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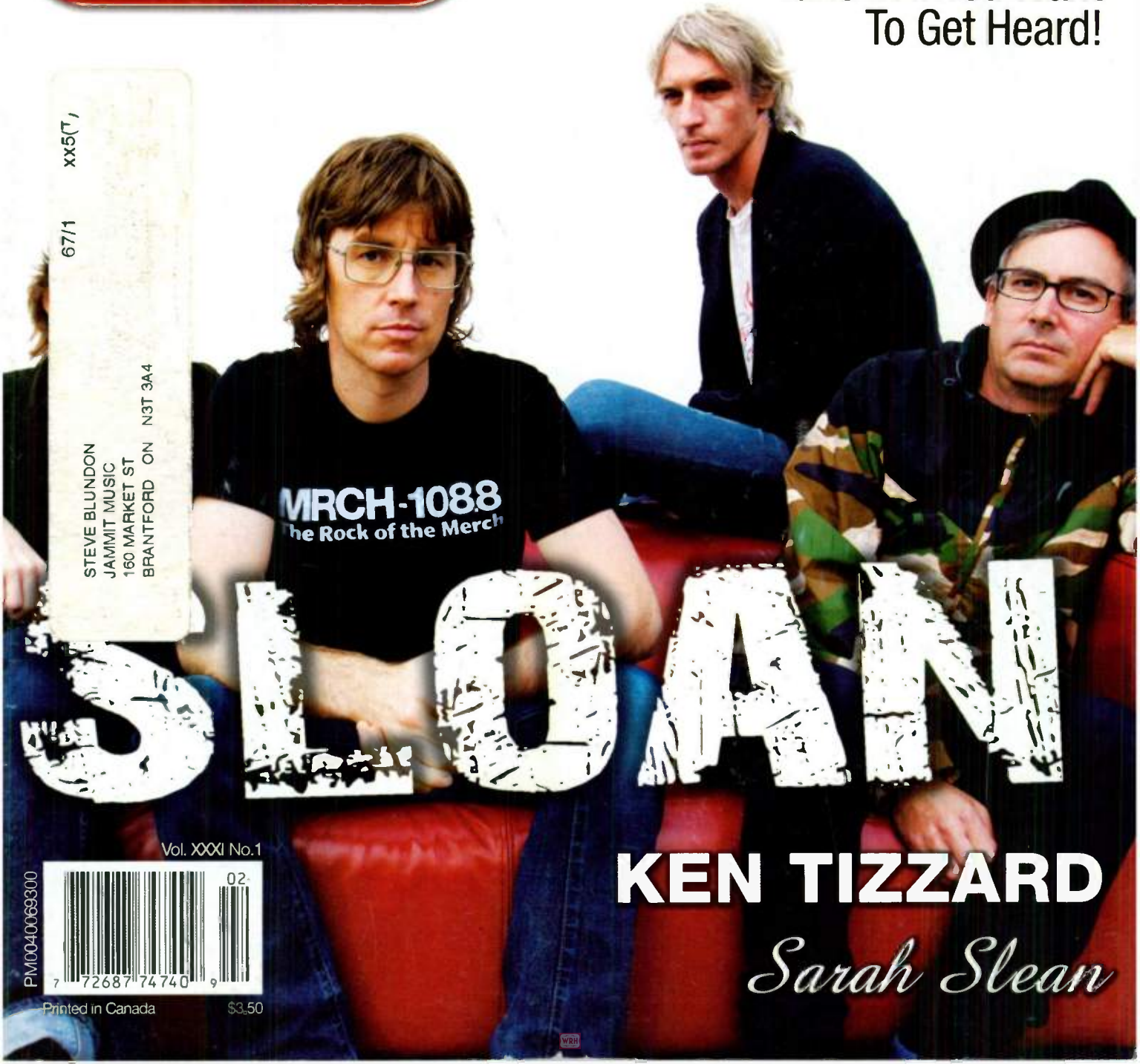


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Contents

FEATURES

34 SLOAN

Making *Parallel Plays* For A Long Career

by Luther Mallory

Keep your band together and successful over the long haul. CM talks with each member of Sloan individually to get the honest goods.

38 MARTHA WAINWRIGHT

Why Blunt Is Sharp

by Kevin Young

She's outspoken and she doesn't pull any punches in her songwriting. Martha Wainwright shares why it's best to make bold statements, creatively speaking.

40 KEN TIZZARD

by Kevin Young

Probably best known as the bassist in The Watchmen and with Thornley, Tizzard continues to restlessly strike out on his own.

42 HOW TO MAKE RADIO WORK FOR YOU

by Paul Morris

Terrestrial radio is here to stay, so check out what you need to do to reap the benefits of airplay.

49 MUSIC EDUCATION 2009

Get Schooled

by Andrew King

You should only stop learning when you're dead. Read on, and we'll help you put some new tricks in your bag.



DEPARTMENTS

- 9 Feedback
- 10 Indie Insider
- 12 Changes
- 19 Events
- 20 Road Test
- 65 Hot Gear
- 69 Advertisers' Index
- 74 Marketplace
- 76 Classifieds
- 78 Showcase

COLUMNS

- 25 Guitar – Juan Coronado
- 26 Keyboards – Ron Davis
- 27 Bass – Steve McCormack
- 28 Percussion – Barry Romberg
- 29 Woodwinds – Daniel Schnee
- 30 Brass – Al Kay
- 31 Digital Music – Paul Lau
- 32 Vocals – Tammy Frederick
- 58 Writing – Sarah Slean
- 60 Recording – Murray Daigle
- 61 Live Sound – John Watt
- 62 Business – Wendy Wixson

PICTURED ABOVE: MARTHA WAINWRIGHT
COVER PHOTO BY MARSHALL ANGUS



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www.canadianmusician.com to write electronically.

Piracy

Piracy takes on many forms, from your old-fashioned peer sharing and BitTorrent downloading systems to the ever-popular media streaming sites. Although I enjoy a solid number of small- to large-venue shows each year, purchase choice CDs, and adorn myself with swag, I must be fair and state that, just like the vast majority of other casual to avid music listeners, I partake in various forms of piracy. But, does that make me, as an individual of the biggest category of music consumer, a terrible person? Since piracy cannot be totally eliminated, what can the consumer do? I think if an individual takes part in pirating, he or she should also consciously make equal reparations back to the music community. If the listening consumer and the industry artist give back to each other, it will ensure a healthy industry and happy listeners.

Reid,
Nepean, ON

Ed. I respect the pragmatism and the good intentions behind what you are saying, but I still caution you about the legality of some of the activities you are describing. My personal rule, especially being in the industry, is just don't do it. Ever.



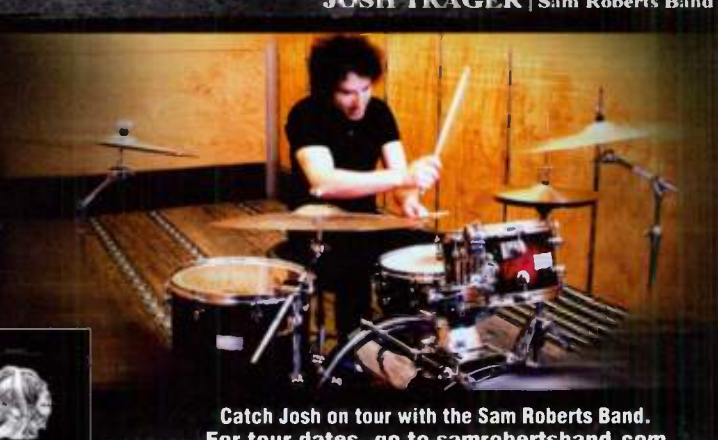
Jeff Healey

Is there going to be a special tribute to Jeff Healey in an upcoming issue, or did I miss something?
Cindy,
Penticton, BC

Ed. Please check out the photo on page 56 of May/June 2008 CM. Rest in peace, Jeff.

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Understanding CanCon Requirements

by Andrew King



The MAPL logo on Comeback Kid's *Broadcasting...*, with the "P" omitted. The album was written and performed by Canadians, but recorded at the Blasting Room in Ft. Collins, CO.

An oft-debated subject among stakeholders, CanCon refers to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)'s requirements that broadcasters – both radio and television, though we're focusing on the former – air a certain percentage of content that is deemed to be "Canadian." As funny as it is to see the word in quotation marks, there are actually a few stipulations in place that determine whether or not a piece of music can ultimately be dubbed Canadian content.

Some see it as a catalyst for the amelioration of the Canadian arts or a fair shot for up-and-coming artists that might otherwise be overshadowed by the more financially dominant American industry; others would call it affirmative action for music programming or even undemocratic. Any way you slice it, it's nice to have a fundamental understanding of the regulations and what they could potentially mean for you as an artist if you're considering getting music out to commercial radio.

Some General Tidbits

First introduced in 1971, Canadian content laws then required that 25 per cent of radio airplay in the country be devoted to Canadian music. This percentage was bumped up to 30 per cent in the '80s, and then to 35 per cent in the '90s, where it currently sits for commercial radio. In order to keep the game clean, the requirements must be met between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. (meaning stations can't cram it all in at 3 a.m. for the insomniacs and bar hoppers).

Campus and community radio stations are actually required to meet slightly higher

requirements. With regards to satellite radio, providers need to offer a certain number of Canadian-produced stations with at least 85 per cent Canadian content. Check out The Verge on XM for an example of how this regulation is effective for artists, listeners, and the station alike. As far as determining if a given track is qualified to count towards this percentage, I present you with the MAPL system.

The MAPL System

Seemingly aware that acronyms are awesome, especially when they spell a word so relevant to the subject at hand, the CRTC has labelled the system that decides whether or not a piece of material adheres to CanCon requirements the MAPL system. The CRTC says that to qualify as "Canadian content," music must generally adhere to at least two of the following conditions:

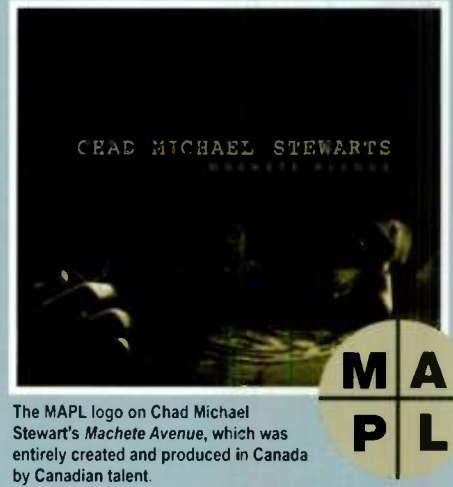
- Music – The music is composed entirely by a Canadian.
- Artist – The music is, or the lyrics are, performed principally by a Canadian.
- Production – The musical selection consists of a performance that is a) recorded wholly in Canada, or b) performed wholly in Canada and broadcast live in Canada.
- Lyrics – The lyrics are written entirely by a Canadian.

Pretty simple, right? Well, it was designed to be, and everybody's better off for it. If you're thinking you've seen MAPL before, you're probably right – in the form of a cute little quartered pie that's stuck on the back of most Canadian CDs. If you're putting out an album and want to make it really clear to broadcasters that your record qualifies as CanCon, look into slapping that little baby on the back. The two or more categories in which the music qualifies are filled in, while the others aren't.

Using the MAPL logo to your advantage is a clever trick, and not only up-and-comers are using it. A few really big Canadian artists who have their own teams of foreign song and lyric writers specifically make a point of recording in Canada to satisfy CanCon requirements in hopes of getting more airplay from their home and native land. Independent labels in the US releasing records by Canadian artists will happily slap the logo onto the back of an album if it means more love back home. Regardless of what anyone thinks of the system, the fact is that it's in place, so use it to your advantage if you can.

Controversy & Closure

Stakeholders have raised various concerns



The MAPL logo on Chad Michael Stewart's *Machete Avenue*, which was entirely created and produced in Canada by Canadian talent.

regarding CanCon regulations. Some believe them to be an intrusion on a consumer's right to his or her desired entertainment, with others going so far as to claim that by being in place, the regulations support untalented Canadian acts that wouldn't otherwise be worthy of airtime. On the other side, some artist believe stations will merely stick to safe programming choices from larger acts to fulfill the quotas before touching music from developing artists.

While many of these concerns are valid, the fact remains that the regulations are in place, and so both broadcasters and artists alike should be finding ways to use them to their advantages. Would acts like U.S.S. or Wintersleep have broken without the help of national airplay? I'd like to say probably, but I'm sure that meeting MAPL requirements didn't hurt their chances.

For more information on CanCon requirements, visit the CRTC online at www.crtc.gc.ca.

Straight From The Fox's Mouth



"Uncle" Rob Pinnock, Music Director & On-air Host, 105.3 The Fox

"Uncle" Rob Pinnock is the Music Director and host of the afternoon timeslot for Fredericton rock station 105.3 The Fox. The station is no stranger to Canadian content regulations, and is thus aware of the opportunities they present for both artists and broadcasters alike.

How do you choose which new Canadian artists you'll start playing on the air?

First off, we like to reflect what is happening across the country where some of the bigger acts are concerned. When it comes to up-and-coming artists, with whom we have an impressive track record, there is certainly no shortage of talent from coast to coast. We feel that it's our responsibility to make the playlist reflect our own backyard whenever possible. If the Novaks are packing up the van and coming to town, why wouldn't we play them? It's a no-brainer.

How do you think CanCon regulations benefit up-and-coming artists?

For new acts, I honestly feel broadcasters need to take a more active role, and open their minds more when they conduct their music meetings. Music directors have to do their homework: read the press, go to shows, and listen to their audiences.

I have no problem coming up with the minimum required Canadian content – our talent pool is very rich. We've come a long way in a relatively short time. If I were to list my personal current top 10 artists globally, I'd bet seven of them would be Canadian.

How does your station benefit from introducing new Canadian content?

When your station represents the community or region properly, the benefits are huge. Make your format matter to your community and you won't go wrong. Become important and represent your town. You aren't going to hear about who's playing at a local club by listening to a station that is beamed in from God knows where.

How important is Canadian talent to your demographic?

I think we're a proud country, and our listeners generally dig Canadian music. We can identify with it. Having to play Canadian content is no longer considered 'high-chair treatment.'

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Have CanCon regulations ever assisted in your development of local talent out in NB?

Certainly, CanCon regulations help local talent – no question, but I find that various cities will support their own acts, and really I can't blame them. The challenge is getting played outside your hometown market. But hey, it's a long way to the top if you wanna rock n' roll.

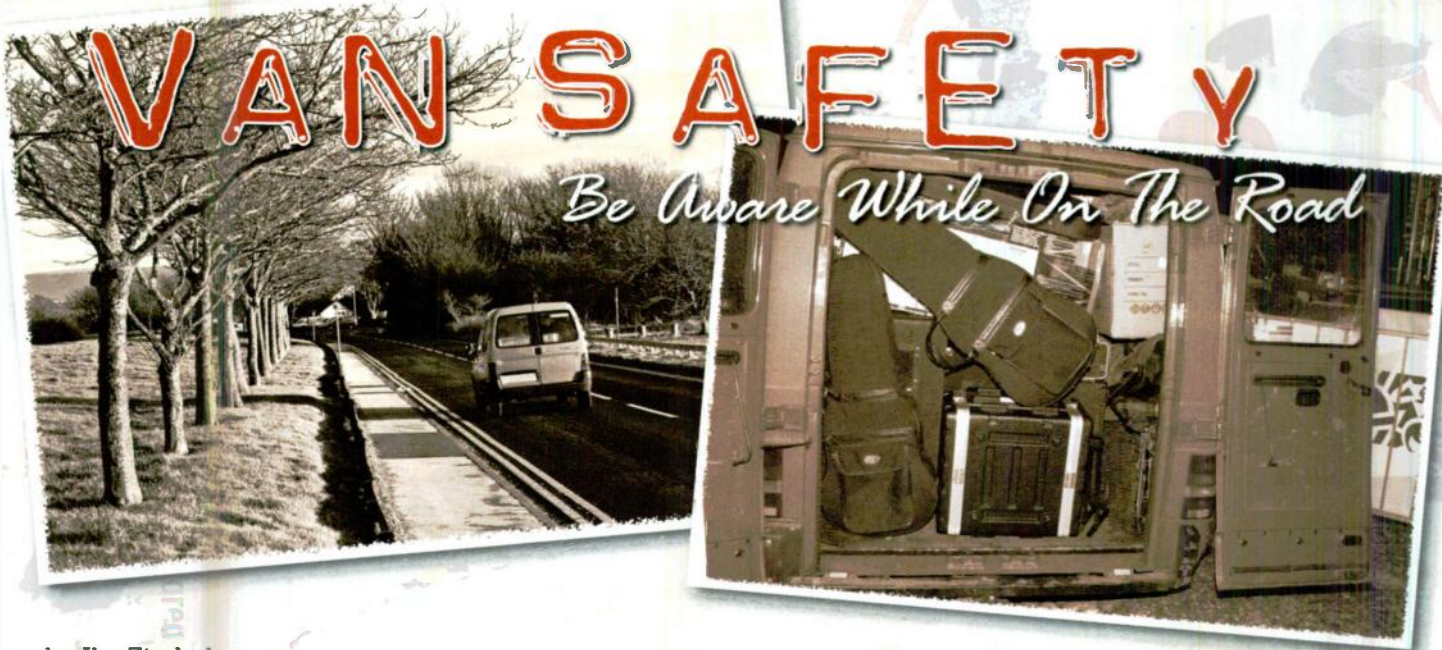


Andrew King is the Assistant Editor of Canadian Musician.

