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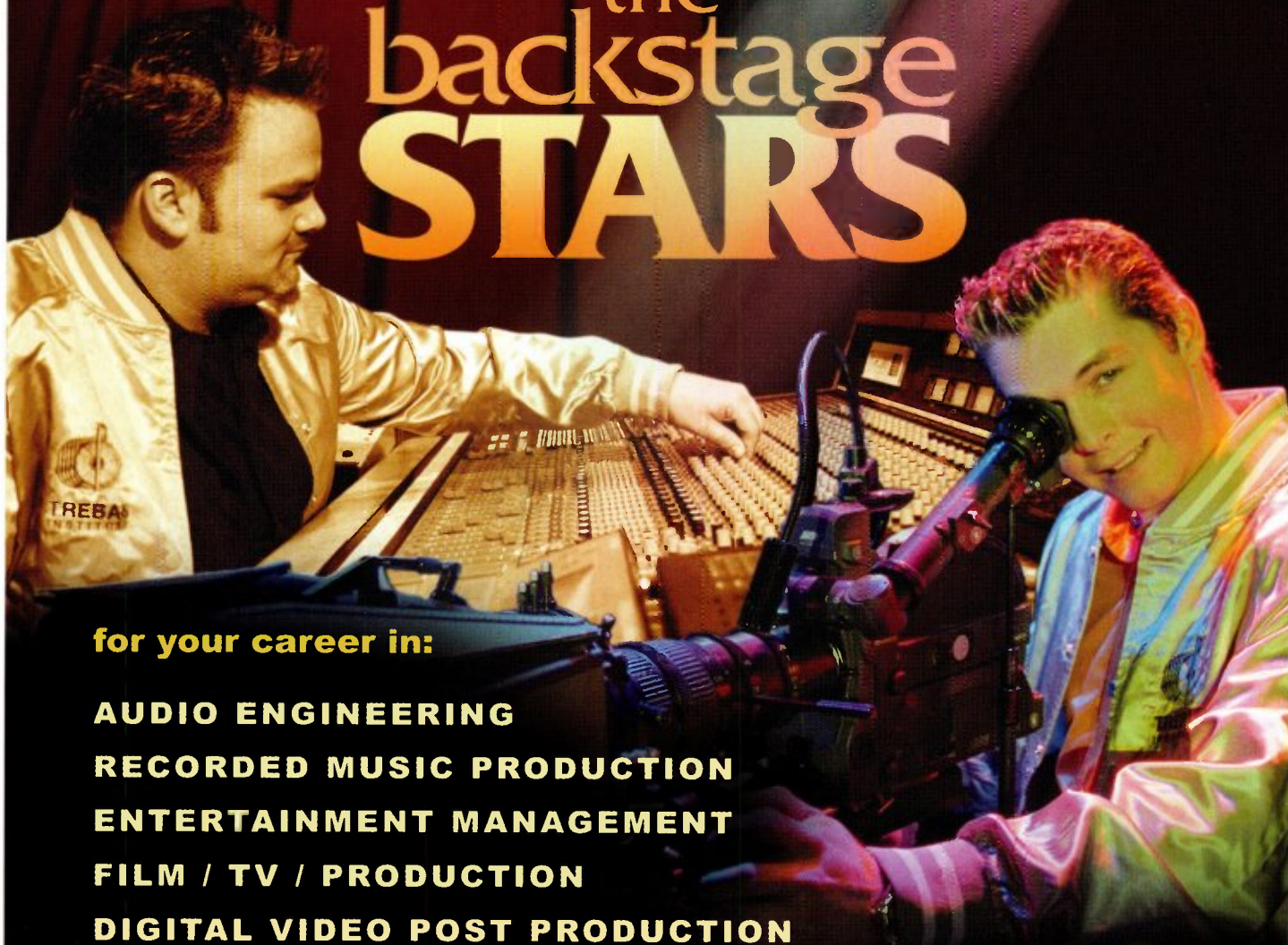
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FEATURES

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by Kevin Young

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by Karen Bliss

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40 Kathleen Edwards

by Kevin Young

Kathleen talks to *Canadian Musician* about how she recorded her latest album, *Back To Me*.

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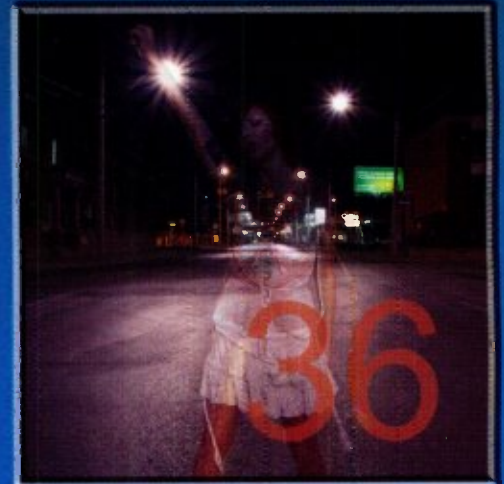
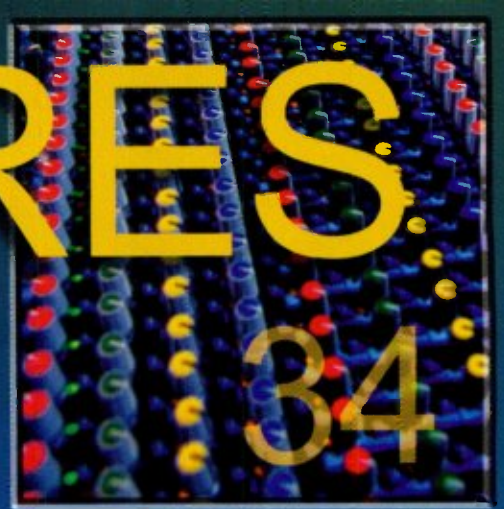
by Karen Bliss

Find out how Mark "London" Spicoluk juggles his time between playing bass in Closet Monster and running one of Canada's fastest growing record labels: Underground Operations.

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On the cover L-R: Byron Wong, David Usher & Jeff Pearce. Photo by Roy Timm



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For more information on products advertised in *Canadian Musician*, please see page 70 or visit www.canadianmusician.com.

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www.canadianmusician.com to write electronically.

Columnists Receive Praise

We've received a couple of letters praising some of *Canadian Musician's* regular columnists this issue, namely James Linderman and Vivian Clement. If there's anything out there that you'd like a columnist to write about, let us know at feedback@canadianmusician.com.

Hi James,
Enjoyed your first column in the November/December 2004 issue of *Canadian Musician*. I've been writing and performing my own songs for many years and have experienced the same thing as you – the songs I've purposely set out to write with commercial intent in mind have turned out to be hateful and uninspiring. On the other hand, the ones that came virtually "out of nowhere" and practically wrote themselves are the ones that others, and I as well, seem to love the most. They usually express something deep inside that I wasn't consciously aware of and are able to stimulate the emotions of the listener more than anything I could contrive to write. I guess I've always known that about my songwriting, but you're the first songwriter I've come across to put that realization into words. I look forward to your next column!

Karen Gold
Toronto, ON

Hey Karen

Thanks so much for your thoughtful and encouraging note. The next issue is actually out and it has Ron Sexsmith on the cover. The songwriting column is called "A Good Kind of Stress" and it's all about the placement of stress syllables, which I know does not sound like a very "out of nowhere" kind of writing concept, but it's great for developing writers and it's a great editing tool as well if your muse gets away from you at any point and you need to refocus the intent of your lyric. Anyway, I hope you enjoy it as well and find a use for the skill it describes. I would love to hear your songs sometime so if you have a site I can hear them at or if you want to send me some MP3s of stuff you've written it would be awesome. Thanks again Karen for taking the time to write, you made my day.

With Faithful Regards
James

Hi Vivian!

Just wanted to drop you a line and thank you for your articles that have appeared in *Canadian Musician*! As a rookie electric guitarist (I only purchased it this past week!), I especially appreciate the "practice" and "fretboard" ones which I will now attempt to fit into my learning process. Boy, there sure is a lot to learning music! But I am progressing (I have the tuning down pat along with chromatic scales A, E and A Major plus hammer ons and few other easy guitar tricks). I want to do it properly and learn everything I can and articles like yours will definitely help me get there.

Many thanks again and best wishes.
Regards,

Dave Ireland
Victoria, BC

Offering Up Advice

Dear CM,

I'm writing you about the "Avoiding Industry Suicide" article in the new mag (January/February 2005) page 42. I really liked it and took some advice that was in there. I wanted to let you know about my band The Ryde and our Web site www.theryde.ca. If you have any honest comments about our music, or can give us any advice on how to move up in the indie scene, please let me know.

Thank you,

Boris Novak
Toronto, ON

P.S. My drummer told me about your magazine!

Ed. – Boris, I'll pass on your comments to the article's author, Kevin Young. Maybe he can offer you some more advice!

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Commercial Airplay Myths About Radio

When talking to people who are launching their first couple of projects, invariably the same misunderstood points come up concerning commercial regular-rotation airplay. Here they are:

DJs Play the Records

This only applies to non-commercial radio, and specialty/mix show radio. The majority of people in the US [and Canada], however, listen to commercial regular-rotation radio, and on these stations the DJs have no say at all in what is going to be played (unless, in the case of a smaller station, the DJ is also the PD). So, the biggest pitfall to

avoid is asking a DJ at a commercial station "Can I give you my CD for possible rotation?" The DJ is not allowed to say "no" and he/she is probably not going to explain that only the PD can approve regular rotation. The DJ is just going to say "OK."

Good Songs Spread to Other Stations

Good songs (or for that matter, good programs) do not mystically spread to other stations. Every single song you hear (or every syndicated program you hear) on commercial regular-rotation radio is on that station because of layers of promotion

and marketing. The song you hear was the one that made it. It beat out the other 300 songs that were going for adds that week. What you don't hear are the endless phone calls, faxes, trade ads, personal meetings, consultant recommendations, call-out research, and other things which went into getting the station to add the record. All you heard was the record itself. And station owners make it a requirement that DJs make it sound like they picked the music themselves.

College or Specialty/Mixshow Will Expand to Commercial

Just because to do well on non-commercial or specialty/mixshow radio, it does not mean anything will happen on commercial regular-rotation radio. Matter of fact, nothing at all will happen at commercial unless a separate, higher-level campaign is put into place to take the record into regular rotation. The pitfall here is that a listener will hear something on college, and then a month later hear it on commercial, and conclude that the college caused the commercial to happen. The listener did not know that both campaigns were in place simultaneously, and the college simply went for adds a month earlier.

You Have to be Signed

Untrue. Being signed is only a signal to the stations that the basic marketing practices are going to be done right. If you have the budget, you can duplicate the marketing practices of larger labels, provided you know how. The band Creed set a good example of putting their \$5 million marketing dollars into the right place.

Request Calls Will Help

Not really. They won't hurt, but your time is better spent doing other things, like inviting people to your gigs. Stations know which calls are real, and which are bands and their friends. Stations have consultants and seminars which cover only this one topic.

I Can't Get Airplay Without Distribution

Depends on the size of radio that you are going after. Smaller commercial regular-rotation stations in smaller markets won't make this too much of a sticking point, especially if you have a powerful radio campaign going, or if you are doing great gigs in their city, or if you have great college or specialty/mixshow results. But the larger stations, which you can't work anyway until you do the smaller ones, won't touch a project that has no distribution.

I Can't Get Airplay Without Gigs

Again, depends on the size of radio that you are going after. Not being able to gig is a serious handicap at any station, but you can overcome it in smaller markets with intense radio promo, press, sales, and non-commercial results.

Non-Monitored Stations are of No Use

Non-monitored stations are of no use only on the Billboard, R&R, and the seven Album Network mag charts. But FMQB, CMJ, and all specialty/mixshow charts are compiled manually; since you need to start off on these smaller charts first, this works out just fine.

This article was supplied by Bryan Farrish Radio Promotion, (818) 905-8038, airplay@radio-media.com. For more tips and information on radio promotion check out their Web page at www.radio-media.com.

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Using The Lack Of Time To Your Benefit

by Tim Sweeney

The other day I was asked if there was anything that all music artists have in common. Of course there is! The lack of time. Whether you are doing your music full-time or balancing a day job and building your career, you never have enough time to do all the things on your list to promote your music. And this is where the problems begin.

When you have a long list of things to do when it comes to promoting your next show or trying to get a review or airplay, you are going to fail. The reason why is because you are trying to accomplish too many things at once. But before you waste your money by running out and hiring a publicist who still uses outdated press kits and old fashion bios or a "radio tracking" service who claims to be a radio promoter, lets sell the CDs you already have sitting on the floor.

Your first step is to cross off 90 per cent of what is on your "to do" list. Focus on two basic principals. One, you need to promote your music at all times! Whether you have a show coming up or not, you need to be talking to everyone about your music and give them a "proper" CD sampler. Two, you need to focus on your home city. Instead of driving hundreds of miles to play for 25 people, build a fan base of a few hundred fans at home before you start touring.

The key to selling your first or next 1,000 CDs is not airplay on a college radio station where they will play your song three or four times a week or airplay on the local show of a commercial radio station. It's not getting a review in a magazine that is primarily read by musicians who aren't going to buy your CD or travelling hundreds of miles to play another show where you don't have a lot of fans. The key to selling your first or next 1,000 CDs is YOU. People want to connect with you. Your music is a means for them to do that. Since you are the key, this means focusing your daily, weekly and monthly "to do" list

Before you spend the time making some grand marketing plan for the year that won't sell your first 1,000 or even 10,000 CDs in your home city (because you will be just repeating what you did last year that didn't work).

Tim Sweeney is a musician and writer who can be found online at www.TSAMusic.com.

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CHANGES

Celebrity Interview With Bruce Cockburn At NXNE 2005

The NXNE Music and Film Festival and Conference recently announced that one of Canada's finest musicians, Bruce Cockburn, will be one of this year's celebrity interviews.

Andy McLean, NXNE Managing Director, said, "We're thrilled to have Bruce Cockburn participate at NXNE. His unwavering independent approach to his music is a true inspiration to the emerging artists at the festival. He is one of Canada's most influential songwriters and someone who has achieved worldwide commercial success without compromising his commitment to speak out against injustices."

Bruce Cockburn is a world-class virtuoso guitar master, wordsmith, and an ambassador for humanitarian causes worldwide, who always remained true to himself and his music. He has been an acclaimed singer/songwriter/ musician for an astonishing 35 years as a solo artist, and has released 27 albums internationally through the independent Canadian label True North Records.

Cockburn has been the honoured recipient of awards such as: Order of Canada; the Governor General's Performing Arts Award; Italy's TENCO Award for Lifetime Achievement; Holland's Edison Award for album of the year for *Inner City Front* and three honorary doctorates. In addition, he has received 11 Juno Awards, 14 SOCAN awards and much more.

With 20 gold and platinum albums, Bruce Cockburn is in a rare league as an artist. He has been inducted into both the Canadian Music Hall of Fame and the Canadian Broadcast Hall of Fame. His appearance at NXNE will be his first, and it also marks the first time he has agreed to a celebrity interview.

The 11th annual NXNE Festival runs from June 9-11, 2005, in downtown Toronto. The Bruce Cockburn interview will be on Friday, June 10th at the Holiday Inn on King, the NXNE conference headquarters. Delegates from both the music and film conference will have the opportunity to access the interview. The delegate passes are available for sale on the NXNE Web site.

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The Festival International de Jazz de Montreal is on the cutting edge with the launch of the first ever Montreal Musician and Musical Instrument Show (MMMIS), at the up-coming 26th edition of the Festival.

The first of its kind in North America, the MMMIS will take place July 7-10, 2005, at the Complexe Desjardins' Grande Place.

Admission to the show and all activities is free, and will take place on the stage or among the 50 kiosks. By making the festival non-profit, the festival hopes the number of people in attendance will increase. Ultimately, the festival wants to encourage everyone to make-music part of daily life.

Geared at manufacturers of musical instruments, equipment and accessories; distributors; retailers; music schools; publishers; musicians and the public, the festival hopes to encourage active interaction between everyone.

As a catalyst for musical expressing the festival will allow visitors to learn the nuts and bolts of music while discovering the most recent products.

A range of activities will be available for amateurs and professionals alike. Workshops, demonstrations and instrument manufacturing will all take place on site. There will also be musical performances, specialized master classes and greet events featuring well-known artists.

Although direct sales or solicitation will not be permitted on the MMMIS site, an auction will take place where autographed instrument and show tickets will be given away. The money raised will be used to finance the event and a portion of the proceeds raised on site or on the Internet will be donated to Young Musicians of the World. As a partner of Jeunesse du monde (Youth of the World), the organization is dedicated to the launching and operation of schools throughout the world that specialize in the teaching of traditional music.

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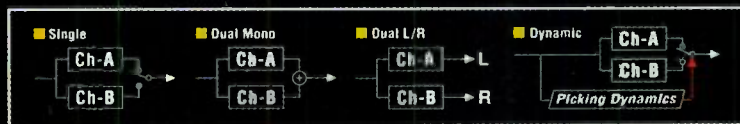
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World Radio History

Cape Breton International Drum Festival

Nominated "Event Of The Year" by the NECMA (East Coast Music Association), the Cape Breton International Drum Festival celebrates its fifth anniversary on April 30th and May 1st, 2005, at the theatre of dreams, The Savoy Theatre, Glace Bay Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

This year's festival will be a weekend of fun, music and education featuring some of the greatest drummers. The Festival organizers Bruce & Gloria Jean Aitken, Mike Megaffin, and Ryan MacArthur were proud to announce this year's line-up, which includes some of the greatest

drummers.

Included in the line up is Bernard Purdie (the most recorded drummer in history), Uriel Jones (a Motown great), Dom Famularo, Marco Minneman, Billy Ward, Will Kennedy (Yellow Jackets), Project A.D. (Bruce Aitken and Keith Dawson Jr.), Yvette "Baby Girl" Preyer (Michael MacDonald) and many more. The weekend will also include special guests, door prizes and a trade show. The Festival is for everyone interested in music, not just drummers. To enjoy the Cape Breton International Drum Festival bookings are essential.

For more information visit, www.cbdrumfest.com.

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TMX Everything Music Under One Roof

The Toronto Music Expo (TMX) is Toronto's first ever music consumer show set to take place November 19-20, 2005 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

Produced by one of Canada's leading media companies, Dynamic Publishing and Events Management, which is part of Torstar, the show will feature professional workshops and seminars, the latest instruments and gear, a stage for up-and-coming artists to play at, and special guest speakers and artists.

The show will attract musicians from every background and age. With everything from guitar picks to full-stage set-ups featured, there will be something for every musician from any style.

The focus of TMX is on the consumer show, not on live music. Moreover, the centrally located show hall, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, is on the TTC line making it accessible to everyone in the entire GTA.

In the past, consumer shows have failed, for the most part because nobody knew about them. However, as part of Torstar, TMX will be marketed heavily to Southern Ontario through print media, industry publications, and various radio and web resources. On top of which, Metroland, as part of Torstar, will be able to promote the show through The Star, Eye and over 70 community papers. They also plan to work through partner organizations and exhibitors to spread the news.

For more information visit, www.toronto-musicexpo.com.

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RØDE NT2-A Microphone

by Ron Skinner



The RØDE NT2-A microphone is the latest addition to the RØDE family of affordable high-quality microphones. Many people will remember the original RØDE NT2 that by now has become a bit of a classic. The NT2 was RØDE's very first foray into microphone design and was introduced in 1990. Before the NT2, RØDE was best known for microphone modification, often taking poorly manufactured Chinese microphones and turning them into high-quality, high-performance, yet extremely affordable microphones for the Australian broadcast, live-sound and recording market. From these humble beginnings, RØDE has turned into one of the world's premier microphone manufacturers and it all began with the NT2.

This Australian microphone manufacturer bases the NT2-A around the newly designed Type HF-1 dual diaphragm, which came about after years of research and development. The HF-1 diaphragm and the NT2-A microphone were both designed and manufactured in RØDE's relatively new 70,000 square-foot microphone assembly and design factory in Silverwater, Australia. If you are familiar with the RØDE NT2000, you will be familiar with the sound of this beautifully designed 1-inch edge terminated, gold sputtered dual diaphragm capsule. The main difference in the design of the NT2000 and NT2-A is that while the NT2000 offered continuously variable polar patterns, filters and pads, the NT2-A features fixed variable settings for these features. The main reason for not providing the continuously variable features is a simple one: price. The NT2-A retails in Canada for \$579 while the NT2000 is \$799. The second reason is probably a practical one. While the continuously variable controls are a nice idea, they aren't exactly needed for most applications. In fact the NT2-A offers plenty of flexibility and at the price this much flexibility is rarely offered.

So, let's talk a bit about these features. The NT2-A offers users three selectable polar patterns: cardioid, omni and bi-directional. A high pass filter is provided that allows for 3dB of gain reduction at 80 Hz and 40 Hz. In addition a -5dB and -10dB pad are provided. As mentioned above, the capsule is a 1-inch dual diaphragm, which is internally shock-mounted to protect from rumble etc. The electronics are all very modern and thus provide an extremely low noise floor and an impressive dynamic range of 140dB. The frequency response of the NT2-A is fairly flat in all of the three selective polar patterns with a nice boost around 10 kHz.

Enough of the tech talk; let's talk a bit about how the NT2-A sounds. All in all I found the sound of the NT2-A to be quite impressive. I had a chance to try it out on several instruments and in most cases it performed quite well. My favourite application for the NT2-A was in front of an acoustic guitar. The microphone provided a fairly warm bottom end and the boost in the high frequency helped bring out the clarity of the instrument. I also had the chance to listen to the NT2-A on tabla and I found that it gave me a nice punchy bottom while again providing clarity in the high frequencies.

I should also mention how robust the NT2-A seems to be. With its very durable nickel finish this microphone looks like it could be run over by a train and still survive, which is a good trait in a microphone if you plan to do lots of remote recording or roadwork. The steel mesh head also seems to be built to last, which makes this an ideal microphone to place on tom-toms without fear of a drummer accidentally giving it a whack. And by the way, I tried it on a floor tom and the results were great.

It looks as if RØDE has done it again with the NT2-A. They have built a great microphone that sounds spectacular and at a price that is well within our reach. Only time will tell if the NT2-A will become a classic like the original RØDE NT2 but for my money they have created a microphone that would easily stand up to many of today's classics.

For more production information, contact: Audio Distributors International (ADI), 1275 Newton, #6, Boucherville, PQ J4B 5H2 (450) 449-8177, FAX (450) 449-8180, info@adi-online.net, www.adi-online.net.

