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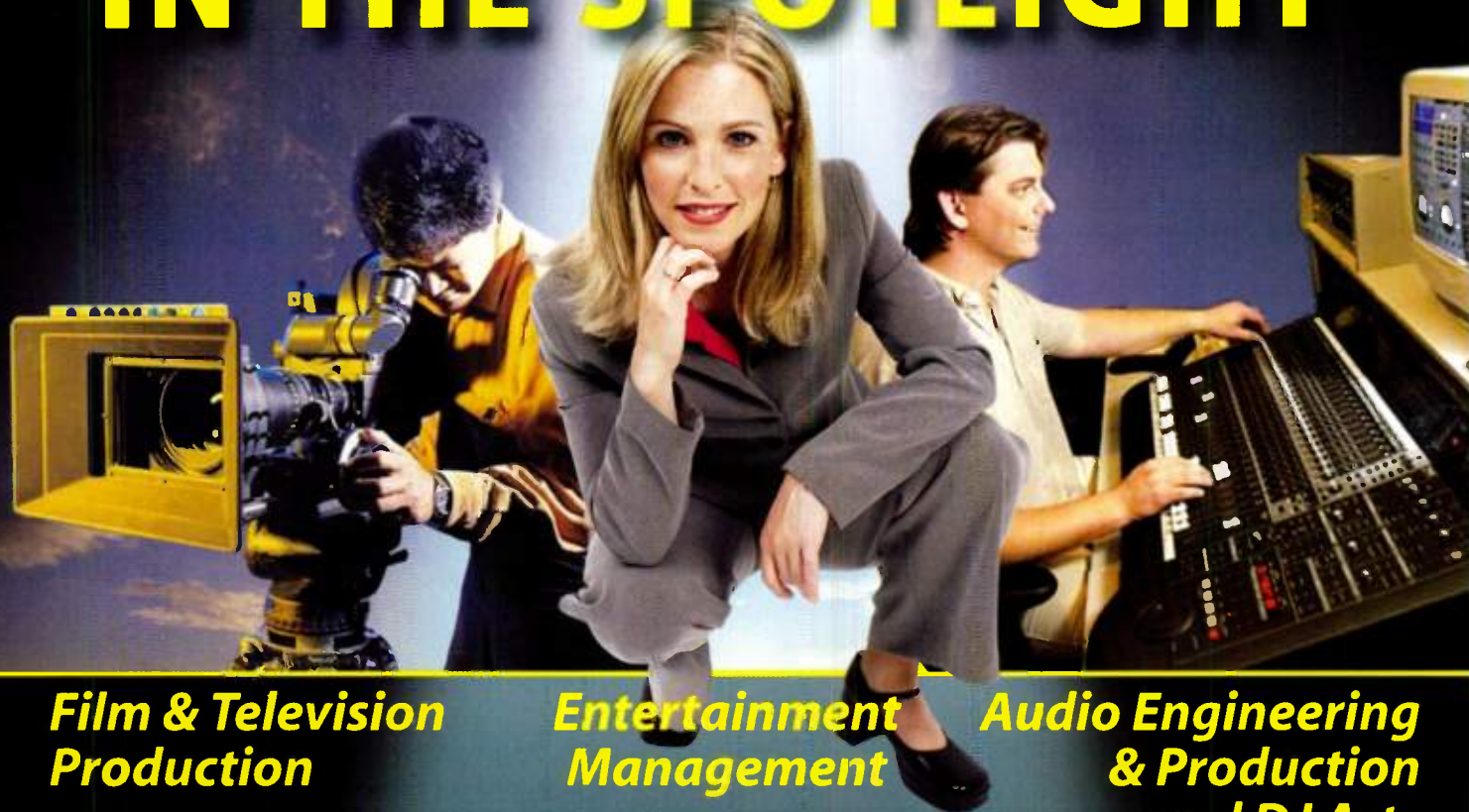


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The Debate Continues...

Dear CM,

Regarding "Computers Have Killed Music?"

On the one side we have "live musicians good, computers bad," and the other side the opposite, but in reality I think a balanced approach is what is working today.

I do play real drums, but use sampled drum sounds for the quality. I use desktop audio editing and recording software to produce and mix my tracks. I can play each instrument if I like and I can use my 1939 Hammond D, real guitars and basses, plus all kinds of digital sounds at my disposal. The end result is music played by a real musician (me) but with some of the sounds being sampled. This is not a case of "pushing a button" to create music, it requires all the musicianship skills in addition to engineering and production skills.

When working in the band I am in, we bounce energy off of one another to get better performances, but it's still nice to be able to go in later and tweak things, or even change a track.

I think most studios use similar tactics these days, which is why I feel this argument required a bit of balance.

John Lister
Lancaster, ON

**Ed. John, you're absolutely right. I admit that sometimes it's too tempting to play devil's advocate when I respond to letters! When I see someone taking an entirely one-sided view on something, I'll try to show the exact opposite side of the coin. In all honesty I do agree with what you've said above about the answer being somewhere in the middle. Have computers killed musicians' careers? Probably yes in some instances, and no in others, such as yourself, who has adapted to learn both forms of creating music.*

FeedBack

Do Flyers Work?

Dear CM,

Not so much a comment as a question. I have been reading your CM magazine for about two years now. I have a close friend, the lead singer with her band. The articles in your magazine have helped me help her with launching her career. My query is about promoting. How effective are flyers to get people to come to a show. In business, a normal expectation is a 2 per cent return, is this the same for the music industry. Is this an effective medium? I really respect your advise in your articles, and would value your input. Thank you.

Vijay
Petawawa, ON

**Ed. That's a good question Vijay. I can't recall if we've ever printed an article specifically about the impact flyers can have on promoting a show. Perhaps it's something we could include in a future article. Maybe some other readers can write in and tell us how it's affected their shows... we can be reached at feedback@canadianmusician.com.*



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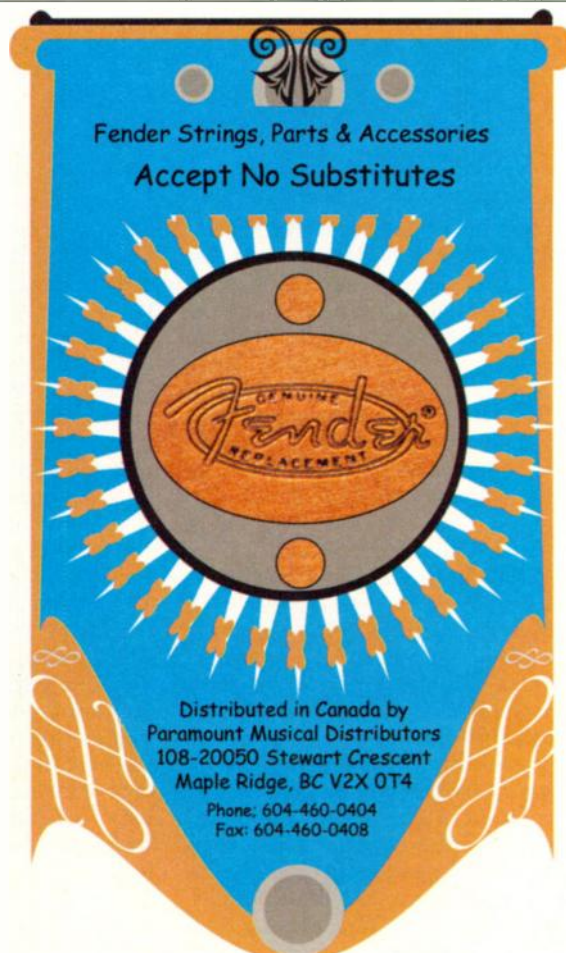
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Applying To Showcases

by Katie VanSlack

■ There are hundreds of festivals and events that take place throughout the year where musicians can showcase their talent and meet other artists, network with music industry professionals and in some cases win some great prizes. But what's all involved with actually applying to and playing at showcases?



Daara playing at Vancouver Folk Music Festival.

The first thing to consider when researching festivals and showcases is if your style of music will be suitable for the showcase. Most showcases will state what genre they're looking for. Do some research to find out what the festival does and what type of performers they presented in the past. Angela Harris, Performer Services for the Vancouver Folk Music Festival (VFM) suggests that you should look at archives and research some of the artists' Web sites that have been in the festival. This will give you a good idea if you fit in musically. Travis Bird, Manager for North By Northeast (NXNE), says that services such as Sonicbids, an online submission platform, allows artists to find hundreds of genre-specific festivals, everything from folk to classical. Once you have your list of festivals that your band would fit into, Bessie Bullard, Communications Director for Canadian Music Week (CMW), says that the main thing to consider is if you are ready and able to perform. Are you available to perform during the show dates? You should also know about travel costs, how prepared your band is and what your goals are.

After verifying the showcases that you would fit into and are able to perform at, research how you need to apply. "What's really important to us is that the artists or agents have respected our process and gone to the Web site and read through all of the steps and procedures

and followed them," says Harris, "because they're in place specifically for us to manage them that way." VFM has a link on their Web site that takes you to the downloadable application form. She says that they look for one page telling what the artist is about, describing their music, history, awards and maybe whom they've performed with. They also look for a one-page discography of albums they have and new releases, and a CD and contact information. As most artists have Web sites, Harris says that a photo isn't required for the submission. "We can see their face on the Web site. We would ask for the black and white glossy photos only in the event that they're hired and we would need them for publicity purposes."

Submissions for NXNE can be done in two forms. One is to mail in a package with your CD, bio, photos, any press reviews of your show and information on what your band is about. They also request a stage plot and input list so they can see what the setup of the band is like and plan accordingly. The other way is through Sonicbids, creating an Electronic Press Kit (EPK). "This is becoming more and more requested as it is a much easier to deal with," says Bird. "It's an easy way to track and log all of the submissions that we get and leave comments right in the press kits." Sonicbids helps you set up your EPK, upload your songs, photos and all that's needed. Bird also suggests that by getting a membership with Sonicbids you're able to apply to hundreds of festivals without having to mail individual packages. He says that if you are submitting via mail, to make your submission as simple as possible. "We get all sorts of clever packages and really it just ends up being more of a pain if anything. It doesn't affect or sway their chances of getting into the festival at all because really we're just looking at the music and the actual submission." All of the typed information should be on white paper for easy photocopying, and don't put pages into page protectors as this just creates more work for the staff. If there is a cheque or money order included with the package for the fee of applying make sure it's secured within the package and use paper clips to keep it all together.

Bird was right when he said that Sonicbids is becoming more popular, as CMW only accepts showcase appli-

cations this way in EPK form. "Generally the EPK consists of a bio, photo, audio samples, contact information, discography, tour dates, press/reviews, etc." Says Bullard, "They're encouraged to include as much information as possible to ensure a complete EPK."

Also consider the costs involved when applying. Harris says that the only costs involved in applying to VFM are two sheets of paper, a CD and whatever postage is needed. She adds that the CD needs to be recorded in a professional manner and acceptable in the world of



Elliot Brood performing at CMW.

radio and TV. "They can send a sample of their record to us or burn their record at home, we just want to hear their music." Bird says that the submission fee for NXNE is \$30 at the most, with some early-bird deadlines. "Outside of that it's going to be whatever you're putting into your press kits." He adds, "There is a fee to join Sonicbids, but if you're submitting to a particular festival (such as NXNE) they usually include the membership fee with your first submission to that festival." Bullard says that the CMW fee for bands that already have an EPK is \$45, and \$49.95 for those that don't. This fee also includes the Sonicbids membership fee.

Most showcase associations, including NXNE and CMW, will not accept any submissions after the deadline. He says that Sonicbids members will receive a notice saying when the final day is to

day is to submit materials. "We have the deadlines there so we can get through all of the submissions." VFM, however, accepts submissions all year round. "Especially from an agent or artist who called us ahead of time and asked us for permission. I'll always say yes," says Harris. So if you think you may be late in submitting your application, call the organizers to see if there's any way you can be considered for the showcase, or find out when the deadline for the next showcase will be, and make sure you don't miss it.

Once you've submitted your application you may be wondering if it was safely received. Remember that there are thousands of musicians applying to the same showcase as you and the organizers don't need a hundred calls a day. Take comfort in knowing that nearly all showcases will contact you to let you know that your submission was received. After that initial contact you will most likely only be contacted again if you're chosen for the showcase. Bird suggests that if you mail in your submission and you don't hear anything for one to two months then it's a good idea to follow

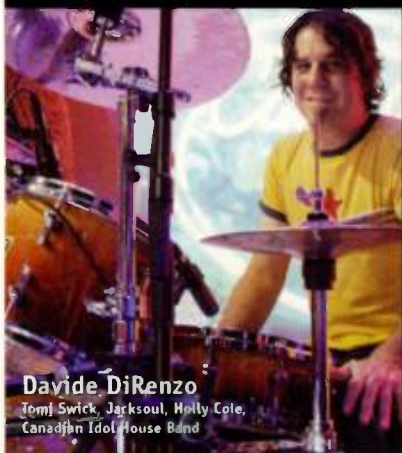


Stars performing at CMW.

up because it could have got lost in the mail. Harris, on the other hand, says that artists should always follow up when applying to VFM. "We don't promote use of paper or time and money spent and for it to not go to good use. So if we get that follow up call then that reinstates that in our heads that this package has come and we should give some consideration to it." She adds that they don't want artists calling every couple of days or once a week to see if they listened to their CD yet, just one call is plenty. Bullard says that one of the advantages of Sonicbids is that all submissions are guaranteed to be received, "Thus, bypassing the need for artists to follow up with our festival team. As soon as an artist submits their EPK, they receive a confirmation e-mail. At the same time our festival team receives an e-mail alert notifying them of an artist's submission."

Broaden your band's horizons by getting out there and showcasing your music. Research as many showcases and festivals as you can and respect the way each association works. A great place to start looking for showcases and festivals is at Sonicbids, www.sonicbids.com.

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2nd Annual TMX Draws Near

■ "Everything Music Under One Roof" is the phrase used by show organizers to describe the 2nd Annual Toronto Music Expo (TMX), set to be held on September 30-October 1, at the International Centre.

TMX will feature live performances, seminars and workshops. There will also be hundreds of exhibitors displaying musical instruments, sheet music, pro audio gear, music education, music associations, home electronics, broadcasting, podcasting, digital music, software, CDs, DVDs, home theatre, the music business, home recording, memorabilia, apparel and everything else musical. Free parking will be available for over 5,000 vehicles. The International Centre is located minutes from Toronto's Pearson International Airport, and 20 minutes from downtown Toronto.

The Roland Rhythm Experience, held in conjunction with TMX, is open to both experienced and student drummers and will allow musicians to explore 4,000 sq. ft. of hands-on percussion stations featuring everything from hand percussion to professional V-Drums kits. Roland representatives will be on-site to offer advice and answer questions. Rhythm and percussion games will offer some great prizes. Two percussion artists have been slated to perform at the Roland Rhythm Experience, Omar Hakim and Johnny Rabb.

Both artists will teach a Master Class in the TMX Seminar Series be-

fore their performances. "Roland is proud to be associated with TMX. Our Roland Rhythm Experience creates the opportunity for artists and attendees to interact and share the joy of music," said Kim Nunney, President of Roland Canada. "We are thrilled to provide such an important international component to TMX and contribute to its overall success."



The TMX Seminar Series will include over 30 seminars and workshops that will focus on three streams, Business, Performance and Technology. Topics include how to get a record deal, vocals, songwriting, digital recording, guitar, keyboards, DJ technologies and Pro Tools.

The highlight of the seminar series is "The Future of the Music Business" featuring Jake Gold, industry expert and *Canadian Idol* Judge.

The Coalition for Music Education (CMEC) Silent Auction will also be held at the show. CMEC supporters and TMX exhibitors will provide the

auction items and all attendees are welcome to bid. The bidding will be done electronically on terminals in the Silent Auction area and all bidders will get an access code so they can monitor the action and make bids from home. All proceeds will go to the CMEC, which supports music education in Canada.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to take part in an interactive drum circle, presented by Mountain Rythm. Participants will have access to a hand-made Mountain Rythm hand drum. This will take place on Saturday, Sept. 30, at 4 p.m.

The TMX Mainstage will feature a wide range of talent and genres from jazz to rock and indie to icon. Sign up for the electronic TMX Newsletters online at www.torontomusicexpo.com to get the latest updates on new performers, attractions, seminars and more as they're announced.

TMX has also arranged for an official Host Hotel, the Toronto Airport Marriott, to offer discount prices. From Thursday, Sept. 28-Monday, Oct. 2, attendees can get a special room rate of \$119 CDN per night. Just mention the TMX rate when booking. Contact the Toronto Airport Marriott at (416) 674-9400, Toll-free (800) 228-9290, FAX (416) 674-8292, www.marriott.com.

For more information, contact: Toronto Music Expo Inc., (877) 746-4692, info@torontomusicexpo.com, www.torontomusicexpo.com.

Prairie Oyster Signs To Open Road Recordings

■ Open Road Recordings has recently signed the Canadian roots rockers, Prairie Oyster to their roster of artists.

With 20 years under their belt, Prairie Oyster has recently released their new album *One Kiss* with "Sweet Sweet Girl" as the single. They came a long way since their first release, *Oyster Tracks* in 1986, collecting six Juno Awards, 11 CCMA Awards and 14 RPM Big Country Awards. They've been described as having a country/bluegrass/folk spirit style.

Their new album features Keith Glass on guitar, Russell deCarle as lead vocals and guitar, Joan Besen on keyboards, John P. Allen on fiddle, Dennis Delorme on pedal steel, John Adames on drums, Frank Barth on trombone and Chris Whiteley on trumpet. "I'm really proud of the fact that it went so smoothly," said deCarle. "I believe this is our best record to date in terms of the collection of songs and the playing."

One Kiss was recorded at Audio Valley in Perth, ON and was mixed by L. Stu Young, who also worked for Prince and David Wilcox. "I've been looking forward to releasing this new CD and letting music fans hear how amazing it is," said Ron Kitchener of Open Road Recordings. "The band is sounding better than ever and the songs are all first class, a creative gem that everyone needs to hear."

For more information, visit www.openroadrecordings.com or www.prairieoyster.com.



PASIC 2006

■ The 30th Annual Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) is coming up on Nov. 8-11, and will be held for the first time in Austin, TX. Confirmed artists, competitions and scholarships have been announced.

More than 150 concerts, clinics, master classes, labs, workshops, panels and presentations will be held at the largest percussion event in the world. All areas of percussion will be showcased, including, drumset, marching, keyboard, symphonic, world, recreational, education, music technology, new music and health and wellness.

Confirmed artists include Kenwood Dennard, Benny Greb, Rodney Holmes, John Riley and Gil Sharone on drumset. Double Image David Friedman and Dave Samules and Japanese marimba artist Keiko Abe with the University of North Texas Wind Symphony will present evening concerts. Eugene Migliaro Corporon will direct this with UNT percussionists Mark Ford, Christopher Deane, Robert Schietroma, Paul Rennick and Brian Zator. Steven Schick will present the Focus Day while Daniella Ganeva presents keyboard. Ed Saindon, Key Play and Ed Soph with the Stefan Karlsson Trio will present the late night concerts. Bill Bachman and the Santa Clara Vanguard Percussion Section will present marching. Thomas Burritt with the University of Texas Wind Ensemble, Minoru Miki and Brian Zator will present the showcase concerts.

The International Drum and Percussion Expo will take place during PASIC from Nov. 9-11, and will feature over 130 percussion related manufacturers, publishers and organizations. Attendees will be able to view the latest instruments, sticks, mallets, accessories, music and related products and services.

The PASIC Indoor Marching Percussion Festival will also take place on Nov. 9 and 10. This is a competition for high school and collegiate drumlines and solo performers to be critiqued by some of the leading percussionists. Participants will have access to the clinics and concerts for all four days. The categories for this competition are: Individuals College and High School snare, tenor, keyboard and timpani; Marching College and High School, 10+ members; Standstill College and High School 10+ members and Small Ensemble College and High School, three to nine members.

Other competitions to be held during PASIC include the Percussive Arts Society Solo Competition, PASIC 2006 Mock Timpani Audition, PAS International Percussion Ensemble Competition and the Annual Percussion Composition Contest.

Scholarships available include the PASIC Scholarship, PAS Armand Zildjian Percussion Scholarship, PAS Hudson Music Drumset Scholarship, The PAS/Remo, Inc. Fred Hoey Memorial Scholarship, PAS/SABIAN, Ltd. Larrie Londin Memorial Scholarship, PAS/Yamaha Terry Gibbs Vibraphone Scholarship and The Don Glasby Scholarship. The Zildjian Family Opportunity Fund is the PAS Grant that's available.

The PAS Drum Circle Facilitation

Workshop will be held again on Nov. 12, from 12-5 p.m. This is open to drummers and non-drummers who will be able to experiment with a variety of instruments. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own drums. Registration for the workshop is \$55 for PAS members and \$65 for non-members. These fees include access to the PASIC Drum and Percussion Expo and Terrace Concerts on Nov. 11.

For more information, visit www.pasic.org.

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KoSA Eleven International Percussion & Cuba Workshop & Festival



■ The 11th KoSA International Percussion Workshop & Festival was held from Aug. 7-13, at Johnson State College in Johnson, VT. Hundreds of people from many nations, ages and skill levels enjoyed the festival as they "rediscovered

their soul".

Participants from the UK, Belgium, Canada and the US enjoyed hands-on training and the experience of living and working with the Faculty. This

year's Faculty included Memo Acevedo, John Amira, Clayton Cameron, Mario DeCiutiis, Kenwood Dennard, Cassio Duarte, Dom Famularo, Vera Figueiredo, Gary France, David Friedman, Gordon Gottlieb, Jamey Haddad, Giovanni Hidalgo, Kalani, Mark Kelso, Aldo Mazza, Bill Meligari, Allan Molnar, Valerie Naranjo, Bernard Purdie, Lou Robinson, Antonio Sanchez, Jeff Salisbury, Marie-Josée Simard, Ed Soph, Rick Van Horn, Glen Velez, Michael Wimberly, Shauni Borden, Jennifer Vincent, Steve Blair and Rafael Alcalá.

Every night there was a KoSA Music Festival that featured the Faculty performing to an estimated 1,000 drum and percussion enthusiasts. New this year was the *Live at KoSA DVD* that features master classes and concert highlights. This was possible with the teaming of KoSA and Hudson Music. The 2nd KoSA/Modern Drummer full scholarship essay-writing contest was held again. Four scholarships were awarded by Tama, Mapex, Factory Metal and Evans. The winners include Cory Porter and Jim Richardson of Canada and Jeremiah Baumgarten and Mark Leonard of the US.

The next KoSA event is the fifth edition of the KoSA Cuba Workshop, which will be taking place from Oct. 22-29, in Havana, Cuba.

KoSA will be working in collaboration with a Canadian school for drums and percussion who organize yearly workshops in the US and Cuba. Divantoura will be coordinating the participation for Belgians and Europeans. Top drummers and percussionists will teach attendees techniques from cultures of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and Europe. Genres from pop to rock, ethnic to classic, instruments played by hand to marimba and drums to new technology and traditional will be practiced. The workshops are open to beginners and advanced players as well as bass players. To participate visit www.divantoura.com and click on "Themareizen".

For more information, contact: KoSA Communications, PO Box 333, Station A, Montreal, PQ H3C 2S1 (514) 482-5554, Toll-free (800) 541-8401, FAX (514) 483-2226, info@kosamusic.com, www.kosamusic.com.

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Will Calhoun Performs Clinics In Canada

■ The drummer for Living Colour, Will Calhoun, will be holding four clinics across Canada where attendees can watch him perform.

In addition to the educational value of these clinics, Calhoun will present his improvisational techniques, a Q&A session and autograph signings. Since switching to Mapex drums last year, he has performed Mapex clinics in Germany, Holland, Budapest, Hungary, New Zealand, Indonesia, the US and France. He also plays SABIAN cymbals and Vic Firth sticks.

The clinics will kick off on Sept. 28, in Calgary, AB at the Steinway Concert Hall, which is located at 152, 6999-11th St., S.E. This will begin at 6:30 p.m., and will be hosted by Axe Music Calgary. The second clinic will be on Sept. 29, at the John L Haar Theatre in Edmonton, AB. This venue is located at Grant MacEwan College, Centre for the Arts Campus, 10045-156 St. Hosted by Axe Music Edmonton, the event will start at 7 p.m. The third clinic will be on Sept. 30, at Just Drums, 5431 Yonge St., Toronto, ON. Beginning at 2 pm., this is hosted by Just Drums. The final clinic will hit Montreal, PQ's Theatre Plaza, located at 6505 St-Hubert on Oct. 1. This will begin at 7:30 p.m. and is hosted by Drum Bazar.

Calhoun is known for his blend of improvisational and hard rock drumming as well as his songwriting and producing skills. He received a Grammy Award in 1989 for Best Hard Rock Performance, and Living Colour won an International Rock Award in 1991 for Best Rock Band. He has worked with many artists such as B.B. King, Mick Jagger, Jaco Pastorius, Harry Belafonte, Pharoah Sanders, Jack DeJohnette, Paul Simon, Lou Reed, Marcus Miller, Dr. John, Carly Simon, Herb Alpert, Ron Wood, Wayne Shorter, Run-DMC and Public Enemy.

For more information, contact: Calgary Steinway Concert Hall, (403) 243-5200; Edmonton Grant MacEwan College, Centre for the Arts Campus, (780) 471-2001; Toronto Just Drums, (416) 226-1211; Montreal Theatre Plaza, (514) 276-3786.



Living Colour drummer, Will Calhoun.