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by Ike Zimbel

In October 2008, a van carrying a band went off the highway and rolled, killing one member and seriously injuring another. This happened in Saskatchewan. Over 30 years ago, a colleague survived an almost identical accident in northern Quebec. One of his bandmates didn't.

In both cases, the van rolled over when the driver tried to get back onto the highway. Although these two tragedies happened many years apart, the circumstances are similar and indicate that it could happen again. In the interest of trying to prevent further incidents, here is some information that may help you if you find yourself in that situation.

First, what should you do if you are driving and your van goes off onto the shoulder of the road? As in any emergency situation, there are a number of things you need to do:

1. Stay calm. That's the first .01 seconds.
2. Take your foot off the gas pedal.
3. **DO NOT** slam on the brakes. Why? Because your wheels are on two different surfaces. When you apply the brakes, the two different surfaces (pavement on one side, dirt/gravel/sand on the other) will slow the vehicle at different rates. Since the same vehicle can't be going two different speeds at the same time, physics demands that the speed difference between the two sides gets transferred into another motion – the van rolling over.
4. **DO NOT** try to steer back on to the highway at speed, keep the wheel

straight until the vehicle has slowed considerably. Why? Because the wheel on the shoulder can dig into the soft surface, slowing one side of the van more than the other.

5. When the vehicle has slowed considerably, check your mirrors for traffic behind you, and when the coast is clear, gently ease back onto the highway and accelerate back up to highway speed. If in doubt, come to a complete stop, take a few deep breaths, and start again.

So that's the big one taken care of. Here are a few more notes to keep you safe when on tour. Note that how you deal with some of these things will vary depending on whether you own the vehicle or are renting.

1. Buy a tire gauge (\$7-12 at Canadian Tire) and check your tire pressure regularly. If you are renting, check the tires when you pick up the van. I have often found rental vans to have mismatched tire pressures, once with one tire 50 per cent lower than the other three. What does a low tire feel like when driving? I often first notice a bit of extra movement when turning or straightening out after a turn – a little kick to the side.
2. If you own the vehicle, you will need to buy good tires. Really. If you are a struggling band and "can't afford new tires," figure out a way to do it. Have a tire benefit show, borrow from friends, ask your parents – anything.
3. When you load the van, make sure you secure the load. In one of the crashes I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the bass amp was ejected through the roof of the van and the person who

died went out after it. You can buy a complete set of cargo straps for \$10-30.

4. Keep the interior clean. It may be common to have a bunch of empty pop cans rolling around the floor, but it's not cool when one of them rolls under the brake pedal.

5. On long drives, take frequent breaks if you are the only driver. If you are sharing the driving, keep the shifts short, like one to three hours each. It's a bad idea to drive until you are tired and then switch for two reasons. First, once you are tired, you won't recover fully before your next shift, and second, the last half-hour or so while you are figuring out that you are too tired to keep driving is a hazardous time to be at the wheel.

6. If you haven't driven a larger vehicle, like a van, or don't regularly drive, here's something you need to be aware of: the van weighs a lot more than what you are used to. You need to be aware of that extra weight and how it affects the driving, particularly the braking. More weight means longer stopping distances, so you need to be looking farther ahead and acting sooner.

7. Wear your seatbelts.

8. No booze or drugs while driving. (In other words, that's going to have to wait until you can afford a tour bus!)

9. Finally, always drive according to weather conditions, especially in unfamiliar territory. Many collisions are caused by drivers driving too fast for the road and weather conditions. This is particularly true for larger, heavier vehicles that require additional stopping distances.

Ike Zimbel is the Owner of Zimbel Audio Productions.



Alex Voros (second from left) is flanked by members of The Tragically Hip during the awards ceremony.

Tragically Hip Honours MusiCounts Teacher Of The Year

MusiCounts, Canada's music education charity associated with CARAS, has named Alex Voros of North York, ON's Chaminade College School as the fourth annual winner of the MusiCounts Teacher of the Year Award. Voros was presented the award by members of The Tragically Hip at the recent ceremony. Voros has been teaching music for over 30 years, eight of which he has spent at Chaminade. He was presented with a handcrafted award, a \$10,000 cash award, and an invitation to attend the 2009 JUNO Awards in Vancouver. The school's music program will also benefit from a \$10,000 grant.



spaz media Helps Artists Increase Online Appeal

spaz media, web developer of the NXNE website, has expanded its offerings in the arts and entertainment sector with consultation services available to up-and-coming artists and industry movers.

Started in 2004, the Toronto-based company has developed creations such as music festival portals, streaming radio stations, and social networks for the arts. The company has gravitated to assisting musical talent with more than just a professional web presence, spaz offers services from streaming audio to live show video feeds, all moulded around the client's budget. It works from domain registration through development cycles to the point of consulting and even building connections with A&R reps.

"Artists need to have more than just a website," believes Founder and Director Mark Zappia. "Most of us grew up around a local band scene and have seen the struggle to get artists' voices heard. With the advent of the web, local musicians now have a platform to the world - and we build that platform."

Visit the company online at www.spazmedia.com

PASIC 2008 Welcomes Thousands To Austin

Over 6,500 drummers and percussionists from around the world gathered at

the Austin Convention Center to attend the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC), setting the third-highest attendance record for the event. Attendees experienced over 130 clinics, concerts, master classes, and performances by international percussion artists. Events covered everything from drumset and orchestral percussion to world percussion and marching. PASIC 2009 will be held in Indianapolis, IN November 11-14 at the Indiana Convention Center. Visit www.pasic.org for more information.



Steve Ferrone, drummer for Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, presents a clinic during PASIC.



Monotonix perform during NXNE 2008.

NXNE Now Open For Submissions

Submissions are now being accepted for the 15th annual North By Northeast festival. Artists can submit for a slot during NXNE 09 from now through January 31, 2009 at www.nxne.com.

Bands submitting for this year's festival are also eligible for the Rogers Fan Choice Award, a \$10,000 prize. The event brings tens of thousands of music fans and industry personnel to over 50 participating venues for artist showcases, as well as an industry conference with guest speakers and panels. The festival runs from June 17-21, 2009 and in past years has welcomed acts like Feist, The Constantines, K'naan, Ron Sexsmith, and more.



Students from Bob Roper's The New Music Industry PDP course.

Harris Announces 2009 PDP Schedule

The schedule for the Harris Institute's 2009 Professional Development Program has been posted online. The PDP offers 15 music industry, audio production, and digital media courses over the weekend and is supported by the Ministry of Culture and OMDC. This year's program offers courses including Music Marketing, Artist Management, Contracts and Negotiation, and Media and Music (Publicity). Some courses will be filmed for inclusion in the online program to be introduced in late 2009. Visit www.harrisinstitute.com for further information and to access the complete schedule.



Another Breakthrough For Digital Music

Atlantic Records, a unit of Warner Music Group, has announced that more than half of its music sales in the US are now from digital products, like downloads from online retailers or ring tones for mobile phones. This is the first instance of digital sales overtaking those of physical counterparts and yet another milestone as record sales continue to decline and digital media continues its slow rise.



Credit: S. Bell

Frankie Venom

Foundation Launched In Memory Of Teenage Head Founder

Gord Lewis, guitarist of Canadian punk pioneer Teenage Head, has announced the establishment of a charitable foundation in memory of vocalist Frankie Venom (aka Frank Kerr). Venom passed away in late 2008 of natural causes. The foundation will offer assistance to artists and those in related occupations with financial burdens due to illness, accident, or old age. Visit www.teenagehead.ca for updates on events and future initiatives.



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ArtistWorks Inc. has partnered with Vestax endorser DJ Qbert to create the Qbert Skratch University, an online video learning site. The university, launching early this year, will see DJ Qbert using a series of videos to teach all levels of scratching techniques from basic to exotic, as well as beat juggling. Students can then submit their own videos for evaluation and are provided with direct responses from the artist. For more information, visit www.qbertskratchuniversity.com.



Credit: Duncan McKie

Saint Alvia performs at Tokyo's Duo.

Canadian Music Mission Yields Results

The Canadian Music Mission to Asia, which saw 26 Canadian artists, 20 visiting Canadian music companies and organizations, and 10 delegates from the Asian music industry meet with over 50 of Tokyo's most prominent music companies, recently came to a close. The Mission is a CIRPA-led initiative that brings Canadian artists and industry members overseas to develop business opportunities and explore the potential for Canadian content in alternative markets.

This year saw artists like Bedouin Soundclash, The Trews, and Russian Futurists travel abroad for two separate artists showcases. Japan is the world's second-largest music market at \$5 billion annually, and is a key and developing market for Canadian talent. Last year's Music Mission yielded \$1.4 million in new business for the Canadian industry. Visit www.cirpa.ca for more information.

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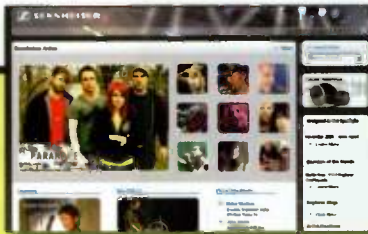
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Sennheiser Launches New Artists Website

Sennheiser has unveiled its new Artists website. Aimed at musicians, sound engineers, and music enthusiasts, the site is a one-stop portal for relevant information about Sennheiser-endorsed acts. Its layout presents facts and discussion about the gear and techniques used by endorsers, as well as punchy biographical summaries of their careers and links to Sennheiser press releases about their tours and recording sessions. Users can navigate directly to the site at www.sennheiserusa.com/artists.



Promoting Music With ... Popcorn?



HevyD President Barry Stecyk

Over 100 artists from across Canada have come together for the launch of HevyDmusic.com. In 2009, 300 songs will be made available for free download to music fans and consumers across Canada, and unsigned artists are encouraged to submit tracks for consideration.

Downloads will be accessed with codes found in each bag of HevyD's Kettle Korn, which has achieved national distribution to stores across the country. By donating a track to be available for download, artists are given a free avenue for national promotion. Artists including White Apple Tree, Art of Dying, and Ron Irving have already donated music to the site.

Each bag of HevyD's Kettle Korn includes a code for 20 free downloads, and a minimum of 15 codes per year will be distributed. Artists have the flexibility to add new songs for download, and the site is designed to grow and host up to 300 artists. HevyD is based in Vernon, BC. President Barry Stecyk comments: "We are doing this for the love of music. The website is non-profit for us, but its popularity will help guarantee people will notice and buy HevyD's Kettle Korn."

For information on how to submit tracks for possible inclusion in the mutually beneficial promotion, visit www.hevydmusic.com.



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Las Vegas, NV
January 7, 2009
646-654-4660
bbevents@billboard.com,
www.billboardevents.com

■ MIDEM Annual Music Market 2009

Cannes, France
January 18-21, 2009
514-660-9724, FAX 514-764-0149
apowell@mutek.org, www.midem.com

■ Hillside Inside 2009

Guelph, ON
February 7, 2009
519-763-6396, FAX 519-763-9514
hillside@hillsidefestival.ca,
www.hillsidefestival.ca

■ Mobile Beat Las Vegas 2009

Las Vegas, NV
February 17-19, 2009
515-986-3300, FAX 515-986-4433
custserv@mobilebeat.com,
www.mobilebeat.com

■ 2009 International Folk Alliance Conference

Memphis, TN
February 18-22, 2009
901-522-1170, FAX 901-522-1172
fa@folk.org, www.folk.org

■ East Coast Music Week 2009

Corner Brook, NL
February 26-March 1, 2009
902-892-9040, FAX 902-892-9041
ecma@ecma.ca, www.ecma.ca

■ 8th Annual Billboard Music & Money Symposium

New York, NY
March 5, 2009
646-654-4660
bbevents@billboard.com,
www.billboardevents.com

■ Canadian Music Week 2009

Toronto, ON
March 11-14, 2009
905-858-4747, FAX 905-858-4848
info@cmw.net, www.cmw.net

■ CelticFest Vancouver 2009

Vancouver, BC
March 11-15, 2009
604-683-8331
ralba@telus.net, www.celticfestvancouver.com

■ SXSW 2009 Festival & Conference

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Interactive & Film: March 13-17, 2009
Music: March 18-22, 2009
512-467-7979, FAX 512-451-0754
sxsw@sxsw.com, www.sxsw.com

■ 2009 Juno Awards

Vancouver, BC
March 29, 2009
416-485-3135, FAX 416-485-4978
info@carasonline.ca, www.juno-awards.ca

■ Mobile Entertainment Live! Spring 2009

Las Vegas, NV
March 31, 2009
646-654-4660
bbevents@billboard.com,
www.billboardevents.com

■ 32nd Annual Dallas International Guitar Festival

Dallas, TX
April 17-19, 2009
972-240-2206, 972-303-4909
info@guitarshow.com, www.guitarshow.com

■ GMA Music Week 2009

Nashville, TN
April 18-22, 2009
615-242-0303, FAX 615-254-9755
info@gospelmusic.org, www.gospelmusic.org

■ Billboard Latin Music Conference & Awards

Miami Beach, FL
April 20-23, 2009
646-654-4660
bbevents@billboard.com,
www.billboardevents.com

■ ASCAP "I Create Music" Expo 2009

Los Angeles, CA
April 23-25, 2009
800-278-1287, FAX 212-595-3276
www.ascap.com/eventsawards

■ Cape Breton International Drum Festival

Cape Breton, NS
April 25-26, 2009
902-727-2337
bruce@cbdtrumfest.ca, www.cbdtrumfest.ca

■ Rogers Spring Music Festival 2009

Hamilton, ON
May 7-9, 2009
www.springmusicfestival.com

■ New York Amp Show 2009

New York, NY
May 9, 2009
818-992-0745
loni@ampshow.com, www.ampshow.com

■ Montreal International Musical Competition (MIMC) Voice 2009

Montreal, QC
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877-377-7951, FAX 514-845-8241
info@concoursmontreal.ca,
www.concoursmontreal.ca

■ NXNE 2009

Toronto, ON
June 11-14, 2009
416-863-6963, FAX 416-863-0828
info@nxne.com, www.nxne.com

■ 2009 COCA National Conference

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519-690-0207, FAX 519-681-4328
www.coca.org

■ 5th Montreal Musical Instrument Show (MMIS)

Montreal, QC
July 9-12, 2009
514-525-7732, FAX 514-525-8033
info_simm@equipespectra.ca,
www.mmmis.ca

■ 32nd Annual Vancouver Folk Music Festival

Vancouver, BC
July 17-19, 2009
604-602-9798, FAX 604-602-9790
info@thefestival.bc.ca, www.thefestival.bc.ca

■ 21st Annual Beaches International Jazz Festival

Toronto, ON
July 17-26, 2009
416-698-2152, FAX 416-698-2064
info@beachesjazz@rogers.com,
www.beachesjazz.com

■ Guitar Workshop Plus Toronto

Toronto, ON
Session 1: July 19-24, 2009
Session 2: July 26-31, 2009
905-567-8000
info@guitarworkshopplus.com,
www.guitarworkshopplus.com

■ KoSA International Workshop Camp & Festival

Green Mountains, VT
July 29-August 2, 2009
514-482-5554, FAX 514-483-2226
info@kosamusic.com, www.kosamusic.com

■ 2009 Canmore Folk Music Festival

Canmore, AB
August 1-3, 2009
403-678-2524, FAX 403-678-2524
info@canmorefolkfestival.com,
www.canmorefolkfestival.com

■ Guitar Workshop Plus Vancouver

Vancouver, BC
August 9-14, 2009
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Rode M2

by Howard A. Laurie

The Rode M2 live performance mic was offered to me to test in a venue that has an extreme variety of artists performing most days of the week. The performers who agreed to forsake their 58s were pleased with having, in some cases, an improvement to their reference on stage. Put through its paces, this modestly-priced (around \$250 street price) hand-held condenser can stand up to more expensive mics. In terms of dynamic range and capacity to deliver a robust monitor level before feedback, the M2 is an outstanding product. The quality of reproduction in the mains was comparable to that of a mic four times the price.

Right out of the box, I had a listen on my talkback channel – in the headphones as well as the mains. My first observation was a surprising amount of bottom compared to most mics I have used. On an actual channel strip (Crest Century console), I found that setting the high pass at 140 Hz resulted in a strong input signal without being too boomy. To test on stage, I first bypassed the graphic EQ on a pair of passive wedges with the channel EQ flat except for the high pass. I was able to deliver a fairly strong level without feedback. This would be perfect for a small ensemble with one vocalist. After this, I engaged the curve that is my “normal” setting for up to four vocalists with Beta 58s. The M2 still sounded nice, and I was able to get a big increase in level before feedback.

A great cross-section of performers agreed to test the mic.

First up was Cuban-Canadian tenor Luis Mario Ochoa, accompanied by an upright bass, with himself playing a Gibson 165 through a small amp. Bravely, he started his set with no more than a one-minute line-check. He had a few moments of getting used to the dynamic possibilities of the M2, but after that he was able to sing an intimate bolero and then switch gears for a more up-tempo traditional Cuban song and selections from his jazz repertoire. I found, like with most tenors, I need to take out a little around 2 kHz for the house. Later that evening, Luis was able to further test the mic under more extreme conditions. Cimarron, his 9-piece Latin ensemble, was providing a barrage of

sound behind and around him. He was still able to maintain dynamics in his performance, and was still able to hear himself well. The quality of his voice in the house was superb. I now prefer this to my regular mics. I soloed his vocal channel when he was not singing, and was surprised as to how little bleed there was from the band. It was less than I would expect from a dynamic, and did not add unwanted artifacts to the mains. Based on this test alone, I'd purchase a handful of M2s for my mic kit – maybe in the '09 budget!