Ron Skinner is owner of Heading North Mastering in Toronto and can be reached at heading_north@hotmail.com.

Distributor's Comments

Thank you for taking the time to review another great RØDE product. The original NT2 was a huge success in its time setting legendary sales records. Kudos to RØDE for doing it once again!

Richard Lasnier
President, ADI

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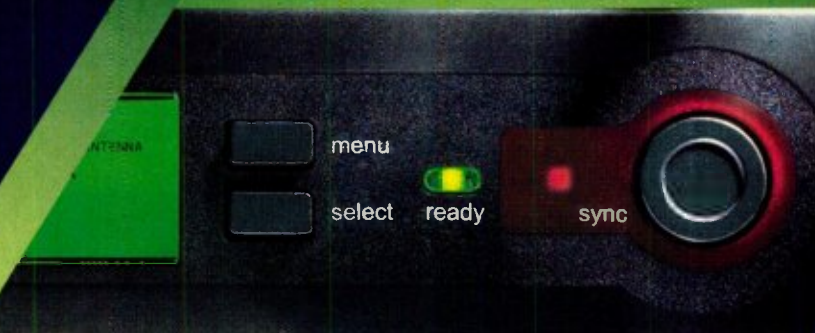
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Mountain Rythm Custom Series Congas

by Chris Taylor-Munro

Darren and Caryn Goldin created Mountain Rythm on the West Coast of Canada because they wanted to build better quality drums at decent prices. The djembe was the drum that launched it all with the "Simple Twist" tuning system; a clever and less time-consuming process for making fine adjustments or complete head changes for that matter. Upon relocating to Ontario in 1998 they expanded the business side (Ryan Goldin) and workshop (Riz). Now the "little drum company" ships the world over and has grown to include bongos, ashikos, cajons, hardware, carrying cases, all hand percussion and a complete range of congas. Five series (six if you count the hardware upgrades) ensure they have a set of congas for your needs and budget. Having worked in retail I have had the privilege of trying all but (until now) the flagship Custom Series the subject of this Road Test.

First impression: these are beautifully crafted congas with a subtle, yet at the same time rich, appearance. As with the rest of the drums offered by Mountain Rythm the wood grain effect is brought out and highlighted by the natural finish and will vary depending on your choice of wood. The Custom Series is offered in Maple or Mahogany as the standard wood types, but custom hardwoods of any type are made to special order. Whatever your choice of wood, the shells are sealed in a two-stage process ensuring the prevention of cracks in the future. The Maple is blond (au naturel) in colour, but the Mahogany drums tested were stained for a deep chocolate brown effect that looks particularly fantastic in contrast to the chrome hardware and natural calfskin heads (a feature unique to Mountain Rythm) that come standard to the Custom Series. Pre-fabricated heads are available for all sizes including 10" requinto, 11" quinto, 11 3/4" conga and of course the big fella' the 12 1/2" tumba. One feature that is not standard, although can of course be special ordered on the Custom Series is the use of reinforcement rings at the base of the drum. If keeping the bottom of the conga from getting chewed up is a priority then I advise getting them, but protection aside, the purpose of the ring on other congas is to keep the wood from bending back to its original shape over time. No need to worry about the Custom Series. Each piece of wood (or stave) is individually cut to shape without disturbing the natural grain from a larger piece of solid wood and then assembled like a drum puzzle if you will as opposed to steamed and bent into place like the majority of congas manufactured today. Thirty individual staves make up each conga and the solidity is evident and should remain that way for many generations of conga players to come.

The hardware is second to none in terms of qual-

ity, precision and expected longevity. As mentioned earlier chrome is standard, but black chrome and gold are offered allowing you to further customize the appearance. Three-bolt side plates look tasteful mounted flush to the shell and are in keeping with the six 5/16" heavy-duty tension rods. The rims are curved for your comfort and ease of playing for long periods of time and are handsomely engraved with the Mountain Rythm logo. A single logo plaque on the shell completes the look. My test subjects for



the Maple Series are a pair (tumba and conga) of demos from a generation prior to the equally sized Mahogany giving me an indication of how time and the rigours of real-world "abuse" have fared on the drums; all wood seams and hardware are just as tight as the newer Mahogany models.

Sound-wise the drums are quite versatile in their tuning ranges – I suspect – because of the natural heads. Even at lower tensions the heads respond with more life than typical rawhide heads. They also feel

softer on the hands after lengthy sessions, which means less chance of your own hands becoming rawhide themselves. The Maple has a brighter tone with a little more sustain versus the Mahogany's deeper bottom end and overall rounded, dare I say, more subdued tone. The edge of the head provides clear highs on both models with the Mahogany having a fuller sound. Using flat-handed strokes in the centre of the head reveals the Mahogany's deeper bottom end, but the pop from the slaps on the Maple is more easily attained and better defined. That said both sound world class and choosing one over the other would be a personal preference for the seasoned player. I expected the weight to be different between the two wood types, the Maple being the heavier, but alas the two congas weighed in on my bathroom scale (How scientific is that?) at 23 lbs. each ... even Steven! With such great looking and, more importantly, sounding drums handcrafted right here in Ontario, Canada, the Mountain Rythm Custom Series Congas are sure to be a popular choice for professionals here and abroad. All Custom congas are made to order so be patient as the six-to-eight-week manufacturing process is definitely worth it.

The manufacturer's suggested retail prices for the Custom Series Congas reviewed are: \$1,160 for the 10" Requinto, \$1,190 for the 11" Quinto, \$1,225 for the 11 3/4" Conga, and lastly, \$1,260 for the 12 1/2" Tumba.

For more product information, contact: Mountain Rythm, PO Box 1356, Lakefield, ON K0L 2H0 (905) 764-6543, FAX (905) 764-6685, drums@mountainrythm.com, www.mountainrythm.com.

Musician Chris Taylor-Munro is a Toronto-based freelance writer who drummed for Hydrofoil and David Usher/Moist.

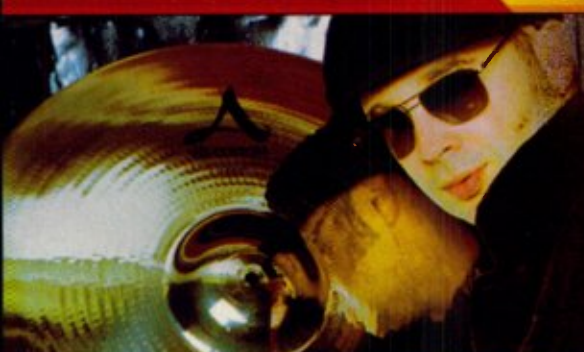
Manufacturer's Comments

Thanks to *Canadian Musician* for taking the time to review our Custom Congas. We would like to add that our Custom Series is truly a custom-ordered line. We can offer drums from a variety of commercially available hard woods, with many different finish options and any of the hardware choices mentioned above. In addition to congas, our Custom Series line also features bongos, wood-shelled timbales, bata and djembes which can be made in matching woods and stains.

Ryan Goldin
Mountain Rythm



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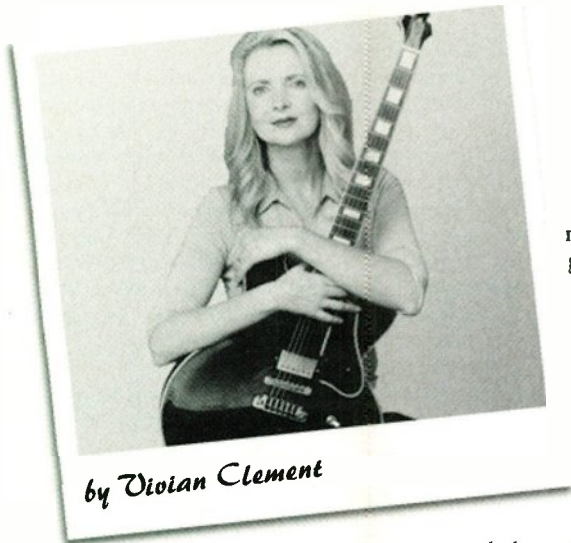
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Guitar And The Art Of Singing



by Vivian Clement

If I could get a penny for every time I've been asked, "how do I learn to play guitar and sing at the same time?", I'd probably have a nice down payment for a house in the Bahamas. Many guitarists assume that since they are able to play guitar and can also sing (or somewhat sing) that they should automatically be able to do both together. There may be some fortunate coordinated guitarists out there who can do this task with not too much problem, but for the most part it is a learned art.

Enter the brain lesson. Several years ago, I decided to do a little research on the correlation between music and the brain. I was mostly interested in memory and discovering methods to speed up my ability to learn guitar. What I was actually trying to do was shorten my practicing time and wanted to see if I could "play smarter not harder." The results? My practicing time didn't get much shorter but I came across a remarkable fact about how the brain works in regards to music and vocalization. Supposedly the human brain possesses seven distinct intelligences. The two that I will focus on for this issue are the communication (vocalization) and musical intelligences. These two sections are located in separate parts of the brain and function independently. But something cool happens when you decide to make them work together; a network of neurons begins to develop between the two. These

neurons are kind of like cables that go from one area to the next, communicating to each other and passing on music and muscle memory information. It is a scientific fact that association triggers memory, therefore if there has never been any association between these two parts of your brain they will not necessarily know how to work together. This may seem very cerebral (pardon the pun) but it

helps explain the difficulty you may encounter when trying to sing and play. You may be able to play wonderful guitar rhythms and licks and even sing till the birds come home, but if you haven't yet spent the time building these networks, your brain will need practice before it can do what you are asking it to do. Learning to play an instrument and sing is a completely separate skill than just playing alone or singing alone. Because of that, if you are just starting to do this you may feel like you are a complete beginner so you will need to apply patience to your practicing.

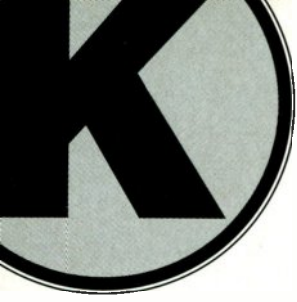
A good place to start would be to try playing tunes with very simple rhythms and then add your voice on top. You can play just downstroke rhythms at first until you get the gist of it and then try spicing up the rhythm as you get more comfortable. For trickier rhythms or riffs you will need to spend a little more time working at coordinating everything together.

I remember several years back when I was in a Top 40 band and we wanted to play Lenny Kravitz's "Are You Gonna Go My Way?" Actually I wanted to learn it since I really liked the cool riff Lenny played at the starting and throughout the tune. Learning the lick was fairly easy, but when I went to sing it and play it together, I was tripping all over myself. This had me stumped since I usually could pull off these kinds of licks and sing with not too much problem, but this particular riff was syncopated quite dif-

ferently than the vocal line. What I had to do was to completely memorize the lick to the point that it was second nature – almost like I had been playing it for a long time. The next step was to ensure that I knew the melody line and the lyrics as well as I knew the guitar riff. Once I had both of these down pat it was time to put them together. The key here to making it work is to play and sing very, very slowly – focusing one beat at a time. It's kind of like playing it in slow motion. You concentrate on each syllable and focus on where it is corresponding with the riff. If this seems difficult, try notating the riff (or writing tab) and write the lyrics below the riff. Be sure to put the lyrics directly below or above so they correspond exactly with each other. This way you are reading the riff and seeing the lyrics at the same time. This may be a painstaking practice but I guarantee that if you stick with it, you will eventually get it. Once you can play properly at a slow pace it's time to speed it up. Use your metronome to incrementally pick up the speed – this way you don't really notice the tempo picking up and you begin to gain confidence. Soon you will find that you can play and sing at the right tempo. You will find that the next time you learn a tricky guitar lick and incorporating a vocal line, your learning curve will be a lot quicker. The reason for this is because you have previously created a neurological pathway making memory association possible. In other words your brainwaves are already warmed up.

If this seems like a lot to work on, just keep in the forefront that all these skills are learned and eventually with enough practice they all come together. So with that in mind start practicing and good luck with the brainwaves.

Vivian Clement is a jazz/blues guitarist performing in the Toronto area and recording in her studio "Exodus Studios" in Mississauga, ON. Her Web site is www.vivianclement.com or www.exodusstudio.ca.



Selecting The Right Keyboard



Keyboards

Want to buy a keyboard to learn to play on, but you're not sure what to get?

As both a teacher and performer, over time I think the question I've been asked the most by students, fans and parents has been: What is the best piece of equipment I can buy to learn on? This column is aimed primarily at these people.

I still believe the best way to learn is to start with the basics and recommend an acoustic piano. If a piano is what you want and you have little interest beyond that then there's nothing quite like the real thing, unless it's a high-quality digital substitute. However they can be expensive and aren't always practical for any number of reasons. Realistically, the quality and feel of modern digital pianos make them, in some ways, preferable to the real thing. Still, either way, quality costs and you have to balance the cash outlay against what kind of use you think the instrument is going to get.

Whether you're a first-time buyer looking for a keyboard to learn on, or have only played acoustic piano in the past and are looking at buying something electronic for the first time, sifting through the huge variety of technology out there can be a bit confusing. Either way, chances are you don't have to buy the latest, greatest music workstation to get by and if there is any chance that your purchase might swiftly become little more than an expensive coffee table; it's best to keep the cost of the purchase reasonable. Granted, you want to get a quality machine that does everything you

need it to, but sometimes, particularly when there are so many options available, there's a temptation to get a machine that seems to do everything you could ever want it to. But if cost and space are concerns, however, and one or both probably are, you may have to look around a bit.

Here are some things to keep in mind when you're looking...

- Check out all your options, looking for both used and new keyboards online, in local music stores and for private sale. Don't completely discount an acoustic piano during your search. You never know what you might find. Keyboards depreciate in value fairly quickly, but not to the same extent that computers do. You should know what a similar, newer keyboard retails for. When buying used in a private sale – the simpler the keyboard, the easier to tell if it still does all of what it did when it was new. Regardless of whether you ultimately decide to go for something electronic or acoustic try to bring someone with you that knows a bit about keyboards or pianos when you're making the final decision.

- Focus primarily on the quality of the acoustic piano sound or sounds available as well as the action of the keyboard. How much does it sound and feel like the real thing?

- Pay attention to small details and decide what is important to you. Do you need a piano bench? A stand to place sheet music? Space on top of the piano for a light? Will you amplify the unit using an external source or do you prefer built-in speakers? Small considerations perhaps, but posture, comfort and making practice as easy as possible are important to developing and maintaining a regular practice regimen.

- Decide what your specific needs will be. Do you want a simple machine that most closely approximates a piano or something that comes with a variety of other options geared specifically towards beginners? If you plan to teach yourself, make sure

you'll actually use these options. If you intend to hire a teacher, seek out their opinion. Anything that legitimately helps a student to learn is a valuable function, but avoid being seduced into dropping more money on a machine, or sacrificing sound quality and feel for something cheaper based on increased functionality. The most important factor to the success of your attempt to learn or inspire another to learn is their level of enjoyment during the process and their will to learn.

- Depending on how much you have to spend you have the option of buying a single keyboard, a keyboard controller and sound module, or opting for a combination of software for your home computer that can be used in combination with a keyboard controller. While most professionals will often opt for a high-end workstation or a variety of components, what works for them may not be ideal for the beginner. Again, setup and ease of use are very important, particularly for a young player. Sometimes starting to practice is the hardest thing to do and you might want to put as few obstacles in the way of that as possible. For a beginner it's best if it's no more difficult than flicking a switch and putting fingers to keyboard. The first option is the simplest and most basic digital pianos have reasonable action and good sound quality while also offering a number of other sounds and performance options as well.

Keep it simple. The bottom line is that the machine that best fits your price and feels and sounds most like the real thing is what you should get. Period. Even for people who wish to learn to play who are also looking to augment their home studio with a keyboard of some variety, ideally the best place to start is with a fairly basic MIDI compatible controller, with a keyboard as close to full size as space and cost allow, a few quality on-board sounds and full size keys. If you do need greater versatility you can expand with software and hardware sound modules and keep the same keyboard. And if you do want a change, a good controller will retain a fair bit of its value should you wish to sell it or trade up.



by Kevin Young

Kevin Young is keyboardist for David Usher and Moist.

The Art Of Bass And Being Original



Young bass players always ask me what they should be listening to and what are good habits to get into for bass playing and I always tell them the same thing: they should be trying to find their voice. I think it's a good idea to try a little of everything and decide how much or how little of each you're going to use, put it together and find your own way. It's incredible how many young bass players have fired me up to try new things. I thought I had done everything under the sun and they just wind up bumping into things because they don't know the rules yet. I have a forum, www.talkbass.com, where we do stuff like that and the old finger vs. pick debate comes up and I try to give them confidence to try it all their own way. There can't be any hard and fast rules. Everything that you are trying is valid. Like, when I go to a club and see a band, of course my eyes go straight to the bass player but then it occurs to me that he probably didn't write this song. So I ask myself "What part would I write for this song?" I love the bass in the way that there are so many possibilities involved.

To me, ensemble playing is really working when it's not just a back-up crew for some virtuoso. I think other humans are interested in it too because it's a weird form of human expression. It can be an analogy for all sorts of different things in life. It's a trippy thing but, for composition, what I normally do is start with a title so I have a focus. Then I come up with the music and finally the words. As far as the music goes, sometimes I think of the other parts so I can write a supporting part. Obviously it's hard to write those parts first sometimes. I have written parts that I leave holes in deliberately because that's where the other cats are going to fill in.

With D. Boon, because we grew up together it was almost an osmosis kind of thing. I'd show him a bass part and he'd play the holes. That's why I say that I'm D. Boon's bass player. He was a very giving guy; he didn't give a fuck about the role. Much respect to Jimi Hendrix, but he was a dominator you know? D. Boon played with a really thin, trebly sound that gave me a lot of room frequency-wise. We tried some really severe things; like we had never heard jazz as kids but we got exposed to it later. We heard it with punk and we thought it was punk except played by older guys because

it sounded so crazy. That changed our perception. The rules were really up to the guy writing the song; you didn't have all of these rigid formats that were all set up. It was all up to the writer. In fact, punk wasn't even really a style; it was more a state of mind. It hadn't homogenized into orthodoxy yet and a lot of these guys were more like performance artists.

As far as songs were concerned I figured three things had to be there: it had to have a beginning, middle and an end and that's all. Because punk was such a mind blowing thing for us, we thought we had to reinvent everything and that all of the stuff that had happened before was old fashioned. We had to decide everything. For a long time with The Minutemen we didn't use tuners. Like, "Oh that's bourgeois." We'd tune with each other by ear.

We struggled a lot to figure out what The Minutemen's sound was. We thought that the bands that we hung out with were so original and shoot; they didn't even know how to play! Like Black Flag and The Germs getting up on stage and somehow having the chutzpah to just go for it. We harbored no delusions about what we were doing – it was just fun.

You always need motivation, but does it need to be "One day we're going to re-enact the Nuremberg rally"? Be a rock star ... yeah right, what a fucking goal. I try to get it to people that maybe it should just be "Hey, I'm playing with these people and they're really interesting. This is fun."

Some people think it's just all about technique but if you develop a sound all your own, it's a component of your personality that does it. The trick is to try and get that over into your playing and expression while still learning stuff and not being a cookie cutter, rubber-stamp or a Xerox machine.

We've got so much of this Xerox stuff and I think the reason that there is so much is that there is a lack of confidence. Like, "Oh, if

I try something they're going to hate it." Well, they might hate it anyway so why not just go for broke and find your own deal? That takes a lot of trial and error. You just won't know where the wall is unless you push against it. Why not push things and find your own unique sound?

That doesn't mean there's an automatic reward. Believe me. However, in the long run, we all benefit because there is now an environment that's more conducive to creativity. Why bother playing for someone else's genre? Play your own way and they'll just wind up creating a new one for you, so play what you want to hear. Genre is a way to organize bins in chain stores. Originality might not always be rewarded but so what? Eventually, someone might pick up on it, and even if they don't at least you go down swinging."

Mike Watt is best known for his bass work with The Minutemen.



by Mike Watt

I Spy With My Little Eye



Over the last year I have had the good fortune to come into contact with possibly the four most recorded drummers in the history of music.

Four drummers that have been on more number one hit records that you could possibly imagine. Sadly these drummers go unnoticed by the public in general, though the songs they helped to propel to the top of the charts are well known worldwide.

These are the elder statesmen of our profession, and as the years go by many such as these great legendary drummers are ignored, forgotten or simply overlooked until it's too late.

Bernard Purdie, Earl Palmer, Uriel Jones and Hal Blaine are legendary studio drummers whose grooves and contribution to popular music should not be over looked nor underestimated.

As often happens in life, once the perceived "use by" date is up, we forget the past and head for the future. In today's "I want it now world," many of the world's greatest ever drummers have been forgotten. Bands and solo artists come and go as big corporations spit out the yesterday man in the constant search for the bigger buck.

In short, life is tough!

Yet in these times of uncertainty and disposable fads, we can take some comfort from the past. You just have to check out numerous TV adverts to hear some of the greatest "old school" songs that hook you onto a product with timeless grooves hitting right on the money, that feel good feeling is pure magic.

Recently I watched two very good programs on the dish: *Standing In the Shadows of Motown* and *Only the Strong Survive*. Both deal with artists from the past who either

had little or no actual footage of their prime days or musicians who played on all the hits but never got recognized or credited for there contributions.

There were two drummers on the *Motown* show the late Richard "Pistol" Allen and the very much legendary Uriel Jones. On the *Survive* show many of the original drum parts were lovingly and accurately recreated by Yvette "Baby Girl" Preyer whose day gig is drummer/singer with Michael MacDonald, the former Doobie Brother.

I had the honour of meeting Earl Palmer at NAMM last January; an introduction by my good mate Denny Seiwel put the icing on the cake of our trip to LA.

Mr. Palmer was ever so humble and gracious and I was very grateful that he was kind enough to give me a few minutes to chat about his work.

Watching Bernard Purdie play, words cannot describe that feeling, among other things the master shuffler, one of the very few drummers ever with a groove named after him. Enough said.

Hal Blaine the studio icon from the Wrecking Crew and countless other timeless recordings typifies the knowledge and drumming prowess these great drummers have to offer today's aspiring players. Look, listen and learn.

Being in the company of such legendary drummers does the heart good and it certainly inspired me to go back and listen and learn from the great volume of recorded work these four drummers, nay musicians, have laid down for all time to share.



by Bruce Aitken

At this year's Cape Breton International Drum Festival, we have the honour of having two of the "big four" performing, a personally signed "All the best" from Hal Blaine and to top it off Yvette "Baby Girl" Preyer. Imagine that all under one roof...

