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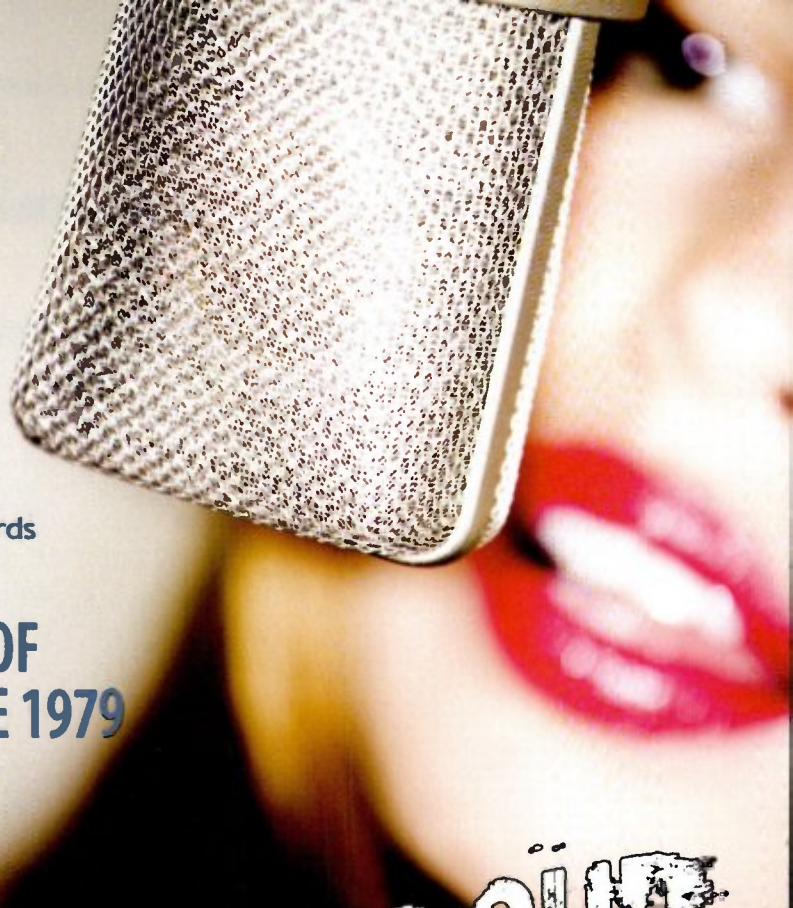
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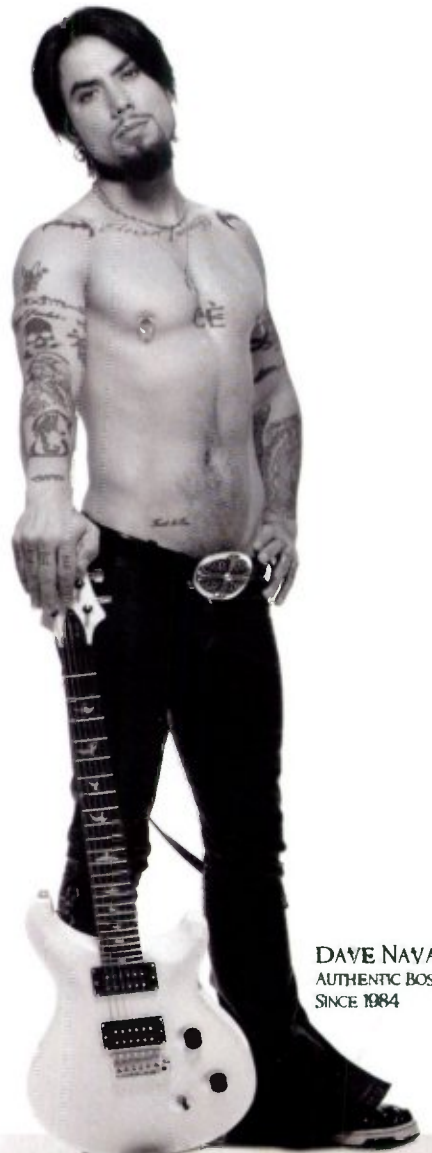
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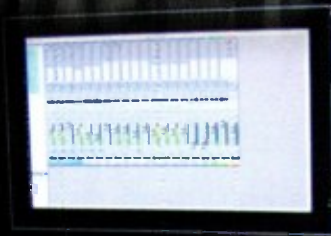


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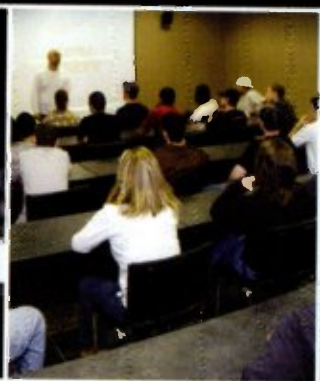
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## 49 Signing a Record Deal Part II

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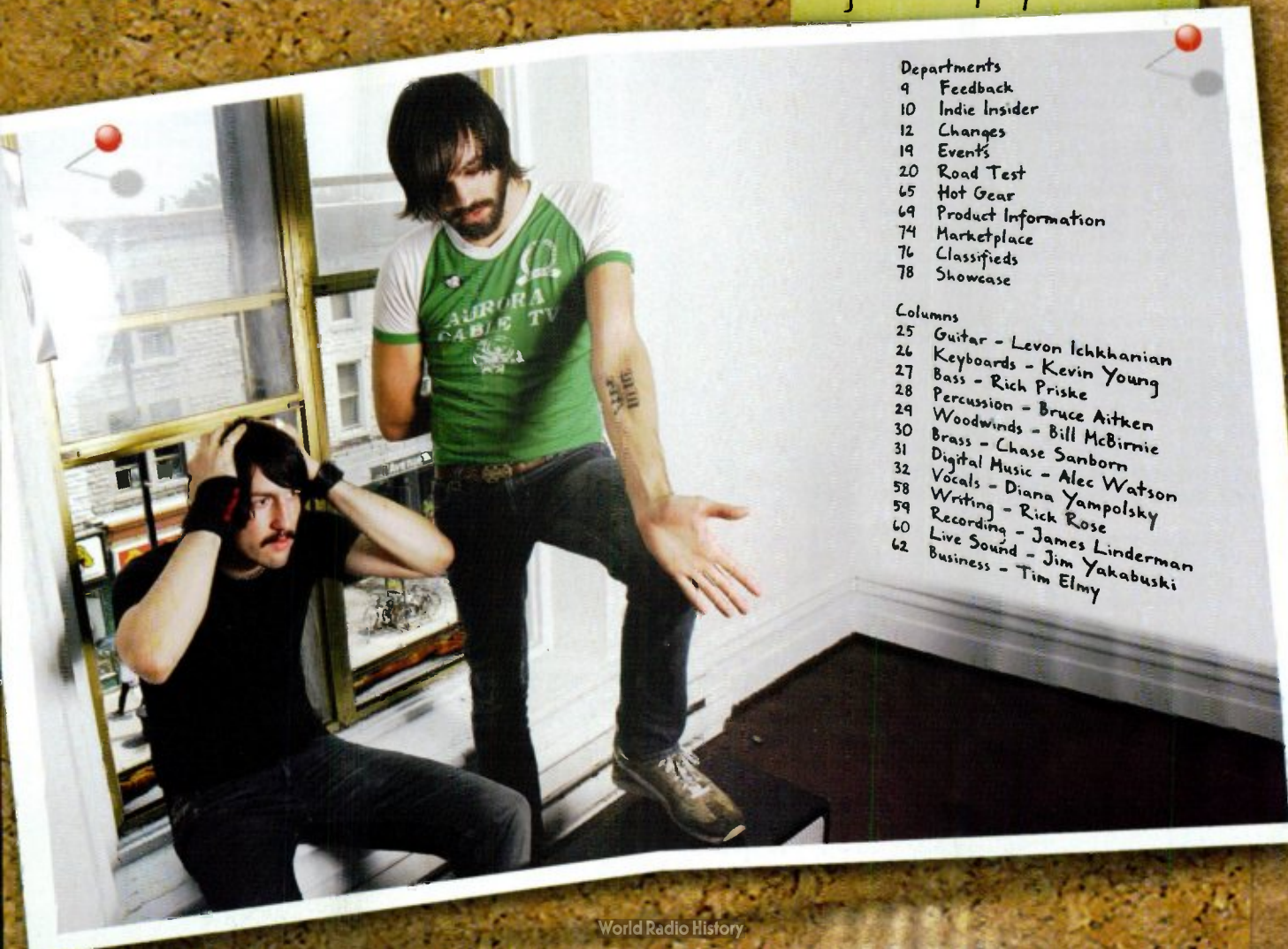
With advice from some industry insiders, this article should help you to understand some of the business behind signing a record deal, including whether or not a signing a deal is even the right choice for you.

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www.canadianmusician.com to write electronically.

### The Reality Of Being A Musician...

Dear CM,

Bernie LaBarge makes a great insight into today's live music scene and how difficult it has become to "make a living." I have friends who play five to six nights a week, which is very rare these days, but they also had to adapt. Solos on Monday/Tuesday, duo on Wednesday/Thursday, band on Friday/Saturday, with occasional Sunday gigs. The pay has also not been any better since the '70s either and while everything else has gone up, musicians' pay has stayed the same for the most part.

But there are a few things that I feel have to be pointed out in Bernie's article. First off, bands that play for "beer" need to realize that they are doing a HUGE disservice to the rest of us. For beer, everyone can chip into a "keg party" and find a free or cheap hall to play with other groups and control everything. Some halls provide the beer and let you charge whatever cover you want to keep. Also, some club owners are very low in their pay out to bands. I've seen amateur five-piece groups get paid \$100 total and when another group that is seasoned and professional asks for minimum \$100 a player, the bar owner laughs and says he can get a whole group for \$100. So ... where's the "Musician's Union" in all of this?

The second point I have to make is Bernie's point about younger musicians denying themselves a chance to see seasoned professionals. Unfortunately, this isn't only younger musicians but also the music "industry" and media's attitude. If I have to make a choice between some 21-year-old "pop star" and a 55-year-old "played 300 gigs a year," guess who I'll pick? A lot of this attitude comes down to the instant "excitement" our youth has grown up with. They have loops galore, auto-tune, quantize, plug-ins, etc. that make their playing easier. Practice their instrument and get better? As for the record "industry" and media, they called the Toronto SARS benefit concert "dinosaur" rock. Excuse me? Rush (congrats on 30 years!) and AC/DC, are no dinosaurs and kicked the asses of the majority of the younger performers. If they didn't learn from that, they should get out of the biz. Lastly, shame on SNL, MuchMusic, and radio for promoting Ashlee Simpson's latest lip-synch garbage. Most talented musicians never get a first chance ... why is she getting a second?

Thanks Bernie, for a great insight into this "weird and wonderful" biz.

Ian Graham  
band@eyerhyme.com

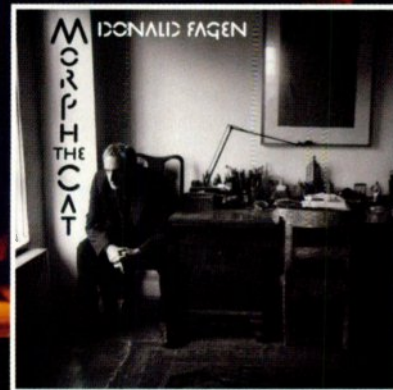
PS – Nickelback has done it again with yet another piece of factory line plastic! Serving up yet another "How You Remind Me" song! Can you guys write anything with some sort of interest?! Two of the songs on the album are almost identical as well ... please. I don't care how many albums your brainwashed fans have bought ... just stop already! You've made your money ... quit being greedy and move on.

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## Choosing A Recording Studio

**S**o you and your band have been together for about a year now. You're busy writing songs and playing gigs and you think that you're pretty damn good. Ready to put your work down on track? There are a few questions you should ask yourself first. Are you *really* ready to record? Do you have a budget set? Are the songs well rehearsed? Do you have a producer? Do you want to get in a recording studio to record an album, or a demo?

Before you decide anything, you should set your goals as a band, then look for a studio that will fit your needs. Decide what recording level you will need in terms of a studio. If you're looking to make a demo just for you and your band, then you might want to try renting some equipment and do the recording yourself. This will help

Your producer will help you make many decisions involved in recording your album such as telling you if your budget is realistic or if your songs are truly ready and they will help you choose a recording studio. Try to find someone who has more experience than you, has worked in several studios and is experienced in your type of music. The result of your death metal album may not turn out as you planned if you get a producer who's mostly experienced in country and bluegrass. Look for a producer who has a great personality, is honest and professional. Remember, like a studio, you get what you pay for in a producer.

Figure out your budget. If your budget is in the hundreds to a thousand dollars, then you'll probably end up in the studio you would use to cut your demo. If you have a budget in the thousands

rehearse in the studio, rehearse in a rehearsal studio for \$10 per hour, as opposed to \$200 per hour in a recording studio. This is the best way to save money in recording time. Bryan Adams was quoted in a past issue of *CM*, "The best advice I could give would be to rehearse your songs somewhere else until you are happy with the arrangements, then go into a great place and put 'em down. The biggest mistake bands make is rehearsing in the studio while the time ticks away. Forget that. Get your songs together first!"

Take the time to work with your producer in pre-production. Rehearse your material, and try new arrangements of material. Both you and your producer should be scrutinizing every aspect of every song. This is the time that you can keep track of all of the work that will need to be done in the studio. Keep notes, an organized schedule and a log of overdubs that you want to add to the recording. All of this will save you time and money in the studio.

There are other ways to save on money in the studio as well. Most studios have a book rate and the actual rate. Often studios will lower the hourly rate to secure a large project if you book a lot of studio time. One common way is to block book the studio for a period of 12 hours or more, the studio will often lower the hourly rate to make the day rate. Note: If you exceed the 12 hours that you booked, the hourly rate will usually apply. If you do block book the studio for 12 hours be cautious of when you take your break because the clock doesn't stop. Your producer should try to make a schedule that rotates everyone's breaks so the production doesn't stop. Feel free to ask the studio if they give discounts for recording during off hours. Often overnight recording is cheaper.

There is an ongoing debate of which is better, analog or digital recording. Because it was the earlier technology, the seasoned, high-end studios generally use analog and are usually more expensive. The smaller, semi-professional studios usually have less expensive digital recorders. As digital recording technology continues to expand in the recording industry, many inexpensive studios are able to master quality recordings for bands. Confused on which to go for? Know that there have been great recordings in both analog and digital, so just try use the right technology for the right job. You could combine the two methods to get the advantages of both. Ask for your producer's opinion.

When it comes down to it you need to remember to stay within your budget by being organized and always remember why you wanted to make the album in the first place. Do your homework about the studio and the producer, but most importantly, you want to feel comfortable with your producer, the studio and the people who work there. Hopefully all of your hard work will pay off.



you learn how to use the equipment, how to mic your instruments and how to record and overdub. If you're looking to make a demo to send out to agents and record companies, then definitely look for a professional recording studio.

When you start shopping around for a studio it may be best to start small. Look for a studio that is reasonably affordable and has done other successful recordings. Ask other bands that you know where they went to record their demos, and listen to the quality of the recordings. Also consider how far you're willing to travel for a good recording studio.

If you've already completed some demos that you're happy with, and you're looking to record a full-length album, first you should find a producer.

or more then you'll find yourself in a professional studio with great staff and equipment. The cost of a recording studio will vary in three categories, semi-professional, medium level and high-end. The semi-professional studio will range from \$25-60 per hour, the medium studio will range from \$75-125 per hour and the high-end studio will range from \$125-400 per hour. But remember, you could find a recording studio that produces final albums at all levels of quality and expertise. If you're travelling a far distance to get to the studio, remember to add in the cost of gas or a hotel to your budget as well.

Before you even step foot into the recording studio, make sure that your songs are well rehearsed. This can't be stressed enough! Never



# Making Music On Myspace.com

**M**any artists and music lovers are already familiar with one of the handiest Web sites on the net, MySpace.com. Although it may have been initially started as a private community where people could share photos, journals and interests with friends through a network, the site has quickly become a location for artists to showcase their music. It also creates another portal for your fans to see what it is you do. You can chat live with people online, have individual pages for each of your band members, whatever you want.

It's a resource where music lovers can find new bands in many genres. Already have a profile and you want to update it to your band's profile? No problem, just convert your already existing profile to a band profile by e-mailing the Customer Service links on site. MySpace is supported solely by advertising therefore signing up is free. Musicians can request to become a featured artist by e-mailing MySpace to boost traffic in their profile.

So what do you get in your profile? First you add a photo of you and your band, make sure that the photo is 72 dpi, this is the standard size for most monitors and anything that's too large will make your page load slower. Next upload four uncompressed MP3s so users can get a taste of what you have to offer. Note: If you upload songs

of which you do not own the copyright to, your profile will be deleted. "Fan" sites are not allowed as this violates copyright laws. Enter your band name, genre and what country you're from and you will be given a URL, such as [www.myspace.com/yourbandname](http://www.myspace.com/yourbandname), for your band to be exposed to 45 million fans!

You can completely design your profile to your unique style and what your band as a whole wants to represent. Try to have fun with it but make it professional at the same time. Take a look at what Web sites look good to you, and keep them in mind when designing your site. Keep in mind that if you have a background that is very busy, text will be extremely difficult to read. By having multiple colours, it can be too flashy and cluttered. Keep asking yourself: what is it you want people to see? Is it prominent on your page? Be creative with your text as well. Use colours that complement each other, but make sure that it's legible and easy on the eyes. Also, try to keep your page 800 pixels wide to avoid the left-to-right scroll bar, which can be annoying to many viewers.

Add links to you profile as well. On the main page have your band's main bio, but try adding links for bios on each of the band members. This will make your profile a little bit more personable for your fans. You can also add videos to your

profile and links to your buddies' profiles. Comments and photos of people who visit your profile can also be added. You can allow your songs to be shared with other MySpace users by adding an "Add" link next to the song. This song will play on the receiver's page when others view it. Visitors to your profile will be able to send you a message, add you to their friends list, send you an instant message, add you to a group, forward your profile to a friend, add your profile to their favourites, block you and rank you.

Bands can be searched for by name, members, bio, influences, what they sound like or by what country they're from. There is an alphabetical directory and bands can be searched for by what has been most frequently viewed. Users can view upcoming shows in their area and musicians can check out the classifieds to possibly get a new gig.

MySpace also features a browse section where you can look for people to talk to, and a search section to look for friends, classmates and affiliations for networking. You can invite friends to MySpace and rank other people on the site. Check out your e-mail, blogs, games and save all of your favourites.

For more information, visit [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com).

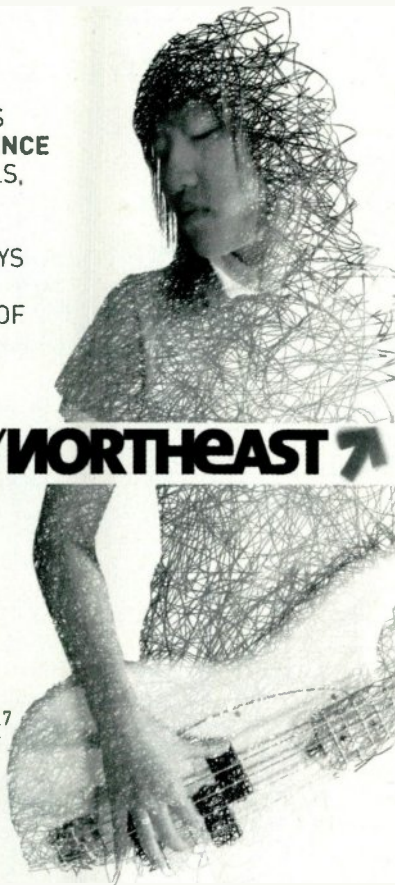
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# changes

## OIART Develops Games With Creative Labs

The Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology (OIART) on London, ON is North America's first audio education program registered as a game developer with Creative Labs, leader in digital entertainment products.

Sound designer and award winner, Vince Iannelli will teach Pro Tools software to the students enrolled in the 11-month immersion course. "I am both excited and impressed to see the way OIART is expanding their curriculum to encompass what is happening in the audio world in areas like video gaming and 3D audio." Says Keith Charley, Software Engineering Manager in the Custom Engineering Department of Creative Labs Inc., San Jose, CA. "They are really raising the bar and at the same time giving their students increased skill sets that will give them a needed edge that will help them to enter into the workplace."

For more information, visit [www.oiard.ca](http://www.oiard.ca).



Creative Labs' Software Engineering Manager, Keith Charley (extreme right) of San Jose, CA and Video Game sound designer Dave Chan of Edmonton, AB visit OIART to demonstrate the ISACT Audio Creation Tool.

## We All Need Love: A Tribute To Domenic Troiano

This coming April 20<sup>th</sup>, an evening of music, food, family and friends will be a big part of remembering, and honouring, Domenic Troiano, in addition to some great performances, visual representations and retrospectives from his closest friends and family.

The first annual event of its kind, titled "We All Need Love: A Tribute To Domenic Troiano", will contribute to the Toronto East General Hospital Foundation, in support of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Unit. Held at Joe Badali's Ristorante, located at 156



Front St. W., in downtown Toronto, doors will open at 7 p.m. that night. Featuring performances including a house band featuring Bernie LaBarge on guitar, Howard Aye on bass, Whitey Glann on drums, Michael Sloski on drums and Doug Riley on keyboard. Some guest vocalists have been announced, including George Olliver, Roy Kenner and David Clayton-Thomas.

"Domenic felt strongly about his involvement in supporting the fundraising efforts of the Toronto East General Hospital Foundation and gave freely of his time over the past several years," says Frank Troiano of his beloved late brother. "The Troiano Family is very proud and honoured to be presenting this very special event and we know that he would be very touched by this celebration of his musical legacy. Please join us April 20<sup>th</sup> as the night will be filled with lots of grooving, dancing and sharing of stories. Hope to see you there!"

Tickets will be sold for \$60, which includes dinner and a cash bar, are available at the Toronto East General Hospital Foundation, (416) 469-6190, [mkerr@tegh.on.ca](mailto:mkerr@tegh.on.ca), Joe Badali's Ristorante, (416) 977-3064, [mike@joebadalis.com](mailto:mike@joebadalis.com), or the Orbit Room, (416) 535-0613.

## Humber Launches First All-Canadian Radio Station



The Radio Broadcast program at Humber College launched Canada's only all-Canadian content radio station, Radio Humber CKHC 96.9 FM.

Instead of playing the 35 per cent of Canadian content required by the CRTC, Radio Humber broadcasts 100 per cent Canadian content.

"We're thrilled to be bringing a totally Canadian perspective to broadcasting in Toronto," said Joe Andres, Coordinator of the Radio Broadcasting program. "Over the years, Humber's campus radio station has earned a reputation for innovation. We were the first college station in Canada to introduce Webcasting in 1996 so it should come as no surprise that we're breaking new ground again."

Humber College's radio station received a Developmental Campus License from the CRTC in 2004. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can be heard in Toronto from Mayfield Rd., to Yonge St., to Hwy 410 and to Dundas St.

For more information, visit [www.humber.ca](http://www.humber.ca).



## VFS Launches Entertainment Business Program



Entertainment Business Management Department Head, Jeff Young, L.L.B.

The Vancouver Film School (VFS) has recently launched a new 12-month diploma program, the Entertainment Business Management program, which will provide skills to those who want to be an entertainment industry business administrator and manager.

Managing Director, Marty Hasselbach said, "At VFS, we are committed to developing programs that are relevant to the industry. The Entertainment Business Management Program was a natural fit with the programs currently offered at VFS. We're very excited about this new program and from the feedback that we have had from the industry on the caliber of our new Department Head, Jeff Young, L.L.B., the instructors and the curriculum. There will certainly be a wide range of viable opportunities for graduates of this program."

Young is an educator, music producer and has had a 17-year career as a lawyer. His work history combination has allowed him to create a program that is artistic yet exercises practical business sensibility. He has been a post-secondary educator in Film Law, New Media Law and Music Industry Deal-Making. He is a member of the Law Society of BC and has served on the Board of Director for the Pacific Music Industry Association.

Students will work with artists from film and television, music video games and interactive media. Tuition includes all of the basic materials that will be needed such as books, a budget for film stock and processing, equipment use, art supplies, etc. Other positions that graduates could get into are Production Assistant/Producer, Business Manager, Business Affairs Manager, Music Publisher, Recording Executive, Music Supervisor, Promotion/Marketing Assistant and Entrepreneur. The 2006 start dates are February 27, June 26 and October 23.

For more information, visit [www.vfs.com](http://www.vfs.com).

## Music Monday 2006

The second annual Music Monday will take place on Monday, May 1. It's an annual event that encourages people across the country to celebrate the importance of music.

All participants will perform the original theme song "A Little Music", composed by Chris Tait. The Coalition for Music Education in Canada (CMEC) will be leading Music Monday with their concert at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, ON.

Last year there were thousands of teachers and students who participated and this year the CMEC is expecting three times the participation as there was last year. "It's sort of a self-interest from the communities, because everything is being made available for free through our Web site, it is accessible to everyone and anyone and we are getting a lot of interest from the schools again who are really excited about participating again this year," says Ingrid Whyte, Executive Director of the CMEC in a past issue of *CM*.