The second test was on a tenor sax in the 12-piece Cuban salsa powerhouse Café Cubano the next night. As there were three lead singers and I only had the one M2, I decided to see what else it was good for – you know, looking for the new “Swiss Army Microphone.” The depth in the low mids allowed for an un-EQ'ed richness that made the sax stand out nicely against the two trumpets, completing the horn section of this highly-energetic band.

For the third experiment, I used the M2 on a hand drum keeping time for a Georgian choir. The key ingredients of attack and tone were balanced, again without more than a little low shelving. I could perceive the sound of “skin-on-skin” amongst the 10 voices of the choir.

The next day, an extreme range of vocalization saw the input clipping, yet there was no perceptible distortion. This singer didn't really hear the difference between the M2 and a Beta 58, and I attribute this to a deficit in this person's hearing graph. Mostly a “belter,” this artist unfortunately has damaged hearing from performing in venues that have poor and inadequate reference facilities. There's a rant here, but I'll restrain myself.

The next artist was a deep-voiced crooner with an eclectic assembly of instruments: two lap steels, banjo, melodicas, guitar, “tine bass,” and drums. There was air in the arrangements and a breathy delivery of song that the M2 was able to capture without fault. The singer was able to take advantage of the low frequency friendliness.



Overall, the M2 is comfortable to use, sounds great, and most importantly, affordable. Well done, Rode! I'm confident that if I had a box of them, I could sell them off the stage!

Howard A. Laurie is the resident sound engineer at Toronto's Lula Lounge. Check out www.lulalounge.ca.

Distributor's Comment

It is astounding what can be accomplished when genuine talent and learned expertise meet with cutting-edge technology and savvy marketing. Rode is the perfect example of this, and the M2 is another link in a long chain of great microphones – proof again that truly great mics don't need to be expensive.

Richard Lasnier, Pres.
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| Alice Cooper | CeCe Winans | Foo Fighters | John Pattucci | Letterman Show | Nickelback | The Rolling Stones | 3 Doors Down |
| Alison Krauss | Celine Dion | Frank Gambale | John Petrucci | Linkin Park | Nine Inch Nails | Rush | Tom Cochrane |
| Allan Holdsworth | Charley Pride | FrankZ Ferdinand | John Mayer | Lisa Brokop | Oak Ridge Boys | Ryan Adams | Tom Coster |
| Alter Bridge | Cheap Trick | Genesis | John Rzeznik | Los Lobos | Offspring | Sammy Hagar | Tom Jones |
| America | Chick Corea | Garbage | Johnny A | Lou Reed | On Stage Audio | Santana | Tom Waits |
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| Amy Grant | Cirque du Soleil | George Duke | Jon Jorgenson | Manhattan | Panic at the Disco | Schubert Systems | Tony Levin |
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| Avenged Sevenfold | Coldplay | Guns & Roses | Justin Timberlake | Mark Knopfler | The Police | Slayer | Vanessa Williams |
| Avril Lavigne | Cyndi Lauper | Gwen Stefani | The Kaiser Chiefs | Mark Tremonti | Prince | Slipknot | Van Halen |
| Bad Religion | Damien Rice | Hall & Oates | Kanye West | Marty Stuart | The Prodigy | Smashing Pumpkins | Victor Wooten |
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| Billy Ray Cyrus | Dreadstar | Jennifer Lopez | | | | | |
| Billy Sheehan | Drentch | Jerry Donahue | | | | | |
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Steinberg MR816CSX & CC121 Controller

by Eric Price



Since Yamaha acquired Steinberg Technologies in 2005, there has been a slow and steady march toward bringing the two companies closer together, merging both software and hardware into a more simple and straightforward integration. The latest endeavours on this front, the MR816 CSX audio interface and the CC121 Controller, are what I will be looking at this issue.

The MR816CSX is a FireWire audio interface with DSP effects. The MR816 comes in two different versions: the basic "X" model; and the CSX review unit I checked out. The only difference between the two units is what Yamaha calls the Sweet Spot Morphing Channel Strip. This is where they add a high-quality Yamaha compressor to every input channel. The Sweet Spot Morphing Channel Strip on the MR816 has an EQ as well as a compressor, and both sections can be engaged independently (you don't need to use the compressor section to use the EQ and vice-versa).

Either interface will work with any DAW, but require Cubase 4.5, Cubase Studio, Cubase Essential 4.5, or Nuendo 4.2 to take advantage of the new Advanced Integration feature, which I will get into shortly. A version of Cubase AI 4.5 is included in the box to get you started, and can be updated to a higher-end version of Cubase if so desired.

The unit itself is sturdily built and features eight analog input channels with XLR/TRS combo jacks: two connectors on the front and six at the back. The first input on the front has a toggle switch for converting the input to Hi-Z for guitar or bass, and inputs one and two each have their own insert jack located

on the back. For analog outputs, we are looking at eight TRS jacks all in the back. There are also two headphone outputs jacks located on the front panel.

In the digital domain, we have an ADAT I/O and S/PDIF for digital ins and outs. The unit actually has WordClock I/O for professional syncing but strangely lacks any MIDI ports. The power adapter has a screw-on style power connector, so no accidents there.

The interface is capable of up to 24-bit/96 kHz recording rates and is there is support for Mac OS X 10.4 and 10.5, Intel-based Macs, Windows XP, and Windows Vista. Last cool tech note here is that you can chain up to three of these babies together for 48-track recording (each unit having eight analog and eight digital inputs)!

Let's delve into the inputs in more detail, as this is where the interface shines. Each input features a Class A preamp and its own gain control. There is also a reverb included on both models: the Rev-X. It can be used as a monitoring reverb or a VST3 plug-in (sadly, it can't work both ways). The compressor and reverb can be completely controlled inside Cubase using the Advance Integration feature I mentioned earlier. This is one useful feature, whereby the interface, when combined with the proper Cubase or Nuendo versions, seamlessly (and I do mean seamlessly!) integrates right along with the software. Cubase even reconfigures itself with new control panels, mirroring all the functions on the hardware.

Sonically, the interface was very clean with a lot of detail and, dare I say, transparent. I found the preamps worked extremely well with instruments and were quite good on vocals – though I still liked using a tube pre for vocals. Both the compressors and the Rev-X were powerful plug-ins, and I found them quite useful – especially with the integration.

Onto the controller, which is once again a sturdy piece of hardware. Designed with the Advanced Integration, the unit plugs into a USB port and immediately integrates itself with Cubase, display-

ing a "Cubase Ready" light when the process is complete. The unit's buttons match up exactly with a Cubase channel strip. All the EQ buttons are there as well as mute, solo, pan, etc. It does feature one motorized volume fader and, of course, transport controls. There are four assignable buttons and an AI knob (that's its name), which is rather ingenious. The knob automatically controls whatever function the mouse cursor is currently placed on – useful for operating softsynths or effects plug-ins. The AI knob can be locked to a particular function or can also be used as a jogwheel. It will control any VST3-compliant effect or plug-in. The unit does require a wall-wart to operate and it is provided for you.

I was very pleased with the performance of both of these items; their slipstream integration into Cubase was simply amazing. It made the whole recording process far more streamlined and helped shave off precious time both in set-up and operation. Even if you own an audio interface already, I can readily say the controller alone is a worthwhile purchase. My only real beef is the lack of MIDI ports.

Visit www.steinberg.net and www.yamaha.ca for more detailed specs, computer requirements, and demo videos.

Eric Price can often be found tinkering well into the night in his own virtual musical world. He also teaches and consults, helping musicians get the most from their computers and software. He can be reached at eric@gepconsulting.ca.



Distributor's Comment

These new pieces harness the very best of Steinberg's innovation in software and Yamaha's excellence in hardware. The units offer a great feature set, and the sound quality of the MR-series is outstanding. Most exciting are the Advanced Integration features, resulting in a powerful system with a unique and elegant workflow.

Dave Miner,
Steinberg Product Specialist,
Yamaha Canada Music Ltd.

BIAS Peak Pro XT 6

by Inaam Haq

Multitrack DAWs are the jacks-of-all-trades in audio production. What they all have in common is the aspect of working with audio files inside the context of a larger whole: the session, the environment, or the arrangement. Sometimes, a more direct approach may be what is needed. BIAS' Peak Pro software is a specialized audio sample editor that works directly on stereo or mono files, and is only available on the Mac platform.

Peak comes in varying flavours of complexity, and the top-of-the-line version is Peak Pro XT 6. This is a bundle which also offers BIAS' Master Perfection Suite, a group of plug-ins for mastering and mixing applications; SoundSoap and SoundSoap Pro, for audio restoration; the DDP (Digital Disc Protocol) 2.0 Export option with CD-TEXT Addendum, for delivering a playlist to CD manufacturing; and the Peak Pro Production Pack DVD, which includes third-party plug-ins, samples, sound effects, loops, and some interesting audio utilities that allow the recording and interconnection of audio from the Internet and between applications on your computer. These full editions are actually AU, RTAS/AS, and VST – so they work with other third-party host applications as well. For comparison, Peak Pro 6 includes Freq-4-band EQ, Sqweez 1 (wide band compressor), and SoundSoap LE and Reveal LE (part of Production Pack DVD). SoundSoap LE and Reveal LE work just like the editions included in XT, except they only work in Peak rather than third-party hosts.

Peak's main window includes an overview pane which displays a zoomed-out view of your audio file at all times, so you can quickly jump around and play different sections while seeing a zoomed-in view simultaneously. You can define markers, regions, and loops to aid you in your editing. You can perform edits within your audio file, or by using playlists (more on playlists below). The Loop Surfer and Loop Tuner features let you audition and define loops within the file, which you can then trim, process, arrange in a playlist, or export to several different types of hardware sampler. The Perpetual Looper creates loops or drones from monophonic sources.

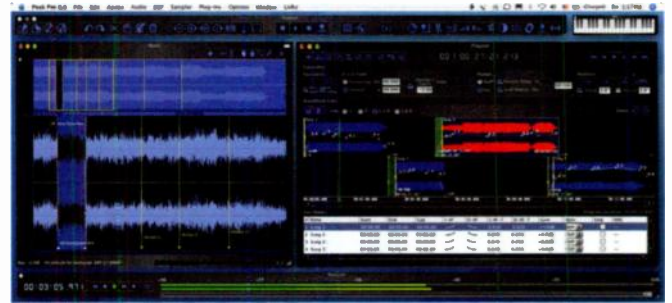
Beyond editing, Peak's audio processing capabilities are quite formidable. In the DSP menu, there are several functions that work like Photoshop filters, giving you a pop-up window with parameter sliders to adjust. You have to process the file to hear the results, but there are some interesting ways to manipulate the audio, like modulating it with contents

copied into the clipboard either from some part of the same file, or even part of another open file.

Peak allows five plug-in inserts that you can hear and tweak in real time, and each insert can be any of three different types: BIAS plug-ins, Audio Units, or VST. That's right, you can use AU and VST plug-ins, at the same time, in the same program. The BIAS plug-ins are actually in VST format, but are grouped separately. Soundsoap Pro is a four-stage noise reduction plug-in with separate modules for rumble and hum reduction, crackle and click removal, broadband noise reduction, and gating. The Master Perfection Suite includes GateEx, a gate/expander; PitchCraft for pitch correction; Repli-Q, a spectrum matching EQ; SuperFreq paragraphic EQs; Sqweez multiband compressors; and Reveal, an analysis tool that provides very extensive metering of phase, levels, and frequencies. On the whole, the BIAS plug-ins were quite usable; however, I found the controls to be a bit fiddly on occasion when small movements with the mouse tended to make rather drastic adjustments. Typing in numeric values seemed to be the best way to make precise changes.

One of the most potentially powerful features of Peak is the VBox matrix, which allows parallel and serial routing and mixing between plug-ins, so that you can create whatever signal chain you can dream of. Plug-ins can be hot-swapped and rearranged as you like, and VBox can store presets of your set-ups, complete with the individual plug-in settings. The VBox window only displays a 4 x 4 area, but the matrix inside can be much larger. VBox can be used as one of the five plug-inserts available for individual file processing, or can be used with Peak's playlist feature, which is used to arrange files or regions into a sequence to be exported or burned to CD.

The playlist window in Peak has two panes. The top area displays the regions for the playlist in waveform view, while underneath is a list that shows the regions in sequence. To reorder the playlist, you need to drag the elements in the list view, not the waveform view, as one might expect. Spacing and fade transitions between regions can be edited graphically by working in the waveform view, or numerically in the list view. The list view allows for inputting of ISRC codes, CD-TEXT,



and other metadata. VBox settings can be applied globally to the entire list or snapshots can be stored separately for each region. Peak stores playlist documents that contain all the details of your arrangement.

Overall, I found Peak Pro XT 6 to be intriguing and pleasant to use. The colours of the interface are customizable to give you a visual environment you can feel comfortable in. One thing that took getting used to was the directness of the editing. Once you save your file, there is no undo. If you are unsure, you can always work from, or save as a copy. I feel that this difference in mindset from the typical non-destructive mode of thinking, while perhaps a bit scary at first, actually could be quite liberating for those who want to be adventurous and do some serious manipulation to their audio files.

Inaam Haq is the Head Engineer at Cherry Beach Sound recording studio (www.cherrybeachsound.com).

Manufacturer's Feedback

As for the plug-in controls being "fiddly":

- The plug-ins do support scroll wheel mice, which makes the parameter control a bit easier.
- For increased control movement resolution, you can move your mouse away from the control element while holding the mouse button, and larger movements then equate to finer adjustments.

In addition to new features mentioned, Peak Pro 6 now includes integrated Podcast publishing, metadata editing, send to iTunes, Cache In RAM, VBox link, envelopes for change Pitch and Convolve DSP, Dither Cloning Audio Technology (DCAT), and more.

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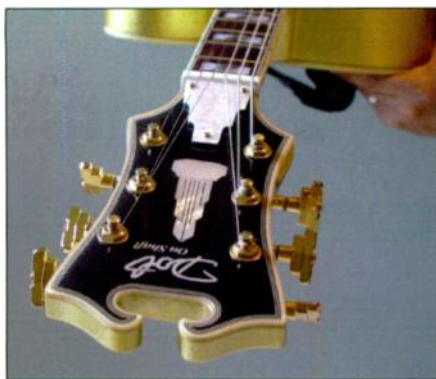
MRP

Adjusting The Truss Rod Part II

by Juan Coronado

What to do if the neck is bent:

1. **Locate the truss rod.** The truss rod is used to stabilize and adjust the lengthwise forward curvature of the neck. It is a steel rod that runs inside the neck and has a bolt that can be used to adjust its tension.



2. **Access the truss rod.** The truss rod can be accessed and adjusted through an adjustment bolt. This bolt is usually located at the heel of the neck by the headstock. Some guitars have it located on the other end of the neck towards the body. In some acoustic guitars, the access point is in the sound hole. Sometimes the bolt is exposed, and sometimes it's behind a cover plate. If it's covered, the plate simply needs to be unscrewed.



3. **Understand how a truss rod works.** When the truss rod is loosened, it allows the neck to bend a little in response to the tension of the strings. When the

truss rod is tightened, it straightens the neck by resisting the tension of the strings.

4. **Get the right tool to adjust the truss rod.** The truss rods of most guitars can be adjusted using an allen key. Some guitars use hex keys. When in doubt, find out which tool you need by checking the website of your guitar manufacturer. It is very important to get the exact size, or you run the risk of ruining the bolt's socket. If the key feels a bit loose, get a larger key.



5. **Adjust the truss rod.** To correct an overbow (convex neck shape), loosen the truss rod and decrease the tension by turning the adjustment bolt counter-clockwise. To correct an underbow (concave neck shape), turn the bolt clockwise. Don't turn the bolt too much at once. After each 1/4 turn, examine the curvature of neck by doing the same test as before (simultaneously pressing one string on both the first and last fret of that string using both hands and then checking). When you adjust the truss rod, make sure that the strings are not touching every fret. You know you're done when you can see just enough space to be able to pass a hair between the test string and the centre frets while testing the neck's curvature. This hair space is needed to keep the neck straight enough to be almost flat while ensuring that you don't go too far and end up with an overbow.



I've outlined the basics of adjusting truss rods. You should be able to find more information on any specific problems you may encounter with your particular guitar model on the web. It would be a good idea to check your manufacturer's website for set-up recommendations for your specific guitar. I have created a short video version of this article, which can be seen at www.juancoronado.com. All the best as you learn how to set up your guitar! You'll see that you could have saved time and money all along by adjusting the truss rod yourself. Also know that you'll only get better with each adjustment you do.



Juan Coronado made *Guitar Player* magazine's "Top Ten Guitar Heroes" list in 2005 and 2007. He won the award for Best Instrumental Album from the Durham Region Music Society in 2005, Best World Music from the Ontario Independent Music Awards in 2007, and was named the Best International Artist by the Orange County Independent Music Awards in 2008. His CD *Renewal* is available on iTunes, CD Baby, and at his website: www.juancoronado.com.