I love the future and what it might or might not bring, I believe in the future and all the amazing drummers who will surface, but I also look to the past for knowledge and inspiration and fully promote the often overlooked drummers such as my "big four" and give them the kudos they richly deserve.

Bruce Aitken is a drum instructor based in Marion Bridge, Sydney, Cape Breton Island, teaching approximately 60 students per week. He is the founder of the Cape Breton International Drum Festival (www.cbdrumfest.com) and is endorsed by Zildjian cymbals, Pro-Mark sticks, RybthmTech percussion, Otarion Hearing Protectors, Taye drums, Remo heads, XL Specialty Cases and Audix microphones. Bruce is currently drumming for Canadian artist John Campbelljohn. Visit www.bruceaitken.com for more information. He was recently named Musician of the Year by the Music Industry Association of Nova Scotia for 2004.

Triad Exercises

In the last couple of years I've been trying to incorporate a technique called "triad coupling" in my soloing. This is largely due to a few conversations with the great saxophonist and teacher, Pat Labarbera. In explaining the technique he pointed out that he would look for triad relationships within the scales and then use these triads as thematic material in a solo.

A good example of this technique can be found in Sonny Rollins' great solo on his own composition "Blue Seven" from the record *Saxophone Colossus* released in 1956.

There is also a recording of a tune with Miles Davis made a couple of months earlier called "Veird Blues" where you can hear Sonny trying out this technique using the same material.

Sonny creates a B \flat major triad from B \flat , D and F then creates an augmented triad from A \flat , C and E natural. Both triads are found in the chord scale B \flat Lydian $\flat 7$ (some people call this a Mixolydian #4). An analysis of the solo shows Sonny uses a major triad from the root and an augmented triad created on the $\flat 7$ degree of the scale on each dominant 7 chord in the blues. He then uses these triads, in various positions and with accompanying bebop lines as the principal motives he develops through his solo. This I think is an extension of a piano voicing technique. A jazz piano player will sometimes pick triads from the scale and play them on top of a standard left-hand voicing formula (7, 9, 3.5 or 3, 5, 7, 9).

Another use of this technique is one that I have been working on lately. If you look at the diatonic triads (the triads in the key) of a major scale you can see there are three major triads, the triad on the root and the triads on the IV and V degrees. Keeping in mind what the three major triads are, I try to use them on the modes derived from that major scale. For example D Dorian (the mode from the second degree of a major scale) will have three major triads C triad, F triad and G triad. I then try to incorporate these three triads as material in a solo over a D Dorian mode or over a D minor 7 chord. A couple of good tunes to start with might be "So What" by Miles Davis or "Impressions" by John Coltrane. You'll notice that these triads contain the prettier notes of the mode and is a good way to organize these sounds. These three triads could of course be used

over all the modes derived from C major (Mixolydian, Lydian, Locrian etc.).

I've found the following exercise pretty useful and it helps me hear what the triads sound like against a chord. Play the chord you want to try on the piano and hold the sustain pedal down so the chord will ring. Then choose two triads and play them from the lowest part of the horn to the highest part of the horn you can comfortably play using various inversions. This way you can hear what the triads you've chosen will sound like. For example on an A minor 7 $\flat 5$ chord the mode I could play is an A Locrian. Locrian is the seventh mode of a major scale in this case B \flat major. B \flat major has three major triads; B \flat , E \flat and F major. I might pick two triads B \flat and F and work them against the chord to see what melodies they suggest. This of course wouldn't be the only thing I would play in a solo but it could be one of the sounds I'd try. If you do this over a couple of weeks you'll start to internalize the sounds the triads suggest and start to recognize the sound in other people's playing as well.

So far all I've discussed is major triads because of the bright quality that they have, especially in minor tunes. I've found that the sound of major or augmented triads on minor tunes is a sound I like. However, you can use any type of triad that you can find in the chord-scale. Mark Turner, a Warren Marsh inspired saxophone player, seems to like minor triads a major third apart over dominant 7 chords as opposed to major third a minor third apart which is found in diminished harmony. That however, is for another column.

I hope you find this information useful. If you spend some time trying to hear this technique as well as play it you'll be able to apply it in a musical way and actually hear the melodies it creates. For the first little while it may sound a little forced but if you persevere you'll be able to use it in an intelligent and musical way. As always remember that some days will be better than others.

Reedman, Alex Dean has been described as "one of Canada's foremost Jazz Saxophonists," has been a mainstay of the Canadian music scene for many years. He has played with Gil Evans, Kenny Wheeler, Dave Liebman, Ernie Watts, Mel Torme, Ray Charles, Pat Labarbera, Nick Brignola, and the Toronto Symphony. Alex is a member of Rob McConnell's 'Tenet'. He also holds the tenor saxophone chair with Rob McConnell's "Grammy award winning" BOSS Brass. His numerous recordings include Grammy and Juno award winners and he is the bandleader of the explosive Tenor Madness, Alex Dean Quintet, and "power trio", DEW East. Alex is the Canadian Artist Representative and clinician for Boosey & Hawkes, promoting Keilworth Saxophones and Rico Reeds. He is also the Artistic Director of the highly regarded Kincardine Summer Jazz Program on Lake Huron, ON. Alex is a member of the Jazz Faculty at the University of Toronto and Humber College. He is a widely respected clinician/adjudicator in Canada and the US.



by Alex Dean

WOODWINDS

B

The Smartest Player Wins



brass

“The average brass player will resort to mechanical practice in order to avoid the discomfort and irksomeness of mental effort.” (Matthey)

This is actually a quote from a piano teacher. I’ve added the word “brass” because it applies so well to brass players who practice mindlessly, day after day, in the hopes of getting better. I know brass players who turn the TV on when they practice to take their mind off what they are doing ... wrong! One hour of practice with concentration is worth 10 without. When I ask an audience of brass players which parts of our bodies we use to play the instrument, I hear “lips”, “tongue”, “fingers” and “lungs”, but I rarely hear “brain”, which is the most important part of the body for any activity! As irksome as it may seem, if you are not harnessing the power of the brain, you are not accomplishing all you could be.

Practice Slowly And Carefully

The beautiful sound you are searching for resides within you; all you have to do is learn to release it. As you practice, use your brain and analyze the way every note feels and sounds. (The two are connected – it never feels terrible and sounds great, or vice versa.) Practice slowly and carefully, and make every note sound as good as possible. Practice short phrases many times at various tempos, striving for improvement with each repetition. Devote short

stretches of time to specific tasks, to encourage focused concentration. Listen critically and ask more of yourself. Don’t just clock hours, work towards a goal!

Eliminate Tension

Observe the beginning brass player: Her body is rigid and the embouchure is compressed so tightly that air can barely pass through her lips. The horn is pointed at the floor, her elbows are tucked into her ribs, her neck is scrunched up and her eyes are squeezed shut. She is tense! She has to strain to overcome all that tension, and the sound is forced and tight.

By contrast, a great brass player looks fairly relaxed most of the time, despite playing an instrument that requires a high degree of physical exertion. This is focused muscular activity – only the muscles that are needed are in use, others are relaxed. As unnecessary tension is reduced or eliminated, the sound becomes large and vibrant. Range and endurance cease to be limiting factors. To the listener, it seems like it is easy to play a brass instrument (contrary to many players’ personal experience.)

Efficiency: Air/Embouchure

In sports, it isn’t just brute strength that wins the game. A combination of strength and efficiency is the recipe for success. It is no different for the brass player. Each note requires a delicate balance of air and embouchure compression. Utilize just the right proportions of each and you achieve maximum results with a high degree of efficiency. Playing becomes, well, if not easy ... at least easier.

Posture is the biggest factor in the efficient use of air. Take long slow inhalations whenever possible to encourage relaxation. Keep the air passage wide open by holding up your horn, your chest and your chin. Picture an air column from the base of your lungs to your lips – shorten the column for high notes (raise the floor) and lengthen it for low notes (lower the floor). Project your sound as if it is a laser beam that you can see; keep your eyes on where the sound is going, just as the baseball player looks where he wants the ball to go. Use the tongue and the lip aperture like the nozzle on the end of a hose to

shape and control the air column. Make sure you use your air to full advantage – the more work the air does, the less the lips have to do.

If your embouchure isn’t functioning efficiently, no amount of air will fix the problem. Start without a preconceived notion of how you should form your embouchure (relearn to play every day). Place the mouthpiece on very relaxed lips and let the air flow freely. Slowly bring the lips together on the air stream until they start to vibrate; establish the minimum embouchure tension for each note. Adjust your embouchure, both with the muscles of the face and by adjusting the placement and angle of the mouthpiece. Picture a sailor trimming the sails to catch each bit of wind – do the same thing with your lips. Find the most efficient position for your lips by listening to the sound. Search for an easier way to play the horn.

Play Like Gumby

Each day is a new adventure for the brass player. You are engaged in a partnership with the horn, and she is a relatively unforgiving mate. If you try to force it, the horn, as Dizzy said, will always win. If you are flexible in your approach (like Gumby) your body and the horn can work together in harmony. While your horn remains pretty much the same from day to day, your body changes based on what you eat, how you sleep, the temperature, the humidity, fights with your girlfriend etc. Good days and bad days are a fact of life for the brass player.

Change is inevitable in the long run, too. A violin player would not play on the same set of strings for her entire career, yet brass players get one set of lips to last a lifetime. Over time, your waistline and hairline may change noticeably, and your lips change as well. You must accept the changes, and understand that your approach to the instrument will need to evolve in response to your changing body. Fortunately, the one part of our bodies that seems to improve with age is the brain. Don’t forget to use it!

Chase Sanborn is a Yamaha trumpet artist, and a member of the U of T Jazz Faculty. This article formed the basis for a clinic presented in January at the LAJE Conference in Long Beach, CA. Upcoming projects for Chase include the Jazz Tactics DVD, due to be released this Spring. For more information, please visit www.chasesanborn.com.



by Chase Sanborn

Recording Shows Digitally

I recently came across a string of live recording sessions. While often considered the mighty digital warrior of a small domain on Vancouver Island, I found myself little match for the battle-hardened live sound engineers, snarling road managers (okay, well they weren't snarling, but at least one of them seemed to converse in a manner that wasn't dissimilar to a large overbearing rodent) and a spectrum of musicians that ran from exceedingly competent through to ... people that have a strong future in road managing.

Regaling in the tales of battles lost and battles won, after the hurly burly had been done, with good friend and decorated road veteran, Vince R. Ditrich (Spirit of the West), we found ourselves astonished to note that the "young bands" seemed to view live recordings as a cost effective (read - cheap) way to flog off records on their unsuspecting fans.

With a plethora of portable digital recording solutions at our disposal, some that you can tuck under your arm, I thought maybe I would pass along some findings and considerations. Let me also qualify these thoughts by saying that I have a wall full of shiny discs for studio recording; however, my experience with live recording is minimal. So let's just say that these thoughts are slightly skewed towards the controlled environment. So, before you run out and buy a portable system to put out your live record, you might want to consider the following:

My first thought on hearing the tone coming back of tape: "Holy Crap! Not only do these microphones sound bad, we have iffy cables and I can't keep up with the sound guys re-patching. All I can hear through the drum mics is bleed from the monitors..." The list goes on and on. You would be amazed at what we accept sonically, in a live show, when the Front of House starts using compression to eek out more power from the billion-watt audio system and the lighting guy diverts power from the eastern seaboard (Ottawa to New York) to dazzle us with visual spectacle. No surprise, the recorded tones were small, there was more bleed than a TLC special on open-heart surgery and as much fidelity as the original mono version of the "Sound Blaster" audio card.

Maybe none of that is news to you. Maybe you are wondering why you have spent two minutes of your life reading this. Maybe you are also wondering: "Alec, where is the technical stuff?" For those that wonder, here you are:

Tech problem one: which of the many formats to use? For sheer no-nonsense reliability, you are going to be hard-pressed to beat the old stand-bys: the ADAT and DA-88. I am apparently the only person in the history of DA-88s that has had a tape completely eaten; yet, when the pressure is on, I would still go back to the archaic helical solution. When it comes to computer systems, and I do love them, they do fail. That once a week crash on a good solid system is going to be a ticking time bomb at a live venue. There are of course hard-disk solutions these days; I am waiting on time to prove these units worthy of capturing a "one-time only" event.

Tech problem two: how do I go about getting tone onto tape? My first choice here is a digital console. I was originally turned onto the Roland VM mixers by Lee Warren from Michelle Wright's band. Though not a winner at retail, the Roland VMs are an outstanding choice for live recording. Much like the Mackie D8B, the console is a control

surface for an outboard brain. Unlike the Mackie, however, all the patching goes into the brain unit, allowing you to leave the rack (brain) up on stage so you can patch directly to the analog to digital mic pres. From here you can take the control surface anywhere up to 200 feet away without loss of fidelity. Cool!

Tech problem three: What, if any, processing to use? For my money, live recording is the ultimate "fix it in the mix" proposition. There are enough different things going on in the first 10 minutes that any processing, such as compression or gating, is just bound to bite you in the ass later. With the abundance of fairly good, high signal-to-noise ratio mic preamps in modern gear, and the fantastic signal-to-noise ratio of the digital recording medium, it's better to be safe when setting the levels. (Set 'em a bit low)

Important thought: just like a good live sound guy, as the songs start up, watch your meters in the order of importance. The lead instrument, whether vocal, guitar or piano, is the first level you need to assess when you see those dreaded red lights on the meter bridge. Conversely, as things get under control, there is the overwhelming need to "optimize" low levels going to tape. Unless it is absolutely necessary, I would leave the levels low until the end of the song. You are going to have to mix this abomination sometime in the near future and level changes within a song are going to significantly compound the complexity of your task.

Quite simply, getting access to the recording gear and getting it to the venue is now, by far, the easiest part of the live recording. And for all you young bands out there contemplating big returns on a quick and easy recording, I guarantee that what you save on tracking time, you will more than make up for on overdubs and mixing when it comes to making a good live record.



by Alec Watson

Alec a producer/engineer in Nanaimo, BC. He can be reached at Alec@Vinsynch.com.



Pavlovian Conditioning



When I speak at music conferences, I often make the statement that vocal coaching is not really about working on the voice, it is about *working on the mind*. I like to think that one reason that I have been successful over the years is that while I did receive a very comprehensive musical education, I have also tried to learn things from other scientific and artistic disciplines and use them to enhance my capabilities as a vocal coach/consultant. One field that has bearing on pretty much every human endeavour, including singing, is behavioural psychology. In 1891, the Russian scientist Ivan Pavlov conducted a series of experiments using dogs to prove that behaviour is conditioned over time via repetition.

In essence, he programmed the dogs' brains so that they would react in the exact manner in which he wanted them to.

For example, if he wanted the dog to learn the command to sit, he had to say it with a very firm voice and put the dog into a sitting position – always rewarding the dog with a treat. Eventually, the dog learned the command and with the command “sit” would do it himself while salivating, obviously at first expecting the treat. Pavlov proved that their saliva was produced in anticipation of the reward. Furthermore, the dog does not know any language. The Russian master would command “sit” in the Russian language, the Japanese in Japanese, etc. The dog recognizes the sound and responds accordingly. Now let's suppose that the dog went to an obedience school in which the masters weren't sure of what command to give and what response they wanted to receive. With the command “sit”, they were making the dog “lie”. With the command “lie” they were making the dog run and so on. The dog would get completely confused and not know what to do anymore. Furthermore, let's say the dog then enrolled in a different obedience school and the new master started giving him the correct commands. The new master would be perplexed – he couldn't understand why the dog was lying when he was commanding the dog to sit and why the dog was running when it was commanded to lie. Obviously, the signals

were mixed up.

With vocal coaching, I meet the similar situation every hour of every day. Many singers have mixed signals and “run” when they should “lie”. To recondition the mind and the response of the body is not an easy task, but it can be done; however, in a lot of cases with a great degree of difficulty. Therefore, I use a structured set of speech and singing exercises to condition the mind and body to work in synchronicity and synergy. In many ways, what I am doing is similar to another scientific methodology – neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), which is basically a methodology that has been designed to help people change and reprogram people's behaviours by “installing” a certain set of instructions into their brains. Similarly, I have found that while all people are given a voice, nobody per se has given instructions on how to use it, at least not in a scientific way. The “manual” and “programs” that I give singers consist of special speech and singing exercises that train people in a way that is really not all that different from the way that Pavlov trained his dogs. After I have supervised the repetition of these exercises over a consistent but relatively short period of time, the way that singers use their voices are the result of a programmed instinct that will give them optimum results with a minimum amount of effort.

In many instances, the hardest part of improving an individual's performance is not “programming” the new behaviours, it is actually getting the singer to truly admit and, more importantly, understand that they have a problem. I call this the “Vocaholics Anonymous” syndrome because in many ways it is similar to the behaviour of an alcoholic with respect to alcohol. Alcoholics abuse their bodies through the excessive consumption of alcohol in a manner similar to the way that many singers abuse their vocal chords (and ultimately the ears of their audiences). In both cases, they usually feel pretty sore the next day. Similarly, both are often told by friends and family that they have a problem but they usually do not listen and cannot admit to themselves that they have a problem.



by Diana Yampolsky

The first step for any recovering alcoholic is for them to admit to himself that he has a problem. For a “vocaholic” the steps are pretty much the same. The singer first has to admit to himself that his current vocal technique (or lack thereof) is a problem. The second step is to commit to doing something about it. The third step is to get expert help and the fourth is to be able to establish the proper habit so that they won't fall back into their bad habits. As with alcoholism, the goal of any vocal coach should be to cure their students of their bad habits to the point that there is no chance they will ever fall back into their old habits.

In conclusion, singing, like almost any other discipline, is based on conditioning. If your voice is conditioned the right way, you will sound better than you ever imagined possible. Like a dog, you need a competent master and a great obedience school.

Diana Yampolsky is a vocal instructor based in Toronto at the Royans School for the Musical Performing Arts, located online at www.vocalscience.com. Her second book, Vocal Science II – Flight from the Virtual Music to Reality, will be available soon.

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PART ONE - RECORDING & MA

MARKETING

by Kevin Young

Regardless how many records they've made, or how successful they are, most artists try to retain as much control over their work and careers as possible. Although the three artists featured in this article make vastly different types of music, all are currently on independent labels and have distinguished themselves by making records on their own terms...

- Three-time Juno nominee and president of her own Dead Daisy Records (formed in 1996), Emm Gryner has made a career out of doing exactly what she wanted to, and has just recently released her latest, *Songs of Love and Death*, a self-produced album of cover songs by contemporary Irish artists.

- Wade McNeil, guitarist/songwriter for Alexisonfire; an innovative Canadian hardcore band that went from wrapping CD burns in old math notes to sell off the stage to sold out shows in Canada, international tours, and a gold record for their newest

release, *Watch Out!* (released in 2004 and produced by Julius "Juice" Butty) Not bad for an act who happily describe their music as "the sound of two Catholic high school girls mid knife fight" and have gotten very little in the way of regular radio play.

- And finally, David Usher, who between Moist's records and his solo records, has sold over a million CDs during his stint with EMI Music Canada. He has left the label and is now gearing up for the release of his fourth solo effort, *if god had curves*, his first on indie label, Maple Music Recordings.

In addition, we spoke to the co-producers of David's new release, Jeff Pearce (Moist, Rye) and Byron Wong, as well as Greg Below, who signed Alexisonfire to his own Distort Entertainment label and produced the band's self-titled debut.

(cont'd on pg.49)

MANUFACTURING

Esthero

WIKKED Lil' Grrls

Swing

On a freezing Sunday evening in Toronto's Annex, Esthero is not leaving her cozy and spacious apartment. Wearing her housecoat and knitted slippers, she pulls a couple of cinnamon crescent rolls from the oven and takes her place on the couch for the interview. Her beloved Pekinese, Oboe, gently snorts by her side and offers the occasional bark.

Two paintings stand out on her wall – one of Lisa "Left-Eye" Lopes, whose solo cut, "The Universal Quest", Esthero sang on shortly before the TLC singer's death; and another of Sean Lennon, a good friend of Esthero's who co-wrote and guests on "Everyday Is A Holiday (With You)", which is featured on the 2004 teaser EP, *We R in need of a musical ReVoluTion!*, and her seven-years-in-the-waiting sophomore album, *Wikked Lil' Grrls*.

Esthero, who was signed at 17 and released her acclaimed debut, *Breath From Another*, in 1998, is now a young woman of 26. "Is that what you call

featured on her song "I Feel You", which circulated on an advance promo, but was inexplicably dropped from the *Whoa, Nelly!* release.

Wikked Lil' Grrls is no less adventurous than *Breath*, but the songs are more defined sound-wise: the bright, horn-injected pop of "Everyday Is A Holiday (With You)" to the sexually-charged romp "If Tha Mood" (feat. Canadian MC Shakari Nite); the plaintive gospel blues of "Gone" (feat. Cee-Lo Green, ex Goodie Mob) to the old-school rhythm jazz of "Wikked Lil' Grrls"; and the breezy African pop feel of "Junglebook" (feat. Andre 3000 of Grammy-winning hip-hop duo Outkast).

The album includes a number of collaborators, among them co-producers/co-writers Adam 12 (artist), Track & Field (Nelly Furtado), Spooky Ruben (artist), Doc, Jully Black (artist), James Robertson (Skye Sweetnam), and Sean Lennon. In addition to Andre 3000, Cee-Lo Green, Lennon, and Shakari Nite, Toronto rapper Jelleestone and poet Jemeni guest. Half the album was mixed by Vic Florencia

McCarty. "She knows how to get the best out of them, and she'll often have a very specific vision of what she wants a song to turn out like. And when she's in a position to control who she works with, then she uses people like instruments."

The Pro Tools rig on which Esthero tracked most of *Wikked Lil' Grrls* has long been in storage, but her living room is filled with assorted musical instruments. There's a wooden crate filled with maracas, a saw and bow, and shakers in the shape of an orange and lemon that she happily shows with a laugh. Beside the unused fireplace are two dumbbells, one animal skin, the other synthetic.

On the floor is a Norman acoustic guitar she uses as a writing tool, and a turquoise Fender Telecaster belonging to her brother, musician j. englishman, which he affectionately dubbed Jessica. Christening instruments runs in the family.

In the corner is a beautiful old Wurlitzer given

Her style is pure, soft, sophisticated, and, perhaps the key – seemingly effortless.

it?," she says with a knowing laugh.