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■ 2nd Annual Toronto Music Expo (TMX)

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info@torontomusicexpo.com,
www.torontomusicexpo.com

■ Celtic Colours International Festival

Cape Breton, NS
October 6-14, 2006
(902) 562-6700, (877) 285-2321
info@celtic-colours.com,
www.celtic-colours.com

■ 20th Ontario Council of Folk Festivals (OCFF)

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

■ Western Canadian Music Awards 2006

Winnipeg, MB
October 19-22, 2006
(204) 943-8485, FAX (204) 453-1594
info@wcmw.ca,
www.westerncanadianmusicawards.ca

■ KoSA Eleven Cuba Workshop & Festival

Havana, Cuba
October 22-29, 2006
(514) 482-5554, (800) 541-8401,
FAX (514) 483-2226
info@kosamusic.com,
www.kosamusic.com

■ Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC)

Austin, TX
November 8-11, 2006
(580) 353-1455, FAX (580) 353-1456
percarts@pas.org, www.pas.org

■ Montreal Drum Fest 2006

Montreal, PQ
November 10-12, 2006
(866) 834-4257
info@montrealdrumfest.com,
www.montrealdrumfest.com

■ CINARS 2006

Montreal, PQ
November 14-18, 2006
(514) 842-5866, FAX (514) 843-3168
arts@cinars.org, www.cinars.org

■ 2007 International Association For Jazz Education (IAJE) Conference

New York, NY
January 10-13, 2007
(785) 776-8744, FAX (785) 776-6190
info@iaje.org, www.iaje.org

■ 41st Midem Annual Music Market

Cannes, France
January 21-25, 2007
+33 (0) 1 4190 4460,
FAX +33 (0) 1 4190 4450
info.midem@reedmidem.com,
www.midem.com

■ 19th Annual International Folk Alliance Conference

Memphis, TN
February 21-25, 2007
(301) 588-8185, FAX (301) 588-8186
fa@folk.org, www.folk.org

■ 25th Canadian Music Week

Toronto, ON
March 7-10, 2007
(905) 858-4747, FAX (905) 858-4848
info@cmw.net, www.cmw.net

■ South By Southwest (SXSW) 2007

Austin, TX
March 9-18, 2007
(512) 467-7979, FAX (512) 451-0754
sxsw@sxsw.com, www.sxsw.com

■ Montreal International Musical Competition (MIMC) Voice 2007

Montreal, PQ
May 22-June 1, 2007
(514) 845-4108, FAX (514) 845-8241
info@jeunessesmusicales.com,
www.jeunessesmusicales.com

■ 30th Vancouver Folk Music Festival

Vancouver, BC
July 13-15, 2007
(604) 602-9798, (800) 883-3655,
FAX (604) 602-9790
info@thefestival.bc.ca,
www.thefestival.bc.ca

■ 2007 National Flute Association Convention

Albuquerque, NM
August 9-12, 2007
(661) 299-6680, FAX (661) 299-6681
nfaconvention@aol.com,
www.nfaonline.org

■ Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC)

Columbus, OH
October 31-November 3, 2007
(580) 353-1455, FAX (580) 353-1456
percarts@pas.org, www.pas.org

■ 50th College Music Society (CMS) National Conference

Salt Lake City, UT
November 15-18, 2007
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Godin A8 Mandolin

by James Linderman

■ As a full-time guitar player and teacher I find that I can only realistically devote so much time and energy to the mandolin, considering it a wonderful secondary instrument I sometimes play.

This secondary status is slowly and steadily changing however, as I get asked for the mandolin at more and more gigs and also occasionally in the studio now. Apparently my non-traditional approach and limitations on the mandolin are now considered my "style" and I am acquiring a buzz as a non-traditionalist. Who knew?

Actually, what the buzz is really all about is that, in a world dominated by the sound of the guitar, the mandolin brings a fresh new sound to a song that's just outside mainstream and just above mid-range.

It's not much use, however, to feature a fresh instrument into the mix like the mandolin without considering the quality of the instrument being used, and if it's substandard in any way, it will certainly compromise a performance rather than enhance it.

Many mandolins, especially low-end instruments and particularly those not designed to be amplified, somehow manage to be annoyingly tinny sounding and yet also somehow manage to sound muddy too, at the same time.

The other common liabilities to a poorly made mandolin are intonation issues which affect the instrument's ability to sound in-tune in every key, and dead frets which can bring your blistering solo to a tragic halt (solo-us interruptus) and leave your chord without a root (chordal root non gratus).

Considering the length and width of the fingerboard, it's amazing that so much can go wrong in such a small space, but almost every economy line mandolin seems to suffer from an irreparable functional liability.

With a consideration of replacing the mandolin I have now, which is a pretty good, but older, traditional instrument, I was recently encouraged to take the Godin A8 mandolin for a test drive and here's what I found.

The first thing I noticed about the Godin A8 is its very contemporary look.

I first saw the natural satin finish model which looks a great deal like an acoustic guitar natural finish on

an electric guitar body shape. Later, I got a chance to see the other colour it comes in, which is a cognac burst in a high-gloss finish. Both finish options are really attractive in their own right and the first thing I thought of was how cool it would look to match it up with the guitars I use on stage. My only concern would be that the satin finish would not be a great choice if you wanted the mandolin's finish to stand up to a lot of wear and tear. Road warriors would be better off with the gloss finish I would think.

As for the feel of the mandolin, the first thing I noticed was how comfortable and completely balanced the A8 felt compared to more traditional instruments. It feels like it's been designed and crafted specifically for guitar players with the same visual and tactile appeal of some of Godin's other A series models. The neck shape and fingerboard arc in particular are so very guitar-like that the challenge of switching back and forth from guitar to mandolin, song by song, became completely effortless.

The jewel in the crown of the Godin A8 is the electronics. Godin has engineered the A8 to be an ideal instrument for any playing situation where you are plugging in, but want the natural acoustic sound usually enjoyed only when playing the instrument unplugged.

The A8 features a Custom RMC Electronics pickup system with individual saddle-mounted transducers designed specifically for the mandolin. With its "on the body" volume and three tone fader-style controls (volume, treble, mid and bass), the A8 offers a wide spectrum of tone options and with its built in preamp, it shows lots of presence and gain. At any volume you will hear "clear" and "warm" rather than "tinny" and "muddy".

The A8 also sounds very sweet as an acoustic instrument due to its solid Spruce top and a two-chamber body



A8 Mandolin with Cognac finish.

design that features an exclusive combination x and fan bracing system on a Mahogany body. It may however not be a good fit for anyone looking at a more traditional style and sound, especially if you have set aside enough money for a really high-end luthiered instrument.

With strap locks and high-end tuners included, you have a mandolin as comfortable on the front porch as it is at an arena gig and is priced well below its more traditional competition.

The manufacturer's suggested retail price for the A8 is \$989 for the Natural SG and \$1,092 for the Cognac Burst HG. Both instruments come with a gig bag.

For more product 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.

James Linderman lives and works at theharmonyhouse, 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.musemuse.com (3 million readers monthly), Canadian Musician magazine, Songwriters magazine, Professional Musician magazine, Songwriters of Wisconsin International and The Dallas Songwriters Association. Contact James at theharmonyhouse@rogers.com.

Manufacturer's Comments

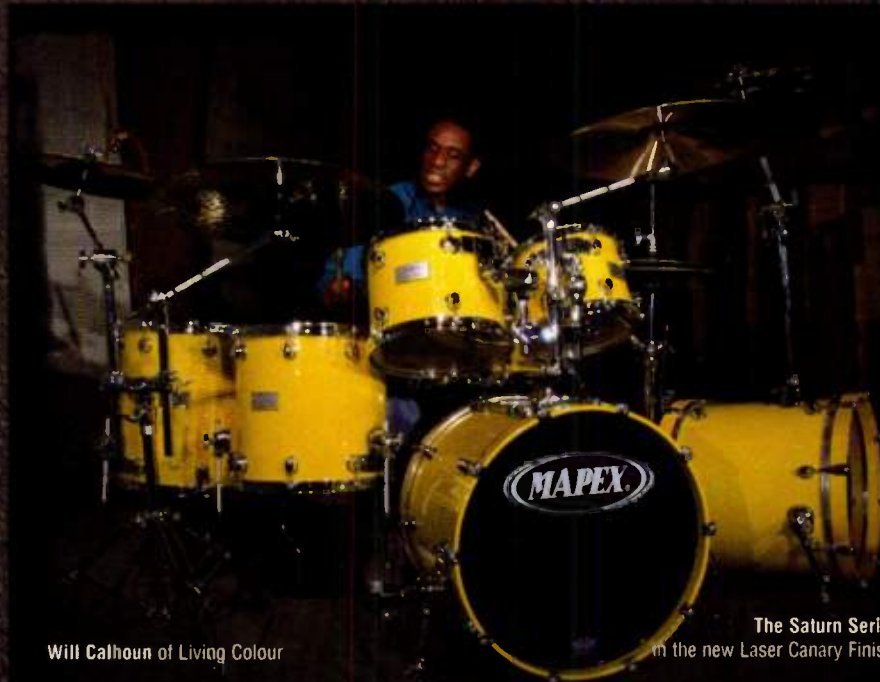
The Godin A8's comfortable feel, ease of playability, high level of craftsmanship and contemporary design are traits found in all of our guitars. It's a common thread that links back to Robert Godin's own search for continued, innovative ways to push the envelope of guitar building and new guitar concepts. Proudly made in Canada, the Go-

din Guitar family now includes six brands, including Godin, Seagull, Simon & Patrick, Norman, Art & Lutherie and LaPatrie. Check out the A8 and other new guitar concepts at www.godinguitars.com.

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Will Calhoun

Canadian Clinic Tour



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September 28

Steinway Concert Hall
152, 6999-11th Street S.E.
Hosted by: Axe Music Calgary
Contact: (403) 243-5200

6:30 PM



Edmonton
September 29

John L. Haar Theatre
Grant MacEwan College
Centre for the Arts Campus
10045-156 St.
Hosted by: Axe Music Edmonton
Contact: (780) 471-2001

7:00 PM



Toronto
September 30

Just Drums
5431 Yonge St.
Hosted by: Just Drums
Contact: (416) 226-1211

2:00 PM



Montreal
October 1

Theatre Plaza
6505 St-Hubert
Hosted by: Drum Bazar
Contact: (514) 276-3786

7:30 PM



Ashdown ABM EVO II 500

by Chuck Dailey

■ This is an awesome amp! Taking it on tour with The Salads, I quickly learned that this amp can rock any size club. It is a beautiful looking, and sounding, amp when indoors. Every single sound guy in clubs from Vancouver to Toronto has been ecstatic about the cleanliness and power they receive from the amp's Direct Out. It made me proud to be using it until I got into outdoor festival and stadium settings. I had to play it on full and was still bending over to hear it. Outdoors is truly a different world when playing through amplifiers. Lots of power is necessary and unfortunately this incredible sounding amp I have been having so much fun with in rock clubs hasn't been cutting it outside. Thankfully, Ashdown makes a head twice as powerful and hopefully I can get my hands on one when I get home from this rock and roll adventure.



My first impression of the head when opening the box was true excitement – the amp is gorgeous! Probably one of the best-designed amps I have ever laid my eyes on. A lot of care has been put into the esthetics of this beauty. It is so retro. It has the look of an American car from the '50s (although built in the UK). It appears to be road ready in its "road case," minus a lid. Travelling across the country can be very tough on gear, especially at outdoor festivals, as we have been doing. When getting ready for this tour I decided I should throw it in a proper case so that the knobs wouldn't get crushed and the amp itself wouldn't get full of dirt, dust, and possibly rain. This was a frustrating, difficult task. I pulled the amp out of its casing (which would have got torn and battered if I took it as is) and noticed that the amp couldn't be racked. I found out online that you can get a chassis for the EVO-500, which I didn't have time to order, but you can't rackmount the EVO-900, which is the actual festival power I need. I was surprised to find that it can't be kept safe on the road without travelling with it in a separate case and pulling it out each day. Kind of disappointing, but after four hours I had the whole thing in a road case surrounded with padding to keep it safe from any unfortunate spills and to help maintain its sexiness!

I have blown up a lot of speakers with various bass amps while playing in The Salads. Taking this Ashdown amp on tour is saving my speakers, but hurting my sound some of the time. It is an incredibly clean sounding amp if you want it to be and can grunge out with the valve drive if need be. It's just amazing in clubs, both big and small. I play my Musicman Stingray5 through it and it sounds full. Equalizing is so precise that you can move just about any knob just a little bit and the sound is totally different. So you have millions of

ways to define your sound. It is a Solid State amp with a tube in the preamp. The tube really gives the vintage sound to the whole amp. I leave the settings at mid-point and it sounds great. I've used SWR, Eden, GK, Hartke and Ampeg, setups and this is the closest to an Ampeg without the weight and it has more clarity. This could be due the double cooling fans in the back, which are incredibly quiet. I believe they operate at a slower speed than traditional amps to help reduce noise. The EVO-500 and 900 come with sub-out (for an external powered low frequency cab), tuner out, pre and post EQ DI out, sub harmonizer, on the front panel and an effects loop on the back. It also has a mute button and footswitch capability for every option of the amp. Pretty freaking cool! For the outdoor festivals it has become obvious that I need a more powerful amp than this 500. The 900 would at least give me some headroom. Throughout The Salads Warped tour dates and at EdFest in Edmonton I had to turn the amp's input and output levels up to full and still needed more sound. I had my sidewash and my monitors cranked to help compensate. When I tried to boost the volume with the EQ and Valve drive, my Ampeg 6 x 10 cabinet, to my surprise, started buzzing. I've never had this problem with the cabinet, and with more powerful heads. The same thing happened at Warped through an 8 x 10 Mark Bass cabinet. The only solution was to turn off all the EQ options of the amp and just run it completely flat leaving zero headroom. I bet this could all be solved pretty quickly with a rack-mountable version of the EVOII-900. I doubt I would ever have to fight with that much power.

I am back to playing clubs starting today and for the remainder of this tour and thankfully get to enjoy this awesome amp properly. At least until the first week of August when we head back out for the final Warped dates. By then I will hopefully be able to switch this 500 up to the 900 and enjoy the incredible sound of this head with some more space to play. The last thing you want to be doing in front of 5,000-10,000 fans is sitting still in front of your cabinet to hear yourself. I love this amp a lot and feel really cool with it glowing behind me on jumbo-trons but could simply use some more volume!

The manufacturer's suggested retail price is \$1,299.99.

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

Chuck Dailey is bassist for The Salads.

Distributor's Comments

Chuck is 100 per cent correct. The ABM 500 II is made for clubs, both big and small alike. The ABM 900 EVO II is a 575+575 watt twin channel amplifier and is built to have enough power for any venue, including clubs, arenas, festivals and stadiums! Under the circumstances, he would have been better suited with the ABM900 for his current tour.

Jeremy Berger
Power Group

Schecter Export Series

by Levon Ichkhanian

Tempest Extreme and Omen Extra

The History of Schecter began in 1976 as a "replacement part" company. The company is now under ownership, since 1989, which was when the company moved back to California from Dallas, TX. Crafted with remarkable attention to detail, Schecter guitars are available in an exciting range of styles. (This is due to the company president Michael Ciravolo's liking of non-traditional shapes) finishes and colours. One of the distinguishing qualities of the Schecter brand is that all guitars are inspected and set up for optimum playability, prior to being sent to the dealer. Also noteworthy, is their extensive offering of left-handed models and the fact that they are the first guitar company that produced a 7-string model with a low "B" as opposed to a high "A".

The guitars I have reviewed are part of the Diamond Extreme Export series:

Extreme Series means: you get Figured Maple tops with different finishes (Black Cherry with black hardware, Amber with Gold hardware and Tobacco Sunburst with Chrome hardware) and Vector inlays (instead of standard dots for all non-Extreme models).

Diamond Series means: that the guitars and basses are manufactured in Korea or China, and 100 per cent set up in the USA, in Schecter's Burbank, CA facility. The only other series available is the Custom Shop series, which are 100 per cent handmade in USA. The Custom instruments are handmade to order only.

Export Series means: Schecter guitars have always been manufactured in Korea but the Export instruments are made by one of the finest guitar manufacturers in China. This way, Schecter is able to offer a quality product to the market at a very competitive price and high quality.

Export Series Configuration availability:

OMEN: Omen 6, Omen 6 FR (with licensed Floyd Rose locking tremolo), Omen 7, Omen Extreme 6, Omen Extreme 6 FR (Floyd Rose Tremolo system) and Omen Extreme 7.

TEMPEST: 006 DLX, right- and left-handed, 006 Extreme.

The Omen and the Tempest played beautifully out of the box in terms of response and smoothness. Great tone for both! Schecter has not spared any-

thing to make these guitars sound and look great (just check the spec combinations above) and since these guitars are made in China they are offered to the consumer at very reasonable prices.

I found the Tempest model very warm sounding. It is slightly heavier, with a more full body shape and different feel from the Omen (scale length and number of frets, neck width).

It played evenly throughout the fretboard and the tones coming out of the different selection of the two humbucker combinations were very impressive.

The Omen has the warmth and the edge to kick it up a bit, great sustain (through body bridge). It has lots of tone possibilities, is equipped with the two Schecter high output Alnico humbuckers (same as the Tempest model). On top of that, it offers a push pull coil tap on the tone control knob, to transform the humbucker pickup to a single coil.

The body shape naturally lends itself to be played. It is modelled after Schecter's C1 model, the company's own design and most recognized body shape. Both guitars offer a good amount of output.

Please note: Gig bags or cases are not included with any of these.

With the playability, quality, the variety of configurations (7-string, Floyd Rose...) and a suggested list price for the export series positioned between \$479 and \$749 you should try them at your local music store, you cannot go wrong!

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

Tempest Extreme

Construction: Bolt-on
Body: Basswood with figured Maple top
Neck: Maple
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 22
Scale: 24.75"
Inlays: Vector
Pickups: 2 Schecter high output Alnico humbuckers
Bridge: TOM with stop tail
Binding: White
Hardware: Chrome
Colour: Black Cherry



Omen Extreme

Construction: Bolt-on
Body: Basswood with figured Maple top
Neck: Maple
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 24
Scale: 25.5"
Inlays: Dots
Pickups: 2 Schecter high output Alnico humbuckers
Bridge: TOM with thru-body
Binding: White
Hardware: Black (3185), Gold (3186), Chrome (3187)
Available colours: Black Cherry (3185), Amber (3186), Tobacco Sunburst (3187)



Multi-Instrumentalist Levon Ichkhanian is a D'Addario clinician. He plays guitars, Oud, Bouzouki, Mandol and Banjitar. Levon's musical experiences range from producing, composing and recording to touring. He has played on over 80 commercially released CDs. Levon's travels, the follow up to after hours with guests John Patitucci and Paquito D'Rivera blends contemporary Jazz with worldbeat overtones and features Alain Caron. Upon his return from A.R. Rahman's 3D world tour, Levon is currently playing in the Orchestra for The Lord Of The Rings stage production. Contact Levon through www.levonmusic.com.

Distributor's Comment

This new range of instruments now makes Schecter quality and innovation available to a whole new legion of players looking for an instrument in the \$400-600 range. Along with these comes a broad selection of left-handed instruments, as well as several guitars equipped with Floyd Rose Tremolo systems. We proudly displayed the brand new Seymour Duncan Designed Active

pickup system exclusive to Schecter throughout 2006. These guitars offer truly impressive gain and tone, and are clearly aimed at those players looking for a more "aggressive" sounding guitar!

Jeff Szant
VP Music Instrumental Division
SF Marketing

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SE *Singlet*

PRG

Technique Versus Inspiration

by Vivian Clement

Last Summer I went down with a few musician buddies to one of the local watering holes to see this great guitarist perform. We all watched in awe as this guy ripped up and down the fretboard like he was the one who had actually invented the guitar. Although it was obvious that he knew his instrument inside and out, the most memorable thing was how he was so "in the zone" the whole night. He was the epitome of the zone.

Being in the zone, I would venture to say should be the goal of all musicians. If you haven't yet heard about the zone, it's that extraordinary place where you get totally immersed in the moment. Where every note played is effortless and magical. In his classic book *Effort-*

less Mastery author Kenny Werner goes to great lengths to convince the reader that playing in the zone is really the only way to go. Learning to play scales, riffs, chords and everything else you need to know to be able to manipulate our instrument, is only the introduction to our journey as musicians. The real object is to learn the necessary techniques, allow them to sink into your subconscious, then let go and let your playing take over. Warner explores the theory that our biggest obstacle is our ego: our need for approval by others and our fear of making mistakes. This mind-set causes us to focus on the wrong things. We are no longer playing music for inspiration's sake but to inflate our egos. We are playing to impress our friends and show them how great we are.

We've all experienced those moments by ourselves where we played for hours on end because we felt motivated to do so. We discovered that space where time disappears and we are infused with the intoxicating power of music. We felt at one with our instrument and when we finish we sense this deep contentment that is truly difficult to put into words. These experiences are the fuel that keep us hungering for more. The trap is when we shift our attitude over to where we use that inspiration to drive us to become better. Of course wanting to be better is part of evolving, but in our quest for improvement, we tend to abandon the habit of remaining inspired. It's easy to get out of the zone and elevate our technique above everything else. The shift is very subtle and its course causes us to deviate from our intended aim. It's similar to the proverbial parallel lines, where both lines start out at the same place but one line is slightly angled. If that line is then drawn out it will keep moving away from the other line so that eventually it is miles away from its original point. The same applies to our growth in music. The straight line is our inspiration. This is the one that we know to be the most important. But our technique can be that curved line leading us down a path where our playing becomes mechanical and empty.

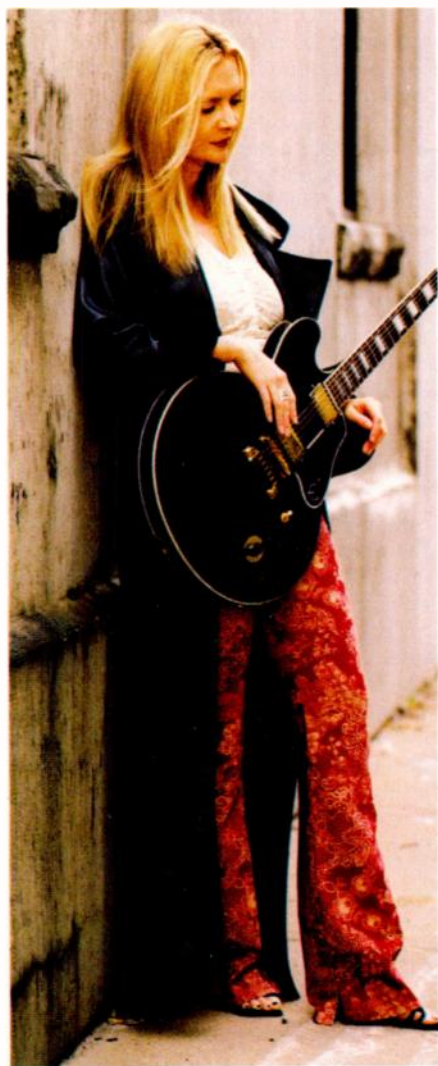
Often when we start out as musicians, we possess great passion. We are having such a wonderful time practicing, jamming and writing our own music that we hardly notice how much work we really

need. But somewhere along the way we start to put more emphasis on our technique. We work tirelessly in order to improve our skills, and then are rewarded by seeing our hard work start to show up in our playing. People begin to comment on our improvement and this sets us off to work even harder. If we are not careful, we can lose sight of our initial intent. Many of us started playing because we saw someone perform who just blew us away and we knew we just had to have that same ability. Wasn't it inspiration that gave birth to our decision to buy a guitar and give it a try in the first place?

When I was in high school I took art classes. I learned how to paint with oils, acrylic and water. I learned about the different brushes to use to accomplish different effects. I didn't really care at the time about technique and brushes, I was just anxious to start painting and see what I could come up with. I enjoyed the creativity of art and the ability to be able to start with nothing and end up with something completely unexpected (sometimes very unexpected!). What I found was amazing about art, was the journey itself. It really didn't matter if I could paint or not, I was swept away by creativity. In this respect music is similar to art. Musicians must always endeavour to find that place of inspiration and play from that place. When we are in learning mode and are spending time on the nitty gritty, we must be quick to merge our new tools with our passion. It's easy to lift up technique on a pedestal. We must keep in the forefront that technique is only the vehicle used to get where we are going and not the goal itself.

Although I occasionally I take out my brushes to paint, I have never mastered the techniques required to be a great artist. I understand the importance of technique, particularly since I have studied guitar for quite a while. I know that inspiration and technique are both important components necessary to reach excellence. But I also know that technique alone is lifeless and mechanical. Inspiration and technique need to work in concert so we can be complete, balanced musicians.

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



Focusing On The Negative

by Kevin Young

I once had a teacher tear a chart away from me in the middle of an improv class. To be fair I wasn't really using it that effectively anyway. I'd known the song would be part of the class for just under a week, had plenty of time to run through it and get the changes in my hands, but hadn't bothered. In fact, the first time I'd looked at it was when I put it in front of me and started to play. I don't remember the song, but I do remember that although it included a fair number of altered chords, it wasn't terribly harmonically complex.



Long story short: After relieving me of the chart, the teacher spat a couple of chords and a scale source at me and told me to stop thinking about what I was doing and just play. Needless to say, once I stopped obsessing over what I didn't know, things went far more smoothly.

It wasn't that the chart was hard. It wasn't that it was beyond my understanding or capabilities to follow it. It was that I got so caught up on hitting every change, playing the head and adding in some fiddly bits here and there that I'd stopped listening to

anyone else. I still have a tendency to overplay at times, but I've become much better at whittling parts down to size.

The empty spaces you choose to leave open are equally important to what notes you choose to play. When stripping your parts down, try to pay attention to the space between the notes. When you do, two things happen: first, you start to listen to other players more effectively and lock into the overall feel. Secondly, you begin to have a clearer idea of what you can add, how you can glue it to other players' parts, and give yourself somewhere to go should you want to ramp up the intensity somewhere in the song, or take over as the main rhythmic component in a break down.

In addition to allowing more room overall this tends to help un-clutter the mid range. This doesn't necessarily mean your parts have to be completely gutted – just take some time to listen to what you're doing from an external perspective. Sometimes we get so into what we're playing, we forget to take a breath and listen critically to ourselves to see what the arrangement actually needs, instead of what we naturally like to add. Doing so can force us out of our comfort zone, open up new possibilities, and lead to some fresh technique and licks.

It can also allow you more room to play around with the actual parameters of the sound, to manipulate it using effects, EQ, and on-board controllers, leading to your creating unique signature sounds and expanding your technique on whatever device you're using.

Bear in mind that the intent of the part might be right, there just might be too much of it – making it overbearing as opposed to complimentary and supportive. There are a number of ways to strip your part down without losing the essence of what you're trying to do...

1. Use time dependant effects or play with the sound's envelope, or other parameters to create movement that supports the overall groove or intent of the song.

2. If the tune is particularly dense harmonically, and you're playing big stacks of chords, then back off a bit. Try different voicings that reinforce the melody. Or add an extension that works across multiple chords in the progression, or across an entire section of the song.