The Teaching Of Art & The Art Of Teaching

by Ron Davis

Some teachers get plaques to honour their efforts. Some get classrooms, or even concert halls named after them.

If ever a piano teacher – a music teacher – deserved commemoration, it is the late Darwyn Aitken. He has no plaque, no classroom, no hall. What Aitken has, though, is a memorial of sound and ideas, the bricks and mortar of which are the musicians whose gifts he nurtured.

Early on, Aitken showed his gifts as a piano prodigy. He was innately musical. His pitch was inhumanly perfect. Frank Falco, a student of his, and now a leading-light pianist and teacher himself, remembers Aitken would drop his keys on to the piano over and over, and then play the chord the keys' jangle rang out. Yikes.

Nothing bespeaks Aitken's gifts more than his two principal teachers: jazz god Oscar Peterson and David Saperton, a top classical name of his day. Jazz and classical.

This was category-free education, reflecting Aitken's no-boundaries beliefs. Jazz, classical, Latin, pop, whatever – music was music. It's obvious now, but in the pre-iTunes '60s and '70s, musical desegregation was radical stuff.

Aitken loved teaching. The results show. Look around

Canada's jazz piano soundscape today, and you'll find the bearers of his legacy everywhere: Nancy Walker, Joe Sealy, Aaron Davis, Gary Williamson, Tom Szczesniak, and many others.

Producing high-end pianists was not Aitken's signal achievement. What put him octaves above the norm was the diversity of his graduates. No one sounds like the other. Each has his or her own aural silhouette. Individual. Personal. Hand-formed, not cookie-cut.

How did he do this? He said he couldn't "teach" music, only piano. He focused on the mechanics and let the music blossom. So, every student endured the heptathlon of Gershwin *Préludes*, Chopin *Études*, tapping poly-rhythms, fearsome scales from Joseffy's book (double sixths, two hands!), Aitken's own exercises, the harmonic labyrinths of Leopold Godowsky, and Gordon Delamont's theory.

Then you played your jazz for him. He would listen and discuss. Try this! How about that? Why did you play such and such here? What about riff X or substitution Y there? He showed, not told. He rarely dictated. There was no wrong. There was only what didn't work. What did work varied for each student, so the students varied amongst themselves.

At the core of Aitken's pedagogy lay his ability to see patterns and systems for controlling the keyboard, and then communicate them to the student. Take "The Hop," for example. Figure 1 shows how Aitken wrote it out for one student, Moxy Frúvous member Dave Matheson. "The Hop" was a way of moving up and down the keyboard with ease and speed, but without chopping up lines. In a D minor arpeggio, when

the right hand third finger hits the A, you prepare, and then hop off it, onto the second at D, and continue the arpeggio. There should be no disconnect in the sound.

What makes a great teacher? A loaded question, to be sure. I have no definitive answer, but if I did it would include these words: empathy, humility, trustworthiness, mastery of subject, communication skills, patience, discipline, focus, vision, and passion. Aitken had all of these, and passion



above all. He was passionate about music, about piano, about recordings, and about teaching. He would talk about them like a hepped-up sports fan.

Actor-songwriter Lynne Derogan sums it up beautifully: "The biggest and most generous thing Darwyn Aitken gave to me was permission. Permission to seek. Permission to play from where I was, not to compare myself with anyone else. He was a great teacher." Amen.

Aitken died in 1986. His wife Peggy died this year. They had no children. But we live on, Darwyn, your students, as your memorial plaques and commemorative halls, honouring your work, and passing it on when we can. Thank you for everything.

Ron Davis is a well-known pianist, composer, and recording artist. Find out more at www.rondavismusic.com. Ron welcomes comments, suggestions, and feedback: ron@rondavismusic.com.

Session Work: The Bottom Line

by Steve McCormack

There is a lot to prepare for before you can jump into the session world – especially for a living. Only the chosen few get to work as full-time session players. You have to be prepared for anything, and this game is not all flash and glitter. There's no Hollywood ending, no glory of recognition, nor even a credit – just the opportunity, the work experience, and the paycheque. There are different types of session work available, all with different rates and demands.

I look at it as three classes of gigs: class **A**, class **B**, and class **C**.

Generally, class **A** session work is for high-budget productions like film, TV sitcoms, and other shows of all kinds like talk shows, dramas, cop shows – you get the picture! There is also work with high-profile artists who have a major deal.

Class **B** session work is jingles or commercials, TV and radio spots, children's shows, cable shows, and artists that are established on a label but not high-profile stars, if you will.

Class **C** session work is the most popular work available. This entails low-budget movies, videos, and demos for up-and-coming artists or bands on a small label with no distribution deal that independently put out their own product. Of course, there are other types of sessions out there, but these are the main ones.

Now, being ready, willing, and able to play these gigs is a whole new ball o' wax. The most demanding gigs are not necessarily the higher-profile jobs. One of the most difficult jobs I have done was a class **C** gig for an independent artist based in Los Angeles. It was all original material with every stylistic influence known to man. The music was very demanding to play and to read. There were several time changes in his songs as well as quick changes in every arrangement. I was sweating like a farm animal after the first take. After five days of this, the artist did pay me well, but what a test of patience and knowledge! The funny thing is that no one will ever hear that demo! Life goes on.

After years of playing your bass, you probably get to a point where you want to know more about music and its facets so you can improve on your instrument. Here is where going to a music school or finding a reputable music teacher, preferably a teacher with a music degree, is the way to go.

You have to go to school to learn what you need to be a successful session player. A bassist especially must learn all styles of music, and this itself is not an easy task. It should and will take a lifetime.

Sight-reading is an essential, required skill, and the task of learning this skill is a scary mystery to a lot of players. I recommend you learn to sight-read like the back of your hand, so to speak. Spending time on sight-reading will pay off.

Developing your ear is very important to you in all aspects of music. As a session player, the producer, musical director, or artist will sometimes only give you a chord chart of the section of music you are to play. Some charts, if you can call them that, are a few scribbled letters between a couple of lines supposed to be bar lines. The person for whom you are working, therefore, thinks you have ESP, or at least very good ears.

Remember, you're being hired to do a job with your instrument, and if you want to get hired again you will **do it right the first time**. In this game, time is money! The producer is paying for you, the studio, the engineers, and the other players for the session. These people can't and won't wait around while you try and get your part right. With a developed and mature ear, and a confident command of your instrument, you will blaze through sessions of this nature like you truly do have mental superpowers.



Play the part you were asked to play and nothing more.

Absolutely no over-playing at all! For example, here is a true short story. I get a call to audition for a famous producer in Los Angeles. I show up, and I'm sitting with my bass next to a colleague. The other bass player is noodling away on his bass, and playing some nice stuff, too! The producer walks in and quietly sits down. The other guy keeps playing until the producer says, "Man, that was fantastic playing. You're a great player." And in the same breath, he turns to me and says, "You're hired." I didn't even plug in my bass, never mind play a note. So be confident, but stay cool! It's a hard thing for some.

Your **sound** is a very important factor in your success. Make sure you have your instrument in great working condition at all times. You never know when you're going to get that call. If you sound great, people will want your sound and feel on their projects. Some session players have created a demand for their signature sound and great success followed. It's not just all about reading and playing what's on the chart.

Steve McCormack was born in Scotland and grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON. He attended the Berklee College of Music. Steve has played with Jeff Healey, Lee Aaron, and numerous other Canadian acts. Session credits include The Simpsons since 1999, Family Guy, Minority Report, Artificial Intelligence, Seabiscuit, and many more movies. E-mail sambassman@yahoo.com.

Odd-Number Groupings

PART 1

by Barry Romberg

One thing I always try and get across to my students is the concept of using odd-number groupings while playing in 4/4 to begin phrasing over the bar lines. The key to these concepts is internalizing the sound of these rhythms (the juxtaposition of 3-, 5-, and 7-beat phrases) in relation to 4/4. Because the rhythms themselves are based on odd numbers, they resolve in three, five, and seven bars, respectively, as we will soon see. The trick is to hear and play them in 2-, 4-, or 8-bar phrases against 4/4 so they can be utilized to create tension and can result in some really cool musical ideas, or, in the wrong hands, be a recipe for disaster. These concepts can be learned away from the drums. It's more about the understanding and internalization of the sound – then you can worry about how to phrase them on your instrument.

Here's a good place to start:



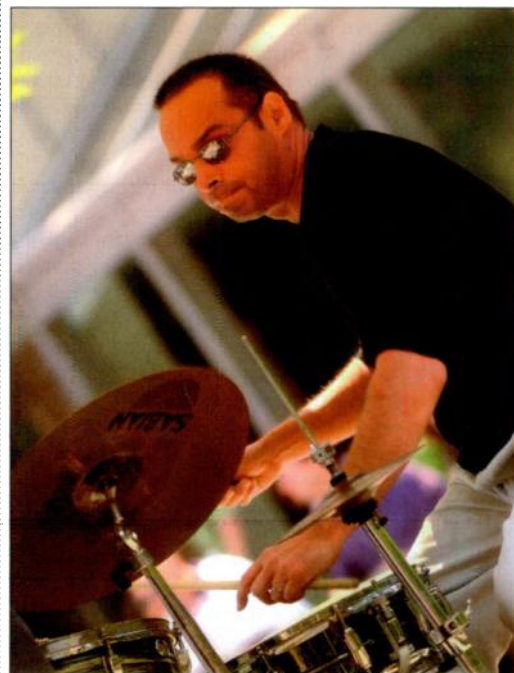
This figure will resolve in three bars, but I wrote it out so that the first bar is repeated to get the 4-bar phrase. Essentially, you're playing three while you're playing in four. Here are a few things you can do with this idea (ride cymbal plays throughout):

- Play the jazz ride cymbal pattern with the hi-hat on two and four and play the 3-beat figure with your left hand.
- Play the figure with your bass drum.
- Play the figure with the bass drum and fill in the eighth notes with your left hand while still maintaining the ride cymbal.
- Do the same thing in straight eighths as well as with the triplet feel.
- Now reverse it – everything the same but play the figure with your left hand and fill in the eighths with your bass drum.

Now that we've dealt with some drum independence ideas, let's address the melodic line. Here's what it looks like with an eighth-note flow:



- Since you're playing eighth notes grouped in threes, you could play alternate sticking RLRL RLRL, etc. and accent the figure – essentially a hand-to-hand triplet sticking on an eighth-note grid.
- You could use the sticking RLL, keeping your left hand on the snare drum and moving your right hand around the kit.
- Play the entire line on the snare drum and add the bass drum on the accents along with the hand accent.
- Now, move your right hand to the cymbal with the bass drum in unison and play the accent pattern – left hand moves around drums.



- Play double-stops with the hands on accents and fill in eighth notes with the bass drum.

Experiment with starting the phrase at different places on the timeline: for the 3-beat figure, the first bar starts on one, the second bar starts on the "and" of one, and the third bar starts on beat two. You could also start it on beat four, or the "and" of three, or any of the eight eighth notes in the bar. You could also play a backbeat groove and play the 3-beat figure with the bass drum.

After 38 years at the drums, Barry Romberg has worked with some of Canada's finest musicians, lead his own groups, accompanied international artists, and has been featured on over 60 recordings, including 13 as a leader/co-leader. He continues to freelance on drums, compose, and teach. Besides leading Random Access and The Random Access Large Ensemble, Barry is a member of groups led by Kirk Macdonald, Lorne Lofsky, Michael Occhipinti, Al Henderson, and David Buchbinder.

Free Improvisation For Beginners

by Daniel Schnee

On a hot, humid New York night way back in 1997, I was completely blown away and divinely transformed by saxophonist Ornette Coleman performing a set of music with his reunited original trio. Since then, I have not only been his student, but also a promoter of the study and performance of freely improvised music, otherwise known as **free jazz**, or free improvisation. I believe that an organized study of freely improvised music is not only beneficial to all musicians, but can be an extremely useful and deeply enjoyable individual or collective activity for anybody to participate in. I will begin by describing what it is, and then explain how you can begin to do it yourself.

Free improvisation is actually a fairly loose term covering a wide array of people and practices. Whatever you think you can turn into interesting or beautiful spontaneous musical sounds can be called free improvisation. I have encountered young and old musicians all over the world making freely improvised music in many ways under many names. In Kobe, I saw a man attempting to coax spirits out of four radios arranged in a square, the squawking of static mixed with faint signals being his "music." In Reykjavik, I heard of a group of avant-garde rock musicians that took readings of a famous classical composer's vital signs and turned them into an album of improvisations. But these are fairly extreme examples. The usual occurrence of freely improvised music is within more conservative collectives and live performance situations, and in many styles other than jazz or alternative rock music.

So what do you do when you decide to just "play?" As composer Joannie Ing asked me once, "What is a successful free improvisation, and how is it measured?" Heavy questions indeed! How would a beginning free improviser learn to create and interact in this manner? If you are practicing by yourself, then the following activities will be a good way to start discovering interesting new ways to make music with your saxophone, clarinet, and/or flute. Though it may seem frivolous and not really "serious" at times, these methods

have led to the creation of some very profound, "successful" works of music over many decades, and I urge you to seriously consider the following before judging their effects and usefulness prematurely.

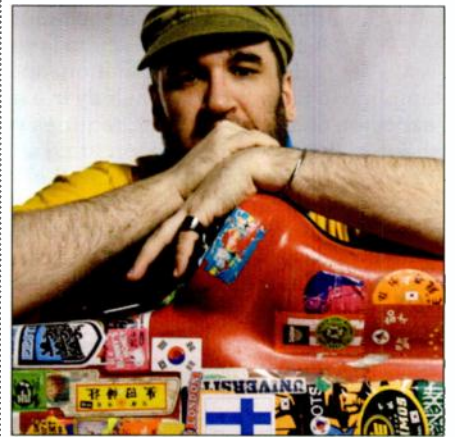
Begin by first exploring your instrument purely as a sound maker. What does it sound like when you tap it? Breathe into it without blowing. Speak into it like a mega phone. Does the wood or metal create any interesting sounds if you flap your fingers up and down on the keys without blowing? How about the sounds the clarinet makes when you slightly lift your fingers while blowing? Could you make a composition out of that?

Next, begin making a list of qualities you like in music. Some examples are: softness, darkness, silence, brightness, slow, fast, breathiness, slowing down, speeding up, and such. Once you have a list that you like, put it on your music stand and begin trying to make these qualities happen in music without trying to play in any particular key. If that sounds too unorganized to you, try and do the same exercise with a scale, a chord, or small melody that you invent off the top of your head. An interesting chromatic scale to experiment with is the symmetrical dominant, a series of whole- and half-steps starting with a halfstep [C # D# E F# G A B].

This exercise is about experimentation, not how "good" you can do it. Don't be worried or saddened if you don't like what you create. The joy is in the attempt and the thrill of discovery. And no one is thrilled all the time! The whole process reaps many musical rewards for those that become comfortable with exploring their own unknown musical wilderness.

Once you have tried that, move on to the next exercise, which is doing the exact same thing, only not looking at a list ... but a picture. Find any picture that you like and put it on your music stand. Now, try and spontaneously make music that you feel describes the picture or music that explains the picture somehow.

For an interesting study of graphic or visual score improvisation, go to the website of the New York Miniature



Ensemble, and peruse its online gallery of graphic music scores. A few minutes of improvising to many of the scores contained therein will open you up to an interesting world of structure and improvisation you may not have experienced before. Then move on to actual movie clips. Create your own improvised soundtrack to any one of your favorite DVDs, or rent some classic silent films and make your accompaniment to them.

I could go on, but I think you get the point. Free improvisation can be a learning resource, a compositional tool, a social activity, and many other things. Whatever you need it for, it can be used, and it has been and continues to be a valuable guide to the study of creativity and human resourcefulness.

If you live in the Toronto area, contact the Association of Improvising Musicians (AIMT) at www.aimtoronto.com for more info on workshops and performances near you.

Daniel Schnee is a Toronto-based saxophonist who has performed internationally with a number of Juno and Grammy Award-winning musicians. He has studied privately with several renowned South Indian and Arabic masters, as well as with legendary saxophonist Ornette Coleman. After composing for theatre and dance in Japan for several years, Daniel became the woodwind and jazz history instructor at the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in Jerusalem. His work, along with works by Brian Eno, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Steven Reich will be featured in an upcoming anthology of innovative graphic score composers of the 21st century, published by the American Musicological Society.

Three Apertures

by Al Kay

When you play a brass instrument, your embouchure is constantly changing the aperture size and shape to accommodate different note ranges, dynamics, articulation, and styles of music. Attempting to play the same melody in a small chamber group, jazz octet, or a Latin big band requires you to manipulate the shape or the notes, change tonguing styles, and increase (or decrease) your air pressure to get the “right” sound that will fit the ensemble. There are many classical and jazz musicians out there who haven’t figured this out yet, and play with a “one-dimensional” sound on all styles – not ideal for making music. Changing your practice routines, adding the ideas below, will eventually make your performances much better, adding new life to your phrases, sound quality, and generally make playing much easier!



These three shapes represent small, medium, and large aperture sizes in your embouchure. Obviously, the trumpet or horn players’ sizes will be smaller, and the tuba players’ even bigger. Play the excerpt below three times, thinking small, medium, and large. As your aperture gets bigger, you will of course have to greatly increase the air speed from your lungs (don’t use throat constrictions or high tongue level to do this), to keep the lips vibrating at the proper pitch. If the pitch goes down, faster air! Take a risk and get a really wide aperture – it’s not impossible to get the notes with lips almost to the edge of the mouthpiece!

