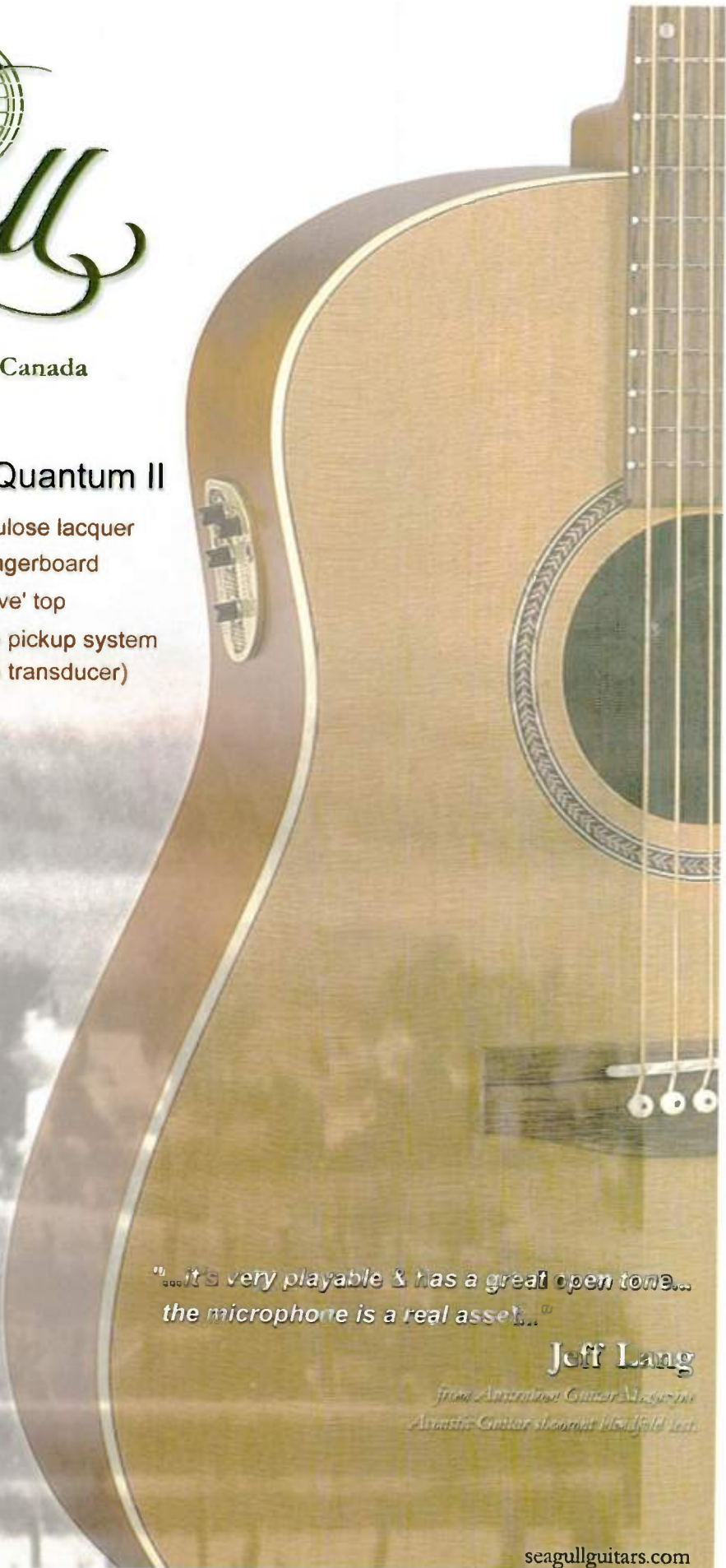




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AT HOME WITH SHARKEY'S HIP HOP

At the time of this interview Washington based hip hop artist Sharkey was excited to see his debut album "Sharkey's Machine" (which features guest appearances by Jean Grae, The Pharcyde, Cherrywine and Cannibal Ox) sitting at number 17 on the US hip hop radio chart. Sharkey, who has worked with numerous big time producers like Rick Rubin and Mario Caldato Jr, speaks with Australian Musician's Greg Phillips about his take on digital recording.

What sort of music did you grow up listening to as a teenager...who inspired you then?

When I was real young, my dad had slews of records and I used to listen to them in the headphones on his big home stereo all the time. Stuff like the Beatles, Steely Dan, Jim Croce & Donna Summers. When I turned ten, I saw the movies *Beat Street* and *Krush Groove* and was completely over come by the hip-hop culture. I started listening to Africa Bambata, Grand Master Flash and then my love for the music developed over time while listening to artists like De La Soul and Public Enemy. Nowadays, I keep all genres of music on a heavy rotation.

What instruments do you play?

I am what I like to call a fiddler. I fiddle with everything. If I hear a sound in my head and that instrument is lying there, I fiddle with it until I get what I want. I've never been formally trained with any instrument.

What sort of things inspired the music on this album?

I am a huge music lover. Over the years, there has been a lot of music that has really touched me and affected my life in a positive way emotionally. So when I created this record, I tried to stay true to whatever I was feeling when writing and not create songs for commercial purposes.

You have some amazing names from the hip hop world on the album. What sort of guidelines were given to these artists prior to recording? How much of their own creativity did they bring to the project?

I think that when a consumer buys a record, they hope and imagine the artists sitting down in a room, hanging out and coming up with a song together. A lot of artists don't want to do that. Sometimes artists haven't even met. They send an already finished track to the other artist in the mail and then they record whatever they want and send it back. I am a true believer in chemistry between people and I try my best to make that happen every time when collaborating. That is the true meaning behind collaboration, isn't it?

Tell me about your gear/computer set up...

I record on a PC using Cakewalk's Sonar platform. I love it. I make all of my beats in Sonar using its sequencer without using your typical outboard drum machine like most producers do.

Not that I am against using drum machines. This is just the way I prefer and works best for me. If another way works great for someone else then they should stick to that. It's all about preference. I use a Neumann U87 mic when doing vocals into HHB tubed preamps. Straight into the computer. I have a Mackie board that I use for bringing levels in and out on but do most of my mixing all within Sonar.

Take me through the process of when you first sit down in your studio with a musical idea. For example a riff that comes into your head. How does Sonar come into play at that stage?

I don't really stick to any certain recipe or system when making a song. Sometimes I come up with the beat first. Sometimes I have a melody in my head and I lay that down and then build a beat to it.

Which Plug ins do you use most?

I love the old vintage simulated compressors. I also really like the new delay. You can get in there and tweak both sides of the delay very easily to bounce things around.

What other outboard gear do you use in conjunction with Sonar?

I have a lot of old vintage synths and effects pedals. Plus some old tape delays and stuff.

Have you used Pro Tools, Cubase or Digital Performer too?

I actually used Pro Tools some when recording a couple tracks with producers Mickey Petralia (Beck) and Mario C. (Beastie Boys) because that's what they used in their studios. It was cool. The plug-ins were real good but the editing functions in Cakewalk were superior in my opinion. I had no problems dumping in and out of systems too, which was real nice.

What do you believe are the key technical factors involved in creating a 'great' recording?

That depends. I hear better recordings sometimes on old recordings from the 60s on far less sophisticated equipment than what we have today. Sometimes a crappy recording can sound better if it fits the vibe more.

I'm aware you had a negative experience with Elektra's President a while ago, and I know Jean Grae has strong opinions about major record companies. How important would you rate the advances in technology in the home recording area to the progress of the independent artist?

It's been extremely important. Major and independent labels have decided not to put as much money into artists these days. So the idea of spending \$1500 a day in a studio like they used to do, is impossible now. People can do this stuff out of their home if they set their system up right for a fraction of that cost.

How will the album transfer to live performance? Tell me about the gear you'd use on stage to recreate these sounds?

My live show at this point is basically me spinning and doing mash-ups worked together with some live synth and drum machine effects. I have special appearances from artists on my record at shows from time to time but it's usually just me.

What's Sharkey up to for the rest of 2004?

I am just getting ready to set off on my tour with label mates Brand Nubian. I am in the process of setting up another tour once that one ends. And I am working on a few new production projects. Hopefully I will be over in Australia soon. We'll have to sit down and have a drink together once I do.

For more information on "Sharkey's Machine" (Babygrande Records) visit www.Babygrande.com



YAMAHA AW16G



The Yamaha AW16G Professional Audio Workstation utilises state-of-the-art digital recording technology incorporating 8 channel inputs with 24-bit A/D conversion, 32-bit internal processing and a sampling frequency of 44.1 kHz, that allows for a total of 16-tracks of audio.