3. If you're playing something rhythmically complex that's interfering with a signature line, an essential part of the groove, or the melody, retool it to lock into one of those elements by altering your note choices, voicing, or notes that clutter the mid and low range. Drop the left hand, or change the register, or go to a sound that's not as thick. If you're trying to lock in with a particularly intricate rhythm, ditch the clutter and focus on what you need to play to stay locked. Simplify what you're playing so that the rhythmic, harmonic, or melodic movement is implied, rather than grabbing every key within reach.

Remember too, that you can simplify without playing less. Paying attention to space can also mean playing more notes...

A long, held pad, or nailing the changes with series of pads and an overbearing sound can make the arrangement sound like it's sinking in muck. Opt for a less dense sound, without a terribly strong attack and play a repeating pattern over the changes can add a similar degree of tension without bogging the whole arrangement down.

That said, sometimes what a piece needs is a big texture – something that, like a well crafted B3 part, fits well in the mix, disappearing and then reappearing as naturally as breathing, or a piano part that chugs along with the low end, adding depth and texture. Depending on the style and the instrumentation, sometimes the best strategy is to stay out of the way by getting right in the thick of things.

Kevin Young is a Toronto-based keyboardist, known for his playing with David Usher and Moist, among others.

First Time Buyer

by Brian Minato

What do you look for when you buy or are looking to buy your first bass guitar? Should it be new and possibly expensive? Used and possibly cheap? Is the bass in question the one your favourite musician uses? Did you read about a particular model or did somebody recommend one? What about buying online at eBay or Craigslist, through the Buy & Sell or at a pawnshop? Small local store or generic music store chain? Four strings or twelve?

This issue's article is a two-parter ... I think it's very important to talk about the many options and situations which can affect your decision making process; *especially* if you are new to the world of bass guitar.



price just like any other payment plan and you will pay more in the end. Top of the line basses cost top of the line dollars so you might want to consider the compromise of getting a bass that is reasonably priced. It might not be your first choice but if you are in it for the long haul you'll eventually end up with the one or the ones you've always wanted.

2) Model and Brand.

I have pretty small hands. Some basses are not very comfortable to play as a result. Try out a few different kinds of basses, different brands, different shapes and different sizes. You want to get a feel, a sense of what might be right or wrong for your situation. What is it like when you play it sitting or standing? Is it light or heavy? Does it feel good playing with a pick *and* with your fingers? Is the neck size a regular scale, short scale or long scale? Does it feel balanced when you're wearing it with a strap? The main thing is to look around as much as possible. And never be afraid to ask questions. Any questions?

3) What Kinds of Music Are You Interested in Playing?

Some instruments lend themselves naturally to certain kinds of music. If you are in a hard rock band you probably want to get something that will give you the necessary crunch and heaviness, which is part of the music like a Gibson Thunderbird. If you like a lot of mid-range punch you may want to check out a Music Man Stingray. If you like jazz, a fretless bass may be in order or an upright.

4) Bring Someone Who Knows

I started out playing a copy of a Jazz bass when I was 13. It was a decent, well made beginner bass, which didn't cost an arm and a leg to acquire. My bass teacher, Wayne Boychuck, helped me pick it out. Actually, he sorted it out completely as I had no prior experience in the buying or selling of any sort of instrument. It was a definite plus to have someone give me guidance so I wouldn't get ripped off when it came time to actually hand my money over for my new purchase. It's not just little kids who get burned either. A contemporary of mine wanted to get an effects pedal for his burgeoning pedal board setup. He hadn't bought many before so I offered to help him out, to come along to the music shop so he could find something solid and workable at the best price possible. I was out on the road with Sarah McLachlan for a while and he didn't want to wait. What happened was he ended up going to a local music shop and got talked into buying a pedal which cost way too much that wasn't all that suitable to his needs. This pedal now sits around gathering dust. It really does pay to have someone with you who knows about gear and stuff – especially if it's your first time buying a bass.

See you next issue for part two.

Here are some things to consider:

1) Price Range.

What do you want to spend or better yet what is your budget? Most musicians are balancing on fairly unstable financial ground, so be aware of what you are prepared to shell out. I'm a fan of making sure the money is in place (if possible) to get whatever it is that I'm looking for. That way the deal is over and done with at the beginning. Unfortunately, this scenario is the less common one to most of us working folk. This is where buying at a bigger music store can come into play. If your credit rating is okay, you can set up a payment plan and with minimal money down walk out of your local Long & McQuade or Steve's Music, etc., with your bass in hand. There will be interest added onto the overall purchase

Brian Minato is the bassist for Sarah McLachlan. He is also a Vancouver based musician/producer currently working with The Blue Alarm, Boywonderbread, Sandy Scofield, Jennifer Campbell, Chris Tait and other artists. Find him online at www.thebluealarm.com, www.myspace.com/thebluealarm.

Sub Please! With The Works Baby!

by Jeff Salem

Nothing is more satisfying than sinking your teeth into a delicious submarine sandwich loaded with all your favourite toppings when you crave a sub sandwich. I guess a bandleader can look at requiring a sub drummer in the same fashion. They will want someone who is loaded with all the great toppings, such as learning the tunes properly, playing the gig great, showing up on time, wearing the right clothing, etc. Let's have a look at what makes a great sub drummer and all the steps at being able to be called for gigs on a regular basis as a sub.

In my 20 years of performing professionally, I have had a chance on several occasions to be hired as a substitute drummer performing with rock bands, tribute acts, wedding bands and duets playing hand percussion. I have found that following the topics and guidelines below, you will put a smile on any bandleader's face. Bon appetite!



MATERIAL: This is the most important step. When you accept a gig, find out the group's song list ASAP. Ask the bandleader if he or she would have charts, CDs, MP3s or live video and recordings of their songs. If they don't have charts, I like to make road maps of all the tunes especially when I am not familiar with them. Also, I like to mark down the tempos of the songs and bring my metronome on the gig just so I can use that as a reference for tempos. Many drummers do this even if they are not a sub. A good example showing the use of a metronome on a performance is the drummer Abe Laboriel Jr. performing with Paul McCartney on the "Live 8" DVD that was released last year. Abe has the metronome up against his ear when he is counting off the tune "Helter Skelter". So you can see this is very important that we play songs at tempos the artist wants.

REHEARSAL: Sometimes the artist will want to rehearse and this is a great way to break the ice before the gig and get to know the other musicians and work out all the details before the gig. Make sure you show up to the rehearsal prepared knowing the songs. If time doesn't allow for a full band rehearsal, I like to do a talk through about the songs, endings, beginnings and which member is going to cue me, etc. I have sometimes done talk through rehearsals over the phone.

EQUIPMENT: This is an important part that drummers sometimes forget. The appropriate equipment necessary depends on the type of gig you will be performing. You don't want to bring a 24-inch bass drum with six toms and a gong to an intimate restaurant gig where most of the tunes you will play are with brushes and the stage is about the size of your bed. I have different sized drum kits for different genres of music as well as for the size of the room I will be performing in. Some of you will only own one kit and that is perfectly fine just as long as you are aware of the gigs you accept and if you feel your equipment is right for the job and that includes having the right tools for the gig. As well, ask if you need to bring microphones. I usually have my own bass drum microphone that I bring on gigs. You should also have a good range of various stick sizes as well as brushes for different musical styles.

ATTIRE: Many drummers forget about the importance of this aspect of the gig. Most of us probably practice in track pants or shorts and forget how to play if a suit or Tuxedo is required. One band I work with uses different colours every night. When the bandleader e-mails me a title that just says "Black", that's the colour for the night, if "Blue" is in the title and I don't have any blue clothes, I will purchase them. So remember that when accepting a gig, you must accept all responsibilities for it and know that you might have to invest a little in it as well.

LOCATION: Always find out the exact address, directions and load-in requirements. Most large hotels do not like to see drummers hauling their gear through the front door as the bellboy is assisting a guest checking in. Ensure that you know of an alternate entrance to the stage if there is one available.

RELIABILITY: This is almost as important as the performance itself. Find out what time you have to be there and be on time! We are not all perfect and certain circumstances beyond our control will allow us to fall behind, such as traffic, weather conditions, etc. In a situation such as this, make sure that you have the bandleader's cellular number if they have one as well as the venue's telephone number to ensure that a message will be delivered.

PERFORMANCE: This is where it all comes together. Make certain that you are prepared for the gig and know all the material that is being performed that evening. Be confident and most importantly, have a great time!

Jeff Salem is a freelance artist who performs with various bands and conducts drum clinics at local schools sponsored by Yamaha, SABIAN, Vic Firth, Latin Percussion(LP), Mountain Rythym, Evans Drum Heads, Real Feel Pads and the music store Drummer's Choice. Jeff is currently busy operating his own teaching school Jeff Salem's Music Studio.

For more information, please visit his school's Web site at www.jsmusicstudio.com and his personal one www.salemdrum.com or e-mail him at jsalem@sympatico.ca.

A Brazilian Primer

by Bill McBirnie

I have been meaning to do this for a while ... but I have always required a little time and effort to pull it together ... so here t'is...

As most of you probably recognize, Latin music plays a very important role in jazz. Accordingly, it is equally important to develop some facility in this area regardless of what instrument you play. However, if you are going to play jazz on flute, then you simply *must* learn about Latin music in a serious manner. Unlike more mainstream jazz contexts, the flute is actually a very common "voice" in Latin music. So both musicians and listeners will expect you as a jazz flutist to be able to deliver musically in this area. You should be able to do so in a thoughtful and idiomatically sensitive way. Of course, in order to meet that objective, you must first become familiar with the sound.

Broadly speaking, there are essentially two strains to Latin music; (1) Cuban and (2) Brazilian. I am going to confine myself to the Brazilian strain here (because I have previously written a piece for *Canadian Musician* bearing on the Cuban strain).

I will begin by delivering a caution: Brazilian music is so beautiful and captivating that you will find the task of investigation to be not at all arduous. In fact, in the course of delving into this idiom, you may find that you want to forget all about be-bop!

Brazilian music has both its indigenous and African roots but it also has some European influences. So it is important to begin by recognizing that Brazilian music is not just the bossa nova. In fact, Brazilian music is an enormously vast area that includes samba (of which the bossa nova is really merely a subset), batucada, baião, maracatu, afoxé, partido alto, choro, frevo as well as permutations and combinations of these various styles, etc. And, once you start to explore this music, you will also find that the number of truly great Brazilian writers and performers (notably the singers) is overwhelming. Although it is not really possible to do justice to the idiom here. I will try to do so by citing just 10 albums that helped me a great deal in learning about this vast area of music. These albums are as follows:

(1) Wayne Shorter, *Native Dancer* (Columbia)

This is a seminal jazz album that bears

an unusually strong Brazilian influence due to the presence of the great Milton Nascimento. Indeed, this was essentially Nascimento's introduction to North American audiences ... and became a Wayne Shorter classic...

(2) Milton Nascimento, *Miltons* (Columbia)

This is absolutely my favourite Nascimento album!

(3) Milton Nascimento, *Nascimento* (Warner Bros.)

Here he is again ... I admit that I am a bit of a Nascimento freak ... and I often return to this album too...



(4) Stan Getz & Joao Gilberto, *Getz/Gilberto* (Verve)

This is perhaps the classic bossa nova album (complete with the original versions of "Girl from Ipanema" and "Corcovado") and, although it may seem something of a hackneyed choice, it isn't – and precisely because it has stood the test of time.

(5) Joao Gilberto, *Amoroso/Brasil* (Warner Bros.)

This is a magnificent two-fer with some gorgeous orchestrations by Claus Ogerman (on the "Amoroso" cuts) and Clare Fischer (on the "Brasil" cuts).

(6) Elis Regina, *Personalidade* (Philips/Polygram)

In my considered opinion, Elis Regina is the Aretha Franklin of Brazil! She is a truly amazing vocalist ... and this compilation represents a magnificent cross-section of her work (with only two or three dud tracks).

(7) Sergio Mendes, *Brasileiro* (Electra)

This is a very highly, but also a very well, produced and diverse collection of compositions written and performed in collaboration by Sergio with some of Brazil's finest performers/writers at that time (the very early '90s).

(8) Djavan, *Djavan* (Rym Musique)

This is a beautiful compilation of work by a very classy singer/writer who is quite a famous pop star in Brazil ... but one who has always kept some elements of "country" in his music.

(9) Cafe Brasil (Teldec)

This is an unusual recording – a real find – and a very hot tip that I received from jazz guitarist, Reg Schwager (who, you guessed it, is a real Brazilian freak!) This album is a mixture of both older and newer Brazilian musicians performing some classic samba and choro tunes. In my view, this particular album is of perhaps the greatest relevance to any of you who have a real interest in this area ... because it has got a lot of Brazilian spontaneity and "soul" to it...

(10) The Mondo Series, *Mondo Samba* (Mondo Melodia)

This is a compilation that I recently stumbled upon and it is a beautiful cross-section of work done by some of the star Brazilian singers/songwriters ... but also by a few performers whom I did not know at all. The CD contains consistently beautiful tunes as well as outstanding performances and it demonstrates just how broad the samba, alone, can be in Brazilian music!

Hopefully, this list of 10 will get you started because you are likely to find great Brazilian music is a never-ending story!

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 new Duo/Quartet album (with Bernie Senensky, Neil Swainson and John Sumner) entitled, Paco Paco. All are available from the distributor, Indie Pool at indiepool.com. If you would like to contact Bill directly, you can reach him at billmcb@direct.com.

Artistry

by Chase Sanborn



Many musical instrument companies maintain a roster of “artists” to promote their products. An effective artist is someone who has established a reputation as a performer and/or a teacher, who chooses to play the company’s instruments and who can effectively communicate why she likes those instruments. There are many misconceptions about being a company-sponsored artist. Hopefully, this article will shed a little light on the situation.

The relationship between the company and the artist is a business relationship – each side offers something of value and expects something in return. The company offers promotional and financial support for the artist’s professional activities, while the artist offers credibility and exposure for the company’s products. An artist benefits from the prestige of being associated with the company; an endorsement implies that she has achieved a certain stature within the industry. The company benefits from association with musicians who have achieved that stature. The company’s primary goal is to sell instruments; the artist’s primary responsibility is to build a successful career while playing those instruments.

Contrary to popular assumption, artists do not get free instruments, nor are they paid to endorse them. The company looks for artists who choose to play the instruments with or without an endorsement; without a sincere belief in the product the endorsement doesn’t mean much. As an artist you are expected to purchase your instruments, however you might have access to discount pricing.

A common misconception among artists is that affiliation with a company will result in a slew of gigs and clinics. While the company strives to help promote the careers of its artists, it is not a booking or management agency. It remains the artist’s responsibility to create a demand for his/her services. There may be times that the company will hire an artist, e.g. as a clinician for a music festival, however most gigs originate with the artist or with an organization that seeks to engage the artist. The possibility of funding may put an engagement within the financial grasp of a host organization, and in that way generate additional opportunities for both the artist and for host organizations.

A common misconception among host organizations is that the company will pay all fees and expenses for an artist to appear at an event. Most of the time the company acts as a co-sponsor, sharing costs with a local dealer and the host organization. If an organization seeks to engage an artist, a clear and concise proposal should be drafted, outlining the nature of the event and the budget, including a specific request for funding. State exactly what you are seeking and what the company stands to gain by co-sponsoring this event, e.g. publicity, advertising, display space, etc. You’ll have to sell the idea – companies are inundated with requests for money – but they are always interested in a good opportunity to promote their artists and their products.

So what makes you desirable as an artist? It all comes down to exposure and credibility: Do your concerts attract a substantial audience? Do your recordings sell in large numbers? Are you winning awards? Are you a well-respected teacher, adjudicator or clinician? Are your writings published? In all of these roles you establish credibility as an artist, and by extension, for the company that makes your instruments. Note that artists must be effective and engaging teachers – many sponsored engagements include an educational component. Promoting music education is a major part of being an artist.

As an artist, remember that this is a business relationship. Dealing with business is natural for a company, but not always so for musicians. Try to see things from the company’s viewpoint: everything they do is with an eye towards improving the bottom line or increasing their market. That is not to say that the company is devoid of altruistic intentions, but they want to grow their business, and artists are a part of that master plan. Therefore, it behooves an artist to consider how to be a more effective spokesman for the company. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what your company can do for you, but what you can do for your company.” Here are some specific suggestions:

- Be organized, responsive and clear about what you offer and what you expect.
- Put together a high-quality promotional package; give the company something

to work with when promoting you. Maintain an informative Web site and be able to send pictures and bios electronically.

- Build a mailing list and become an important local source of information about upcoming events and promotions.
- Compile a price list for your services, taking into account all the different situations you might encounter as an artist (clinics, concerts, adjudication, etc.)
- Keep the company apprised of any upcoming projects or high-profile gigs. Try to involve them whenever possible.
- Incorporate the company logo on your handouts and promotional materials.
- Learn about the relationship between the company and its dealers. As an artist you may find yourself working with competing dealers. Knowledge and diplomacy are invaluable.
- During a clinic or performance:
 - Acknowledge your sponsors. Explain briefly how corporate sponsorship helps to allow events like this one to take place. Emphasize the company’s role in promoting and advancing music education.
 - Tell the audience about the instrument(s) you are playing, including the model, features, etc. Explain how you evaluate an instrument and offer some tips for choosing their own instrument. Emphasize the importance of playing a quality instrument to maximize the effectiveness of all the hours spent practicing and studying. Encourage them to try out instruments at the local dealer, or at the venue, if instruments are available.
- Above all, build your career and inspire people to enjoy and explore music. The more successful you are as a performer or teacher, the more valuable you are as an artist.

Chase Sanborn is a jazz trumpet player based in Toronto, Canada. Chase is a veteran studio musician and a member of the jazz faculty at the University of Toronto. His teaching methods, Brass Tactics and Jazz Tactics, have earned worldwide praise for their insightful yet light-hearted and humorous look at the world of brass playing and jazz improvisation. For more information on Chase’s books, DVDs, CDs and other products, visit www.chasesanborn.com.

How to Get a Record Deal – Guaranteed!

by Alec Watson

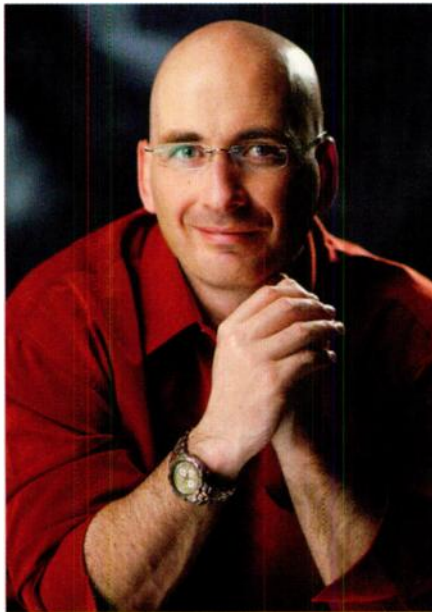
Having just been informed, by phone, that I am “*off the hook*” for writing a techie article in this issue, as I am writing the “Home Recording” feature, I thought I would take the chance to write about one of the questions I get asked the most at clinics and workshops: “How Do I Get A Record Deal?”

Let’s start with the story of a Canadian musician, a *close* friend of mine that used to live in Nashville. Every once in a while he would get a really good payday for playing or engineering, and sometimes producing. Most of the time, however, he just crept by, completely living beyond his means so that all his friends thought he was doing much better than they were; which is of course the next best thing to *actually* doing better than your friends. The really good paydays kept him in Nashville; he knew that a big hit production was just around the corner. Unfortunately, at the time, he really didn’t understand how the music business worked; even though he could, of course, explain it all. He knew all about publishing, writing, mechanicals, endorsements, touring, points, management ... but strangely, he never really *understood* how it *really* worked. Having gone to school, worked as house producer at a very successful publishing company, and engineered for the ‘A’ list producers, it seems hard to believe (but true), this friend of mine just didn’t get it.

The true understanding of the music business started to come clear to me; I mean him (let’s give him a name – Plod), while Plod was working with an act that you have probably never heard of: Ronna Reeves. Ronna had some pretty good achievements as a blossoming country star: a strong first record, good management and a good record company. She had decided, after a few years in the country genre, that country wasn’t really her thing and she wanted to make a pop record. When Plod began playing keyboards for her band, she had just finished her pop project with Peter Cetera, and her management had her placed at the pop label as a priority act. Ronna was good looking, a fantastic vocalist, had some pretty good songs (which in hindsight really needed to be awesome, not just pretty good) and a music video for MTV. All the ducks were in a row, what could go wrong? Well, like I said

– you’ve probably never heard of Ronna Reeves.

At the same time as Plod was touring with Ronna, he learned from his buddy, Nashville Predators’ Defenseman Joel Bouchard, that Joel and his hockey player’s band had been offered a record deal (several in fact). From his years as a publishing company producer, Plod knew lots of people that had been “*of-fered*” record deals – you probably know a bunch yourself. To Plod’s amazement, however, Joel had letters from nearly every label in Nashville expressing an interest in putting together a recording



project with Joel, Sebastian Bordeleau, Denis Lambert and Darren Turcotte of the Predators. To help whip the band of NHLers into musical shape, Plod was assigned keyboard duties; this was truly the worst band Plod had ever played with. I should add that this includes the accordion band that Plod played in when he was eight; poor Plod, what chance did he ever have in the music industry when his parents put him in an accordion band? That’s a whole different story though.

Signed to Warner Music Nashville, the NHL band “The Offside” was a local hit. Now you could point out that you have never heard of this record either (which of course would ruin this whole story), but without going into detail, it turns out that the NHL owns the rights

to anything to do with the Predators – including records ... the *en-suing* legal battle squashed the record. We will never know if it could have been a hit. But I will add that nearly everyone from The Guess Who to Ted Nugent wanted, or had some involvement with this record.

Here is the lesson, and it’s one you probably know ... but do you get it? Do you *really* get it? Record deals have something to do with musical talent, a lot to do with entertainment, and *everything* to do with: (cue fanfare) – *selling records*. Of all the projects Plod ever worked on, no band had less musical talent than “The Offside.” Of all the incredibly talented people Plod ever worked with, some of them stars, tabloid favourites and household names, others unknown outside of their hometown, no act, other than “The Offside” had ever received contract offers from every label in town.

There it is, that’s the skinny: you can get a record deal – *guaranteed*, if you can sell records! So while you’re worrying about song hooks (extremely important), what you want to say as an artist, and your act’s image, consider this: what is your selling hook? Why will people buy your records? When competing for a share of the local consumer’s expendable income, why are they going to buy your record rather than someone else’s? *Buy Jove*, if you can answer *that* simple question, you have yourself a record deal! Sure, there is that *other* route where you count on talent, perfection of craft and hard work; but if you choose that route you are going to have to count on a bunch of luck. If you’re after guarantees and don’t necessarily care about saying something, go the *simple* route: create something that sells records – you will be guaranteed a deal.

... Of course, if you can actually create something that sells records, do you even need a record deal? Why share your fortune?

Producer/Engineer Alec Watson, never has figured out the answer to the question – why should people buy his records. In fact, he thinks the question sucks! Instead he is happy to Plod along making music for fun and still has all his friends thinking he is far more successful than he really is.

Hoarseness: The Top Causes & How to Avoid It

by Tammy Frederick



Maybe you are like many singers who have experienced a dry, gravelly voice the morning after a hard night of singing. You may not be too concerned about this vocal roughness if you are able to rest your voice for a few days, but what if you have to perform again tonight? What if tonight's performance has to be the best of your life? Now, the state of your voice becomes all-consuming. There are five top causes in total, but we'll only be able to touch on the first two causes this issue ... check out next issue for the remaining three.

How can I fix it? Is there some miracle liquid I can drink? How much water can I drink before the show?

Although there are some tactics that will help ease hoarseness, curing chronic hoarseness permanently begins long before it even happens and it involves dealing with the number of factors that cause it.

Cause #1 – Poor Vocal Technique

The number one cause of hoarseness and vocal fatigue is poor vocal technique. If you find you get hoarse after performing or rehearsing it is very likely that you

are singing with a high larynx. To make matters worse, you are probably forcing large amounts of air through this high larynx by shouting or singing loudly. The larynx goes up when the throat muscles or swallowing muscles engage and yank it up in their effort to help you reach those higher notes. When this occurs the larynx becomes unstable and tension sets in. Then, in your effort and determination to hit those high notes you force a lot of air through the larynx, increasing the volume, and essentially muscling your way through the range of the song. This sets you up for a prime case of hoarseness. All that pulling and pushing and forcing of air has fatigued your vocal cords and they have swollen. When this happens the cords are no longer able to connect properly, affecting the quality of your sound and seriously hindering your vocal range.

Solution: Seek out competent vocal training. Competent training is key, since there are many teachers out there who can do more harm than good. If you can't afford training, try some practice techniques. Practice your songs quietly, but don't hold your breath. Breathe while you sing. You will have more control over your sound if the vocal cords are able to adjust to the pitches you need without the extra-added musculature. Try singing other genres of music and

songs that are not like your own. Think of it as cross training for your voice. A more immediate solution would be to lower the keys of your songs so as to avoid having to push and strain for the top notes. If you take time to develop your instrument you can increase your range and up the key again later.

Cause #2 – Inadequate or No Vocal Warm-up

It is shocking to me how many singers come into my studio with the complaint of chronic hoarseness and when asked if they warm-up before performing the answer is no! Always, always, always warm up your instrument! How long would an athlete last if they did not warm up their body prior to competing? Singing through your songs ahead of time is not a sufficient warm-up. You need to vocalize beyond the range of your songs.

Solution: Warm up your instrument before any performance, recording or practice session. If you work with a vocal teacher you should already have a vocal warm-up recorded. Otherwise, find a keyboard and run through some scales using liprolls or tongue trills and words such as "mum" and "woof". The key to a good warm-up is to make sure you are breathing and not straining. Also include a physical warm-up. Do some general stretching to loosen up your limbs. Despite what some people may think going on stage "raw" only makes for inconsistent performances. And in any business, not just music, consistency is what makes for a successful career.

Tammy Frederick began training with Bill Vincent in 1998 and became an associate teacher in 2002 at which time she opened her own voice studio. Tammy has been developing voices ever since with a vocal technique designed to connect the voice from top to bottom, increase range, endurance and flexibility and develop a sound that is effortless to produce. With Tammy Frederick's Voice Studio, she has worked to create an environment that is exciting, a vocal approach that is superior, and an attitude of success that she hopes is infectious to all who enter. Along with teaching private voice lessons she also conducts voice workshops, musically directs, adjudicates, and more recently added the title of director to her credits. For testimonials or more information please visit www.tammyfrederick.com.