If you’ve tried the three ways, you’ll notice that the sound is

clearer at the middle aperture, the phrasing is better because of the more constant air stream, and the higher notes don’t sound so strained. The smaller aperture might have made you shape the notes more (like a mwahh mwahh sound), and the large aperture is maybe not the best sound, but you’ve proved to yourself that if you had to play this tune really loud in front of a big band, you might just be able to pull it off! Think of the times when your chops have been very tired and you couldn’t make a smaller aperture for the higher notes – wider chops plus fast air will get you those notes.

Many players practice at home with a softer “practice” sound, which might be comfortable for them, but is useless



at concerts when they have to produce a much bigger sound to fill the hall. Change your practice sessions to include the three aperture concept while playing your warm-ups, lyrical and technical studies, orchestral excerpts, and jazz tunes.

A smaller aperture doesn’t always mean small sound, and wide doesn’t mean really loud, so try to vary your dynamics. When I play a soft, sweet, high ballad most of the time it’s with a smaller aperture, but I can play the same tune no louder with a medium aperture. The sound may be little less focused, but it might be exactly the sound I need to match another instrumentalist who’s playing in unison or octaves with me.

The next example is a ballad, so a nice, long, uninterrupted air stream is essential for beautiful phrasing. Try any one of the three apertures and alternate playing it softly *p* (picture

a small coffee shop gig with you and an acoustic guitarist), *mf* (maybe a jazz gig with a quintet in a larger room), and *ff* (playing at a large hall with an orchestra or big band wailing behind you!).

Vary your dynamics and apertures in private practice and rehearsals, and get used to it, because this important concept will help you excel in just about any musical situation you can think of!

Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College, is very active as a jazz and classical soloist, a member of True North Brass, and a Yamaha artist and clinician. His website is www.alkay.ca.

The Yin & Yang Of Digital Audio Formats

by Paul Lau

Throughout the years, have you ever noticed how manufacturers produce so many choices in audio/video formats? For example: cassettes had Normal or CrO², videotape had VHS or Beta, and now DVDs have either conventional or Blu-Ray. The list goes on. In general, for audio formats, there is an extensive history of different types and are too many to be confined in a one-page article. For musicians that are using either a PC or Mac for recording, I will touch on one of the most-asked questions: "What audio format should I use or save as?"

The most familiar audio format is the .WAV (Waveform Audio Format). This is the standard audio file used mainly in Windows PCs. These are usually found as 16- or 24-bit files, with some sample rates ranging from 44.1 kHz to 192 kHz. This file is mainly used to store uncompressed PCM, CD-quality sound files. For Mac users, the standard audio file is AIFF (Audio Interchange File Format). So how do we save either file formats? Both .WAV and AIFF should be saved as Redbook-compatible formats. What is Redbook, you may ask? Redbook, co-developed by Philips and Sony, is the standard for audio CDs. CD players play Redbook format. When saving, you will be saving your file or dithering to 16-bit, 44.1 kHz so it can be played in a CD player!

Here's a quick size calculation for a three-minute song: **two channels x 5 MB x 3 min. = 30 MB** of hard drive space. Most musicians automatically create a folder in the C: drive and save everything there or put it on the desktop – I did when I first started and sometimes that's all you can do. Nowadays, with external drives at such an affordable cost, there is no reason not to have a secondary drive, or even a third to back up to. So, to recap on file placement and storage, the C: drive is good for the OS and program files, a secondary D: drive is great for the audio files, and a third E: drive, if available, is for back up to. (Oh yeah, should it be a FireWire or USB2 drive? Check out my Digital Music column "FireWire vs. USB" in *CM* July/August '08.)

What you will find within all audio software sequencers is that there is a "save as" option, usually under "export" for the bit file and sample rate, regardless if it is .WAV or AIFF, so you can set it to the needed resolution when mixing down. Now, is there a difference between a .WAV and AIFF file? Not really. A .WAV file and AIFF file of the same audio will actually be very similar (you really can't hear the difference), and the only difference is the header and footer of the file. I've noticed recently, and it's probably more evident on the Mac user side, that you can save either .WAV or AIFF on either platform. Macs have been very advanced in being able to create Windows environments with Bootcamp or VM (virtual machine) software, giving you the best of both worlds if needed, whereas Windows does not create a Mac environment in its platform (but that's a whole other article).

The MPEG-1 (Moving Pictures Experts Group) Audio Layer-3 format (more commonly known as MP3) is the most



popular format for downloading and storing music. What happens here is the elimination of portions of the audio file that are essentially inaudible. The MP3 files are compressed to roughly 1/10 the size of an equivalent PCM file or CD file, while maintaining good audio quality. Most all Internet music sites only allow MP3 songs for obvious reasons – when it comes to transfer speed and storage of MP3s, this is the most efficient format to use. So does the file format make a good recording? Not as much as the file format's resolution, so theoretically, the higher the resolution, the better the quality! This is only part of the equation; the hardware and input instrumentation also play a crucial role.

The quality of the A/D-D/A converters in your interface determines, to a great extent, how well the software will process the analog recording. With that said, I believe we may have hit a ceiling. The quality of the hardware and software, regardless of format, is so good these days that we've come full circle. For example: in a recording, I've heard singers sing off-key, which creates a bad recording even though it was recorded in a million-dollar studio. In the end, as I have always asked, is it the technology that leads you or the music? Let the music lead you and use the technology as a tool to present what you want to perform and say in the best way!

Paul Lau B.Sc.

Musician/Producer/MIDI/Digital Audio Specialist
Technological Solutionist for Axe Music Calgary (www.axemusic.com)
Managing Director of PowerMusic5Records (www.powermusic5.com)
Member of the Cool Christian Pop Band Scatter17 (www.scatter17.com)

Harmonizing Part II: Singing Harmonies

by Tammy Frederick

Once you have created the harmonies, it is time to vocalize them. For some, being able to sing a different note than the other singer is fairly easy, but please be aware that the majority of people out there find it challenging to sing a different note than their singing partner. That is because it is not easy to override our built-in imitation mechanism. We are hardwired to hear and match pitches, but in harmonizing we are asking ourselves to ignore the note we are hearing and sing above or below it. Again, this is very doable – it just takes some practice.

The best way to practice harmonizing with your singing partner is to have each singer practice his or her vocal line separately with the piano or guitar playing the notes. This will begin to build vocal muscle memory for each singer with the individual vocal part. Once each singer feels comfortable with his or her part, it is time to put the two together. It is very important to have the piano or guitar play along so the singers can hear their notes. Don't be surprised if it feels like a bit of a train wreck at first; it is just a matter of time and practice, and of repeating this process until the two vocalists can sing together without throwing each other off. In the following example one singer would sing through the notes of the first line, and the other singer would sing through the notes of the second line.



Harmonizing is a lot of fun – when you feel confident with it, the voices will feel like they are pressing against each other, holding each other up.

Sounding Good Together

Everyone's voice is different, so it can pose a bit of a challenge if the two voices do not blend well singing in harmony. There are a few key things each vocalist can do to help blend better with the other vocalist. First, do not try to over-sing your vocal line. Both singers should start off practicing no louder than the volume you would talk at. This will manage your air pressure and ensure an easier sound. Then, analyze the way each vocalist says the lyrics. We all have slightly different diction based on our upbringing and cultural influences. Even though you think you are both saying the word, you may not be saying it the same way. This can easily interfere with how the voices will blend.

Practice speaking the lyrics together before singing them.



If there is a sustained or held note it will be very important to pay attention to the vowel of the word you are singing. We sing on the vowels so be sure you are both pronouncing the vowel correctly. For example, a lot of times the vowel "oh" is sung more like an "aw-oh,"; this will change the sound and interfere with the blending of the voices. Simply identifying what the vowel is that you are singing on will go a long way in improving your blend. Finally, it is always a good idea to sing with a straight tone on sustained notes when you are harmonizing as opposed to allowing your vibrato. The vibrato is the slight wavering of the vocal tone you may hear in a singer's voice while sustaining a note. Everyone's vibrato is unique and oscillates at different speeds; therefore, it can dramatically interfere with the sound of the blend.

Ultimately, harmonizing is very simple – it just requires the time and practice to make it all come together. Most of all, have fun! Allow yourself to play and make bad sounds – it doesn't matter. It is all a part of the process of creating a piece of music.

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SLOAN

In this musical world, bands are sure to break up as long as there are egos, and money, and record labels to complicate what was supposed to be just simply music. Multiply that by the number of band members, and demise is forever lurking closely by. Today, the members of Sloan are relaxing at their homes in Toronto, in between albums and tours. Sloan, at some indefinable point in the last 17 years, has snuck into the ranks of Canada's iconic bands. It's coasted past most of the usual band-obliterating obstacles and is now cruising smoothly in the wide open alongside The Tragically Hip and Blue Rodeo. Sloan has a sensible formula for such success, and longevity. I had the benefit of talking with each member about all things musical:

JAY FERGUSON

It's 10:30 in the morning and Ferguson is chipper on the phone, despite having just woken up. In Sloan, Ferguson is the boyish, sweepy-haired rhythm guitarist who half-jokingly proclaims his role in the band to be the "spoiled child who tries to get his own way." In his personal life, Ferguson is pegged by his bandmates as "nebbish," "super polite," "agreeable," and "a fuckin' music encyclopedia." This morning, he seems to be getting a kick out of recalling the old band rehearsal days in Halifax.

"We used to practice in Andrew's basement bedroom when he still lived at home. We set up down there and played two or three times a week, I think. When we got a real rehearsal space, it was above this club called The Misty Moon in Halifax, which was just sort of like a Top 40 bar. They had all this vacant space upstairs and it was just gross. It was like an industrial wasteland with lighting fixtures and old freezers and crap like that, and then these little tiny rooms where we would rehearse."

It's 17 years later and everything has changed, except Ferguson's boyishness and his enthusiasm for good music. I get the sense that he would be just as pleased to chat about old Elvis Costello records for the rest of the interview. Sloan rehearsals in recent times, Ferguson assures me, are a rare occurrence teetering on the edge of never. He chuckles about it: "We're definitely not a band that gets together to jam, or work out ideas, you know? We're more like a songwriting band where everybody writes separately, and then when it comes time to record the album, we just learn each other's songs."

In his primitive musical years, while his future bandmates were throwing down to Minor Threat, Ferguson was the quintessential record store kid with a taste for pop music: "I started working at a record store when I was 12, and the people who worked there got me into a lot of '60s music like The Beatles, The Stones, and The Who, plus a lot of stuff that was happening at the time like Nick Lowe and The Smiths."



Making *Parallel Plays* For A Long Career

BY LUTHER MALLORY
PHOTOS BY MARSHALL ANGUS

In the late '80s, the Halifax music scene was dominated by hardcore punk. "More of the American-style punk and less of the British," Ferguson assures me. When he and Chris Murphy started up Sloan in the very early '90s, they were trying to emulate My Bloody Valentine and Sonic Youth. "All that shoe gazer stuff," he says.

Ferguson denies there being a definable "Halifax" sound, insisting that "everything that was happening in Halifax in the early '90s got earmarked as the Halifax sound, but it didn't last very long. There is a university crowd and art community in Halifax, and that's why it breeds interesting bands." In the last few years, Ferguson has reconnected with what's happening musically in Halifax and takes a moment to name drop. "Brent Randall and his Pine Cones is fantastic; there's Laura Peek and The Stance."

On the topic of his 17 years with Sloan, Ferguson has some ideas: "We've been fortunate to have enough moderate success for a long period of time that we've avoided typical problems. We only played about 15 shows before we got signed, so we had so much success out of the gate that it was able to keep us together." That's hardly fair to tell struggling bands looking for a break.

Finally, I quiz Ferguson on the typical recent album type questions, but he's not really biting. Contently, he mutters, "I'm most happy that we've just been able to last after 17 years, and still have an audience and still make records."

CHRIS MURPHY

I had the discomfort of calling Murphy just minutes after his infant son threw up all over the floor in the kitchen. "It sucks," says Murphy. I offer my condolences. In the recent weeks, Murphy has been sifting through old Sloan 4-track demos and transferring them to the computer for posterity before they deteriorate. "I started with the 1993-and-later stuff, and for *Twice Removed* there are something like 70 demos. It's probably about 25 songs, but there are something like six different versions of 'Coax Me.'"

The Sloan songwriting process is a peculiar one, in that each member is a songwriter, and songs are rarely written in collaboration with any other member. Murphy recalls what has changed about his own songwriting throughout his career: "Listening to these old demo tapes from '92 or '93, even in the early stages of the songs I have three quarters or more of the lyrics finished, which leads me to believe I had a full set of lyrics going into it. Now, I'll have a whole song structured and everything right down to the tambourine part before I have any lyrics." I ask him what changed. "I'm never writing bits and pieces of ideas into a journal for later use anymore. I'm busy cleaning up barf and dirty diapers. I try to write good lyrics, but I just have a lot more music than lyrics now."

Barf and dirty diapers is indeed a theme now in this band. Three of the guys have kids,

SLOAN

and it's clearly been the biggest change for Sloan in what has otherwise been a fairly steady ride. It's glaringly clear that the band is still a huge focus, but certainly not "the" focus. Becoming family men, however, Murphy insists, didn't change that much about how Sloan operates.

The years have brought self-awareness to the band. There is a recurring theme of two years' space between each record. "We did *Navy Blues*, which sold well, and then we released the live one, and then we did *Between The Bridges*, which was basically a huge commercial flop. They all came out within about 18 months and," Murphy laughs, "we learned that people don't have the appetite for that much of our music. We could put out records more often if there was a demand for them."

Ferguson refers to Murphy as "the glue," maintaining that "without Chris, I don't think that the band would work." Murphy responds to Ferguson's claim: "I was the central relationship between all of the guys. I'm not a musical genius; if anything, I was just reluctant to give up on the biggest chance I was ever given in my life," he says, referring to Sloan's brief break-up in the mid-'90s. He adds jokingly: "Maybe it just made me desperate or something."

There is a refreshing honesty, and sort of a vulnerability to Murphy. On each of my separate interviews with the bandmembers, I ask if they're still friends after all these years. Typically, the response is light laughter followed by some version of yes. When I was finishing my conversation with Murphy, I told him I was off to call Andrew Scott, and he said, "When you're talking to Andrew, tell him that I said that we're all still friends." Ah, passing notes for Sloan.

ANDREW SCOTT

Scott could be the resident shit-disturber in the band. He holds a certain disgust for the business side of music that the other members seem to shrug off or just deal with. He speaks with particular annoyance about both of the

band's experiences with a producer: once on *Twice Removed* under Geffen Records, and then once again on *Action Pact* under RCA. He's otherwise friendly and chatty, and I think he's probably the "coolest" member of Sloan, in that there's something elusive about him that makes him extra-fascinating.

In similar fashion, when asked to define a role for himself in the band, Scott half-reluctantly calls himself the art police: "I'm the one in the band who doesn't really give a shit if something sounds wrong or if there are little pops and clicks on the record. I like chance, and I like things that happen by mistake."

Scott recalls Sloan's very first tour, a three-stop, absurdly-routed jaunt across the entire country: "Our first show was with Eric's Trip in Moncton at this little pub called The Black Rose, I think, and then our next show was in Regina. Our final show after that was in Vancouver, so we had three shows all the way across the country. The show we played in Vancouver was the one where we ostensibly got signed to Geffen Records. The Geffen A&R guy was there and saw us play. We booked the tour by ourselves and we travelled in a rented minivan in the fucking winter time. All the elements of disaster were right out front. We didn't realize at the time that we couldn't fit all of us, plus our band manager, plus all of our equipment, in the minivan – so we didn't get very far out of town before we realized we had to go back and rent a U-Haul trailer."

Signed to Geffen Records after an estimated 15 shows as a band, and an estimated 12 people in attendance at any particular show, touring for Sloan definitely changed 17 years later: "It's changed in that we're not the same people we were 17 years ago. We have bigger priorities other than whooping it up like a bunch of teenagers. We have families at home and more important things to think about. We'll obviously bus it now. There are about 10 of us plus a driver on the bus. We're at a point with our comfort level that we know that we're going to have to do it, so that everybody can keep their heads above water out on tour. The longest we'll go is about three weeks - mostly Canada, and we'll dip into certain pockets in the US." No families on tour with Sloan. It's not a rule – they just aren't interested in coming, adds Scott.

Even back in the day, Scott assures me that Sloan never did a lot of "whooping it up" on tour: "Never more than staying up all night drinking beer, which Jay and Chris never did, or do. We managed to keep the abuse to a minimum. I don't think anyone has ever laid eyes on a pile of coke in this band."

Post-Geffen, the band has more often than not released records, certainly in Canada, on its own Murdereords which, according to Scott, is a big reason for keeping his own sanity throughout the band's career, especially since he has such apparent disdain for the business side of music. After the

Geffen fiasco, the bandmembers made a decision to figure things out for themselves. "We went into a very self-directed game plan, and we said, 'Let's record the next one ourselves so that we won't have Geffen fucking us over, and we'll just try and make recording an enjoyable experience.' That became *One Chord To Another*, which was recorded in a much better head space. Murdereords isn't our label. We 'are' the label. Murdereords is just a phone at our practice space."