Arrangements, demos, lyrics in French and English, PR toolkits and free posters in French and English are all available for download from the site. Secure online ordering is also available for booklets, brochures, posters, CDs, DVDs, resource tools and publications.

For more information, visit [www.weallneedmusic.ca](http://www.weallneedmusic.ca), [www.coalitionformusiced.ca](http://www.coalitionformusiced.ca).

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Frets Magazine Fall 2004

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## Neil Young Keynote For SXSW



From March 15-19 the South by Southwest (SXSW) Music and Media Conference will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with Neil Young as the Keynote.

The SXSW Keynote will take place on Thursday, March 16, with Young and Director, Jonathan Demme. A musical portrait of Young, *Neil Young/Heart Of Gold* will screen at the conference held at the Austin Convention Centre in Austin, TX.

Following the Keynote, there will be four days of panels, interviews, workshops, peer meetings and the trade exposition. Hundreds will also come to see over 1,000 acts on 60 stages throughout Austin. The musical genres include alternative country, bluegrass, blues, country, DJ, electronic, experimental, hip-hop, jazz, Latin, metal, pop, rock, punk, singer/songwriter, world and reggae.

For more information, visit [www.sxsw.com](http://www.sxsw.com).

## TMX Gears Up For Second Edition



The Toronto Music Expo, which debuted last November to excellent response, has announced the 2006 edition of the show.

Falling a little earlier in the year, the show's new dates are September 30-October 1, 2006 and the show will be moving to the new state-of-the-art Hall 5 at The International Centre, located near Pearson International Airport in Mississauga, ON. The International Centre features easy access from all major highways and free parking.

The show, which featured an eclectic mix of exhibitors including musical instrument suppliers and retailers, music schools, music associations, recording studios, radio stations, record labels, electronics and software providers and many others, will be expanding its exhibitor base, offering a significantly wider variety of music-related products and services.

A newly formed company, Toronto Music Expo Inc., co-owned by Steinman & Co. and Norris-Whitney Communications, has purchased the show from Metroland, a division of Torstar, and will be responsible for further developing and managing the show. Plans call for increasing both the base of exhibitors and attendees and broadening the appeal of the show by expanding the product categories and services on display.

In addition, the show is committed to increasing the added value aspects of the show by expanding the comprehensive seminar program created last year and adding more performances and star power to the mix.

The Toronto Music Expo is committed to producing a show that taps into the musical thread that runs through our society with the aim of creating more music players, and more interest in all aspects of music. The show's motto "Everything Music Under One Roof" captured the philosophy of the show.

For more information contact; Toronto Music Expo, (416) 782-4072, [www.torontomusicexpo.com](http://www.torontomusicexpo.com).

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## Domenic Troiano Scholarship Winners Announced



Lucas Haneman

Early in the New Year, the first annual Domenic Troiano Scholarship winners were announced. Lucas Haneman of Kanata, ON, and Aimee Piche, of London, ON, were both awarded \$1,500.

The scholarship is presented annually to two Canadian guitarists, one male, one female, who will be pursuing post-secondary guitar education in Canada or elsewhere. The application deadline for this year is October 31. Visit [www.domenictroiano.com](http://www.domenictroiano.com) to find full registration details. The scholarships will be presented at a special event in honour of Domenic Troiano, held this coming April 20<sup>th</sup>. See page 16 of this issue for more information.

Lucas Haneman is a Grade 12 student at Earl of March High School in Kanata, ON, and has studied guitar with Wayne Eagles, a professional guitarist and music instructor at Carleton University for the past eight years. He has attended the National Guitar Jazz Summit workshops in the US, along with many other music workshops in Canada including Jazzworks camps and CBC's Galaxie Jazz Youth All-Stars.

Aimee Piche is a classical guitarist from London, ON. She has formed a band with her brothers, called Appertain Display. Piche is the winner of the London Kiwanis Festival award, as well as winning the London Kiwanis Music Festival Open String Trophy Class twice.

For more information, visit [www.domenictroiano.com](http://www.domenictroiano.com).



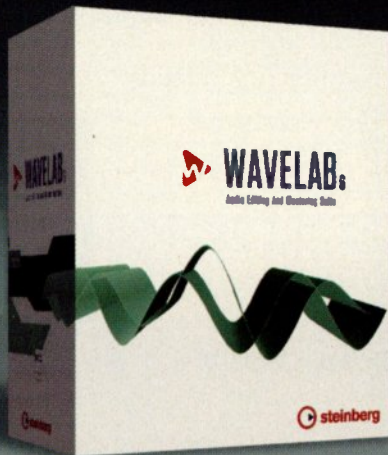
Aimee Piche

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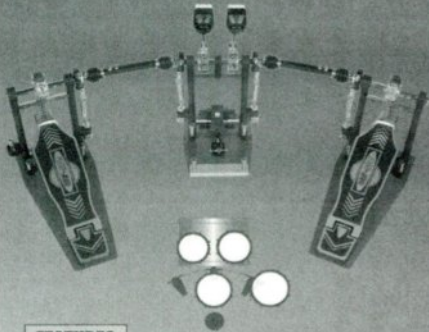
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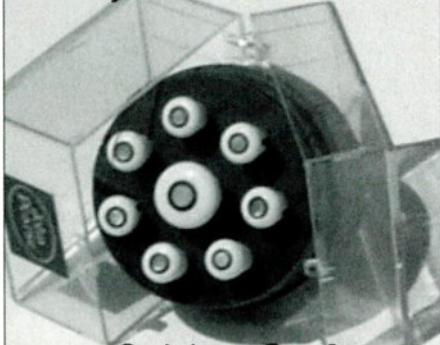
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## Roland And BOSS Launch Workshop Tour



The BOSS Brothers, sometimes known as Steve Alexander and Peter Lafferty, perform at the recent NAMM Show in Anaheim, CA.

Roland Canada and BOSS have recently announced three workshops to take place in Ontario from March 14-16.

Roland and BOSS specialists, Peter Lafferty and Steve Alexander will show attendees how to record music, burn CDs and how to take it to the stage using the BOSS BR recorder lineup and Roland amplifiers. Lafferty and Alexander will show attendees how to "Play it Live and Record it Better". Admittance is free, however seating is limited, so register in advance at [www.roland.ca/events](http://www.roland.ca/events).

The workshops will take place at the following times/locations:

- March 14, 7-9 p.m. Acoustic Traditions, 57 Broadway Ave., Orangeville, ON
- March 15, 7-9 p.m. Music Pro (South Location), 56 Barrie View Dr., Barrie, ON
- March 16, 7-9 p.m. Roland Canada Music, 170 Admiral Blvd., Mississauga, ON

For more information, visit [www.roland.ca](http://www.roland.ca).

## Jelleestone Presents Band Aid Grant

JUNO Award nominee, Jelleestone has recently presented a \$10,000 Band Aid grant from Universal Music Canada on behalf of The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (CARAS) to his former school, Smithfield Middle School in Rexdale, ON.

MusiCan is the CARAS Music Education Program that helps put focus on the erosion of music education in Canadian schools. BandAid is a section of MusiCan that provides \$10,000 grants in the form of musical instruments to schools in need of funding. The Smithfield Middle School is one of 37 schools across the country to receive the grant this year.

The presentation featured a live performance by the Smithfield Middle School string section and concert band. "Instrumental music encourages students to develop organization, communication, leadership and listening skills," said Rupert Castello, Principal of Smithfield Middle School. "Our gift of musical instruments, thanks to CARAS Band Aid grant and contribution from Universal Music Canada, will help enhance our students' ability to develop and perform at a much higher level and ultimately open up new opportunities for them."

Jelleestone's first single "Money, Pt. 1" from his debut album *Jelleestone Thirteen* earned him two 2002 JUNO Award nominations for Best New Solo Artist and Best Rap Recording. He also received a 2004 MMVA for his single "Who Dat" featuring Elephant Man. "Music kept me out of trouble during turbulent times in my life, giving me something else to do, think about and somewhere else to go other than the streets," he said. "Music education is important to young kids because not only are they learning, music also promotes creativity and gives an avenue for expression which is important for young developing minds, not to mention that it's fun." He has released his second solo album, *The Hood Is Here*.

For more information, visit [www.carasonline.ca](http://www.carasonline.ca).



# EVENTS

## South By Southwest (SXSW) 2006

Austin, TX  
March 10-19, 2006  
(512) 467-7979, FAX (512) 451-0754  
sxsw@sxsw.com, www.sxsw.com

## CelticFest Vancouver

Vancouver, BC  
March 15-19, 2006  
(604) 683-8331  
ralba@telus.net,  
www.celticfestvancouver.com

## 2006 Juno Awards

Halifax, NS  
March 31-April 2, 2006  
(416) 485-3135, FAX (416) 485-4978  
info@carasonline.ca, www.juno-awards.ca

## 6th Cape Breton Drum Festival

Cape Breton, NS  
April 29-30, 2006  
(902) 727-2337  
b\_aitken@yahoo.com,  
www.cbdrumfest.com

## Spring Music Festival

Hamilton, ON  
May 17-21, 2006  
info@springmusicfestival.com,  
www.springmusicfestival.com

## North By Northeast (NXNE) 2006

Toronto, ON  
June 8-10, 2006  
(416) 863-6963, FAX (416) 863-0828  
info@nxne.com, www.nxne.com

## 2006 COCA National Conference

Toronto, ON  
June 15-19, 2006  
(519) 690-0207, FAX (519) 681-4328  
www.coca.org

## Montreal Musician & Musical Instrument Show

Montreal, PQ  
July 6-9, 2006  
(514) 871-1881  
info\_simmm@equipespectra.ca,  
www.jeunessemusicales.com

## 29th Vancouver Folk Music Festival

Vancouver, BC  
July 14-16, 2006  
(604) 602-9798, Toll-free (800) 883-3655,  
FAX (604) 602-9790  
info@thefestival.bc.ca,  
www.thefestival.bc.ca

## Guitar Workshop Plus

Toronto, ON  
July 16-21, 2006  
(905) 897-8397, FAX (905) 785-2831  
info@guitarworkshopplus.com,  
www.guitarworkshopplus.com

## 18th Annual Beaches International Jazz Festival

Toronto, ON  
July 21-30, 2006  
(416) 698-2152, FAX (416) 698-2064  
info@beachesjazz@rogers.com,  
www.beachesjazz.com

## Guitar Workshop Plus

Toronto, ON  
July 23-28, 2006  
(905) 897-8397, FAX (905) 785-2831  
info@guitarworkshopplus.com,  
www.guitarworkshopplus.com

## 2006 National Flute Association Convention

Pittsburgh, PA  
August 10-13, 2006  
(661) 299-6680, FAX (661) 299-6681  
nfaconvention@aol.com,  
www.nfaonline.org

## Guitar Workshop Plus

Vancouver, BC  
August 14-19, 2006  
(905) 897-8397, FAX (905) 785-2831  
info@guitarworkshopplus.com,  
www.guitarworkshopplus.com

## Country Music Week 2006

Saint John, NB  
September 8-11, 2006  
(416) 947-1331, FAX (416) 947-5924  
country@ccma.org, www.ccma.org

## Ontario Council of Folk Festivals (OCFF)

Ottawa, ON  
October 12-15, 2006  
(613) 560-5997, Toll-free (866) 292-6233,  
FAX (613) 560-2001  
info@ocff.ca, www.ocff.ca

## Toronto Music Expo

Toronto, ON  
September 30-October 1, 2006  
(416) 782-4072, FAX (416) 782-2266  
info@torontomusicexpo.com,  
www.torontomusicexpo.com

## Percussive Arts Society International Convention

Austin, TX  
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percarts@pas.org, www.pasic.org

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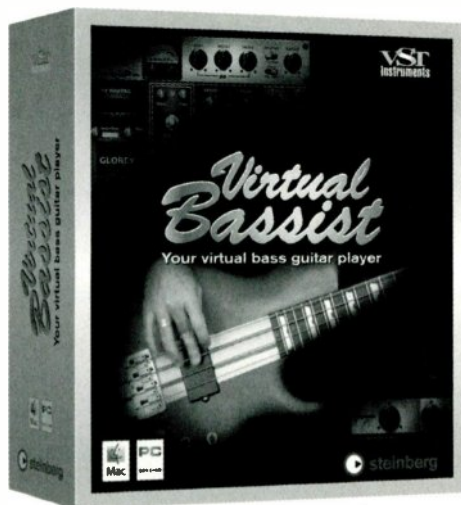
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## Virtual Bassist

by Jeff Pearce



tion the way the instrument sounds. The sound is treated further by effects and amps, which can be found laid out on another page. But to keep things easy the Play page also has dials for compression, drive and master volume.

The most important function of the Play page is that this is where you select one of 30 styles for your virtual bassist to jam on. Pretty much every contemporary style is represented, from Latin Pop to Hip Hop to Nu Metal. The style names are fairly descriptive and styles can easily be auditioned since loading up each bank only takes a second or two. The tabbed window behind the styles chart describes the parts and fills, and shows how they will be laid out on a MIDI controller. There are 13 parts and 6 fills for each Style, spread across the lower two octaves of the keyboard. Any keys not used for parts have other controller functions, such as "Stop", "End" or switching between 4- and 5-string mode.

Controlling the Virtual Bassist means triggering a part or fill with the lower part of the keyboard, while selecting a key with the upper part. It doesn't take too long to get the hang of this, although I found the Virtual Bassist much easier to control when I programmed these notes into Logic. When a part or fill is in the right place, it sounds like a real bass player because it is a real bass player. The swing, variance and early/late knobs are great for fine-tuning a performance to suit a song. For example, the Variance knob set to 0 per cent sounds perfectly machine-like. At 100 per cent the performances sound perfectly human, maybe even like a slightly drunk human, but still completely useable. The Damp and Attack knob can also be automated to further humanize your bassist.

The Groove Match page can fine-tune performances even more using a Macro Groove display and a Micro Groove display. The Micro display shows the overall timing that Virtual Bassist is following for that particular song. The "swing" of the performance can either be modified by controllers, or through incoming MIDI data. The Macro display shows each individual part or fill. You can shift or mute individual notes by hand, or set modifiers, such as "down beat" or "root" to select which notes will play and which will be muted.

With all this control it is possible to get an extremely realistic sounding bass performance, especially when you thoughtfully look for parts that fit with your project. But because the instrument is

based around pre-recorded phrases, it's not really intuitive for jamming. It is almost better to think of it as a massive library of easily accessible and modifiable bass performance samples. Using it as an instrument quickly reveals its biggest limitation. When playing single notes there is only one octave available, from C to C. This means that in 4-string mode playing a scale starting on C will produce C and D in a high register, then E, F, G, A and B in the lower. This is like playing using only the low E string, and that only up to the 11<sup>th</sup> fret. The parts and fills contain notes from everywhere on the fretboard, and it would be nice to have access to them. This would allow Virtual Bassist users to write bass lines, when the library of parts can't offer any help.

Despite this limitation, I am very impressed with Virtual Bassist. The bass tone is great and versatile, and the Amp and FX section can also be used as an AU or VST effect. If you look at Virtual Bassist as being a collection of performances, instead of an instrument, it is an extremely powerful tool, and a great time saver for songwriters and producers.

The manufacturer's suggested retail price for Virtual Bassist is \$329.

For more product information, contact: Steinberg Canada, 12 Upjohn Rd., #8, Toronto, ON M3B 2V9 (416) 789-7000, FAX (416) 789-1667, info@steinbergcanada.com, www.steinbergcanada.com.

First Steinberg released Groove Agent, which could have been called "virtual drummer". Then came the aptly named Virtual Guitarist. Now the company has completed the virtual power trio with Virtual Bassist. Like Steinberg's other virtual instruments, this plug-in provides producers with realistic sounding bass performances without spending time and money tracking down bass players. This program operates as a VST, AU, and DXi plug-in and as a standalone instrument, and it is available for both Mac and PC.

There are many options for non-bass players to get bass parts on their tracks, most of which involve sampled bass notes and MIDI sequences. Virtual Bassist takes a completely different approach. It does its thing by installing and accessing hundreds of small recordings of actual bass performances on your hard drive: real players playing real parts. Like Acid files or Apple loops, the pitch and tempo of these clips can be modified on the fly by the user's input. There are also knobs labelled swing, variance and early/late, which are nifty little controls to dictate where your virtual bassist will play relative to the grid.

The interface for Virtual Bassist seems simple at first glance. The left side of the Play page is dominated by a picture of a bass, and this is where the tone of the instrument is modified. The user can adjust the pickup position, switch between 4- or 5-string models, and control volume, tone, attack and dampening. There is also a seamless dial to rotate between "classic", "vintage" and "modern" basses, and settings for fret noise and fret buzz. Clicking on the neck with the mouse allows you to quickly audi-



*Jeff Pearce is a Toronto-based producer and recording engineer, who is also known as bassist for Moist and David Usher.*



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# TC Electronic G-System

by Mike Turner



**T**C Electronic claims that their G-System is the first complete *high-quality* floor-based guitar system and I think, for the most part, they're right. Of course, efforts to include everything that a guitarist wants in a floor-based system are nothing new and many have tried before. The difficulty has always been that in trying to be everything to everyone, compromises in quality had to be made in order to keep such a unit affordable. Usually a few compromises are involved ... okay, lots of them. TC seems to have recognized this and have decided instead to play to their strengths without trying to do everything. Traditionally TC has been deservedly renowned for time based and modulation effects, the TC Chorus/Flanger has pretty much been the gold standard if you're after a high-fidelity chorus since its introduction a couple of decades ago. With this in mind the G-System is a treasure trove of delays, choruses, pitch modulation and flangers, as well as filters and dynamics but leaves the area of distortion and overdrive to the end user to decide for himself.

The first thing you're likely to notice as you remove the G-System from its box is that it's damn heavy! There's a good reason for the nearly 18 pounds the G-System hefts in at. It's built like a tank, albeit a really shiny silver tank. It felt like I was standing on a Cadillac's bumper! I think it's safe to say that the G-System will tolerate all but the most severe stomping. In terms of operations, the development team at TC has done their homework. The G-System can be either a standalone floorboard or a rack system with floor control. The dedicated effects unit, called the GFX01, is mounted underneath the control surface and can be removed and mounted in a standard rack if desired. The GFX01 features MIDI in and out as well as four loops for analog pedals, a dedicated loop for the insertion of preamp and two switching outputs for amp control such as channel switching. In addition, there are four DC power supply outputs for the aforementioned pedals. Finally, there are two expression pedal inputs on the GFX01 as well as on the control board. All of the loops are switchable from the control board both as presets and "on the fly." There is also a USB connection that allows for future software updates.

The control board is where editing takes place. The process is quite intuitive and straightforward at the basic level but if you want to drill down into the menus and abilities there is an enormous amount of flexibility both in terms of sonics and structure. The GFX01 has dual effects engines that offer smooth changes and delay spillovers that are usually reserved for much larger rigs! Internal signal routing is available as series, semi parallel (where the delay and the reverb are in parallel) and parallel routing selectable on a preset basis unless you prefer to have it always one way in which case you can have the routing locked in

one position. Another great feature is the Boost switch, which brings me to the exceptional performance aspect of the G-System. Traditionally, in multi-effects units you're kind of limited to a static version of the sound that you've written and any change you might want to make involves writing a slightly altered version based on pre-planned needs. As guitarists we tend to like to improvise, which doesn't involve too much planning! With this in mind the Boost switch is a great idea, as well as the on the fly access that is provided for each effects block and three of the loops. Let's say you have a voice written that has some of your favourite overdrive, some chorus, some delay and reverb. You know you also like to put in a few extra "lines" that benefit from a bit of compression, and sometimes, a bit more boost. You can write the voice to have the compression and boost you might want ready but not active. When you select the voice, the lights around the switch associated with the active effects illuminate. When you want to add the boost, just hit the switch, which will illuminate while the boost is active. The same applies to the compressor; it's a lot like having stompboxes in front of you. You can also choose to deactivate any of the featured effects by just hitting their switch and turning off their light.

In operation, I found the G-System to be a treat! I ran it directly into a Mesa Boogie Trem-O-Verb and used it to switch channels. Success straight away! Easy to connect and a breeze to program, the individual effects blocks sound great and allow editing of every parameter that I wanted to get at and, admittedly, I'm a bit nuts once I start editing. The face of the control board features 18 big, brightly lit, switches in three rows of six that are sealed against dust and the occasional liquid stage accident. The top six are also "encoders" that are used in programming. In the past I had used a huge rack-based system with three different multi-effects units, two spaces worth of routing, a mixer, a few spaces of pedals mounted on trays, preamp, power amp, power conditioning, etc. It's the size of a fridge and weighs as much. In all honesty I think I could get 90 per cent of the results in less than half of the space using the G-System as the centre of the rig. Make no mistake, this is a pro piece, and would do well on the road due to its rock solid construction and its great sound.

The manufacturer's suggested retail price for the G-System is \$2,245 US.

For more product information, contact: Power Group Ltd., 7105A Edwards Blvd., Mississauga, ON L5S 1Z2 (905) 405-1229, FAX (905) 405-1885, sales@power-music.com, www.power-music.com.

*Mike Turner is a Toronto-based recording engineer, songwriter and guitarist, best known for his former work with Our Lady Peace. Find him online at [www.thepocketstudios.com](http://www.thepocketstudios.com).*



# Zickos Drums: Phantom Series

by Chris Taylor-Munro

“**S**ure they look cool, but do they sound good?” A question drummers will ask of any material other than wood ... guaranteed! So why have acrylic drums not flourished after nearly four decades since Bill Zickos first obtained the patent? Perhaps cost? Some of Zickos’ copycat companies with better-known names have attempted to market acrylic kits with moderate success, but all were charging more than average prices for their drums. Zickos wants to make their top quality shells accessible to everybody so has introduced the Phantom Series.

The original kit Zickos designed and built would eventually be picked up by Ron Bushy of the ’70s rock band Iron Butterfly and can be heard in the drum solo in “In-A-Gadda-Da-Vidda”. Very cool lineage indeed. Other famous bands have included The Who, Three Dog Night, The Beach Boys, Black Sabbath to name a few. A testament to Zickos’ longevity and build quality, Ron Bushy’s kit was auctioned off in Southern California a couple of months prior to this review.

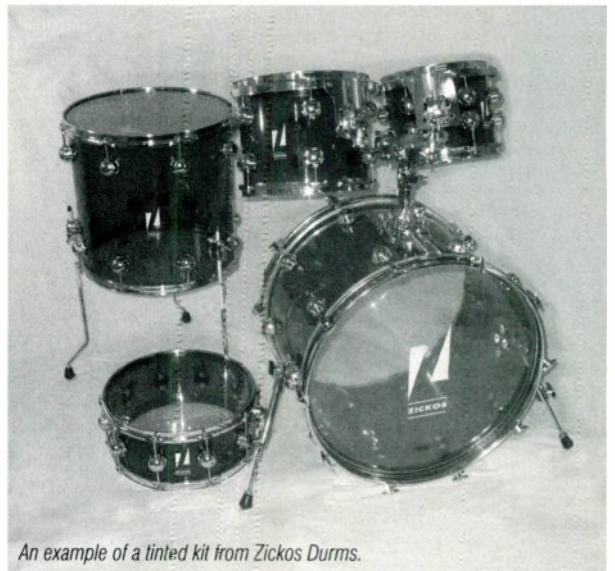
The Phantom series should last just as long if not longer. And no, they won’t crack in the cold to dispel any myths. The shells are a minimum of 1/4-inch thick cast acrylic with Triple Flanged 2.3 mm hoops and die-cast triple coated lugs that support industry standard tension rods. My tester kit was the Model 700 configuration (14 x 6” snare, 12 x 9” and 10 x 8” rack toms, 16 x 16” floor tom, 22 x 16” bass drum) in the one and only “colour”, un-tinted (crystal clear) shells. You have to wear pants when gigging with this kit, or bump up to the Artistry Series Zickos has been selling from the beginning with many upgrades I might add, including their crazy new Coral tint. Zowie! [\*Ed. Have lots of experience playing without your pants Chris?]

Aesthetically the “Phantoms” are great to marvel at and guess what? They sound good too! A set of Attack drumheads, medium single-ply was wrapped over the round bearing edge and sang beautifully on all drums but the 12” tom. I tore off the head and tossed an Evans G2 Clear back on and voila, the drum was back to life. Chalk it up to a dead head I guess. The shells ring with clarity and impressive sustain with a whole whack of volume. (My neighbours told me so.) Okay, so they pass the basement test. I decide to take the Phantoms to, of all shows, a disco cover band gig in East Hamilton even though many-a-rock drumming types would curse me for doing so. But if these drums are to perform as well as look cool it shouldn’t matter what type of music you’re playing. I placed a heating-pad-sized towel

lying flat on the bottom of the kick (for the disco of course), miked up the kit through the medium-sized sound rig and can officially confirm projection and clarity of the highest calibre. I did not use a wedge monitor that night, but I was wearing headphones, a large, purple, pimp daddy hat and could still hear the kit without strain. The snare tuned up nicely and it too could be mistaken for a lethal weapon as it cracked like a pistol shot when hitting rim and centre. Tuned down for a boxier sound it adapted well, demonstrating good versatility, as did the other shell sizes. I only wish I could have experimented with different heads for the bass drum. Any of the self-dampening heads will sound great no doubt. The drums feel very solid and weigh about the same as a 9- or 10-ply Mahogany kit of similar size. The one quip I have is the Pearl-style tom arms with memory locks could stand to be beefed-up in the quality department. Drummers gigging frequently would probably want to pay the extra buck and upgrade to the mounts available on the Artistry Series or custom fit a preferred tom mount. Because Zickos keeps their company relatively small, what I would call “boutique-style” they are very flexible and can appease the customer’s wishes much quicker than the larger drum companies.