The tiny framed singer with flaming orange hair and penchant for pink is still every bit the cutesy girl (a book shelf is dedicated to fairies and pixies and she has a pink Hello Kitty microwave in her kitchen), but she is infinitely more wise and attune to her talent – vocally, as a songwriter, and as a producer – than she was when she made her first album with just one other person, Martin "Doc" McKinney.

The result of that partnership was a seductive sound blending hip-hop, drum 'n' bass, R&B, Latin, jazz and pop, which many felt was ahead of its time, kind of a trip-hop version of Bjork meets Billie Holiday.

Two years later, fellow Canadian Nelly Furtado came along with her more pop-friendly world flavours and broke wide open. Esthero was actually

(Nelly Furtado, Danko Jones); the other half by Serban Ghenea (Jay Z, Mary J. Blige, Destiny's Child, Janet Jackson).

"I've learned so much," Esthero acknowledges. "I'm still learning, just the process of being in the studio, learning about my own voice and how to record vocals, and the way I like them and the best way to execute them. And because I executive produced this record and co-produced the majority of it, I was sort of left on my own to bring things to fruition. I have so much more faith in myself now. I have so much more ammo for the next record. I know this doesn't have to take seven years," she laughs.

"I think the process of making this record was her hooking up in a serial fashion with a bunch of mega-talented musicians, or musician/songwriters or musician/producers," says her publisher, EMI Music Publishing Canada President Michael

to her by her trumpet player, Bryden Baird, but the fuse is blown. Her dad, under the name Teak Wood had a Billboard hit with the George Martin-produced "See My Girl" in the '60s, bought her the 1904 Heinzman piano that's in her bedroom. She named it Emmy, after her cat, Muffi The Second (M2).

"The last record I wrote a lot of parts with my voice, a lot of horn and string parts, and this record I did the same," says Esthero. "I do play stuff – keys, guitar, and I program a little. I have just enough knowledge to write. I'm smart enough to have other people play what I can't. I just know what my weaknesses are."

Esthero's main instrument is her voice, as cliché as it sounds. She's not just another singer. While Celine impresses with her five-octave range and histrionics, Esthero is the epitome of subtlety.

ed Lil' Singer

Who

by Karen Bliss

Back After Seven Years



Esthero

As she talks about her album, she often sings a line or two to illustrate a technique. It is at these moments that you hear just how great she is. Her voice is the very definition of beautiful. Her style is pure, soft, sophisticated, and, perhaps the key – seemingly effortless.

"Wayne Gretzky used to make it look effortless too," laughs McCarty, who signed Esthero at 17. "She's probably the greatest female vocalist I've ever been in a room with including recording studios, offices, and concert halls. I've never met anybody who is as musical as her and has the pipes."

Esthero's voice also has character. There's nuances that help convey the meaning of the songs. Take "If Tha Mood", "Melancholy Melody", "Bad Boy Clyde" and "Everyday Is A Holiday (With You)". They're all different.

She calls "Everyday Is A Holiday (With You)", the song Lennon helped her finish at his house in New York two years ago, "the whitest song I ever wrote." Originally inspired by one of his songs called "Happiness" (also nicknamed "The Muppet Song" because of its happy-bounciness feel), the ironic break-up song bounces and chirps along. Esthero's voice simply glides. She starts singing the *la la las* from the bridge, demonstrating the little vibratos. "I think that's what makes it mine is that part," she says, adding that she also intended the *la-da* melody in the chorus to be a horn part.

"Working with Esthero is like mainlining inspiration," says Lennon, who also co-wrote "This Lull-A-Bye" on the EP with her. "She is one of those singers who has absolute control of her pitch and timbre. 'I hear a horn part that goes ... *la la la la*, a synth part like, *beeow beeow*; the piano should go, *dada dada da...*' she'll say to me. Most of the time, her voice sounds better than anything an instrument can do. The bridge of the song is no exception. 'Every Day...' was a garden already in bloom; she simply wanted someone to walk through it with. Lucky me."

Moving on to the pumping "If Tha Mood", in which she nastily boasts of her sexual skills, she simply swings vocally. "That was fun for me because I totally got to get into character," she assures. She starts singing again: "Oh, *if tha mood should hitcha and ya wah-ah-nah* – you have to be really over the top and 'putting on the ritz,' kind of," she explains, then sings the next part:

"Bayyyy-baaay with grit and kind of yelling. Basically in that chorus, I'm just yelling. It's a very loud strong vocal and that was one of the first times I ever got to do that, other than 'Heaven Sent' (on *Breath*) where it's just balls-out the whole time and ultra character. I had fun recording that one just because I was like, 'Wow, I've never got to sing like that before on my own stuff.'"

Another cut of which she's proud is "Wicked Lil' Grrls", which has that Andrews Sisters "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" old swing jazz vibe. "That kind of stuff comes so naturally to me, that sort of rhythm jazzy stuff. I listen to so much rhythm jazz. It's hard. It takes a lot of air; it takes a lot of technique and control because it goes (sings), '*Wicked lil' grrls*' very low, and then, '*kiss the boys and make them cry*.' It's a lot of jumping.

"I was excited about that because I think it's one of the first times that someone's done something that is very hip-hop and very swing, but actually approached vocally like a rhythm jazz singer, whereas most people tend to go to the R&B side."

"Gone" has a real melancholy vibe that could well work with a choir. "I wanted to approach the chorus as an old spiritual," she explains. "It's just big and kind of gospel-y (sings just the word 'gone'). I just picture some old southern man with a harmonica on his front porch (laughs), and I tried to channel that kind of a vibe and get those sorts of harmonies and that lushness to it.

"There's three words in the chorus, basically. It's all about the emotion and the swell that you can bring out in your voice – it's very thick, it's very long, so it has to be filled with emotion, if you're going to sing whole notes."

Asked straight up if she knows she's unique, that her phrasing and delivery and timbre are like no other singer, she says a quick "yes," appearing to rush off the topic with humility.

"I definitely had no idea who I was on the first record vocally. I felt really lost, like I didn't really have a style. I still couldn't pinpoint what it is, but I

definitely feel like my own voice now. I have certain things or isms that are unique to me. My brother will point them out, 'That's such an Esthero.'"



uch an Esthero was born Jenny-Bea Englishman in Stratford, ON, December 23, 1978. An independent kid, she always had dreams bigger than the small towns in which she was raised. Her father had tasted success in the '60s with Teak Wood, and her older brother, Jason (a.k.a. "j."), had moved to Toronto to pursue a parallel dream (in 2000, he put out *poor lil' rock star* on Warner Music Canada). Jenny followed at 16.

Once there, she was told about a management team, Zack Werner and Beau Randall, who was looking for a young singer. Randall went to see her gig at the Free Times Cafe, alongside a guitarist and dumbek player, covering the likes of Bjork, Elvis Costello and the Eurythmics.

Randall then set up an afternoon showcase for Werner at the now defunct Ultrasound Showbar. "I went in there and my brother played guitar and I sang (Concrete Blonde's) 'Joey', the song that started it all," remembers Esthero. "Then I started hanging with Zack and he walked me into McCarty's office and he gave me some money. He'd never heard me sing until I handed in those demos. He just liked me."

Partnering up with a transplanted American Martin "Doc" McKinney, the collaboration between the two newcomers (plus some outside contributors) eventually became her debut album, *Breath From Another*. Esthero, inspired by a fictional heroine from some late-night film on television, was initially the duo's moniker, as well as the stage name she decided to adopt. At 18, they landed a record deal with Sony-affiliated WORK Group. For a time, Esthero and Doc did interviews together to support the release, but then they parted ways, a topic she'd prefer not to discuss.

But Esthero plowed on as a solo artist, expanding her vision, touring with an eight-piece band that included a trumpet player, turntablist, backing vocalist, and drummer who triggered samples live.

"When she and Doc split up initially – they got back together again for several tracks on this record (*Wicked Lil' Grrls*) and there's clearly nothing wrong with the chemistry between them – people at the label I think were quite worried about the short-term future of the band," says McCarty, "because the thought was that the musical director/producer/co-writer has just left, 'Oh my God what's going to happen to the band?' I think the unstated assumption was, 'She's just a girl,' and 'She's just a teenage girl,' and they thought it would be rudderless. And then, she stepped up to the plate and moulded the band precisely the way she saw it in her head."

Despite the huge expectations and critical acclaim, the album, spearheaded by the singles "Heaven Sent" and "That Girl", wasn't massive but ended up selling a respectable 250,000 units worldwide, including gold status at home in Canada (50,000).

A remix of "World I Know (Country Livin')" (feat. Goodie Mob) also appeared on 1998's *Slam* soundtrack, and started what would become a slew of collaborations with such artists as Mos Def, Saul Williams, Rascalz, and Michie Mee. "Weekends", the song she cut with Black Eyed Peas for the group's 2000's album, *Bridging The Gap*, became a single, and her 2001 house track with Ian Pooley called "Balmes (A Better Life)" was a club smash.



Along the way, she also earned the respect of such varied notables as Macy Gray, John Legend, Fishbone, Burt Bacharach, Chris Rock and Howard Stern.

After WORK Group was absorbed into Epic, Esthero was released from her contract, but not soon after quietly signed a new deal with Reprise after performing at California's Coachella Festival in October 1999 – but all was not good. She went into an almost debilitating dark period, which included a creative drought. As she often says, "If it doesn't come when I want it to, what makes you think it will come when you want it to."

"Melancholy Melody", one of the songs on *Wicked Lil' Grrls*, talks about that very thing. "All these people, their livelihood depended on me. Not that they had said that but I really felt it," Esthero says. "I didn't feel like I *couldn't* do it again. I just knew I couldn't *then*, but I knew it was gonna come. I never at any point lost faith in who I am or what my talent was or what I wanted to do. What I was scared about was I didn't know if everybody was going to wait for me to figure it out."

But they did, and then it came. It was early 2001, and "scared shitless" about her continual writer's block, Esthero ventured to New York, a place she finds enormously inspiring. There she laid down a track with Gravediggaz' Poetic, who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer (he died that July). The song, "One Life", (which also featured The Last Emperor and appeared on his 2003 *Music Magic Myth* album) was reportedly the last song Poetic ever recorded.

Then re-inspired, over the next two years, she amassed some 30 songs, mostly written at her old house in Regent Park. "I think one of the reasons she's been away from the marketplace so long is every time everybody thought the record was done, she'd write another great song. It just never stopped," says McCarty.

Another lyric from that dark time was the gorgeous "Thank Heaven", about her roommate at the time who took care of her and kept her tumult private. "Beautiful Lie", the title of which came from a line in the movie *Bowfinger* of all places, is just about how great enjoyment can still be had from recalling a lie even after the ugly truth is revealed, and "My Torture" chronicles three different love affairs.

"I didn't put a lot of effort into the first record, lyrically," admits Esthero. "It was very passionate and a lot of it was very spur of the moment, very phonetic. I didn't really care if it made sense to anyone else but me. I'm still very improvisational. I've always been the kind of person where melody, ideas, production come first – the way the bass should sound, the way my voice should sound."

"Lyrics have always been a tackle for me. One of my main problems is I finish my musical thought within a first verse and a chorus, and then I'm stuck. And two years later, I'll sit in front of the stereo and listen to what I recorded, and write the second verse and finish the song. I'm a little quicker now. It just depends. But I definitely crafted a little more, spent more time this time. I tried to combine being phonetic with it making sense."

With the dam now burst, songs started flowing and the album was finally completed. Then, at one point last summer, Prince Paul asked her to come up with something for his Handsome Boy Modeling School and she discovered she was all written-out. "I was totally blank," Esthero recalls, and she told him so. But she was okay with it this time because it had come at the end of a flood, not a drought. "One of the things was after I went and worked with Andre, in July in

Atlanta, his energy was so creative and inspiring, I came home and I had all these little songs in my head."

As creative as she finds her new apartment (she has been playing "Amelia", about Amelia Earhart, at her live shows that she wrote here), only "We R in need of a musical ReVoLuTioN!" is included on *Wicked Lil' Grrls* – it was the last addition.

The song, which actually kicks off the album, opens with the line: "I'm so sick and tired/ of the shit on the radio/ And MTV/ they only play the same thing/ No matter where I go/ I see Ashanti in the video/ I want something more..." In the liner notes of the EP, she writes a long mission statement, a small portion of which reads: "This song is a call to arms ... to demand more, more from every moment of your life, but especially to demand more of radio stations, of video channels, of the so-called 'keepers of the keys to the kingdom.'"

But what is Esthero demanding of herself?

"It's not a demand," she corrects, "but rather a natural inclination to just be really honest and really creative and do the best that I can. If I don't think a song is great or has amazing potential, I don't even bother finishing it. But I



don't think it's necessarily demanding more of artists per se." She pauses ... for a while. The question is not easily answered.

"What you do is what you do, but," she sighs, and mulls over the "demanding more" part of the question again, repeating the words out loud.

"Demanding more from the people who have the ability to get good artists out into the world. And demanding, no not demanding, but asking people to maybe consider other options than what's shoved down their throat, and I think I'm not just speaking for myself. I'm just echoing a sentiment that's been around forever. I don't think I'm reinventing the wheel, nor am I saying that I'm trying to bring the musical revolution by any means. I'm just offering an alternative. The mission statement was more a plea as a music fan." ●



Toronto-based music journalist Karen Bliss is the Canadian news correspondent for *RollingStone.com*, and operates a Canadian music industry news column, *Lowdown*, at <http://jam.canoe.ca/Music/Lowdown/>. She also edits *Gasoline*, and contributes to *Elle Canada*, *Audience*, *Tribute*, *Words & Music* and others.

With a voice that's a compelling mix of honey and grit, she could probably sing the phone book and wow the crowd.

But this singer/songwriter has more than that to offer.

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by Kevin Young

thirteen

"I'm terrible in arguments, but I always nail it on the head when I write it in a song."

— Kathleen Edwards, from an interview with Robert Everett Green, *The Globe and Mail*, Tuesday Jan. 14, 2003

Beyond being extremely quotable, Kathleen Edwards is a rare talent as both songwriter and performer. And on her newest record, *Back To Me*, just freshly released this month, she nails it on the head repeatedly. With a voice that's a compelling blend of honey and grit she could probably sing the phone book and wow the crowd, but add storytelling chops well beyond her age and it's an unbeatable mix: One that we might have missed out on had it not been for a lucky late night break in America. When we spoke, just after a United Way benefit performance at the Toronto's Phoenix in December of 2004, she was just preparing for the release of the record. The day after we speak she'll be heading back to Ireland. It's a return trip and one she's clearly looking forward to; "Dublin's an amazing town and there's nothing better than playing a block away from the Guinness brewery." After that, her schedule is completely up in the air, but not exactly wide open, as she'll soon begin promotion for the new one before its release in March.

For anyone not entirely familiar with the route Kathleen took to get where she is, a short recap may be in order; Originally from Ottawa, she studied violin from ages 5 to 17 and played trumpet in school, but it was laying hands to her brother's guitar that made the difference. "He was the first person in the family to get a guitar. I think I picked it up when he brought the guitar home. I went to summer camp in Temagami, Ontario, and everyone sort of sat around and sang Neil Young songs. It was this amazing — no showers, no running water — summer camp for kids. We could just basically be dirty and run around wild." Being one of the few who could play she was drafted to do so and it just stuck. "I just continued to play and learn songs. I was the kid in the canoe singing stupid camp songs and then, eventually,

got my own guitar for Christmas." To this day, guitar remains the instrument Kathleen uses when writing. On the record she also plays banjo, strings and vibes.

When her last record, *Failor*, was released, it made little initial impact and was pretty much dead in the water when David Letterman agreed to have her on *The Late Show*. "It was wonderful. If I were to ever have a hit record, or get an award, the first person I would have to thank would be David and his show, because something changed the day that they said "Yes, we'll have you."

What followed was a great deal more interest both in America and here at home. Kathleen was named one of the 10 artists to watch in 2003 by *Rolling Stone*, a second *Late Show* appearance followed, as did one on Leno, Juno nods and more. Still, Kathleen downplays the hype, "It wasn't this amazing amount of success. It was that I got the opportunity to do some cool stuff. I think what really happened was I really got absolutely no coverage in Canada until I was on Letterman. I ended up selling some records in the states, I certainly didn't have a hit record, but I was able to build a fan base. I felt sort of guilty, I mean, this shouldn't be what it takes to get someone to want to do an article about you. Having America praise you and sort of validate what you're doing and then your own country doesn't want to be on board until then.

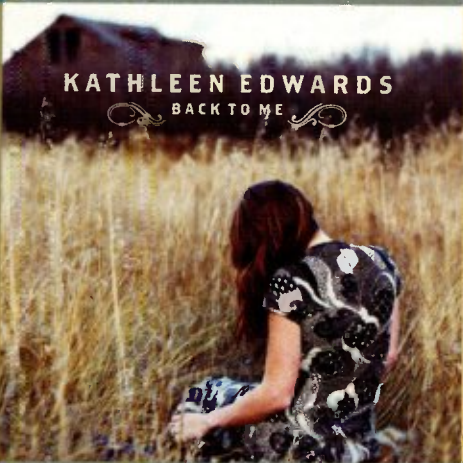
Even if it wasn't massive, chart topping success, it was more than enough to continue. The kind of success that allows an artist breathing room to work, but not so much that they feel completely trapped by overly high expectations the next time out. She makes it clear she is in it for the long haul and focused well beyond the immediate hype. "It's kind of comforting that I can still go and try to put out five more records and not feel like if I don't have a hit, I should stop or that that's the fuel

behind what I'm doing." Still making her second record was somewhat nerve wracking. In her bio she's quoted as saying "The worst thing about being the 'It' girl is

that you're worried tomorrow

wards

Kathleen Edwards



For more info on
Kathleen Edwards
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you're not going to be the 'It' girl."

Whether it's fuelled by chart topping hits, critical acclaim, or just plain hard ass touring the plan is to maintain the momentum of her career so she can continue to write and make records. It's a sound plan, one based on optimism as much as on sheer bloody-minded determination. That determination is a good part of what set her on this path in the first place. With 500 copies of her indie EP, *Building 55*, she booked and did her first tour across Canada – alone – in her Chevy Suburban.

The logic ... "I have a truck, I can tour." Simply put, she picked up the phone and tracked down club bookers across the country in the hunt for gigs. Sometimes making up to 20 calls just to get the number of the person she was looking for. Looking back now, she says, "It's a pretty gutsy thing to do, to get in my truck and drive to Sault St. Marie; to not have a hotel and just sleep in the back of my truck outside Tim Hortons in the parking lot. Classic Canadian," she says. She chose the Tim's because, being open all night, it seemed a reasonably safe place to stay. "The next morning was brutal; I'd picked the busiest Tim Hortons in the Sault and parked right beside the drive-thru line. So I open the truck door in the morning and rolled out and I look like some vagrant."

As clearly as that determination comes through on her full-length debut, 2002's *Failer*, it's even more focused on the new record. Named for the album's first single, *Back To Me* seems, initially, a bit more aggressive off the top than *Failer*. If so, Kathleen explains, then it's a sound that developed over time; one that's appropriate for the songs and that she and her band graduated into over a year and a half of relentless touring. "I can definitely say I can sing more confidently now and that totally came with playing a lot."

Confidence and determination aside, with the kind of recognition 2003 brought her; she did have to cope with a fair amount of high expectations. "The sophomore jinx?" she asks. "I had my moments. There was a lot of self-doubt going on: Is this any good? Am I going too far away from my last record? There was just a lot of uncertainty. It's funny, cause going into it, prior to getting to the studio, I was like, 'I got the songs. I feel good about it. The record company's not going to push me around. I'm just going to do my thing. Then you get in the studio and you're like; is this any good? Luckily I'm surrounded by my band who were great supporters and would tell me straight if they didn't think it was good."

Any doubts Edwards may have had while making the record certainly don't show on the finished product. An intriguing mix of observation and longing, *Back To Me* evokes the loneliness of the road, the everyday heartbreaks and triumph of life in simple terms. The album is populated by recollections and insight about the ghosts of her past, the simple comforts of home, and characters she speaks to and about in such a way that you can almost hear them knocking at your own door; allowing the listener to feel right at home in her songs regardless of the difference between the singer and her audience in age or life experience. End to end the record delivers strong songs and performances that happen to be engaging stories to boot. In addition to the band, (Colin Cripps on Guitar, Joel Anderson on drums, and Kevin McCarragher on Bass) there are a few notable guests, including Erik Heywood on pedal steel, Jim James of My Morning Jacket, and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' keyboard player, Benmont Tench.

For Kathleen, Benmont's involvement was a dream come true. "There were two people I really wanted to work with on this record and one was Benmont." Initially, however, after being told by Petty's management that Tench would be unable to play, Kathleen was disappointed. "I was bummed because I really fucking wanted him to work on the record. Then he picked up the package from the office and, a couple of weeks later, he just out of the blue called us and said 'Hey, I'd love to do this'. The other guy I wanted was Jim Scott. I'm a huge Petty fan," she says by way of explanation. "I really wanted him to mix because he made some of my favourite records and he's worked on all of the Petty stuff since *Wildflowers* and I just knew that he was the guy." In the end Jim Scott mixed the record at LA's Cello Studios.

Recorded at Toronto's Reaction Studios, the album was produced by Colin Cripps (formerly of Junkhouse and Crash Vegas). At Reaction, they recorded directly to tape, only switching to Pro Tools for the mix. "Reaction is in Leslieville – sort of Queen East. If you wanted to record in the States, that room would cost you twice or three times as much a day. It's really a great room and I loved working there." The album also features co-writes with Cripps on "Back to Me" and "Summerlong", Pete Cash (Skydiggers, Cash Brothers) on "Old Time Sake" and a song written by long-time collaborator, Jim Bryson, "Somewhere Else". The ethic in the studio was to get to final tracking immediately. "We didn't really demo anything. We had a few live versions from having played one or two songs here and there. Just go in and record it; that's what Colin said and he was right. Most of the time, the original versions are better anyway.

If there is one overall thing Kathleen learned from the process of writing and recording this new record, it was to let go. Initially she had intended to co-produce the record, but it became evident to her early on that she wasn't quite ready to take on that roll. "Colin was always going to be the producer. I just thought I'd have more of a role co-producing it. The one thing I learned was that it's okay to stand

back and let other people put forth ideas, especially people who know you really well, know what your songs are and know what your sound is. I didn't have to be so much of a control freak this time." In the end it was a healthy thing, she says.