PATRICK PENTLAND

At this point in its career, Sloan has undoubtedly "made it," certainly in Canada, at least. Pentland seems to have the best sense of this; everyone else has a slight unsure vibe despite it being obvious to the rest of the nation. "We're not trying to compete with younger bands anymore," continues Pentland. "We've settled into the idea that we can just put out records and our fan base will pick it up."

Getting to that point hasn't been without its hiccups and road blocks. Pentland recalls recording *Twice Removed* under Geffen's watchful eye: "We made that record, and Geffen wanted us to



LEFT: JAY FERGUSON (TOP, GUITAR), CHRIS MURPHY (CENTRE, BASS), ANDREW SCOTT (CENTRE, DRUMS), PATRICK PENTLAND (BOTTOM, GUITAR).

re-record a couple of songs to sound more like our first record, and we said 'no,' so they didn't want to release it. We were very brave and we told Geffen 'You have to put the record out because it's in the contract.' Of course, being naive, we didn't see that they would put the record out but they wouldn't do anything to promote it." Pentland chuckles, "We kind of shot ourselves in the foot. Had we gone back and re-recorded two more songs they probably would have promoted it really well, but because we said 'fuck you,' they said 'well, fuck you too,' and we were fucked."

The way Sloan records its albums now is the same way the bandmembers write: separately. In '94, Scott moved from Halifax to Toronto, making rehearsal impossible. "One Chord To Another became the first record that we recorded separately because Andrew was in Toronto. One Chord To Another was the follow-up to *Twice Removed* and the band's third release that became its most commercially successful record, and it featured one of Sloan's most notable hits: "The Good In Everyone,"



RIGHT: PATRICK PENTLAND



ABOVE: CHRIS MURPHY & JAY FERGUSON

which Pentland wrote. "For most of our records since then, whoever writes the song usually records all the guitars. Andrew will often play everything on his songs, and I tend to play most of the instruments on my own songs. It's almost like four little solo bands."

Pentland's role in Sloan has been to keep the band accessible to the music-listening public. "For a long time, I think I was the guy in the band who, for better or worse, tried to keep us in the public domain, and tried to write songs that would keep us on the radio and make us a bit of money so we could continue being a band. With the last few records, I haven't been so concerned about that and, hey, we're still on the radio."

If you can manage solutions for the usual break-up-inducing obstacles of being in a band, it seems you can be coasting into a long career. Sloan has done this by way of owning its own label, writing and recording separately, and splitting the money members make evenly, effectively knocking out potential for "artistic differences," annoying label people, and financially-related resentment. Genius, really. The whole family thing has certainly rerouted what

Sloan is all about as a band, and as people, but the musical focus remains – and so does the fan support.

When questioned about the latest record, *Parallel Play*, Sloan has no desire to try to sell me on what's so groundbreaking or high-concept about it. I gather that it's a Sloan record, and Sloan fans will dig it. No youthful bravado behind it, no desperate need to be seen as redefining pop music. Indeed, it's more evidence of Sloan's comfort with where it is now. Family has been the one factor in this band that has changed everything. Scott, Murphy, and Pentland are all family men, and there is no question when talking to them about what comes first. They all maintain that the band hasn't suffered because of it, and Sloan will carry on, just, perhaps, with less insistence.

The dichotomy of Sloan 17 years after it began is illustrated to me in total clarity when I ask Murphy if he still practices his instrument after all these years. "Sure, I'll pick up the guitar occasionally, but then there are dishes to wash and puke to clean up." ■



Luther Mallory sings and writes songs for Crush Luther and is the Director of A&R for High 4 Records. He also writes a songwriting blog at www.luthermallory.com.

Martha Wainwright

WHY BLUNT IS SHARP

BY KEVIN YOUNG

Every now and then an artist comes along whose voice, on its own, without any of the flash and marketing preamble that generally attends the release a record is, frankly, captivating. Songwriters in all genres trade heavily on emotional upheaval, but Martha Wainwright does this so relentlessly that her records play like a master class in raw honesty.

From promo photos featuring her draped over a sofa in her underwear, to the vocal histrionics of her live show, to lyrics like "I know you're married, but I've got feelings too," she leaves an indelible mark on her audience with her frankness. You could be sitting in a dark room with no idea of who Martha Wainwright is, what she looks like – or any context at all – and her music could take your breath away. Or you could sit in silence, reading her lyrics, and it's a fair bet you'd get the same result – nothing hidden, nothing squirreled away for later.

Unfortunately, I wasn't listening to Wainwright's music while I waited for her to pick up the phone in her Spanish hotel. Instead, I was being treated to some overly-majestic hotel muzak. Currently, Wainwright is booked up with a tour of Canada and an engagement at the Royal Opera House in London, and when we spoke she was midway through an extensive European tour that took her to places she never thought she'd see – the Arctic, by way of Moscow, as part of a group of artists sent by the Cape Farewell organization to see the effects of global climate change up close, for example.

The pace of that tour was wearing on her. Even so, when she picked up she told me the wear and tear is worth the chance to see things others so rarely do. "Because I travel so much for work, I don't travel places to trek, or to see nature. I just don't get the opportunity. It would never occur to me. That trip required a lot of planning and organization, which is something I don't have a talent for," she said, laughing.

It helps that the tour is a bit of a family affair. For this particular leg, she was joined by two of her cousins, as well as her husband, producer, and bassist Brad Albetta. "It's very helpful for me to have Brad out," she said. Particularly, she related, for maintaining balance and perspective, and for limiting mental stress. "I don't know if it's because of the economy, but not all of the shows in the UK were sold out. There's generally less spending by people. You can really take that to heart – at least, I have a tendency to do that. To have him tell me, 'no, you're doing really well,' it's moral and mental support. I don't know if everyone needs it, but I do." Her mother, Kate McGarrigle, came in for a few shows, writing a guest blog and performing with her daughter. "We put her to work," said Wainwright. "If she's going to come out, she needs to, you know, so we had a piano and she accompanied us."

For the Wainwrights, music is truly the family business. Beyond her mother's career, and well-known folkie Loudon Wainwright III, her father, there's brother Rufus as well. Though her music stands alone, in the larger context it doesn't hurt that she has a compelling back story, particularly in an industry where newer artists have difficulty penetrating the public consciousness. But, with a mix of such eclectic personalities in the immediate family, you have to wonder how she rebelled when younger. "It was hard – kind of impossible in a family of individualists and black sheep. I think I rebelled by not taking myself seriously, and pushing against opportunities. I think I needed to, because artists need to have their own story, their own relationship with their art and their music, and their own way to succeed."

For her, she explained, that took a while. "I was watching my brother, Rufus, who was so determined and so focused at such a young age. Maybe I had a chronic second child problem of being a bit more of a fuck-up in some ways." That, however, impacted her songwriting, giving her songs a quality and a startling honesty that's almost shocking at times. "It seeped into the songs, whether it's feelings of loneliness or insecurity."

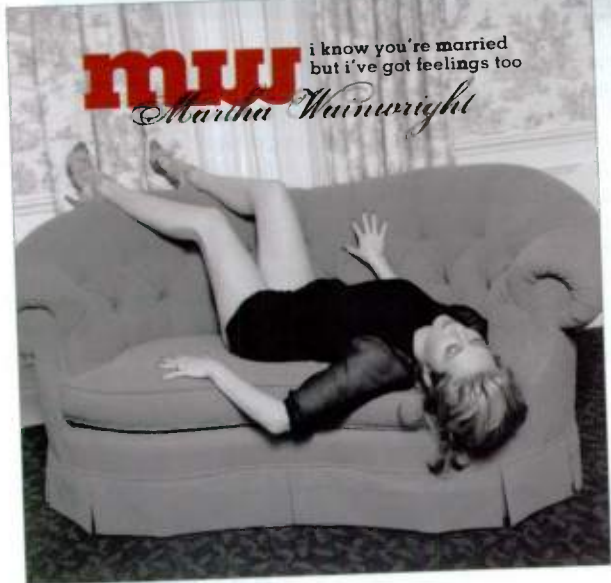
Raised in Montreal, following her incomplete studies in drama at Montreal's Concordia University, she moved to New York City, where she began to establish herself as an emerging singer/songwriter in her own right. Home is still Brooklyn and Montreal as well. "Although," she added, "we'll probably be home a total of a couple of weeks this year."

Lest that give you the idea that Wainwright's lyrics tend toward passive introspection, be warned – the woman does not pull any punches in her music. You can see this by scratching no deeper than album titles alone: 2004's *You Bloody Motherfucking Asshole*, of which the title track of the same name is allegedly penned with father Loudon's parenting skills in mind; and equally so on her current record, *I Know You're Married, But I've Got Feelings Too*.

Is it a way of working out the kinks in her relationships with family and others? "Yeah, you know, unfortunately for them," she said. Her first batches of songs, written from the ages of 17 to 25, were steeped in her family and personal life. "With this record, I think I'm able to look beyond those things because they're not the centre of my life anymore. I think I can write my feelings, or impressions of a larger world, because I've seen a larger world now. I have my own family with Brad. As you get older, your world gets larger, and I think that then the responsibility, your subject matter as a songwriter, should follow suit."

That's not to say she does, or will likely, take on the role of dispassionate observer in her lyrics any time soon. "I think that if I see things that make me sad, or disturb me, that's what would make me write songs that are less autobiographical. But I'll always try to use examples from my own experience to denote the point I'm trying to make," she added.

She mines some very personal material, and you get the sense there's little, if anything, that's off-limits. The current record seems heavily preoccupied with trust, and though that's a big part of it, she told me, the songs have a quality that allows listeners to find themselves and their own preoccupations within them. "I think that's obviously because of what people are thinking of themselves, which is kind of the usefulness of music. It's not only autobio-



mw i know you're married but i've got feelings too
Martha Wainwright



graphical, but also, hopefully, the story of other people's lives, and is useful in that way." For her own use, the songwriting process is a way of taking the skeletons in her closet out, rendering them "down into a small powder," and letting the wind take them away.

The rendering process is thorough. By turns thoughtful and melancholic, there's still something to her delivery that's more forceful than maudlin, and always keenly direct. Her lyrics are a mouthful, at times, but Wainwright has a unique way of marrying complex emotional content to melodies that are eminently singable, but not simplistic or trite. The new record hangs together as a roots/folk record with a flair for the epic. In many cases, Wainwright favours soaring melodies, vocal arrangements, and phrasing that employ her voice as an instrument in itself. That style, she explained, was a reaction to her own feelings of inadequacy as a guitar player. "I was around a lot of people who could play really well and I wasn't a strong guitar player, but I had a more sophisticated ear than for what I was able to do on a guitar. I used my voice as an instrument." The frustration with her limitations led her to add textures similar to those you might use a guitar or keyboard to recreate, with harmonies and vocal textures in the studio. "In one way, it's essentially a laziness," she laughed. "I think I've gotten much better at the guitar, and I have a style that I feel has a legitimate musicality there, but I lean on my voice for a more sophisticated musical language."

That language is applied to great effect on the album's two covers: the Eurhythmics' "Love Is A Stranger" and Pink Floyd's "See Emily Play." The latter was recorded for a Syd Barrett tribute and produced by her mother. "She's the one who came up with the piano arrangement and the feel of it, which I think is brilliant. When it came time to pick a cover song, it seemed an obvious choice. As far as the Eurhythmics, I had met and interviewed Annie Lennox for E Television Canada. Then she had me involved in this project called Sing. "Sing" is a song from Lennox' album *Songs Of Mass Destruction* and is a collaboration with over 20 female singers, and also is the name of a website devoted to

her support of AIDS awareness in Africa. "[Lennox] was one of my mentors when I was growing up. I wanted to be her. I think it's a tip of a hat to the music I listened to as a young person," said Wainwright.

There are other well-established musical presences felt on the new disk as well. A powerful and eclectic mix of special guests, in addition to her brother Rufus and both McGarrigles (her mother and her aunt), it includes contributions from the likes of Pete Townshend, Steely Dan's Donald Fagen, and Garth Hudson of The Band. All that firepower wouldn't mean a thing if Wainwright cut corners on the emotional candour that is the hallmark of her lyrics. Her signature vocals and unrelenting honesty set her well apart, on record and on stage, but she brings that honesty to bear on her approach to her career as well. Knowing full well she may never achieve the ubiquitous status enjoyed by some contemporary female pop icons means spending a large amount of time on the road, she explained. "It's really the only way for me to spread the word and promote my music, and I happen to like playing live. The trick is finding a way to do it in a healthy way – getting into a rhythm. I sometimes have trouble doing this since I'm not a creature of habit, so that's my challenge."

There's a tradeoff there – it may enlarge her world, but it takes a physical and mental toll as well. "It ages you, and that's a frustrating thing as you come into your 30s, but you know, fuck it, that's what inspires songs. You just gotta get a facial every once in a while." ■

FOR MORE INFO GO TO
WWW.MARTHAWAINWRIGHT.COM.



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

Largely self-taught, Ken Tizzard actually came to his primary instrument by way of a case of mistaken identity. After buying his first instrument in grade eight, he immediately set the bar high: "For the first year I had this thing, I was sitting in my room trying to learn Judas Priest and Iron Maiden solos." Trouble was, he'd actually bought a bass. It was only when a musician friend of his sister pointed out that little fact that he realized why he was having so much difficulty copping heavy metal guitar sounds. And when the friend patiently explained the difference and took the time to show Tizzard what the bass parts for those same songs were...

"I was totally disappointed," he says, laughing. Clearly, he got over the trauma, and it might just be that experience that's helped him develop such a healthy approach to his career.

Challenging himself is essential to Tizzard's growth as a musician. Simply put, he's not only open to the possibilities that present themselves along the way, but has the chops and willingness to capitalize on them. It's refreshing to speak to an artist who seems so comfortable with where his career has led him. Today, however, he's not entirely comfortable – he's on a rare break from work, at home, but fighting the flu, before a series of Ottawa-area shows with his backup band, The Variety Show Players. "The way of having any kind of longevity in the music business is to keep at it because you love, absolutely love, and need, to play music. If you're in it for any other reason, I can't say you will fail, but you're setting yourself up to," he says.

In the past decade and a half he's covered a lot of ground, literally and stylistically: in the '90s with the Watchmen, more recently a stint with Thornley, and now as a solo artist promoting his sophomore effort *Lost In Awe*. Though most well-known as a bassist, Tizzard's skills go well beyond that. The various gigs he's taken over have allowed him to explore his role as a musician, across a broad spectrum, as both a performer and songwriter/composer. "The Watchmen allowed me to explore bass playing in a way I hadn't before, using a lot of chords and filling out the sound," he says. There he also gained a thorough education in both the business side of the industry and the art of crafting songs.

With Thornley, the playing style was different

again. "It was more root-oriented, driving, fundamental stuff," he explains. Applying past experiences playing hardcore, Tizzard's role in Thornley let him explore a different side of himself as well: "From the way I look, to the way I play, to my entire attitude towards music." His relationship with Ian Thornley goes beyond business; Thornley is his brother-in-law and a close friend. "His musicianship is out of this world. We'd be playing for a whack of people and he'd start re-harmonizing chord structures live on stage, and if you weren't listening, or didn't have the knowledge to keep up, you just stopped playing. That was my challenge every night – to step up to the plate with him."

Tizzard has also stepped up to the plate as an arranger/composer for several theatre productions mounted at the Westben Theatre, near his Campbellford, ON, home. Notably, a production of *Rapunzel* co-starring Michael Burgess of *Les Miserables* fame, and a theatrical mash-up of a famous Hans Christian Anderson tale and Handel's *Messiah* entitled *The Matchbox Messiah*.

In Tizzard's experience, each challenge informs some facet of those that follow. "When I was doing *Matchbox Messiah*, I'd learned all the cello lines on six-string bass, and I was also transcribing the cello suites that Bach wrote." The process involved learning a lot of altered tunings, odd chords, and voicings, he says. Taking that as a starting point for his solo debut, *Quiet Storey House*, he developed a style of playing that was decidedly un-bass like. Describing his approach, he says, "I wasn't playing bass at all at that time. I was playing pretty much anything but bass, but I was using the bass as a primary instrument." In some ways, it brings him

full-circle to that earlier case of mistaken identity – essentially using a six-string bass very much like a guitar. "I was using some looping and effects. I had the low B-string removed and had a low G-string from a guitar put on, an unwound G-string, and I would play slide guitar on that string and lay percussive loops down on the rest of the bass. I'd use a really thin high C-string and tune that down or up to create all these weird open tunings." During that album cycle, he also arranged and performed several songs from *Quiet Story House* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in the summer of 2006.

For his most recent effort, *Lost In Awe*, Tizzard steps away from bass entirely and takes up a new challenge focusing on guitar and harmonica. Recorded over five days in Blue Rodeo's Woodshed Studio in Toronto with producer John Whynot, it seemed the simplest way, he says, to feed a resurgent interest in folk music. If you think that means Tizzard's simply strumming away à la your average Saturday night campfire jam, let's clarify – that's not really his style. "I can't just step on stage with a guitar and play some chords and sing. I've got to spend months sitting in my living room learning fingerpicking techniques. There's a certain perfection that I strive for. I know I'm not hitting it yet."

That type of pursuit speaks heavily to Tizzard's ability to weather the ups and downs that come with maintaining a viable career. "Going back to longevity," he says, "it's about finding the stuff that's in you and pursuing it for a time." Exploration, he suggests, is the only way to deal with quiet times between albums and projects "when you're not on the radio and the shows get smaller. It happens with every band. It's just the way it goes."