Eight tracks may be recorded simultaneously, with alternate takes having a storage point on an additional 144 virtual tracks (the unit having 8 virtual tracks per track). Dynamics processing (compression, expansion, gate and ducking) and 4-band parametric EQ on all channels are available, as well as two blocks of high quality multi-effects (taken from the popular AW4416 Professional Audio Workstation) that include the Input Library (for electric and acoustic guitar, bass, vocal, speaker simulator) and the Mastering Library (13 types of studio-quality mastering effects such as reverb, delay, modulation, distortion, dynamics, multi, etc). The design also features a Quick Loop Sampler with 4 stereo sample pads for recording drums and sound effects offering 4 voices of stereo playback polyphony and 44 seconds of stereo recording time. And to assist in the sound department, the workstation provides a sample library containing 250MB of audio samples that may be assigned to the 16 flash memory locations. A Sound Clip function allows you to record up to 180 seconds (or 3 minutes) of looped recording time (with separate memory allocation), ideal for use as a sketchpad for song ideas, and configured so that successful licks or melodies are transferable to your track.

There is a built-in 20GB hard disk, as well as an optional CD-RW drive for CD-burns and general backup. So essentially, a CD of your entire project can be produced directly within the workstation. Balanced XLR and TRS phone mic/line inputs, unbalanced phone mic/line inputs, unbalanced phone stereo/aux outputs and an optical S/PDIF digital input and output are all available, with two out of the 8 mic/line inputs phantom-powered and one being a HI-Z guitar input. Synchronization with external devices is also possible via Midi in, out and thru jacks. You can further use the AW16G as a MIDI Remote Control, turning it into a virtual mixing console to be used in conjunction with software packages such as Cubase, Logic and Sonar – a Scene Memory function providing touch of a button recall of current fader levels, pan position, muting and effects routing.

The generous screen and the user-friendly nature of the workstation was a definite positive for me. There was an almost inexistent learning curve, with most basic operations easily negotiated – the layout of buttons and knobs making lots of sense. It was quite easy to isolate tracks and enhance a selected channel with the built-in effects, edit parameters, and so on. The handy Quick Loop Sampler a very cool add-on. Of course, in order to make the most of any equipment a certain amount of time needs to be invested, but who needs complicated gear that's impossible to work out. The capabilities of the Yamaha AW16G Professional Audio Workstation are quite impressive, with results that sound crisp, clean and dynamic, thanks to the 16-bit linear 'uncompressed' recording resolution. A great product from Yamaha.

The RRP of the AW16G is \$2,495, although Yamaha is currently offering a package (RRP is \$2,595) that contains the AW16G along with an Audio Technica AT3035 condenser microphone, AT33A condenser microphone, ATH-M20 headphones and a free training session with Yamaha Product Specialist, Chris Steller.

Road Tested by Andrian Pertout
Distributor: Yamaha Music (03) 9693 5150

ZOOM MRS-1608



The MRS-1608CD is a 16 track digital audio workstation that records to a 40 GB internal hard drive, and features the power of seamless digital editing and Zoom's well known signal processing, and includes programmable drum and bass sections with a complete bank of touch-sensitive pads. The 1608CD has 16 physical tracks, each with 10 virtual tracks. The new machine also has 8 XLR/phone combination input jacks, with four of them being able to provide phantom power for

condenser microphones, with the capability of recording up to eight simultaneous tracks at once, as well as having the ability to insert compression and EQ on all eight of those input channels. The 1608CD now includes a sampler function that allows you to assign part of V-takes or WAV/AIFF files to those drum pads. With over 100 different drum and bass sounds, the 1608CD has 40 real sampled drum kits as well as 20 real sampled bass sounds. The 1608CD has adjustable EQ and pan controls for each channel, as well as a complete array of adjustable 24-bit mastering effects such as Reverb, Chorus, Modulation, Delay and Compression. Of course the MRS-1608CD model has an integrated CR-R/W drive, so you can mix and master your project right down to CD without the use of external hardware.

Info: www.dynamicmusic.com.au

BEHRINGER USB CONTROLLERS



Not recording devices as such, but certainly an impressive range of units that will assist you no end with your digital recordings. BEHRINGER is launching two USB/MIDI controller desks that offer intuitive operation with analog feel. The Behringer B-Control Rotary BCR2000, (AUD RRP \$399.99) is a total recall USB/MIDI controller

desk with 32 illuminated rotary encoders, and the Behringer B-Control Fader BCF2000, (AUD RRP \$499.99) is also a total recall USB/ MIDI controller desk with 8 motorized faders. The BCR2000 and BCF2000 are highly capable total recall cascaded desktop MIDI controllers with analog feel and an intuitive user interface.

The BCR2000 boasts 24 high-resolution encoders with LED rings for ultimate control over virtual mixers, synths, samplers and effects processors. The BCF2000 features 8 ultra-precise 100-mm motorized faders for control of virtual mixers, organ-drawbars (inverse mode) or virtual synths and samplers.

Info: www.behringer.com.au

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gives you realtime control over your music in ways your keyboard and mouse never will. With 100mm optical touch faders, a full sized backlit LCD, V-Pots for fast tweaking of effects and plug-ins, and shortcut navigation and editing for all major software including Pro Tools.

The Mackie Control Extender is a channel extension for Mackie Control. Slightly narrower than a Mackie Control, the Expander has all the channel strip features of the Mackie Control - only without the master section.

Info: sales@ausaudio.com.au

DIGITECH GNX4



Why is this Digitech guitar processor placed within a section on recording device road tests? An on-board 8 track digital recorder certainly helps! This unit really lifts the bar on what a guitar processor is capable of, and in the couple of weeks I had to check out the unit I feel I only scratched the surface of its capabilities.

Firstly, the GNX4 is an accomplished amp simulator with an impressive modelling amp and cabinet modelling engine featuring 16 banks of five pre-sets each. The banks have titles such as Meta!, Country, A1t Rock, Clean, Stars (Angus, Carlos Eddie VH, Pat Jazz, Jimi Haze, MayQueen etc). Each GNX4 preset has three channels with one and two having selectable amps and cabinets and independent controls for gain, level, EQ and cabinet tuning. Channel three is titled Warp and is a mixture of Channel 1 and 2 and cabinets using the warp knob. So all up there are 80 factory presets and 80 user presets. It is easy to come up with your own sound with the number of amp simulators and studio quality effects at your disposal. There are all manner of options of inputs and outputs available on the back panel too.

The basic amp sounds are great and are right up there with the better amp simulators such as a Pod and Amplitude. The advantage of the GNX4 is the fact that the presets and user presets can really be tweaked to desired taste. The unit sounded great when plugged straight into the computer and also excelled when used as part of an amplifier set-up. You are able to control all range of effects in realtime with the expression pedal including the famous DigiTech Wammy effect. The GNX4 also has a brilliant talk box simulator that sounds really authentic. You can also use the expression pedal to make a transition from one amp sound to another.

So what makes the GNX4 unique? Firstly, there is an 8 track digital recorder on board the unit. There is a recorder control panel on the top left hand side of the unit with all the normal recording controls such as record, rewind, forward etc. There is no on board memory so an optional flash memory card needs to be inserted first but again DigiTech provide complete software suites with the unit for both Windows and Mac computers. The Recording Software provided are Pro Tracks Plus Recording Suite, a comprehensive 32 track recording suite for PC with acidized looping features, Bias Deck for Mac's with up to 64 tracks available, X edit Editor Library and Pantheon Integrated Reverb Plug In made by Lexicon, one of the biggest names in Reverb. The Pantheon plug-in has 35 factory pre-sets and 6 reverb types. So you can use the GNX4 as a sketch pad for recording ideas with the onboard eight track or a fully fledged multi track recording system with your computer, the versatility of this unit is stunning. A 32 MB card will give you 6 minutes recording time. You can use the GNX4's footswitches to perform all kinds of functions depending on what mode you are in, but one of the coolest functions is the fact that you can record entirely hands free, just select recorder mode and the pedalboard is a remote control recorder. Again, you can use the footswitch for hands free computer recording using the GNX4's USB connection.

The GNX4 has an above average built in drum machine with a complete range of great sounding patterns and drum kits and it also has the capabilities of playing back MP3's. The patterns are midi so they can be edited and you can also download patterns or load new third part patterns, the choices are endless. This part of the GNX4 could really be a saving grace for the soloist playing live gigs etc and the creative possibilities of enhancing your live situation is exciting. The GNX4 is a complete recording, guitar production workstation that offers incredible value for money and so many extras and options that is going to be mighty hard for the competition to catch up.