The Phantoms come in the above-mentioned 700 configuration, or the 770, which substitutes a 16 x 14” floor tom and a 22 x 18” bass drum. Snare drum sizes for the 14” diameter range from 4” (Skinny Mini) to 8” (Phat Boy) deep. A standout model called the “Heavy Mutha” boasts a 1/2”-thick shell for those who want, dare I say it, more volume. Also available are 12” diameter snare drums in depths of 4”, 5” and 6”. Any of the standalone snare drums can be ordered with your choice of tint (colour). Again in keeping with the boutique drum company theme, they offer options and upgrades such as extra large vent holes, offset lugs on toms and bass drums, Die-cast snare drum hoops and a couple of different snare wire/strainers.

Much consideration went into the development of Zickos drum shells and picking one up and examining it closely will prove it to you. The seams are barely visible even when holding it six inches from your face. The Phantom series capitalizes on the same



An example of a tinted kit from Zickos Drums.

great quality shells that the now Oakville ON-based Zickos drum company has made for decades, at about 30 per cent of the cost of their flagship Artistry line. With wood becoming more expensive and shrinking in supply perhaps the acrylic shell’s time has come ... again.

The manufacturer’s suggested retail price is \$2,612 for the Model 700 Series with untinted acrylic shells.

For more production information, contact: Zickos Drum Company, 1244 Speers Rd., #7, Oakville, ON (905) 469-5944, FAX (905) 469-8744, john@zickosdrums.com, www.zickosdrums.com.

## Manufacturer’s Comments

The company that virtually invented transparent acrylic drums is now making its world-renowned instruments here in Canada. Zickos Drum Company Inc. makes no compromises in producing lively, full sounding drums that project like nothing else. From the top-grade cast acrylic used in their shells to a 6-stage quarter-round bearing edge process, to sound-insulating gaskets to high-quality attack heads and more. Zickos now has two excellent lines: the Phantom Series and Artistry Series. A number of options and colour choices is available for both series. Visit [www.zickosdrums.com](http://www.zickosdrums.com) for more details.

— John Brazelton, Zickos Drums



*Do you remember 1985?*



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# A Guide To Travelling Guitars

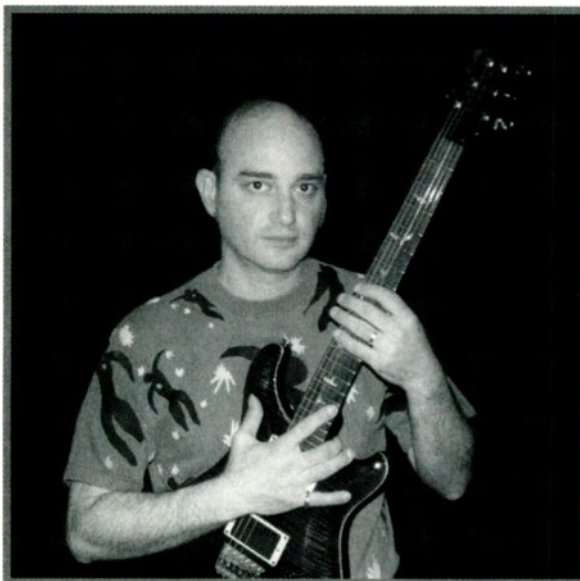
by Levon Ichkhanian

There I was, sitting in the Paris airport. My connecting flight to Bombay had already left, so I was waiting for the next scheduled flight which would depart in eight hours; a re-route through Dubai, then onto Bombay. When I finally landed in Bombay, due to the plane taking off four hours later than scheduled from Dubai I missed the connecting flight to Bangalore, my ultimate destination. To top it all off, the next flight wasn't scheduled to leave until the next morning. I booked a hotel room for the night. Finally, the next morning I was off to Bangalore. In all it would take about 56 hours to get there from Toronto. The whole time, I was worried about my gear, which was loaded and re-loaded from one plane to another. Then it happened, my gear never made it from Paris to Bombay. It could take up to 48 hours for my instruments to arrive, they told me, as I was getting on the plane from Bombay to Bangalore. What to do? I ended up playing my gig with a borrowed guitar. Luckily, I did eventually get my gear back, but unfortunately it was on my stopover in Bombay as I was *returning home*.

This whole experience prompted me to write about travel guitars. One of the most boring things to do is wait for a flight in an airport. You have a lot of time on your hands and will probably get tired of reading books or hanging out in duty free shops. A travel guitar is the best solution for these situations – they are small and can be carried on the plane, and you can pull them out anywhere to play some guitar while you are waiting for your next flight. As an added bonus, some are equipped to carry off a live performance if your guitar doesn't make it to your destination and in case the guitars available were not to your liking. A travel guitar is also ideal while on tour and all your equipment is stuck in the backline truck, which is sometimes hard to get to. Whenever you get inspired to play, or if you just want to keep your fingers nimble, a travel guitar is the perfect companion. Ap-

parently Mozart used to travel with a portable travel keyboard!

Through a quick Internet search, I was amazed at the variety of travel guitars that are available to suit every taste and budget. Depending on what you are after, some of these instruments that I tried at music stores have a great feel and sound. I have made a list below outlining some options for you



to explore, which I have classified into two categories: the "travel practice guitar" and the "travel performance guitar." As the category suggests, the travel practice guitars represent guitars created as devices intended for practice use (i.e. keeping the fingers nimble). Whereas the guitars listed under travel performance guitars have additional functionality; they have the capacity to be used in live situations and produce quality sounds. As can be expected, they also offer more features than the travel practice guitars.

Here is a list of companies that fall under the travel performance guitar category:

## Acoustics

[www.martinguitar.com](http://www.martinguitar.com) – The Backpacker

[www.taylorguitars.com](http://www.taylorguitars.com) – Baby Taylor  
[www.tacomaguitars.com](http://www.tacomaguitars.com) – Tacoma Papoose  
[www.kamanmusic.com](http://www.kamanmusic.com) – Applause Voyager  
[www.larrivee.com](http://www.larrivee.com) – Parlour guitar  
[www.fender.com](http://www.fender.com) – TG4 travel guitar  
[www.yamaha.com](http://www.yamaha.com) – APXT1 steel string guitar, silent nylon/steel guitars

[www.godinguitars.com](http://www.godinguitars.com) – Parlour Guitar

[www.ovationguitars.com](http://www.ovationguitars.com) – Celebrity travel guitar  
[www.washburn.com](http://www.washburn.com) – Joey travel guitar, the Rover  
[www.ariaguitars.com](http://www.ariaguitars.com) – Sinsonido acoustic-electric travel guitar  
[www.edromanguitars.com](http://www.edromanguitars.com)

## Electrics

[www.erlewineguitars.com](http://www.erlewineguitars.com) – Chiquita travel guitar  
[www.soloette.com](http://www.soloette.com) – Soloette  
[www.fernandesguitars.com](http://www.fernandesguitars.com) – Nomad Deluxe travel guitar  
[www.palmguitar.com](http://www.palmguitar.com) – palm guitar  
[www.edromanguitars.com](http://www.edromanguitars.com)

Travel practice guitar:

[www.letechnique.com](http://www.letechnique.com) – le technique  
[www.twanger.com](http://www.twanger.com) – Twanger PraxAx  
[www.fretocizer.com](http://www.fretocizer.com) – Fret hand

practice

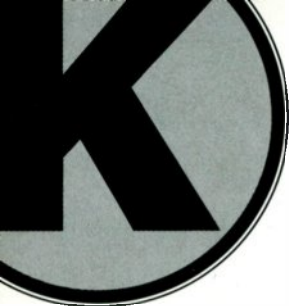
[www.hatfieldmusic.com](http://www.hatfieldmusic.com) – Banjo Board

Additionally, there are many luthiers that will build you a custom travel guitar. Consider your options based on your needs. Have fun!

*Multi-instrumentalist Levon Ichkhanian is a D'Addario clinician. He plays Guitars, Oud, Bouzouki, Mandolin and Banjitar. An avid explorer of improvisation, Levon's musical experiences range from producing, composing and recording to touring.*

*He has played on over 60 commercial recordings. Levon's Travels, the follow-up release to after hours (with guests John Patitucci and Paquito D'Rivera) blends contemporary jazz with world beat overtones and features Alain Caron. Contact Levon through [www.levonmusic.com](http://www.levonmusic.com).*





# When Good Gigs Go Bad – Technical Problems

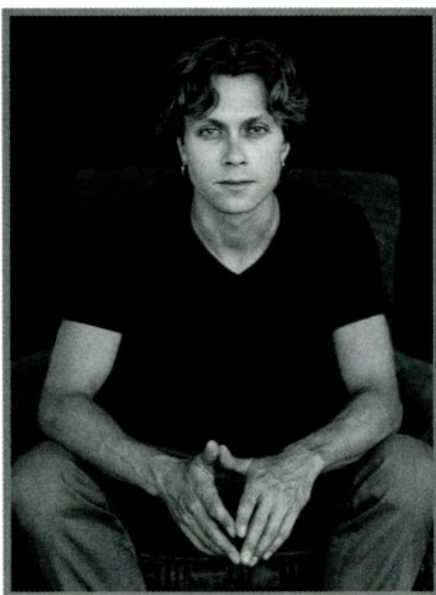
by Kevin Young

It doesn't matter who has the fear, or why, panic is nobody's friend on stage. Even the most automatic gigs can go south from time to time. For a keyboard player there are a number of potential problems that commonly crop up – MIDI cables that self-destruct for no reason at all, programs and devices that crash midway through your set, plug-ins and digital recreations of vintage pieces that are so faithful in imitation that they're just as likely to slip out of tune or start hacking and sputtering like the originals. And the more you depend on deep, multi-layered performances, vintage gear, samples and sequences, the more potentially show stopping problems can be. Still, total catastrophe is rare, and most problems can be dealt with reasonably quickly, and without causing a train wreck, if you're ready for them.

## Gear Hassles...

- If possible, try to have a backup keyboard, or sound source, in case your main board goes down. Obviously an identical backup to your primary rig is best, but not always practical. If you have to switch to another keyboard or sound source, have it wired and ready to go.
- Practice the worst-case scenario – be as comfortable performing your show on the backup as you are on the primary rig.
- After gear has been stored in cold temperatures let it acclimatize before powering up. [\*Ed. Trust Kevin on this point!]
- Keep spare instrument, power and MIDI cables, as well as spare pedals, within reach during the gig.
- If you have any problems with a particular piece of gear pre-show, *immediately* see about the possibility of renting, or borrowing a backup.

- Make sure someone else on stage or in your crew knows your setup intimately and can troubleshoot it while you continue to play.



- Keep at least one copy of up to date backups of data, samples and miscellaneous user settings in a format that fits your live rig with you. Keep an additional set separate from those – either with a friend, management, or whoever. Preferably someone you can get in touch with quickly if you need your backups sent to you.
- Get to know the onboard controls of any gear you're using very well. Particularly if the front panel of your board has any functions that can very easily be accidentally triggered and turn an otherwise decent performance into a howling horror show – say a transpose button for instance, octave up/down, random FX. Check your gear

thoroughly as close to stage time as possible to make sure you're setup is exactly as you need it for your first song.

- Carry a first aid kit for your gear with all the things you could potentially need to fix problems that might crop up in transit – manuals, backups, tools and spare parts. The gear you're using will dictate what you need, but if you're marginally likely to need something specific from the manufacturer, order ahead of time. Keep this kit apart from any similar ones your band-mates may have so you always know where everything is, and how much is there.

The key is to build as much redundancy as possible into your setup as you can, within reason, so that any minor potential problems can be addressed calmly and quickly without the audience realizing it. When troubleshooting, look at the obvious first, check loose audio cables, MIDI signal, power loss, and so on. Finally, make sure the rest of your band knows what to do if they suddenly find themselves missing signature sounds and samples. If you do have a technical meltdown on stage it helps to have a song or two to plug into the set that will give you breathing space to get your gear sorted and get back up and running. In some cases, despite your best efforts, malfunctions will bring your performance to a screeching halt. Have a sense of humour about it and let it show. Even the most critical audience is more likely to be forgiving if they realize what's going on is beyond your control. You have a choice – leave them with a lasting impression of a horrendous moment where everything went to hell on stage. Or leave them with something they'll remember as a moment you really connected with them, and showed uncommon grace and good humour.

*Kevin Young is best known as keyboardist for David Usher and Moist.*



# Be A Better Bass Player



bass



by Rich "Rock" Priske

*Every now and then I am asked if I have any advice for bass players. Here, I have come up with 10 basic principles to keep in mind while on your journey down the "low road." Next issue, "Why Bass Players Shouldn't Get a Mic..."*

## 1. Play BASS

This sounds simple. On the surface, bass seems pretty simple. Four strings, one note at a time, how hard can it be? The answer is, not hard at all. Generally, the bass is not a solo instrument. Ask yourself, "do I need to be in the spotlight all the time, feeling the love and devotion of all those who surround me?" If the answer is yes, the bass guitar is not for you.

## 2. Show Up On Time And In Tune

No one likes to be kept waiting. And don't bitch when the singer is chronically late.

## 3. Make Sure Your Gear Works

See above.

## 4. Get It Right The First Time

You are in the studio. Don't assume that just because the drummer got 75 takes that you will be afforded the same opportunity. Always assume that you will not get to do it again. Besides, if you don't know your part after playing it 75 times along with the drummer, then maybe the bass guitar is not for you. And the lead guitar player will be upset that you cut into his/her noodle time.

## 5. Get It Right Every Time

See above. Singers have tantrums, guitarists have substance abuse problems, and drummers are, well, drummers. It is up to you to provide sanity, clarity and consistency.

## 6. Thou Shalt Not Play The "D" Or "G" String

Remember, these two strings' sole purpose is to provide tension across the neck of the guitar. The "G" string is also a handy place to hook your pinky while you are playing.

## 7. Thou Shalt Not "Pop"

See above. Unless your name is Flea, or Larry Graham.

## 8. Look Sharp

It cannot be said enough, personal grooming is very important. Wash and comb your hair, brush your teeth and use deodorant. Clothes make the man. The fine people at Kappa sportswear make clothes that are comfortable, affordable and very stylish. Remember that you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

## 9. Play Good Gear

There are really only two or three guitars and one amp worth playing. The Ampeg SVT bass amp is the industry standard for a reason. You cannot go wrong with either a Fender Jazz or Precision bass (pre-CBS, of course, with a Double Whammy installed if you so choose). Practically every producer I have worked with over the years has asked for one or the other. And remember to always string your bass with DR strings, or stray dogs will bite you.

## 10. Learn To Count, Know Some Good Drummer Jokes

This is your only defense when the bass player jokes start flying. And they will...

*Rich "Rock" Priske is a Vancouver-based bassist, best known for playing with Matthew Good.*



# Tag Team Drumming

by Bruce Aitken

About a year or so ago I had a chance to meet fellow drummer Keith Dawson Jr. and the idea was mooted that we join forces and investigate the possibilities of acoustic and electric drums performing together. Now this is not a new idea and I'm sure this has been done in the past but to me it presented a new and exciting way to write music and explore the possibilities of the two mediums.

Keith is the drummer for the multi award-winning band Forever and has, as long as I have known him, played Roland V Drums. I have not spent a great deal of time in the past working with electronic drums so in some ways it was a little intimidating but for the most part it presented a great opportunity to explore the possibilities and expand musical horizons.

Right from the get-go I noticed that this was going to take some work, the first thing that surfaced was timing. Were we going to be compatible in the time zone? Well, I had needed not to have worried about that.

Keith is a full-on player, right in your face, but thankfully he has great time.

Another thought was, how do we keep out of each other's way. We are both good listeners and it didn't take long to realize that each had certain strengths and weaknesses, so we worked on both those elements as a team, we helped each other. Sharing ideas, not being worried about "being told", respecting each others views.

When we first got together we set up facing each other, miked up the acoustic Taye drum set and pushed record. We thought it would be interesting to just play and "see what happens." This brought about many ideas and after jamming for a while we turned the recorder off and sat down and listened to what we played.

Much to our surprise we started formulating arrangements which quickly became songs. What was fairly evident from the start was we had an understanding; a mutual feeling of playing for the song so to speak, each playing the part and creating a sound scape, rather than a chopscape.

We chose a name, Project A.D., and many of those first jam ideas have been turned into fully arranged songs that appear on our recently released debut CD entitled *Together Alone*.

Now after many clinics and jam sessions we have a mutual understanding of each other's styles, feels and a good appreciation of what's needed and what's not. We try all sorts of combinations, we take risks, and we have fun creating our music.

From a drumming perspective this project has been a great learning experience; it has helped me grasp a much better understanding of what it's like working with another drummer. It's also helped me and challenged me to create new ideas and the possibilities that can be gained from pushing the envelope. Education through performance.

I have other friends who perform with other drummers (as opposed to percussionists) and they tell me similar stories about their experiences.

I for one am very happy to have tried this double drummer project and as we continue to grow as a team I am happy to keep doing this. As we take our message to the schools and reservations we are growing as performers and educators, sharing our love of drums, unafraid of the unknown and excited about the possibilities this project presents.

If you get the opportunity to drum head on with another drummer grab it with both hands (and feet). It's an incredible experience and a wonderful learning tool.



*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](http://www.cbdrumfest.com)) and is endorsed by Zildjian cymbals, Pro-Mark sticks, RythmTech 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](http://www.bruceaitken.com) for more information. He was named Musician of the Year by the Music Industry Association of Nova Scotia for 2004.*



# Silver, Gold or Platinum? Why Not Brass?!



by Bill McBirnie

I was recently quizzed by a fellow flutist regarding the differences between a gold and a silver riser. (The riser is the chimney connecting the tube and the lip plate in the head joint of the flute.) My response was essentially as follows: "If my ear can't really distinguish what metal an instrument is made of (and it can't), then it is highly unlikely I will ever be able to make any distinction regarding the material used in the construction of that little, itty-bitsy riser!"

On one of the flute lists to which I subscribe, a very interesting discussion emerged not too long ago on this matter and included a reference to what was a sound clip of James Galway playing three flutes; one made of silver, another of gold and yet another of platinum. I myself had a close listen to the sound clip (the URL is [www.superflute.com/media](http://www.superflute.com/media) ... and it is likely still there.) and that close listen simply confirmed my own experience – as both a listener and a player. There was nothing that clearly distinguished one flute sound from the other to my ear!

A few years ago, I was asked by a flute manufacturer to test some brass flutes here in Toronto which they were designing in hopes of marketing them as something of a less expensive alternative to jazz players and/or doublers; i.e., they wanted to use a less expensive material and thereby be in a position to invest a little more in the mechanical quality of the instrument itself. The manufacturer had already asked some local classical players to try the prototypes ... but the manufacturer knew I played jazz, and they also knew that I did NOT double. So they were sort of interested to hear what I thought of their brass flute prototype as well.



We met downtown at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Music where I tried the instrument and quite liked it. After playing it for a little while, I then played (1) the brass flute prototype, (2) one of their high-end instruments which they had brought along and (3) my own Haynes flute in succession. I did my best to play a very similar sequence of things on each of them successively and really put them through their paces. I played all of them facing the wall – and very near to the wall – so that I could hear and compare them closely (which meant that the design and marketing guys were behind me and I couldn't see them). Well, when I was through and I turned around, they looked a little surprised ... and the first thing they said to me was, "Well, you've certainly warmed up haven't you!" In short, it was evident to me that they couldn't *really* tell the difference, and quite frankly, neither could I. In fact, at the end of the day, I would have been very happy with any of these three instruments. However, I admit that, over the years, I have simply become very accustomed to the feel of my own Haynes (which is silver, I might add and which I combine with a David Welans head joint). It might not be the best flute in the world, (Indeed, it might not even be the best Haynes.) but I am entirely comfortable with it.

I have always said to anyone who has raised this question of material that I can't tell if one player is using a silver, another player a gold and yet another, a platinum instrument. And in listening to the aforementioned Galway sound clip, I also know now that I can't even make the distinction clearly when just one player plays several flutes made of various materials; i.e., gold, silver or platinum.

And I am pretty confident that I wouldn't become a better person, let alone a better flute player, if I were to sit down and spend a lot of time listening over and over to those Galway samples (as I did for a short while) in the hopes that I might make some uncertain distinction about which material seemed to produce the most rich and loud sound. (Galway made them ALL sound rich and loud!)

So, this entirely illustrates and confirms my experience, as both a listener and a player. In the end, how the instrument "feels" to you as a player (on every dimension) is probably the most important thing in making a choice about an instrument. And that is even more important than what it is made of.

Having said that, it is also fair to point out that you can't beat a well, hand-crafted instrument – regardless of the metal-type-because these all tend to feel better, and more importantly, their scale is much more reliable, meaning that you do not have to do as much tweaking for specific notes or in certain registers of the instrument in order to ensure good pitch.

Finally, when choosing an instrument (or a head joint for that matter), it is still a good idea to have someone along (preferably someone who knows your playing well) in order to help you make that final choice. However, the ultimate choice is yours and it will ultimately depend on how the instrument makes you feel. So, choose your weapon!

*Bill McBirnie is a jazz and Latin flute specialist located in Toronto. Bill has also been chosen Flutist of the Year by the Jazz Report Awards, nominated as Instrumentalist of the Year at the National Jazz Awards and declared a winner of the USA National Flute Association's triennial Jazz Flute Masterclass Competition. He has produced several Extreme Flute projects including his brand new Duo/Quartet album (with Bernie Senensky, Neil Swainson and John Sumner) entitled, Paco Paco. All are available from the distributor, Indie Pool at [www.indiepool.com](http://www.indiepool.com). If you would like to contact Bill directly, you can reach him directly at [billmcb@idirect.com](mailto:billmcb@idirect.com).*



# Audition Advice

by Chase Sanborn



Brass

The Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto is a four plus two-year program, offering a BM and MM in jazz performance. There are approximately 60 undergrad students in the program and five masters students. The faculty consists of some of the most prominent jazz musicians in Canada. The small number of highly motivated students and the impressive faculty roster assures that there are many more applicants in a given year than we can accept. Aside from meeting the academic requirements for admission to the University of Toronto, admission is granted on the basis of an audition.

Each audition lasts approximately 20 minutes. In that time we have to get an idea not only of how the student plays, but also a broader understanding of the individual. We are not only looking for the best players, but for students who will benefit from what the program has to offer and who will offer something in return. In a small program such as ours, everybody knows everybody else, and the ability to fit in and work well with others is crucial to the success of the student. During the course of the audition we hear prepared pieces, sight-reading and ear training, and conduct an informal interview.

## Prepared Tunes

Students prepare three tunes on which they can improvise – one required piece and two of your choice from a published list. These pieces should exhibit diversity of style and show you off to strong advantage. In the interest of time, you will play the melody and a solo, and then we will stop and move on to the next piece. A rhythm section is provided, comprised of students currently enrolled in the program. While you may feel nervous playing with unfamiliar musicians, you'll find them very friendly and sensitive (that's why we choose them for the auditions). Chances are they will probably be stronger than some of the musicians you are used to, and that will only make you sound better. The ability to step on stage and interact with other musicians cuts to the core of being a jazz player.

## Sight-Reading

We'll provide something for you to sight-read, so spend some time every day working on your reading, particularly in the jazz idiom. (*Dance Band Rhythms*, by Alan Raph, is an excellent resource for familiarizing yourself with typical jazz rhythms.) When practicing sight-reading, try to get through a whole piece once without stopping. Then go back

and work on the parts you missed until you can't imagine missing them ever again. Make sure you keep steady time and sub-divide the bar correctly. Practice with a metronome and develop your internal pulse.

## Ear Training

You'll be asked to identify various intervals and chords played on the piano. We start with simple diatonic intervals and progress until you are stumped. Try to go with your instinct and don't second-guess. The secret to identifying chords is to recognize the sound, or "colour" of the chord. The "big three" chords are major 7, minor 7 and dominant 7, particularly as arranged in the II-V-I progression. The more time spent at the piano, playing and listening to chords, the better. There are several recordings available to help you train your ears.

## The Interview

The interview is a crucial part of the audition, as it allows us to get to know each other. Be yourself – we want an honest picture of who you are and what you are interested in. Don't try to give answers that you think are "right", or present an impression of somebody that you think "fits the mould." Just think about what is asked, and try to answer the questions as honestly as you can. If you have questions about the program, this is your opportunity to ask them.