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before we get started, I want to tell Alexisonfire's lead screamer, George Pettit how much I like the new record. "I heard the record the other day..."

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm going to have to stop you. It sounds like... It sounds like... my cell phone's not great. It kinda sounds like you're in a subway and they come over the speaker and they're like... They're like... You know, I can't tell what you're saying at all."

Pettit is not necessarily in an ideal place for this interview, driving through downtown Toronto, just on the cusp of rush hour, on a Friday afternoon. But, to be fair, neither am I. I'm not in the subway, mind you — I'm in an empty room, taping a speakerphone on an ancient mini cassette recorder, and the sound is bouncing off the walls like a super ball every time either of us speaks.

"I'll fix it," I say. "How's that?"

"It's not..." He considers. "It's a little better."

Now sitting in an empty room with a cardboard box over my head as a makeshift cone of silence. It's not pretty, but it works.

"I heard the record the other day," I begin again...

"Okay." He sounds like he's not quite ready to commit to a tone for the interview until deciding whether I'm on side or not...

I'm definitely on side. Alexisonfire is a rare band; nobody does manic hardcore like they do. They're as inventive and solid live as they are on record. Pettit's trademark screams and Dallas Green's soaring melodies underpin each other — two sides of the same coin. Although the band has made some changes, chances are that fans won't be disappointed by their latest effort, *Crisis*. Without sacrificing their traditional mix of blunt rage and tight lyrical hooks they've added depth to their sound and weight to their subject matter; giving guitarist/vocalist, Wade MacNeil an expanded role lyrically and vocally and tweaking Green's and Pettit's vocal approaches a bit. Fewer effects on Green's give his vocals a decidedly more urgent edge, while Pettit's throat searing screams are just slightly more decipherable. The group also features bassist Chris Steele and drummer Jordan Hastings. Occasionally, Pettit also takes a more melodic approach and sings. "We definitely played around with that. I'm not tone deaf or anything. I'm not a great singer, but Juice, who produced our record, said, 'you should try singing it.' We came up with what we came up with," he says.

What they've come up with is alternately bleak and furious — a gut level, empathic response to desperation, waste, and want around the world and around the corner. Co-produced by long-time collaborator Julius Butty, along with the band, *Crisis* was engineered by Nick Blagona, recorded at Mississauga's Metalworks and at Butty's own studio, Silo Sound. For content and tone the record mines first



hand accounts of the blizzard of 1977 that slammed Ontario's Niagara Region. Depending on whom you talk to, *Crisis* may or may not be a concept album, but much of the sentiment seems, at least, loosely based around the chaos the storm created. "It's not so much loosely based around it as it is based around it," Pettit says. "The artwork is all these photographs from this book called *White Death*; people with really bad frostbite, cop cars buried to the sirens, everything covered in snow."

There's no doubt that the state of the world and Alexis' near constant view of it from the road has had an effect on the record. Neither Green or Pettit think the record's angrier tone came from a conscious decision. They see it as a reflection of the times and their front row view of them.

"I don't necessarily feel angrier," says Pettit, "that's just the way that things were written. The world seems like a much smaller place, but, at the same time, I've seen more of it. I think I can see things a little more empathetically. We're kind of living in a pretty fucked up time right now — with the war and everything — it's a very trying time. I'm not exactly sure what I'm getting at here..."

Like many of us, Pettit is concerned — nervous of Canada's current course, uncertain of our government's approach to foreign policy and our relations with the US. "Why fucking suck up to the Titanic, you know? I feel like we're taking steps back sometimes. I don't know if this is relevant to this interview or not, but that probably explains why we didn't have a lot of songs about go-karting on this record." George has



BY KEVIN YOUNG



a bit of a fascination for apocalyptic themes, and a suspicion that the only way to save the world is to tear it down and start all over. "It's hard for me to sympathize with civilization, you know?"

It's a sentiment that comes across screaming loud on *Crisis*. From howling rage to creeping disappointment and dissatisfaction the record covers a broad spectrum of emotion. Drawing on a short story he wrote "We Are The End", raising images of a mob rising up and tearing the world down around them, but there are also more intimate portraits of dissatisfaction. "Boiled Frogs", for instance... "It's just about getting beaten down by a job, you know? My dad spent 28 years as a mechanical engineer at this refrigerator company. They kind of put the screws to people in their last three years of work and try and get them to quit, so they don't have to give them

their pension. The title is an analogy for my parent's generation in the workplace – if you put a frog in cold water and heat it up it will just kind of boil, but if you put it in boiling water right away it will jump out. It's something my mom said one time..."

Not chaos on the grand scale of songs like "Crisis", and "We Are The Sound", maybe, but it shows the personal costs of isolation, desperation, and outrage. "It was something I wanted to get out in a song, because we've been living outside of reality for a long time. Being in a band ... it's work. It's not a nine to fiver. I travel the world and I get wasted. I wanted to do a song that reached out to people that don't work in a job they love, or have made compromises in their life in order to get by."

When Green and I have a chance to talk we get right down to the concept label as well. "We defi-

nitely didn't set out to write a concept record," he tells me, explaining that the unique dialogue between he, MacNeil, and Pettit comes from their writing process. "We decide what we're going to write about and we all write our own ideas." Part of the reason the album has such clear themes is that the record was written in such a short space of time, in January 2006 and they just naturally came out in the band's writing process. While many acts write together, Alexis' process is truly collective. Looking at the lyrics broken down by contributor and listening you can hear that Alexisonfire's material as a blend of talents and ideas. "We always wanted to make it equal. That's why we have three singers..."

That equality comes across in all facets of performance – no small feat for a group of truly driven guys working so closely together. There's

always pressure for people to identify more strongly with one or two band members than the others, but their individual contributions are loud and clear on stage and in the studio. Having said that, keeping it equal and keeping it together isn't always easy. And in the past year, the band has made more than changes to their sound – the most traumatic being the replacement of their original drummer with Hastings.

The momentum of touring a successful record is as unmistakable as it is hard to slow down. The trick is to try to grow your profile as much as possible to set you up for the inevitable time when you've got to go away and make another record. It's part business and part obsession. Nobody wants to stop when their stock is rising, but it's not always easy to manage both your business and personal life from the road. Depending on the band, artists can spin everything from personal feuds to drunken encounters with dangerous palm trees into stories that fuel that momentum, even if it means cancelling a few shows. But there's nothing terribly glamorous about managing your personal life with the added weight of distance in the mix. "Basically, our old drummer got engaged. His life became more about that, than about the band. He was having some problems and went home to take care of that and we got Hastings as a fill in," Green explains. After three months with Hastings, it wasn't easy to see their way back to the past lineup. Not an easy decision, he says. "Some things happened that really put a tremor in the relationship of us with our old drummer and it didn't seem natural to go back. So we had to make the decision to continue playing with Hastings."

For some acts, losing a member might require a bit of a readjustment, but *Crisis* makes it clear just how comfortable they've become together. One of the band's strengths has always been that, both on record and in performance, each player has always had a distinct voice. That hasn't changed. While there's a pervading sense of bleak inevitability on *Crisis*, there's an unmistakable sense that the band has never been tighter. It goes back to keeping things equal and playing to their strengths. "We're a band," he says emphatically. "As much as a lot of people think that I'm the focal point because I have a solo project, or [Pettit] is the focal point. We write the songs together. That's just the way it is. We've done this since the beginning, so that's the way we keep it." The three-way lyrical/vocal perspective drives the band's songs home more effectively, adding depth sonically and emotionally.

You can hear it in Green's voice when he talks about his co-lyricists and the writing process and you can also hear it clearly on the record. "Pettit is a really good story teller," Green says. "He had this idea about a guy who's fed up with everyone around him talking about him, and him being the outsider and him basically burning down the town by putting mail bombs in mailboxes." Pettit, Green and MacNeil's lyrics run the gamut from the universal to the intensely personal. "Mailbox Arson" is pretty dark, all in all, but there's something truly funny about the band singing "Your mail's not safe in this town."

Often, says Green, the lyrics come together so seamlessly the collective process seems very automatic. "'This Could Be Anywhere In The World' is a song that is about how every time I come home from tour it seems like my city has gotten worse – with poverty, and drugs, and there's more shit I read about in the newspaper. It's something I never thought I'd see – St. Catharines is such a small town. And then George wrote 'Mailbox Arson'... It just worked out that way," Dallas says. "That's the thing with our band



GEORGE PETTIT



DALLAS GREEN



CHRIS STEELE

AVOIDING A CRISIS IN THE STUDIO

Julius 'Juice' Butty has a strong relationship with Alexisonfire. He produced *Watch Out!*, Dallas Green's *City And Colour*, and Wade MacNeil's debut solo effort, *Black Lungs*. On *Crisis* he and the band made calculated decisions about the direction they'd take prior to recording.

CM: How much were you involved in the pre-pro/songwriting/arranging process?

JB: We spent about two weeks doing pre-pro. The main thing we talked about was how the songs and how the band were going to sound. We all wanted to go more of a natural, organic way this time around – not a lot of overdubbing, not a lot of effects, more of a live feel.

CM: The vocal treatment is different this time out.

JB: That was intentional. With the guitars too, there's a lot less layering. We tracked the beds at Metalworks in the large tracking room with an old Neve console. We made it a point to really use the room to its full potential. We set the bass rig

up in one booth and another guitar rig in another. Then we set Beard up off to the side with the drums and tracked a lot of the beds live. Dallas did a lot of rhythm guitar stuff off the top. Wade overdubbed his guitar tracks afterwards – I think that was a good way to get that sense of them playing live.

CM: How do you get the performances you and the band wanted?

JB: I try and keep things positive in the sessions. I like to be relaxed and I don't like to stall. Everything rolled along really well because the guys are really good players and we didn't get really critical about the takes. There were some magical things and some noises that happened and I didn't take them out. We didn't go, 'fuck, there's some weird noise there. Let's do it again.'

CM: What platform were you working on?

JB: Metalworks has Pro Tools HD. We tracked there and then brought it back to my place. I've got Steinberg Nuendo – I mix everything in

Nuendo. It was all done at 24/48. We then tracked all the vocals here at my place.

CM: What did Nick Blagona bring to the process – have you worked with him before?

JB: This is the first time I've done a session with him. He brought a lot of experience. He was a vital part. He's really fast, too. The drum sound we had, literally, from the mics being set up to getting some really good workable sounds, it was probably half an hour at the most. He knows the room and the board really well. We went back and forth on the snare a little bit. We tuned it to go from song to song. I don't like to have it the same throughout the entire record. But, again, there wasn't a lot of mucking around and it sounded really good.

WADE MACNEIL



JORDAN HASTINGS



RUM

Live Photos: Jeff Mackay

— a lot of times things just work out — MacNeil will come up with a riff and he'll say "This is what I've been doing lately," I'll show him something that I've been doing, and they just work together without us even talking."

You'd expect a bit of collective self-doubt to be a part of the process, but the pressure didn't hurt them, or the outcome. Part of the reason the process was more fluid than expected, he explains, is Hastings's fresh influence. "He listens to a lot of stuff that's chorus-based. It just seemed like when we went in to write the songs they just came out of us a lot easier. We only wrote for about a month — we took two months off, two weeks in December to get away from music. To come back at it with a clear head, you know? Then we went in and went crazy and wrote." Deadlines seem to suit them: "The last record we wrote in a month, too, and that was only because we only had a month, basically."

Since releasing *Watch Out!* the band has toured relentlessly, across North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, picking up multiple MMVAs and a Juno along the way. Dallas has also made time to record and promote his solo project, 2006 MMVAs People's Choice winner, *City and Colour*, and Wade MacNeil will put the finishing touches on his own album project, *Black Lungs*, before the Alexis album hits the street. When you consider that they started writing *Crisis* in January of this year, and had the album in the can and ready to go for this summer, that's one busy band.

Other changes they've made along the way have been less difficult — all part of their sound and process evolving. They have a knack for mixing it up on record, marrying big vocal hooks to tricky arrangements and sudden instrumental breaks, but, somehow, they never lose the emotional weight in the fireworks. The band has a natural tendency to experiment and the *Crisis* sessions allowed them more latitude than previously to do so, with sound as well as arrangements. Like the multiple vocals and lyrical perspectives, this lends depth to the songs. "A big chorus is really fun to play live and have kids sing along, but I don't really like doing the same thing over and over," says Green. As for how they manage that... "It's a hard question to answer. It just comes out of us. That's the one thing; as much as we like to throw in a break, or a time shift, we make sure that it's still part of the song."

Some bands manage change well, others don't. There's always the potential that something you tried will hang out like dog's balls. Collectively, Alexisonfire just have a talent for making transitions even striking ones, almost seamless. It's a talent they apply liberally on *Crisis*, to writing, arrangement and song order. The hooks on *Crisis* come fast and furious — amid blistering guitar breaks and heavy drum fills. It never seems gratuitous or hard to get your ears around. Off the top of the record, when MacNeil steps up to the mic for "Drunks Lovers Sinners and Saints", he owns it. Their voices come across musically, in the three different lyrical styles, and now it comes across in the three different voices — it's really striking.

What's equally striking is a new voice that appears midway through the record, on "You Burn First", a fourth voice, joins in — Gared O'Donnell, from *Planes Mistaken For Stars*. "The thing with that song is that I didn't know if I should bring it to the table because it was really different. The more I sang the words I felt like it didn't sound like something I would usually write." The idea of having a guest vocalist for a track had been talked about. Far from being distracting, the sudden introduction of Gared's voice, gives the album additional weight.

Many bands talk about wanting their records to be a reflection of the live show — Alexis continues to actually deliver, harnessing that raw, live energy, bringing it to the studio, while managing to get it on tape consistently. Onstage, though, says Green, is where the real connection is made. That's why, ultimately, they try and write songs that make them happy first. "I feel like, as long as we're being honest with ourselves, it will come across better with kids. The way we look at it; if we play a song live we're not into playing, then it's a dishonest show. So, when fans ask, "Why don't you play this song or that song?" he's quick to answer... "I say it just doesn't feel the same way as it did when we first wrote it. If we play it, you're not getting all of us."

Whether the album is darker, angrier, more political than their past records matters less than other basic concerns. Dallas' favourite line of the new record, he tells me, is the first line on the record, the opening of "Drunks Lovers Sinners and Saints" — "All right, this is from our hearts". "That's what you get from Alexisonfire," he says. "It's not anybody telling us what to do, or what single to put out. It's from our hearts and we put everything we have into the music. Ultimately, they do everything with the live show in mind — aiming their songs exactly where they'll have the most impact on their audience.

It comes across...

In a landscape where terrestrial radio seems increasingly out of touch with grassroots fans, where video has become increasingly disposable, and, where many bands can barely draw a bath on a Saturday night, Alexisonfire stand out. They fill the cracks between genres and offer something neither mainstream emo, or your garden variety neo-punk, pop act rarely do: not just unique personality and good humour in dark times, but songs that hammer the hooks home and still take you somewhere unexpected along the way. And they do it with the same raw energy they've been kicking your ass with since before anyone heard about them.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CHECK OUT
WWW.THEONLYBANDEVER.COM.

EQUIPMENT

GEORGE PETTIT

Microphone: Shure SM 58

DALLAS GREEN

Head: Marshall JCM 2000
Amps: Orange 4 x 12
Morris 4 x 12 (custom built)
Guitars: Gibson Les Paul Classic
Gibson Les Paul Custom
Pedals:
Line 6 DL4
BOSS Tremolo
BOSS Chromatic Tuner
BOSS Digital Reverb Delay
BOSS Digital Reverb Delay
Digitech Digi Delay
BOSS Noise Suppressor
MXR Phase 90
Piano/Keyboard: Roland FP5

WADE MACNEIL

Head: Marshall JCM 2000
Orange 4 x 12
Morris 4 x 12 (custom built)
Guitars: Gibson Les Paul Classic
Gibson Marauder
Pedals: Line 6 DL4
BOSS Noise Suppressor
BOSS Chromatic Tuner
MXR Phase 100

CHRIS STEELE

Guitars: Fender Jazz Bass x2
Head: Ampeg SVT Classic
w/ 2 8 x 10 cabs
Pedals: BOSS Tuner
Sans Amp Bass Driver

JORDAN HASTINGS

Udrum drums: 12" x 9" tom
16" x 16" floor tom
22" x 18" bass drum
Cymbals: SABIAN AA Metal X
Hardware: Paragon



Kevin Young is a Toronto-based writer.

It's a bright May afternoon and Chantal Kreviazuk is in the early stages of preparing for the August release of her fourth solo album, *Ghost Stories*. There's mixing and mastering left to do, the artwork and liner notes, and video shoot for the first single, "All I Can Do". Excited and confident, she is in a different headspace than she was for 2002's *What If It All Means Something*, adamant about the album title, clear on the cover art, willing to express her views.

Her first three solo albums firmly established the young talent, now 33, especially in Canada – 1997's *Under These Rocks And Stones* and 1999's *Colour Moving And Still* both went double-platinum and her last album, *What If It All Means Something*, surpassed gold despite the corporate mess at her record company, Sony, when it was announced it would merge with BMG.

But in the past few years something extraordinary happened that would give the Winnipeg-born singer-pianist some clout. She became recognized as a top pop songwriter, co-writing songs for Kelly Clarkson, Gwen Stefani and Avril Lavigne. Her husband, Raine Maida of Our Lady Peace, also earned respect as an outside songwriter and producer, most notably for Lavigne. Together, with millions of albums sold, the Los Angeles-based couple now have what every musician and recording artist longs for, strives towards, fights for – freedom to make an album without any interference from the label.

"Actually, this is a funny story," Kreviazuk begins, sitting in a room at Sony BMG Music Canada in Toronto, where she will meet with many of the staff for the first time since the 2004 merger.

"A couple of years ago, before we did all sorts of other projects, I remember calling up management or the label or something and saying, 'I've got the songs, I'd really like my husband to produce them' and I remember the response was, 'Well, do the demos and get them to us.' I remember thinking, 'That's such bullshit, what bullshit.' And then all it took was having a hit or being on these massive records and now nobody bats an eye. Now, you do what you want to do."

"But we're human and this is not a perfect world. You have to pay your dues and earn your status," she adds. "And so, thankfully, now that that's happened, a) it allows me a creative freedom, and it allows me this privacy to do some great things. So it's the greatest thing I've done because I didn't feel pressure. I just wrote music I felt. And b), if it doesn't do what I think it should do, I kind of don't care. I do, but I don't. Financially, I don't. So I just go back to my drawing board and keep creating and maybe work on someone's record."

Ghost Stories truly is a haunting album in mood and sentiment. It is sophisticated, full of nuances, has no guitar whatsoever, is filled with emphatic string arrangements, and highlights her unique impassioned raspy and ringing voice and exceptional piano skills. It is not a one-listen album. These are not obvious hits – although there are a few ("Spoken In Tongues", "Wonderful" and, of course, "All I Can Do"), but a *flowing* album – *connected*.

It kicks off with the sweeping setup of strings and the almost eerie earnestness of the piano to underscore her wistful words in "Ghosts Of You", a sweet and melancholy tribute to her dear cousin Brenda, who passed away four years ago.

"It's the most simple lyric," says Kreviazuk, and begins to recount it. "We were occupied / Never had to go outside / I was your alibi / We were planning our escape / We stayed up all night with Lucy and the Diamond Sky / Drank cheap red wine and talked ourselves to sleep / Please don't go / These ghosts of you / The only thing that helped me get through the day / Baby, Please don't go / Cause I love you / You're the only one that will stay the same."

She says that she selected the album title *Ghost Stories* – verses naming it after the song "Ghosts Of You" which her label, she says, initially preferred – because there's an overall ghost theme to the songs. "The ghost thing, it does reflect the death of my cousin, but it also reflects the things we pretend aren't there; the things that we make disappear, like poverty, war, the misfits, the timeless."

"Things are pretty direct. There are a couple of quite abstract things. Like there's one abstract

Chantal Kreviazuk

A close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark, straight hair, looking slightly to the right. She is wearing a white, sleeveless dress with a dark floral pattern on the side. The background is a bright, sandy beach with shadows cast by trees or structures.

How
Ghosts
Appeared
by Karen Bliss

song called 'Spoken In Tongues' where it, to me, relates to the ghost stories theme because it's about a ghost of a relationship.

"There's a lot of remembering and grieving and a lot of is spiritual too, so in that sense I think *Ghost Stories* really pulls it together well."

Kreviazuk and Maida started on the album about two years ago in their home studio in Los Angeles and took their time, tracking and writing intermittently, and getting into crackdown mode in February/March of this year. Of the final tracking listing, she co-wrote nine of the songs with him and the remaining two on her own (see sidebar).

"The coolest thing was making a record on your own timetable," says Maida in a separate interview by phone, while he was on tour with *Our Lady Peace*. "We tried so many times, 'Okay, she wants to sing, let's go



Interview With Producer/Co-Writer Raine Maida

What kind of console do you have in your home studio?

"It's a Neve 50-36 – an old vintage console."

The most obvious question — why no guitar on Chantal's album?

"It was a good idea to put some parameters on the record for her and I think by not having guitar, it really forced her to really look at where she knew that, okay, this is fine and once we add some other instruments it will augment the track and it will sound full. And so, the piano is the main instrument by far and there's not going to be anything to help it or support it. That put the pressure on her to write really great piano parts."

What haven't other producers recognized in Chantal, musically or in their approach to her music?

"It's not just her. Any artist that I work with. I don't like production where people just keep adding stuff to make it (full) and more produced and, ultimately, it usually sounds more slick. For her, I wanted to strip everything down and get to the essence of what she is and that's when she writes her songs, she sits at the piano and she sings and she's got to make that sound great."

When you first brought up the notion of no guitars, was she on the same page?

"I think she was a little freaked out at the beginning but as it went, you're so conscious when you're writing that you're not going to have that stuff to rely on, now she can sit down at a piano – because a lot of her other stuff, like a song like 'Before You,' sometimes I think she prefers to play on her own just with the piano for shows, but a song like that, it's a guitar lick; it's like a roots-y guitar lick at the beginning of the song, so when you take that away and she's playing it on piano, it doesn't sound as great as it should. I just wanted to make a record true to her – kind of like an Elton John record where she can just go play piano and those are the songs and they stand up, and all the hooks that you hear are on piano so she can play them."

Is it easy for you to have a perspective on your wife's material, naturally loving her and her music?

"Yeah, it's probably easiest for me to be most critical. I'm a very critical guy and with her, I think we knew not to take anything personally. As well, I can push things farther than I think someone, a new producer just getting to know her, would be able to push."

At what stage did you decide to bring in strings?

"That was the only other thing I always heard was strings. I was a big fan of that Keane record, the way that record sounds. I think Spike Stent is a brilliant engineer and yeah strings are big and there's a lot of real strings. I think we really pushed in terms of interesting arrangements and not having typical arrangements. It's a little quartet. I was trying to lean more on the Bjork tip and some other bands. It was a long process. Once we'd basically done all the vocals and all the rhythm tracks and the basic piano takes, I had Eric Gorfain, who is the leader of that quartet in L.A., come in and we sat down and it took a couple of weeks to get all the arrangements because I heard specific things, Chantal heard specific things, and Eric was interpreting what we all heard and trying to add some of his stuff as well, so it was a long process before we even went and recorded."

The first single, "All I Can Do", Chantal feels stands out from rest of album because it's "a big pop rock song," but that you did little things to make it fit.

"Yeah the music was the toughest. I think once you get to the bridge and some of the more orchestrated elements of it that ties it in with the rest of the record. The rest of the record has a lot of dynamics. There are a lot of little parts. There's a lot of attention to detail even though there's not a lot of instruments. There are never more than three instruments going on at the same time. 'All I Can Do', even the way it was written, for Chantal it's probably something that was closer to one of her older songs than other things. But I think once they get deeper into the record and some of the other singles that will come out, it will really show that she really challenged herself on this record."

sing,' and it wasn't happening so you walk away. With so many records, mine included, you're forced – you're in the studio paying money and you gotta do it. And whether you're not ready to do it or it doesn't feel right, it's like, 'Well, too bad' [laughs] and that's the best thing about the way this music was made. There's such a purity to it because it was just done only when you were inspired."

Kreviazuk never had a problem the past couple of years getting inspired to write with or for other artists, amassing dozens upon dozens of songs. Naturally, she has become a more proficient, efficient, artful songwriter, able to write those hooky mass-appeal chart-toppers, but that didn't impact the writing of her own album.

"I didn't go back into my work and say, 'Okay, now I've got to do a pop record,' at all," she says. "I practiced writing more. That's all. Normally, you're like, 'I've got to write 10 songs for my album,' and you put so much energy into those 10 songs and you go and tour them for two years and it's just insane how you promote 10 songs. And so now, I got to go back to those 10 songs after writing 150 songs or 200 songs, in the past two years, who knows how many?"

While Kreviazuk estimated 90 per cent of the new album was written separately from her other work, she occasionally dipped into her repertoire of songs that had been pitched to other artists. *Ghosts Of You* is one such example.

"That started off being a song for Gwen Stefani, but when she didn't end up putting it on her album, I still loved the track," says Kreviazuk, who didn't actually write with Stefani, but presented the track.

Credits For 'Ghost Stories'

- All songs written by Chantal Kreviazuk and Raine Maida, except for "So Cold" and "Mad About You" written by Chantal Kreviazuk
- All words written by Chantal Kreviazuk
- Produced by Raine Maida
- Mixed by Michael H. Brauer for MHB Productions, Inc. at Quad Studios, NY
- Mastered by Bob Ludwig at Gateway Mastering Studios Inc., ME
- Engineered by Raine Maida; additional engineering by Jason Lader and Greg Collier
- Recorded at: King Noise, Sunset Sound, Ocean Studios, Sage & Sound, Los Angeles, CA
- Chantal Kreviazuk: all vocals, piano and bass on "Wonderful"
- Earl Harvin: drums on "All I Can Do", "Wendy House" and "Ghosts Of You"
- Randy Cooke: drums and percussion on "Ghosts Of You", "You Blame Yourself", "Mad About You", "So Cold", "Spoken In Tongues", "Waiting For The Sun" and "Wendy House"
- Chris Chaney: bass on "All I Can Do", "Wendy House" and "Ghosts Of You"
- Jason Lader: bass on "Waiting For The Sun", "Spoken In Tongues" and "Grow Up So Fast"
- Raine Maida: bass on "Asylum"
- Lenny Castro: percussion on "All I Can Do", "Wendy House" and "Ghosts Of You"
- Trey Henry: upright bass on "Ghosts Of You", "You Blame Yourself", "Mad About You" and "So Cold"
- Eric Gorfain: string arrangement on "Asylum", "Ghosts Of You", "Grow Up So Fast", "Mad About You", "Spoken In Tongues", "All I Can Do", "You Blame Yourself", "Waiting For The Sun" and "Wonderful"
- Strings performed by The Section Quartet: Eric Gorfain, Daphne Chen, Leah Katz and Richard Dodd



"This was a song I played for (Interscope co-founder) Jimmy (Iovine) after I did 'Rich Girl' because once 'Rich Girl' happened, they were like, 'What else do you got?' so I played it for him and they were crazy about it, but she already had a ballad or two on her record and she didn't need my song and she certainly didn't want me to hand her a song; she's not really like that. She's definitely an artist in her own right, for sure.