Currently, that's not Tizzard's problem. Between supporting the current solo effort and recent Watchmen reunion shows, Tizzard finds himself busier than he has been in recent memory. After getting together to do a few songs at a party for manager Jake Gold, the Watchmen decided to do a reunion show. A plan to do a single night at the Horseshoe Tavern in downtown Toronto swiftly grew into more shows, among them, the tailgate party for the Maple Leafs' first game of the 2008 season as well as some upcoming shows in western Canada. Although there are no plans for a new record, the band has been rehearsing regularly. "We've set aside an hour at each rehearsal to see where musical noodling takes us. If a new song happens to come about we might record it and put it on MySpace."

Whatever the case, Tizzard is, as ever, open to the possibilities. You never know where the trip will take you, he says, or for how long. The members of the Watchmen, given recent shows, are well into the project's second decade. *Matchbox Messiah* was a one-shot, six-month trip. The solo work, however, is what's allowed him to cover the most ground over

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"COVER ME" FROM KEN TIZZARD'S *LOST IN AWE* (GUITAR)
 "WHEN I BEGAN LEARNING A FEW ALTERNATE TUNINGS ON GUITAR, IT LEAD TO INTERESTING VOICINGS OF CHORDS AS LISTED IN 'COVER ME,' WHICH I FINGERPICKED"

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"LUSITANA" FROM THE WATCHMEN'S *IN THE TREES* (BASS)
 "EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW WAYS OF THINKING CAN SOMETIMES BRING SONG IDEAS TO LIFE. LUSITANA WAS WRITTEN WHEN I WAS EXPLORING THE HARMONIZATION OF THE C MAJOR SCALE AND IS PLAYED WITH A PICK"

the past few years: booking his own shows, packing up his family into a truck and camper for up to two months of the year, and touring Canada and the US.

"That sort of happened by fluke as well," he explains. After recording *Quiet Storey House*, he wanted to head home to Newfoundland for a holiday and decided to gig along the way. What started as a family outing with a few shows thrown in for good measure has become an annual trek. "This past summer, I did almost 17,000 km from Toronto to Vancouver, down through California, Arizona, Tennessee, Texas ... That's one of the reasons why I left the corporate rock thing — to be with my family."

For much of his career, the demands of the business and music were the central force in Tizzard's life. "My wife, my family, and everybody had to accommodate that." As important as music still is, now family is the priority. "It's a good relationship that music and my life have right now. I'm essentially taking everything I've learned, from press and publicity, to songwriting, performance, and management, and doing everything myself. If I was in a band and we were making a lot of money, we'd probably each have a tour bus and be touring with our own families. I'm not doing music that generates that kind of money right now, so this is a scaled-down version — me, a couple of acoustic guitars, a bag of harmonicas, and my wife and kids."

Still, it's a tradeoff. The solo shows make him a better player, a better performer in general, but it can be isolating. "When you have a bad night, it's just you." With a band, there's camaraderie, in good times and bad. Alone, and when something goes wrong, says Tizzard, it's a huge weight — one that's sometimes hard to put down. As for the next step, his mind is already on the next solo record. "I hate to say it, but I've just written two rock songs." Not because he's actively looking for a new direction, he says, so much as dabbling on electric guitar, testing the waters to see what works for him. "In the end, it doesn't make me famous. It doesn't make me rich. It just makes me happy. That's why I do it." ■

For more information go to
www.kentizzard.com.



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

Ken Tizzard



HOW To Make
RADIO
Work For YOU

BY PAUL MORRIS



There's a great scene in Tom Hanks' movie *That Thing You Do!* that captures the genuine excitement and pure joy of a band hearing its song on the radio for the first time. Everybody in the band screams, laughs, and literally jumps for joy. Hearing your song on the radio for so many is an affirmation that you've "made it." Somehow, it seems when people have put your song on the radio, they've said that your song "belongs," that maybe you now have a shot at something bigger. Hit songs on the radio, no matter what format, are still the cornerstone of the music industry. A hit song is an artist's calling card – it is usually people's first exposure to a band and, over time, will be part of an artist's legacy. This is not to underscore the importance of performance, a great songbook, and a collection of songs as part of an album, but in the end, artists are best remembered by their best songs. The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* stands as one of the greatest albums ever recorded, but its status is not as great as our emotional attachment to the songs on that album like an "A Day In The Life" or "With A Little Help From My Friends."

Getting a song on the radio is not as romantic as hearing it. It's tough. Frankly, there are more songs out than there is "room" for them on the radio. Listeners have a limited capacity to embrace new music, and the older people get, the less interested they seem to be. The major labels are signing and developing fewer acts than ever before. As a result, there has been a necessary shift to a DIY model with most artists. New independent labels with fresh A&R and marketing strategies have emerged – all to the benefit of the artists. In many cases, the major labels have become partners with the indies in providing some marketing and distribution. The distribution of songs and recordings itself has been revolutionized with the emergence of digital music files and online distribution models. The "business" of music has changed dramatically in the last five years, and the way in which consumers access it has also changed. The status of the "single," though, hasn't changed. Terrestrial radio, despite all its competitors such as satellite radio, Internet radio stations, cable, music TV, DVDs, MySpace, Facebook, and the other social networking websites, remains the primary source of people's experience with new music. That share may have diminished in recent years, but research shows that most people purchase music because they heard it on the radio. Many artists have been successful without any radio airplay and have found their audience through live performances, marketing, and networking. Still, to some, the idea of having a song on the radio affirms that you've made it. Getting a song on the radio is the trick. I'll give you some insight on how you can improve your chances of getting your song played on the air, but it's best to understand how radio works first.



HOW To Make RADIO Work For YOU

Radio Is A Business

Radio sells advertising to pay the bills. The primary goal is to get the highest possible ratings. The more listeners we have, the more we can charge for our commercials. It almost goes without saying: to get the highest ratings, we must play the most popular music. In its simplest terms, the best songs = high ratings = high profits. Long ago, somebody figured out a winning formula. The legend goes that there were two guys sitting in a bar watching people dropping coins into a jukebox with hundreds of singles to choose from. Over time, they noticed that a select number of songs was repeatedly chosen. The next day, they came back with pen and paper and wrote down the names of all the songs paid for that day. In the end, they found that from the hundreds of songs available, 40 songs stood out from the rest – thus, the birth of the Top 40 radio format. In more recent years that working number of songs has diminished, but the principle still remains. Even though most people refer to pop music stations as Top 40, the idea of a select number of songs defining a format is applicable to almost all popular music formats.

Which Songs Make It Onto Radio

It's not really a big secret: you only have to look at the songs that you, yourself, love the most. Songs on the radio always have a great melody, a great lyric – a hook. They often have a dynamic performance. It may be a great vocal, a great guitar solo, or an irresistible rhythm or chorus you simply can't get out of your head. They are songs that make a connection with us, and these are things that radio programmers listen for. If a song comes from an established artist, then it improves the chances of a song getting on the radio ... but that, sometimes, is not enough. There are a lot of very good songs out there. One common misstep is when artists send CDs of their album and ask the Music Director to "pick your favourite" or to listen to three or four specific tracks and pick the best one that fits

the radio station. Unfortunately, no Music Director has the time or energy to listen to that much music. There just isn't enough time. Instead, focus on one song – the single. As I mentioned earlier, this is how the business works. It's your calling card. Once you've picked the right song, the next step is getting the attention of the decision-makers at the radio stations.

Radio Music Meetings

Radio DJ's don't select their own music. That may have been the case 40 or 50 years ago, but today's radio music playlists are put together by a Music Director or a Program Director. Music Directors program the hourly music schedule using licensed software such as MusicMaster and Selector. These programs allow each station to input all the typical information about the songs, such as artist, title, album title, run time, tempo, etc., as well as scheduling parameters that ensure a balanced sound and flow, and that songs get played with a defined frequency. A Music Director may also have a regular on-air shift. This is becoming more commonplace and presents a new set of unseen challenges for artists trying to break new music. An MD/DJ not only has to spend three to five hours sitting in front of a mic, but also has a shift to voice commercials, and prepare and research his or her show. With what time remains, we have to consider all the pitches for new music along with the regular duties of scheduling daily music logs. Ultimately, the amount of time an MD has to listen to and digest new music is compromised. Concise and focused promotion of new music becomes a necessity.

Every week, the MD and Program Director will hold a music meeting to listen to all the new songs being considered for airplay. This meeting often includes other people on staff, both on and off the air, ideally bringing different levels of experience and taste to the decision-making process. The Program Director has the greatest influence and the final call on all decisions, as he or she is ultimately responsible for the overall sound of the radio station. MDs usually have a great love of music that sometimes is wider than the scope or capacity of the radio station. The Program Director ensures that this is all kept in check. Ideally, the Program Director is a person that has a great love of music and understands the nuances of breaking new music and artists.

In any given week, a radio station will consider 50 or more new songs for airplay. To audition 50 songs a week in a room full of people would be tedious even for the greatest music lover. A typical music meeting will include 20 to 25 songs. Most radio stations will add one to four songs per week. Those are tough odds to work against if you're an independent artist or label trying to get regular airplay on radio stations across the country.



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ON THE AIR



At music meetings, many factors are considered with each song: airplay at other radio stations, local shows and performances, street rep, requests, call-out and online research (we'll talk about that at another time), sales and download charts, and anything else that would contribute to an artist's "buzz" all come into play. When you add up all the factors, the statistics, and even the mood in the room during the meeting, a lot can happen. A music meeting is not unlike Simon, Paula, and Randy auditioning contestants for *American Idol*. Ultimately, we're all looking for great songs – no matter where they come from.

Song Distribution

One of the most mishandled components of record promotion by independent artists is the distribution of the song. It is imperative that you get the song into the "hands" of the MD. CDs and CD singles are fine, but the industry has moved on to digital files. Make sure yours has a high bit-rate. MP3 compression is adequate, but it will sound like crap during a meeting next to .WAV files. You can send your music by e-mail, but large files and restrictions on e-mail may prevent your music from being delivered. You can send it using third-party sites such as www.yousendit.com, but then you're asking the MD to take extra steps to enroll and download your file. Some MDs don't have the time, and some can't be bothered.

Probably the most common approach artists take is to contact the MD by e-mail and send a link to their websites or MySpace pages. There, the MD can sample the band's music, the blogs, the band's bio, and any (performance) videos that might be there. If the MD hears and sees something that he or she likes, he or she will probably request a high-quality audio file.

Another means of distribution is a file vault. It's a secured website where an MD can log-in and download the music files. Lastly, there is a website that all the major record companies, independent promoters, and bands use to distribute their songs: www.dmds.com, a very easy and effective way for artists to distribute their songs at a reasonable rate, and for radio stations to access songs. When a new song is posted, radio stations that are enrolled are sent an e-mail that a new song is available for download. Radio stations can then log-in, preview the song online, view all the information about the song and artist, and download a high-quality .WAV file. Record companies pay per download. In the end, it saves you the task of manufacturing CDs, putting them in shipping envelopes, and paying Canada Post or courier charges and hoping it finally gets into the hands of the MD. All these methods work. The most important work comes next.

Promote, Promote, Promote!

Assuming your single is in the hands of all the MDs you're trying to reach, the next step is to correspond with them. Communicating with radio stations requires persistence and patience. First, find out the names of the MD and the Program Director, or whoever is in charge of making decisions on new music. Don't send or contact the DJs, as you'll only be wasting your time and theirs. If you're lucky enough to get your song on the radio, then you can send them personal copies so that they just might talk about it on the air. Initial contact with radio stations

by e-mail works best for most radio stations, as it is difficult get anybody on the phone given air shifts and times zone changes. The more you can groom your pitch to each station, the better. At some point you've got to follow up with a phone call.

I find the biggest mistake most artists and promoters make is to stop promoting their songs. If someone is not constantly reminding me about the song; the concert itinerary; or the names of the radio stations that have already played the song, featured the artist, or conducted an interview, then it indicates the song is no longer important. I'll drop it from my list of songs to consider. It's almost as if the initial e-mail or phone call was enough, and that if I didn't return the e-mail, then I wasn't interested. MDs get a ton of e-mail and can't respond to each one, but that doesn't mean that they have forgotten or don't care. On some weeks, I just can't listen to everything I get, and I have to defer it to another week or listening session. But I will listen to it, especially if somebody is consistently promoting it!

About two years ago, I started getting e-mails from the lead guitarist and singer of Starewell, a straight-ahead rock band out of Alberta. He did all their promotion. The first contact was by e-mail, and I probably got two or three updates every week with each one celebrating some new progress on the airplay. Every once in a while, he'd make a phone call, but the e-mails never stopped coming. One thing you should know is that MDs and Program Directors watch for consensus. If key radio stations start playing a song, then it gets greater consideration for airplay. It's a snowball effect. Finally, over the course of three months of persistent promotion, Starewell, the indie band out of Alberta, had a song in the Top 30 charts for rock stations in Canada. Starewell had no major record company to help, no independent promoter, no swag, no national tour, and no reputation. What it did have was an incredible work ethic and, most importantly, a good song. The band, if my memory serves me well, has had three songs in the Top 30 rock radio charts in Canada and is working on a fourth.

It all sounds easy, but it's not. You still have to have a great song, and despite the example of Starewell's efforts, you still have to compete with established and/or major artists who are constantly popping up with new releases. Radio stations, in their bid to build ratings, will add music by popular artists over less familiar artists. The first four to six months of the year tend to be the best time for new artists to get their songs on to playlists. At the end of the day, however, it's very difficult. Most songs that we get at radio never make the cut. Does that mean there's no hope for you and your song? No. In fact, with the incredible reach of the Internet and the many different platforms available, you really don't need radio to get people to hear your songs. You can build and communicate with a dedicated fan base on a daily basis if you wish all without the help of radio – but nothing says that you've made it more than hearing your song on the radio blasting out of the car speakers. ■



Paul Morris is the Music Director at CHTZ 97.7 HTZ FM, an Astral Media rock station in St. Catharines, ON.



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MUSIC EDUCATION GET SCHOOLED 2009

– BY ANDREW KING –

- A) A 9-year old who's just scored his first guitar and wants to learn the opening chords to "American Woman."
- B) A veteran cellist trying to iron out one of Bach's *Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello*.
- C) A tour manager prepping for her first road trip.
- D) A first-time engineer trying to capture a killer drum track.

Music is an umbrella under which everyone standing seeks constant self-improvement. Our will to learn and constantly hone our crafts is something that unites us, or at least those of us who are serious about what we do.

Of course, practice makes perfect, and with the vast amount of educational media available and the wealth of resources technology puts at our fingertips, self-learning has never been easier. That said, the classic student/teacher model of education is still the one that yields the best results. The greatest musicians in the world still take lessons – often from people less skilled than they are, should it offer them the chance to improve at just one aspect of their instrument. Record producers and engineers are constantly sharing tricks or attending courses to keep up with new methods and media. The reality is that if you're serious

about prospering in any branch of the music industry, seeking an education will give you a huge edge on properly acquiring the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed for success.

PRIVATE LESSONS: FOR YOUR EARS ONLY

Plain and simple: improving on your instrument is good for business. So is improving on or picking up a different instrument. You self-taught garage band players would see your potential increase exponentially with the ability to sight-read. Even if music is just a hobby, why not make the most of it?

There are plenty of private music teachers set up all over the country. Some teach out of music stores, others out of small music schools, and others out of their own homes or studios. Some are active professional musicians; others are full-time teachers. Somebody out there is ready to help you improve at whatever it is you might want to learn. Take a look in the YellowPages, or head down to the musician's Mecca that is your local music store. If it doesn't have a school incorporated into its operations, I'd bet the folks there know where you can find some teachers in the area for any instrument. Lazy? Try the Internet.

When it comes to selecting a teacher, you need to make it clear what you're looking for. What do you want to learn? How competent are you on the instrument? How do you take in information? Some teachers will take things slowly and are very hands-on and laid back in their approach; others will instill a very fundamental teaching style that will require plenty of discipline and practice, often with big payouts.

A good music teacher will act as a mentor for all of your future musical endeavors. He or she will identify areas that need improvement, work with you to troubleshoot problem areas, and also introduce new and helpful techniques you'd have not otherwise come across. You'll be introduced to the right kind of practice regimen and supplied with the proper teaching aids to complement your learning style and goals. Education is a continual process.

Some tips on making the most of your lessons:

- Ask questions.
- Always come to lessons prepared.
- Be punctual and professional.
- Keep up to speed with the material.
- Ask more questions.

The learning process is never complete – especially not in music. I had the opportunity of interviewing a famous metal guitarist recently who said, "The more you know on your instrument, the more you realize you don't know." Smart guy. Don't be afraid to see different teachers, either. Some will work better with your style of learning, and

others might be able to offer instruction in a specific area you want to develop that others don't usually touch (see our interview with Chris Cresswell of The Flatliners for an example of seeking out a teacher with a specific area of expertise).

Though your musical education will never be complete, there'll come a time where you'll have enough tools under your belt that you'll be able to preach some of the skills you've practiced and become a teacher yourself. You'll earn some extra income, all the while becoming a more rounded player. And wouldn't you know it, we've found somebody with some advice on how to get you started...

PRIVATE SCHOOLS: LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

There's a wealth of private institutions across the country with specialized programs that encompass the entire music industry and its related peripherals. If you're a player, there's more to developing as a musician than playing your instrument. How about learning about the recording process to have more creative control over your output? These schools offer several different learning packages, from multi-year programs to development workshops and seminars.