The best way to prepare for the interview is simply to immerse yourself in the world of jazz. Listen to recordings, read biographies, watch jazz videos and take lessons (very important!). We ask questions that probe the depths of experience and knowledge of jazz specifically, but also music and life in general. Who are your favourite players and why do you admire them? What attracts you to jazz? Who are some of the most influential jazz musicians of the present and past? Why do you want to study at U of T? Do you know who is on the faculty? (It is amazing how many students apply for the program with no knowledge of who they will study with!) Do you understand the economic realities of the music business? Where do you see yourself working in 10 years?

## General Audition Advice

- Relax! We are serious about music at U of T, but rather informal about everything else. We know you are nervous, and we'll do our best to make you feel at ease and create a situation where you can play your best. We want you to do well.
- Prepare your material thoroughly, and memorize it. Know the *correct* melodies for the tunes you play. Knowing the lyrics is a huge help in establishing natural phrasing.

- Concentrate on making music, rather than trying to impress.
- Wear clothes that make you feel comfortable, but dress in a manner that suggests maturity and self-respect.
- Don't over warm-up too much! Concentrate on tone, airflow, response, etc. Don't play a bunch of high notes!
- Listen to your favourite music prior to your audition. The more music you have in your head, the more likely it is that music will come out of your horn.
- Bring a bottle of water.

## Don't Be Discouraged

Because of the numbers, not every qualified applicant can be accepted. Your chances depend on your ability, how many players the program can accept in a given year and who is competing against you, just like the real world. If you are not accepted, that does not mean you are not acceptable, simply that someone else was more suited this time around. Do some studying in the year to come, either at another institution or with private teachers, and audition again next year. University is just a few years out of a lifetime of study; the more knowledge and experience you bring to the experience, the more you'll get out of it. Remember: those with determination and staying power are the ones who will succeed. As Winston Churchill said: "Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm."

Good luck!

*Chase Sanborn is a jazz and session trumpet player based in Toronto, Canada. He is a member of the jazz faculty at the University of Toronto, and is the author of Jazz Tactics and Brass Tactics, books that have garnered worldwide praise for their insightful yet light-hearted and humorous look at the worlds of jazz improvisation and brass playing. Chase has just released the Jazz Tactics DVD, which takes the viewer on a guided tour through the world of jazz improvisation. For more information: [www.chasesanborn.com](http://www.chasesanborn.com).*



# Digital Highlights From The 2006 NAMM Show

## The Greatest Invention In The History of Music!!!

by Alec Watson

You're probably reading this in some blissful spring weather (if you live on the West Coast) and if you aren't, well, good. The weather at the time of writing this column has broken all records for – CRAP – and makes me want to live in an igloo in Winnipeg – they do still live in igloos there part-time don't they?

Anyway, I was lucky enough to escape the darkness and deluge that is Vancouver Island in winter and spend a weekend of shock and awe at this year's NAMM show. Not only did I get to hang out a block off the beach at a producer friend's Long Beach house (which seems to have a permanent unrecognizable blue hole in the sky above it), but I also got to peruse the many booths of this year's exciting wares – here's this year's long term forecast for digital recording enthusiasts:

Computers – some changes this year! All this *dual-core hyper-threading* stuff you keep hearing about, makes a big difference for audio. There are many tasks going on simultaneously, especially when mixing, these new chips work REALLY well for music. Windows is likely going to go 64-bit this year; little difference for people who work in the office, big difference for people who work on memory intensive large number crunching problems; no not mathematicians – *musicians* recording music – who knew? Cakewalk's Sonar is the first workstation to be able to run 64-bit. You can download 64-bit Windows for free at the moment, [www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/64bit/evaluation/trial.msp](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/64bit/evaluation/trial.msp), you might want to give that a shot – though whether you will have compatible hardware drivers or not for your sound card may be a problem.

Sound Cards – at one time, sound for your computer came in the form of a PCI card that you would have to open your computer to install, and then wrestle with your computer for it to be recognized – and that goes for you Mac fanatics too! Wow, is *that* a thing of the past. There have been a couple of outboard answers for a few years now, but this year, every manufacturer has at least a couple of price points of outboard USB or Firewire preamp sound cards. Whether you

want cheap and functional, or all the way up to audiophile quality, there is an outboard easy-to-use box available. These boxes can now come with multiple mic preamps, several headphone jacks that can actually listen to completely different mixes, and MIDI in and out (though MIDI is quickly being relegated to an antiquated interface). Yep, you really can record your whole band onto your laptop these days and it won't break a sweat; at least not like your lead vocalist will when you solo their vocal and play it horribly loud and dry.



Alec visits NAMM and finds true love.

I have received some e-mails lately asking whether to go with Firewire or USB interfaces, here are some thoughts: I find that Firewire has more stability on older systems. This may, in part, be due to the fact that you have your printer, cordless mouse, keyboard, hub, external hard drive, camera, USB coffee maker ... all plugged into the USB ports while the Firewire port sits empty. If I were to choose one system over another, that would be why. A Firewire port will likely be dedicated to your music interface allowing for uninterrupted bandwidth to and from your processor.

USB microphones will be a big hit this

year – I don't think I would run out and buy 12 of these and then plug them into a couple of USB hubs and then record my band – though conceivably you *should* be able to do this. But if you just want a simple rig for getting sound into the computer, these little techie gifts from the Computers Gods are awesome. I first reviewed the Samson USB mic last year, and although it isn't likely to replace any of my studio mics anytime soon, value for money, it was excellent. Apparently I wasn't the only one who thought this, as there are all sorts of manufacturers who will be peddling USB mics this year. If you just need to get an acoustic instrument or vocal into the computer, you will be hard-pressed to beat the ease of use and price of these.

The greatest innovation, possibly of all time, I have saved for last (insert echo-y deep announcer voice) Roland's V-series MIDI accordion! You think I am joking don't you? I am, a bit. Seriously however, this thing rules! ([www.roland.com/products/en/FR-7/](http://www.roland.com/products/en/FR-7/)). For all the keyboard players and programmers out there who have to twiddle, for hours, with all sorts of knobs to get their keyboards to play horns or strings, this unassuming little machine could change programming as we know it. The biggest reason a keyboard can't recreate a realistic horn or sax sound is the fact that the keyboard is a percussion instrument. Much like a drum, the envelope of the sound attacks hard and then decays; an accordion however IS a wind instrument, one with keys. You can play horn arrangements that sound fantastic on this little machine – accordion geeks of the world rejoice! For all those years that you have been picked on and laughed at, the lead guitarist and keyboard player are now going to be secretly envious! You're still not likely to get any action after the show, but oh yes, the lead guitarist *will* secretly be plotting against you, while he is getting some action!

Alec Watson is a producer/engineer that works from his destination studio on Vancouver Island. His parents couldn't afford to get him a piano when he was a child; they got him an accordion; the rest, including his career, is history.





# How To Achieve A Successful Vocal Performance And Avoid Making A Fool Out Of Yourself

VOCALS

by Diana Yampolsky

**A** long time ago I read a book about singing by another writer who gave some simple advice about how to handle stage fright and nervousness. He exclaimed: "Lighten up, make eye contact with the audience and don't be afraid to make a fool out of yourself." Now I understand what he was saying, but he didn't really take into account one really important fact: the reason that many amateur singers are worried about performing live is because they don't have enough training to be 100 per cent sure that they will be able to fully control their voices!

Positive thinking is definitely useful but it can only be taken so far. You wouldn't tell a prospective pilot with little flying experience to get in the plane, act confident and not be afraid to make a mistake, would you?

The truth is that I have had many students over the years who were confident, charismatic and self assured people in every aspect of life – except singing. Confidence in any discipline generally comes from training and experience. So the fact of the matter is that if you want to sing successfully and be 100 per cent sure you won't make a fool out of yourself, you need training.

One of my previous students was actually a professional pilot and once pointed out that the training he received as a pilot was similar in many ways to the training that I was giving him as a singer. He was trained using a flight simulator and the goal of his exercises was to program him to automatically respond correctly to all possible situations that might confront him as a pilot. Examples include extreme weather, equipment malfunctions, engine fires and violent passengers. The one common thread to all situations was that he had to act instantly and always know the right response as a pilot. If he was wrong, it could mean the life of himself and his passengers. The training that I gave him as a vocal coach was also concerned with instant and 100 per cent correct responses. We "simulated" hundreds of musical situations and trained him to always respond to them correctly. I always tell my students that they should be able to

perform all of the technical components of singing subconsciously – leaving their conscious brain capacity towards style, emotion, stage presence, etc.

Essentially, singers should be free to lighten up and take their feet off the brakes when they know how to drive. Actually, they have to do it! I believe once a singer is trained, professional singing should be



produced with a minimum of effort. There is actually a danger to over training as well. This truism applies to almost all disciplines, not just singing. I remember one time I went to the ballet and saw a ballet dancer who was so tight and rigid that I could not wait for her to get off the stage. Ideally a ballet will appear graceful and composed without appearing rigid or tight. The same general rule applies to singers as well. You should have good posture, stand up straight and apply all of the required muscles in your body, but also look completely relaxed and composed at the same time. The perfect analogy is actually a hitter in baseball who possesses what baseball aficionados call a sweet swing. A baseball hitter uses all of the muscles in his body to hit the ball but he does it in a relaxed fashion; he does not grip the bat so tightly that his knuckles are white. A "smooth swing" is what singers should

strive for as well. In many ways, hitting a baseball with the sweet spot of the bat is akin to properly lifting the voice off the vocal chords and "nailing" a high E.

## Let Your Spirit Fly

As a Vocal Coach/Consultant, every day I come into contact with a multitude of people that want to become singers. Strangely enough, quite a few of these aspiring singers actually exhibit opposite characteristics of what it takes to be a truly authentic singer. They are cold, closed off, robotic and trying to instruct them is like trying to communicate with a wall. I can see them breathing, blinking and moving but it is like they are not all there emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It's like the lights are on but nobody is home.

Affecting and great singing only occurs through the synergy and integration of the mind, body and soul with the voice as a final projection of the state of your being. Therefore, being a true singer is about sharing your spirit – who you truly are as a person. Your physical body, mind and spirit work in conjunction with each other to deliver your performance to the audience. In essence, releasing your spirit and letting it fly is what singing is all about. If the person is tight emotionally, and thus unable or unwilling to do so, the true authentic performance will never take place, independently of how technically good and sound the singer is.

That said, it never ceases to amaze me how people who have completely subverted and closed off their spirits want to become artists. Their very natures are the antithesis of what being an artist is always about. It is like being in a coma. The person is still alive, but not really present. The machines are doing the work.

The conclusion of this is – get over yourself, come out of your shell and start *singing*, i.e. sharing yourself, your body and soul and mainly your spirit with the audience and the sky will be your limit.

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



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# Jeff Martin Aims High

EX-TEA PARTY FRONTMAN  
RECORDS FIRST SOLO ALBUM

by Karen Bliss

**A**n exotic scent from burning incense fills Studio 1 at Metalworks in Mississauga, ON. Jeff Martin, wearing blue jeans and a brown twill hat, not his usual all-black, is pacing back and forth as he listens to the 10 final mixes of his first solo album, *Exile And The Kingdom*, due in April on Nevada Koch. At just the right spots, he does a little dance, more like Sam Roberts than Usher. Yes, that serious Tea Party guy is having a “good, good, good time,” as one of his lyrics goes.

“I’ve never seen him happier,” pronounces Nick Blagona, who travelled to Durras in southwest Ireland in early December to engineer the 10-day recording session at Caroline Studios, just down the lane from where Martin now resides with his wife, Nicole, and young son Django. The two have worked together since The Tea Party’s 1999 release, *Triptych*.

“I think one of the greatest aspects of the new record is the lyrical content,” Blagona surmises. “On this one, he’s got more depth than he’s ever had before of personal feelings, of metamorphosis, and how he’s redefined himself as an artist.”

Nowhere is this more clear than on the album’s final track – a hillbilly blue grass party hoedown called “Good Times Song” on which Martin pays tribute to some of his friends.

“Let me tell you about Ritesh/Big soul in his chest/And he’s staring at the sea/Wondering how the hell he ever got involved with me.”

That’s Ritesh Das, percussionist with the Toronto Tabla Ensemble, a frequent Tea Party guest whose handy work is all over *Exile And The Kingdom*. He is now a member of Martin’s new touring band.

“MJ at the wheel/Staring at the mess/He’s wondering when the money’s gonna come/C’mon out MJ let’s just go and have some fun.”

MJ is Martin’s new manager. Based in Buffalo, NY, Michael Lee Jackson is a lawyer and fellow musician, who has played with 10,000 Maniacs, Greg Lake, and currently tours with The Michael Lee Jackson Band, which recorded with Blagona.

“Blue eyes/hey blues eyes/You’re crazy as a hare/But top of the mountain, baby, I’m gonna take you there,” Martin sings, referring to Page & Plant drummer Michael Lee, also on the album and now in his live band. (Also in the touring line up is bassist Rodney Appleby, who played in Jackson’s band for years, and on Ian Gillan’s new solo record, and another Buffalonian, Nelson Starr, on keyboards.)





As Martin proudly plays back the album for his visitor, he asks the first-time listener to sit in the chair front and centre at the console, the ideal equidistance from the monitors. He'd prefer no talking, not even to comment or ask questions. He doesn't actually say this. One just knows it would be the ultimate rudeness to the host.

He is passionate about his music. Proud. He firmly, assuredly, says how genius it is, yet it is so matter-of-factly stated that it's not quite arrogant. Jeff Martin is not a humble man. He would laugh and agree.

He refers several times to "going to the top of the mountain," not just using it as a line in a lyric, but also in conversation. He is certain this time he will. But he's been certain before.

How can he be so sure?

"Like I keep saying, I'm taking this thing to the top of the mountain and I have many more things behind me this time than I've ever had in my life," Martin says.

"I don't really want to get into the brass tacks of that because now we're getting in the metaphysical, but you've known my association with certain individuals and my studies in occult philosophy, so this is not fantastical to say this, but I have things behind me right now that will not allow this to fail."

As he jokingly says of the Delta blues number "Black Snake Blues", in Haitian voodoo a black snake represents the devil which had to make an appearance somewhere on the album. Did he sell his soul at some crossroads in Ireland?

"No, I just dedicated my soul to the white side, and to the Goddess," says Martin, and there will be the readers out there who will say, "What the fuck is this guy talking about?" but educate yourselves and read a book by Robert Graves called *The White Goddess*, and understand where true artistry comes from. When you make a decision to devote your life to that aspect of your higher self, you know your higher psyche; there is nothing in the world that you will not accomplish.

"And the only thing that I want to accomplish is I don't care about the success and the fame and all that, because I've tasted it and it's left a really bad taste in my mouth; the thing I care about most is giving back to people, beautiful music, music they can live their lives by, and at the same time, taking themselves and, in turn, taking myself through the live experience, to a better place.

"That's what the best rock 'n' roll was all about in the early '70s with Jimmy [Page] and what Robert [Plant] did and bands like The Band and early Stones," he says on a roll. "I was watching MuchMusic in the morning in fuckin' disgust, in disgust: where is the message? What the fuck are you people saying? You're not saying anything. What are you giving? If I hear another teenage angst rock 'n' roll song, I'm going to have to hurt somebody [laughs]."

Photo by Roy Tenn



# Jeff Martin Aims High

## Equipment Used Recording 'Exile And The Kingdom'

### JEFF MARTIN

#### Electric Guitars

12-string, 6-string doubleneck Danelectro  
1971 Fender Telecaster with Gram/Parsons  
B&E Bender

1971 Gibson Les Paul Black Beauty  
Custom hollow body Paul Reed Smith  
Fender Stratocaster 12-string

#### Acoustic Guitars

1916 Gibson Harp guitar  
Maton 6-string acoustic  
Maton 12-string acoustic  
7-string resonator guitar, made by Andrew Ellis  
(one of a kind)  
Eagle 6-string acoustic (cheap Australian  
make)

1960 Gibson J50, 6-string

#### String Instruments

Sitar  
Sarod  
Hurdy Gurdy  
Tampura male 5-string  
Esra (bowed Indian instrument)  
Epiphone Mandolin

#### Keyboards

Steinway Grand Piano  
Hamond B3 organ  
Korg Triton  
Oberheim synthesizer  
Harmonium Indian

#### Basses

1963 Fender jazz  
1967 Hagstrom  
1971 Les Paul recording bass  
Contra Bass (stand up bass)

### MICHAEL LEE

#### Drums

DW drums

### RITESH DAS

#### Percussion

Tabla  
Dumbek  
Udu  
Manjira  
Dholak  
Table

As Blagona says, compared with The Tea Party, there are significant changes in Martin's lyrical approaches, even if his ego remains the same. "Daystar" is a simple, beautiful welcome from a father to a son; "Butterfly" searches the many moods of his wife. And "The World Is Calling" is perhaps Martin's first straight-up political (not social) statement – an open letter to George W. Bush. "You paint a pretty picture/But you're lying ain't cha/Just to save your own/You keep on lying/There's children dying," he sings.

"Yeah, George Bush, man. I love America and I love the country and I love the concept of the country, but [not] the stupidity that brought that man back into power," says Martin. "You look at the decimation of humanity that that man is creating, and I don't care if this is going to affect my visa to get into the States, I just felt that it was my responsibility as an artist. And I know that Incubus and a lot of other great artists did songs to bring awareness to it.

"You've got to get an infinite background of emotion and distill it into something that's receivable for the public. I felt it was my responsibility to say something because now I have my wife and my child, and I want to be able to travel the world and everyone has a smile on their face. I know it's very utopian, right? And I know that there's a lot of problems with poverty and human rights and whatnot, but when you've got the world police doing absolutely everything wrong, something needs to be said."

It is this reason that "The World Is Calling" is the album's lead-off track and first single. If Martin really wanted to make a complete departure from The Tea Party, the band he fronted for 15 years and left in October under less than amicable circumstances, then he would release "Good Times Song" as his solo introduction – something fun, frivolous, cool, and different.

But it's precisely the eastern vibe of the single or "Sun Goin' Down"-styled "Black Snake Blues" that is something different for Martin, he says, because for latter Tea Party albums, he claims he was encouraged to lose those roots.

"We weren't expected to bring that side of The Tea Party back again because there were all these people that their mindset was 'America, America, America,'" says Martin. "And trying to make a band like The Tea Party sound like Simple Plan or Our Lady Peace or any of these modern-rock toss-aways – and you can say this, please – is a travesty, a fucking travesty."

When Martin announced abruptly – to the public and his bandmates, bassist/keyboardist Stuart Chatwood and drummer Jeff Burrows – that he was leaving The Tea Party to pursue a solo career, there were many personal reasons rightly left undisclosed to the media. Still, no matter what the impetus was for the decision the reason was the same: "I had a vision of an artistic destiny for that band and I believe, in my heart of hearts, that, with *Seven Circles*, everything came to a proper end," Martin explained in a conversation from Ireland right after the press release announcing the split. The childhood friends debuted as The Tea Party with 1991's self-titled indie CD and then remained on EMI Music Canada from 1993's double platinum, *Splendor Solis* to the gold-selling swan song, *Seven Circles*, released in 2004.

"The three of us were discussing another record, but I just found myself not being inspired to write another one for that vehicle," says Martin. "Something about it wasn't making sense to me and once I had a chance to just get away and to think about it, the realization was that, yes, the artistic destiny had been fulfilled."

Initially, Martin planned to cut a solo album at folk legend Roy Harper's studio more than hour away in another Irish town. Martin has remained friends with the 64-year-old Harper since the early '90s. He also knew he would play a variety of stringed instruments and bring Das over to add percussion. "Angel Dust", an acoustic song originally slated for *Seven Circles*, would be on it. And perhaps "Toy Balloon", "Scherzade", and David Crosby's "Guinnevere".

When Jody Mitchell, one of The Tea Party's former A&R guys at EMI Music Canada, now at new Toronto indie label Nevada, heard that Martin wanted to release a solo album, he reconnected with him through Jackson, and struck a unique three-way arrangement whereby Martin would be signed to a joint-venture deal between Nevada Entertainment and Koch Entertainment – called Nevada Koch.

At the time, all parties, including Martin, felt he would deliver an acoustic album described as "Elizabethan," "Celtic folk" and "Eastern" with nods to artists from Bert Jansch to Nick Drake and Jeff Buckley.

"Those boys from Nevada and Koch thought they were getting an acoustic vanity record from me," Martin laughs. "Once Ritesh and [Darlington, England's] Michael Lee came over to Ireland, everything changed. So what I brought back to the guys at Nevada and at Koch was something that no one expected but everyone was thrilled by."

"A harder-edged rock record," says Blagona.

The plan to record at Harper's fell through not just because it would be more expensive to commute or house everyone but the man immortalized in Led Zeppelin's "Hats Off To Roy Harper" was working on a DVD.

"So lo and behold, I go down to the local pub one night," Martin recounts, "and someone tells me



Photo by Roy Timm





about this gentleman [Kevin Nolan] who's in his '60s and made all his money in software in the early '80s and decided to build a recording studio in his house. I live on top of a hill overlooking Durrus Bay and I can see his house down at the coastal road. If I had a really good arm, I could throw a stone and hit it [laughs], so I phoned him and went over to his house one night."

Martin would produce the album, as he had many of The Tea Party releases but he wanted Blagona, as usual, to engineer so he phoned him long distance to go over the studio specs at Caroline Studios as Nolan's space is called – an old Trident console, Russian microphones and a new computer system.

"His facility was enough that if we just supplemented it with some more rock 'n' roll gear, we could turn it into a magical, magical space and that's what Nick and I did," says Martin.

By all accounts, the picturesque place was inspiring. Blagona cites the mist, the Guinness, the tea, the pub, the food and the slow pace. "South-western Ireland is a magical place," he declares.

Martin started with the four songs – "Angel Dust", "Daystar", "Lament" and "Black Snake Blues" – that he had written on acoustic and came up with the rest in the studio. And out came the arsenal of instruments (see sidebar), including the sitar, sarod, hurdy gurdy, tampura, esra, mandolin, and harmonium, that The Tea Party employed on such albums as 1995's *The Edges Of Twilight* and 1999's *Triptych*.

"Back in the day, Jimi Hendrix used to talk about music in colours and that was his concept behind *Axis: Bold As Love* – and not that I'm comparing myself to Jimi Hendrix, but it's the same thing for me. I see music in colours – and sometimes it's a painting that is a spread of palettes and colours and whatnot, but sometimes all you need is a pen and ink sketching, so that's how I view my instruments," explains Martin. "It's my arsenal of voices.

"The only things I'm not playing on this record are percussion and drums," says Martin. "I'd say Ritesh is on 6 out of 10 songs, and Michael Lee is on 8 out of 10 songs."

When the session in Ireland was finished on December 20, Martin ended up performing his first solo show behind it in Buffalo later that month. While there, Jackson hired a local gospel choir, the New Beginning Choral Ensemble, to lay down

vocals on "The Kingdom" and "Black Snake Blues" at Chameleon West, a studio owned by Goo Goo Dolls' Robby Takac.

Over the holidays and into the New Year, Blagona got down to mixing, back in the comfort of Metalworks. There, Martin did a bit more work on the album. He cut the vocal for "Where Do We Go From Here" and enlisted Jennie Laws, who was recording in the next studio, to sing on "Stay Inside Of Me".



Above and below, Martin records at Kevin Nolan's studio.

He also went to Montreal's Studio Piccolo to add string arrangements to "The World Is Calling" and "The Kingdom".

"Mark Quellette was my partner for all those symphony shows and everything symphonic that The Tea Party did," says Martin. "He fell in love with my style of writing from (2001's) *The Interzone Mantras* – the song 'Mantra' was the first time that Marc ever did an Arabesque style symphonic arrangement, and so I had him do the same thing again for 'The World Is Calling,'" says Martin. "I called him again from Ireland and I told him about that song and 'The Kingdom', and I said, 'I need you. I need you to take this to the top of the mountain.'

"Marc has these wonderful players that are taken from the MSO (Montreal Symphony Orchestra) and whatever. Marc is such a perfectionist and when he was doing 'The World Is Calling', he had

them playing perfectly. I had to go up to him and say, 'It's all there; it's just beautiful, but you have to think about the Arabic world and think about those old recordings of Om Kalsoum (a legendary female singer) with the Egyptian orchestra from the 1950s; the players weren't as proficient as what you did right now, so what I want you to tell them is to *relax* [laughs] and *not* be so perfect,' and once they did that, it was just magic."

There's that word again – magic.

Could he ever have cut a Tea Party album in 10 days?

"No. No," Martin answers. "I think just because back then we had the big recording budget. We were signed to EMI, so I think we were a bit more lackadaisical with our work ethic and that's probably more my fault than certainly those two (Chatwood and Burrows), because I just felt I had a cushion. So I could do this and that, but it was a wonderful experience this time around because it was my money through investors that believed in me, but we were always on a time frame, and so there was no room for rock 'n' roll vice, lifestyle, whatever. It was just brass tacks: get down to it and get it done."

His goal with the first solo album, *Exile And The Kingdom*, whose title is taken from the 1958 Albert Camus book, which contains stories about a revelation or liberation of some kind.