"So the funny thing was I couldn't get the song out of my head, but whenever we went to record it for me, it just sounded wrong. So we started fucking around with it. 'Oh let's change the verse; let's change the chorus' and all of a sudden the whole song, melody and lyric, had completely changed, but with the same track under-

neath, so it turned into my song. So it's not a black and white thing, but pretty much when I write for other people, it's for other people."

Ghost Stories is an exceptionally personal album. The single, "All I Can Do", is for the couple's two young sons. "All I can do is love you to pieces / Give you a shoulder to cry when you need it," she sings in the chorus.

It's a beautiful, bright piano pop song that includes the line "What a lovely day to shape your dreams / And you don't even have to sleep / You can make it what you want to be."

"I wrote it for my kids. I can't listen to it," Kreviazuk says, getting emotional, as it plays on the stereo where the interview is taking place. "It sounds a little bit different than the rest of the record. That's the only issue I have with it. That one's very big. It's a big pop/rock song. Raine and I did a couple of things on it to make sure – like little things that tied it to the rest of the record, like this (sings loudly) 'Ahhhh-oh-oh Aaaaalllll, all I' going into the last chorus, which is a little bit gospel, because a lot of the record has a gospel theme to it."

It was, in fact, "All I Can Do" and "Ghosts Of You" that were the first songs Sony BMG and Nettwerk Management heard from the sequestered pair and the positive response kicked Kreviazuk and Maida's butts to finish the album.

"('Ghosts Of You') was the first song we sent around, just to prove we were making a record, because everybody was like, 'Where's your album?' We're like, 'Fuck off, we'll hand it in when it's done,'" Kreviazuk laughs. "I think they wondered if we were even doing anything. So we handed them 'Ghosts' and everybody flipped out."

Sony BMG Music Canada President Lisa Zbitnew then arranged for Kreviazuk to perform at Sony BMG's annual Managing Directors Conference in Miami, FL in March. The MDC is attended by the heads of all the record labels in the Sony BMG family, including Clive Davis and Donny Ienner.

"I was like, '(Play) just this one song?' And they were like, 'Well, you have to play another one.' I assumed that it would be an old one because then people would remember me from my other records and they called me a couple of days before and they were like, 'Nope, you've got to play another new one.' I was like, 'Shit, I really don't have a record, I really don't [laughs]!' So I finished 'All I Can Do' and performed that one as well and it was great."

After that, Kreviazuk finished the album and turned it in. What's most striking perhaps about *Ghost Stories* or unusual is the absence of guitar, none whatsoever.

"I think Raine was sick of my first three albums, people trying to take this piano-singer and then do something with it, but always using guitars," says Kreviazuk. "He'd be like, 'Why are you doing that?' And the funny thing is that this album rocks way more than anything I've ever done and there's not one fuckin' guitar lick on it.

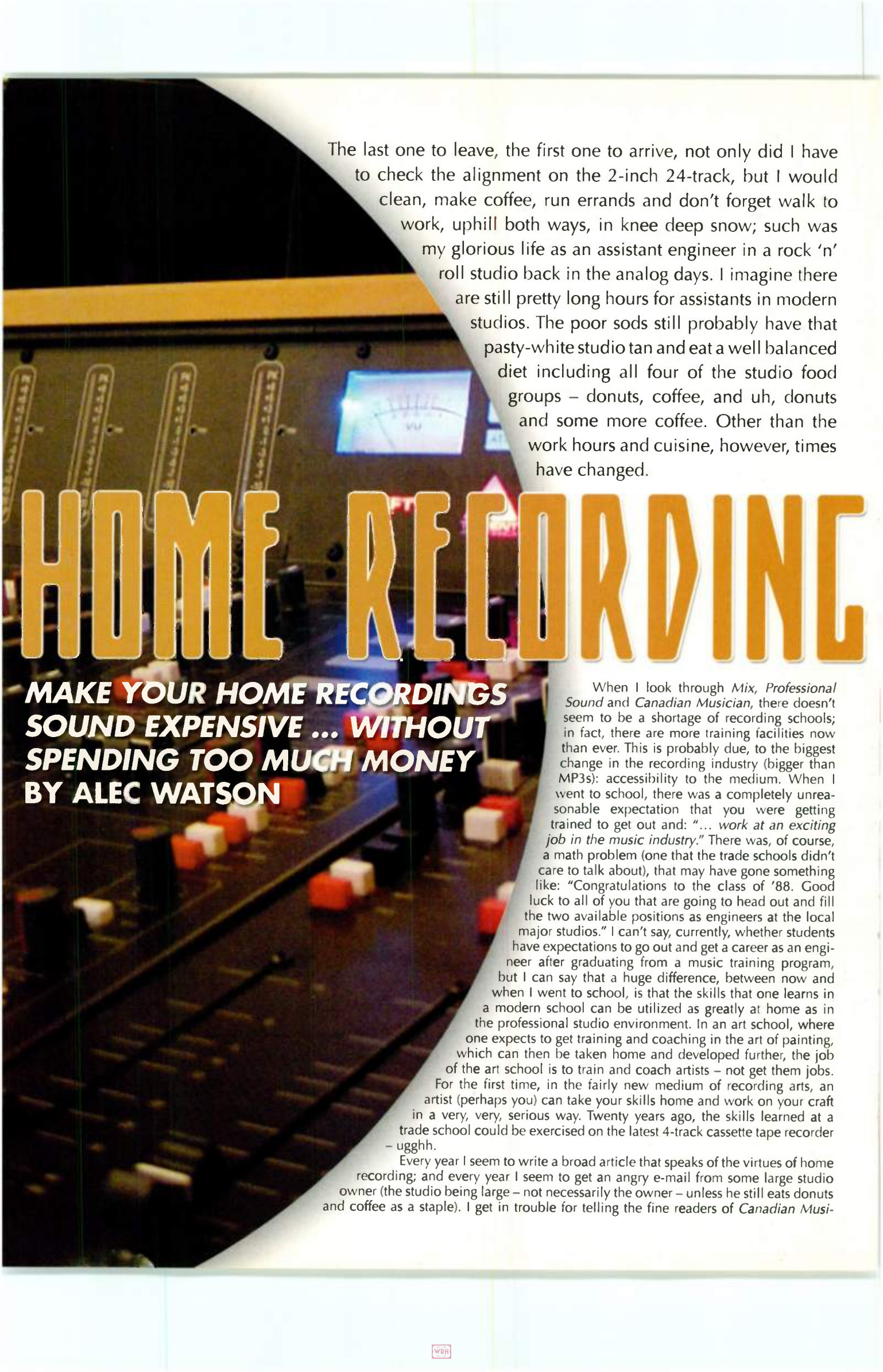
"I love that too because when I go to play the songs live (usually) I'm always playing the guitar licks live on my piano and that won't have to happen on any of these tracks which is great.

"Yeah, it's so amazing," she gushes. "Raine is the most unbelievable producer. He's phenomenal. He's the guy. He's fucking amazing!" (see sidebar)



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/>. In addition, she writes for *Gasoline*, *Teen Tribute*, *Words & Music*, *Access*, and others. She has also published an anti-racism children's picture book, *The Girl With Pinhead Parents*, available at chapters.indigo.ca and amazon.com.





The last one to leave, the first one to arrive, not only did I have to check the alignment on the 2-inch 24-track, but I would clean, make coffee, run errands and don't forget walk to work, uphill both ways, in knee deep snow; such was my glorious life as an assistant engineer in a rock 'n' roll studio back in the analog days. I imagine there are still pretty long hours for assistants in modern studios. The poor sods still probably have that pasty-white studio tan and eat a well balanced diet including all four of the studio food groups – donuts, coffee, and uh, donuts and some more coffee. Other than the work hours and cuisine, however, times have changed.

HOME RECORDING

MAKE YOUR HOME RECORDINGS SOUND EXPENSIVE ... WITHOUT SPENDING TOO MUCH MONEY BY ALEC WATSON

When I look through *Mix*, *Professional Sound* and *Canadian Musician*, there doesn't seem to be a shortage of recording schools; in fact, there are more training facilities now than ever. This is probably due, to the biggest change in the recording industry (bigger than MP3s): accessibility to the medium. When I went to school, there was a completely unreasonable expectation that you were getting trained to get out and: "... work at an exciting job in the music industry." There was, of course, a math problem (one that the trade schools didn't care to talk about), that may have gone something like: "Congratulations to the class of '88. Good luck to all of you that are going to head out and fill the two available positions as engineers at the local major studios." I can't say, currently, whether students have expectations to go out and get a career as an engineer after graduating from a music training program, but I can say that a huge difference, between now and when I went to school, is that the skills that one learns in a modern school can be utilized as greatly at home as in the professional studio environment. In an art school, where one expects to get training and coaching in the art of painting, which can then be taken home and developed further, the job of the art school is to train and coach artists – not get them jobs. For the first time, in the fairly new medium of recording arts, an artist (perhaps you) can take your skills home and work on your craft in a very, very, serious way. Twenty years ago, the skills learned at a trade school could be exercised on the latest 4-track cassette tape recorder – ugghh.

Every year I seem to write a broad article that speaks of the virtues of home recording; and every year I seem to get an angry e-mail from some large studio owner (the studio being large – not necessarily the owner – unless he still eats donuts and coffee as a staple). I get in trouble for telling the fine readers of *Canadian Musi-*

cian that they can make good recordings without having to go to a really expensive facility; I get in trouble for encouraging artists to create on “inferior” canvas, with a lesser palette. Well this year will be NO exception – big studios are *great* places to work, but you know what? You can make very serious recordings at home. Yes, you can have hits written and recorded in your basement, your living room – heck, your girlfriend’s apartment (I thought I should add that so guitarists can feel that they have a chance at making hit home recordings too). Having made some fairly decent recordings in the big rooms and the little ones, and having earned some wall hardware (albeit just a little) for my efforts in both venues, I thought I should take this chance to pass along all the things that worked, some that didn’t, and some of my (not-so) secret trade secrets to great home recording.

G.I.G.O.

One can be forgiven for thinking that recording starts with the microphone ... I was thinking about the recording chain, and about to start talking (writing) about microphones; really though, the biggest difference you can make with the whole recording, whether it’s good, bad, full of character, or completely lame, is concentrating on the *source*. One of the biggest differences between a “big” studio recording and a home one is often not so much made by the gear, but the care that goes into preparing the source of the recording. Preparations that seem to happen for the “big sessions” but are often overlooked for the small ones include:

Getting the guitar, acoustic and/or electric “set up” properly; making sure the action is such that the frets don’t buzz, but it’s not so high that tuning becomes a problem (this sentence was for the benefit of the keyboard players like me that often forget that guitars need to be maintained). Basically, when it comes to recording guitar at home, just like the big room, tuning is *just* the beginning of a good sounding track.

If you’re “lucky” enough to have room to record drums ... are the drums well maintained? Do they need new heads? If the drums don’t sound tight and punchy *before* you mic them, good luck getting them to sound punchy when you turn on the virtual red recording light.

Tuning – holy crap can tuning be a frustration! Admittedly modern tuners are really very good and they seem to be fairly consistent, but keyboard players, yes – you guys with the hair (or in my case lack there of) check the tuning on your keyboard. A new keyboard will certainly be in tune relative to itself, but is your instrument in tune with the tuner of the bass player? Probably is, but *check!*

This kind of care ALWAYS happens in the big studio (okay maybe not always), but it is a common oversight when home recording. And if these things are overlooked at the tracking level of a home recording; you have already limited yourself to sounding “demo-y” – uggghh!

“Preparation H Is Good On The Whole.” – Mike Meyers

Okay, it’s obvious: preparation includes *arrangement* – charting parts and instrumentation. I have seen all sorts of production styles work really well and, of course, really *%&%y. Having worked for years in Nashville, I know that simply getting great experienced players and placing a chart with a bunch of numbers in front of them can get you a pretty good recording in a couple of hours. I also know that this is a limitation of the style. While in

Nashville, I had the pleasure of working with a fairly prominent Australian producer that insisted on getting the players together and jamming on the songs for a couple of days before going to the studio (the management and A&R people didn’t understand why they should have to pay for this when this process was so unnecessary when recording professionals). The project we worked on didn’t fly commercially, but as a production style it forever changed the way I work.

Giving great musicians “time” to collaborate and be a greater part of the creative process can net you great results. When recording at home, you’re often left in a position where you have to build a song from nothing; over-dubbing each part without the benefit of hearing the parts together. If you are really talented at arranging, perhaps you can hear all the parts of the composition before you start. Then you can split them up and play them individually, building the production as you go. If you’re like me (far less talented than that) I can hear completed *pieces* of a production, but basically I start building, and then the production takes on a life of its own. This is a great way to work, but it is also a limitation in home recording; for me, I begin to “pigeon hole” myself quite quickly. I tend to apply the same techniques that have worked in the past. In taking home production to the next level, try jamming a song with musicians you respect; you don’t necessarily have to make a keeper recording at this point. Often, the time and care needed in making a good recording can quickly sterilize the creative bug. Rather, set up one mic and just get people to throw in their inspiration. If and when you end up with something you like, take the parts and rebuild them later, like a “recording craftsman;” this process will give you inspired parts and arrangement, yet still allow you to achieve sonic greatness. Great arrangement and sonic purity are the keys to making your home recordings not sound like demos. There, now we can move on to the *actual* recording talk, but I CAN NOT STRESS ENOUGH that the previous suggestions will have a bigger impact than *any* piece of expensive gear in making your recordings shine.



Testing, Testing, 1, 2, 3

Microphones are a transducer that changes mechanical energy, in the form of sound waves, into electrical energy that can be sampled and stored for later reproduction. From the immortal cartoonage of Gary Larson – blah, blah, blah, Ginger!

Mic Tip #1 – My best mic placement tip? Listen! No, that’s it – listen. Yeah, yeah what else are you going to do?

Here is the trick – try listening with one ear – sounds stupid, but plug one ear and listen with the other. Now I don’t pretend to be some kind of psychoacoustic expert (psycho expert perhaps), but there is something that our brain does in processing information, when we use two ears, that doesn’t happen when only using one. I have aging relatives that have hearing aides, that they really should use but don’t cause it’s too noisy!?! Check this out in a busy restaurant sometime: try and listen in on a conversation at a table near you (this is a great skill when you’re in a band and single), when you have them tuned in with all your bionic hearing skills, plug one ear and keep trying. Suddenly the room is noisy, it sounds all reverberant; you can’t isolate the sound from one place. Now perhaps people with hearing in only one ear can learn to isolate, but for me as a “stereo” listener, my finely honed (or at least somewhat honed) listening skills go right out the window when reduced to one ear. In fact, the sound that I perceive when only using one ear is suspiciously like a recording in a room from a single condenser microphone! When you use only one ear, it is

HOME RECORDING

suddenly really easy to hear the “sound” of the room. From here you can concern yourself with thoughts like: do you need to deaden the room with gobos? Does the instrument sound small and tinny or is it boom-y? Decide and make changes with microphone placement and gobos – if you hear a problem always try to fix it physically before you try electronically.

Mic Tip #2 – Put on some headphones and listen to what the mic is “hearing.” This suggestion, from back in the days of engineering school, has served me well over the years. This technique can be a little bit of a hassle, as you have to have your levels set pretty well and get the musician (or yourself) to play how they are going to play in the track. Move the mic around and find the “sweet spot.” If the instrument sounds good in the headphones, likely it will sound good when it is playing in the track. Also, don’t be afraid to ask the player for their input on mic placement. If they are experienced and have had good success in the studio, they intimately know their instrument (hopefully not in the – *this one time in band camp* – way).

Yeah, But I Can Make It Sound So Much Better With EQ

I am sure you, like me, have heard all about how great engineer “so and so” never uses EQ – and *that* is why his recordings sound so amazing. EQ of course, destroys the sonic purity and integrity of the signal by adding phase problems to the sound; by the time you have a bunch of tracks with phase problems, your finished song sounds terrible ... especially when you can’t afford good EQs or the latest plug-ins. What a load of CRAP! (kind of...)

There is definitely some truth to all that stuff about EQ, but here is my personal interpretation of the “avoid EQ” scenario and it seems to have served me well. Other than the electric guitar, and leaving synth stuff out of the equation, the instruments that we record, in one form or another, have been around for several hundred years – in some cases significantly longer. Technology may have changed instrument quality for the better, but what hasn’t improved are the arrangements that we create with the timbres of our instruments. Great musical arrangements have existed since before we created a way to write the arrangements down. Similarly, but existing in far greater number, bad musical arrangements have been around slightly longer. Keeping this in mind, here is the secret to great sounding tracks with little or no EQ: Good musical arrangements played well on instruments with good tone, by good players *sound great!* They don’t (or rarely ever)

need EQ. That is how engineer “so and so” gets away without using EQ. Avoiding EQ doesn’t make his recordings sound better; the engineer and the people around him are raising the bar high so that EQ doesn’t have to be used – remedially or otherwise. Sorry, not much of a secret, but it is very important to keep this in mind.

If I may relate a relevant story: Back in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s when Bonnie Raitt was winning all those Grammys, everyone (well certainly me) wanted their drums to sound like Ricky Fatar’s. I would study these tracks, try different mics, placements, different effects, different mic pres and EQs to little success. A few years later I ended up working on a project with Ricky Fatar. I have to admit that I was a little nervous; my gig was up, I had never been able to make my drum tracks sound like the ones on Bonnie Raitt’s records; Ricky had flown from L.A. to Nashville for this session and he was going to tell the label people to get a new engineer. I found out (exceedingly quickly) that the secret to Ricky Fatar’s great drum sounds wasn’t some master engineer (sorry Bob Clearmountain – no offense), it wasn’t the effects, EQ or the mics either; I just put the usual mics up in the usual places set the levels – and SHAZAM – I had the drum sound from the Bonnie Raitt records. Who woulda seen that one comin’? I have since taken the approach that I can’t make something sound better than it does in reality. The player, instrument and arrangement combine to create the source. From there, as an engineer, you can either take care to capture this, or, to varying degrees ^%&\$ it up!

How To Avoid & *%@ing It All Up

The biggest novice engineer mistake is made when the novice discovers “slotting” ... I know, I have been guilty (many times) myself. Slotting is the process of EQing instruments in a way so that they blend better and/or make room for others; a common practice is to EQ out frequencies in guitar parts to make more room for the vocal. This is a good practice; slotting *is* an important process in mixing, but before you perfect your system for “slotting” the instruments in a mix, have a listen to a bass, acoustic guitar, piano, vocalist and drums acoustically sometime. These instruments have all sorts of frequencies that should fight with one another, but instead of fighting, if the arrangement is good, you can hear everything and it sounds GREAT! (My apologies for the overuse of the Tony the Tiger exclamation)

Now if you’re the engineer, as in you

are wearing the engineer hat and your ONLY job is to record, often times you need to become a master of slotting instruments and creating room, as the *musical genius* you are working for has a vision that you need to make sound right – good luck with that by the way. If, however, you are the home recorder, engineer, producer, player, writer ... before you start EQing and slotting, let me suggest that if you need EQ in tracking (I used to), you either need better mic placement, or more likely, a different musical arrangement. Musical arrangement will place your instruments in a mix FAR, far, better than the latest/best EQ plug-in!



2696 Words And We STILL Haven’t Talked About Gear!?!

Writing reviews about gear and tech procedures, to get home recordings to sound better, leads one to believe that the best gear gets you the best recordings. There is some truth to this of course, with the stress on the word *some*; let’s explore gear 2006.

Back when dinosaurs chased us into the studios there were very few (good) microphone choices, fewer preamps and no recording devices that could make the home producer/engineer compete with the pros; well we don’t have that excuse anymore!

Microphones

Microphones are like wine; except of course, for the bottle, taste, chemical composition, phase state ... and the hang-over. Other than that, microphones and wine are identical. You can buy a cheap bottle of wine and celebrate its virtues with hamburgers at your summer barbeque; everyone is happy; later – happier; the next morning – not so happy. If you have a really nice meal with great presentation, that same bottle of wine isn’t going to cut it. Likewise, an inexpensive microphone will serve the purpose for a work tape or cheap demo, but it honestly is not going to cut it for a truly pro sounding recording. There are lots of good budget mics out there that are good to have around for different purposes (like barbeques), but for whatever your lead instrument is whether, vocals, guitar, piano, saxophone or even kazoo, you are going to need a good mic; even *just* one good mic is a great start.

I was once a client of “One Good Mic Studios,” today I’m the president.

A reasonably good mic should cost around \$600; like wine you can spend a lot more on some bottles, but after you break the \$25 mark, you probably have

to be a connoisseur to discern a qualitative difference. Unfortunately, the \$25 wine price point is somewhere around \$600 when it comes to microphones. In the past a \$600 microphone was definitely an entry level condenser, these days \$600 will get you a pretty darned good RØDE, Audio-Technica, or stylish Blue condenser microphone that will sound good to just about anyone.

Cables



I have never been a huge proponent of good cabling; I should say I was never one; until the day I found that there was something wrong with my studio cabling. I had made my own cables out of some "entry level" Mogami cabling (which should have been good), I soldered my own ends on (if you have ever opened up the XLRs that you buy from the store you might start soldering your own too); in short, I believed that this was pretty good cabling. I did an article on cabling one day and tried several different cables with the same source – a snare drum. The snare drum not only sounded punchier with better cables – it had a quantifiably different look to the waveform in Pro Tools. I am always wary about "expectation effect." This effect can often be found when you spend more money and perceive greater quality (you KNOW you have friends that have fallen for this – have you?). I always like to have some way to quantify my test results outside the realm of my (often fooled) senses. How much money do you spend on cables? If you're frugal (like me) have a really good cable for your good microphone, one for guitar and two for keyboards, beyond that go middle of the line – unless, of course, you are independently wealthy (not like me).



Preamps

Where does it end? Now I need a good preamp? Well, yes.

If you can afford one good preamp – get one. If you can't afford one, the latest version USBs are pretty good – not great – but good. In my experience if you are going with a moderate budget mic-pre (again \$400-\$600) go with something solid state. Tubes are great for character and that "warmth" thing that everyone talks about, but in all honesty, if you go with a good solid state mic-pre in this price range, you will get a clean signal which you can modify later with some sort of tube "plug-in." Adding tube distortion after capturing the signal clean allows you to tailor the amount of tube distortion without destroying the recording. I have heard a lot of cheaper tube mic-preamps and with little exception have never been that impressed. Tubes are analog pieces of gear, and my ears tell me that they seem to work well in fairly expensive packages, but not so well in budget versions (expectation effect? – you decide).

Hey! Tube mic preamps are just like cabernet!?! There are a lot of cabernets out there. The cabernet grape is a common grape that is (apparently) somewhat difficult to make good wine out of. A cheap cabernet is a cabernet, but you have to get a good one if you want to really enjoy it. On a budget, perhaps you should go with the "solid state merlot" ... and then add the cabernet plug-in?? (Nice job Watson, that wine stuff really made the whole tube preamp thing clear.) [And I know I'm in trouble when Alec starts writing his own editorial comments – the Real Editor.]

Digital Recorders

Perhaps, surprisingly, this is the area that is in some way least affected by budget. Hope you don't hate this, but sticking with the wine theme, digital recorders are the merlot of the recording world. They are *not* created equal, and you *can* buy a cheap palatable one (merlot that is), but over all, if you buy a decent merlot, you are going to have a decent wine; same with digital recorders. What is decent? That's not easy to answer, but here is a tip that will rarely steer you wrong. Whether it is a sound card into a computer, or a hardware recorder, any device that has a "true" balanced input is going to be superior to one that is not. Not to say that plugging in a ¼-inch cord guarantees you poor results, but in practice, if the manufacturer has gone to the expense of

including a balanced XLR input, you are likely to have a superior input circuit. At one time, good A/D circuits were the be-all and end-all of good digital recorders. I will likely look back in the future and balk at this statement (and some will now), but here goes: "In 2006, after refining prosumer and professional A to Ds for well over 25 years, the R&D has been paid for; a *reasonably* good analog to digital circuit (the electronics that change you audio into bits and bytes) costs very little." Conversely, the balanced input has been around for a great deal longer and costs more money than a circuit that amplifies



one leg of the two-phased signal ... blah, blah, blah, Ginger! If you want to find out if the gear you are looking at getting has true balanced XLR inputs – ask. The omission of an XLR balanced input doesn't mean a piece of gear is going to sound bad, but based on the increased cost of manufacturing a product that is truly balanced is likely to have some bearing on the quality of the product. Digital recorders with balanced inputs are a sign of better quality; this input will make your one pretty good microphone with its one good cable sound better. The spec sheets will be full of the recording products are full of sample rates and bit depths that can even impress bats (yes those furry flying rodents). Forget the spec sheet and go with the better quality piece of gear. It is likely that a good quality 48 kHz 16-bit system from a few years back will outperform this year's plastic "slap together" that has some crazy recording specs of 196 kHz at 32 bits. (Now I AM going to be in trouble.)

HOME RECORDING

Tracking and Mixing

Without decent monitoring, you have NO idea what you are doing with the overall recording. I was recently asked to mix a project at a *friend's* project studio; they had good gear, recorded good instruments, played well, and they had the *most* atrocious mixing conditions I have ever encountered. Worse yet, the friend I was doing a favour for compared his "Squashed-to-hell" MP3 to my mix (which I was in NO way proud of) the next day and wondered why his sounded so much better than mine?!? (I don't think it did sound better, but the blast of squashed snot coming out of the monitors did have more impact than my mix – which *he* equated to better).