Road Tested by James Manson
Distributor: Central Musical Instruments

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 BASS
 KEYBOARD
 BRASS/WIND
 COMPUTER BASED
 DRUMS/PERCUSSION
 ORCHESTRAL/STRINGS

4. IF YOU PLAY, ARE/WERE YOU:

SELF TAUGHT
 LEARNED/ING AT SCHOOL
 PRIVATE TUITION

5. IF MUSICIAN, ARE YOU:

PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN
 SEMI-PROFESSIONAL
 AMATEUR

6. HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT YOUR LOCAL INSTRUMENT STORE?

ONCE A WEEK
 ONCE A MONTH
 OCCASIONALLY

7. ARE YOU IN A BAND?

YES NO

8. AFTER LIVING EXPENSES, WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY GO?

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 CLOTHING
 CDS
 COMPUTER

9. HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU BUY A CD?

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 ONCE A MONTH
 MORE THAN ONCE A MONTH

10. HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU GO TO A LIVE GIG? (NOT YOUR BAND)

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 ONCE A MONTH OR MORE

11. NUMBER 1 TO 7 YOUR FAVOURITE SECTIONS OF AUSTRALIAN MUSICIAN

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 2 INTERVIEWS
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 4 INSTRUMENT LESSONS
 5 ELECTRONIC WARFARE
 6 CHECK 1,2 (ROAD TESTS)
 7 XPOSED

12. WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN AUSTRALIAN MUSICIAN?

13. RATE 1 TO 5 YOUR OTHER INTERESTS

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18. IF SO DO YOU USE IT FOR MUSICAL PURPOSES?

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www.australianmusic.asn.au

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21. IF SO, RATE THE SITE 1-10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

21. NAME ANOTHER MUSIC PUBLICATION YOU READ

22. DO YOU HAVE TROUBLE GETTING A COPY OF THE MAGAZINE?

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Distributed in December 2004

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YOUR TOP TEN GUITAR RIFFS

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YOUR TOP TEN OVERSEAS BANDS

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YOUR TOP TEN DRUMMERS

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YOUR TOP TEN KEYBOARDISTS

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Competition closes Oct 28, 2004
Prizes drawn Oct 29, 2004
Results in Edition #40 December 2004

KATE MEEHAN



The blues can sound so pedestrian in the possession of an average set of vocal chords. Conversely, in the case of Tasmania's Queen of Blues, Kate Meehan, the blues can also be an invigorating musical experience. Kate's latest release "Can I Play Too?", a collaboration with talented pianist Skip Landy, is a stripped back affair showcasing her substantial vocal prowess on some familiar blues and jazz

standards. For a more complete picture of Kate Meehan's passionate vocal delivery you could also check out her 2002 release "Soulshaker", which features some inspirational playing by her band including bona fide blues harp, accordion and impressive backing vocal arrangements.

www.katemeehan.com

SIMPLY BUSHED

For the last 12 years Simply Bushed has performed their energetic Australian bush rock beat to regional audiences ranging from festival crowds to corporate groups and traditional bush dance enthusiasts. For this band there's no discrimination, if the crowd has come for a good time, they'll get it. They've just released their second album 'Spinifex', which features all the usual culprits such as 'Wild Colonial Boy' and 'Click Go the Shears', as well as the poignant instrumental title track, just to let you know quietly that beneath the beards and beer bellies, there's some considerable musicianship happening.

www.simplybushed.2ya.com

TOURIST



Regulars to the Cottesloe Beach Hotel in WA will know Tourist's brand of guitar rock/pop well. Forming in 2002, Tourist has supported many local and international artists including Joe Camilleri, Daryl Braithwaite and Michael Franti & Spearhead. The band has just released an EP titled "The Places We All Go" featuring five original tracks. For information on the band including gig dates, go to www.touristband.com.au/.

KIERAN MURPHY

You may recall seeing young Melbourne guitar picker Kieran Murphy featured in our Autumn edition when we got him together with blues legend Tony Joe White. It seems Kieran's career is on the up and up having just returned from a short jaunt to America where he played and impressed many at the Chet Atkins Appreciation Society Convention in Nashville. Word caught on about Keiran's fretboard skills leading to numerous jams at clubs around town. Several gig and festival appearance offers were made, one resulting in a tour of Italy in October supporting Michael Fix.

KEITH ANTHONISZ & THREE WISE MONKEYS

Keith, friends, and family combine to create "Promised Land" an album possessing the feel of a pair of your favourite comfortable shoes. Perhaps not the most appropriate analogy for someone's music, but Anthonisz emits a familiarity and warmth that can only endear the listener. The themes are deep and reflective, the music wandering and meditative. The notes accompanying this disc indicate a lot of goodwill, friendship and enjoyment have gone into this project .. it shows.

Submissions to XPOSED should be mailed to: Australian Musician PO Box 315, Kangaroo Ground, Vic 3097 or information emailed to: mediaville@netspace.net.au

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ELECTRONIC WARFARE >

This issue my featured producer is one Kay Nakayama, who as you may have guessed, is from Japan. Nakayama is an icon of chilled electronic music with an eclectic range of output via his two main projects, 'Something Wonderful' and 'Intelligent Jazz' as well as releases under his own name. He got started DJing in the late 80's organizing underground parties in Tokyo where he would 'synchronise the music with early computer graphics'. His first album release under the guise of Something Wonderful came in 1992, and it was released on YMO's own 'Alfa' label. This led to remix work with YMO and world music icon Bill Laswell.



Column by Baz Bardoe
(www.psyburbia.co.uk)

KAY NAKAYAMA

In 1996 Nakayama set up his own label Chillscape, which has run successfully ever since, releasing a range of sounds including his Intelligent Jazz output which features some of Japan's best jazz players doing their thing over some very cruisey electronic beats. 1999 saw the release of a Something Wonderful album on the UK's esteemed Matsuri Productions, and it further cemented his position in the pantheon of chillout producers globally.



I posed some questions to Kay, and got some answers which betray only partial English and since I don't know Japanese at all, we'll just have to soldier on – you'll get the idea.

I asked Kay about his studio set up.

'Cubase for PC. Many Yamaha synthesizers. TR 808. Jupiter 8. Moog Effecters.'

His favourite piece of kit is the TR 808.

I asked him what made him decide to run his own label, if he enjoyed it, and if it was a profitable exercise?

'I love music and want to release it by myself. It's a really simple reason. In 1996 Chillscape started with my old friends of Vap (a big Japanese record company). So old Chillscape was a division of Vap. In 1998....Chillscape runs by myself. Small label is, like a small ship, easy driving yeah. Yes, enjoying.'

I asked him how he approached writing music?

'I want writing music for motion pictures. I love films.'

Finally what advice did he have for aspiring producers?

'Sorry, I can't say advice anymore.....just do it, yeah.'

So there you have it. Check out his amazing music at:

www.chillscape.com

Trust the boffins at Roland to come up with something as amazing as the **SP606**. Okay, I haven't tried it yet, but if it does what they claim it may be one of those bits of kit that we later look back on as being groundbreakers. You see people still talk in terms of hardware versus software and the relative merits of both, but this product looks set to give the best of both worlds. The hardware component is a dedicated sampling groovebox which has trigger pads on the front reminding one visually of the legendary Akai MP boxes. Apparently this unit will



work fine as a stand alone sampler and sequencer, with inbuilt effects and plenty of sampling and processing power. But the big detail is that it comes bundled with P606 software which is a Cakewalk based software

described as a 'virtual groove box'. The SP606 can be hooked up to a computer via a USB connection, and no other interfaces or soundcards are required. The P606 software is a sixteen track sequencer with effects and a huge range of topline Roland patches that can be used via 3 areas, called 'Groovesynth', PSYN mini analogue' and a 'Groove player' which is 'loop manipulator for use with WAV/Acidised files'. The two other areas allow the accessing of Roland patches based upon top Roland drum machine and synth sounds. The amazing thing is that any work you do on the P606 software can be transferred to the SP606 hardware unit, which you can then take out and perform live with. Likewise work done on the SP606 can be transferred to the P606 software. The best of both worlds it would seem. Roland promise ease of use and I can't wait to do a full review of one!
www.rolandcorp.com.au

Future Music recently featured another device that may blur the boundaries of hardware and software in the shape of the Openlabs Neko workstation. It combines a keyboard with all of the attributes of a computer and mixer in one rather large unit. At last we're starting to see companies design products with the best of both hardware and software, designed from the ground up for musical applications, rather than trying to make music software fit with platforms designed for something else. This was a topic brought up by Brian Eno in an interview – at last! – in Future Music, as well as the subject of the crap ergonomics of most software that tries to replicate hardware controls such as knobs, even though these are as fiddly as hell to manipulate with a mouse. Check out the ambient pioneer's site at: www.enoshop.co.uk and www.futuremusic.co.uk

A great site for dub fans is www.dub.com Some great links and history of dub music which to my mind has been probably the most influential music style of the last three decades in terms of production approaches. I also enjoyed speaking to J Walker from Machine Translations, a dedicated home recordist enjoying some pretty mainstream success it must be said. Check out the interview in this issue.
www.machinetranslations.org

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World Radio History

Mixed Subdivisions- Part One

by Grant
Collins



I'd like to look at developing a vocabulary utilizing a combination of beat subdivisions. Typically, most musicians are competent with subdivisions such as triplets, eighth notes and sixteenth notes which are commonly used in western musics. In this article I'd like to set up some groundwork exercises for the development of these and other various subdivisions.