"It was an amalgamation of everything, everything that makes my musical makeup, I wanted to

showcase, I guess. I wanted to give everything back to those very passionate people that have followed The Tea Party through thick and thin. I wanted to give it back to them, but also give it back to myself, more importantly." ●



Toronto music journalist Karen Bliss is the Canadian correspondent for *RollingStone.com*, and operates her own Canadian music news column, *Lowdown*, at <http://jam.canoe.ca/Music/Lowdown/>. She also contributes pieces twice a week to local TV show *Inside Jam* on Sun TV. In addition, she writes for *TIME* Canada, *Gasoline*, *Teen Tribute*, *Words & Music*, *Access*, and others.





World Radio History



# DEATH FROM



# ABOVE 1979

BY KEVIN YOUNG

I'm beginning to feel like I'm batting 0 for 2. When I reach DFA drummer/vocalist, Sebastien Grainger, he isn't expecting me. I'm already convinced that I'd woken up Grainger's other half, DFA bassist/synth player, Jesse Keeler, when I called him earlier this morning. Neither seems particularly put out, though, but after the better part of 14 months on the road the two have probably made their peace with minor annoyances and mild surprises long ago.

"If I don't play a show for nine months," Keeler tells me, "there will be no love lost, whatsoever. I don't need to do it." He has every right to sound road weary, DFA have had little in the way of time off since they started touring *You're A Woman, I'm A Machine*, in September of 2004. Besides, he assures me, this isn't a complaint. Keeler writes the band's blog and it's clear from his entries that DFA has covered a lot of ground, at speed, over the past year: Texas, Scotland, Australia ... Again, they're not complaining, but they're clearly cautious about how life on tour can isolate them from reality. "The thing about playing live is, when you start, you're doing it for yourself. DFA have played 300 plus shows over the past year, sometimes twice a day. At some point, with that kind of schedule, your motivation for playing evolves. "I now understand what that term means; doing it for the fans." At some point you just need a break. "I don't ever want to write a song about *hard* life on the road. So I'm not gonna, and the only way that's going happen is if I don't actually live on the road."

"It's not a tired issue," Grainger elaborates. "It's a strange lifestyle. I think it's easy for some people to slip into the idea that it's not your real life, but if you're on tour most of your life then that is what your real life is. It's easy for people to slip into unorthodox behaviours – things that are incongruous with other people's lives or with what they consider to be their life ... I don't know. I'm just talking shit right now."

Being a two-piece has made touring a bit more automatic from the beginning; it certainly has made it easier for them to cover so much ground so effectively. The operation has gotten bigger, over time – five people including crew, but still far more economical when compared to larger bands. Their deal with Last Gang Records hasn't hurt either. Last Gang founder Chris Taylor, had been the band's lawyer, but DFA first became aware of the label at a Sudbury record shop. "We heard the Metric record and it sounded unlike anything I'd heard on the radio. I looked at the record and it was, like, 25 bucks. I looked on the back and it said 'Supported by the Government of Canada'. I was like 'what the fuck? I'm not gonna pay 25 bucks for something I've already paid for in taxes ... And that ended up being on Last Gang records," he says, laughing.

The fit between Last Gang and bands like Metric, DFA 1979 is very comfortable. "It's a small label, but Chris has big plans and big ideas. When you look into his eyes, and you're talking about your band, you don't see dollar signs. I want to see dollar signs in my bank account, but when you're dealing with something so personal ... it's your life."

Both Grainger and Keeler have a fairly measured response to the benchmarks they've



# DEATH FROM ABOVE 1979

The crowd might not have converted to rabid DFA fans on the spot, but hits on the band's myspace.com account grew from 20 to 500 a day during the tour. "It puts the band's name into a more general consciousness," he says.

DFA have a reasonably pragmatic view of their success. There's no award show babbling from either band member when asked about how far promoting *You're A Woman, I'm A Machine*, has taken them. "It's not like we just popped into this place," Grainger says. "We were working for a long time. I'm not the kind of guy to get over enthusiastic about things like that. It's not that we're taking what we're doing for granted, it's just that everything makes sense when it happens." Some things more than others; playing Conan O'Brien, he says, though it felt normal at the time was a little strange in terms of being in a place he'd seen other bands do and feeling as he puts it, "I don't feel like I'm where I want to be musically, or in my life, so I get there and I feel like, 'I'm not done yet – like I should be in the oven for another 20 minutes'."

DFA are a bit cagey when it comes to where they met ... they may, or may not, have met on a cruise ship, or a pirate ship, and may or may not have lived above a funeral home. Both did, however, grow up in the GTA area. Both are multi-instrumentalists, both largely self-taught: Grainger had some lessons, but is mostly self-taught, playing guitar and then drums, his brother showing him the basics on the kit. "I did take guitar lessons in elementary school, but that was more of an excuse to go to this guy's house and play all his guitars." Until DFA started to hit, Grainger did little travelling. "As far as travelling for leisure I couldn't really justify it – I don't think I could afford to do it." Before the band, Grainger says, "I did a lot of nothing, a lot of dropping out of different schools and pretending I didn't want to be a musician, but I realized it was what I'd been doing the whole time."

Keeler never took lessons, but his family, some of whom are also professional musicians, have been consistently encouraging. "From drums I got into guitar, then keyboards and into bass. Switching between instruments has changed his approach as a player. "As a guitar player and drummer approaching the bass, it's interesting. Everything that I do is influenced by how I play bass and how I play bass is influenced by how I play guitar." Although he says the bass can be limiting comparatively, the role his bass plays in DFA clearly isn't.

"This sounds funny," says Keeler, explaining their approach to the band, "but there was a plan to do well. Anyone who starts off with dreams of playing in a coffee shop, at 40, to no one, should do something else. We wanted to do well. I decided to put my life into music at the time. We were kind of broke. If we can't do this maybe we should just forget about it forever, because there are so many horrible bands making a lot of money. I have faith in the audience; that there's someone out there that is as appalled by what most of what mainstream music is, as I am."

This faith in their audience, and drive to make music for like-minded listeners, is one of the forces that fuels DFA's sound. The results are consistently compelling – with many bands, it can be difficult to sum up their overall impact without a few words of comparison and maybe a nod to one or another of their influences. DFA are an exception. Simply put, they're relentless; from the mayhem they capture on record and their almost frantic delivery as players, to their heavy tour schedule. It's as evident on *You're A Woman, I'm A Machine* as it is on their recently released remix/B-side record, *Romance Bloody Romance*.

Both Grainger and Keeler have slightly mixed feelings about the record. "The only thing I wish was a little different about that record," Keeler tells me, "is that there were more remixes off other stuff." The record is made up largely of multiple remixes of the singles "Romantic Rights" and "Black History Month". But there are also remixes of several other tracks from the studio record, as well as a raging cover of La Peste's "Better Off Dead" and DFA's own, "You're Lovely (But You've Got Problems)" – a tune that was tracked in October 2004, in the UK, with Paul Epworth (Futureheads, Bloc Party). "I don't know what to call it," he says. "I don't want to call it an album. It's a collection of B-sides."

Better than a mess of rerecords and B-sides that aren't particularly good or don't make sense. Admittedly *Romance* is a little thin on quantity, but big on quality, ultimately worth a listen, if just for the various treatments of "Black History Month". Alan Braxe and Fred Falke's stripped down verses and lush almost disco like choruses stand in sharp contrast to the more ominous, Josh Homme mix, but both hang their hats on the strength of the original. *Romance Bloody Romance* definitely hangs together, owing in part to the fact that DFA's sound owes as much to heavy rock as it does to dance music. It's a huge influence for Keeler, informing his choices as a songwriter and a player. Rock is about far more than big guitars and drums, he explains. "Dance music relies on bass hooks. Rock and roll is vocal music. Listen to a Beatles record, the Rolling Stones – they wrote songs around vocals and melodies. The instruments sound like they're backing the vocals." In dance music, vocals are optional, another source to mine for hooks. "So bass lines and synth hooks – those things have to be as strong as the lyrics people sing along to."

In fact, what sets *Romance Bloody Romance* apart from a fair number of other remix records is that the songs translate so seamlessly. "We've always been concerned with making sure the songs are present," Grainger says. "We're loud and trashy, but we want the songs to be evident. The three things that lends themselves well to remixes are the riff, the melody, and the beat: the melody is fun to play with for a remixer, the beat is fun to throw away, and the riff is fun to alter."

It also makes the listener wish there were a few more tracks translated, but says Keeler, the band had only so much time to get involved in the process. Even the artwork was a remix he says,

made since 2004. The reaction of those people in the house to DFA's slot as opener on last year's NIN and Queens Of The Stone Age tour, Keeler jokes, was often, "Look, they're playing music, wow, I wonder how close they are to being done."



*You're A Woman, I'm A Machine*

## GEAR LIST

1978 Rickenbacker 4001 bass guitar  
1974 Gibson Grabber bass  
Korg Microkorg keyboard  
Clavia Nord Lead 2 keyboard  
Jim Dunlop 6CB-95 pedal  
Morley ABY pedal  
BOSS DD3 digital delay pedal  
BOSS chromatic tuner  
Peavey F800-B amplifier  
Ibanez UE400 effects rack  
iBook G4 12-inch computer  
PowerBook G4 17-inch  
Digidesign Mbox  
2 x Traynor YC8-10  
Gretsch 22" bass drum  
Gretsch 12" tom drum with GTS system  
Gretsch 16" floor tom drum w/ legs  
Gretsch 8 x 12 tom drum  
Gretsch 16 x 16 floor tom drum  
Gretsch 16 x 22 floor tom drum  
Pork Pie snare drum  
DW 5000 kick pedal  
Zildjian 20", 22" ride cymbals  
Zildjian 14" high-hat  
Gibraltar drum hardware



*Romance Bloody Romance*



"My old roommate did it. I didn't have time so I said, 'Dennis, remix the art, dude.' We weren't that involved in recruiting people," says Grainger. "That had more to do with the UK label. I think the Josh Homme thing happened because there was already an interest on his part. The Alan Braxe thing came through because our label knew there was an interest in serious dance music, so they sought out a serious dance producer." The La Peste cover was fairly easy to lay down, Jesse explains, being a song DFA often played live, back when they had fewer songs to draw from. "We're not a band that's good for getting B-sides out of. You can't just say, 'quick, make a song!'"

There are also mixes of "Little Girl" and "Sexy Results" done in Keeler's own studio, MSTRKRFT. "It's quite the toy shop right now," he says. With MSTRKRFT, he co-produces, but when it comes to DFA Keeler tries to take the production hat off and leave the job to long-time collaborator, Al P. "He's

general frenzy DFA seem to achieve so routinely. As he says, rock is largely vocal music and though sometimes Jesse will contribute melody lines, much of that comes from Grainger.

The vocals, Grainger says, often don't get written until they are about to be recorded. "The ideas are usually already there. The seeds of the song are written down somewhere. Then the language comes, after the melody, and the melody usually comes last." Grainger's process for writing helps to make the songs both more universal and to leave their interpretation open to listeners. "I think there are a lot of different meanings to the songs," he says. "I've always been inclined to write somewhat mindlessly, with intention and aesthetic, but in such a way that I can turn around and interpret it, myself after." Once, in a writing class, he discovered his most effective technique was to write in a way that the various words mean little to him until taken as a whole after the fact.

says. The thing he does find difficult about writing is coming up against his own limitations. "It's not the creative part – it's like I always want to do more..."

"It's hard. It's a totally different way of doing things," Keeler says. He has a fair bit of experience with the two-piece dynamic; "It's funny, I have two other bands that are two-piece. I don't know if it actually makes it easier to get things done – when I was in a band with more people, it seemed that when things were right, they *really* came together."

Grainger feels the band has become less limited the longer they work together, but also that each successive record becomes more personal for him. Earlier on, he says, "I think we were limiting ourselves to an idea of what our band was. I think we've become more comfortable putting more of ourselves in the songs."

DFA's bio says the two just want to see how far they could take the sound. Again Keeler is pragmatic, focusing on DFA's future. One of the highlights of touring for him was watching Sonic Youth from side stage in Norway. In their own way he says, they're as important as bands like Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath in terms of creating a new sound, albeit to a different group of people. "They're not pop stars, by any means, nor will they ever be, nor do they desire to be." His point is that they consistently put out strong records, with little in the way of fanfare or hype, but maintain their career and relevance. "That band is important to the development of music as we know it now – so many guitar sounds you hear in shitty emo-pop, you can attribute it back, but they'll never be huge. By no means is DFA as important or as earth changing as Sonic Youth, but in the same way I think we can maintain this for a long time if we chose to."

The future will have to wait for the moment, however, at the time we spoke, DFA were planning to bask in a little well-earned time off. Keeler is currently working on a project with DFA producer, Al P., also signed to Last Gang. In that process, he says, they can add as much as they want. "But the DFA lesson has helped me remember to know when enough is enough – you know, this is enough of a song." As for how DFA's own sound will develop... Keeler sums up by referencing some fan responses to *You're A Woman, I'm A Machine* – the very first record, the orange one, was way crazier. It's funny. Sometimes people come up and say, 'I liked you guys on that first record, but by the pink record you guys really started to wimp out.'" As for specifics in terms of what the future holds: "I'm almost 30 and I've been in punk bands since I was 17 – bands that make DFA 1979 sound like the Backstreet Boys – I'm just going with it. If I make a song that I like, that can be Death From Above. I'm not trying to prove anything to anyone." There are already a number of bands, far heavier than DFA, he says – it's not a contest. "It's better to make music you enjoy than let the band's history dictate what you're going to do."



the band's producer in everything we've done; like the third member of the band. I don't record anything without him." Keeler says he hears the drums in his head when he's writing, sometime the vocals as well – "It's usually a compromise after it's left your head."

Although DFA tunes start with the bass, Keeler credits Grainger with bringing the rock to the project. "If it was up to me DFA would probably just be dance music. There would be a lot more songs that sounded like 'Romantic Rights', but I'm only half of the band. Pretty much every song I write in my head is a disco song. When I'm finished and then I bring it to Sebastian, and he brings the rock and roll side. He would say that if my bass didn't sound the way it did, then he'd have options as to how he was going to play, but whatever," he laughs.

And that's exactly what Grainger does say... "I think that's something Jesse likes to say a lot, but I didn't become a hard-hitting drummer until I started playing drums with him. You kind of have to play loud and heavy to play over his bass sound. It's not only the sound, it's the volume." Having said that, Keeler is talking about more than just the bone crushing grunt quotient of Grainger's drumming, his threshold vocals, and the

"It's kind of therapeutic, in a way." It is also fairly economical in terms of sheer word count. Grainger has a talent for getting his point across quickly, establishing lyrical and melodic hooks without being chatty. Like the sonic assault of drums and bass, it's direct and no nonsense. "We're just trying to serve the song. I listen to the song, find a melody and write lyrics to serve that purpose. They have to be significant to me and they have to be ambiguous enough to be significant to other people."

There's an almost desperate urgency in their delivery that comes across so clearly on the remix it shows how entwined the two personalities and styles are in the process of writing and recording DFA. The interplay between Grainger and Keeler on record is compelling. You have to wonder whether having just the two members makes things a bit easier in terms of the writing and recording process and the inevitable compromises of a collective process as well...

"This band is pretty much all I remember right now," Grainger says. "I haven't played in a band where I've written songs with a bunch of people – a bunch being more than two. I did a lot of solo stuff and played in other people's bands." He and Keeler don't really butt heads creatively, he

**For more information check out...**

[www.deathfromabove1979.com](http://www.deathfromabove1979.com)

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

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



Kevin Young is a Toronto-based freelance writer and musician.



Matt Mays and El Torpedo soundcheck while opening for Blue Rodeo at Vancouver's beautiful Orpheum Theatre.  
Photo: Ashley Maile



# Live Sound

## A Musician's Guide to Sound Systems

by Don Barber

**A**s a musician it can be incredibly nerve-wracking and frustrating to know that no matter how good a player or singer you are and how great your band might be it won't matter a hoot if you're not coming out of the sound system properly. If your audience can't hear what you're doing, or you can't hear yourself or your mates because the monitors suck, there's not a lot of point to it all.

If you're going to be an opening act or part of a multi-band program at a bar, or maybe you'll have an opportunity to play at a summer festival main stage or a side stage, or you might get hired to do a corporate event or even a church fund-raiser, these are some suggestions and pointers for musicians starting out to do live shows or even those who have been doing it for awhile and would like to know how they can improve their overall sound through the PA and monitors making it better, easier and more consistent from gig to gig.



## IT ALL STARTS ON STAGE

In fact, the most important part of getting a good PA sound is getting a good, clean stage sound, which is very much within your control. The first step is to make sure your own gear is straight. To state the obvious, a sound system can't tune your guitar for you. Furthermore, it's not going to get rid of hums and buzzes – in fact it's going to amplify them. There is no EQ for a squeaky kick drum pedal and there's no magic electronic solution for flabby, poorly tuned drums; a rattling bass cabinet is only going to rattle louder through the PA system. So, your instruments and personal equipment have to be in good shape. Let's take that as a given.

Your kit should be as self-contained as possible; what will make you friends and influence people is if you can get in and on-stage quickly. If you get a sound check, and, even more importantly, if you don't get a sound check, you don't want to be wasting time trouble-shooting your gear. This requires proper packaging – which does not mean it has to be expensive. I'm not talking about road cases for a truck tour – that's a whole other league, and hopefully if you've reached that stage you've got some professional help that's going to insist and ensure that everything is properly racked and cased for quick transport and consistent and reliable operation every night. No, at this point I'm assuming you're going to the gig in the family car and you're going to be relying on the house sound system or whatever the venue is supplying.

## ELECTRICAL POWER

A guitar, bass or keyboard player should only need one A/C plug – don't expect the house sound person or stage tech to be supplying you with outlets for all your stomp box wall warts. All your electrical should be consolidated into one power bar requiring a single plug. The problem with wall warts is that they're wider than a standard outlet and most power bars are oriented so that one wart covers two outlets. Furman makes a Plug-Lock power bar that has five outlets spaced wide enough apart and oriented so that the warts all fit nicely. There's a clamp down assembly that makes sure they don't fall out as well.

You need to search a bit, but for less money you can find power bars in your local hardware store that are designed for a combination of warts and standard plugs, they don't have the clever clamps, but that's why they invented tape to lash them all down – a cheap investment for convenient and reliable power.

Speaking of stomp boxes, having them floating around the stage and trailing after your guitar cord and getting unplugged when you travel too far is not good form. Get them mounted together on a panel – wood, Plexiglas or aluminum, it doesn't really matter.

Velcro works amazingly well for laying them out, and it allows you to reposition them easily or change your pedal configuration.

Get your gear in a case or a bag. You can get a decent aluminum briefcase-style box for under \$20 at the hardware store. Gator makes a whole line of soft-shell bags from about the same price that can accommodate all sorts of different gear.

Take care of your cables – 90 per cent of sound problems are caused by faulty cables. Hand wrap them – elbow wrappers should be shot – the cables don't behave or lie flat and they will fatigue and fail after awhile. Get some Velcro wraps or tie line (I like leather boot lace) and label the cables with your name or an identifying marker – colour tape works OK, but a lot of people seem to like blue tape. P-Touch labels work really well. My experience is that cables don't usually get stolen; if someone picks up a cable that is clearly identified they know it's not theirs. If they pick up a cable that's not identified the benefit-of-the-doubt theory says they might just think it is theirs ('cause they don't know who it belongs to). The tie wraps should be at the male end of the cable – you don't want them dangling in front of your face on a mic cord, it also means you can tie up any excess at the receiving end. On AC cables you can wrap the connection to the outlet or conduit to ensure it doesn't get pulled out.

## SENDING YOUR SIGNAL

You should be able to provide a single balanced feed to the sound system. A balanced line can travel considerable distances with no frequency loss and no noise interference. There may be enough channels available to accommodate a number of feeds, but don't count on it. Bass players should invest in a good active DI box; it's guaranteed to be the best, cleanest, most accurate signal with the best frequency response. DIs do not have to be expensive – they're reliable and fast to set up. A mic on your speaker cabinet is a nice option, but it's not going to match the quality of an active DI.



The author's acoustic rig: the stands and cables fit in the \$12 Aerobics bag. Note the DI parallel out goes to the tuner.

For acoustic bass the best sounding pickup I've heard is the Schertler, it's actually a moving coil element that fixes to the body using green soya gum. There's a resonant frequency that you have to EQ out, but after that, it's brilliant, with great isolation and no feedback – not inexpensive, but so much better than any of the thumpy bridge pickups I've ever heard.

Electronic keyboard players should be able to provide a good balanced signal out in both stereo or mono. This can come from a mixer or a DI box.

Acoustic guitars, violins, mandolins, etc., should have a direct pickup out to a DI box.

Acoustic instruments sound best with a good quality condenser mic for proper tonal pickup. However, condensers can be problematic in high heat and humidity, so at outdoor festivals, for instance, you can't always rely on them working or being available.

The direct feed doesn't feedback the way a mic will so you are guaranteed a good sound and indefinite gain before feedback until the actual instrument itself is feeding back. The DI can be active or passive – these instruments don't have the bass response concerns that the keyboards and bass guitar have, so even a middling passive DI will do a decent enough job. This way you'll get the monitor level you need. Then if there's a good quality condenser mic you can also get the quality and tone your acoustic instrument is capable of.

## ELECTRIC GUITAR PLAYERS, LISTEN UP

The guitar amp and speaker are integral to the sound of an electric guitar, so a DI is not a good option. Typically a directional dynamic mic is placed in front of the guitar amp. Personally, I think this is a poor idea for three reasons. Directional mics exhibit proximity effect, which is a boost in the bass response when placed close to the sound source. The mics most often used are actually vocal mics which usually have a response tailored for voice, this entails a boost in the upper midrange response. A directional mic is going to focus on a specific area of the speaker; if it's placed in the centre it will "hear" predominantly upper frequencies, if it's placed to the outside it will "hear" predominantly lower frequencies. The net result is that the tone of the guitar will tend to be artificially boosted in the bass and upper-mid frequencies and be largely dependant on positioning. I too often find the mixer channel for the guitar with the EQ carved out in the bass and upper-mid to compensate. To me, this is like pressing the gas and the brake at the same time.



# Live Sound

A further problem is that the guitar player typically stands some distance from the cabinet so what they hear and the tone they're going to work with is not what the mic "hears" inches away from the speaker.

My solution is to use an omni condenser mic. Omni mics inherently have flat response with no proximity effect so they are not very critical about mic placement. A further benefit is if you use a small lavalier mic you can just drape it over the grille cloth – no mic stand required, so it's cheaper and much quicker to set up with no stand to get knocked over or pulled by a guitar cord. Dynamic mics also pick up hum from magnetic fields like those emanating from amplifiers and speakers. Condensers don't do this, so they're also quieter.

Guitars are notoriously over-poweringly loud – "but that's my sound, man."

I don't understand why players think they need so much power. Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page did all their earliest recordings with 15-watt amps and a single 12" speaker. Anything larger for other than an arena stage is more size, weight and money than anyone really needs to deal with. I did one show with a reggae band where the guitarist used a Pig Nose. Now admittedly, all he wanted was that chika-chika reggae "riddim" sound, but we had a major PA and Monitor system so a mic and some gain gave us all the level we needed.

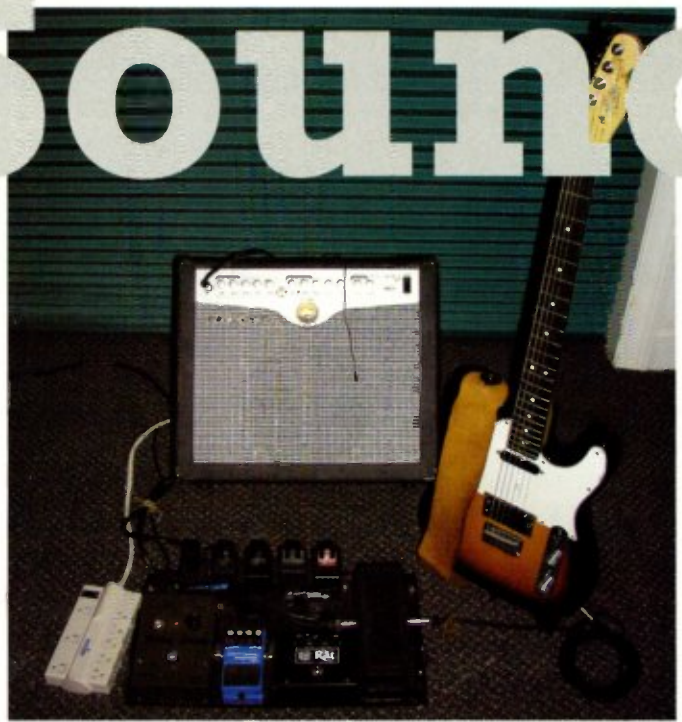
Electric guitars also tend to overpower the stage sound. Often the reason is the guitar amp is on the ground firing into the back of the players knees – tilt the amp back like a monitor and aim it at the ears and it's amazing how the volume comes down – it's also not firing into open vocal mics. Another solution is to position the guitar amps on the side of the stage firing across and not out from the backline. In this way the guitars can be heard on stage with minimal mic bleed and they aren't taking off the heads of the punters in the first rows. If the guitars are coming off the stage too loudly, they don't get into the mix so only the seats in the direct line of fire hear them – the rest of the room hears mostly mud.