A statement that I don't believe will come back to haunt me in the future: "Squashed SNOT does NOT sound better than a well balanced dynamic mix!!!" Monitoring requires referencing. The tools that you have at your digital disposal – EQ, reverb, delay, summing and bussing stages on your digital mixers, are most likely very good in the grand scheme of things. We really do have access, at home, to very good gear at relatively low prices; unfortunately you won't have any clue what you are doing with this pretty good gear unless you are in a position to have an understandable reference point. This reference is the job of the monitors (thus the name reference monitoring). The bad news is that your monitors are COMPLETELY affected by the acoustic environment in which they are contained. This, quite honestly, is where the real studio has you beat hands down every time. I don't have the room to cover adequate monitoring in the scope of this article, but DO take the time to investigate what is required. For those of you that want to "up the anti" – find out about placement, monitoring position, RT 60, L.E.D.E., coupling, and early reflections. For those of you not worried, here are some things that help in a pinch:

Tip 1 – A good set of headphones can be a good reference that isn't affected by the room environment. I can't mix on headphones to save my life, but headphones help as a starting place when all else fails.

Tip 2 – Get your monitors onto solid speaker stands; I often see speakers on a desk or a shelf; the speaker, in these situations, will couple – or resonate the shelf making the mix sound muddy. This makes the monitoring environment muddy, while the actual mix is not. A monitoring environment like this will cause you to over EQ or imbalance your mix. Fix this and you will be able to make better mix decisions.

Getting Rid Of The Mud That Is Actually IN Your Mix

Important Mix Tip 1: Earlier we were discussing the ability of the brain to discern a conversation at a different table when one uses both ears. Similarly, when a track starts to get bogged down *and* you believe that the arrangement is solid and doesn't need changing, *before* you start to thin sounds with EQ, try hard panning the tracks that seem to be fighting for space. The ear will suddenly be able to discern much more information this way. You might not need to EQ at all.

Important Mix Tip 2: As a general rule, the ear can only hear two different things at once. We're not talking rhythm instruments here, we are talking melody and counter melody. When it comes to mixing, I LOVE computers; the visuals can often clue me in to the fact that I am throwing too much information at the listener. When mixing, you have listened to the mix 50 times, to a first-time listener (that is going to decide whether they will never listen to this again or will enjoy it forever more), they need to be lead through the garden of your mix. Don't be afraid to prune tracks. You will be amazed at how much better (and interesting) a track can sound when you mute tracks that seem to be playing anything other than chordal rhythm at the same time. Stick to one melodic instrument and then thin, thin, thin! Keep your track melodically simple but interesting; let the melody and possibly counter melody move between different tracks, instruments, and timbres.

Make Your Home Recordings Sound Big And Pro

Here it is in order of importance:

1. Arrangement – unless you're a musical genius that can hear an entire composition before you start, don't be afraid to bring in people to help flesh things out. Making a rough "one mic" demo of a recording before you take the "sonic craftsman" approach can take your recordings to the next level.

2. Listen to the instruments carefully before you hit record. Is the tuning on with your reference? Is the instrument maintained and intonated properly? Are you managing to capture the character of the instrument and player? If you can say yes to these questions and the track isn't working, you may have the wrong player; if you can't say yes to all these questions, you are not doing your job to the level required to make a professional recording.



3. Splurge on at least one good mic and cable. If you can afford it, stretch your budget to include a good preamp and try and get your audio into the digital realm through a balanced XLR audio path.

4. If you don't have a good listening environment, go to a better one to mix. If you have been careful in the tracking phase of your recordings, then mixing in a better studio will be worthwhile.

5. Create a recording that is full of heart; if you can't play it for friends without "qualifying" why something isn't as good as it should be ... you're the studio owner, you're the producer – fix it! If you feel the need to say something, take one of two approaches: either close your mouth and get some balls, your work is good and don't diminish it by starting with excuses, or, don't play it and wait till it is finished properly.

6. Most importantly, forget the first four rules if they get in the way of "making a recording that is full of heart."

You are an artist working with a sonic palette; it is the first time in the history of the world that man has been able to create in this medium. Take your time exploring this new art form and become a master right in your own home. Most of all – enjoy!



Alec Watson is a producer/engineer that works from his home studio overlooking the Georgia Strait. He has purchased far too much gear over the years trying to make things sound better; when all he really needed to do was give good players better arrangements. Look for his old gear on Ebay.



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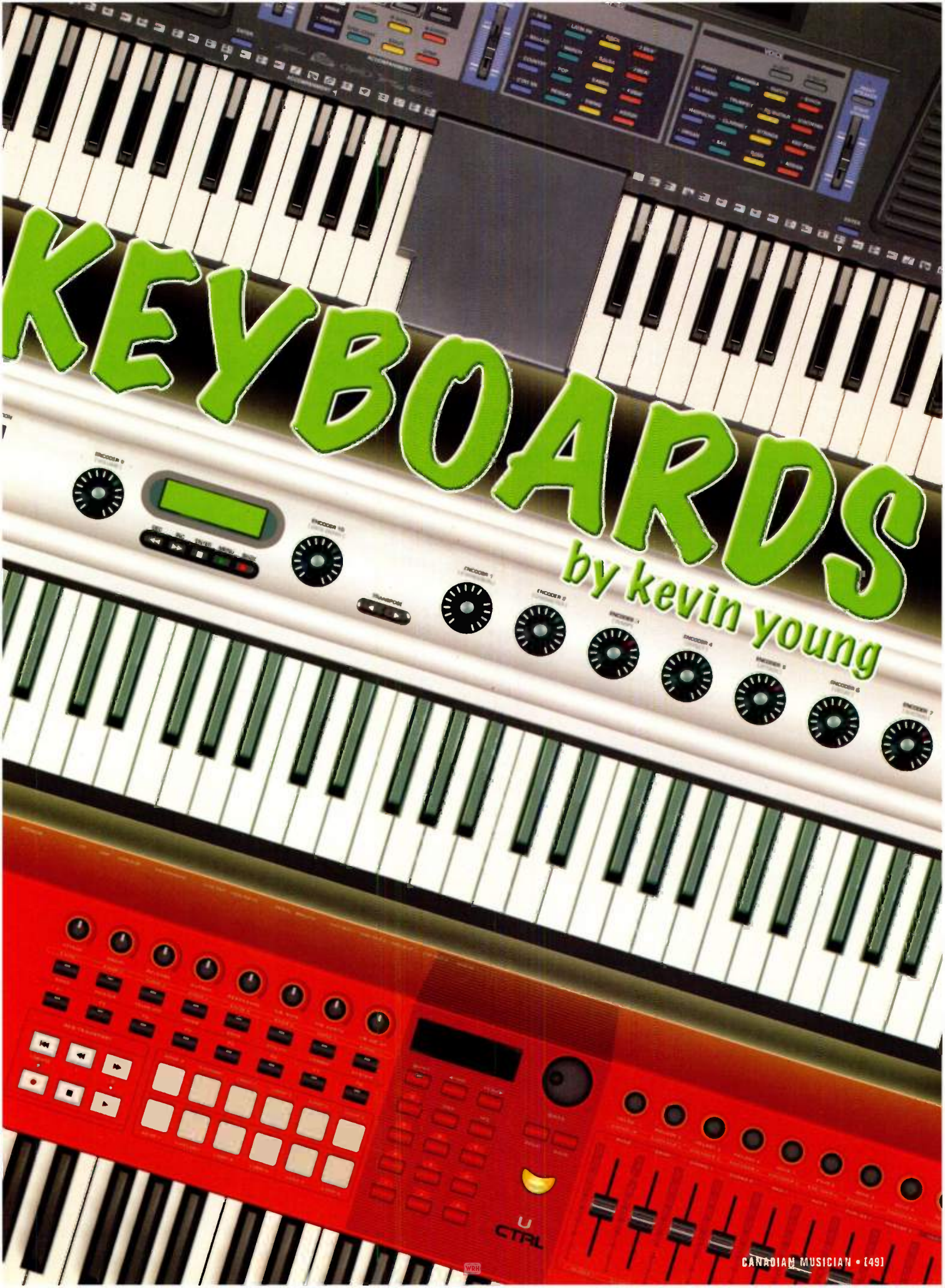
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KEYBOARDS

by kevin young



Out of all the responses from for this year's featured keyboardists, one that strikes home with the most immediacy is from Bobby Wiseman. His full answer appears later in this article, but the main point he made is this, "It isn't about the ship. It is about the cargo."

Whether you have all the latest and greatest gear or a battle scarred old electric piano, it's what you as a player bring to the table that makes all the difference. Of course, there are standards, and depending on what table you're sitting at you will need specific gear. But without imagination and passionate performance it won't mean a whole lot. A good thing, as judging from the gear that's coming down the pipe now, we can and will likely be handling more and varied media on stage.

As keyboard players, to some extent, we're all gear geeks – new tech, old tech, low tech, high tech – it doesn't matter.

You're much less likely to hear people complaining about the warmth of tape vs. going straight to disk during recording. We've transitioned. We want to take our studios on the road, but we still love the vintage cool of old gear, the possibilities afforded by recreations of it, and the sheer eye/ear candy of a powerful and intuitive interface. It all depends on the individual and the demands of the gig.

It's no secret that you have to diversify – to learn different disciplines at different points in your career to keep working. This year's panel hails from a wide variety of musical backgrounds, educational histories and practical experience, and by capitalizing on their strengths as players and composers and adapting their skills to fit their gigs they stay in demand. Also, as their responses show, they've taken different paths through the maze of technology available and the work opportunities they've found to define their sound, their style, and their strengths as musicians.

Some make their living exclusively from one source, where others wear a variety of hats in order to pay the rent, the mortgage, and the government. They'll talk about where they started, their gear, and some of the disasters that have befallen it, and them, along the way, as well as speak to why they're uniquely suited to the work they do. All bring substantial combined experience to the table and can speak confidently about the changing role of keyboard players on stage, in the studio and as composers and content providers for other media.

CM: How did you learn to play?

Bob Wiseman: My older brother, Ronnie, threw me into the river. "Play or drown you little shit!" Naturally I moved both hands quickly (in every key) and found I was able to remain afloat. I am grateful to Ronnie to this day.

Stuart Chatwood: I started on trumpet at age 10, moved to guitar when I started high school, which led to bass with the Tea Party. On the second Tea Party record I started playing keyboards for a few hours every single day. I was mostly self-taught.



Amin Bhatia: I studied some basic theory in piano, then in classical voice. The rest is self-taught. I love film scores and prog rock so that steered me toward synths. I started with a Minimoog and a 4-track – one note at a time, one track at a time. The hours were long, but I learned a lot of orchestration from those limitations. I have perfect pitch so that helped.

Byron Wong: First by ear, then I took

Bob Wiseman: formerly of The Hidden Cameras, Slutarded and Blue Rodeo. Personal career highlight: "Once," he says, "I was almost Prince." He has performed with, or produced, such talents as Ron Sexsmith, Wilco, Edie Brickell, Sam Larkin, Barenaked Ladies, The Hidden Cameras and many more. www.bobwiseman.com

piano lessons for a couple years from the local piano teacher in Kelowna, BC.

Dafydd Hughes: I took private classical piano lessons from age 11. In high school I became interested in jazz and studied jazz piano at Mohawk College and the University of Toronto. Since then, I've spent a great deal of time learning other styles by playing live and recording.

Kevin Hearn: There was a piano in our house my older brothers and sisters practiced on. I was drawn to the music and took my first lesson when I was five years old. I practiced my scales and assigned pieces but, to me, improvising was equally as important.

Joan Besen: I began playing by ear (using my fingers, though) on my grandmother's piano when I was four years old. I loved the thing, and couldn't leave it alone. After two years of begging, my parents got me my own piano. I took classical lessons, and although I'm glad now that I took them, I spent most of my time learning songs from the radio and records. I used to sit by the radio waiting for my favourite songs to come on, and then run to the piano as fast as I could to try to play them before I forgot them. I tried to figure out how to play all the parts I was hearing, bass, drums, guitars, anything, just on the piano.

David Trusz: I was about 12 years old, picked it up by ear and took piano lessons for a couple of years.

Natasha Alexandra: I was always fascinated with the piano. Never took lessons as a kid so when I went away to school I got a keyboard and learned how to play. I'm pretty much self-taught.

Dave Genn: I was lucky to have a mother who was willing to drive me to and from music lessons from age six. When I seemed to take an interest, she increased the trips to music school to several times a week. Thanks, Mom!

CM: What gear do you use on stage?

Bob Wiseman: Why encourage any musician to think they need this or that piece of gear? They only need to know how to play. It isn't about the ship. It is about the cargo.

Stuart Chatwood: On our final tour we had four Kurzweil samplers in various states, a second Korg Prophecy for some solo stuff, and an Indian Harmonium.

Byron Wong: Traditionally one main controller, a sampler, FX units, and a small, cool analog machine. Lately, if I'm performing it would be with a Rhodes, a laptop, a small controller and a tape echo.

Amin Bhatia: When I started it was with modular boxes on stage and lots of psychedelic lights. MIDI made it possible to pre-program sounds and change them live. That was fun for a while, but then things went nuts. Computers helped, but then things went even more nuts. Now, I'm back to modular boxes with psychedelic lights.

Dafydd Hughes: It varies from project to project, but usually some combination including; Fender Rhodes, Wurliitzer, acoustic piano, Hammond organ, melodica, Roland Juno 6 and laptop – sometimes as a sound bank, but usually running Pure Data for live sampling/manipulation.

Kevin Hearn: My main instrument on stage is a Yamaha GranTouch



Amin Bhatia: Gemini-winning, Emmy-nominated composer, active in electronic and orchestral music for over 25 years. Projects include the analog-synth album *The Interstellar Suite*, collaborations with Johnny Clegg, Steve Porcaro and John Woo, several animated series for Nelvana, Decode and Disney. Personal Career highlights: working with Toto and landing his own deal after being heard by Steve Porcaro through a Roland competition. Collaborating with producers; David Greene, Cory Mandel, Byron Wong, Dan Lowe and artists: Ari Posner, Meiro Stamin, Tom Szczesniak, Blair Packham and Jamie Hopkings, and songwriter Arlene Bishop. Currently nominated for an Emmy with Ari Posner. www.bhatiamusic.com



Dafydd Hughes: Toronto-based keyboard player and composer. Personal Career highlights: As a band member: James Bryan, Esthero, Jacksoul, Christine Bougie, the Woodchoppers Association, and as a collaborator – The Deborahs, Methuselah, Retainer, Paydirt, Nightingale. www.sideshowmedia.ca

piano. It looks like a baby grand but has no strings. It does not require a microphone or tuning and this makes it ideal on tour. I like the feel of it. It has real wooden hammers and piano keys. If I'm doing a scaled down setup, I'll use a more portable piano, like a Yamaha P80. I'm also using an Access Virus T1 Polar – a great tool for creating unique sounds – it's my current favourite.

Joan Besen: Because of transportation issues, I'm seriously re-thinking my gear, but I sure love the things I've been using. For acoustic piano, I've always loved my Korg SG1D (or the smaller SG1). I have a bunch of these. I use a Korg CX organ, a modified Casio MT40 (a beautiful little instrument – Henry Mink modified a couple of these years ago – I have one, and Bob Wiseman has the other), and a Voice module with classic keyboard sounds in it. I really like the clavichets in this one, and the Wah, Tremolo and Chorus effects are really nice. I run both the CX and the Casio through chorus pedals too. I recently bought a

Nord Electro. The acoustic piano sound in it, however, is awful, but I can lift the thing myself, and that is important.

David Trusz: We're hitting the road in the fall and will be running a Macbook Pro with Ableton Live 5, Moog Voyager, Oberheim OB-Xa, Roland Juno 106, Nord Lead 2X, Roland RE-301 Space Echo, Korg Stage Echo, Korg Kaoss Pad and a digital mixer of some kind.

Natasha Alexandra: Yamaha P80, Wurliitzer, Nord G2, and a laptop running Ableton Live.

Dave Genn: Currently, with 54-40, I use a Rhodes 88 electric piano through a Fender Bassman amp and a Korg Triton for triggering samples, various preset sounds and pads. Sometimes I'll use a Korg CX-3 and Leslie 145 for Hammond sounds.

CM: What instrument(s) are you most proficient or comfortable on as a player/writer?

Bob Wiseman: I have never been able to sleep on a piano unless it is on its side. Possibly I am most comfortable on a very long road case with a futon on top of it. For songwriting I use the energy of the dark star I see in the distance at night.

Stuart Chatwood: Keyboard is the best to write on. It's so versatile. However, for a song or groove with feel and attitude, there's no substitute for an acoustic or electric guitar.

Byron Wong: As a player, and composer, I mostly play my computer.

Amin Bhatia: The Minimoog. I learned how to program it live and play it expressively. As a composer, sequencers have taught me so much about orchestration. The first sequencer I had was a Roland MC500, then Opcode Studio Vision, then Emagic Logic.

Dafydd Hughes: In both cases, keyboards – usually piano or electric piano for writing.

Kevin Hearn: Piano is my first instrument. I have a Yamaha Grand piano at home that is both acoustic and electric. If it's late at night, I can disable the strings and play through headphones. If I am improvising and I stumble on a chord progression or melody I like, I just press record and get it down before I forget it. I always carry a pen in case a lyric or melody comes to me while I'm out.

Joan Besen: I'm most proficient on piano (I've been looking for middle C for years, and am absolutely determined to find it). I did realize a long time ago that I would never really get good (I found out that I was far from alone in this – everybody I think is good doesn't think they are), but if I just kept playing, I would get better. One thing I have learned is, when



Joan Besen: Singer/songwriter and keyboardist with Prairie Oyster and others. Personal Career highlights: Joan has played and recorded with so many artists that even she finds it hard to keep track of: "I've played with lots of people live and on records; my own bands, Colin Linden and Morgan Davis and lots of others, many years with Sylvia Tyson, and nearly 25 years with Prairie Oyster." She also plays with David Celia and has recorded with such artists as Marty Stuart, Pam Tillis, Rodney Foster, Dixie Chicks, Bob Delevante, John Sieger, Ben Mink and others. Prairie Oyster's new CD, *One Kiss*, is available now. www.prairieoyster.com



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KEYBOARDS

someone tells me they think I'm good, to just accept it and politely say "Thank you," instead of going into long explanations about what I did that wasn't very good, and who is really good and why.

David Trusz: Definitely keys.

Natasha Alexandra: I seem to be able to bring out my best and most honest music on the piano. I connect with its tone and its simplicity.

Dave Genn: My first instrument is piano but I'm probably recognized most as a lead guitarist, although I seem to pick up a lot of sessions playing Hammond. Usually I write on guitar and use keyboards to flesh out songs later in the process, but I will write on piano if the style warrants.



PHOTO: TIMMI

By the time we returned to the venue, it was 4 a.m. They went on, were a massive hit and were only five hours late for their curtain call. **Amin Bhatia:** I once got to play live with UZEB on a Roland Trade Show. One night their main rig went down. The whole trio fell silent. Some MIDI reset problem or something. Well, my main keyboard was still working so I vamped into some piano and told jokes while they were fixing it. The audience loved it and when the problem was fixed we finished the set to rousing cheers. It's always about communicating with an audience, no matter what.

Dafydd Hughes: I've been very lucky. I don't think I've experienced anything more serious than a broken cable.

Joan Besen: I've played whole nights on inappropriate keyboards. I've driven long distances

Stuart Chatwood: The Tea Party bassist/keyboardist, composer for film and video games, is starting a new project with Tea Party drummer, Jeff Burrows.
www.stuartchatwood.com

and spent large sums trying to locate or replace some irreplaceable power cord or foot pedal. One time at a large outdoor Prairie Oyster show, my digital piano suffered some kind of slow, horrible motherboard death right on stage. It sounded like HAL in *2001 A Space Odyssey*. Once you get over the shock and irritation of this kind of event it can certainly make you try things you wouldn't normally try.

Kevin Hearn: I had a problem a few years back at BNL shows. There was a point in every show when members of the audience would throw Kraft Dinner at us. Over time they became more zealous and began throwing open cheese packets – The cheese would end up on our strings, in my piano, on synth keys. This created a slimy film on the keys and caused chronic random crashes in one of my synths. Luckily I have a backup for each of my synths, and the Kraft Dinner phase has subsided.

David Trusz: My biggest fear? Laptop running beds and click track crashes. I'd be lost without the Mac running Pro Tools. This did happen a month or so into the record – a night of re-installing everything down to the last plug-in with serial numbers missing, authorization issues. All in all I spent about a month getting everything back the way it was – one more argument for hardware.

Natasha Alexandra: There have been times where I've had to use duct tape and hope for the best. Unless you travel with a piano you just have to trust your gear will hold up to the rough housing of touring. The worst is when the wheel of death comes up on the laptop in the middle of a set.

Dave Genn: Spend a few years on the road and you'll realize that every piece of gear you own is eventually going to die on you, probably at the most inopportune time imaginable. Take spares, and if you are lucky enough to have a crew, make sure that they know how to connect and load all devices. I once had a video tech trip over the power snake as he ran across the stage during a particularly huge show. Everything on my side of the stage powered down,

and, as he was plugging everything back in, he confessed to me that he didn't know how to reload any of my keyboards. Needless to say, my hands were pretty full for a couple of songs there.

CM: How does your main gig challenge you as a player, performer and/or songwriter? Why do you excel at it?

Bob Wiseman: It is a privilege for anyone to make a living at something they dreamed of doing in junior high.

Stuart Chatwood: Writing melodic passages is my strength. Being raised on The Beatles has helped myself and countless songwriters develop into mature writers that can get emotions across. When the *Prince of Persia* video game was being developed, Simon Pressey, the head of the audio department at Ubisoft, put together a list of people that he wanted to be involved. He phoned me up and we started working together. That was five games ago. You're all alone, with no one pushing you forward and nobody holding you



ADAM SMITH

Dave Genn: Vancouver-based producer/keyboardist/songwriter and guitar player. Currently with 54-40.

Personal Career highlights: six years with the Matthew Good Band, has appeared on records by Holly McNarland, Art Bergmann, Emm Gryner, The Lowest of the Low, The Grapes of Wrath and Hedley. Recently performed as well as produced records by Marianas Trench and Armchair Cynics.
www.davegenn.com, www.5440.com

back. Some of the deadlines on these games are so tight that you don't have the luxury of second guessing yourself. I had to build a sample library from scratch, and expand my studio to a Pro Tools HD rig. All five of the games feature various amounts of instruments from around the world. Unfortunately, the budget didn't allow for too many session players so I was left to my own devices to play the other parts. When you make a "band" album, you normally play a few of the instruments, but for the soundtrack work, you are providing 60-90 minutes of music, and creating all the overdubs yourself. On the technical side,



Natasha Alexandra: NYC-based singer/songwriter/keyboardist with NLX. Personal Career highlights: Working and writing with Byron Wong, Chris Brown, David Usher and Danny Greaves. www.nlxmusic.com

Kevin Hearn: Playing with BNL has taught me to serve the song, support the singers when I need to, and to take the reins when the song needs me to. I improvise most of my solos every show, which keeps me on my toes. Also, the band improvises songs on the spot at every show, which helps to keep Tyler Stewart (drums), Jim Creeggan (bass), and I communicating.

David Trusz: We want more than anything to sound unique. So the challenge there is to

draw on influences without copying or sounding like anyone. I don't know if I excel at it, but I work as hard, if not harder, than anyone else.

Natasha Alexandra: I guess the main challenge is to keep creativity coming and to keep it honest. I try to always stay inspired. Every gig poses its own challenges, but I guess the main thing is to stay focused and fresh ... (So I wear Secret.)

Dave Genn: Replacing a player of a long-running band is a difficult gig to say the least, especially when that player has been a key member for twenty-some odd years. The challenge for me has been to do justice to Phil's parts, to keep the original spirit of the songs alive, yet add a freshness that the band

these games are 10-20 hours long, so with only 60-90 minutes scored, many pieces have to loop seamlessly. It's a lot of work, but it is also rewarding. These games go worldwide, and my music has reached so many more people than it could possibly have reached with The Tea Party. The final game features some of my pieces scored by the Hollywood Studio Symphony Orchestra at the Eastwood Scoring Stage, Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, CA. For that, I was lucky enough to hook up with Inon Zur, who scored many of the cinematic sequences on the final two games. Arranging and conducting for a symphony is not within my skill set, so it was nice of Inon to be able to take that out of my hands.

Byron Wong: My main gig is composing and producing, so most of my challenges are from process as opposed to technique. I am way more interested in how to manipulate a keyboard or synth than play it – if that makes sense. The thing I excel at, if anything, is understanding how to manipulate a keyboard or synth to communicate a feeling. Often times I do that best by doing very little, technically speaking – just a few notes. Or, even better, I let someone else play it and I get to manipulate the sound while recording. Often the best keyboard takes I get are from other people.

Amin Bhatia: Because I'm a synth/film geek my joy and challenge is not in finding the killer axe, but in building layers of orchestration and sound – that's the buzz for me. It's not about sound libraries, but about combining sounds to create new textures.

Dafydd Hughes: We keep pushing each other to come up with new ways of playing the same music. A tune rarely ends up being performed the same way twice, even when we're trying to get a take for a recording. Personally, I'm always trying to find new sounds and combinations of sounds, trying to move us beyond the sonic limits of a traditional trio by introducing other instruments, computers, loops and so on.

Joan Besen: Every single thing I do, I approach as if it is my first time ever doing it and my last chance ever to do it. It's hard for me to observe this about myself, but I suspect it gives my musicianship a certain desperate quality, enhanced of course, by the fact that I really may be about to screw up horribly at any given instant, which for some reason, other people sometimes find attractive.

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KEYBOARDS

and fans will appreciate. From a songwriting perspective, the challenge has been to come up with riffs and progressions that don't seem out of place in 54-40's extensive catalogue, yet exhibit growth, both from my perspective and the band's.

CM: Do you prefer hardware, particularly vintage gear, or recreations of vintage gear vs. software live/in the studio?

Stuart Chatwood: I'd love to tour with a Steinway, a B3, a Wurly, and a Mellotron, but that's not a reality for me, or most musicians. The power of the software instruments today is just incredible. A touring band is a machine, and instruments breaking down or falling out of tune hurts that machine.