The different subdivisions are sometimes classified as being either 'natural' or 'artificial' (Gary Chaffee).

Natural Subdivisions:

Three musical staves illustrating natural subdivisions in 2/4 time. The first staff shows two eighth notes per beat, labeled "8th notes (2 notes per beat)". The second staff shows four sixteenth notes per beat, labeled "16th notes (4 notes per beat)". The third staff shows eight thirty-second notes per beat, labeled "32nd notes (8 notes per beat)".

Artificial Subdivisions

Four musical staves illustrating artificial subdivisions in 2/4 time. The first staff shows an 8th note triplet (3 notes per beat), labeled "8th note triplets (3 notes per beat)". The second staff shows a quintuplet (5 notes per beat), labeled "Quintuplets (5 notes per beat)". The third staff shows a 16th note triplet (6 notes per beat), labeled "16th note triplets (6 notes per beat)". The fourth staff shows a septuplet (7 notes per beat), labeled "Septuplets (7 notes per beat)".

The artificial subdivisions may seem awkward at first, but with systematic practice, they will become as familiar as natural subdivisions such as eighth and sixteenth notes. Practice each of the above subdivisions individually to gain confidence before moving on.

The next step to gaining control is to methodically mix the subdivisions so that you can become comfortable moving from one to another. The following are a series of exercises which cover the mathematical combinations to move from any one subdivision to any other.

A series of 15 numbered exercises (1-15) on a single musical staff in 2/4 time. Each exercise consists of two measures. Exercise 1: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 2: eighth notes, sixteenth notes, eighth notes. Exercise 3: eighth notes, sixteenth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 4: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 5: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 6: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 7: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 8: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 9: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 10: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 11: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 12: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 13: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 14: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes. Exercise 15: eighth notes, eighth note triplet, eighth notes.

This series of exercises will get you comfortable with the transition between the different subdivisions. Be sure to practice these and in the next lesson, I will look at different combinations of the subdivisions in short studies. These are not ideas that you may be going to use in your top 40 band but keep an open mind so that you can add to your skills and knowledge as a musician.

Grant is a professional performing artist who has built a reputation as being a leader in his field and a pioneer of new techniques. His success in Australia is easily documented by the thousands which have attended his solo performances. He has also been very successful on the international scene, having done several solo tours of Asia and most recently a series of highly successful solo performances in the United States. Website: www.grantcollins.com

Grant's lesson was originally created using Sibelius 3 scoring software

KNOW YOUR BASS

by George Urbaszek



How many frets does your bass have? How many octaves? Do you know the name of every note on every fret on every string? Now! How about the sound of each note? Can you identify which string a note is played on by hearing alone? What about the tone of each note on each fret? Is this important? Will it be important? You decide ... after reading this.

A lot of the time we get to know our basses better by accident. A string might break on a gig, and because we can't just stop playing, we have to transfer the trusty riff to another string. That's being thrown in the deep end. It is a good way of learning, but it only covers a small aspect of the process. One of the most challenging gigs I have done was completely in the dark. Thankfully, I wasn't in the dark, as I knew the repertoire and my bass well.

Here are some of the exercises I have done. You might find them useful.

- Visualize a fret position - see it in your mind's eye - and name the note over and over again until you know you never have to repeat this exercise. Then go on to another note.
- Play all possible involutions of a C major triad arpeggio using any combination of the available two octaves of C's, E's and G's on the E, A, D and G-strings up to the 5th fret. There are 48 possibilities. Now what about the other chords?
- Play the chromatic scale from the lowest to the highest note on your bass many, many times over, crossing the strings at different points on every new attempt. There are more possibilities than you realize.
- Play all intervals from a semitone to a major tenth in two or more different ways.
- Play 2, 3 and 4-note chords. This is a great discipline to have if you ever want to do a "feature" accompaniment spot.
- Play a melody without ever playing semitone intervals one fret apart. This one is challenging and lots of fun!
- Play a two-string riff on one string instead. Notice the difference in sound.
- Play a one-string riff on two strings instead. It might be easier to play and therefore sound more relaxed.
- Play repetitive notes on different strings. This creates a remarkable texture.
- Pick the same note in three different positions and listen for the change in timbre.
- Play the same note over and over again - for 5 to 10 minutes - moving the plucking hand in the minutest increments from right next to the fretting hand (yes, over the fingerboard) to right next to the bridge. Listen for the change in harmonic content.

- Do the same with a riff. Try it on a gig or at rehearsal and find out how you best "sit in the mix".
- Check the intonation of your bass - not with a tuner, but by ear. Then check with a tuner.
- Practise.

I could give many more examples, but you will learn better if you make up your own. Persevere with patience.

Be in tune for the next edition of Australian Musician. It promises to be a healthy 40th!

"George specialises in distance music education and offers individualised bass lessons by correspondence as well as ready-made lessons on CD and CD ROM. For details visit his website www.creativebass.com or phone 02 66886143.

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MUSICAL MERCHANDISERS

Introducing Triads

by Simon Patterson



Welcome to this edition where I'm having a bit of a look at the humble triad. What are triads and why are they relevant to your playing?

Well, triads in this case aren't a bunch of dudes involved in dodgy narcotic activities! Triads, in the musical sense refer to the 1st, 3rd and 5th degrees of a respective chord. For example, with a C Major chord, the 1st, 3rd and 5th degrees would be C, E and G respectively. As another example, if you took the chord D Minor, the degree would be 1, b3 and 5 giving you the notes D, F and A.

Triads add a great deal of interest to your playing as you're able to play wider interval leaps and this in turn allows for some more interesting, non-scale arpeggiated melodic ideas.

Triads are best absorbed via arpeggios and because of their direct relationship to chord shapes on the guitar, they're fairly easy to get a handle on. Once you have learnt these basic arpeggios, it is possible to pick out the notes over the entire range of the fingerboard.

In the five musical examples here, I've listed the various chords and marked the various triads that are superimposed over the chord type. Study the various intervals in each triad as it relates to the root of each chord and you'll observe some distinct colours.

In example 2 you'll notice I have used an 'A' triad over the Dm chord giving me ultimately the sound of a D minor/major7 chord (D maj7). Also the use of F# and E triads over the Dmaj7 chord in example 4 outline a D Maj 7#5 and a D Maj7#11 respectively.

Have fun and enjoy the colours triads add.

Simon Patterson's latest CD 'Project 3' is available at: www.users.bigpond.com/simonpatterson/

Australian Musician uses Sibelius 3 scoring software

Ex1

Dm C G C D F

Ex2

Dm C F A D G C

Ex3

B RB C7 C Bb F

Ex4

Dmaj7 Bm F# E F#m A

Ex5

Bbmaj7 F Bb Dm



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The Jazz Piano Chair: What Does the Band Expect?

by Allan
Zavod



*Bachelor of Music (Melbourne)
Professor of Music (Berklee School of Music, Boston, USA)
Website: www.allanzavod.com*

Hi Readers

The piano chair as you probably know, refers to the pianist in a band usually from duo up to big band proportions. There are of course many combinations of instruments. The jazz pianist is expected to contribute in a dual function: soloing and accompanying the latter often called comping. It is this dual function that usually makes the piano chair one of the most important players in the band. We could say there are two types of ensembles : large and small both of which require the pianist to perform in various ways.

There is a common thread here as in all jazz playing that is required from pianists ... listening.

Comping requires you to listen to the soloist as well as to others involved in the accompaniment, (other rhythm players -bass, drums guitar, percussion etc), including your own contribution. Listening to others performing with you is vital in creating the best support for a soloist.

Listening is equally as important when you are the soloist. Of course you want to be free to play wherever the inspiration take you. Sometimes that inspiration can come from the accompanying bass, drums, guitar etc. The opportunity to pick up on their ideas may be lost if are only listening to yourself.