Back To Me showcases Edwards growth as a singer/songwriter without ever getting bogged down in the places some sophomore efforts might. It remains as forthright and plainspoken as her first record, and whether it's the voice, or Edward's knack for offering up real life experiences while striking just the right balance between giving away too much and too little, there's an immediacy in her delivery and lyrics that allows the listener to slip into the song as comfortably as if they themselves were singing it. "It's tough finding that balance. There's this perfect world of 'well, these songs are really personal, but yeah I'm not going to tell you exactly what they're about' and I think it's good to let people make their own interpretations. It makes you realize that it might not be something that's not just specific to me, which is why I think musicians and songwriters connect with so many people, or have the potential to do that so."

Most of all that immediacy comes Kathleen's ability to give up a slice of life from different points in time without ever sounding removed from them. If *Failer* was about the barfly existence and the people she knew when living in Ottawa and Wakefield, Quebec, then the driving force of *Back To Me* is how she felt about being away from them and missing the barflies and all the people that she wrote about on *Failer*. "I sort of got plucked out of that world and suddenly I was touring relentlessly for a year and a half. At the same time I'd sort of packed up all my stuff in Ottawa cause I'd moved to Toronto, being away and suddenly thinking, 'Well, when I get home off the road I'm not actually going home anymore. I'm going to Toronto so when am I gonna see these people?' She makes certain to explain that how grateful she is for this chance to succeed as an artist, but, particularly with all the personal changes of the last while, the ride sometimes leaves her feeling disconnected from her old life in some ways. "Copy Keys," she says, "sort of sums it all up. That song was about me sort of being in Toronto for a month or so and realizing and waking up one morning and saying, 'Oh my God,' like this isn't my life, this is your life and what am I doing here."

Kathleen is no stranger to moving around. Although born in Ottawa she lived in Switzerland and Seoul, Korea as a youth before returning to the Gatineau region and living in Wakefield for a time. Clearly, though she comes by her wanderlust honestly, relocating is always easy. "I'm definitely based in Toronto against my will," she adds, in a way that makes it unclear if she's entirely joking. I really love Ottawa. I'm here because I married a Torontonians. Well, I guess a Hamiltonian, who needs to work in Toronto."

Even with all the travel and attention of the last year or so, one of her fondest memories is still that first sold out show at her local Wakefield haunt, The Black Sheep. "It was at Christmas time and it was wild. I'd never sold out a show out before. It was just nice. It felt like a bit of a homecoming and that's one of my favourite places in the world. I love the Black Sheep Inn. The person who runs it is the person who gave me my first few gigs and there's a lot of history for me there."

History, specifically that with husband/co-producer/guitar player Colin Cripps' widely respected former Junkhouse bandmate, Tom Wilson, also played a part in her memorable 2003 Juno performance. One of her earliest gigs had been opening for the Hamilton rocker. "We became friends and stayed in touch ever since then. I was a huge fan and I got to know all those guys. Then last year at the Junos we were trying to get different acts together for the show so it just made a logical connection to be together." So much sense in fact that Blackie and The Rodeo Kings made here an honorary member of the band.

"An honorary Rodeo King?" I ask.

"I'm a Rodeo Mistress apparently," she corrects me.

Fair enough. It doesn't take long to see how Edwards would fit in. Her music is a seamless blend of roots and country styles that pay tribute to her varied influences without ever sounding derivative or losing her distinct voice and attitude; a touch of Tom Petty here, some bits of a Neil Young and Crazy Horse vibe in other places. "Even before I was legal age I'd go to Barrymoores

and I saw the Cowboy Junkies play there, same with Blue Rodeo." She doesn't shy away from talking about the artists who've influenced her over time, Ani DiFranco, Aimee Mann, Dylan. "Jim Bryson as well; Jim has been a huge part of me defining my sound. Cause I really just stole his sound and, you know, I'm a girl so I can, right?"

When I ask Edwards if there are any other artists that influence her, or if she has any specific guilty musical pleasures she replies with a quick rundown of the some of her the top picks on her iPod: "I love that new Loretta Lynn record, AC/DC, The Darkness – love it; I love Roy Orbison, Elvis Presley – fucking brilliant; Gillian Welsh. There's so much out there right now." With many artists she listens to it is song specific, she says. "You know when someone says 'Have you heard this?' You say 'No' and they're like, 'Oh my God, you haven't heard that record?' Like, look man, there's a lot of fucking music out there. I'll get around to it, lay off."

And if the response to *Back To Me* is anything like it was for the last record, she may end up playing with many of the artists making that music before she has a chance to get around to listening to it. She's shared the stage with a number of legends, at SARSstock and elsewhere. "I went to do this great Gram Parsons show on the west coast over the summer. He had Dwight Yoakum, Steve Earle, Lucinda Williams and Jim James from My Maroon Jacket. I've been really lucky to do some stuff that's really cool."

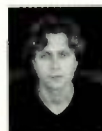
If the attitude in her lyrics, and the bold moves she's made to get to this point are any indication, luck has less to do with it than hard work. That, and an unflinching and brutally candid self-awareness that's seems as much a part of her success as it is a part of the charm of her music. Something that shows through in her reply to my question whether record production is something she might like to do in the future, either her own records or other artists... "I think it's something everybody inherently wants to do. I was so 'I don't need a fucking producer'. Not that I know everything, just that I don't need someone telling me what I should sound like or what I should do. I always thought that was what producers did. I came to realize



Kathleen performs with Blackie and the Rodeo Kings at the 2004 Juno Awards.

that being your own producer is not necessarily a good thing."

In the spirit of learning to let go, Kathleen points to her relationship with Colin as key to the success of their working relationship in the studio. "He knows a lot about me," she says. "Colin was great about it, especially for being able to point out what could be better about something. There were times where I said, 'There's nothing wrong with it. Leave it'. And he'd say 'This could be better, let's make it better'. He was right. Colin and I, we don't really go at it very often, but the studio was a good environment for us to go at it. We're like, 'Look, if we can tour together for a year and a half, and then you can produce a record with me, we might as well fuckin' get married, man. Cause if we're still together after that, then it's a done deal.' ●



Kevin Young is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

It's past midnight and Mark "London" Spicoluk is downstairs in the small basement office of Toronto's Underground Operations, the indie punk label he's been running since age 16 and now has a staff of five. It's not unusual for him to be working at this late hour. The guy is a workhorse, singer-bassist in his own band, Closet Monster; manager of Protest The Hero; a songwriter, producer, and multi-instrumentalist – in addition to heading artist development and overseeing marketing, promotion, radio, video, and touring for the U.O. roster.

The house is bustling. His band members – guitarists Jesse Colburn and Adam Cyncora (drummer Aaron Verdonk is absent) – are upstairs, having accompanied him to a small gathering earlier in the evening at the Bovine to meet Kevin Lyman, founder of the Vans Warped Tour, on which Closet Monster has played two summers in a row. Spicoluk then popped into EMI Music Publishing Canada's in-house recording studio to meet and check out a young rock singer for a potential co-writing opportunity.

Now he's trying to get the interview done, as interruptions are frequent and his cell phone rings. He's offered the chance to reschedule and join his friends, but true to his business nature, says no. Besides, he's never really reflected on the history of Closet

"Yes, that was me," laughs Spicoluk, between drags of a cigarette and sips of herbal tea. "Out of everything I ever wrote, *that* was the most honest."

"Uniquist" is an invented word with an invented symbol that Spicoluk has tattooed on his right leg. "We wanted to coin some kind of philosophy that was life-based and politically personal," he explains. "Basically, we took equality and unity – everybody being equal, no gender, no race, no borders, just humanism in its most basic form."

Most "normal" teenagers don't give a shit about what happens outside their social circle, why did he?

Born in Edmonton, Spicoluk has lived all over Canada. When he moved from Hay River, N.W.T. to Ajax, ON midway through 1992, he was already hooked on hip-hop, such as political revolutionists Public Enemy. In grade 7, he tried his hand at writing rhymes. "They were retarded. At this stage, I wasn't politically aware. I was strictly raised upon the values and things so dear to middle-class white suburbia," he explains, including the requisite piano lessons.

That same year, when Nirvana blew up, the 13-year-old wore plaid and got into grunge, like Pearl Jam, Screaming Trees, and alt. rockers Sonic Youth and The Pixies. As he hit 15, starving for new music, he tuned into the 1 a.m. punk show *Mods & Rockers*, on

road, adding with a laugh, "Sorry for egging your house, Mark." (True story)

To complete Closet Monster, Spicoluk recruited Clap Trap drummer Kyle Stanley. "We wanted a four-piece, but I was like, 'Fuck it, we'll be three because we can't find anyone else who thinks like us.'"

Before even playing a show, the band recorded a demo on 8-track with Rumsfeld's Dean Scott in August of 1997, and put the track "Life Goes On" on U.O.'s second release, a compilation called *The Declaration Of Independents* that Spicoluk funded himself.

In September, Closet Monster went into Toronto's Insight Recorders with owner/producer Simon Head, who Spicoluk first met at an Oshawa battle of the bands Public Display entered. "That was probably the best studio experience of my life because we were working with somebody who made it really comfortable and fun, and it was the first time we were in a real studio environment," Spicoluk says.

The cassette EP, *So Be It*, came out in October and was followed in July, 1998, by another Head-produced EP, *Pure Unfiltered Anarchy*. "I was just using ADATs. I didn't have too much gear," says Head on the phone from his studio. "I didn't really know what I was doing. I was just learning."

At the suggestion of Spicoluk, the three piled into his mother's mini van with the studio gear, and went across Canada for a month to record bands. "Mark ended up meeting all these bands and booking a tour," says Head. But when they returned, Marshal, who wrote half of Closet Monster's material, quit the band due to hearing damage.

With the tour just two weeks away (solidified with the help of Maximumrockroll's global punk link, www.byofl.org), Spicoluk approached the younger Jesse Colburn, the guitarist in AWOL. He jumped at the chance. "I'd never been outside the Toronto area," Colburn says during a later phone interview from Ajax.

Immediately, Colburn became a writing member. "They only had five or six songs that they played, so we had to rush and write songs. It was a matter of us doing my song, then doing (London's), and not fixing much," Colburn remembers.

"We evolved quick enough that a song's life-span would be about three months," says Spicoluk. "We'd be like, 'This is horrible!' And never play it again."

The first CD, 1999's *A Fight For What Is Right*, includes just three songs from the cassettes. Again, the recording was produced by Head.

Closet Monster then went on a North American tour with Marilyn's Vitamins (whose singer is now in U.O.'s Hostage Life) attempting an ambitious 57 dates that ended in van breakdowns. Upon their return, Closet Monster and Head hooked up yet again to record 2000's EP, *Where The Fuck Is The Revolution?!*, which included such songs as "Class Oppression 101" and "Freedom Is Slavery".

"I amended that very strict left-wing extremist anarchist point of view because the realism of society started sinking in," says Spicoluk. "We have to work towards change, not just reject things. That was my biggest political struggle."

As for the industry, Spicoluk got heaps of rejection letters – some said the packages needed to be "solicited" ("What the hell does that mean?" he remembers thinking); others just thanked him for his handwritten diatribes insisting that pop-punk would be the next big thing ("That was my theory and I was right").

At this point, Closet Monster was on its way to becoming a four piece with on-again, off-again guitarist Mark McAdam. The band toured hard behind *Where The Fuck Is The Revolution?!*, and when the American east coast leg was over, Stanley announced his departure from the band to start a family.

"I went through a really long period where I didn't know if I wanted to continue without Kyle because he was my rock – and I still don't know how I do it without him," Spicoluk admits.

"It was the best thing that could've happened to them," reflects Stanley, who lives with his wife, child – and Colburn. "They were in a rut when I was in the band, then I left and they started playing with new guys and pushing themselves and writing stuff that was fuckin' unbelievable."

The new guys were Stanley's replacement Chris McCartney and second guitarist Brandon Hilborn.

While UMO existed, it hadn't exactly become the Fat Wreck Chords model Spicoluk had envisioned. In fact, the guy who had quit the University Of Toronto after acing one year of philosophy and political science was working at Green Earth in Pickering Town Centre, "selling incense and statues of dogs."

SOCIOPOLITICAL INFILTRATION THROUGH PUNK ROCK

Monster, the sociopolitical band he started at Pickering High. It puts his accomplishments in perspective.

The 25-year-old had a clear vision from day one. He's smart enough to infiltrate the very systems he wants to change, be it the political or corporate worlds, but chose instead to do it via punk rock. "I didn't want to become part of the system to change the system," he explains, recognizing the irony of such a statement, since U.O. signed a pressing and distribution deal with Universal Music Canada last summer.

"I really believe that I can exist outside of the system and influence others. To me, it wasn't about changing the world as a whole. It was more about giving people the hope that I was given from bands like mine."

In its eight-year history, Closet Monster, or Spicoluk, the only original member, has pretty much stuck to the same themes – anti-capitalism, anti-war, animal-friendly, pro little guy and open minded. The band has released two cassette EPs (now out of print) and four CDs, including the latest seven-track EP, *We Re-Built This City*, which contains "Mamma Anti-Fascisto (Never Surrender)", whose video received medium rotation on MuchMusic.

The song was written after a particularly grueling European tour in the summer of 2003 that almost destroyed the band. In Italy, Closet Monster had stayed and played at Centro Sociale Leon Cavallo, a self-contained politically autonomous city-sized squat replete with restaurants, two venues and a library.

"We were introduced to this old, weathered woman, who barely spoke English," recounts Spicoluk. "She was like, 'My name is Mamma Anti Fascisto. I fight fascism for 25 years.' And then she says, 'What you guys do is good. Never surrender.' That came at a point in the tour where we were getting ready to surrender."

"So we wrote a song reflecting on what we do with our label and with our band and with our lives, how we just keep going. It's about seeing an end goal and realizing no matter what anyone says or does, if you stick to it, you'll succeed. Even if you don't get to your end goal, the success is finding your way."

"I spent 16 years living life without a clue then I re-educated and re-evaluated me and now I sing," goes one of the lines in Closet Monster's "Uniquist Me", found on 1998's cassette EP *Pure Unfiltered Anarchy*, and reissued on 1999's CD debut, *A Fight For What Is Right*.

by Karen Bliss

Toronto's 89.5 FM. There he first heard NOFX, and most influential of all, Winnipeg leftists Propagandi. He soon started Lukas, a Sonic Youth-inspired duo for which he and his buddy switched up instruments (drums, guitar, bass) and wrote originals about nonsensical subjects. "We used a lot of BOSS pedals, Cry Baby wah pedals, overdrive and grunge," says Spicoluk, "and figured out how to use a 4-track."

His next band was "more serious," a dirty-punk four-piece called Special Ed. Spicoluk sang and played guitar. From '95 to '96, the teens made 4-track demos, and were practically the house band at Oshawa's since defunct Moon Room, opening for treble charger, Hayden, DOA, and others.

After kicking out a member, the band took the name Public Display and started writing in the So-Cal punk vein, inspired by Fat Wreck Chords acts like Good Riddance and Lagwagon. Taking a cue from NOFX's Fat Mike, the label founder, Spicoluk figured he'd start one too. He selected Criminal Records, but the name, remarkably, was taken by a local business. He then chose UMO, which only insiders knew stupidly stood for Underground Monkey Operations.

Not knowing any better, Public Display went into a studio, and emerged \$7,000 in the hole with programmed drums and substandard engineering. The eponymously-titled Public Display CD became UMO's first release in 1996. "Lyrically, it was the start of our rebellious state. We didn't know where to focus our angst, so we targeted anything we could," says Spicoluk.

When he bought Propagandi's *How To Clean Everything and Less Talk, More Rock*, he gained better insight. Picking up any book recommended in the band's liner notes, Spicoluk says, "Noam Chomsky changed the way I thought about the world."

It was 1997. Spicoluk, now 17, a vegetarian and well-versed in world issues such as foreign trade, had spent May through July playing bass for then-unknown Ajax band Sum 41 with singer Deryck Whibley and drummer "Stevy" Jocz. But sensing a lack of camaraderie, he stole its guitarist, Jon Marshal, to start Closet Monster.

The coup d'etat would trigger a silly feud that would last for years. Sum 41's 2000 EP, *Half Hour Of Power*, is mockingly dedicated "to Closet Monster ... in loving memory."

"We were always best friends, then arch-nemeses, then best friends again," muses Spicoluk, whose U.O. acts often open for the band. "We were the yin and yang of the Ajax scene. We'd write a song about not eating meat; they'd write a song about eating meat. It was hilarious."

"We're all friends now," confirms Sum 41's Jocz from the

WELLSNOW LOST



CONVICTIONS OF A PUNK ROCK STRATEGIST

CLOSET MONSTER

One day, in wandered Head. "What the hell are you doing working here? If you need a job, I'll train you and you can help me with the studio," relays Spicoluk.

So for most of 2001, this 21-year-old aspirant commuted daily to Insight. "I'd be a gopher or just watch, then slowly he'd test me — 'Mic a kit, 'Compress these overhead mics, 'Show me your best mix, 'I really excelled at it," says Spicoluk.

Part of his job was to solicit bands for Insight. Within two-and-a-half months, he recorded his first, Rim Trik. His second was ska punks Happy Go Lucky. Then just 14-years-old, the band had unwittingly impressed Spicoluk by sending e-mails, begging for an opening gig with Closet Monster, that signed off with a Chomsky quote.

Determined still to build his label, Spicoluk got rid of "Monkey" and relaunched as the cooler Underground Operations. Happy Go Lucky changed its name to the cooler Protest The Hero, and signed on with Spicoluk for both management and a record deal.

Meanwhile, Closet Monster was given new life. The band invited Pump Action Joe guitarist Adam Cyncora to replace Hilborn, but it was a devastating summer of 2001 that strengthened the band's resolve.

When Cyncora joined, his girlfriend Melody, also a close friend of Spicoluk and Colburn's, tragically drowned. "It made me decide not to waste my time and to appreciate everything that was coming my way," says Cyncora in a phoner from Ajax.

"It destroyed us all," says Spicoluk, understandably. "It made the record a period in our life that I will stand by until the day I die — and that was the rebirth of Closet Monster."

All summer, Spicoluk, Colburn, Cyncora, and Stanley (as a writing member only) wrote what would become the next album, *Killed The Radio Star*. It includes one of the band's most radio-friendly tracks, "Melody's Song", featuring Spicoluk on piano.

Closet Monster was finally able to spend significant time cutting an album since Spicoluk worked at Insight and got cut rates. In September, the band holed up for six weeks. For the first time, Head didn't produce but oversaw the process. "We were completely self-sufficient for that whole record," says Spicoluk.

The songwriting had really developed. Contrary to most acts, Closet Monster's material had become less structured, poppy and clean and more dirty, fierce and textured. "I know, I know," Spicoluk sighs mockingly, "If we were still playing music like that, who knows where we'd be because we'd be great fuckin' pop songwriters."

But what the band began to excel at is writing great fuckin' punk anthems from "Battle Cry For A Better World" about everything from class structure to environmental decay to "The Anti-Racist Sing-A-Long", a ditty poking fun at the need to even write such a lyric in this day and age.

What Spicoluk has learned over time is how to distill all these ideas, ideals and ideologies down to melodic declarations, even though they don't read like typical lyric constructions on the page. "We took pop song structure that we got so good at writing when we were young and decided to break all the rules. I learned about minor bass scales," he adds. "You could write major chord bone structures and fill it in with minor scales on the bass and it would give it an evil overtone."

While Spicoluk continues to write most of the lyrics, he says his main writing partner, Colburn, has a knack for melodies.

"Our writing style completely changed with *Killed The Radio Star*," offers Colburn. "It had a lot to do with the bands we were listening to, such as Dillinger Four and Bombs Over Providence — bands with broken pop formulas. They taught us that you didn't need a set formula to write a song, like verse-

chorus, verse-bridge-chorus.

"But I think us just getting older, more informed, and angrier about certain issues played a huge role in the way we presented ourselves and our music."

Killed *The Radio Star* was in the can and contained some of the band's best songs to date, but all was not well in the Closet. As friends established acceptable careers, "We had this whole security system pounded into our head from suburbia that what we were doing was wrong," says Spicoluk. "We were all completely depressed and had no faith in the record we just recorded. We hadn't released it yet. Our whole lives had been our way, our way, our way, and we had seen no success, except getting out on the road starving in a van."

Now intent on building Underground Operations, Spicoluk was trying to figure out how to get capital when he received a phone call from Greig Nori, Sum 41's manager and frontman for treble charger. A newly signed pop/rock singer named Avril Lavigne was in need of a bassist.

"He told me it would be a background gig, get flown around the world, part-time mostly because it's all about her. 'You'll get paid better than working at the studio,'" recounts Spicoluk. "I had a day to decide if I would take the plane ticket and go. Fuck, I was a musician. I was getting paid to play music. How amazing was that?"

So Spicoluk was jet-setting, appearing on Leno and MTV, staying at fancy hotels, the extreme opposite of his punk tours from hell. He took a "beating" on message boards for selling out, but he had a plan. He would put his weekly paycheck back into U.O.

"When London first left, I was pretty shaken up," admits Cyncora. "It came out of nowhere. I didn't know how much he meant it when he said he'd come back. He started calling me all the time and I knew he was doing it temporarily."

Meanwhile, Spicoluk had got Colburn a gig with Lavigne and he ended up dating her.

He would remain in her band for well over a year.

Closet Monster did not break up. In fact, it shot the video for "Mr. Holland vs. Acceptable Behavior" during Spicoluk's downtime; *Killed The Radio Star* was released in June, and the band played unannounced at the U.O. launch party (with

Protest, and Bombs) at the since closed Kyles in Toronto.

"I quit Avril a month and a half after that (August)," says Spicoluk. "I left because the bottom line is when you're not where you should be, you know."

Hilborn returned to the band to replace Colburn, and Spicoluk immediately secured European distribution through Join The Team Player, and FAB in Canada. "As soon as I left Avril, it was game on," he says. "We toured on *Killed The Radio Star* non-stop in Canada and Europe."

The summer European '03 tour was nearly nine weeks and covered 14 countries with almost no breaks. Out of Closet Monster's tour budget, the label set the band up at Elk Studios in Stuttgart for six days. "By that point, we were probably clinically insane," Spicoluk says, only slightly joking.

Needless to say, when the band returned home, it decided to recut most of the *We Built This City* EP at Parkhill Studios in Oakville, ON. Spicoluk asked Colburn if he would co-produce. "I immediately smiled because I still wanted to be part of the band somehow," says Colburn, who helped write "Mamma Anti-Fascisto" and "Punk Rock Ruined Our Lives".

In Colburn's absence, McAdam, and Bombs Over Providence's Adam Cooke, had also pitched in writing-wise.