Use an instrument stand! Laying an instrument on the floor or propping it up against an amp is an invitation to minor disaster. Particularly on tight bar stages or busy festival stages where there's too much going on and too many things to trip on. Nobody wants to damage an instrument, but accidents do happen ... on a stand it's visible, stable and safe.

I have set my mandate that I can carry my instrument and equipment in one load. Guitar in a gig bag on my back, stand bag over my shoulder, amp in one hand, pedal board case in the other. I ask the sound guy for one AC plug and say, "Here's my balanced feed to the PA, I need phantom power, please."

I also hand them a stage plot showing all the instruments, the vocals and the monitor positions. They usually just grin and say, "Great!"

**Gator makes a variety of cases to transport your equipment safely. At right, the legendary Shure SM58.**



The author's electric rig: note the omni mic on speaker grille – amp is tilted up. Fuzzman plug lock on custom pedal board; domestic power bar (white) holds three warts plus five other outlets.

## MORE ABOUT MICS & MONITORS

Mics are great tools. A mic that has the specific characteristics you want can really make quite a difference to your sound, they can be a relatively inexpensive investment that can be made in small increments. They're useful for both recording and live work. Mics are also relatively expensive to rent, particularly if you want something that is more than just a dynamic cardioid. There are a lot of variables to play with that can really affect your sound. There's an old adage that says "stick a 58 (Shure SM58) in front of anything and it's going to work OK," which is true, but it's boring and simplistic. also they're tailored response with the bass and mid-high frequency boost are not very flattering to most female voices. I hardly use any cardioid dynamic mics; omni, hypercardioid and even Figure-8 patterns are much more interesting and useful. I also try to reduce and eliminate as many mic stands as I can – they're bulky, heavy, expensive, and they clutter up the stage. (See DI boxes above).

Omni condensers can work well on drums – kick drum in particular. The Crown PZM is popular for this.

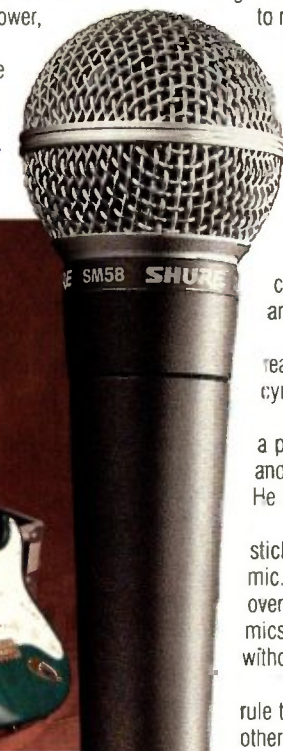
I once heard a show where the percussionist had a mic on each wrist – anywhere his hands went there was a microphone – it worked brilliantly! If he used sticks that were that much louder, his hands were that much further away from the drums so it acted as a built-in volume control. Two mics plus a kick mic did an entire 360-degree array of every percussion toy imaginable, and no mic stands!

Figure-8s are not the most common mics but they work really well for picking up matched instruments like toms and cymbals while ignoring the snare below.

I worked with one percussionist that also sang. We found a position for a head-worn figure-8 that worked for his voice and picked up the various drums and shakers in front of him. He learned to balance his own sound.

A single omni taped to the lid of a grand piano on short stick can work perfectly. The lid acts to reflect sound into the mic. Much easier to position than trying to get a boom arm over the strings with a large mic on it. If you use directional mics their focus means you will need two mics, so positioning without phase interference is much trickier.

If you do use two mics (in any application) follow the 3:1 rule that states that the mics need to be placed apart from each other by 3 x the distance of the mic to the source.





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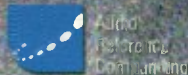


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# Live Sound



Hypercardioids reject sound from the sides instead of the back. Main speakers are overhead and to the sides as are side-wash monitors, so you will get the best isolation and gain-before-feedback from a hypercardioid. Floor monitors can be positioned to aim at your ears not your nose and you can use two of them if you want. Monitors for keyboards pretty much have to come from the side.

I like to position the drum monitor behind the drummer, even though it's aimed at the back of the head, which isn't the perfect position for listening, the great benefit is that it's not aimed at open mics and the drummer's body also acts to block the sound from leakage. An even better solution is to have the drummer and keyboard player use headphones – they're sitting there not going anywhere so a wire isn't much of a problem, they can get a loud and clear monitor feed with no leakage whatsoever and way cheaper than a monitor speaker and amplifier.

For a lead singer I would recommend getting an in-ear monitor system as soon as you can afford it. Save your voice, save your ears, save your back (they weigh a lot less than a monitor speaker and amp).

If the stage sound is clean and clear with the volume under control you're a long way down the road to a clean PA sound, so what about the other components – the mixer and its associated controllers, and the speaker system?

## BEWARE OF CHEAP MIXERS...

In the too-good-to-be-true category you seem to be able to get an amazing number of sliders, knobs, and connectors with enough alternate switch functions to make your head spin for not very many dollars these days. My personal experience has been that these mixers can sound very clean and clear on individual channels and can work very well as a sub mixer for a limited number of inputs, but when we tried to mix my band (Minds In Retreat) with six vocals, two guitars, bass, drums and keyboards together the sound got totally squashed (to use a very scientific term). This was not distortion or overload per se, I know about those. I believe what happens is the summing amps that take all the inputs and group them into the outputs act as a bottleneck and can't handle the total signal. We ended up getting a 20-channel version of a concert touring-quality console. It cost three times the money but the sound quality difference was truly amazing.

For mixing from the stage you don't need faders (sliders), knobs are fine because it's not an active mix, once it's set it doesn't change much. Knobs take up less room, cost less and aren't as susceptible to dirt. Don't spill a beer on

your board, but if you did sliders will corrode, knobs will likely be OK if you clean it up fast enough.

A small 6-channel mixer can work very well for your rehearsal vocals. It can then act as a sub-mixer for live work that means you only have to rent a 12- or 16-channel board. It also gives you a back-up if the main board fails – which is not as uncommon as you might think.

## SPEAKERS

Vocal speakers don't need a lot of bass response, 80 Hz is the bottom range of the voice, guitar and most other instruments other than bass, piano and kick drum, so for most applications you don't need a woofer bigger than 12". Two 8" speakers have the same surface output area as a 12" so you will get just as much bottom. I'm a big fan of the Renkus-Heinz TRX82 speaker. It's a twin 8" with a horn. The Renkus horns are very accurate and they offer a variety of coverage patterns up to 120 degrees, which is not common. Their smaller boxes go as wide as 150 degrees. The horns are rotate-able, so they work vertically or horizontally on a yoke bracket.

The smaller speakers are easier to handle and easier to get up in the air on a stand or flown off the lighting rig. It is important to get the top end boxes up above the audience and aimed down. The sound will not take the heads off of the front row and will carry into the audience. Aiming down will avoid reflections off the back wall and the ceiling.

The most efficient and versatile speaker configuration is to have a 2-way top-end box over the audience's head and a sub-woofer on the ground.

Beware of plastic boxes – they're popular because they're cheap and weather resistant, but the moulding process does not allow for precision horn patterns and the boxes resonate with bass input. Many of them are specifically intended for DJ work with a bass and high end "smiley curve" bump. There's one box that seems to be everywhere that also has a pretty nasty 5K peak that is really not nice for vocals.

Above left: JBL's VRX 932LA line array loudspeaker system.  
Below: Renkus-Heinz's TRX82 speakers.



The new JBL VRX 932LA system has a pole mount position that tilts the box (or two boxes stacked) down at the audience. There's a single 12" speaker and 3 x 1" compression drivers that can be variably attenuated so that the nearest to farthest throw drivers can be set to different output levels.

Start with the stage – that's where you will have the most control and provide the best sound to the PA. Then if you're looking at buying PA equipment, carefully consider your needs and the feature benefits of the products. Look at what will give you the most use and long-term benefits and what can't be readily rented. Usually the cheapest is not the best option, so invest wisely. ●



Don Barber is a Toronto-based audio consultant and designer, who also plays bass in Minds In Retreat. He can be reached by e-mail at don.barber@sympatica.ca.





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# SIGNING A RECORD DEAL

## Part II: Deal Pointers

BY KEVIN YOUNG

### Left

on its own, last issue's article might lead you to believe that little has changed in the way labels and artists do business with each other. The business has evolved, but to some extent – good songs, compelling artists, strong partnerships with companies with the vision and resources – these are all still the basics. Having said that, as much as the technology has, the expectations and standards and the climate of the industry have changed dramatically. And continues to as competition for the average entertainment dollar gets stiffer. Here we're not going to discuss the mechanics of the deal and the mechanisms by which you sell records after signing as much as its consequences. The first being, that the bottom line has shifted and everyone has been trying to catch up for several years.





# SIGNING A RECORD DEAL PART II

from elsewhere may be a little dubious at first. Feeling secure that you're being taken care of in your home market is one thing, other territories can be daunting and it's good to know someone who has already been there, getting to know who's representing you on the ground. The best way for a label to do this is to physically be there. When I e-mailed Last Gang's Chris Taylor to ask about his roster's international success he was in Japan doing just that, for the third time this year. Even so, he responded within the hour.

Like Maple, Last Gang sees itself as a great place for developing acts to be. Last Gang's success, particularly with bands like Metric and Death From Above 1979 speaks for itself. The key, Taylor says is "putting all the profits back into the company and hiring great people. We are constantly on planes and delivering on our promise to find international license partners for every one, in every major market."

The point of all this talk about enthusiasm and commitment is simple – if the label, or worse, the artist, isn't willing to throw down and do whatever they can to make their career happen, why should anyone else bother? One of the problems over the past few years is the perception of listeners that the labels will sell them anything to make a buck and that most artists are complicit in the fraud. Treating customers as if they're the enemy doesn't help – as Sony's recent copyright protection mess shows. Music buyers are increasingly evolving into music users for whom music is just part of another product or service. There will always be people that prefer holding a hard copy record in their hands, but whether there're getting fewer or more numerous, you also have to court the people that don't care either way.

As new interactive media eat away at the demand for traditional music outlets like CDs and television there are more opportunities than ever to exploit and, correspondingly, more on the table during any negotiation

– Games, Internet, DVD, Ring Tones and other new opportunities and licensing avenues for artists. In some cases even the means of breaking them. Everyone involved in the process, artist, management, label, are all trying to divine just what the future holds and how best to position



**"There is talk of companies like Rogers, Bell and iTunes becoming 'labels' which is not a bad thing – any way that we can get more music out there is great."**

*– Barb Sedun, EMI Publishing*

themselves individually and collectively to take advantage of it. But whomever the consumer thinks is holding open the gateway to what's fresh, cool and innovative, that's where they're going to go. Their patience is thin and getting thinner by the moment.

Committing all your resources to a few projects and championing them alone, for a label, or to only a few of many means of reaching your potential audience, for an artist, is no longer acceptable. Maple's solution is flexibility. "Our goal was to be a service provider to the musician," Dexter says. "To that end there's the online store, maplemusic.com – over 500 acts selling everything from concert tickets, to T-shirts, to CDs. And there are three labels and a distribution company, MapleNationwide (now Fontana North as of Janu-

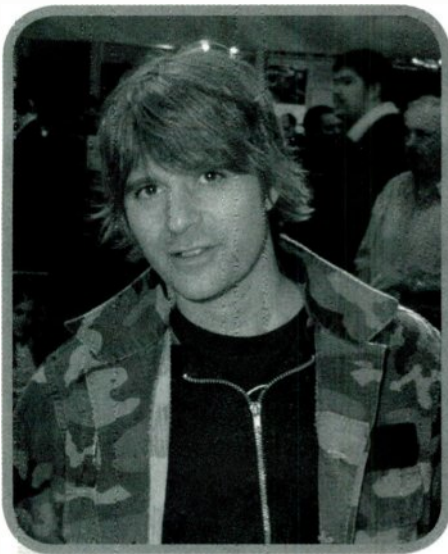
ary's deal with Fontana Distribution, US-based independent distribution arm of the Universal Music Group). Nationwide," he says, "started because there were so many acts coming to us that we wanted to be in business with, but didn't fit our model. They didn't want a record contract, but they wanted to do business with us, so we started a distribution company." A distribution company, he adds, that's actually a joint venture with Universal.

"It's all about risk," he continues, and spreading the potential downside and upside around. Something that puts him into a position similar to an artist; "When I started the company I had to get venture capital from a bunch of people and they just take chunks of the company – in return for that cash they get a percentage of the business, forever. Without that exchange there wouldn't be a Maple." Without similar exchanges, it's reasonable to assume there are a number of artists we'd never have heard about. This is the prevailing logic for one of the most talked about changes in terms of the way deals are evolving – the depth and scope of these exchanges and a deeper and purportedly, more equal, sharing of artist and labels traditional revenue streams between the two.

The business has always been about dividing rights and royalties. No deal should be approached blindly, but you have to look at what the ultimate goal of the partnerships you're forming, says Barb Sedun. "Some people say, 'don't give up your digital rights'. Some people say 'don't give up your publishing rights'. As a publisher what we do is acquire copyrights. What I say is don't give up any rights until you educate yourself. Know what you're getting into so it becomes, not what you're giving up, but what partnerships you're forming to move yourself forward." This trend toward greater sharing of income isn't a positive or negative, she says. "Whatever works best for you is the right way to go."

The structure of a joint venture, like a traditional deal, depends on what each party brings to the table. It depends on the artist, their lawyer, whether the artist is already known, or just starting out – on weighing the potential risks and benefits. Like any business, an artist owns 100 per cent of their music to start with. Then, like any business, after bringing in people to fund, market and promote it, they end up with a percentage. Again, the prevailing logic is that without the label's investment there would be no business for the artist; no music sales, no merch sales, no





**"Statistics say radio and TV viewing is down 40 per cent and computer/Internet activity is up 40 per cent. It's been directly replaced."**

*- Greig Nori, Manager of Sum 41*


touring. For what was routinely a significant investment for the label they only got a share of actual sales of the music. Also, when an act did hit huge – like Celine Dion huge – out of those proceeds came funding for other domestic, emerging bands.

Just what's fair and equitable is often a sticking point between artists/management ways and the label's. The perception is that music sales are a shrinking pie and that offering up a chunk now, after making a killing on them for some is a little disingenuous. Still, if we can all make a bigger buck by splitting the risk then it's all good, right? Right, but only if the labels can actually provide the kind of clout and dollars to break bands and everyone can make enough money to survive, which, some people argue, is becoming more rare.

Agree or disagree with either side – each has valid points. Right or wrong, the resentment between artists and labels over revenue can run deep. At the very least, joint ventures keep artists from treating label investment and their corresponding debit balance as theoretical money, instead of real debt. The kind that can adversely affect future prospects and partnerships.

Of course none of this matters unless you're making any money in the first place – artists may have to give up chunks of their traditional income streams to see increasing income from sales, but what if there are no sales? If what a label invests is determined solely by a formula tied directly to sales, the benefits to an artist without any track record or following could be limited. The money for tour support and marketing has to come from somewhere. Do the math: if you're not selling records, 50 per cent of nothing is nothing. Consider that when you're thinking about a deal. It's not unfair for a label to want a piece of traditional artist income, but regardless of the label, there's an important difference between the earning potential of the two. For a label, there will always be the next project, maybe even the next big thing. For artists, usually, it's one kick at the can, make as much as you can in a short time and invest it wisely. Occupation: Rock Star might sound great at the high school reunion, but doesn't play that well on your resume. This discrepancy, on its own, never mind the fact declining sales and increasingly less overall necessity for hard copy albums has made a number of people consider what the model might look like if labels weren't as much a part of the equation as they are now...



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# SIGNING A RECORD DEAL PART II

"There is talk of companies like Rogers, Bell and iTunes becoming 'labels' which is not a bad thing – any way that we can get more music out there is great," says Barb Sedun. She sees the future as a one-stop shop, but with more partnerships than before, not necessarily excluding the label. Partnerships, "Where the manager and band form the centre of the wheel and everyone else as the spokes. Instead of the label being the hub of the wheel." She's not alone...

"There's an amazing book out right now," says Greig Nori, "called *The Future of Music*, by David Kusek and Gerd Leonhard. It talks about where the focus is shifting to: statistics say radio and TV viewing is down 40 per cent and computer/Internet activity is up 40 per cent. It's been directly replaced. Kids, in the cycle of playing a game for one hour, are going to hear a song repeat more times than they would in an entire day listening to radio."

As fewer and smaller devices provide exponentially more entertainment there will be an ever-increasing number of bundles that include a dazzling array of entertainment options. "(Gaming and Telecommunications) companies are starting to wake up to the fact that they have more marketing power to break bands than the major labels do. We're very close to not having to sign bands to labels; to being able to do various licensing deals directly with EA Sports, directly with Nintendo, directly with a cable network, directly with all kinds of things that are out there. Pull all the money together through various licensing deals and you've probably added up more of an advance for a band to go and record an album than you're getting from the majors right now and, probably, five times the marketing power."

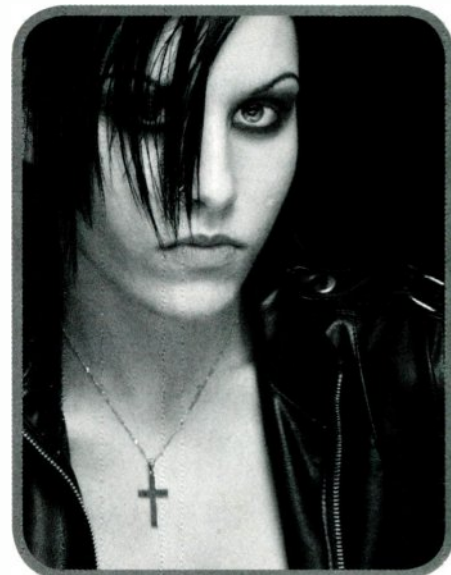
Potentially, says Greig, the upside for artists is greater royalties and less red tape. "I'm telling you: it's only a matter of time before Bell Mobility has a music production company as part of it and they'll want to get bands before they have to pay a record company." If you take the label out of the mix, there's more revenue for artist and management. The indies, he says, have the potential to strike a better deal with a lot of these licensing avenues than the majors; "By no fault of their own," he adds. "The majors are huge companies with huge overhead – they can't cut deals like an indie."

There are big grey areas in terms of bypassing labels altogether, but, if it is possible to do so and cut an equitable, non-exclusive deal with the production department of a major corporation, Greig sees it as demonstrably better than the current situation. "I'm thinking this is actually going to change things in the artist's favour – artist's can make the money they deserve to be making off of this and live. You know what it's like; you sell platinum in this country and you're still poor."

It is an attractive possibility. There has always been the potential for artists to spin off what they do into a variety of profitable enterprises, many only loosely associated with music – modelling, acting, perfumes. You name it. The stars have sold it. Whether or not these revenue streams would exist without the initial work of a company or group of companies, there might be less acrimony surrounding the issue if the parties were able to negotiate a variety of deals without giving up too much for too long. Of course, there is a potential downside...

Tying music to products and for a short space of time might cheapen the perception of music and artist's value further, and give rise to even more disposable stars of the minute. Beyond that, not all artists or fans are overly thrilled with the idea of being beholden to corporations. You might fight with your label, but at least you know that you are all trying to sell music. There's always been a fine line between what an act is willing to do for cash and what they won't. It's a personal decision that may or may not change, depending on their fortunes.

Regardless, of who the partnership is made up of – majors, indies, artists, dirty big telecommunications companies – there will always be disagreements. Some partnerships are going to go sour, some might not have been such a good idea in the first place and sometimes they might be the right idea at the wrong time. There's an element of wishful thinking to a speculative business like this. It can't always turn out well, regardless of who's holding the purse strings – anyone who's fought the lonely, irritating battle



**"I just want a mutually beneficial deal in which my best interests are looked after as well."**

– Rose Perry, Anti-hero

of the bill with Rogers or Bell after a nasty case of identity theft or an accidental cancellation knows that big business tolerance for the little guy is notoriously slim. There's also the potential for ending up right back where we were: Where a few companies become the primary portals for people to learn about new music and get their music and artists to line up out the door and around the block, willing to sacrifice whatever portion of their potential income will get them through the door.

Naturally, the hope is that the sheer variety of equally non-exclusive deals this model allows would counteract the downside. And, if the deals are not as long term or all encompassing, that they will be fairer for everyone involved.

Not everyone is convinced, however. Both the majors and indies are somewhat hesitant to embrace this model, understandably so. "I think some artists can potentially do that," Steve Blair says. "But I think that the ones that are going to be successful are the ones that have a really good fan base. No matter what anyone says, there's a value to the dollars that are spent marketing artists." Essentially, it's the labels business to invest in artists – at times, you have to admit, a bit of a crazy thing to invest in, but that's their gig and their and most people get into it because they love music. Though



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- July/August - Wide Mouth Mason, Danko Jones, Natalie MacMaster, Software Review 2000
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# SIGNING A RECORD DEAL PART II

he sees the inevitability of other corporations developing their own A and R/Production departments, Blair points out that things that look too good to be true in the music business are exactly that. "There's no doubt the model is going to morph and change," he says. "But I think it's going to be a slower change than people think."

Grant Dexter, too, admits that it's an interesting idea, but that for large scale change along those lines that a large number of artists will have to take that route before it replaces the traditional artist/label relationship, particu-

larly in light of the growing success of indie acts and labels. "So long as there continues to be success, and motivation for managers and bands, then the labels will always get people knocking on their door. He's also quick to point out that labels, like his own, are evolving in such a way as to be ever more relevant. "I think there's many different levels now that you can have a relationship with a band. And I think that you just have to be a flexible company."

The consequences are a much wider debate about rights, royalties, fair play, and fair pay. Obviously, what you believe is fair depends on what side of the fence you're standing on. It might seem unfair to spend 20 bucks on a CD to discover all but one or two songs pretty much disappear after one or two listens. But that logic means nothing to someone who got the axe from his or her job because sales were tanking.

But the debate and its resolution isn't the point. It's a matter of choices and consequences. There are no guarantees. You may find yourself with a partnership that's inappropriate to your genre, your business partner may be more interested in promoting some other aspect of their business other than you. You, your management, your label or other partners may not have the patience, or the finances to sustain the relationship. There's always a risk. That's not the point however...

Regardless of who's holding and what services and hardware they've mixed up with your music someone is still going to buy it. Someone is still going to promote it. And someone is still going to have to sell it to them. Who exactly that is isn't certain, but the industry has been forced to re-examine what constitutes value, and, for perhaps the first time, music users were directly involved.

The holy grail of getting a deal may not be quite the dream it once was for some artists, but the drive to get their music out there still is. Back to Rose Perry - You may remember Rose, of Anti-Hero and HER records, from last issue? All anybody wants, regardless whether they're making music, selling music, or buying music, is pretty much what she wants... "I just want a mutually beneficial deal in which my best interests are looked after as well."

That's the point.



Kevin Young is a Toronto-based freelance writer and musician.

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# Writing For A Music Publisher

by Rick Rose

Writing

**M**usic Publishing is a very exciting business. In this column, I will go over some of the most common topics discussed and some of the most asked questions. I'm now in my eighth year writing for Sony Tree Music in Nashville and it's still pretty much like the Brill Building Days in New York City. Nashville's Music Row still has writers that are full of ideas and turning out the songs on a regular basis.

Being signed to a Music Publisher is a job, and a very demanding job at that. A basic songwriting deal means that you are hired to write so many songs in a year, and you are given a draw, against your future royalties of whatever songs get cut. You will be assigned a song plugger, who will work closely with you on deciding what songs should be demoed and he or she will decide what songs they should pitch to the artist that are cutting.

A song plugger will also suggest whom you should be co-writing with, because every songwriter has a different forte, and when a plugger knows that, he can set up little teams of songwriters.

All right now, let's say you just finished writing a song in one of the writers rooms in Music Row, and you would like to bounce it off your plugger. He either comes down to the writing session and listens to the song, or you can put it on a work tape for him. Let's say he comes down to the session. He would listen to us perform the song with just our acoustic guitars and us singing it, he may suggest to change tempo, work on the lyric a bit in certain parts. He might just say he doesn't think he could get the song cut, due to many of that type song hanging around in the library, or it's too country, or it's not country enough. There could be so many reasons. But when a plugger expresses his thoughts, you should rely and trust his judgement call because he is the one who is out there everyday playing songs for artist's and producers, and he's got his ears on the pulse of what's going around town.

Basically, what it gets down to, if the song doesn't knock people out in the early stages, don't spend the money on a demo that will never be pitched. Usually I will go in and demo four songs with a full band of session

players and decide before hand what type of songs they're going to be, obviously after they have been approved to demo. First I get a bandleader to run the session and he usually hires the session players on my behalf of Sony Tree and I. I would then get together with the bandleader and go over the style and vibe that I want in each song, and also the most important part, the vocalist. If I want the session to lean more toward a pop country vibe such as Lonestar & Collin Raye, I would call in vocalists that have the more pop country voices and have them sing the demos. It would be contradictory if I brought in a really hardcore country voice to get a modern pop country vibe on the track.