Knowing when to lead and when not to is another requirement. All this can only be achieved by " keeping your ears open".

I will write about this in the examples ensembles below.

Now lets talk about attitude with regards to ensemble playing. In this context attitude is about allowing space in the music.

Creating the right amount of space for good taste as well as giving fellow players room to make a contribution. This comes with experience. The only way to get experience is to 'get experience' so put yourself out there and join or form a band.

Let's divide the ensembles into small and large. Small ensemble would be from two up to six or seven musicians.

Small Ensemble

Duo

The usual type of duo for a jazz pianist is with a bass player. This can be some of the best playing experience due to the intimacy of this kind of set up. Comping behind a bass solo without a drummer, (who might have supplied a light rhythm track), can be challenging but

invaluable in developing accompaniment skills. For the less experienced pianist it can be tempting to overplay during the bass solos. You don't have to play all the time thinking you have to make up for a the missing drummer. The fact is you keep the same attitude playing with any number of players including solo piano.

The combination of bass and piano being both harmony and rhythm instruments, gives way to endless possibilities. During solo sections for example they may bounce off each other to the extent that they can be soloing together and build up to a powerful climax that anyone would get excited about. You may ask where is the space. The space is in the building stage . Once a climax is reached the attitude may be to create a different kind of space where by you see the climactic moments as a space unto itself which is to be filled.

Well I may be running out of space so I will go to the other end of the scale and briefly discuss a much larger ensemble:

Large Ensemble

Big Band

My experience playing with big bands has been a great experience. Playing with bands like Glen Miller Orchestra, Maynard Ferguson and Woody Herman confirms the kind attitude that I have been discussing is required.

To fill the piano chair in a big band is a big responsibility when it comes to giving space. For example a big band can accompany itself, The reeds, (saxes), may play a written fill while the brass play the melody of a song and visa versa .

We pianists often create a space by only playing in the the space between the brass and sax phrases. If you play a rhythm against the written phrase played by the saxes for instance, you might impose or step on their space and spoil the effect of the their rhythm and melody.

Also during a solo the band may play a written piece as a backing to the soloist. At these times the piano fills the cracks or spaces. As well, however, you can learn everyones parts and play them being very careful not to change the colour intended. There is more to discuss so maybe next issue.

Meanwhile keep playing and involve yourself in all kinds of ensembles On the aspect of giving space listen to the masterful ensemble playing heard on a Miles Davis cd titled "My Funny Valentine" (live at Carnegie Hall.)

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The RG40RXM brings the power of guitar combos up a notch with 40 watts/ dual channel and a 12" speaker. The three band EQ, FX loop and reverb control allows you to personalize your sound, whilst a boost switch gives you access to extra kick when required. This amp is the perfect choice for the player who wants the big Randall sound in a small package.

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World Radio History

SPRING 2004

Australian Musician Spring 2004

PRODUCT: Takamine TAN 16C Guitar with Cool Tube Preamp & Fishman Loudbox Acoustic Amplifier

REVIEWER: Ian Noyce DISTRIBUTOR Pro Music 1300 880 278

This double review is quite a challenge! Two unusual, very classy products that marry up together in a very impressive manner! First let's look at the manufacturers respective product descriptions and specifications.

The Fishman Loudbox. (RRP \$1599)

Fishman has entered into acoustic amplification after years of producing the world's leading acoustic pickups with the high powered Loudbox. With a simplified design layout and headroom to spare, the Fishman Loudbox is designed to accommodate professional acoustic instrument players.

Controls include Volume, Low, Middle, High, Brilliance, Anti-Feedback, Phase Switch, Reverb, and Mute Switch.

Amp Specifications:

- Frequency Response: 100Hz - 20kHz 4dB
- Input Impedance: 10M / 68pF
- Nominal Input Level: -14dBv
- Maximum Recommended Input Level: +6dBv
- Fixed High Pass: -3dB @ 50Hz
- Bass: 10dB @ 100Hz (shelving)
- Mid: 12dB @ 1.2kHz (resonant)
- Treble: 12dB @ 10kHz (shelving)
- Brilliance: 12dB @ 10kHz (resonant)
- Notch: -14dB @ 20 - 400Hz (Hi Q resonant)
- All tone controls 1dB tolerance, all frequencies 10%
- Reverb: Equalized, medium delay, triple spring reverb
- Effects Send:
- Input Impedance: 20K
- Effects Send and Return designed for compatibility with battery operated effects processors.
- XLR out : +3dBv balanced
- Crossover Frequency : 450Hz, 3.4kHz (Tri-amplified w/electronic crossover)

Speaker System:

- Woofer: 8" Treated Paper Cone
- Midrange: 4" Polypropylene Cone
- Tweeters: 2 x 1" dome, rare earth magnets, ferro fluid cooled

Takamine TAN16C guitar with cool Tube preamp. (RRP \$2599 plus case \$259)

The CTP-1 Cool Tube preamp introduced at the January 2004 NAMM show in Anaheim, California is the most significant development in on-board acoustic signal processing since Takamine presented the Acoustic DSP, the industry's first on-board digital acoustic guitar preamplifier in 1998. The Takamine CTP-1 Cool Tube preamp is an on-board acoustic- electric preamp that utilizes a 12AU7 dualtriode vacuum tube.

The CTP-1 Cool Tube preamp gets its name from Takamine's unique and new technology that runs the Tube at very low voltages, therefore the tube does not glow or produce high levels of heat. The tube actually runs at only two or three degrees above ambient, so there is no concern over the delicate tone woods being affected by radiant heat. With the



Takamine CTP-1 Cool Tube preamp, the playing will be hot, the tone will be warm, and the tube always remains cool.

pickups with the preamp. The output volume slider can then control the blended signal. The CTP-1 is powered by 4 AA batteries, which will deliver approximately 24 hours of playing time.

OK! As you can see, this is one versatile preamp, but first let's look at the Fishman unit. This 490mm. H x 395mm. W x 350mm. D Box delivers a triamped 160 Watts of power to the Bass speaker, 60 Watts to the midrange cone and 30 Watts to the speaker. That's 250 Watts all up giving heaps of head room. The T bar on the back allows three different set up angles to suit any stage situation. Although this is a very compact box at 25 Kgs. for 250 Watts it's a little awkward to carry because of it's cubic shape.

I put two of my acoustics and a new Takamine cool tube classic through the Fishman before I received the Takamine 16C and they all came up bright and juicy. While the front panel is simple with one input, volume, low, mid,

... you can relax, without fear of feedback.

Cool Tube Features:

- Takamine players will find a most useful array of features to enhance their recording or live performance applications:
- A chromatic tuner available at your fingertips keeps the guitar in tune. The tuner is capable of being calibrated from A438, to A445. An LED display reveals the note being played and directs the player with illuminated arrows that show sharp and flat.
 - The EQ section utilizes a shelving, graphic EQ, which can cut or boost bass and treble frequencies. The mid range is shaped using a semi-parametric EQ section comprised of a rotary knob used to choose the mid point of the midrange frequency. The midrange frequency can be cut or boosted with the mid slider. The range of frequency covered by the rotary knob is 200hz to 8.5Khz.
 - The tonality of the preamp is further enhanced by the use of the rotary knob labelled Cool Tube With this control, the player chooses the depth of effect the tube places on the signal generated by the proven Takamine Palathetic pickup. With this knob the player can choose from a high degree of CUT for aggressive strumming, expanded sweetness and harmonic density with fatter lows and rounder highs; or levels of rewarding richness for finger style players.
 - An auxiliary input jack and volume knob, which can control an additional add-on pickup of your choice. This facility can accept a magnetic sound hole pickup, or a soundboard transducer. The AUX control knob is used to blend the add-on signal with the Takamine pickup. A small switch in the back of the preamp can be used to match the varying outputs of different

high, brilliance, anti feedback and reverb controls they work well and cover the range.

The anti feedback control really works! Used in conjunction with the phase button the anti feedback pot helps eliminate the first feedback frequency; the air resonance of the guitar, usually around low G# on most acoustics and the phase switch further helps by reducing feedback in the second resonant mode, the top plate resonance. You can stand in front of the amp and really turn on the juice without feedback once set up- very impressive!

The unit is very quiet and all controls are very effective rather than over done like so many and once set up for a particular instrument, you can relax, without fear of feedback.