Lyrical, Spicoluk revisits some past themes. "Convictions Of A Schoolyard Anarchist" expounds on mis-teachings of political history, and "Shitting In The Face Of This Western Disgrace" critiques escalating advertising bombardment. More personal are "Summer Of '97" about those that knocked the band's outspoken political stance, and "Punk Rock Ruined Our Lives", a love song to Closet Monster's history.

That history would include yet another change. Drummer Aaron Verdonk of Cids Lance replaced McCartney in October of 2003. The band gave him the Germany recording, plus "this moment's manifesto" from the eventual liner notes to see if they were on the same wavelength. "I agreed with them," says Verdonk who was mildly political before and after high school, with Amnesty International and anti-war protests. "Nothing too intense though. Really, joining Closet Monster thrust me into this political world a lot more."

Shortly after Verdonk joined, major labels starting showing interest in Underground Operations. Over the eight months it took to field offers, Closet Monster continued to tour and released *We Built This City*. Just as everything seemed to be coming together, strangely the stars aligned again. Hilborn decided he couldn't commit to the lifestyle and quit the band, leaving the opening for Colburn who had just left Lavigne a week before.

With the P&D deal in place with Universal, Closet Monster remixed, re-produced, re-guitaried, re-sang and re-released the EP under the slightly modified title *We Re-Built This City* with the additional track "The Empire Strikes Iraq". Since then, the band supported Alexisonfire's national tour, then immediately followed with a 33-date Unity Tour with its U.O. labelmates. It culminated in a sold-out finale at Toronto's Opera House to 800 strong in November.

While Closet Monster has yet to get added at any commercial radio station, Toronto's Edge 102 dubbed it "The Next Big Thing." "Whatever they want to call it is fine; it's not going to change our strategy," says Spicoluk. Never Surrender.



Toronto-based music journalist Karen Bliss is the Canadian news correspondent for *RollingStone.com*, and operates a Canadian music industry news column, *Lowdown*, at <http://jam.canoe.ca/JamColumnBliss/home.html>. She also edits *Gasoline*, and contributes to *Elle Canada*, *Audience*, *Tribute*, *Words & Music* and others.

CLOSET MONSTER EQUIPMENT LIST

ADAM CYNORA

Marshall JMP head
Marshall JCM 900 cabinet
Gibson SG guitar
Seymour Duncan Pickup Booster pedal
Seymour Duncan Invader pickups
EMG pickups
BOSS tuner pedal
SIT strings

JESSE COLBURN

Marshall JCM 800 head
Marshall JCM 800 cabinet
Godin LGXT guitar
Gibson SG guitar
Seymour Duncan custom humbucker pickups (Godin guitar)
498T Alnico magnet humbucker pickups (Gibson guitar)
SIT strings
Korg DTR-1000 rackmount tuner

MARK "LONDON" SPICOLUK

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Ampeg 8 x 10 cab
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The Exaggerated Death Of The Hard Copy/CD Duplication Tips

Online Vs. Hard Copy

There's been more than enough navel gazing, angry rhetoric and debate about whether the death of the CD is imminent, but when it comes down to the nuts and bolts of delivering your record to your audience, many people still prefer it. Ultimately, although the CD may eventually be headed for the dustbin, it's not going quietly.

Obviously, you should use every possible avenue to get your music out there. MP3s are invaluable for passing finished songs around to learn, to comment on the mix, just generally for ease and speed of transfer. So much so that it wouldn't be entirely surprising if some musicians actually came to prefer an entirely digital record. And soon, when you go to a show and want to buy a band's music, it might become standard to walk up to the merch booth and download the album files to your MP3 player. Some concerts have even offered burned CDs of the show immediately after the concert ends. But until MP3 players become as ubiquitous as cell phones, it's doubtful that artists, (particularly those with little in the way of tour support and for whom having breakfast the next day depends on selling merch the night before) will take the risk of not having something to sell off the stage and spread their music around.

CM: So, how do you listen these days – online or hard copy?

Some concerts have even offered burned CDs of the show immediately after the concert ends.

Emm: I'm old fashioned. I still love getting a CD, playing it in the car and looking at the artwork. I'm sure that that's gonna change, but I'll probably be the last one to latch on.

Jeff: I like having a physical record in my hand. I've bought songs online with iTunes, but sometimes when they get thrown into the iPod you forget that you have them, so you might not actually really listen to it. If I actually have a CD copy I might be more inclined to actually take some time and love the record.

Byron: Hard copy. Maybe I'm a holdout – I've got about five and a half thousand CDs – but going into a record store and saying "What's hot? What's interesting? What do you like?" and hearing something from the speakers that I'd never know about is great. We need tastemakers, and for better or for worse, that's what the record stores and radio stations do for us. Also, people just like to look at something – to flip through something. Once people start reading books on their PDAs, or computers, because when it gets that good, that's when we can start marketing digital music exclusively. I think that's a ways away, but it is coming.

CM: But are CDs necessary?

David: I've thought a lot about that. The thing about CDs is that you're looking for presence where people look to buy records. If you're not in the stores, if that's the place where a lot of people still buy records and you don't have that presence people have less opportunity to buy it. So, for the present time you need both outlets.

If you're just putting out your first recording as a truly independent artist, whether the first comments you hear will be coming from an A&R rep who wonders if you have what it takes for him make you a star, or your mom, who wonders if you happen to coming home later so she can make you dinner – either way, you have to get it into their hands. Bottom line, right now you're going to need CDs. The question is whether to get them made professionally or burn them, and then, how many do you need and how slick should they be?

Quick do-it-yourself burns are cheapest, but are also most likely to fail and, with the options available to you in terms of home and professional duplication, not likely to thrill your fans. Be clear before you make them just what you're using them for. Research and shop around – spend what is reasonable and only get the quantity you need. Resist the temptation to get a super deal by ordering far more product than you need.

You know that incredible feeling you felt when loads of boxes of your very own record got piled in the hall? (And under your bed, behind the sofa...) Well, it fades quickly when they refuse to disappear into the willing hands of your fans. Especially if it only works in one CD player in their house, every second Tuesday of the month – if you're lucky – and then only on tracks 4 through 7.

Adopting a do-it-yourself attitude is fine, but not if you end up doing a crappy job. Take responsibility and, regardless of who is getting a copy of your record, put your best foot forward with the smartest looking, best sounding package possible. One that serves the purpose it's intended for – if you're not certain exactly what you should send to someone, be it A&R at a label, other industry folks, press or the CD duplicators/replicators, do your research and figure it out. Ask pointed questions and

check out the work they've done in the past. If you're going to get your recording mastered at the same place it will be manufactured, find out what they've done before pressing and do some listening.

As engineer/producer Ken Friesen of Signal Path Studios put it; "Mastering is two things: to put the picture in the best possible frame and make the CD level competitive in the modern world." Mastering is not something you want to skimp on. Meaning that just because you have a friend with the software to master your record doesn't mean he/she is the best choice for the job and has the necessary experience. He may have the capability, but not the ideal monitoring environment to base the results on. Also, he cautions, when you're mastering and trying to make your record the loudest thing ever to rock God's green earth, bear in mind that incredibly loud, doesn't necessarily mean incredibly good. "The only way to make it louder is to compress and limit it more. And by compressing and limiting it more, you're not necessarily putting the picture in the best frame, you're putting in the biggest frame."

While asking questions, researching and generally trying to figure out what and how much product you need, a good one to ask is... "Is there any doubt the CDs will be ready on time?" When Jeff Pearce found himself without product for his band RYE's CD release party he was forced to sell burns of the record and get fans to fill out a card so he could send them a proper CD later – a good solution to a lousy situation, but definitely not ideal.

"When you're looking around," he says, "it's tempting to go for a bigger company because you might feel like they've got a big machine there and everything is going to work well, but sometimes it's just as well to go for a smaller company where you can actually hassle them every day and find out what stage your CDs are at."

Changing Paths

Sometimes the risks you take are as much driven by an inseparable mix of creative and business concerns. In recent months, both Alexisonfire and David have made big changes: Formerly distributed by EMI, AOF have now moved over to Universal for distribution. David also left EMI, after 10 years, for Maple Music Recordings.

CM: What prompted you to make the changes?

Wade: More or less, Greg just thought it would be the best and we backed him up.

Greg: Just to be clear on one thing; I have zero issues with EMI; they worked really hard and achieved a gold record; they were a big part of it. There are people at EMI that jumped through hoops to help this band out, but I signed my deal with no band signed to my roster, so I got terms that I just had to accept in order to have distribution. When the terms came up after three years – on the Universal side – Allan Reid approached me before I even went to Universal and they showed an interest. They came together with a plan of attack. Business is business; I'm trying to look out for Distort as a whole and you have to do what's right for everyone. It just seemed to be a better opportunity for growth and Universal seems to be a little more in tune with some of the heavier stuff and were willing to meet us in the middle. If I save a few pennies here and there it directly affects my band in that there's more coming



Jeff Pearce ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

in so there's more to share, down the path, with everyone.

David: Basically, I thought that we weren't going to make good records together anymore. We'd done so much together successfully, but at a certain point you have to change things up to make them fresh again, to be excited. Change forces you to take risks and forces you outside your comfort zone.

CM: Are you a little nervous working with a whole new group of people?


David: I know it takes a lot of people to get music out there and to make records happen and it's been amazing with Maple because it feels like a real collaboration again. We're also very excited. I think my excitement feeds them and their excitement feeds me and that makes it fresh again, which, after this many records is important.

Self-Production

These last comments bring up an important point; no matter how much you do on your own, it takes a strong team to get a record out. Having creative control doesn't mean you don't listen to people – recording in a vacuum, with no one to provide perspective is begging for trouble. Greater freedom doesn't always make for a better process or record. It's great to make a record on your own terms and time, but you still have to own up to the result.


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Recording *if god had curves*

For all intents and purposes, David Usher's process isn't greatly affected by the cost associated with recording. It's something he has refined over time – a process that evolves according to what kind of record he wants to make, not according to how much cash he can throw at it. "I'll tell you: one of the most important things for recording yourself is making sure you have a good signal path," he says. "I'm not so worried about background noise and cars driving by and things like that, but what I am concerned about is that the signal path is clean. If it is, you're going to get great sounding tracks. It's very simple: a decent microphone – you can get one for five or six hundred bucks, a decent preamp, and a good audio card. With a clean signal path, you're far along the way to making a better sounding record. That's why I can make records in the kitchen, the bedroom, or anywhere."

Recording the latest albums, *if god had curves*, in Jeff Pearce's home studio [pictured on this issue's cover] and Byron Wong's Homework studios, the album is a collage. A mix of players and ideas – it includes performances from members of his touring bands past and present, as well as guest appearances by other well known Canadian artists including Tegan Quin of Tegan and Sara and Bruce Cockburn.

"It was an organic process," says co-producer Jeff Pearce; "For



me there were three parts to making this record: It started with demos I was making for David and the songs from the demos we really liked we decided to flesh out into album tracks. The second part was taking songs that had begun with Byron, or with the band, and adding to them. But the hardest part of the record was working songs up from scratch."

"I was in a very unbeatable position with this process," says Byron. "Jeff and David really did all the heavy lifting and I got to come and do some adjusting here and there. From a collaborative point of view, even when it was Jeff, David, and I in the room, there was always an outside person that was consulted. It wasn't so much what I brought to the process, but what I assisted in."

"They're both incredibly musical and that's the main thing. They both have great arrangement ideas and a sense of music to bring a song to life," explains David. He describes the process of making this new record as being one of his favourites, both productive and truly enjoyable; on par with the recording of his first solo album, *Little Songs*. "The records that have been fun to make are the ones I tend to want to keep listening to. And you capture something in that process that hopefully translates the enthusiasm that went into making the record so it comes out in the music."

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CM: In your opinions what are the biggest pitfalls of self-production?

Emm: It takes a little longer when I self-produce something. I don't think that just because I've recorded it and it's my vision that it's necessarily the right thing, so I have my group of friends and confidantes that I bounce things off. I also get my brother, who's an engineer, to mix the record. That always takes forever because he lives in LA and we tend to mix things by FedEx.

David: Self-production is intense. Trying to figure out when you've found the right vibe for a song and when it's going down the right path is difficult. I get very, very into the process and I get obsessed with songs, and the production, and every detail, but at the same

time I'm aware that I have a budget to work within and when you self-produce you have to understand where you are with the budget; where it's all going and how you're going to make it work on the dollars you've got. I'm surrounded by great people: we talk about everything, we live with things and talk about if we think the vibe is right or not. In the end, I have to make the call about when it's going in the right direction, which direction to follow, and when it's finished. It's always difficult and always a mad rush at the end.

Jeff: The pitfalls are the same as the benefits – when you're not on the clock you're more inclined to experiment and when you are on the clock, you're less inclined to and either can be both a pitfall and a benefit.

Byron Wong: With the unbelievable amount of flexibility we have with inexpensive technology now, we have fewer gatekeepers telling us how we can make records. That's wonderful for artists who have a vision, but, for a lot of artists, it means that they can sort of meander and nothing gets done; that's the thing to be careful of. In David's case, he always has a vision. That vision is collaborative and evolving, but there's a core vision.

CM: So, on your first time out, with no gigs and no industry interest, do you need to make a full record?

David: It all depends on what you want to do. If an artist is really driven and they have 11 or 12 songs, and they want to make a body of work that's a record and feel like they're into making it and producing, then absolutely they should do it. If they're more interested



Byron Wong ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

in recording a few songs that they can sell from the stage on tour – that's another way to go.

Wade: We started the band out with the intent of wanting to play as much as possible and we recorded a three-song demo after about a month. It was kind of, like all of our recordings, a testament to what we were doing at that exact time. We were very comfortable putting our stuff out ourselves and just trying to create word of mouth. We burned CDs ourselves and tried to make the packaging interesting, we didn't want it to look like shit, but at the same time we felt that the emphasis was our music, as opposed to having the CD look esthetically great.

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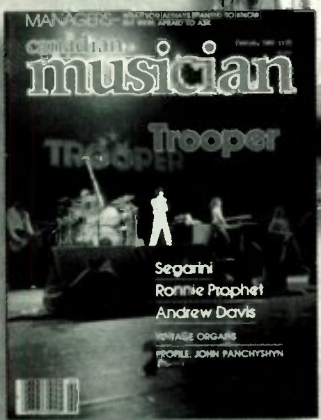
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1980

- **January/February** - Trooper, Segarini, Ronnie Prophet, Andrew Davis, Managers, Vintage Organs
- **March/April** - Triumph, Jerry Doucette, Ginette Reno, Tom Mawhinny, Show Playing for Guitar - Part I, Record Piracy
- **November/December** - April Wine, Dianne Heatherington, Buffy Saint-Marie, Bobby Edwards, Troubleshooting Your Gear, Harlequin

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- **March/April** - Rough Trade, Rob McConnell and the Boss Brass, Dick Damron, Terry Crawford, Sam Moon, Do it Yourself Percussion - Part I
- **May/June** - Liona Boyd, The Spoons, Raffi, Do It Yourself Percussion - Part II
- **September/October** - Bruce Cockburn, Ian Thomas, Lydia Taylor, Image - Part I
- **November/December** - Oscar Peterson, The Lincolns, Wildroot Orchestra, Jarvis Benoit Quartet, Image - Part II

1984

- **July/August** - Triumph, Aldo Nova, Uzeb, Chilliwack, Grokking Electronics

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- **May/June** - Corey Hart, Murray McLachlan, L'Etranger, The Electronic Drum Jungte, The Canadian Musician Lighting Guide Part I

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Indie Label Vs. Major Label - Which Way Do We Go?

While we're singing the praises of indie labels isn't meant, in any way, to devalue what the majors are capable of; nobody tosses a whack of money at a project like a major that's committed to breaking an act. When they do push the button to kick start an act's career, it gets pushed mighty hard. Now, however, they're signing fewer bands and scaling back budgets and there's a sense that, in the end, indies with distribution are a better alternative, at least in the present climate the industry finds itself in.

CM: The bottom line is finding the situation that works for you. There seems to be a sense, right now anyway, that you may better off at an indie. Is there any reason, right now, to sign with an indie label versus a major label?
Greg: There's no easy, direct answer, but I think that independents have a little less on their plates. They have a little more focus, and maybe, a little more ambition to try and win for themselves and do a good job for your band. They can take a different kind of risk; there's no one looking over their shoulder and things are approached in a cost effective way obviously. On majors, they have the

resources to make you a very big band and to get more attention, but, on many occasions, if it's not doing what the expectation is right out of the box, you may not have too long a career.

David: When you're independent there's certainly an element of freedom you get from having no expectations and no pressure about having to match yourself. You don't have a big label that needs you to match your sales and match your status.

CM: You're saying there are fewer expectations in general?

David: You never know what's going to happen; you know how it can go well and how it can go wrong. There's pressure that way, but I have that pressure whether I'm with EMI or with Maple.

Wade: We like being an independent band, but it's not like we're adverse to major labels. We never said when we started the band that this is some "street cred" kind of thing. I think that the thing that would turn us all off is a lack of control. That's really, really, important to us.

And creative control is still the biggest sticking point when it comes to signing a contract with any label. For the artists featured here, that degree of autonomy is non-negotiable and they've all proven their ability to make strong albums. Again though, beyond the freedom to work on your own terms, that kind of control can potentially be a curse if you don't have the vision and patience to follow through. As Byron sums up, "We knew there weren't going to be other people messing with [the album] further along in the process so there was a greater sense of freedom in some ways, but in others a broader, truer sense of responsibility. Granted, we've all seen these things through before, but that responsibility - just owning - I think that's something every artist should make sure they do, whether they're signed to a major or indie label or not at all."

For more info on David Usher, Alexisonfire and Emm Gryner check out...

www.davidusher.com
www.theonlybandever.com
www.emmgryner.com

Next issue, in Part 2 of this article, the artists and producers talk about working with the companies labels to manage their careers and get their music into as many hands as possible. ●



Kevin Young is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

Look for Part II
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The Transposition Chart



The chart below was created as a university music assignment but after I finished school I found myself turning to it as a comprehensive resource for teaching the concept of “key” and for a quick reference when learning the keys less travelled in.

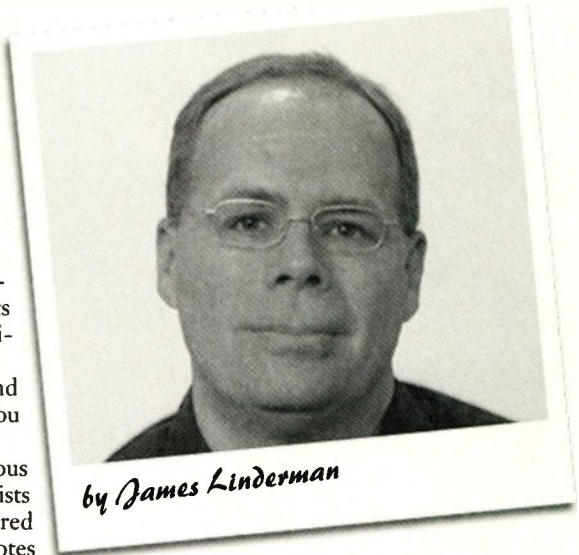
I also found it invaluable when working as an accompanist for various singers who would change the keys to songs often, and with short notice (you know who you are).

Since moving music from one key to another is called transposition and this became this charts most common use amongst students and other players I shared it with it became known as The Transposition Chart.

There are also some great songwriting tricks to be discovered and visualized from having all of this “key” information in front of you on one chart.

Here’s how it works. The left column lists the names of the various keys in order of sharps, and then in order of flats. The right column lists the key signatures for each key. Unless a note is listed as being altered by the sharps or flats listed in this column it is assumed that all other notes will be natural. The middle columns with roman numerals from I to 7 and back to 1, are the chords indigenous to each key, displayed as a harmonized scale, like “do, re, mi” etc. in chords.

As a songwriter I find myself still doing three things with this chart. I will start my writing session choosing a key and writing all of the chords in that key on the top line of a blank page and just “bang” the chords around on the guitar until I find some cool combinations. I also like to pick out chord from the list in the left hand of the piano and improvise melodies with the right hand with the chart to remind me of what is sharpened or flatted and then singing what my right hand played. The third use is a songwriting trick that this chart is essential for but it will have to wait till next issue.



Key	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	I	Signature
C	C	D _m	E _m	F	G	A _m	B _o	C	∅
G	G	A _m	B _m	C	D	E _m	F [♯]	G	F [♯]
D	D	E _m	F [♯] _m	G	A	B _m	C [♯]	D	FC [♯]
A	A	B _m	C [♯] _m	D	E	F [♯] _m	G [♯]	A	FCG [♯]
E	E	F [♯] _m	G [♯] _m	A	B	C [♯] _m	D [♯]	E	FCGD [♯]
B	B	C [♯] _m	D [♯] _m	E	F [♯]	G [♯] _m	A [♯]	B	FCGDA [♯]
F [♯]	F [♯]	G [♯] _m	A [♯] _m	B	C [♯]	D [♯] _m	E [♯]	F [♯]	FCGDAE [♯]
C [♯]	C [♯]	D [♯] _m	E [♯] _m	F [♯]	G [♯]	A [♯] _m	B [♯]	C [♯]	FCGDAEB [♯]
C	C	D _m	E _m	F	G	A _m	B _o	C	∅
F	F	G _m	A _m	B [♭]	C	D _m	E _o	F	B [♭]
B [♭]	B [♭]	C _m	D _m	E [♭]	F	G _m	A _o	B [♭]	BE [♭]
E [♭]	E [♭]	F _m	G _m	A [♭]	B [♭]	C _m	D _o	E [♭]	BEA [♭]
A [♭]	A [♭]	B [♭] _m	C _m	D [♭]	E [♭]	F _m	G _o	A [♭]	BEAD [♭]
D [♭]	D [♭]	E [♭] _m	F _m	G [♭]	A [♭]	B [♭] _m	C _o	D [♭]	BEADG [♭]
G [♭]	G [♭]	A [♭] _m	B [♭] _m	C [♭]	D [♭]	E [♭] _m	F _o	G [♭]	BEADGC [♭]
C [♭]	C [♭]	D [♭] _m	E [♭] _m	F [♭]	G [♭]	A [♭] _m	B [♭] _o	C [♭]	BEADGCF [♭]

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Equalizing the Drums



Last time we conquered microphone setup of the drums, now let's look at equalizing those drum sounds. Equalizing drum tracks can be tricky because you don't know how the rest of the tracks will sound until mix time. Equalization, or simply EQ, is often used in tandem with compression or limiting. Drums are often the pillars of a song, and must be sturdy enough to carry the load. Equalization and compression can bring out the natural crack and boom.