Byron Wong: I'm a big hardware fan. I love software, too, but music is all about feel. The way one plays a piano is entirely different than the way one plays a Minimoog – not just because of the size, or polyphony – how the keys feel, having large, tempting dials in front of you. Still, nothing beats options at crunch time, and digital – whether computer based, or a modeller – sure offers options.

Amin Bhatia: For live it has to be hardware. There's some nice software out there, but I just can't imagine throwing my vintage stuff away. Deadlines in film and TV have made it necessary to go the software route. So for studio work software synths are undeniably fantastic, but you still can't "touch" them. It's close, but we're not quite there yet.

Dafydd Hughes: In all cases, I prefer the real thing, whatever that happens to be. There's something about the way a real piano, electric piano, organ, or an analog synth responds when you play it that allows you to relax and

filters and effects right there, so I can manipulate the sound live.

David Trusz: In the studio, and live, hardware all the way. Software synths, regardless of what anyone says, don't sound the same as the real thing. They lack depth and character. Besides the difference in sonics, the lack of physical knobs and sliders to work with reduces spontaneity and really removes the performance element in the studio. You can go the controller route to make up for some of that, but it's not the same. Synths with drifting tuning, tape delay machines with uneven delay characteristics add an organic element to tracks and generally make things less sterile.

Natasha Alexandra: If you have the ability and luxury of both, it's an ideal situation. You can create some great ideas on vintage gear, but things can get twisted and manipulated on software. It's a great formula to create something that is your own.

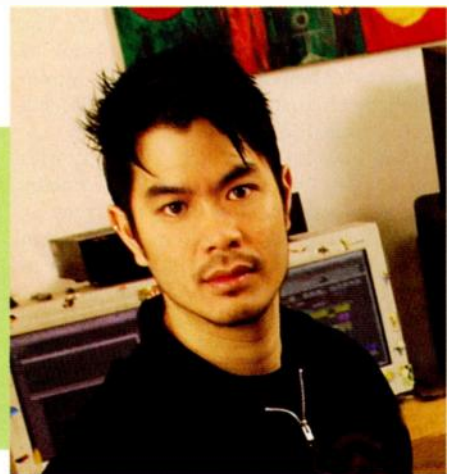
Dave Genn: I don't tend to use soft synths, or even modern synthesizers in general in the studio. I prefer the tried and true: Hammond, Vox, Acetone and Farfisa organs; acoustic Rhodes and Wuritzer pianos; vintage analog

in the end your ideas live and die based on the size of your library. A real player, however, can dream up a part and play it. I can't imagine singing an idea in the shower then running to my computer to search a database for a similar loop.

Byron Wong: Well, nothing beats what can be communicated musically and simply. More often than not, players with technique can do that with more variation than players who use one finger. Having said that, there is a number of one finger players I would much rather have on my productions over a virtuoso because many of those less-adept players have better taste in music.

Amin Bhatia: Some parts I can do very well. Other parts I bring in players that know the style I'm going for. The one-man orchestra thing is such crap. Any real players, (keyboard, guitar, spoons, whatever) can infuse some humanity into all this synth stuff. And DON'T

Byron Wong: producer and composer. Personal Career highlights: Working with an exhaustive list of artists, including the Crystal Method, David Usher, Junkhouse, Daniel Lanois, Chin Injeti and others. Has scored, contributed, or played on film projects like the Genie-nominated *Lie With Me*, *Center of The World*, *Zoolander* and *Straight Up*. Multiple broadcast credits for Astral Media/The Movie Network, HBO, MuchMusic, MTV, Bravo, Acura, CBC Newsworld, Movie Television, Headline Sports and Global.



ROY TIMM



David Trusz: Member of NYC-based, Global Underground (UK) recording act, Sissy. Personal Career highlights: Sissy album, *All Under*, released in June 2006. Has released singles under 'Kinnder' and 'David Trusz' on Silver Planet Recordings (UK), System Recordings (US), Sifted Recordings (US), Rhythmic Recordings (US), Ibizalem Recordings (Benelux), Remixes (released) for Groove Armada (Jive Electro US), Trafik (Global Underground (UK)), The Spoons (Release Records CAN) www.myspace.com/sissytheband

really enjoy making music. In the studio, I can't see any reason for not using the real thing, especially as recording equipment is so inexpensive and portable.

Joan Besen: In a perfect world where I'd take every individual piece of gear with me all the time. It's not just the sounds – the physical feel has a big effect on one's playing; hammers beating and buzzing on the strings of a grand or an upright, that rich, crunchy, slightly muddy feel of a Wuritzer, the bounce of a Clav, the smooth slide of a B3 – can never be matched by any digital reproduction from a pure, visceral, get-off point of view. But it's not a perfect world, and you do what you can.

Kevin Hearn: I like having re-creations of vintage gear on the road; having access to the

synths. The real gear sounds fatter, and even their little flaws and idiosyncrasies add a certain character that you just can't attain any other way.

CM: Technology allows people with few or no chops to do so much without a dedicated keyboard player – just inputting data. Can anybody fill the role of a keyboard player in the studio?

Bob Wiseman: David Foster is considered a producer. Shania Twain is considered a songwriter. Yes, anybody can fill the role of a keyboard player.

Stuart Chatwood: A player can bring freedom. With loop-based recording, you are limited. Yes you can have a huge library, but

enter in notes offline or apply groove templates and beat manglers. Just PLAY.

Dafydd Hughes: The main thing a keyboardist brings is knowledge of the techniques associated with a particular instrument, and how it fits into the music. With any instrument, this goes beyond simply playing the right notes at the right time. This often doesn't come across when an instrument is played or sequenced by somebody who has only a superficial relationship with it. On the other hand, that can lead to some strange and beautiful accidents – it's certainly not always a bad thing.

Joan Besen: At times, someone with a great ear and sense of the song who is not a keyboard player may come up with something far better than I can in certain situations. Sometimes one's own familiarity with one's instrument, habits and preconceptions actually end up limiting options and take one further away from the emotional heart of a thing. Someone with less of these preconceptions may be able to come up with something fresher and deeper as a result. The great challenge for any player is having a level of competence without letting it get in the way of creativity. On one end of this scale you have something like the well-known story of Al Kooper, not a keyboard player, walking into a Bob Dylan session and playing one of the most classic keyboard parts of all time. And, on the other end, you have

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KEYBOARDS



Kevin Hearn: songwriter, musician, and member of the Barenaked Ladies and Thin Buckle.

Personal Career highlights: 11 years with BNL, working with Thin Buckle, writing with Ron Sexsmith, the Rheostatics and others. Lou Reed making a vocal cameo on one of his songs. Recording with Gord Downey, Rheostatics, Jim Carey with The Look People, and Garth Hudson and Mary Margaret O'Hara. Playing piano on a duet with Marianne Faithful and Fernando Saunders. Performing with Peter Hook,

Burt Bacharach/BNL, Bruce Cockburn/BNL. Playing accordion with Neil Young and Sarah McLachlan at a Bridge School benefit concert.
www.kevinhearn.com

Thelonius Monk. Somewhere in between, the rest of us have our small moments of personal triumph.

Kevin Hearn: No way.

David Trusz: Depends what kind of music you're making. Obviously chops help live regardless, but if you're making electronic music you can get by on a basic music knowledge, creativity is far more important.

Natasha Alexandra: I think it's good to be articulate in whatever you try to do. I write my own material on piano and play. But I also embrace technology. It allows people to create without restrictions. Sometimes you meet people who can't play well, but their creative capacity is amazing. In my opinion there are no rules.

Dave Genn: There are ways to effectively construct "feel" with the sequencing programs that we all use today, but it's much less frustrating and time consuming to simply play the part into the recording device. I'm no muso snob and I don't have anything against those who manufacture their keyboard parts, but an accomplished player will bring musicality, experience and most importantly, brevity, to the session.

So There It Is...

Our panel may have some diverging opinions when it comes to composition and technology, process and product, but all agree that the most important part of the equation is still the player. There may be more bells and whistles around us, more elements to enhance the depth and scope of performance than ever, but the job is the same in terms of skill, inspiration and passion. Enhancements or not, the fire created by a compelling performer who's having the time of their life is undeniable. All the technical prowess and gear in the world can't make up for this.

As the pace of development and our capabilities accelerate, so have our expectations and those of the people we work with and for — on stage, while recording, arranging, and composing. Most musicians recognize that the demands and opportunities open to us for work absolutely require the expediency of all the most powerful tools at our disposal — even some who might be inclined view some technology as a crutch, or an excuse for not developing traditional chops. The large array of new keyboard gear that includes increasingly powerful and intuitive, vintage style interfaces, show we're still drawn to the feel, as well as the sound, of the original instruments, but we're becoming equally open to dramatically different control surfaces as well. A good thing, as judging from the gear that's coming down the pipe now, we can and will likely be handling more and increasingly varied media than ever on stage.

Regardless of what you do, regardless of your personal opinions about the changing direction and the evolving mechanics of composition and live performance, if there's any one thing the profiles of these players show, is that Bobby Wiseman's comment about "ship and cargo" is a point that bears remembering.



Kevin Young is a Toronto-based writer, best known for playing keyboards with David Usher and Moist.

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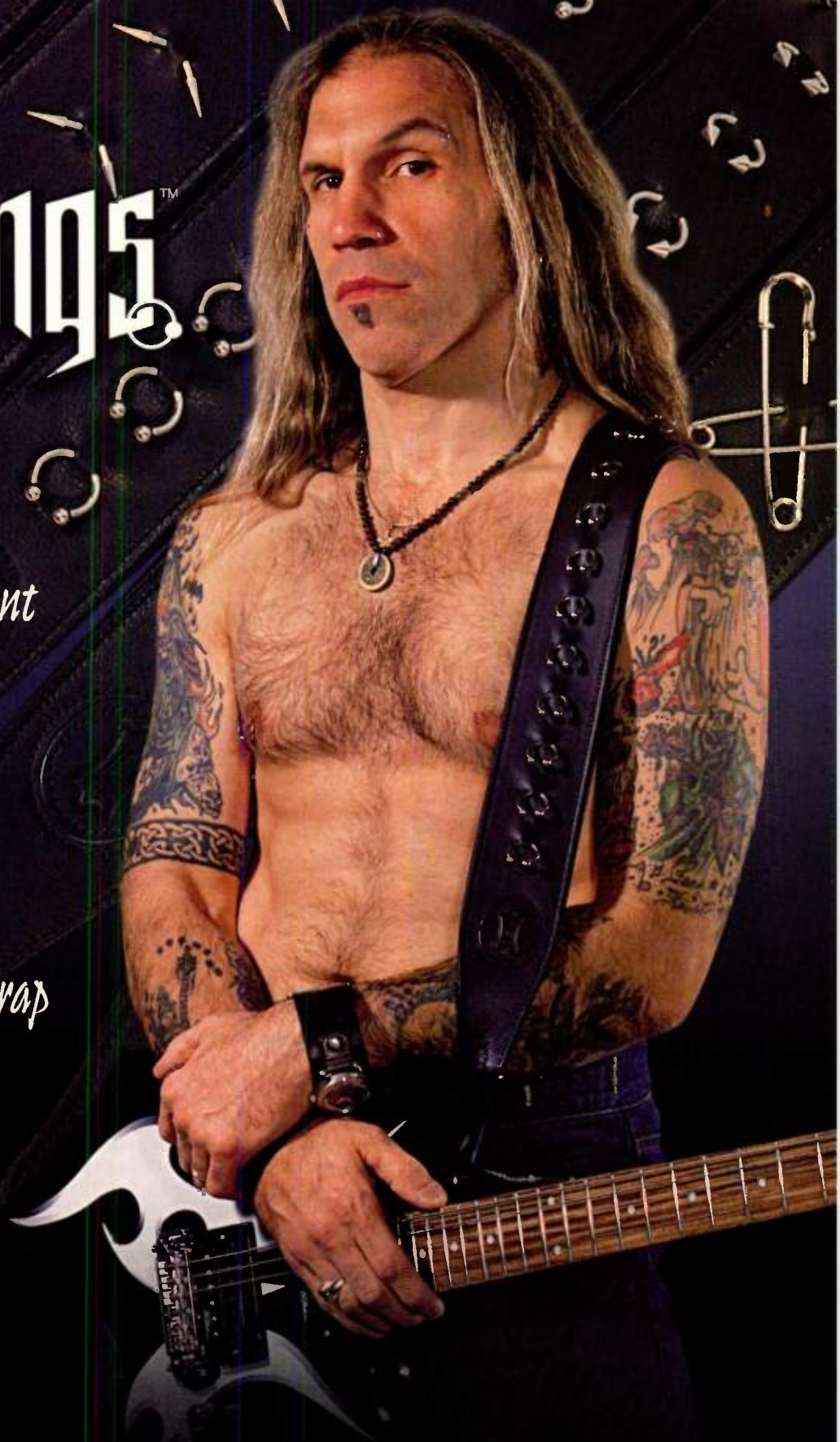
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Before The Lights Go Out

by Jim Yakabuski

If your Front of House area right before show time resembles Cape Canaveral (i.e. extremely organized) just prior to a shuttle launch then you're going to feel like I'm preaching to the choir in this article.

If you're the kind that kicks back with a latte just before the lights go down and mumbles casually, "It all worked in soundcheck so it should be fine now," this article is prepared with you in mind.

We're going to have a little heart-to-heart about pre-show preparation. Remember as you read each one of the following stories that they came from the school of hard knocks.

Preparation, preparation, preparation. One more time: preparation. That's all you really need to avoid early show fatalities. Read on to learn every sordid detail.

Ready, Set, Go!

This tip is so simple and fundamental that we often forget to do this. You've done a soundcheck earlier in the day, and if you have an opening act, you've probably just concluded a second line check prior to your band hitting the stage. They hit the first downbeat of the first song. Is everything working? Is everything coming up as it should in the correct channels? Is each channel's corresponding gate or compressor working correctly? These should be checked right away.

If you're doing a lot of one-offs, you probably fall right into this habit once you've spun up something resembling a band mix with a vocal on top. This should always be the first priority. Get some semblance of a mix going and then do some mental checks. Just the other night I was doing an arena that had an unusually thick sub slab that really masked the definition down low. I noticed that after about three songs I was missing something. Well (I'm blushing here), it was my bass guitar.

It's easy to sit back and say, "How do you miss an entire instrument?" But if you've done any arena mixing you will know that many rooms are very thick in the sub-bass area and the bass guitar tends to get washed out a lot. I mistook

the washy low end for my inability to define the bass, when the actual problem was that the output knob on the bass compressor had been bumped. This resulted in a -10dB output level coming from the compressor. I turned it up and things came together in the mix, and it was at that moment that I cursed myself and decided to write this down. It's perspiration and inspiration all at the same time.

The method I would suggest is to immediately follow the "getting the mix together" thing with a quick blast up the input channel PFL highway. Start at the first channel and have a quick listen and then move on. This might not be as convenient as listening to the groups and then moving on, but you might miss something that way. Having a pre-show checklist will help you catch these little moved knob situations, but a quick once-over at the beginning of the show will confirm everything is there. It's that simple.

Darth Vader You Don't Need

Effects can take an average show and add all the glitz and sparkle that make a great show. If you have a nice, acoustically dead environment to mix in your choice of effects, it can make or break your mix. One of the bad habits I've found myself getting into over the years is checking effects returns during the day and then assuming the parameters are not going to change at all before the show. You can be pretty sure that all is okay with most effects units because you physically have to call up edit parameter pages to get in there and muck around with things, but some units have parameter adjustment wheels on the front, and they have been known to get bumped here and there which can cause some embarrassing moments.

One unit in particular that I am speaking of is a certain kind of harmonizer. It has a spinning wheel on the front panel that is very easy to turn,

and on one occasion I just happened to catch myself before I made a horrendous mistake. The last thing that I was editing that afternoon was the pitch of the harmonizer. Without changing that edit page, the wheel got bumped later on



in the day and just before show time I happened to listen to my effects returns and caught the mistake before the show started. If I had not, the two lovely ladies who were singing backup vocals for the show would have resembled Darth Vader much more than their normal sweet-sounding southern selves. The edit wheel had spun down and the pitch dropped considerably.

Another way that you can get caught is if someone, like an opening act engineer, makes adjustments to your effects during his show and forgets to tell you, or you forget to recall your program or parameters. Usually these days most opening acts get their own effects gear, but in many club situations everybody is sharing effects. Be sure to store your settings, and in those types of situations, double-check that nothing is out of whack. It's a good habit to get into. Unfortunately, aside from the benefit that all these programmable units have given us, they can catch us once in a while because we rely too much on their stability. Add this to your pre-show checklist. And use the force!

This article is excerpted from Jim Yakabuski's book entitled Professional Sound Reinforcement Techniques. The book is published by MixBooks, an imprint of www.artistpro.com. You can also find the book online at www.mixbooks.com and www.musicbooksplus.com.



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How To Know If Your Band Has A Shot

by Dave Genn

Life isn't fair. We all know this. The music business is even less fair than life itself. Okay, that sounds a bit dramatic, but if you've stuck it out as a musician for any number of years then you also know this statement to be true. Why is it that some bands succeed where others fail? Is it talent? Luck? A combination, perhaps? I don't claim to have all the answers, but what I have learned through experience and disappointment is that there are certain elements, some within our control and others beyond, that increase a band's odds of carving out a career for itself. There are, of course, exceptions to each one of these rules, but knowing beforehand what labels, managers, producers and tastemakers are looking for in a new artist will allow you the greatest chance for success.

Work Ethic

This one is absolutely essential. Nobody has ever had a lasting or meaningful career without an innate drive to work harder than his peers. Nowadays major labels are not as willing to develop young acts as they were in the past, and often won't even consider signing a band until they have proven that they are willing to do whatever it takes. This means endless touring, without the aid of tour support, and probably an independent release or two under your belt before anyone is going to take you seriously. Once you've established yourself, say with a record deal and a couple of hit singles or a steadily selling album, the real work begins. Doors will open and opportunity will knock, and a promising artist will do everything in her power to play every show, do every television appearance, and endure every interview no matter how tired or inconvenienced they might feel. We all know that incredibly talented individual who is always complaining that they never got their shot, but more often than not, that person just wasn't willing to do the work necessary to put themselves in a position to succeed.

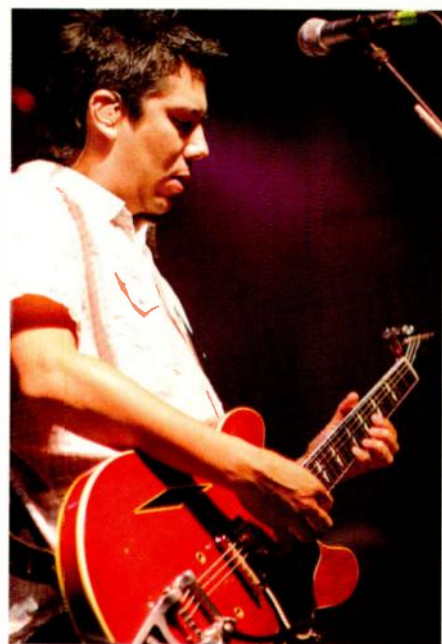
Timing

This one is probably the aspect that is the least in our control. Great artists never chase trends, and career artists will develop and evolve independently of what's popular at any given moment.

There is, however, an undeniable element of luck involved in finding oneself in the right place at the right time. Often you will hear bands being described as "dated". In other words, they're playing a style of music that, although competently performed and well-crafted, sounds stylistically like what was popular 15 minutes ago. Your average garden-variety rock and roll fan is looking for the NEXT BIG THING, and in order to place yourself ahead of the curve it is essential to take artistic risks. The other side of this coin, of course, is when bands are described as being "ahead of their time". This description seems only to apply to bands that have already broken up in fits of disillusionment and bankruptcy, but hey, they almost always become some obscure influence on the platinum sellers of the future, and that's something, right? Besides doing the right thing at the right time, an act must find itself aligned with the right representation, label, publisher, producer, etc. Many great records have gone the way of the dodo simply because the label to which the band was signed just happened to endure a messy corporate merger at the precise time of release. Unfortunately, politics do play a major role in how a record will perform in the marketplace, and timing is indeed everything.

A Star

If the singer in your band is not the strongest link, you are wasting your time. There are exceptions, of course, but very few. What constitutes star-quality in a front person is somewhat indefinable by nature, but could be construed to include an outstanding voice or songwriting ability, drop-dead gorgeous good looks, undeniable originality or an outrageous fashion sense. Sometimes star-quality is an indeterminable "spark" or X-factor that can't be described any other way than "I just can't take my eyes off of him/her". A world-class front person has an insatiable desire to be the centre of attention, either consciously or sub-consciously, and is often miserable if they don't find themselves in that position on a near constant basis. Good times in the van if you happen to be the drummer, but it is exactly this quality that allows a great singer to shine when the lights go down and the pressure's on.



Adam Smith

Songs

Obvious, right? Then why are so many turds floating up to the top of the charts, while great songs sink like stones? I wish I could answer this admittedly mixed metaphoric question with unwavering insight but, truth be known, I can't, other than pointing out that there is an incredible amount of back-room wrangling, back-scratching/stabbing and occasionally, payola, that goes into the process of determining what gets played and what doesn't. The best position that you can put yourself in is to have UNDENIABLY GREAT SONGS, and lots of 'em. Songwriting is a craft and craft is learned. I often tell people that nobody writes a great song until they've written a hundred, and after that you can probably keep one in five. You can expedite this process by co-writing with friends, colleagues, or pros, as each experience is bound to teach you a little more about the process. There are no hard and fast rules to writing great songs and every writer's modus operandi is different, but I can't stress enough the importance of not becoming precious about your art. When a writer becomes precious, all the fun is taken out of the event for all involved, and if you're not having fun creating, why do it at all?

So there you have it... The Formula. If you are in a young band eager to take the next step, then ask yourselves the following questions: Do we work harder than everyone else? Are we doing the right thing at the right time? Is our singer a star? Do we have undeniably great songs? If you can honestly answer each of these questions with an unmitigated "Yes!" then your chances of success are better than most. Good luck!

Dave Genn is a Vancouver-based musician, songwriter and producer, best known for his guitarist and keyboardist roles in (currently) 54-40 and (formerly) Matthew Good Band.

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■ Ludwig has recently released a new line of marching percussion, the Free Floater snares and Challenger tenor and bass drums.

The Ludwig Free Floater snare drum features a new finish on its cross-laminated Birch and Maple shell, allowing it to be lighter in weight and provide a great pitch and tone. It has 6 mm steel key rods that are heat-treated, providing solid tension tuning. It also features magnesium die-cast top and bottom support hoops and aluminum alloy connectors. The snare carriers have J-bars that offer stability and smaller belly plates for more comfort and a cleaner look under the uniform.

The Challenger tenor and bass drum shells are made of Birch and also features the new finish. Its light-weight aluminum alloy rail systems for quad, quint and sextuplet designs make it two pounds lighter than the previous models. The lugs are die-cast zinc and have supporting plates on the inside of the tenor shells for extra strength.

Ludwig's bass drum rim guard and mallet caddy is a two-in-one solution, connecting the spring-loaded adjustable caddy over the shell to the bass drum rim. The side connections protect the rim for on-the-rim playing and the top mallet caddy provides storage for mallets.

Finishes offered are white, black and red cortex, mirror chrome, brushed silver and brushed gold. Optional shadow finishes are available as well, such as ebony, cobalt blue, ivory, scarlet and Mahogany. A variety of Remo heads are offered as well.

For more information, contact: Conn-Selmer, Inc., PO Box 310, Elkhart, IN 46515 (574) 458-0980, FAX (574) 522-0334, www.conn-selmer.com.

Fender California Series

■ Manufacture of guitars, amplifiers and related equipment, Fender Musical Instruments Corporation (FMIC), has recently released a new line of acoustic guitars, the California Series. There are three models in this series, the Sonoran, Malibu and Kingman.

All three models feature a dreadnought body shape, a solid Spruce top, Mahogany back, sides and neck. The fingerboard and bridge are made of Rosewood. These acoustics will give the player a vintage vibe with the Fender Stratocaster guitar headstock design and V shape of the necks. Each guitar is available in either straight ahead dreadnought design or a dreadnought cutaway design. Each model also has Fishman Classic IV electronics with a built-in tuner.



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RKS The Wave

■ Guitar manufacturer, RKS has recently released a new electric guitar that features an interchangeable body shell and pickguard, The Wave.

The Wave allows musicians to personalize their guitar to suit their mood or their method. A variety of vibrant colours and graphics are available and bare models offer a do-it-yourself painting experience. Different woods will soon be available as well.

Other features that The Wave boasts include a bolt-on neck concept that's integrated with the molded body's core, producing an ultra-resonant tone. It's able to play without supporting aluminum ribs, so The Wave is lighter and more compact than other RKS models. The neck is made of North American rock Maple and the fingerboard is Rosewood. It features custom-made Lace Humbucking pickups, Groove Knobs and a Posifly pickup selector switch. Similar to the other RKS models, The Wave features the Open Architecture Resonance design.

For more information, contact: RKS Guitars, LLC, 221 Lombard St., Oxnard, CA 93030 (800) 942-4757, FAX (805) 988-2144, info@rksguitars.com, www.rksguitars.com.



Pro-Mark Autograph Series Drumsticks



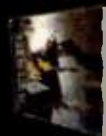
■ Manufacturer of drumsticks, mallets and percussion accessories, Pro-Mark Corporation, has recently released two new Autograph Series models from Jason Bittner and Jimmy DeGrasso.

Jason Bittner is the drummer for Shadows Fall, which has seen commercial success and critical acclaim. His model is made of American Hickory, is 16 1/8" long and 0.59" in diameter. It features an acorn-shaped nylon tip.

Jimmy DeGrasso has been a rock drummer for years. His roster includes Suicidal Tendencies, Alice Cooper, Megadeth and many more. His model is also made of American Hickory, is 16 1/2" long and 0.617" in diameter. It features a modified acorn-shaped wood tip.

For more information, contact: EfKay Music Ltd., 2165 46th Ave., Lachine, PQ H8T 2P1 (514) 633-8877, FAX (514) 633-8872, howard@efkaymusic.com, www.efkaymusic.com.