The Takamine TAN 16C is an all solid wood (Rosewood back and sides) cutaway guitar typical of Takamine build quality. Unplugged the guitar works well but it's a guitar that's at it's best amp'd up. The 12AU7 valve is run on low voltage and can be blended in to suit different playing styles and dynamics and offering that lovely valve warmth and compression to the typical harsh nature of an acoustic with under saddle bug. Again, the tone controls work well without being "in your face" and beside the cool tube blend is a blend pot for an extra pickup such as a magnetic sound hole unit. below all that and the Eq controls is a neat chromatic on board tuner.

Both these products should find a well deserved place amongst acoustic gig players.

PRODUCT: Ibanez AF85VLS Hollow Body Jazz Guitar

REVIEWER: Craig McDonald DISTRIBUTOR: Australis Music 02 9698 4444

The guitar I am reviewing this edition is the 'Ibanez' AF-85VLS Hollow Body Jazz guitar. This is quite a different type guitar for me to review, as Jazz guitars are generally not my thing, however I was very interested in how it would feel and sound. I always thought that these "jazz-box" style hollow bodied guitars would feel large, cumbersome and difficult to play, especially as I always play smaller solid bodied electric guitars, (still stuck in the 80's!), but I have to say that I was completely wrong. This guitar is excellent to play, it feels light, has a great neck, and some very useable tones for both jazz and rock playing. It has been an experience that I enjoyed immensely.

The AF-85 is just one of the four 'Artcore' series of guitars made by 'Ibanez'. I did a bit of research on these guitars, and it seems that for a long time, good full acoustic and semi-acoustic guitars were very expensive and the inexpensive ones weren't very good at all. So in 2002, 'Ibanez' introduced the 'Artcore' series and that has changed everything. Now everyone, jazzers, rockers, pickers, and punks can get a well-made, great looking and great sounding "jazz-box" at a price everyone can afford. This guitar is aimed at the intermediate to professional guitarist after a versatile sounding and great looking guitar at a very affordable price, and with a retail price of only \$995.00, 'Ibanez' certainly has achieved this.

I really enjoyed getting that raunchy rockabilly sounding - "Living End" tone

One thing I noticed even before picking this guitar up is the exquisite finish and attention to detail by the crew at 'Ibanez'. The 'violin sunburst' coloured flamed maple top / back and sides are very impressive looking, right down to the matching flamed maple pick-guard and 'Artcore' DX fingerboard inlays. This is a beautiful looking guitar with a faultless appearance. On my first play of this instrument, I found it to be very well balanced and easy to play sitting or standing. It came strung with medium-light strings, that felt good for me, but real jazz players will have to replace them straight away with much heavier strings, which will only add to the already fat jazz tone.

Most full and semi-acoustics in this price range feature simple bolt-on necks, but the 'Artcore' series feature a painstakingly crafted 'set-in' mahogany neck for a fuller tone, more sustain and easier upper fret access. It has 22 large frets which were tapered and seated very neatly with not a sharp fret edge in sight. The neck was so smooth it felt like it had been played for years. The action was perfectly set up straight out of the box and the intonation perfect. It has the very distinctive 'Ibanez' jazz headstock with three die cast tuners per side and it kept perfectly in tune during the whole review. As you can tell already, I am pretty impressed with this guitar and felt settled with it straight away.

The AF-85 has two medium output 'Artcore' pickups with chrome covers, which produce clean, clear full and semi-acoustic tones. Obviously perfect for jazz, but add some gain and they crunch up nicely and sound perfect for rock as well. I played this guitar



through my 'Marshall' JCM-600, using just the amps clean and crunch channels, and I really enjoyed getting that raunchy rockabilly sounding - "Living End" tone just by winding on a little gain, which sounded great.

The neck pick-up sounds very warm and by adding a little reverb you will get that very nice fat jazz tone. The 'Artcore' pick-ups have definitely been matched perfectly for the tones you would expect from this guitar. I then I played it through my 'Digitech RP-21d' digital effects unit and found the pickups also worked well with effects in the chain, a perfect mixture and very versatile. Unplugged, this guitar is also seriously loud, with a very resonant body, the large hollow body and the 'F' holes really making for a big acoustic sound. With easy upper fret access and the extra sustain of a 'set-in' neck, this guitar felt great for playing both rhythm or lead styles. As you can tell, there is not much that I don't like about this guitar.

The AF-85 is fitted with the 'ART-1' bridge, which looks very similar to the 'tune-o-matic' style bridge, but with the jazz style chrome tail-piece which attaches to the base of the guitar. Looks very 'jazzy', solid and adds to the overall great look of this guitar. A three-way toggle switch switches between the neck,

bridge or both pick-ups together, and each pick-up has its own volume and tone control for greater tone adjustment. Of course the knobs are vintage style and match perfectly with the 'Violin Sunburst' finish.

For those of you who really love your guitar specs, I thought I would include these dimensions. Scale - 628mm / 24.75", Width at Nut - 43 mm, Width at Last Fret - 58.5 mm, Thickness at 1st fret - 21.5mm, Thickness at 12th - 26.5 mm, Radius - 305. All in all, these specs make up for a very comfortable and easy to play neck.

In the 'Artcore' series there are 4 different models available - the AK/ AS / AF and AG. There is a huge assortment of styles, both true hollow body guitars and semi-acoustics in all different sizes, thicknesses and shapes. The AFs 'tremolo' fitted model offers an original design vintage vibrato with a roller saddle bridge and all the great vibe of the classic trem's - with none of their traditional tuning glitches. With 'Artcore' series of guitars you get an amazingly affordable price plus the quality and tone you expect from 'Ibanez', the guitar company with over four decades of experience making full and semi-acoustic guitars. With a retail price of only \$995.00, I have certainly changed my mind about the old "jazz box", so get on out there and have a play of one, I'm sure you will be impressed... Awesome...!!!

FEATURES

- Flamed maple top / back and sides
- 3 piece maple / mahogany neck material
- Artcore 'set-in' neck with 'DX' inlays
- Bound rosewood fingerboard
- Chrome Hardware
- Art-1 Bridge
- Die Cast Machine Heads
- Ach-1 Neck pickup
- Ach-2 Bridge pickup
- 3 position 'toggle' pickup selector
- Gold Vintage Knobs

PRODUCT: Cort MMP-1 Master Series Guitar

REVIEWER: Phil Para DISTRIBUTOR: Lamberti Bros 03 9376 8111

Another Cort guitar has arrived to road test and as with any other Cort I have reviewed before, this guitar too is a visual delight. Immediate standout features of the MMP-1 are the design, craftsmanship and the hand selected woods used. In past Cort reviews I have noted that this company only use North American Hardwoods but as that claim has disappeared from their website I am not certain if this is still fact across the board however it is certainly one of the features of the M Series

The MMP-1 is carved from mahogany and features an arched, flamed maple top and chamber design. A high quality laquered finish sets off an antique burst which is edged with a dark violin antique hue. A blonde maple binding completes the effect. The end result is incredibly deep and lustrous.

The set in neck is also mahogany and has a comfortable silken feel. A rosewood fretboard sports 22 large frets, they sit flush with the edges of the binding and the fret levelling is very consistent. The ivory coloured, graphite nut is also perfectly set and cut. At the rear base of the headstock the neck has been contoured into a deep lip. A complex "Tree of Life" design snakes along the full length of the fretboard and designates the position markers. This design is made from a combination of pearl and abalone inlays set around intricately carved and inlaid wood which creates a fine trunk and branches. Because of the combined features of the design I have laboured for a long time to find a description that doesn't make it sound overdone and clumsy. You will have to trust me; this is very fine work indeed. A true example of "master craftsmanship".

Quite frankly, I found the MMP-1 to be flawless and inspirational to play.

The ebony headstock has 3 Sperzel Trim lock tuners a side, a chrome Cort logo and the characteristic bite from the top right side. The truss rod adjustment is easily accessed in the front of the headstock behind the nut.

The Sperzel trim lock tuners and the graphite nut combined with the tune-o-matic style bridge and the top loading stop tailpiece allow fast restringing and keep the guitar in tune. The controls are a three way toggle switch, a volume control and a tone control.

At first glance the neck join seems far too thick to allow access to the high end and I was very reticent about the combination of a thick neck join and the arched top for the playability factor. However, after playing the guitar I can honestly say that there was none of the anticipated restriction and in fact, it is



particularly comfortable playing in the higher register as the double cutaway and the neck join contouring has been specifically, ergonomically designed to enable the reach needed.

Although slightly heavy, the guitar is well balanced and comfortable. I have played the MMP-1 through a Laney VC30 and a Marshall JMP 100. As soon as I began playing the MMP-1 it was clear that this is a sophisticated instrument that plays as well as many guitars of twice the price.