When your session is finally complete, you will turn them into your publisher with all the paperwork correctly filled out, date of creation, Studio recorded at, date turned in, publishing info, and lyrics. The creative department at your publisher will then listen to your songs along with the other batch of songs that were also turned in. They will go over all the songs and decide which ones they think, they could get cut or even put on hold, which means the artist is still deciding if they will cut it or not.

Let me back up a bit here: there's basically three things that can happen when one of your songs gets listened to from the artist or producer. Number one is they could just simply say PASS, which means the song they just heard doesn't suit the project, or it's too slow, or they already have a song like it on the project. Chances of it being a bad song are slim, because usually all songs in a major company that are pitched are very strong songs. If the song is passed on, it's not what they are looking for.

Number Two, is, they could put it on hold, which is nerve wracking because every time you hear that one of your songs is on hold, you think that could be the ticket. Remember they put many songs on hold, and slowly start narrowing in on the ones they want to keep. A song on hold could be six months before they tell yes or no! What you have to do is keep writing great songs, and stay focused on your job, which is songwriting, and getting the best performance out of your session.

Number three is the big prize. A producer or artist might hear your song for the



first time and totally flip out and say it's a cut, just like that. That happens all the time. You don't know, it's almost like whatever is in the artist's mind and what you wrote is the exact same thing, then you hit the jackpot.

Many people have always asked me, do you sell your songs, do you get paid when you write a song, there's all kinds of questions, but I'll try to keep it simple and to the point. Basically you have a quota of songs to write, while you are under contract with your publisher, they give you a monthly salary (or whatever you have negotiated). They will usually pay for all the recording costs, and this is all goes on a tab that gets bigger every time you turn in songs and cash your salary cheque. You then hope that one of your songs lands on Garth's or Shania's CD and then your publisher would recoup everything that has been spent on you and advanced to you and then you would start to see royalties.

*Rick Rose is now in his eighth year with Sony Tree Music Publishing in Nashville and has just over 200 songs in his catalogue that he's written with writers such as Desmond Child, Anton Fig, Monty Powell, Tom Douglas, Dave Gibson, Naisoe Sheridan, and many others. He also has cuts with artists such as Bill Medley, Atomic, Doc Walker, Robyn Scott, In Theory, Lennox, Perfect Affair, and his own CD Songs From the Studio B Sessions on Bandana Records, and he's managed by legendary manager Dee Anthony. For CD purchase info, check out [www.rickrosemusic.com](http://www.rickrosemusic.com).*



# Part III: Post-Production And Beyond

by James Linderman

This is the last part of a three part series on building a killer demo. It should be noted that there are many ways to record your songs, many kinds of songs that inspire variations on the methods I have outlined here, and many kinds of studios and operators. As you read all of this be aware that some conditions apply.

When we left off last issue we were in the studio, all the tracks had been recorded and they were mixed as if the panning created a sound stage for our various instruments and vocalists.



Now drop all of the faders on your mixer down to the bottom until no sound is coming out of the monitors and, starting with the drum tracks and working your way across the board, raise the levels till you get a mix that sounds clear and yet "band-like".

If the tracks start to lose their definition you can always go back to where it last sounded good and start again from there, moving each fader up by smaller increments.

When the volumes are set you can then determine if any of the tracks need some extra presence by adding compression and also decide if each instrument requires its own reverb setting, bearing in mind that you have the option of just adding reverb globally to the final mix.

The advantage of having individual reverb settings is that it creates the illusion of a live stage with instruments sounding

closer and some sounding like they are further back.

However, the advantage to adding reverb only to the final mix at the end is that individual reverb time settings within the mix can conflict with one another and cause the mix to lack clarity or sound cluttered.

It has also been noted that many demos tend to feature way too much compression on too many tracks so a more subtle use of it should make your mix more dynamic.

When the song is mixed to taste you can then save it as a .wav file.

There are a lot of mastering software programs suitable for making good demos. Sony's Sound Forge 7 and CD Architect 5 are great demoing tools for first editing final mixes down and then burning them on a CD in Redbook.

In Sound Forge you can crop the final track to length, add fade ins and outs, change the speed and or pitch of your mix and manipulate it in hundreds of ways with effects and process tools.

Sony's CD Architect is a simple to use burning software that allows you to format your CD and make it playable on every conceivable kind of CD player.

Once you have burned a CD and checked it out on every CD player in the vicinity (okay, so I'm still a little paranoid) you will want to go back and save the song again, but this time as an MP3 in a file size that most of your friends and associates can open as an e-mail attachment without it taking an hour and a half... and 90 per cent of the useable memory in their computer.

I find I can send a full mix down of a 2 1/2 minute pop song in 128 kBit/s; 44,000 kHz; stereo and almost everyone can open it easily and find it has a very good audio quality.

Looking back you will be able to hear the effect that your hard work has had on your demo.

Here are some of the fine points from this 3 part series:

- Type a COW – Chords Over Words.
- Type a Chord chart with chord changes divided into bars.
- Set the tempo – use a metronome or [www.metronomeonline.com](http://www.metronomeonline.com).
- Record Guitar/Vocal or Piano/Vocal to a dedicated click or drumloop track.
- Listen to pre recordings in your genre to

pull production ideas from like guitar sounds, string pads, percussion, bag pipe riffs.

• Go into the studio with as much pre-production done as possible to reduce billable time and to reduce the guesswork associated with lack of good preparation. Motto – I'd rather have a chart I didn't need than not have one I did.

• Record your tracks in time and in tune.

• Hire players for instruments you don't play well and a singer if you don't sing well.

• Start the mix with no volume and build the demo from the bottom up.

• Save in .wav and MP3.

There are now 3 essential steps left to our process...

• Register your song to the Songwriters Association of Canada Song Depository. Visit [www.songwriters.ca](http://www.songwriters.ca).

• Manufacture copies of your demo to give out at industry events and for pitching (make sure all of your contact info is on the CD and on the jewel case insert as well). Look at your demo like it's a musical business card.

• Go out and celebrate your achievement. You never know where a great demo can take you so before you get out there and show the world what your music's made of, raise a glass of your favourite beverage and toast your diligence, talent, artistic vision and sheer tenacity.

*James Linderman lives and works at theharmony-house, a music lesson, songwriting and recording pre-production facility in Newmarket, ON. James writes songwriting articles and music book reviews for The Muse's Muse Web magazine, [www.musesmuse.com](http://www.musesmuse.com) (3 million readers monthly), Canadian Musician magazine, Songwriters magazine, Professional Musician magazine, Songwriters of Wisconsin International and The Dallas Songwriters Association. His writing is also featured in the James Linderman Wing of the library at [www.songu.com](http://www.songu.com). James has a Canadian University and American College education in music theory and composition and is also pretty good at making up songs and playing the guitar. Contact James at [theharmonyhouse@rogers.com](mailto:theharmonyhouse@rogers.com).*







# Tricks For Touring

by Jim Yakabuski

Live Sound

## Put All Your Ducks In A Row

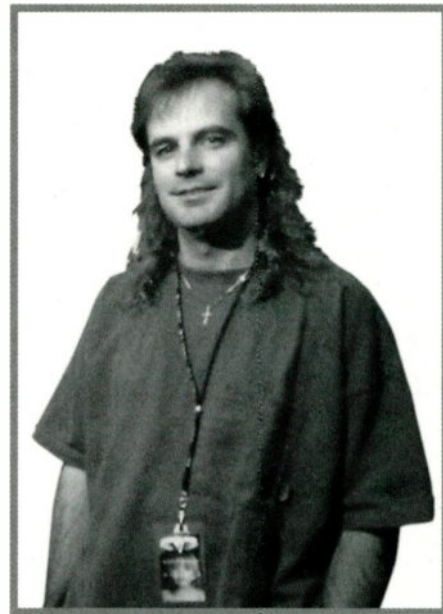
Old sound engineers never die, they just move to Vegas and run sound for singers our parents listened to. Well, at least that happened to some sound engineers that I know, including myself for a short time. It was a bit of a learning curve moving from mixing mostly rock and pop bands to artists that were without a doubt the only star of the show. Their names are on the marquee, and the fans buying the tickets want to be sure to hear that singer's golden pipes well above any musical distraction.

What I discovered early in my new career direction was that conventional mixing didn't necessarily work, and I would continually chase my tail. First, I'd turn up a keyboard patch, and then I'd turn down the percussion. Soon I'd reach for a guitar mic, and then ... well, you get the picture. The funny thing was, as I would reach up to turn something down, the musicians were already backing off the gas pedal, having spent years mixing themselves on stage. What I learned was, never let the star vocalist get lost in the mix as you play the game of "chase the offending instrument."

The simplest way to make sure I'm not losing the vocalist is to group everything except the star vocal into one VCA group. This way I can mix the show with two fingers. One is on the band and one on the star. If some part of the band gets too loud, I turn the whole band mix down to ensure the vocalist is clear and on top and then sort out the culprit before fading the whole band mix back in.

This all may sound a bit extreme, but you can't really know how tough these gigs can be until you try them. It doesn't often happen that a fan will come out of the audience at the end of the show and mention to you that the keyboards were a touch low. You *know* you will hear, and usually your boss will as well, if his vocals were not the primary element of the mix. Make your life easy and group everything except the star on one VCA.

The musicians in the band are usually not around more than a couple years at a time, and we sound engineers come and go from those gigs as well, but that star will be in Vegas well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so do your duty and let the fans hear him or her as clear as crystal.



## Group Rates

Okay. Let's face it. It's all about money, right? In this day and age of cutting back on costs, we have all been forced to cut corners and rethink how we approach the necessity of certain equipment. We've also been asked to minimize our footprint on the front-of-house riser. One way that space can be saved is by cutting back on the amount of compressors you take on the road.

On a recent tour, I put the main instruments and most of the vocals that needed to be compressed into stereo subgroups and then inserted stereo compressors across those groups. One rack space, one stereo compressor, and a whole group of vocals or instruments are processed. End result: a lot of space was saved. With the new consoles on the scene now, loaded with virtual dynamics and onboard software-driven signal processing, the days of racks and racks of gates, compressors, and effects units are soon to be gone. We are also seeing "8-in, 8-out" interface devices, such as BSS Soundweb, that process the signal in a bunch of ways; this further eliminates rack-mounted compressors and EQ units.

I agree with this philosophy of downsizing when it comes to tours that go for a long period of time, where things get set and pretty much left alone. When I do a one-off and have very little time to get set up, however, sitting down with a mouse and new software is a scary thought, and definitely not the fastest way to go. That being said, the onboard stuff is really close (at the time of this writing) to being just as great sounding, and user-friendly to operate, as the rack-mounted stuff. We are already seeing rack mounted consoles that operate with a mouse and screen, or small mainframes with a few VCAs and channel strips to replace the monoliths we now mix on. The learning curve may be a bit steep, but when the first big tour goes out there with a front-of-house riser that is 8' x 8', we are all going to have to follow suit. Because I've seen this coming, I have tried to consolidate my rack space and get used to the "downsizing mindset."

One great way to accomplish this is to gang those compressors up into subgroups. It works well. You may lose a little control over individual vocals or instruments, but on average you will be just as pleased and keep costs and real estate requirements down. Let's get with the new way of thinking and keep ourselves employed. And if you're still not convinced, think of all the P-touch labels that you'll save not having to mark all those compressors at the start of the tour.

*This article is taken from Jim Yakabuski's book entitled Professional Sound Reinforcement Techniques. The book is published by MixBooks, an imprint of artistpro.com.*



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# So You Wanna Be A Rock Star?

by Tim Elmy

Several *CM* readers sent me kind e-mails about my article in a previous issue on Songwriting, Beatles and Bernie. One of those readers asked if I had any thoughts on getting into the music business. I responded to the best of my ability and realized afterwards that other *CM* readers might find some of the ideas helpful.

Dude, there are entire books written about getting into the music business so I don't know how much I can tell you in an e-mail! Okay, maybe a couple of things: **Identify and know your market** and tailor your music and image to appeal to that market. Go and see other artists who already appeal to your market, maybe in your case guys like Ottmar Leibert and Jesse Cook. Try to understand what makes them appealing to this market.

What kind of people are in their audience and how do these people buy their music? Where do these artists play? How do they distribute their stuff? What labels do they record for? What radio stations play them and therefore may play your stuff? (You need a label release to get on commercial radio, but university, community and college radio are more accessible...) I'm not saying copy other artists – you need to be yourself – but find a way to combine the familiar with the fresh. Give it a new spin – combine new elements. Create your own sound. Think of Stevie Ray Vaughan – you know it's him from the first note.

**Stay in touch with your audience** and build it using e-mail blasts to invite them to shows and link them to your Web site.

**Create a strong and memorable image** for yourself so you'll stand out from the crowd. James Brown had the moves; Chuck Berry had the duck-walk; The Beatles had the hair; Johnny Cash had the all-black wardrobe; Nirvana had the scruffy look; Dolly Parton has the tits; KISS has the makeup; Marilyn Manson has the ... well you get the idea.

**Don't wait to be discovered.** I've met countless musicians who lock themselves away in their basement home studios fussing with the reverb on the eighteenth guitar part of their latest self-indulgent opus. Like that's going to advance their careers. Get out in the world and promote yourself. Get business cards, letterhead and a demo. Generate some activity. Sure it takes away from your time writing and playing, so stop sleeping so much! Agents, managers, the media,

producers and executives want to back a winner, someone who is seen to be on the rise. A Catch-22: to be successful you have to appear like you're already successful (or at least well on your way). So fake it 'til you make it. If you want to be a rock star, start being a rock star now. Rent a hotel suite and trash the bastard! If you want to be a country star, start drinking and feeling sorry for yourself now! You don't need, nor will you get, anybody's permission. Go to recording industry conferences and functions, identify people who can help your career and meet them. "Hi, here's my latest CD, a guest pass



to my next show and an article about me trashing a hotel suite..."

**Get something on CD.** A crisp, tight set of quality recordings can help you in two ways. It can act as your demo and calling card, and it gives you something to sell. Personally, I think a four- or five-song EP is the way to go. Not too long, but enough to whet the appetite and demonstrate your sound and ability.

**Stay on top of what's happening** in the recording industry by reading the trades. Go to a big magazine store (that is, a big store that sells magazine, not a store that sells big magazines) and buy a bunch of music and music biz mags, then subscribe to the ones

you find most helpful. This can help you identify potential contacts and alert you to new record labels that are looking for artists. Get to know the names of the players so when you meet someone, you'll be, and appear to be, informed, and therefore serious.

**Get out and play** anywhere and everywhere you can, you never know who is watching. Solo, with a band, as a duet, with a singer, whatever. You need to find a format that best showcases your music ... your product. Go to open jams like at Jeff Healey's place or the Orbit Room and get to know the guys. If they see you've got it going on, you may be able to get on a bill and expand your market. Sometimes studying with a known and respected teacher can introduce you to new circles of players and "players".

Finally, and I can't stress this enough: yes, music is art, but the music business is commerce, no different than the movie business or the toothpaste business. Remember the old saw: "it's called the music business not the music music." And business is based on things like matching products to markets, optimizing resources and capital, risk versus return, cost versus sales, profit margins, primary, secondary and tertiary market segments, anticipated growth curves, share prices, marginal tax rates, derivative bond issues, etc. So learn to be both artist and business-person.

Success probably won't come easy, brother, but it can be achieved. You just need to go at it with every fucking thing you've got.

Sorry, one last thing: when you do get rich and famous, make sure you look at the books every month. And get a sharp accountant and entertainment lawyer before you sign anything (in fact, you'll need said lawyer and accountant *before* you get rich and famous, otherwise you'll get poor and famous, which is the worst of both worlds). It used to be considered uncool to worry about money. Leonard Cohen, possibly the coolest man on the planet, recently discovered that \$5 million has been siphoned from his accounts over the past few years, allegedly by his long-time, trusted manager. How cool is that?

Hope this helps.

*Tim Elmy is a Toronto-based writer and musician. You can reach him at [timelmy@rogers.com](mailto:timelmy@rogers.com).*





# “I Got a Six-Figure Indie Label Deal Because I Joined TAXI”

Jenna Drey – TAXI Member – [www.jennadrey.com](http://www.jennadrey.com)

**M**y name is Jenna Drey. That’s me sitting next to TAXI president, Michael Laskow.

For as long as I can remember, I’ve wanted to be a recording artist. I’ve studied music my whole life. I’ve read all the books. I’ve been to the seminars. In short, I’ve done all the same things you’re probably doing.

## **Who Hears Your Music?**

I’ll bet you’ve also noticed that no matter how much preparation you’ve done, it doesn’t mean anything if you can’t get your music heard by people who can sign on the dotted line.

I found out about TAXI a few years ago, and have kept an eye on it ever since. The longer I watched, the more I became convinced it was the vehicle I needed for my music. When my demos were done, I joined. And guess what – it worked!

## **A Record Deal With Lots of Zeros!**

Seven months after joining, TAXI connected me with a great Indie label that’s distributed by Universal. The president of the label heard my song, “Just Like That,” and just *like* that, I was offered a record deal, and that song became my first single.

## **Madonna, Bowie, Jagger, and me!**

The icing on the cake? The label hired legendary producer, Nile Rodgers (Madonna, David Bowie, Mick Jagger, and the B-52s) to produce it! All these amazing things happened to me because I saw an ad like this and joined TAXI.

## **1,200 Chances to Pitch Your Music**

It seems like all the serious artists and writers are hooking up with TAXI. Where else could you find more than 1,200 high-level opportunities for your music every year?

You’d hire an accountant to do your taxes. Doesn’t it make sense to hire the world’s leading independent A&R company to make all the connections you need? Do you have the time to do all the leg work yourself?

## **It Worked for Me**

TAXI doesn’t take a percentage of anything, and it will probably cost you a lot less than the last guitar or keyboard you bought. Think of TAXI as the most important piece of gear you’ll ever need. It’s the one that can get you signed.

If you’re a songwriter, artist, or composer who wants to succeed in the music business, then do what I did and make the toll-free call to TAXI right now.



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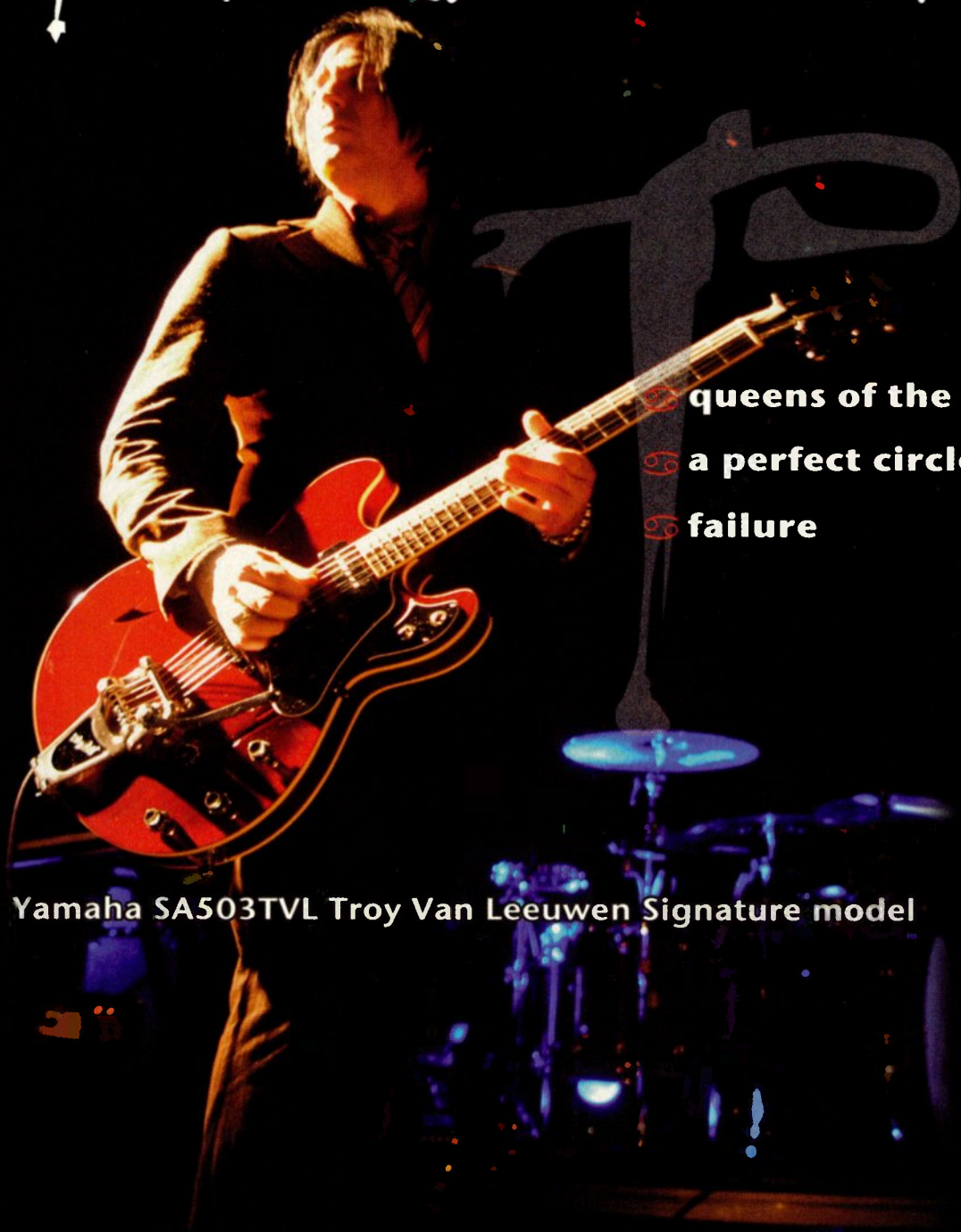
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## Planet Waves Tuners



Five new tuners have recently been released by Planet Waves; the S.O.S., Pocket Tuner, Pro-Winder, Full-Function Tuner and Metronome and the Pedal Tuner.

The S.O.S. (Strobe-On-String) Tuner is shaped and used like a guitar pick. It uses strobing LED lights that project onto the string to tune, without the need for input or sound. You know the string is in tune when the strobos stop moving on the string.

The Planet Waves Pocket Tuner is a compact tuner that features a sweep/strobe rotary display. It is also an input/output equipped in-line tuner.

The Pro-Winder Tuner is a five-in-one tool that combines Planet Waves Pro-Winder multi-tool with a chromatic tuner. It includes a tuner, string winder, string cutter, string stretcher and bridge-pin puller.

The Planet Waves Full-Function Tuner and Metronome is a practice workstation for the advanced player. It includes a sweep/strobe rotary tuner and a professional metronome.

The Planet Waves Pedal Tuner is housed in a rugged, die-cast body with black chrome finish. It features a true hard bypass that preserves the player's tone when the pedal is not being used.

For more information, contact: D'Addario Canada, 50 W. Wilmot St., #13, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 1M5 (905) 889-0116, FAX (905) 889-8998, orders@daddariocanada.com, www.daddariocanada.com.

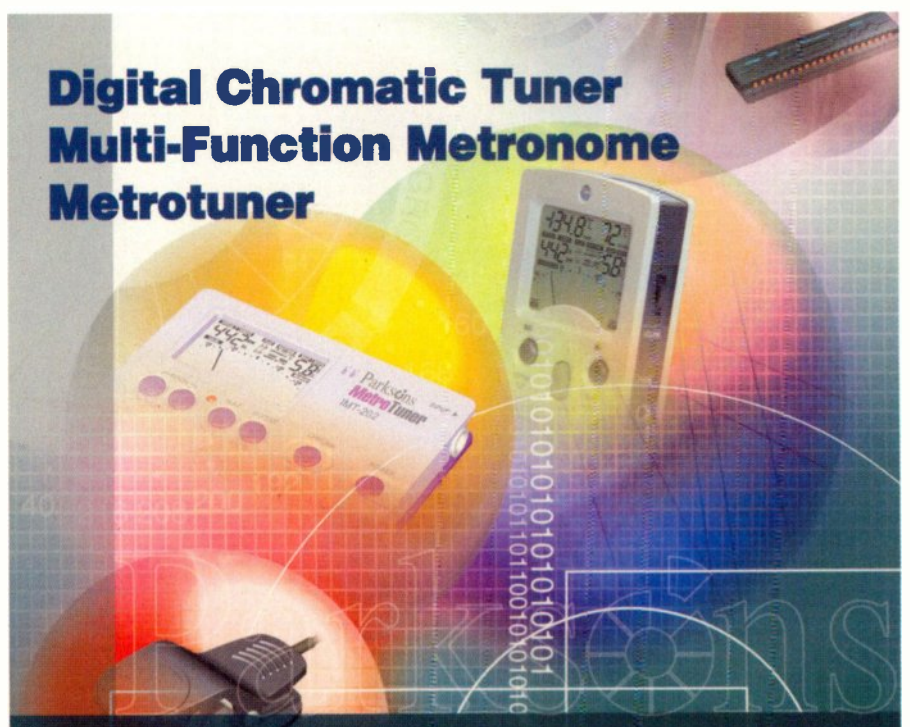
Avatar has recently released a new guitar cabinet, the G212H Premier. The G212H is available in red, green, brown, black, orange or blonde tolex covering. The cabinet's fabric grilles come in vintage wheat, black, vintage Fender and oxblood with standard or vintage logo badge. White piping adds the finishing touch. This portable cabinet is great with combo amps, heads and rack systems. Customers can choose from and combine Celestion, Hellatone and Eminence speakers. Customers also have the option of the Premier or Premier Vintage configurations, and an open or closed back cabinet. The Vintage version has a slightly different design with a valance front and larger dimensions of 24 x 30 x 12". The open back lets the mids and highs from the back of the speaker cone out into the room, creating a larger spatial quality, while the closed back provides a more focused tone and more bottom end.