When getting drum sounds, set the monitor mix at a reasonable level. If the drums sound full and clear at a lower level, imagine how great they'll sound when the volume is turned up. Plus low drum levels delay ear fatigue.

Don't set the equalization and then leave it, but tweak the sounds with other instruments in the monitor mix. For example, if you are adding 5 kHz on the snare, check that you aren't also adding 5 kHz on the guitar, the bass and the kick drum, or all will lose distinction.

Of course, the following are for reference only, and every situation is different. No matter what your settings are, they will change when the rest of the instruments are introduced into the mix.

Kick Drum Equalization

Proper Q settings can help define each drum by minimizing frequency overlap. Starting points might be:

- Pull below 40 Hz.
- Boost around 60-100 Hz to bring out the thud of the kick, maybe even lower in certain circumstances such as some dance mixes. Set the kick drum frequencies in tandem with the settings on the bass guitar. These two instruments carry the low end of the song and each should be distinct. Add a frequency on one and pull the same frequency on the other. Note that a tight kick skin won't have the low end of a looser skin.
- Pull around 164 Hz in the kick drum to bring clarity to the bass track. 164 Hz is a harmonic of the bass guitar's fundamental low E note, 41 Hz.
- Add up to 200 Hz for body and fullness. Watch overlap.
- Pull from 200-600 Hz or higher to remove unwanted cloudiness and to open room for other instruments.

- Boost around 2.5-5 kHz for solid thwack.
- Boost at 5-8 kHz for crispness or a clicky sound. With faster tempo songs, the kick may need more click to be heard, while slower tempo songs leave room to allow solid lows to come through.
- Pull 8 kHz and up. These frequencies contribute little. Pulling them won't affect the sound much and may reduce hiss.

Snare Drum Equalization

- Roll off up to 100 Hz to reduce muddiness.
- Boost somewhere between 100-300 Hz for the body of the snare drum to come through.
- Boost somewhere between or around 500 Hz-1 kHz for that nice woody crack sound.
- Boost around 1 kHz for a "tink" sound.
- Boost between 5-10 kHz for crispness.

High-Hat Equalization

- Roll-off everything below 180 Hz to remove rumble and leakage from other drums.
- Pull 500 Hz-1 kHz to remove "clang".
- Boost 3 kHz to add fullness or ring, but this is seldom needed.
- Find sheen at 8-12 kHz.

Tom-Toms Equalization

- Roll off unwanted low end. Some tom-toms can get pretty low.
- Find and pull the rumble on each tom-tom. Turn up the level control on the equalizer, but not a lot. Too much low end can carry enough power to blow out a speaker. Sweep the low frequency as the player hits the drum, and find any offending rumble, maybe somewhere within 300 Hz-1 kHz the floor tom-tom might be lower. Find and pull the frequency using a narrow Q setting not enough to radically alter the sound, since there is a lot of harmonic tone within that frequency area. As well, that frequency may have a higher harmonic sweet spot, so when you pull the rumble, it naturally enhances that spot.
- Adding lows, between 100-300 Hz, depending on the drum, will bring out the thud.
- Pull around 8-900 Hz to lessen the "boxy" effect. Boost in this area to add boom.

- Use a narrow Q setting, and sweep between 3 kHz and 5 kHz to find the "sweet spot" frequency and raise it. You'll know it when you hear it.
- Pull a bit around 8 kHz and higher to diminish cymbal leakage.

Cymbals/Overhead Equalization

- Roll off up 180 Hz to eliminate air conditioning rumble and low-level street noise.
- Boost a wee bit of 8-12 kHz to add shimmer.
- Sweep the high end to locate any frequencies that may need pulling or adding. The overheads preside over the whole drum kit, and tend to gel the individual drums together. A rich, full-sounding kit should have lots of rich highs, and few clashing lows.

Room Microphone Equalization

- Use the appropriate microphone roll-off to minimize rumble.
- Pull somewhere within 120-500 Hz to open up room for high priority instruments. The rich harmonics will still come through, with the power of the low frequencies coming from the individual drum tracks.

Next time we will examine compression/limiting and noise gates for the drums...

Tim Crich wrote the bestseller Assistant Engineers Handbook. He has over 20 years of experience in the recording studio, and has worked on records by Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, John Lennon, KISS, Billy Joel, Bryan Adams, Cher, Bon Jovi and many more. This article is excerpted with permission from his new book Recording Tips For Engineers, available through www.musicbooksplus.com. For more information, see www.aebandbook.com.



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Distribution Agreements



The views and opinions expressed in this article are not meant to substitute for legal advice, which should be sought in each particular instance.

Introduction

This article provides an overview of some of key provisions found in standard distribution agreements.

Term

The term of a distribution agreement will vary depending on particular circumstances. Average distribution agreements range from two to six years. In some cases a distributor may opt for a definite period of two years with options for two more years; and, in some cases an option for a further two years (six years total).

Territory

Most distribution agreements I have seen are for Canada only, however some distribution agreements are limited to particular regions of Canada (i.e., Quebec; East Coast provinces). Canadian-based distributors may occasionally participate in foreign royalty income.

Advances

Some distribution agreements provide for advances while others do not. Advances can range from \$0, for an artist with no sales track record and little bargaining power, to seven figures, for an established label with a firm sales track record. You may be able to get some of this advance as non-recoupable while some or all of it will be recoupable from your net receipts from sales of records under the agreement.

Fees

One of key provisions in any distribution agreement is the fee structure. Distribution companies typically charge anywhere from 20-25 per cent

of proceeds derived from sales of records. This percentage may slide one way or the other depending on the success of the parties. For example, if the distributor sells your record(s) to HMV for \$14 you would get \$10.50 (after deduction of a 25 per cent distribution fee).

The issue of "reserves against possible returns" is an important one to focus on in the negotiation. Distributors will often require the right to retain gross collected income in the event that some of the records shipped are returned from stores. Normally this reserve level is about 25-40 per cent of shipments and is liquidated with 12-24 months of holdback. Distributors may require a higher reserve level in the final periods under the agreement to protect them against being "out-of-pocket" with their artist/label partner at the end of the term.

Services

It is important to realize, whether you are an individual artist entering into a distribution agreement or whether you are an actual label, that distribution companies are normally only responsible for a limited number of functions including: shipping; safe storage of records; collection/invoicing; sales; and, accounting. Many artists (and sometime companies) are under the impression that a distribution company is somehow responsible for substantial marketing and promotion of records; however, this is not the case unless this is stipulated in your distribution agreement with the distributor. Some distributors will offer "enhanced" services over an above typical distribution services such as, extra marketing support or radio/promotion services, which are provided for an extra fee on top of the fee described above. This enhanced fee can range from 5-20 per cent depending on the circumstances and the level of services requested.

It is important for the artist or label to consider whether or not they are equipped to handle the job of marketing and promoting their own records. Clearly, if a record is not marketed and promoted properly the distribution aspect is almost irrelevant.

Manufacturing

Distributors may also provide manufacturing services to its distributed artists and/or labels. This type of agreement is often called a "P&D Deal". In this case the "P" stands for "Pressing" and the "D" stands for "Distribution". Normally a price list will be attached to the distribution agreement to confirm which prices will apply. It is important for

distributed artists and/or labels to be careful to monitor and control production runs on their product because they will ultimately be responsible for these costs if the distributor has not recouped enough manufacturing costs from sales of records under the agreement. It is important for all parties to take a reasoned, well thought out approach to manufacturing orders. If you under-manufacture you could lose valuable sales. If you over-manufacture you could waste a lot of money or be on the hook for this cost.

Off-Stage Sales

Some agreements will make provisions for off-stage sales for the artist. The distributor will likely want to get "a piece" of these sales because, they would argue, these off-stages cut into sales that would go through their retail channels. The distributor may look to cover its manufacturing costs (if applicable) and at least its distribution fee for these sales. Obviously this is an important point for a label or artist who believes they will sell a substantial amount of records off-stage. It is a more important angle for distribution for the independent artist that faces a lot of barriers at traditional distribution channels (i.e. retail).

Product Commitment

Distribution agreements will often have language determining how many albums must be delivered during periods under the agreement.

General/Conclusions

Distribution agreements for labels get into more complicated issues such as recoupment of advances; cross-collateralisation of artist income streams; and more detailed product commitment language. Novice and experienced label owners often work alongside qualified counsel to ensure they are not selling themselves short or putting themselves in a vulnerable position under these tricky provisions.

Other issues are also addressed under most distribution agreements such as pricing issues; Internet rights; accounting; indemnities and post-term inventory return policies; however we do not have room to get into those points in this article.

A good distribution company is an essential ingredient in any record's sales success. It is important to do your research and determine who the best choices are. An experienced music industry attorney should be able to assist in making this determination as well.



by Chris Taylor, B.A. LL.B.

Chris Taylor is a music lawyer with the law firm of Sanderson Taylor and works with Nelly Furtado, Avril Lavigne and Sam Roberts among others. Find him online at www.sandersontaylor.com.

WEAPONS TECH 21 OF MASS DISTINCTION



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- Trademark 60 two-channel, 1x12, 60-watt combo
- Trademark 10 single-channel, 1x8, 10-watt combo



Trademark 10

Trademark 60

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Yamaha Mark IV Series Disklaviers

Yamaha recently unveiled the Mark IV Series Disklaviers offering users everything its predecessors offered, as well as newer features such as new entertainment functions, a touch-screen, an enhanced graphical user interface and larger internal music storage. There are seven models that make up the Mark IV series and they all replace current Disklavier models DGC1A and up. All of the models in the Disklavier Mark IV series feature new, open-ended software-based architecture that will work with upcoming upgrades and expansions making the Mark IV very flexible. The models also comprise built-in, high capacity hard drives for simple, high-volume storage of CD-audio, MIDI song files and personal digital images. All of the Mark IV models include the Pocket Remote Controller (PRC-100), a wireless remote with dedicated buttons and a full-colour LCD touch screen. Along with the PRC, several models also feature Table Remote Controller (TRC-100), a 10.4" portable and



colourful touch-screen control panel. Also, the Mark IV's hard drive holds about the equivalent of 80,000 floppy disks, which demonstrates the advances in step-up features found on the Mark IV.

Much like existing Disklavier models, the Mark IV can harmonize the piano's playback with other instrument and vocal tracks from a typical, store-bought audio CD for an orchestrated performance; however, with the Mark IV, that ability has been extended to video. Users can videotape their own performances and enjoy them afterward while the Disklavier's playback and the television's image are in perfect sync with each other simply by connecting the audio jacks of a standard camcorder to the SYNC jacks.

The Mark IV Series also incorporates the renowned PianoSmart technology, SmartKey software and compatibility with all previous PianoSoft releases, much like its predecessors.

For more information, contact: Yamaha Canada Music Ltd., 135 Milner Ave., Toronto, ON M1S 3R1 (416) 298-1311, FAX (416) 292-0732, www.yamaha.ca.



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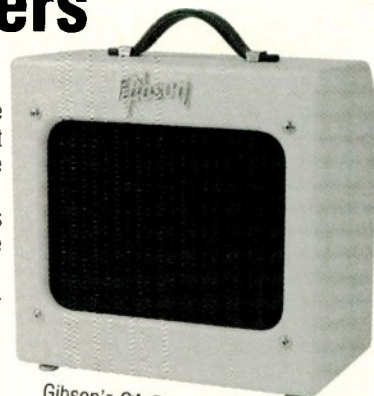
Gibson Acoustic Amplifiers

Gibson Guitars has recently released a new line of acoustic guitar amplifiers, the GA series. The amplifiers in the GA series that will be released in Canada include the GA-5, the GA-20RVT and the GA-40RVT. The GA-5 is a 5-watt Class A amp that is hand built, point to point with an 8" special design ceramic magnet speaker. It's available in vintage Tolex with plexiglass and hardwood cabinets.

The GA-20RVT is a 15-watt Class A amp, also hand built, point to point with two channels plus mix. Some of its features include Tube Reverb, Tube Tremelo, Pentode/Triode switch and a 12" Eminence Legend speaker. It's available in two-tone Vintage Brown and Tan Tolex.

The big brother in the line is the GA-40RVT, a 30-watt Class A amp that is also hand built, point to point with two channels plus mix. Its features include Tube Reverb, Tube Tremelo, Pentode/Triode switch and a 12" Eminence Legend speaker. Constructed of 13-layer Baltic birch plywood, the GA-40RVT is available in two-tone Vintage Brown and Tan Tolex.

For more information, contact: Yorkville Sound, 550 Granite Ct., Pickering, ON L1W 3Y8 (905) 837-8481, FAX (905) 839-5776, info@yorkville.com, www.yorkville.com.



Gibson's GA-5 Acoustic Amp.

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Roland CD-2



Roland recently unveiled the CD-2 all-in-one recorder and CD burner. According to Roland, the CD-2 is ideal for individuals who need to record audio quickly with no trouble, or for those who want to burn quality CDs on the spot. The CD-2 records directly to CD or onto Compact Flash media (up to 2 GB for capacity) for hours of recording time. Once a recording is complete, audio can be edited, processed and burned to CD.

Built into the CD-2 is a high-quality stereo microphone. If preferred, external microphones can be plugged in using the CD-2's two XLR inputs, complete with phantom power. RCA inputs and outputs are at hand for convenient connection to CD players, stereos, etc. In addition, 1/4" inputs allow instruments to be connected directly.

Roland feels that the CD-2 is a useful educational/practice tool due to its built-in stereo speakers, speed/pitch control, tuner and metronome. Musical passages and lessons can be recorded and played back at a slower tempo while maintaining the original pitch. Pitch of the audio can also be changed for play-along practice in different key signatures.

Users may also enhance recording quality with the CD-2's lineup of professional audio effects such as reverb, EQ and compression. Special tools are also provided for guitar and vocals and the onboard mastering effects help polish the mix before burning to CD.

For more information, contact: Roland Canada Music, 5480 Parkwood Way, Richmond, BC V6V 2M4 (604) 270-6626, FAX (604) 270-6552, info@roland.ca, www.roland.ca.



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World Radio History



Zildjian Anti-Vibe And Purple Dip

Zildjian recently introduced two new sticks to the Zildjian Super 5A and Super 5B models – the Anti-Vibe and the Purple Dip, both available in wood or nylon tip versions.

The Anti-Vibe, already available in 7A, 5A, 5B and 2B, reduces unwanted vibrations in the stick when struck. The stick preserves its conventional lacquer finish while the vibration absorption technology is contained out of the way, inside the butt-end of the stick.

The Purple Dip, a result of purple being introduced to the DIP coating option available on wood and nylon tip 7A, 5A, 5B, 2B and several artist models, possesses a coating on the grip area of the stick. This provides a comfortable, somewhat tacky gripping surface. With this feature, drummers may loosen their grip and rest their hands a little, especially in the middle of a sweaty performance.

For more information, contact: B&J Music Ltd., 2360 Tedlo St., Mississauga, ON L5A 3V3 (905) 896-3001, (800) 268-8147, FAX (905) 896-3001, FAX (800) 777-3265, bjmusic-kmc@kaman.com.

Korg Oasys Synthesis Studio



Korg recently introduced the Oasys Open Architecture Synthesis Studio – a synthesizer combining a large 10.4" colour TouchView display with the latest in synthesis, audio recording, MIDI sequencing, second generation Karma functionality, CD burning, etc.

According to Korg, Oasys is three synthesizers in one: Korg's new HD-1 High Definition PCM Synthesizer and two added EXi Expansion Instruments, the AL-1 Virtual Analog synth and an improved CX-3 Tonewheel Organ.

The 172-voice HD-1's voice architecture enables a single oscillator to play back stereo waveforms and support 4-way layering, crossfading and switching. A few other new features include a "Drive" parameter for harmonic overdrive, recently designed multi-mode resonant filters, detailed Envelope Generators and improved modulation possibilities.

The AL-1 is a virtual analog synth engine providing 84 notes of polyphony while two ultra-low aliasing oscillators per voice offer eight waveforms. An adjustable "Edge" parameter supplies vintage oscillator modelling, while sync, FM and an assortment of ring modulations offer ample tone-shaping possibilities.

The CX-3 Tonewheel Organ engine offers an advanced version of Korg's Tonewheel modelling technology. Along with the dual drawbar sets, the CX-3 features control over every nuance of the sound – leakage, key click, adjustable percussion, chorus/vibrato and a complete rotary speaker simulation.

Combinations can use sounds from the HD-1, AL-1 and CX-3, with dynamic voice allocation between the different synth engines. In addition, Oasys comes with the first two EXs Expansion Sample Libraries.

The 10.4" TouchView display provides a clear layout with colourful graphics. Real-time controllers include the traditional Korg joystick, an assignable Vector Joystick, dual switches and ribbon, 16 switches, eight real-time knobs, nine sliders and three pedal inputs.

When it comes to recording, the 16-track MIDI sequencer records up to 200 songs (400,000 MIDI notes). Additionally, Oasys provides a 16-track audio recording studio, fully integrated with the sequencer's MIDI tracks. Users can record up to four tracks of 16-bit, 48 kHz audio to the internal 40 GB hard drive at the same time.

Oasys is available in a 76-key synth action and an 88-key model.

For more information, contact: Korg Canada, 21000 Trans-Canada Hwy., Baie D'Urfe, PQ H9X 4B7 (514) 457-2555, FAX (514) 457-0055, support@korgcanada.com, www.korgcanada.com.

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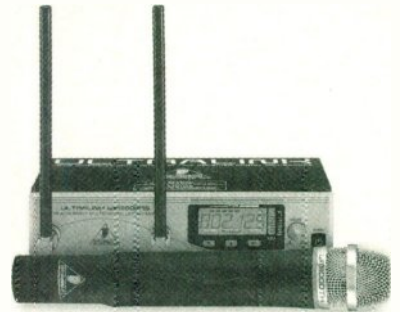


Behringer Ultralink WMI2000HH

Behringer recently released the Ultralink WMI2000HH – a UHF wireless microphone and receiver set that offers 320 channels, 24 simultaneously usable systems and complete reliability, signal integrity and audio bandwidth – even in harsh RF environments.

The Ultralink WMI2000HH, according to Behringer, is easy to operate due to its user-friendly control menu, proprietary scan function for transmitter frequencies and comprehensive LCD. Behringer feels the microphone has an excellent cardioid pickup pattern and is ideal for vocal applications. The high-performance compander system ensures high dynamic range, an optional signal-to-noise ratio and a broad audio transmission range. Additionally, the Ultralink WMI2000HH, which easily fits into a 19" rack space, provides user-tunable transmit frequencies as well as three presets with eight interference-free channels each. With this, users have a sum of 320 different frequencies at their fingertips, ensuring the possibility of finding a free frequency. The receiver also possesses a switch-mode power supply with easily interchangeable AC plugs for maximum flexibility (100-240 V).

For more information, contact: Behringer Canada Ltd., 18912 North Creek Pkwy., #200, Bothell, WA 98011 (425) 672-0816, FAX (425) 673-7647, www.behringer.ca.



Tech 21 SansAmp Para Driver DI



Tech 21 recently released the SansAmp Para Driver DI pedal providing detailed tone shaping for any signal course. Comparable to its predecessor, the SansAmp Acoustic DI, this innovative design integrates a footswitchable bypass and a Drive control.

The SansAmp Para Driver DI is operable by phantom power or by an optional 9-volt DC power supply (Tech 21 model #DC2) or a 9-volt battery. According to Tech 21, the SansAmp Para Driver DI is ideally used with acoustic, electric and bass guitars and upright bass.

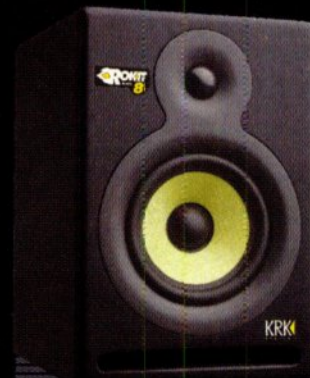
The SansAmp Para Driver DI, engineered for both live and studio applications, is designed to be used with instrument amplifiers or to connect directly into the mixing console of a recorder or PA system.

Bass & Treble cut or boost ± 12 dB. The sweepable semi-parametric EQ controls, Mid Shift & Mid, range from 170 Hz to 3.5 kHz, ± 16 dB; Blend combines the amount of SansAmp emulation circuitry with the direct instrument signal. There is a $\frac{1}{4}$ " 4.7 megOhm instrument level input, as well as $\frac{1}{4}$ " and XLR outputs with selectable levels and a parallel, unaffected output to run a dry signal to a separate channel. The unit may also be applied as a standard direct box with EQ or only as a standard transparent direct box.

For more information, contact: MOL Marketing, 6773 Wallace Dr., Brentwood Bay, BC V8M 1A2 (250) 544-4864, FAX (250) 544-4865, info@molmarketing.net, www.molmarketing.net.

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PRS Dave Navarro Signature Model



PRS Guitars recently unveiled the Dave Navarro Signature Model electric guitar. Navarro has been using PRS guitars for the past 17 years while recording with bands such as Jane's Addiction, The Red Hot Chili Peppers and solo projects.

The Dave Navarro Signature Model, available in Jet White, is an exact replica of what he plays. Features include mother of pearl bird inlays, wide-thin neck, gold hardware, HFS and Vintage Bass pickups as well as a Navarro Model truss rod cover. The guitar also possesses a 25" scale length Mahogany 24-fret neck with a Rosewood fretboard along with volume and push/pull tone control with a 3-way toggle pickup selector.

For more information, contact: Paul Reed Smith Guitars, 380 Log Canoe Circle, Stevensville, MD 21666 (410) 643-9970, FAX (410) 643-9980, www.prsguitars.com.

OPTIONS

March/April 2005

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Step 1
Starting at either the treble or bass side, loosen and remove the first string to be replaced. Take note of how the bridge pin is positioned in the bridge saddle slot. Insert the string in its proper hole in the bridge. Keep the heavier portions of the double winding facing away from the saddle hole.

Step 2
The string should be positioned into the front edge of the bridge pin hole and the corresponding notch in the bridge pin. Push the ball end of the string down into the hole approximately 1 - 2 inches. Position the string.

Step 3
The string is held in place at the bridge by a small notch in the front edge of the bridge pin. Push the bridge pin all the way into the bridge. Then pull up on the string to make sure that the ball end of the string is pulled tightly up against the inside of the top of the guitar. (Older guitars may have small slots in the front of the bridge pin holes, but these are no longer necessary with these new style bridge pins.) After inserting the string and pin, a firm push with your thumb on the pin is all that is needed to keep it in place.