I was amazed that the dual Seymour Duncan Humbuckers: JB in the bridge and Jazz in the neck, also provide comparable tones to a single coil solid body guitar. (The generic specs on the Cort website state that the MMP-1 is fitted with Mighty Mites and as the guitar I am reviewing has the Seymour Duncans, I suggest you check specs with your Cort dealer if ordering a MMP-1. I can say though that I have played a Cort M800 that had Mighty Mites fitted and although distinctly different tonal qualities I was very pleased with that result as well)

The response was very even all the way down the neck and the clarity is fantastic. The bridge pickup has great treble response which can be rolled off well with

the tone control. Solos here literally scream. With the toggle switch in the middle position both pickups are activated and the tone opens up giving a nice quality for rhythm, there are some nice blues tones for solos here as well. The neck pickup has smooth, fat, tones very suitable for jazz and blues.

I am quite impressed with the balanced and articulated tones throughout and although there is only one tone control it is extremely efficient for all pickup positions. This guitar is very versatile and will translate all styles of music really well.

It is surely a sign of a great instrument when it sounds fantastic played "clean" straight through the amp however I found a great level of enhancement with everything I tried it through in my effects rack as well. Quite frankly, I found the MMP-1 to be flawless and inspirational to play.

Cort claim that their instruments are "designed by musicians for musicians" and this doesn't appear to be a mere slogan. I am always impressed by the fine craftsmanship of the Cort custom shop luthiers and their obvious attention to detail. The MMP-1, at \$2395 including a plush, deluxe Cort case, is the highest end of the M Series, It is a professional guitar that doesn't appear to have many rivals in its price range. Cort are continuing to set extremely high standards in custom shop guitars for a very reasonable price.

FEATURES

- Mahogany body
- Arched, flame maple top
- Blonde maple binding
- Mahogany set-in neck
- "Tree of Life" design through fretboard (made of pearl abalone and wood)
- Sperzel Trim lock tuners
- Tune-o-matic style bridge
- Chrome Cort logo

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PRODUCT: Laney VC30-112 Class A Vintage Combo

REVIEWER: Phil Para DISTRIBUTOR: Lamberti Bros 03 9376 8111

To mark the tenth anniversary of the Laney VC 30 Combo series I am looking at a VC30 -112 this month. Originally modelled as a vintage style British valve amp, after ten years of steady sales the VC is already a classic of its own era and set to become a vintage that I believe will still be a market leader in its class in years to come.

The VC30 112 is a 30-watt Class A tube combo amp which is also available in; 2x10, and 2x12 configurations. This model I am reviewing is loaded with a Celestion V12 60 silver series speaker. Many will know that the earlier models in this amp series were loaded with HH Invader 35 watt speakers and by all reports these speakers were terrific but as I have only played through the current model I can make no comparison here. The preamp tubes are ECC83's/7025 and power amp output tubes are a matched quartet of EL84's.

There is also a range of dedicated extension cabinets to provide the player the opportunity to mix and match speaker compliment to get their chosen classic tones.

The VC30 features two channels; clean and drive, three band EQ and a bright switch. Spring reverb, hi and lo input jacks, a footswitch jack for drive and reverb control, an effects loop with top panel level control and an extension speaker jack and a switch to change ohms.

Laney always provide a straightforward no nonsense look to their amps; (although

... the VC30 combo series has serious street cred!

having said that, I do believe a red fur covered stack has been sighted on various stages around the world, you would need to go to Laney's website to authenticate that piece of gossip) The VC series has black tolex covering with black and white grillecloth set off by white piping. The front is further decorated with a rather large Laney Logo in white plastic which to my mind is quite incongruous with a vintage style amp. The amp's top mounted chrome control panel has vintage-style pointer knobs recessed at the rear of a thick leather handle and chrome vents. The speakers are mounted in an open-back cabinet fitted with a protective metal grille.

An important detail that shows some lateral thinking from the Laney design department is



the logical location of controls which face the player standing in front of his amp. Many vintage amps with top-mounted controls require frustrating upside down reading skills.

After a quick "dry" run at home at low volumes and not expecting too much kick from 30 watts I gave the amp a live run at a duo gig using an Eric Clapton signature series Strat. From the punters point of view it must have looked like I was involved in a private joke, as halfway through the first song one eyebrow must have been raised in surprise..... "this is no ordinary 30 watt amp!" The VC30 has serious gain and tone control that seems inordinately out of place with the size and basic equalization of the rig.

In the studio I ran many types of guitars and effects through the amp. Each retained its inherent tonal qualities and at no point in volume did I find any compromise or sacrifice of tone as can sometimes be experienced with larger rigs. This is an important factor which also makes the VC 30 a great choice for studio work. There was little or no crossover distortion and here lies the obvious advantage of true British Class A tube amplification.

The clean channel has a nice array of tones and when playing as advised in the manual with all tone controls at 7 an authentic vintage tone is easily achieved.

The drive channel delivers a large spectrum of sounds from classic British rock, through heavy rock and grunge to fat blues tones.

For players needing extra distortion levels a tube screamer or other setup of choice can be added via the effects loop.

Both channels are rich in tonal quality and are very responsive and allow for dynamic playing. The bright switch adds a nice sparkle to the top end and the the spring reverb provides warm, complex tones that were neither too subtle or too enhanced. This reverb is an artful effect that blends smoothly with the original signal.

I know it would be hard to shift the preconceptions of a lot of "power" guitarists out there but this is not a domestic model, the VC30 combo series has serious street cred!

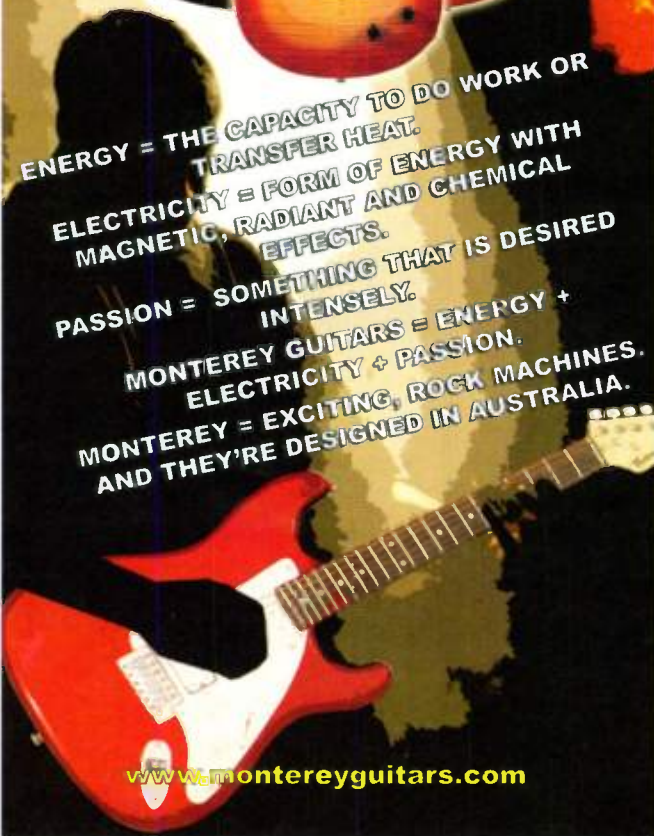
Overall after spending quite some time with it, there really isn't any significant issue that I can fault with the VC 30. I also believe it will cope well with any playing style. Ordinarily this amp retails for \$1499 but with the anniversary special of \$1099 and the optional footswitch thrown in, I think that anyone in the market for a new amp should give the Laney VC30 some wise consideration. After all this is an established model that is still entirely relevant after 10 years of production and as such should not reveal any unexpected flaws.

FEATURES

- 30 watt Class A combo
- Celestion V1260 series speaker
- Ecc83/7025 Preap tubes
- Clean and drive channels
- 3 band EQ
- Spring reverb
- Hi and lo in put jacks
- Foot switch jack
- Effects loop
- Extension speaker jack
- Ohm change switch

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PRODUCT: Hughes & Kettner Warp X Head

REVIEWER: Simon Patterson DISTRIBUTOR: Central Musical Instruments 03 9315 2244

You are about to enter the 'Dark Zone' here readers! In the following review the new Hughes and Kettner Warp X Head was put under the microscope in order to see how it performed. Hughes and Kettner have long enjoyed a reputation for typically high standard German engineering when it comes to their products—so with that in mind, let's put it to the test and enter that 'Dark Zone'.