The G212H Premier is made from 13-ply Baltic Birch and is constructed with dovetail corner joints with the front and backboards dadoed into the top, bottom and sides. The speakers are rear mounted with T-Nuts and it features protective nickel corners, rubber feet and large steel bar handles.

Available in either 4 ohm mono, 8 ohm mono, 16 ohm mono, 8 ohm stereo and 16 ohm stereo, the G212H Premier has two 1/4" in/out jacks. It is 21" high, 28 1/2" wide and 12 1/2" deep and weighs between 45-55 pounds, depending on the speakers.

For more information, contact: Steamco Music, 49 Rosewarne Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2M 0V8 (204) 237-4299, steamco@mts.net, www.steamcomusic.com.

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# Sonor SQ2 Drum System

Sonor has recently introduced the new SQ2 Drum System that allows drummers to build their own custom drumset from the ground up by choosing from a variety of options.

To create your signature sound first select the shell material. You can choose from Birch, Maple, Beech and X-Ray Acrylic. Then decide the shell construction. For a full, mellow tone with high volume, then a medium or heavy shell is recommended. If you want a sound that is more flexible then go for a vintage or thin shell.

After your shells are chosen you can choose the dimension of your drum from over 100 sizes for tom toms, floor toms, bass drums, snare drums and gong toms. Finally you can choose between different solutions on how to mount and adjust your drums. The APS (Advanced Projection System) comes standard as well. Choose from seven different finish categories: Natural Satin Wood, Satin High Gloss, Satin Fade High Gloss, Sparkle High Gloss, Sparkle Fade High Gloss, Solid High Gloss and Solid Fade High Gloss. There are three types of metal finishes that you can choose for your rims, lugs and mounts: Chrome, Black Chrome and Gold Plated.

The SQ2 Drum System features a new Tune Safe locking device that ensures consistent drumhead tuning. It works by turning a tension rod to set the exact tension position. This line also features 600 Series Hardware, which features the Easy-grip adjustment knobs on all top ratchets for fast and safe settings.

Log on to [www.sonor.com](http://www.sonor.com) to check out the SQ2 Drum Configurator that allows you to design your SQ2 setup. It's available for free online and each of your configurations can be saved under your username and password. You can also compare other setups before you finalize your decision.

For more information, contact: Coast Music, 21000 Trans-Canada Hwy., Baie D'Urfe, PQ H9X 4B7 (514) 457-2555, FAX (514) 457-0055, [info@coastmusic.com](mailto:info@coastmusic.com), [www.coastmusic.com](http://www.coastmusic.com).



Sonor's SQ2 drums were debuted at this past January's NAMM Show. Pictured are Karl-Heinz Menzel of Sonor and Scott Atkins of Coast Music.

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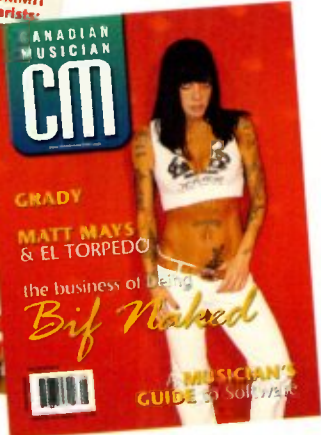
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# iCoustic Enterprises iCoustic System



iCoustic Enterprises LLC has recently released a new technology, the iCoustic System. This technology was created to add more power and sound to the acoustic guitar and allows you to attach your acoustic guitar to many portable digital devices. iCoustic Enterprises says that the iCoustic System is the merger of the acoustic guitar with the digital age.

With one flip of a switch, your mini acoustic will sound and feel like a full size acoustic. In today's technological advancements, such as MP3s, you can now listen to those songs by using your mini acoustic as a portable speaker and play along. Connect a Korg ToneWorks PXR4 to your mini acoustic and record multiple tracks and play them back using only your guitar. With the iCoustic System you can use effects pedals without an amp or PA system and also connect two or more guitars together using a standard guitar cable. When connected to another guitar you will hear and feel that guitar playing inside of yours.

For more information, contact: iCoustic Enterprises LLC, 6549 Crestpointe, Dallas, TX 75240 (877) 426-8784, [ken@icoustic.com](mailto:ken@icoustic.com) or [bob@icoustic.com](mailto:bob@icoustic.com), [www.icoustic.com](http://www.icoustic.com).



Taye Original Birch-Basswood AntiqueHoney 14x7

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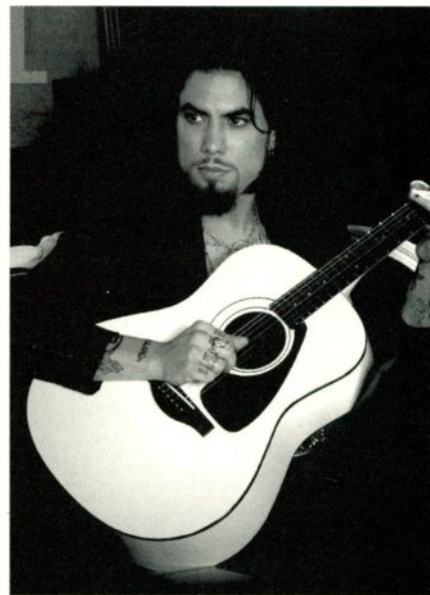
Taye Original 10ply maple Tung Oil 14x5

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SolidMaple 14x5.5 Tung Oil



## Yamaha LLXDN Acoustic/Electric



Yamaha Canada has recently released a new Dave Navarro signature acoustic/electric guitar line, the LLX6DN.

This limited edition line was designed with the same playability, natural tone and electronics as the LLX6 line, but with a bold visual statement and versatility for all genres. It features a multi-ply Maple body with black binding, a 25.5" scale length Mahogany neck and an Ebony fingerboard with star inlays. It also has an Ebony bridge, black tuners with Pearlloid buttons and a high-gloss white finish with a black rosette.

The internal construction on the LLX6DN includes Yamaha's Non-Scalloped 90-degree X-Bracing for a more focused midrange. It is also constructed with SQ Frame Side Bracing that enhances low and low-mid response. It has a NC Neck Block design for easy coupling of the neck and body.

The electronics include a system 45 two-way pre-amp with 3-band EQ and phase switch and mic balance control. It also has a combination of a piezo bridge pickup and condenser mic near the sound hole that is mounted on an adjustable gooseneck.

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](http://www.yamaha.ca).





# Godin Guitars A&L GT



Godin Guitars has recently released a new addition to its line of acoustic Art and Lutherie guitars, the A&L GT.

The A&L GT is the first gloss top model in this line and is available in either Antique Burst or Trans Red. The neck is silver leaf Maple, has a radius of 16" and a scale length of 24.84". The fingerboard and bridge is Indian Rosewood, the back and sides are 3-way laminate wild cherry and the top is solid Cedar for the Antique Burst or solid Spruce for the Trans Red. The saddle and top nut is Tusq and the nut width is 1.72" while the machine heads are A&L 14:1 ratio tuning machines. The A&L GT has a nitrocellulose lacquer finish and is available with the Godin Quantum 1 electronics system with under saddle transducer for the guitarist who wants more control over their amplified sound.

For more information, contact: Godin Guitars, 19420 Clark Graham Ave., Baie D'Urfe, PQ H9X 3R8 (514) 457-7977, FAX (514) 457-5774, info@godinguitars.com, www.godinguitars.com.



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- Give us a Call at 1-877-RING-NWC (746-4692)





# BOSS BR-600

BOSS has recently released a new portable digital recording device for musicians to record band rehearsals and gigs, the BR-600.

The BR-600 has eight tracks that each contain eight V-Tracks (virtual tracks), providing 64 tracks of recorded material. The tracks can also be manipulated with the built-in effects. Musicians can fix their mistakes and master their mixes with the COSM guitar and bass amp models, chorus, delay, reverb, EQ and pitch correction.

This digital recorder also has a built-in drum machine that provides nearly 300 drum and percussion patterns. Beats can also be programmed from the velocity-sensitive pads. The BR-600 operates on six AA batteries or AC and it also has a stereo microphone built in. It records directly to the included Compact Flash card and comes with a carrying bag and XLR-to-1/4" mic adapter.

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



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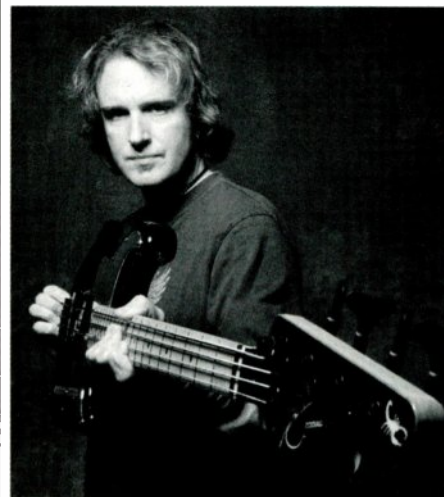
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## Peavey Zodiac DE Scorpio



Peavey has recently released a new bass line, the Zodiac Series. The first bass to be released in this line is the signature Zodiac DE Scorpio, designed with metal bassist David Ellefson.

The Zodiac DE Scorpio was named Scorpio after Ellefson's sign in the astrological zodiac and was built with a solid Alder body with sculpted front and back contours. It features both J-style and P-style Seymour Duncan Quarter-Pound pickups, a steel bridge and machined steel saddles. It has a 34" scale length with 21 frets. The Maple neck is 8" in radius and has a Rosewood fingerboard. It features a black finish with a chrome-plated pickguard, all chrome-plated hardware, passive electronics, two master volume controls and one master tone control. It has a 1.5" nut width, Switchcraft jack and butterfly tuning pegs.

For more information, contact: Peavey, 5022 Hartley Peavey Dr., Meridian, MS 39305 (601) 483-5365, FAX (601) 486-1278, [intsales@peavey.com](mailto:intsales@peavey.com), [www.peavey.com](http://www.peavey.com).

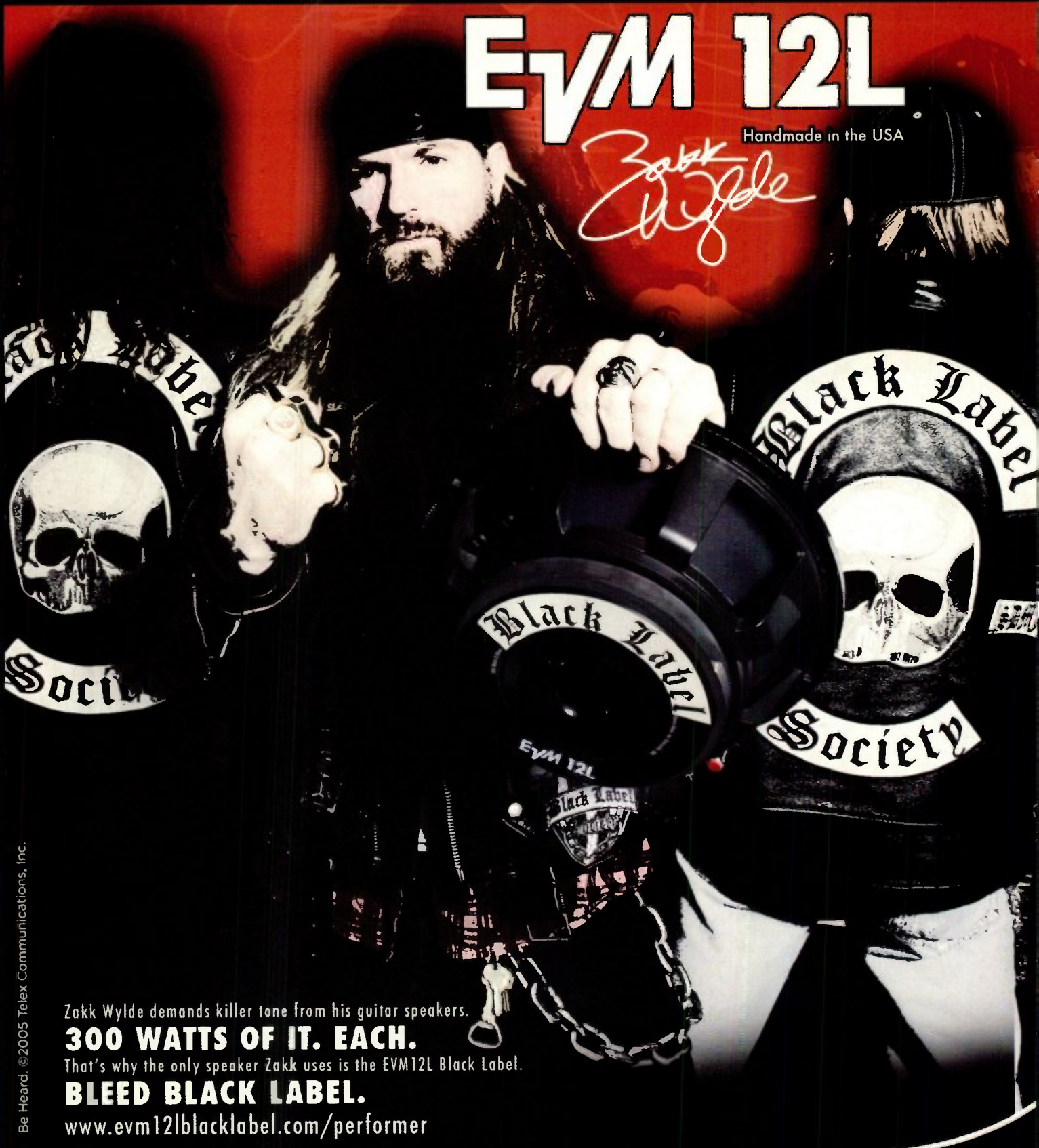


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## Line 6 LowDown Amps

Music gear manufacturer, Line 6, Inc. has recently released a new line of bass amps for live and studio use, LowDown LD150, LD175 and LD300. The LD150 features a 12" speaker and is housed in a tilt back monitor design at 150 W. Both the LD175 and LD300 feature a 15" speaker with a horn. The LD175 is 175 W and the LD300 is 300 W.

Each amplifier in the LowDown line features a collection of bass effects such as a modelled vintage studio compressor, Bass Synth, Chorus, Envelope Follower and Octaver. They also have four programmable channels, a footswitch jack, headphone out, line in and XLR direct out.

For more information, contact: SF Marketing Inc., 325, Boul. Bouchard, Dorval, PQ H9S 1A9 (514) 780-2070, FAX (514) 780-2111, info@sfm.ca, www.sfm.ca.

## SABIAN Vault Ride



SABIAN has recently released a 20" Vault Ride cymbal that combines a top that features pinpoint lathing with a bottom that's unlathed.

The unlathed bottom focuses the cymbal's clean response at every volume and ensures that the sound remains the same. When a stick hits the top, the sound is crisp and is projected without vibration. The Vault Ride was hand crafted from B20 bronze and is the latest in the Vault Collection. It is available in Brilliant Finish.

For more information, contact: SABIAN Ltd., 219 Main St., Meductic, NB E6H 2L5 (506) 272-2019, FAX (506) 272-1265, sabian@sabian.com, www.sabian.com.

## TC-Helicon VoiceSolo



TC-Helicon has recently released a new line of personal voice monitors for live stage use, the VoiceSolo. This new line of nearfield voice monitors is optimized for live vocals and is easy to set up with conventional mic stands and booms. The three models available are the passive VSM-200P monitor, the active VSM-200 monitor and the active VSM-300 monitor that features advanced connectivity and personal mix controls.

Each of the monitors use the ICT true point source driver that reproduces the human voice and cuts through the mix so the singer can hear great vocals. Each monitor is housed in a rugged cast aluminum enclosure and offers a variety of mounting options. Both the VSM-200 and VSM-300 include a 150 W BASH amplifier, volume control and mic/line input. The VSM-300 also offers I/O box with mic in, stereo instrument, aux, splits and front personal mix controls that includes VoiceShape tone circuit.

For more information, contact: Power Group Ltd., 7105A Edwards Blvd., Mississauga, ON L5S 1Z2 (905) 405-1229, FAX (905) 405-1885, sales@power-music.com, www.power-music.com.



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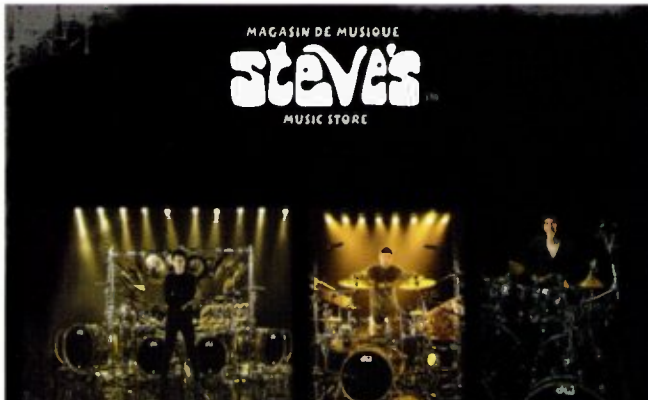
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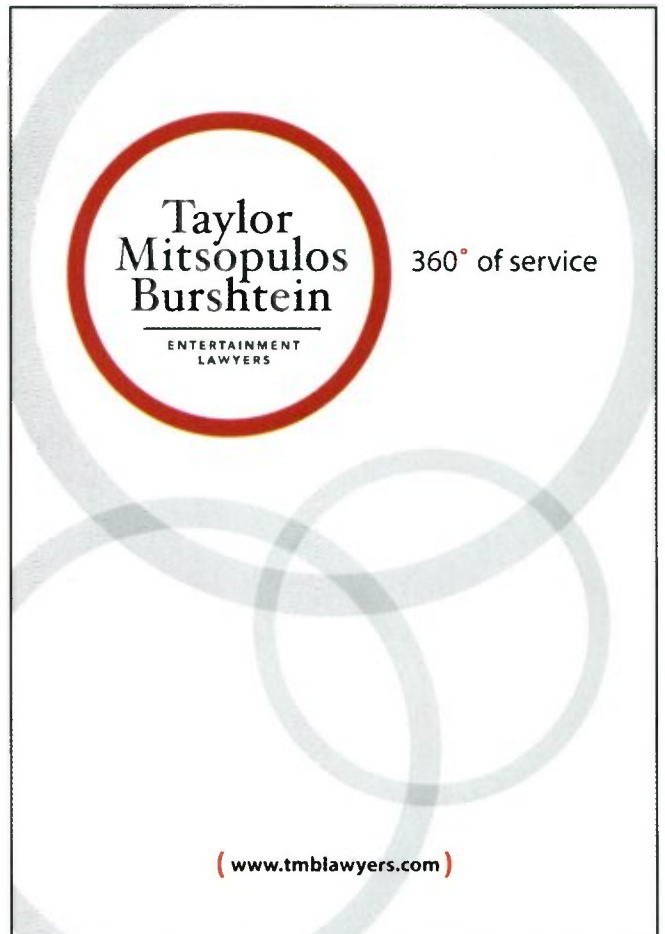
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by Karen Bliss

**Die Mannequin****Who:** Die Mannequin**Where:** Toronto, ON**What:** burn baby**Contact:** Shull Management, Paul Shull 55 Rosevear Ave., Toronto, ON M4C 1Z1 (416) 778-7000, paul@shullmgt.com, www.myspace.com/diemannequin.

Care Failure doesn't play *cute* – in any sense, personally, musically or vocally. And, God, it's so refreshing. This is her life and if she fucks up, well, she'll write another great song or battle her demons again, or both. On her band Die Mannequin's EP, *How To Kill*, she played everything, except drums, which Death From Above 1979's Jesse Keeler took care of, since she hadn't yet put together a permanent band. Under the name MSTRKRFT, Keeler and partner AI P produced the four tracks, including radio-be-damned-rock smashes "Autumn Cannibalist" and "Donut Kill Self". The 19-year-old left home at 16 and had a tumultuous affair with hard drugs (she openly writes in her bio), but fortuitously came to the attention of the right people (from Harry Hesse to Keeler to EMI Music Publishing Canada to Shull Management) who wanted to give her a break, set her on the right path and direct her fire. And even if other teens can't relate specifically to her story, many will take heed. After all, what can young girls possibly glean from Jessica, Britney or even Beyonce? Care doesn't even have a booty!

**Paper Moon****Who:** Paper Moon**Where:** Winnipeg, MB**What:** endearing**Contact:** Endearing Records, (604) 773-0115, info@endearing.com, www.endearing.com, www.myspace.com/papermoonmusic.

On the band's second album, *Broken Hearts Break Faster Every Day*, the quintet-turned-sextet creates romantic light pop that seamlessly connects each song from "Turning Colours To Greys" to "Daytrip to Salzburg" to the closer. Produced by Brandon Friesen, and mixed and mastered by Greg Reely, its Six Pence None The Richer meets Stars style can entice the indie music lovers but also draw in the sophisticates (do yuppies still exist?). Formed in 2000, Paper Moon (it's surprising it can use the name) signed a publishing deal with Nettwerk Songs Publishing and has since collaborated with members of Nada Surf, Ivy and the Hermit, not to mention landed songs in some 20 films and TV shows. Most of the tracks on *Broken Hearts* are penned by the band, however, there are a few outside contributors, including Ivy's Andy Chase on "String Of Blinking Lights". The band is signed to Vancouver's Endearing Records, and distributed by Endearing Records/Fontana North. The line-up is Allison Shervemoha (vocals/guitars); Chris Hiebert (drums/percussion); Rob Rodgers (bass/vocals); John Wilson (guitars); Nicole Pielo (keyboards/guitar/violin/vocals), who all appear on the album, and Leslie Workman (keyboards/guitar/vocals).

**Jay Bizzy****Who:** Jay Bizzy**Where:** Halifax, NS**What:** get bizzy**Contact:** Urbnet, PO Box 10617, 998 Bloor Street W., Toronto ON, M6H 1L8 (647) 271-7736, info@urbnetrecords.com, www.jaybizzy.com.

Jay Bizzy (a.k.a. Jay Flemming) grew up in Shelburne, NS, where in 1999, the aspiring MC created an anthem for the town of about 2,000 when he recorded "U R Shelburne When," popularized on Napster. Later, he moved back to his native Halifax, where local rapper/producer Classified helped him make his 2002 debut CD, *Hard Rhymes In The Maritimes*. The ECMA-nominated album gave him cred and he landed opening slots for the likes of The Game, Busta Rhymes, Kardinal Offishall, Rascalz, and Buck 65. On his second album, the 16-track *The Ghost Of Jacob Marley*, he offers to "take you on a trip to Nova Scotia/Show ya hip-hop the way yer s'posed ta." His tracks are eclectic, chilled and fun, ranging in flavor from the Jamaican interjections of "Get Busy On 'Em", featuring Rocky Ninja to the jazzy "The Party Crasher". Produced by Classified, Fresh Kills, Jorun, Beatmason, and Dexter Doolittle, 13 of the tracks were recorded at Beatmason's Stonecutter Labs, the other three at Classified's Hallfide Studios.



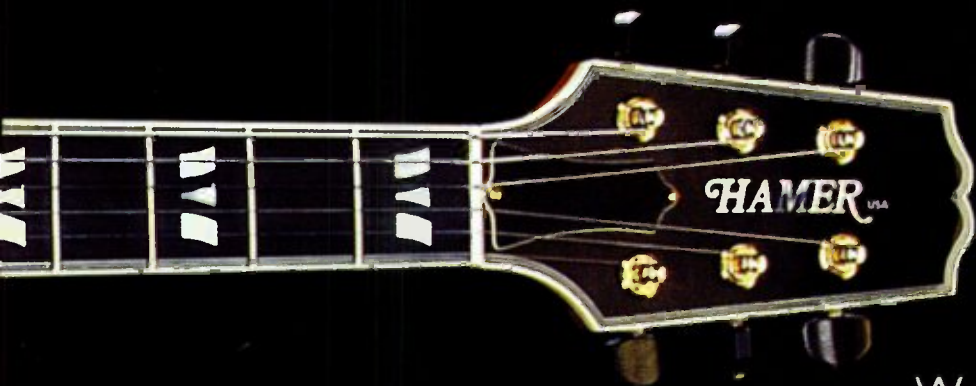
Toronto music journalist Karen Bliss is the Canadian correspondent for *RollingStone.com*, and operates her own Canadian music news column, *Lowdown*, at <http://jam.canoe.ca/Music/Lowdown/>. She also contributes pieces twice a week to local TV show *Inside Jam* on Sun TV. In addition, she writes for TIME Canada, Gasoline, Teen Tribute, Words & Music, Access, and others.

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