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The Yamaha **GO46** and **GO44** are mobile FireWire audio interfaces, featuring high quality built-in mic preamps (GO46) and line inputs (GO44). Both audio interfaces come with a complete computer software package for professional quality recording. GO46/44 can be carried and used virtually anywhere in a wide variety of applications—including full music production in a home studio, mobile recording of band rehearsals or live concerts, and even field recording in remote places. GO46 boasts additional professional features like independently selectable phantom power and channel inserts for connecting external effects. GO46/44 are both compatible with surround playback systems which sets them apart from other FireWire interfaces. **GO Series** audio interfaces come with all the software you need including a full suite of VST instruments and effects so you're ready to start making music right out of the box.

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TerraTec Producer Area 61 Keyboard



Manufacturer of soundcards and PC audio systems, TerraTec Producer, has recently released a new expandable keyboard system for studio and stage use, the Area 61.

The Area 61 keyboard is the first keyboard that comes with an integrated USB 2.0 High Speed Audio and MIDI Interface. It features 24-bit/96 kHz resolution and discrete power amps. The 61 keys are velocity-sensitive and half-weighted and features two after-touch zones providing various touch-control options. Therefore when a keyboardist is playing a left-hand chord they can control the volume level by varying after-touch pressure, while playing a right-hand lead line using a different sound and after-touch to control a filter.

A dual-colour LED chain with 15 segments surrounds each of the 10 programmable rotary encoders. Each encoder has the control dial and a push-button that triggers different events. Area 61 features two rubberized control wheels and five buttons that control the menu and navigation, which can be re-programmed using the included control software.

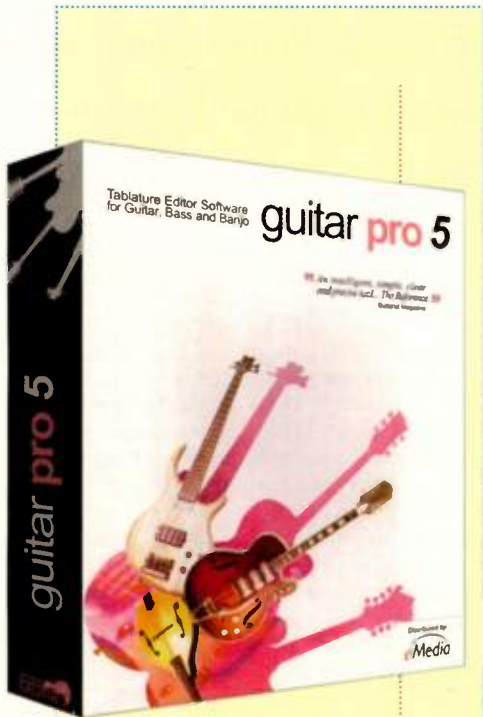
Other features that the Area 61 has are stereo input and output and two separate MIDI ports, extendible with hardware sound generator modules, soft-touch modulation and pitchbend wheels, two 16-character LCD displays, transport controls and fast ASIO 2.0 connection and HAL plug-in drivers. It is secured in a robust aluminum chassis and is compatible with both Mac and PC platforms.

For more information, contact: Synthax Canada, 4858 Jeanne Mance, Montreal, PQ H2V 4J7 (514) 271-8735, FAX (514) 271-1583, eric@synthax.com, www.synthax.com.

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Guitar Pro 5.1

■ The latest version of Guitar Pro, 5.1, has recently been released. It features all of the same great characteristics as 5.0, but is now available for both Mac and PC systems.

Guitar Pro 5.1 is a workshop for guitarists to use as a tablature editor. Musicians can add drum notation, vocal notation and tablature support for any stringed instruments with four to seven strings. Artists can create complete scores, lead sheets or lesson sheets for students in minutes.

This software also features Realistic Sound Engine (RSE), which gives a real-time playback of the scores with realistic sound samples. Guitar Pro 5.1 also features improved ASCII import/export, enhanced speed trainer and new effects.

For more information, contact: eMedia Music Corp., 664 N.E. Northlake Way, Seattle, WA 98105 (206) 329-5657, FAX (206) 329-0235, custserv@emediamusic.com, www.emediamusic.com.



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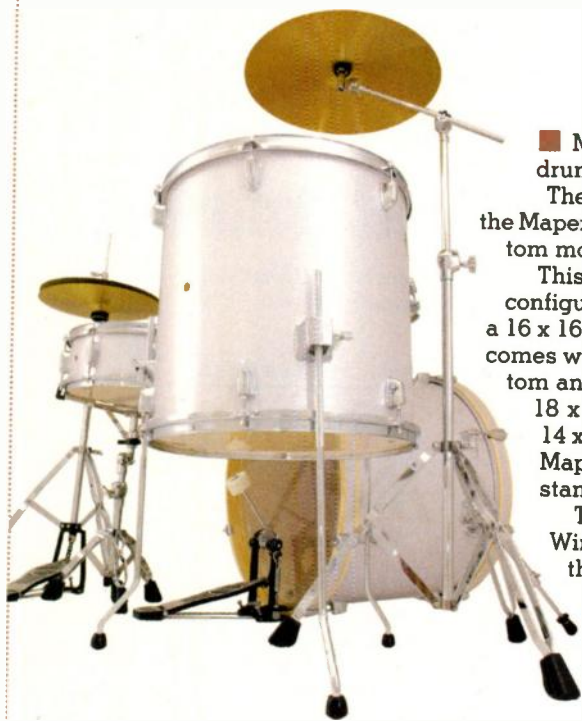
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September-October 2006

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Mapex QR Drum Series



■ Mapex has recently released a new drumset that is ideal for first-time drum buyers or for teaching studio environments, the QR Drum Series. The QR features 9-ply, 7.2 mm basswood shells with low-density lugs and the Mapex Isolated Tom System (ITS). ITS eliminates direct contact between the tom mounts and the drum, allowing the shell to vibrate freely.

This drumset is available in three five-piece configurations. The Standard configuration comes with a 22 x 16" bass drum, 12 x 9" and 13 x 10" tom toms, a 16 x 16" floor tom and a 14 x 5.5" snare drum. The Fusionease configuration comes with a 22 x 16" bass drum, 10 x 8" and 12 x 9" tom toms, a 14 x 14" floor tom and a 14 x 5.5" snare drum. The Voyager configuration comes with an 18 x 16" bass, 10 x 8" and 12 x 9" tom toms, a 14 x 14" floor tom and a 14 x 5.5" snare drum. Each configuration also comes with double-braced Mapex 300-Series Hardware, which is a boom stand, hi-hat and snare stand, bass drum pedal and padded drummer's throne.

The QR Drum Series is available in three wrapped finishes, Angel Wing, Onyx Sparkle and Crimson Swirl. It also comes with a new DVD that features Mapex artist, clinician and educational director, Dom Famularo, giving lessons on assembling the kit and a few basic lessons and tuning instructions.

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.

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Planet Waves Polish Express Packs

■ Planet Waves has recently released a new set of single-use packets of the premium three-step polishing/detailing system, the Express Packs.

The Express Packs include the Restore deep-cleaning cream polish, Protect liquid carnauba wax and Shine instant spray detailer and maintainer. Restore is a deep-cleaning cream polish with a formula that cuts through grime and evens out swirl marks and minor scratches. Protect is a natural protector and sealer that has yellow Brazilian carnauba to create a radiance with easy application. Shine spray cleaner and maintainer keeps the finish looking like new as it erases dust, fingerprints and minor imperfections while colour enhancers bring out the finish. As this is a liquid, it comes pre-applied to a soft polishing towelette.

For more information, contact: D'Addario Canada, 50 W. Wilmot, #3, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 1M5 (905) 889-0116, FAX (905) 889-8998, orders@daddariocanada.com, www.daddariocanada.com.

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Disc Makers ReflexAuto3 & ReflexAuto8



■ Manufacturer of CD and DVD duplicators, Disc Makers, has recently released its first-ever automated tower duplicators, ReflexAuto3 and ReflexAuto8.

Both duplicators are ideal for high-volume duplication and do not require a PC to operate. Minimal interaction is needed as these duplicators incorporate a robotic arm. The ReflexAuto3 and ReflexAuto8 have all of the features that the other Reflex towers have, but with the robotic arm users don't have to manually change discs after every duplication session.

The ReflexAuto3 can duplicate up to 18 DVD-Rs and up to 26 CD-Rs per hour. The ReflexAuto8 can duplicate up to 32 DVD-Rs and up to 48 CD-Rs per hour. They both also feature dual-layer DVD duplication capabilities.

For more information, contact: Disc Makers, 7905 N. Route 130, Pennsauken, NJ 08110-1402 (856) 663-9030, FAX (856) 661-3458, www.discmakers.com.

Famous Discoveries 'My Sheet Music & Roll Up Piano'

■ Florida-based Famous Discoveries, creates and distributes many products, including the new *My Sheet Music* CD-ROM and *Roll Up Piano*.

My Sheet Music CD-ROM comes with 28 interactive lessons for keyboard and piano, sheet music for hundreds of songs and free access to sheet music for thousands of songs online. This CD-ROM also offers free chord charts and a free music dictionary. You can play the sheet music on your computer, transpose, speed up or slow down the tempo and print as many copies of the music as you want.

My Sheet Music CD-ROM allows you to watch and listen using your computer to know what the songs should sound like so you can properly learn how to play. It also features a massive library of sheet music and allows you to choose between 1,000 different instruments. Just click on the instruments you want and print out the music of your choice. You can change the key of your music to make it easier or more challenging to play. Many teachers and school boards use this to teach students.

Roll Up Piano is a cordless roll up piano that allows you to play and practice anywhere as it rolls up for easy transporting and storage. It features a built-in speaker with volume control, a flexible touch-tone design and 10 demo songs. It provides quality digital sound in 100 instrument voices such as piano, organ, horns, violin, trumpet, electric and acoustic guitars, flute and strings. It has 61 keys in four full octaves and has 100 rhythms. It is 10.75" long, 7.75" wide and 4" high. It includes the piano it-

self, an instructional book and four AA batteries. An optional AC adapter is available separately.

For more information, contact: Famous Discoveries, 9800 Fourth St. N., #203, St. Petersburg, FL 33702 (800) 303-6403, FAX (727) 579-8315, info@famousdiscoveries.com, www.famousdiscoveries.com.

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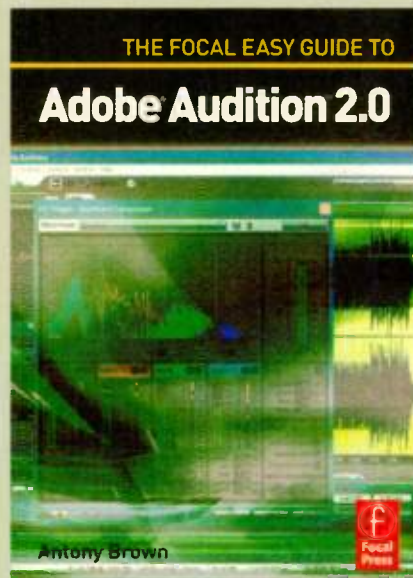
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The Focal Easy Guide To Adobe Audition 2.0

■ Focal Press, an imprint of Elsevier, has recently released a new easy guide, *The Focal Easy Guide To Adobe Audition 2.0*.

Musicians, producers, music programmers and editors, recording

engineers, music technology students and serious hobbyists can refer to this guide as it's an ideal first read for those new to Adobe Audition 2.0, or just want a handy desk reference. It features many colour diagrams and screenshots



as it takes the reader through the program step-by-step. It covers only the key features and essential workflow to get the reader up and running fast. Areas covered include set-up, editing, looping content, mastering, finalizing, working with video, making a CD, audio restoration and more. There are many workflow tips that show the reader the best way to create digital audio files.

The contents included in *The Focal Easy Guide To Adobe Audition 2.0* are Introduction; Setup; The Interface; Importing, recording, playback; Editing (Edit view, Multi-track view); Looping content; Restoration tools; Mixing, Mastering; Surround sound; Working with video; Exporting, saving files and projects; Making a CD and Adobe production studio integration.

The author, Antony Brown, is a freelancing specialist in sound design/editing, music composition and audio restoration. He is also a freelance Adobe software trainer/demonstrator. He was previously a UK Systems specialist for Steinberg audio software.

For more information, contact: Elsevier Inc., 30 Corporate Dr., #400, Burlington, MA 01803 (781) 221-2212, FAX (781) 221-1615, usbkinfo@elsevier.com, www.elsevier.com.

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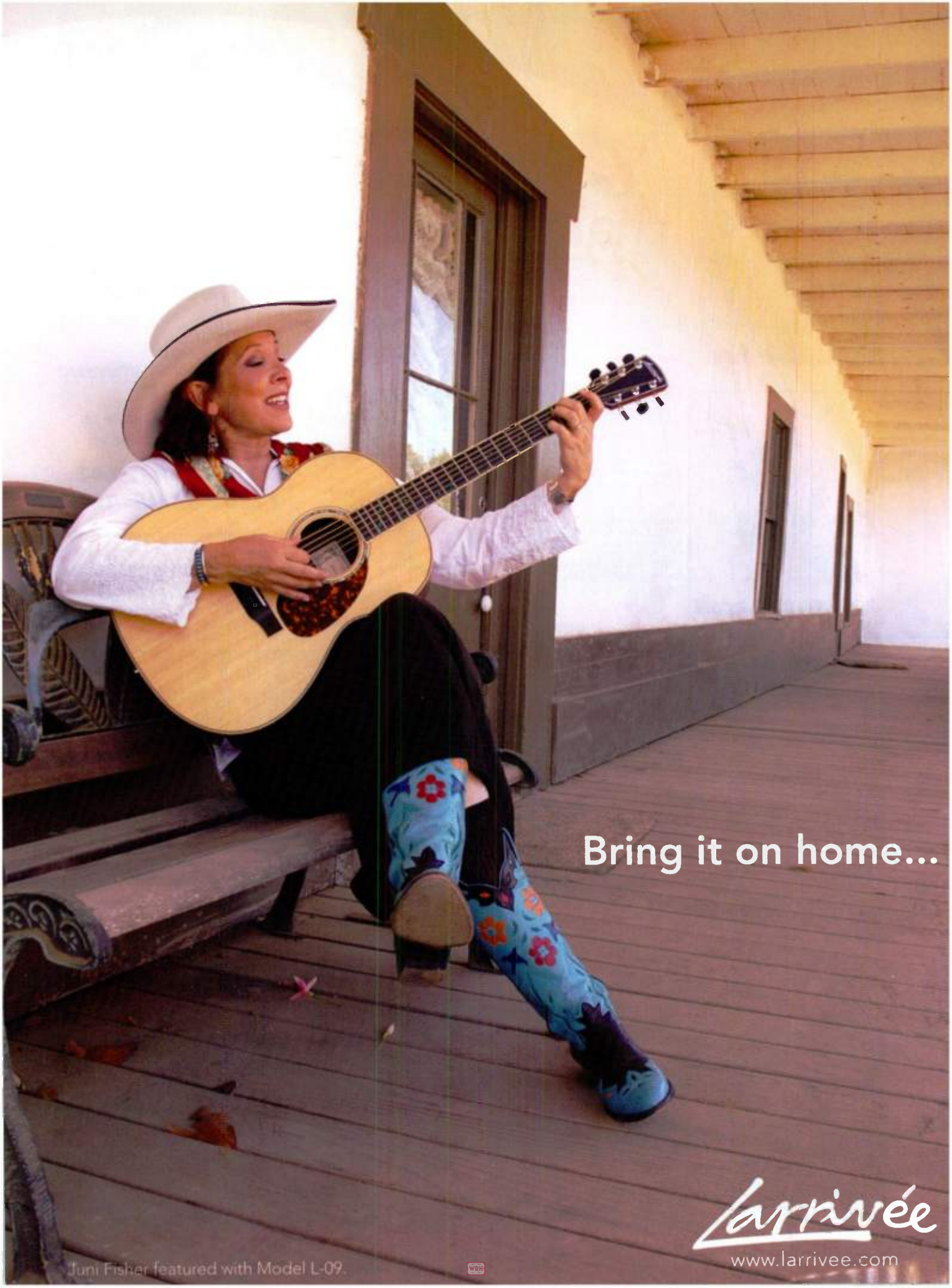
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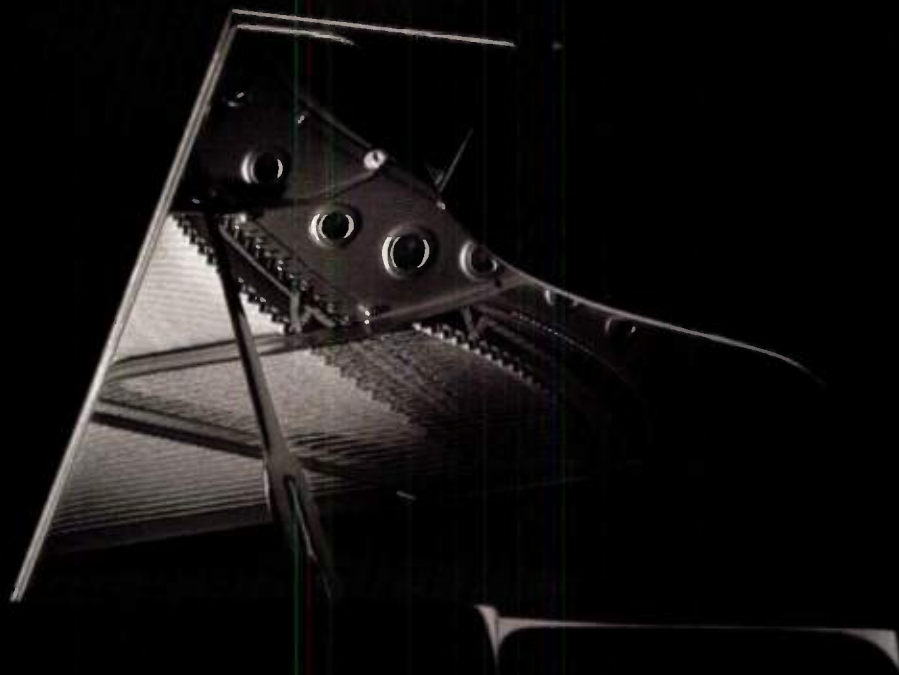
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Vellone Communication, Canadian distributor of multimedia solutions for system integrators is seeking a bilingual inside sales representative for our Montreal office.

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Where: Calgary, AB
What: aye matey metal
Contact: Scarab Metal Productions; #22, 2526 Battleford Ave. SW, Calgary AB T3E 7J4 (403) 240-7843, info@verbaldeception.com, www.myspace.com/verbaldeception.com, www.verbaldeception.com.

Sure this is a bit Spinal Tap, but maybe it's meant to be. With song titles such as "Pirates Attack", "Jewels Of The Dead" and "High Seas" and a 16-page story with treasure map (ARRR!), Verbal Deception is working the theme well on its debut full-length, *Aurum Aetus Piraticus*. Naturally the first song is "Pirates Attack" which starts off with the sound of crashing waves and seagull caws, and then a kind of metallic sea shanty. The vocals are pure guttural with the lines "Cowards of battle/Bastards of life/Our enemies being/Quelled by the knife." Hilarious stuff! Metalheads will rally for this, much like they did for BC's Three Inches Of Blood. Comprised of lead vocalist/guitarist Kresho Klarich, 19; keyboardist Walt Fleming, 19; bassist Matt Petti, 18; and drummer Jordan Bourgeault, 22, the band – now in its fourth year – released a six-song EP in 2004 and this album in late June. It was self-produced at Sundae Sound with engineer Al Irving and mastered by Dave Horrocks at Infinite Wave and charted at #3 on iEarshot National College Loud Chart, July 25. Since October 2005, Verbal Deception's songs have received about 45,000 plays on MySpace.



CHANTAL CHAMANDY

Who: Chantal Chamandy
Where: Montreal, PQ
What: exotic pop
Contact: Steve Levesque or Jennifer Malazarte at Luck Media & Marketing Inc. 8900 Olympic Blvd., Beverly Hills, CA 90211 (310) 860-9170, FAX (310) 860-9171, info@luckmedia.com, www.luckmedia.com, www.chantalchamandy.com.

Lush and exotic, Montreal's Chantal Chamandy's "Love Needs You" is one of the best dance/pop albums to come out of Canada. The ethnic flavours (Indian, Middle Eastern, Latin) and her strong beautiful voice give it its uniqueness, as opposed to some of the by-the-book cheesy, mechanical-sounding dance music so often released. Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Chamandy self-produced all 14 songs at Caverne Studio in Montreal, where she now lives, and is aided by some two-dozen musicians, who add everything from violins, percussion, trumpet, saxophone, piano and background vocals to carnatic violin, ehru, and tablas. She wrote all the lyrics and co-wrote all the music, mostly with Subir Dev. The lead track "Zindegi" is a sensuous song with a soft undercurrent of percussion, but the second song, "You Want Me" is the one getting all the attention with its Eastern vibe and rock sensibility. The body-shaking song is enjoying club play with a remix done by Brian Rawlings (Cher's "Believe") and US airplay at Hot AC. The album was recorded and mixed by Yanik Daunais, except "Nunca Sera Igual" and "Amor de mi Vida" was mixed by Humberto Gattica. Mastering was done at Vlado Meller at Sony Studios in NYC.

TACOMA REDD

Who: Tacoma Redd
Where: Toronto
What: redd rock
Contact: Management – Diane Foy, Skylar Entertainment, 45 Markham St., Toronto, ON M6J 2G4 (416) 413-9672, diane@skylar.com, www.tacomaredd.com.

Out of a tragic circumstance, Toronto's Tacoma Redd is paying tribute to its friend and late guitarist Ron "Dabz" Boudreau-McLellan (who died in 2004 after a valiant fight against Cystic Fibrosis) by continuing on without him. The rock band's six-song EP, *A Momentary Misfortune*, is not only dedicated to him but many of the lyrics seem to be about him. On the lead track and first single, "When I'm Not Around", frontman Doug Smart sings "You never backed down from your fight/You fought for 30 years to hold back all those angry tears...your pain is over," and on "Letting Go" there's such lines as "Time can only bring more healing...time to rest eternally...I'll have to say goodbye." A song like "Please Keep Believing", which has a darker, urgent sound, could be a romantic relationship ("Where are you now, my angel/Cause I need you now") or perhaps be a call-out to Dabz. Produced by Moe Berg of The Pursuit of Happiness, the EP was recorded at Toronto's Chemical Sound and engineered by Rudy Rempel, and is a straight-up melodic rock recording. "Tears Fall Down", a softer song, includes violin by Douglas Spence. Joining Smart in the band are guitarist Bryan Richards, bassist Chris Bell and drummer Dean Glover.



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/>. In addition, she writes for *Gasoline*, *Teen Tribute*, *Words & Music*, *Access*, and others. She has also published an anti-racism children's picture book, *The Girl With Pinhead Parents*, available at www.warchild.ca.

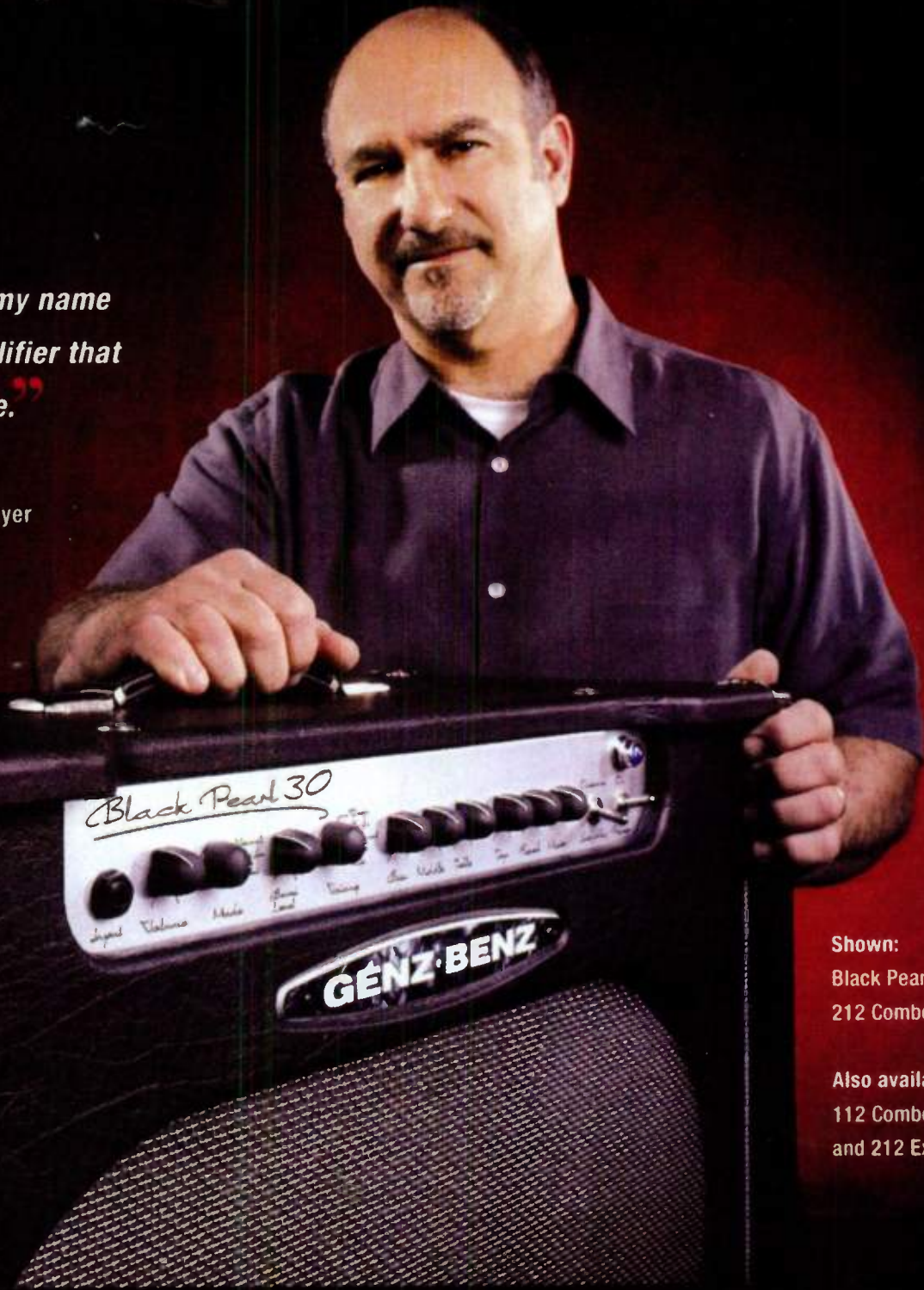
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