Overview

The Warp X amplifier is the latest offering from H&K as part of their Warp range of products. Regarded as the flagship of the range, it's easy to see why with its bold appearance and vibe. Aimed squarely at the heavy end of the guitar market, the Warp X is definitely built to rock! Hughes and Kettner have delivered a bold new addition to a market that already has its fair share of 'heavy' competitors.



head is the midi channel switching which allows for automation via MIDI patch changing. Unfortunately this head didn't come fitted with the MIDI module. The module is an optional extra (@\$360) and can be used not only with the Warp X, but also with many other H&K models.

you'll be extremely happy here. For those readers who follow bands such as System of a Down, Pantera, Disturbed or Korn, this channel should cover it.

Again the 6L6 power stage helps here keeping the sound very focussed even at ridiculous gain levels. There is definitely an American vibe here with the amp responding very powerfully with both the Tokai and the 335. Even at lower gain settings, the Warp channel responded very

musically—with a very even, harmonically rich aspect. There it is— that big, slightly grainy US sound!

In spite of the Warp X reviewed not having the MIDI module fitted, I managed to control the channel switching, using MIDI, via a multi-effect unit and the Warp X delivered in all intended areas, and then some. Regardless of the Warp truly being a modern rock machine, I could envisage the amp covering a number of situations admirably. With its very useable clean channel, highly adaptable effects loop and seriously rockin' Warp channel, the Warp X covers a lot of ground.

The Warp X is a serious bit of gear that should sit well amongst many players who require some rockin' contemporary sounds in a bold package.

The Warp channel is really where the head says "That's what I'm talkin' about!"

My initial impression of the amp was one of solid construction and striking aesthetics, with the plexi-glass panel lighting up red, highlighting the large 'Warp' logo. For the hardcore out there, this will definitely get you noticed on stage.

All eight valves are visible with this back lighting and are mounted on a solid steel chassis. The amp definitely has a feel of quality when it comes to construction and is housed in an inch thick cabinet finished with heavy duty black vinyl—of course!

Features

The Warp X is equipped with four 6L6 power tubes and four 12 AX7/ECC83 preamp tubes. Controls for the two channels on the Warp X are fairly standard. On the clean channel you have your basic volume, bass, middle, treble and presence. With the dirty Warp channel, there is gain, loss, middle, treble and presence. Two additional buttons that appear on the Warp channel are the sub switch (which adds additional gain to low end frequencies for total 'bone shaking') and the Lube switch which increases dynamic response. Effects on/off switches also appear on each of the two channels. Effects can be run in either series/or parallel and there are master volume and master effects level controls used in the Warp X. There are also jacks to run various speaker configurations with the Warp X—these are 1x4 ohm, 1x8 ohm or 2 x 16ohm boxes, or 1x16ohm cabinet. One nice feature of this

In Operation

I tested the Warp X in conjunction with a Hughes and Kettner 100 watt Celestion Greenback loaded LC412 cabinet. For guitars, I used a Tokai with 3 single coil pickups and a Fernandes 335. Rated at 120 watts, the Warp X at first impression is an exceptionally loud amp. My other initial impression with this unit was how noisy the power transfer seemed to be with this particular unit—which may be an irrelevant point when fully cranked at a gig.

The clean channel proved to have formidable headroom (like a few other contenders in the current modern head market) and remained very tight at high levels with both single coils and humbucker pickups. Given the 6L6 power stage, the clean channel displayed some elements of the Fender vibe but seemed not quite as rich, harmonically speaking. The sound seemed very serviceable with both guitars but not quite as complex as I might have hoped. When I introduced some effects to the clean channel, the Warp X performed flawlessly both in series and parallel modes. Purely out of versatility I tried a few pedals into the front of the Warp X and found the amp preferring to have the direct signal from the guitar as opposed to that of additional overdrive sources.

The Warp channel is really where the head says "That's what I'm talkin' about"! If you're a fan of the ubiquitous drop "D",

FEATURES

- 120 watts
- All tube
- Preamp 4x12 AX7/ Ecc83 valves
- Powerstage 4 x6L6 valves
- 2 channels: clean, warp
- Effects loop series/parallel
- MIDI channel switching
- Master effects level dial
- Backlit front plexi-glass panel

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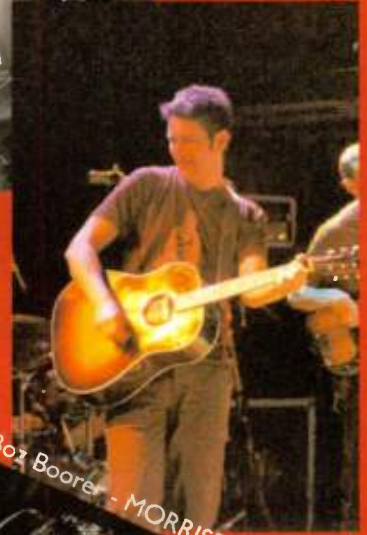


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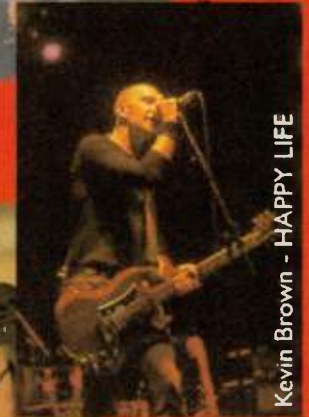
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Well that's what these guys said -
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PRODUCT: Tanglewood TW15 & TW45 Guitars

REVIEWER: Scott Mullane DISTRIBUTOR: National Music 1800 773 438



Upon receiving the two Tanglewood guitars for review, the similarities to another well-known "T" brand guitar were apparent. Right down to the font used on the logo. These similarities continue in almost every aspect of the Tanglewood guitars, except the all-important bottom line. These guitars can comfortably lay claim to the catch phrase, "bang for your buck". So let's get straight in and see what these value packages have to offer.

The two models were the Tanglewood TW15 and the Tanglewood TW 45. Both were acoustic/electric cutaways fitted with Fishman pick-ups and pre-amps, solid tops backs and sides, and all of this for well under \$1000.00. Clearly, unbelievable value for money.

The TW15 [RRP\$899.00] features a traditional dreadnought body shape with a solid spruce top and solid mahogany back and sides. A mahogany neck with a rosewood fingerboard and genuine Grover machine heads. The timbers are highlighted with a beautiful satin finish, which gives the neck a great feel and allows the body to resonate freely. The weight of this guitar is well balanced with or without a guitar strap. The feel of the instrument was stunning with one of the best actions I have felt on an acoustic guitar. The ease of touch made this guitar a pleasure to play and produced a very satisfying acoustic tone. The sound was well balanced with a slightly lifted presence.

The Tanglewood TW45 [RRP\$799.00] has a

mini jumbo style to it, very round and lovely to look at. The solid cedar top is complimented beautifully with a full gloss sunburst finish. Also featuring solid mahogany back and sides, a mahogany neck with a rosewood fingerboard and Gotoh style machine heads. Although the body has a gloss finish, the neck remains satin, giving great feel and playability. The weight of the instrument was the only indicator of a less than top end instrument. Having said that, when was the last time a few less grams was a problem with a guitar? As with the TW15, the TW45 has an equally fine action, further enhancing the playing experience. Like the TW15, the TW45 has a very balanced tone, with a gentle rise to the top end. Although, those who prefer a fuller sound should stick to the TW15, as the TW45 is more suited to fingerpicking styles.

Plug it in or mic it up. Both of these guitars come fitted with Fishman Classic 4 pickup and preamp combinations, making this pair of guitars a solid live performer. Plugging both models through a DI yielded very similar sound and produced extremely flexible tones thanks to the broad sculpting capabilities of the Fishman's EQ.

The plugged in sound may be the same, but, as one would expect, their miked up sounds produced drastically different results. The miking combinations were classic Neumann U67 [valve] and AKG C451/CK1 through a Focusrite ISA 220 pre-amp. The TW45 was a surprise

package producing a beautifully balanced strumming tone, whereas, the TW15 had a little too much scoop to the mids. Inversely, the TW 15 was far superior when it came to fingerpicking, with the dreadnaught body offering just the right amount of sustain.

The ease of touch made this guitar a pleasure to play and produced a very satisfying acoustic tone

All in all, both of these models were fine performers, successfully earning an above average mark in all of the right categories. It needs to be clear that these guitars are not in the same top end league as Martin or Taylor, but they do perform admirably and are every bit the equal of the aforementioned "T" brand guitar at a fraction of the cost. All of this points to Tanglewood being a brand that we will surely be seeing a lot more of in the future.

FEATURES

TW15

- Solid Spruce top
- Solid Mahogany back and sides
- Fishman Classic 4 pickup & pre-amp
- Grover machine heads

TW45

- Solid Cedar top
- Solid Mahogany back and sides
- Fishman Classic 4 pickup & pre-amp

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