Step 4
Note: Most bridge saddles are not glued to the bridge saddle slot. The tension of the strings will hold the saddle in place and the strings in their proper alignment. The tension of the strings will hold the saddle in place.

Step 5
Be sure to attach each string to the correct tuning peg (as shown in photo). The string is passed through the string hole located near the top of the tuning peg. Leave enough slack in the string so there will be 2 or 3 wraps around the tuning peg when tuned to pitch. The string is passed through the string hole.

Step 6
After passing through the string hole, the end of the string is wound one-half way in the reverse direction around the tuning peg (clockwise for the three bass strings, counterclockwise for the three treble strings). This will enable you to form a lock up the string to avoid slipping. (See notes on page 3.)

Step 7
(Note: The position of the guitar is reversed to show how the string is backed onto the shaft.) After passing under the longer part of the string, the short portion is bent back over the long part. As you tune up the string, you will notice that this step forms a lock that will prevent string slippage.

Step 8
After the string is brought up to pitch (standard A-440 tuning), the extra length of string may be clipped off, usually about 1/4" above the last band. Note that a string should pass around the shaft at least two to three full times. Each winding should be under the previous one, or close to the base of the peg. This holds the strings in more secure and holds more tension. The string is wound two to three times around the tuning peg. You might occasionally encounter an older guitar with a thin bridge or a string with a longer double winding adjacent to the ball end. As contact with the bridge saddle by this winding is not recommended, we have shown an old luthier's trick or remedy. An extra ball from an old string is placed over the string and drawn against the first ball. This will effectively back the string into the bridge, removing the heavy area of the string from direct saddle contact.

Dean Markley Strings, Inc. - manufacturer and distributor of world famous Dean Markley electric, Acoustic, Banjo, Classical, banjo, and Mandolin, 12-string, Plectrum Steel and Bajo Sexto Strings. Dean Markley also has a complete line of guitar accessories which include Acoustical pickups, featuring the award winning ProKyle all-wood-housing soundhole pickups. Dean Markley's new high end line of West Coast Series acoustic guitar amplification pickup systems is setting the acoustic field on fire. Be sure to check out the new "Buy Swag Direct" section on the www.DeanMarkley.com website. Now you can get Dean Markley T-shirts, Jackets, Turbo-Tune string winders and Drive key winders. There are many other accessories which you can get directly from the company. Check it out.

Dean Markley is among a very small group of string companies that make their own strings. We have a manufacturing facility in Kalamazoo, Michigan that makes Dean Markley strings, as well as strings for a number of other companies.

Dean Markley started off as a very small string company that focused on quality and original design concepts which produce superior products. Dean Markley has grown into one of the industry's major string manufacturers without compromising those ideals and standards. In a "me too" industry, Dean Markley made his own rules, creating innovative products such as the Blue Steel string line, ProKyle acoustic pickups, SR2000 bass strings, and the Enviro Electric and Formula R2/R Acoustic string lines. Basically every product that the Dean Markley company makes is the very best in its field.

Alex Lifeson needs no introduction. As the guitarist for progressive rock pioneers Rush, Alex knows a thing or two about guitars (and guitar strings). "I have been a user of Dean Markley strings for over 20 years and hope to continue for another 20 years. They are simply, the best!"

A MODERN DAY WARRIOR: Young Alex in the early days



No question, strings are an essential part of the sound of a guitar. With the exception of a rare few, the majority of players will agree that their guitars sound noticeably better with new strings. Though it's no secret, this fact is frequently overlooked and taken for granted. Changing strings is probably the cheapest and simplest way to improve your tone. So if you're not actively happy with the sound of your guitar you may want to consider trying another type of string before replacing pickups, or changing the amp of your new bass player, since different strings may give your guitar an entirely new sound and feel. Remember, the string is really where the sound of your guitar begins. It's the vibration of the string that initiates everything.

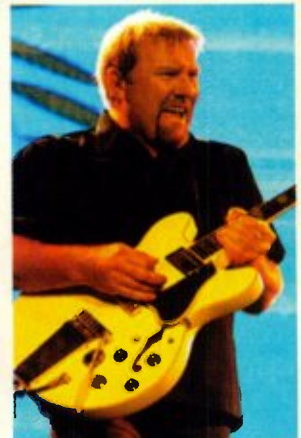
A string is constructed of a core, the center around which the windings of the string are wrapped, and the windings, the wrap or wire around the core. The core is usually either round or hexagonal in shape, while the windings come in three shapes: round-wound, half round (which are also known as polished or ground-round wound), and flat-wound. Round-wound is the most common of all string types and produces the brightest and clearest sound. A half-round string is constructed on a round-wound string that has had the outer round wrap ground or burished down to create a smooth edge and flatter surface. The smoother surface allows the hand to glide more freely with less squeaking as it moves across the strings, and are generally not quite as bright as round-wounds. Flat-wound strings have a completely smooth outer wrap to provide the deepest and most fluid surface for effortless sliding without squeaks. Flat-wounds produce a flat and dark sound and are most frequently used by traditional jazz players.

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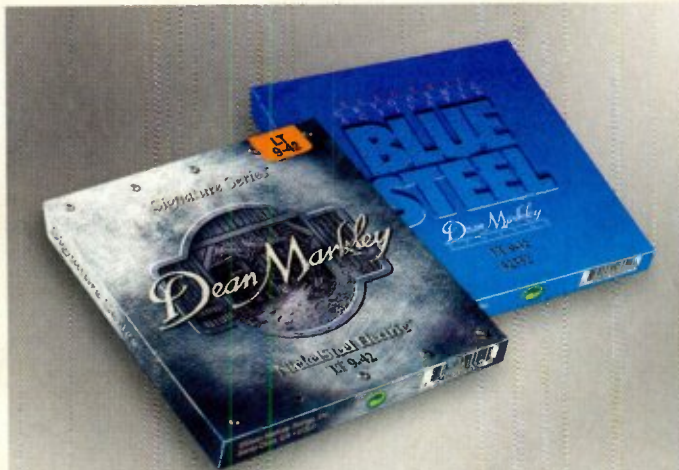
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The first thing that most people assume when their guitar won't stay in tune is that the tuners are slipping, or somehow not doing their job. A logical enough assumption, but 99.9% of the time it is wrong. Given that all the information factors we have discussed are accounted for, making the instrument capable of getting in tune in the first place, the most common reason guitars go out of tune is old (frayed) strings. That's just new strings on (wax), you say. You're right, you should always stretch them! "Oh, come on," you protest. Let's see that guitar. Well, look at this. One punk on the low E and the pickup drops a step and a half. If your average guitar repairman had a guitar for every time that someone took a photo, he would be working from a computer in Malibu, not the back of the local one stop.

In all, this may seem like a bit to deal with, but if you keep your strings new and stretched you will probably sound fine. And put in one-hour that electronic tuner humbly and full of fresh batteries.



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Strings.....	A#
Turbo-Tune.....	Bb
Swag.....	Caug
Pickup.....	D#
Picks.....	Eb
Alchemy.....	F#

Beyerdynamic Opus Drum Mics

Beyerdynamic recently released the Opus Series Microphones intended for drums, percussion, instruments and boundary applications. The percussive series includes the Opus 53, Opus 83, Opus 88 and Opus 99; the Opus 51 acoustic boundary microphone is ideal for all boundary applications, according to Beyerdynamic.

The Opus 51 acoustical boundary microphone is intended for studio and stage applications, such as miking instruments, and works best when used upright or for grand pianos where the microphone can be placed inside or laid within a kick drum. The microphone element is housed within a solid metal plate with a rugged shielding surface lessening the chances of damage caused from kicks or footsteps. The half-spherical polar pattern of the Opus 51 has a very wide and even pickup angle. According to Behringer, the frequency response of this condenser microphone is a flat 30-20,000 Hz through a semi-spherical polar pattern.

The Opus 53 consists of a strong, yet lightweight carbon fibre reinforced composite casing. Its small design allows unobtrusive positioning. The frequency response of 30-20,000 Hz has been enhanced for universal miking of instruments. According to Beyerdynamic, it's great for miking a hi-hat or snare, taking advantage of the tight cardioid polar pattern; it's also suitable for miking guitars and other stringed instruments, brass and woodwind instruments.

The Opus 83 studio condenser microphone utilizes back electret technology. Its broad frequency response of 40



to 20,000 Hz combined with a slight proximity effect makes it ideal for all recording formats. This mic, operated between 12-48 V from a phantom power supply, holds a maximum SPL of 138dB at 1 kHz with a THD of one per cent and a signal-to-noise ratio of 60dB relative to 1 Pa.

The Opus 88 is also a condenser microphone utilizing back electret. The microphone clamp is outfitted with an integrated preamp and yields a frequency response of 30-20,000 Hz and a maximum SPL of 136dB (at 48 V phantom power) or 126dB (at 12 V phantom power). The microphone clamp is also available without preamp as MKV 87 with an integrated 3/8" thread. The cardioid polar pattern allows for high-gain before feedback and the capsule is set up on a short gooseneck allowing good positioning. The Opus 88 is fixed with a 3-pin XLR plug at the microphone clamp for connection.



The Opus 99 dynamic comprises a strong neodymium magnet system and a mass reduced special diaphragm to give the microphone a powerful reproduction with transient characteristics within the 30-18,000 Hz frequency responses. The hyper-cardioid polar pattern helps in reducing feedback in live applications and allows an optimum channel separation between different instruments. The Opus 99 has the ability to operate at very high sound pressure levels without loss of sound quality and almost no distortion. In addition, the Opus 99 can be placed directly inside or in front of the bass drum with the ST 99 stand.

For more information, contact: White Radio, 940 Gateway Dr., Burlington, ON L7L 5K7 (905) 632-6894, FAX (905) 653-7811, sales@whiteradio.com, www.whiteradio.com.



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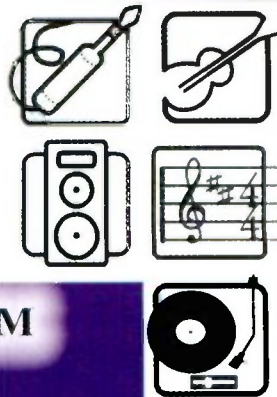
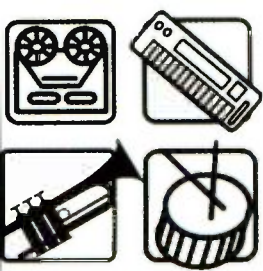
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Peavey Valve King Series

Peavey recently introduced the Valve King Series of all-tube guitar amplifiers, combining hot-rodded tones with boutique features. The Valve King amplifiers are available in a 100-watt head, a 100-watt 212 combo and a 50-watt 112 combo.

The Valve King amps feature a patent-pending variable Class A/B control, Texture, which according to Peavey is the only amp control to enable sweepable selection between Class A and Class B power structures, as well as any combination of the two; guitarists can now coax nearly any tone. The amplifiers preamp and power sections are powered by 6L6GC and 12AX7 tubes and drive specially voiced 12" Valve King loudspeakers (112 and 212 versions only).

Additional features include two footswitchable channels with independent, 3-band EQ and volume, plus a footswitchable gain/volume boost on the lead channel to provide extra volume for solos. Valve King amps also feature global resonance, presence and reverb controls, a buffered effects loop and dual speaker jacks in parallel (head and 212 only).

For more information, contact: Peavey Electronics Corp., 711 A. St., Meridian, MS 39301 (601) 483-5365, FAX (601) 486-1278, www.peavey.com.



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Cakewalk Project5 Version 2



Cakewalk recently introduced the Project5 Version 2 performance workstation, offering users the next stage of Project5's evolution with a streamlined user interface, integrated multi-track audio, a high-performance engine, loop reconstruction, dynamic arpeggiator, multi-pad pattern triggering, PSYN II subtractive synthesizer, multimode subtractive synthesizer and much more.

In addition to the new features, Project5 Version 2 also incorporates all of the key features that defined the original Project5, such as complete pattern sequencing and arranging tools; ReWire client capabilities; open support for DirectX and VST instruments and effects; studio-quality instruments including DS-864 multi-format digital sampler, nPulse analog modular drum synthesizer, Velocity drum sampler, Cyclone Dxi groove sampler; pattern and loop-based creation tools that include the P-SEQ, pattern sequencer and unsurpassed ACID-compatible loop integration; automatable effects such as Envelope/LFO Filter, High Frequency Exciter, Stereo Delay/Echo, Classic Phaser, Stereo Chorus/Flanger, Studio Reverb, Stereo 7-band Graphic EQ, Stereo 2-band Parametric EQ and Compressor/Gate, etc.

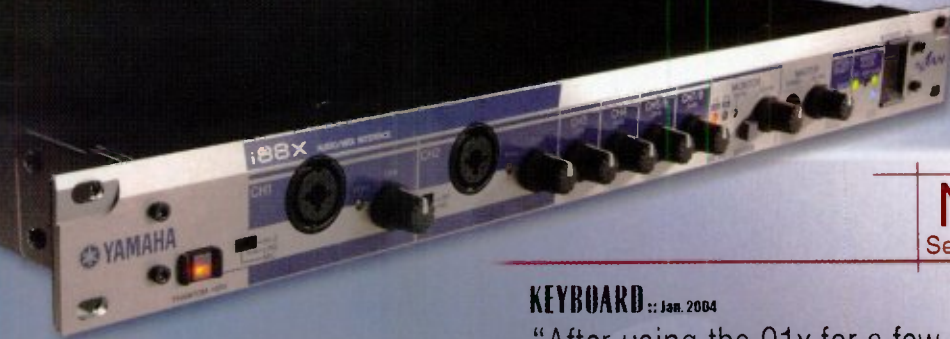
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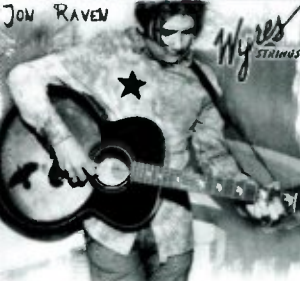
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The Matadors

Who: The Matadors

Where: London, ON

What: hail to the devil

Contact: Stumble Records, 57 Leaside Dr., St. Catharines, ON L2M 4G1 (905) 934 6901, www.thematadors.net, stumblerecords@yahoo.com

They describe their rock 'n' roll as "the devil's music," even title their CD as such. They go into a little tale of how, after toiling in the "Z circuit" for some time, they were approached by The Luciferian Brotherhood of Baphomet to sell their soul. If vocalist/guitarist Joel "Hooch" Parkins, bassist "Creepin'" Jeff Sheppard and drummer Jay Westman would just incorporate "Luciferian gospel music" into their rockabilly style, they would be given "super-human" musical skill and preside over their audience. Well, it takes more than guts to play rockabilly in this day of pop, hip-hop and punk, so why not? Entering into the fiery depths of Dark Art Studios in London, ON, with producer Alistair Hay ("who never accepted a half-assed take or weak performance") and engineer Darren Morrison (who fixed the unfixable), The Matadors emerged with the igniting nine tracks on *The Devil's Music*. If Elvis or even Chris Isaak had gone over to the dark side, they may have come up with such gems as the barbarian booty call "Devil's Mistress" and truly seductive ballad "Burning Desire".



THE MATADORS

Ryan Thomas

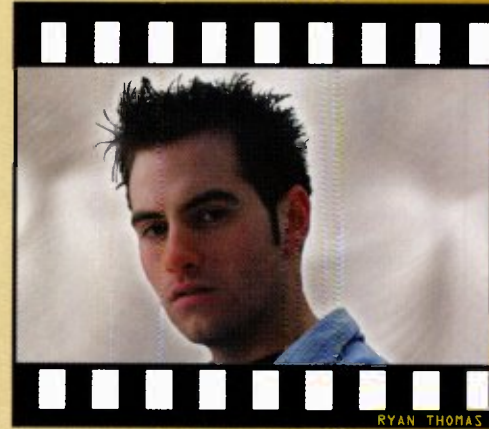
Who: Ryan Thomas

Where: Newmarket, ON

What: face up rock

Contact: Ryan Thomas, (905) 868-4985

Former Serial Joe frontman Ryan Thomas (aka Ryan Dennis) took a break after the demise of his rock band, which was signed when he was just 15 and made four albums, including the gold-selling *Face Down* and 2001's swan song, *(Last Chance) At The Romance Dance*. Going through some personal development and soul searching, Thomas was hit by a flood of ideas, and ended up writing 15 songs in a month. For the next year, while attending the University Of Toronto, he was distracted by music and wrote another 20 songs. He then knew for certain that music was what he wanted to pursue. This collection of songs is his first venture as a solo artist. The music is a lot heavier than Serial Joe's and lyrically it's more autobiographical, covering everything from the pressure to conform to a so-called normal career ("Through Me") to appreciating your surroundings ("Taken In") to society's dark path and superficial obsessions ("One Hundred Thousand Miles"). Produced by *Last Chance* producer Corey MacFadyen at his Groundloop Studios in Niagara Falls, Thomas wrote all the songs himself and played guitar, bass, and sang. Drums were handled by Tim Oxford. He will continue to record a few more tracks, while searching for a label and management.



RYAN THOMAS

James McKenty And The Spades

Who: James McKenty And The Spades

Where: Peterborough, ON

What: dig this rock

Contact: Karl Lawson, (705) 876 6340, www.thespades.ca

James McKenty And The Spades' album, *Burning On Fumes*, was co-produced by The Tragically Hip's Gord Sinclair, who knew McKenty from his native Kingston, ON and took in a show. The trio's weekly gigs reportedly pull in a regular 100 strong fans, who stay after the show to get autographs and buy a ton of CDs. Recording the Peterborough-based band – McKenty (guitar, piano, vocals), Winchester Street (drums), and Chachi Robichaud (bass) – at The Hip's studio The Bathhouse, in Bath, ON, the 10 tracks have a casual, but rockin' vibe that gives nods to vintage rock 'n' roll like the Animals and Yardbirds, and current mainstays Blue Rodeo and Neil Young. There's even something vaguely reminiscent of Gord Downie in McKenty's voice. About half the songs are co-pros between Sinclair and McKenty, and the rest by McKenty alone, who also writes all the band's material. The Spades came together in 1998 after McKenty took an engineering job at Sound On Sound Studios, where his first project was recording the legendary Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins, who apparently imparted this piece of advice: "It'll be a long road son, but the big time is always right around the corner." The band has since opened for The Hip, Blind Boys Of Alabama, Jim Cuddy and April Wine.



JAMES MCKENTY AND THE SPADES



Toronto-based music journalist Karen Bliss is the Canadian news correspondent for *Rollingstone.com*, and operates a Canadian music industry news column, *Lowdown*, at <http://jam.canoe.ca/Music/Lowdown/>. She also edits *Gasoline*, and contributes to *Elle Canada*, *Audience*, *Tribute*, *Words & Music* and others.

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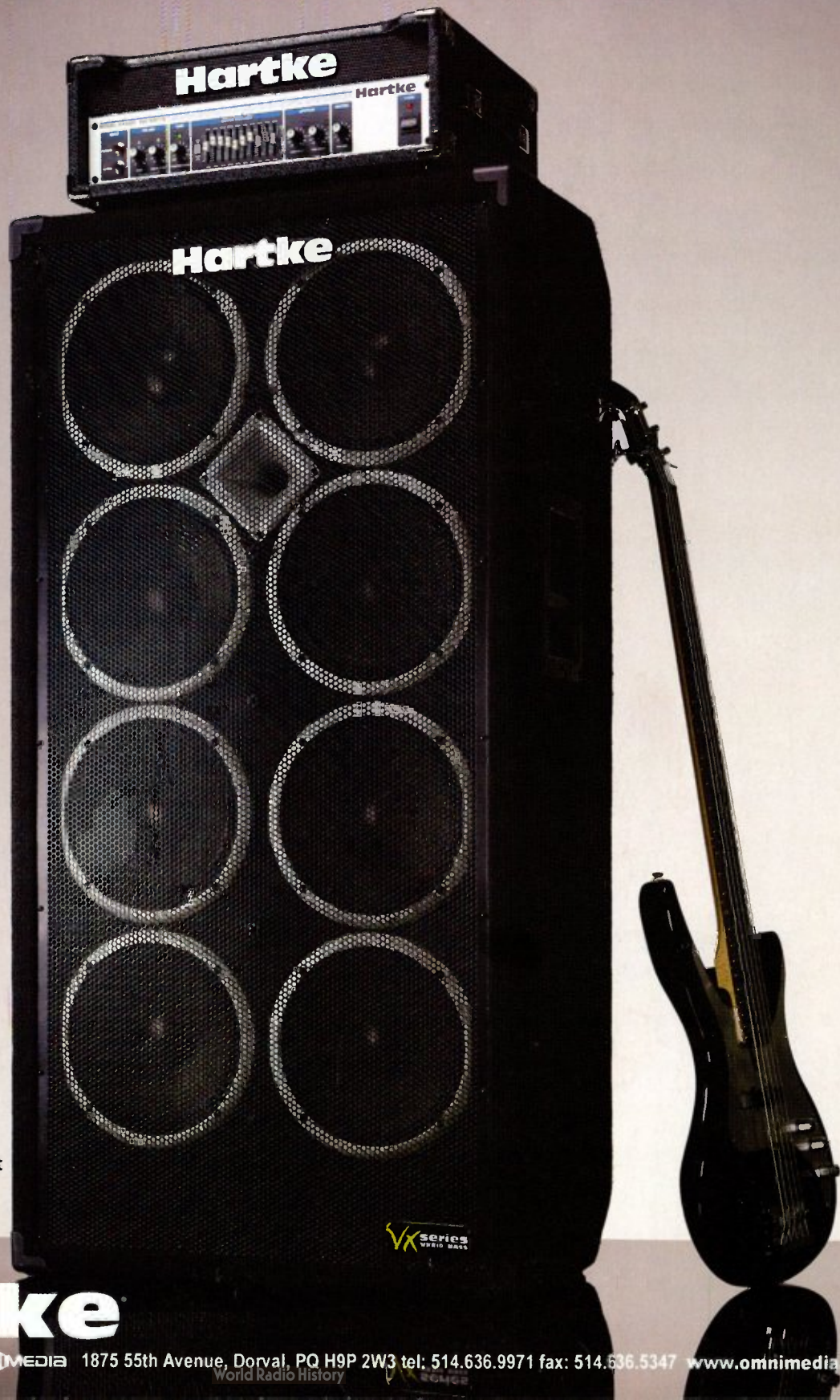
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