Programs include training in audio production and engineering, music business management, live event management, live sound, and many other areas. Courses and seminars available will range from marketing in the music industry to contracts and negotiating to working with a specific piece of audio production software.

If you're serious about signing on for these types of programs, you've got a lot of homework to do even before applying.



AARON VERDONK

PAY IT FORWARD & GET PAID BACK

Taking on the role of teacher yourself is a great way to bring in some extra revenue through music, become a better player, and share music with others. Aaron Verdonk has been teaching drums for a few years in between gigs with Robin Black, studio sessions, and his newfound stint with grimy hardcore crew Kathleen Turner Overdrive. Oh yeah, and he used to play in Closet Monster (R.I.P.). He shares some tips with CM on how the students can become the teachers.

CM: How did you get your start teaching drums? Where did you go to find students?

I started teaching out of my parents' basement shortly after I graduated from high school. My first student roster consisted mainly of friends of the family and guys that I'd known from school that had an interest in the drums.

CM: Which skills did you find were most important to being a teacher?

I'd say the most important skill to learn is patience. Although technical skills like reading and playing are an absolute must, patience keeps lessons fun and the teaching experience pleasant. Sometimes it's easy to forget that the basics can take a lot of time to grasp.

CM: How does teaching make you a better player?

It keeps your chops in line, that's for sure. When teaching, you are forced to slow yourself down on the click and really focus on the essentials. It helped my timing and control immensely. Also, when you are teaching younger students, you must stay current with all sorts of styles of music as well as be able to call upon classic styles such as jazz and funk. That kind of versatility can really help get gigs!

CM: How do you balance your teaching schedule with your other musical projects?

It's really easy as long as you keep a manageable number of students. Most people don't mind the occasional cancelled lesson or rescheduling. The key is to always give lots of homework!

CM: Can you offer a few bits of advice to musicians thinking about teaching?

Make sure that you can write out actual music, not just tabs. Although I've found some tabs helpful, nothing beats the real thing. It's how most books are written anyway. Also, if you don't already, learn to love kids. It makes the job a lot easier, and there will always be kids that want to hit things...



If you're not willing to get your hands dirty with this type of research, the music business might not be for you. Those ready to dedicate a good portion of time and effort to learning about our industry and how to grow within it should start online. See which schools offer the programs in which you'd be interested. Then start researching the school. You're about to make a big financial commitment – bigger than with most other institutions – not to mention dedicating a large chunk of your life to higher education.

Open houses or tours are great opportunities for you to immerse yourself into a given school's environment and see first-hand what it can offer, both educationally and socially. Here, you'll have a chance to explore the campus, speak with some of the faculty and administrators, and observe what life as a student entails. If distance is a factor, the Internet and telephone are your friends. Reach out to the school, and see what past and current students have to say. There are two main things for which the Internet is notorious: pornography and honest opinions, the latter of which will be infinitely helpful when making such a big decision.

These schools are very proud of their faculties, so a little research into who's teaching what might give you insight into not only what you'd be learning, but also the type of teaching style employed. Explore the teachers' credentials and credibility.

You should take into account the school's placement rate, which is a statistic presented as a percentage that will clearly show you the number of graduates from a given institution that find work in that field within a year of graduating. Also, you'll need to research entry requirements for your program – what kind of grades do you need and in which subjects? What kind of experience? Is there an audition or an interview involved? If so, what do you need to know to excel when the time comes?

Like any other post-secondary institution, you'll be paying a substantial amount of money for a substantial amount of information. The schools should have different options in place for financing your tuition. This will be done either through the school directly, or through an affiliated financial institution. Scholarships are less common than they are with registered colleges or universities; however, a number of provincial governments have programs in place that will compensate you for higher learning – look into them. Along with this come living arrangements – both a financial and social giant. Start by consulting with your school liaison, but also consider other sources before making any decisions. Talk with friends or relatives. Search classifieds. Use the web.

STAYING ON PULSE WITH A FLATLINER

Chris Cresswell is the vocalist/guitarist for Canadian punk act The Flatliners. The group has been on tour throughout North America in support of its sophomore LP, 2007's *The Great Awake*, on Stomp Records/Fat Wreck Chords. Cresswell discusses with *CM* how taking lessons has been advantageous and continues to benefit him as a touring musician and songwriter.

CM: Give us a brief rundown of the various lessons you've taken since you started playing.

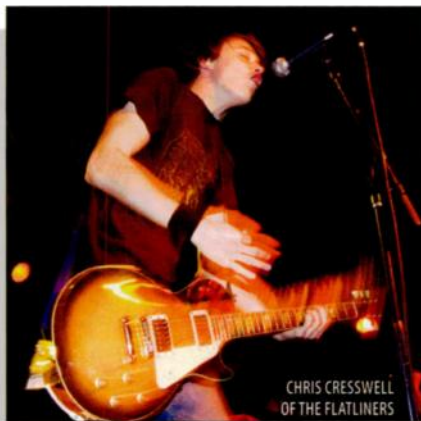
I began playing guitar in grade six, taking lessons at (Richmond Hill, ON's) Cosmo Music with hopes of starting a band. I took guitar lessons once a week for four years, and then ventured out on my own. I also just recently took my first-ever vocal lesson.

CM: How do you feel these lessons have benefited you as a songwriter?

Taking lessons helped me appreciate the little things about playing guitar, like all the subtle techniques and tricks to coming up with your own style, so to speak. Taking lessons helped set the mould for musical creativity much more quickly.

CM: Tell us about your recent voice lesson – what were you hoping to get from it?

I saw a woman named Melissa Cross in New York City who came very highly recommended. She teaches vocalists how to properly scream and sing. She opened my mind to different ways of breathing while performing and tips on how to launch my words rather than just scream my head off. Her advice, although brief, was sound.



CHRIS CRESSWELL
OF THE FLATLINERS

CM: Why do you think it's important for other musicians to make the effort of furthering their musical education?

More and more practice at your instrument can only bring a natural progression and maturation as a musician. If you're dedicated to your music, you'll continue your education in some way. Doctors don't just learn the procedures expected of them once – everything evolves, in every field.

CM: Any tips you have for musicians on how to make the most of the lessons they're taking?

Ask questions! I think when learning, most people are too shy to ask the questions they really need the answers to.

CM: Do you have any plans for the near future of things you'd like to learn how to do or do better in terms of performing or writing?

I've always wanted to learn how to play the piano and the trombone. Maybe one day I'll be able to pull one of them off.



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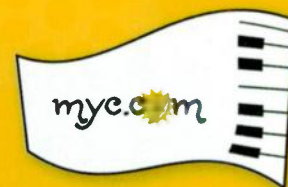


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Entertainment industry courses will open up opportunities for a long list of potential careers, and certainly give you a leg up on breaking into the industry. Of course, the information you'll be taking in won't hurt your career as a player, either. In fact, it'll give you a much larger foundation on which you can build your career with far less outside influence.

Learning about audio or show production is another two-way street that will be largely beneficial to a musician, yet also offer up a wealth of career options on its own. Look at musicians like Trent Reznor, Timbaland, or Canadian Matthew Von Wagner of Alpha Galates – these folks can attribute a lot of their success as musicians to their knowledge of the recording and production processes separate from playing are jobs in a recording studios, putting on live shows, or even working in other streams of entertainment like film or radio.

COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY: A HIGHER DEGREE

Akin to private institutions, seeking a diploma or degree in a music-related field is a major financial decision. Various schools across the country offer a number of potential career paths in music – anything from teaching music or composition to working with audio or entertainment law. Of course, many will attend colleges or universities with reputable music programs to become better performers.

Looking into university offerings will end up with you receiving a degree, and that comes with more formal and standardized training with a slightly longer program length. College programs offer a diploma, and tend to be shorter and more

JOINING THE GANG

Chris Taylor is the President of Last Gang Records, home of Canadian acts like Metric, Crystal Castles, The New Pornographers, and others. We asked him to weigh in on how post-secondary education in an industry-based program can give you a leg up on getting into the music business.

CM: What knowledge and abilities do graduates of music industry programs possess that give them better chances for success in the music industry?

It depends on the schooling, but at least there's a basis of understanding on how the industry works and its basic parameters. A head start is always a bonus.

CM: How does working with these graduates benefit your operations at Last Gang?

Artists overlook the value of manpower (or womanpower) and the amount of work it takes to produce, market, and sell records. Extra hands can train on basic day-to-day tasks and hopefully graduate to having meaningful input on a daily basis. Our Online/Digital Marketing coordinator, Trevor Guy, is a perfect example of a graduate that has slowly become an integral part of our company.

CM: Would you encourage someone hoping to get into the music industry to have this type of education? Why or why not?

Yes. School is what you make of it, though. It's not a guarantee to a job or even an internship. Education can happen 24 hours a day by reading, paying attention, attending conferences, etc. The schools provide guidance and mentors that can help you get on your path.



CHRIS TAYLOR

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application-based. Financially speaking, university is, on average, more expensive than college. Again like a private institution, the reputation of a college or university is what will ultimately attract students and is based in large part on the reputation of the faculty.

College or university programs carry a competitive and selective application process that will involve a number of academic requirements, as well as an audition if you're applying for a performance program. There shouldn't be any surprises, though. Proper research should make you well aware of everything you'll need to do to get into a given school and prosper while you're there, and inform you on what's available when you've completed your program. Before opting one way or the other, you'll need to have a number of goals in place and a career path to follow.

While tuition will be a big burden to bear, colleges and universities offer many options when it comes to planning your finances. Depending on the province, you'll have some kind of post-secondary student assistance program that can help fund your schooling, not to mention a number of scholarships and bursaries available from the government, independent grantors, or the school itself. Regardless, you'll need to either have some funds available or be willing to take out a loan.

Although often referred to as "post-secondary" institutions, colleges and universities offer a number of education options available to adults that will update or refine your skills as a performing musician, composer, teacher, etc. You can opt for the term-based offerings, or also look into a number of weekend or nightly sessions available through many institutions. Some offer

SOME GREEN IN YOUR FUTURE

Vic Branco is Owner and Operator of Toronto's Iguana Recording, which has welcomed and worked with acts from Our Lady Peace to Redoubt Soundflash and Two Hours Traffic. The studio has taken in several graduates of recording programs as engineers and helped them cut their teeth in the studio industry. Branco shares his thoughts with CM on the advantages that come with a formal education in audio.

CM: What advantages do graduates of an audio recording program have when it comes to getting into the industry as opposed to someone without that type of formal education?

They have every advantage. Most schools now have great studios on campus along with instructors that have worked and continue to work in the industry. They get hands-on training on industry-standard recording gear which allows

them to jump right into most recording studios. Without this training you pretty much have a mountain to climb.

CM: Which key skills and abilities do you find prevalent in engineers that have graduated from a recording institution that help them find success in the industry?

I'm finding that today's graduates are very proficient with most recording formats, but especially Pro Tools. Their knowledge of outboard gear, mics, and general recording and mixing techniques is what will help them grow and find success in our industry.

CM: How does it benefit Iguana to bring graduates of these programs onboard?

Graduates from recording programs are simply better prepared to deal with all that's asked of them in a recording studio. They have a better knowledge of gear and how to use it and



VIC BRANCO

they're more comfortable working in a studio environment. This allows Iguana to throw them into key situations which makes them a valuable asset to us right out of the gate!

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intense camps – a week or two of intensive instruction in anything from jazz performance to working with audio software.

As far as resources available to you outside of the classroom, colleges and universities have very strong alumni networks and career services departments with the sole intention of smoothing the transition into the workplace for graduates. While in school, your

instructors and fellow students will offer networking potential and support services that will prove valuable once you make your way into the industry. As far as career help, schools will have online job boards, career counseling services, and even internal jobs just waiting for you. Take advantage.



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INTERNET & EDUCATIONAL MEDIA: ASSIST LEADERS

The emergence of online lessons and resourceful websites has only added more options to a pool of self-learning tools that also includes music books, CD-ROMs, and DVD offerings – all designed to help you learn individually. These media do indeed carry an educational value, working most effectively when paired with proper instruction.

Adine Mintz, Director of the Cosmo School of Music in Richmond Hill, ON, offers a number of benefits to both one-on-one instruction and individual learning when it comes to honing your skills on your instrument or knowledge in other areas of the industry

Lessons:

- Direct feedback from teacher.
- Each lesson can be tailored to the specific needs of the student.
- Teacher observes the student and then focuses the lesson on specific technical problems.
- Teacher keeps the student on a proper learning track and provides external motivation for practicing.

Individual Learning:

- Learning can be done at any time and at the student's home.
- Students learn to be completely responsible for their own learning.

While there is the chance of developing poor technique or bad habits without the help of an actual instructor, working with a mix of resources to educate yourself will offer the best results.

The spectrum of opportunities that come with music education has pretty well been covered – you've got tools you need to look into everything from a career in music to improving your chops behind a mixing console or even just sharpening up your bass lines to improve your band's songwriting potential. If you take your career in music at all seriously, and want others to do the same, you'll need to keep on top of your craft.

Learning will take dedication.



PREPARING FOR AN AUDITION – SHOW YOUR PLAYING POTENTIAL!

Every audition is slightly different, but most spell out EXACTLY what they want you to perform. Whether you have three months or just three weeks to get ready for it, you need a practice plan. Your goal is to walk into the audition and play with confidence and brilliance, showing your potential. Here are a few tips from Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College:

- Find a classical and/or jazz instructor. Even a few lessons can make a big difference.
- Read and re-read the audition requirements. Don't substitute your own tunes. If the tunes or studies are your choice, ask your teacher, or go online and check out music program audition requirements from other institutes.
- Set aside an hour or three a day to improve your sound, technique, endurance, and practice your audition repertoire. Don't have a practice sound – always perform!
- Find recordings of your jazz or orchestral songs, and play along, matching the players' style, articulation, and pitch. If it's a jazz tune, learn the improvised solo.
- Scales should be played fairly fast, with good articulation and no hesitations.
- Sight-reading is often a player's weakest area. Buy or borrow music in the style of the music program or ensemble you are auditioning for.
- To control nervousness, play your whole audition in front of family, friends, and fellow students, so the real audition will be the 20th time you've performed it.
- When you enter the audition, feel and appear confident, and don't react badly if you miss some notes. Just keep playing and show them your potential!

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ADINE MINTZ

(BLUE) PRINT TO SUCCESS

Adine Mintz is the Director of the Cosmo School of Music, located within Richmond Hill, ON's Cosmo Music. The school takes in over 1,200 students and is still growing. Mintz shares some tips on how print music and other educational media can help in the learning process.

CM: How does a good teacher incorporate other educational media (print, DVD, etc.) into the learning process?

A good teacher introduces new material to keep students motivated and uses print material to enhance the musical concepts taught in the lesson. DVD examples provide students with active performing role models that will inspire them. Depending on the instrument, playing along with recordings can help students stay in time and in pitch.

CM: Can a student effectively learn on their own, with the help of educational media?

I really do not think that educational media can replace a private teacher. Students can learn basic note reading skills and certainly develop learning by ear using the media, but bad habits can be developed and reinforced if there is no teacher to correct them as they occur.

CM: Are there any trends you see emerging in educational media that will bring enormous benefit to the learner? What does the future have in store?

The invention of video conferencing over the Internet has really great potential in the future of musical learning. The student can choose any teacher regardless of physical distance. Recording devices are also excellent teaching tools. They allow students to hear themselves and practice along with their teacher away from the lesson.



patience, resources, and perseverance – but so does anything that's worth doing. The music industry is notorious for how rapidly it evolves, and anyone that's found success playing, managing, recording, or writing has found a way to adapt to the times. Those who don't are left behind. ■



Andrew King is the Assistant Editor of Canadian Musician.

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Arranging Strings

by Sarah Slean

Strings, glorious, strings. Who can resist them? In my view, their power to manipulate emotion is unsurpassed. The timbre of the violin is closest to that of the human voice – and perhaps this is why we find it so irresistibly, painfully beautiful.

My love of the string sound blossomed into “utter besotted-ness” when I started investigating the wealth of incredible string repertoire out there. Like anything in music, if you want to learn you have to **listen**. While textbooks are great for grasping the basics such as range and technical terminology, no amount of reading can teach you the tonal qualities of each instrument or how they change with varying registers and techniques. You have to **hear** it, and you have to hear it in context. I’ve always maintained that if you can read music, you can write music, but before you start “painting,” you need to know what colours are available. So, while “Orchestration 314” at the University of Toronto lit the flame, the old classical vinyl bin at my used record shop really poured on the kerosene. Thus, my first point is to **become familiar with what the instruments can do**.

Barber’s “Adagio,” Mahler’s “Adagio-etto,” and Max Richter’s “On the Nature of Daylight” are good examples of strings doing what they do best – that is, “kill you softly” by journeying between consonance and dissonance, light and dark, profound peace and heart-wrenching tension. For interesting effects, check out the eerie, glassy *ponticello* in Bartok’s “Concerto for Orchestra,” the feathery *sul tasto* in Debussy’s “Pelléas and Mélisande,” the spritely *spiccato* in Mendelssohn’s “Midsummer Night’s Dream,” or the bone-rattling *con legno battuto* in Berlioz’s “Symphonie Fantastique,” to name a few. For register references, rhythmic ideas, and to hear soloists and smaller ensembles, I recommend the Shostakovich quartets, violin concertos in D by Beethoven and Brahms, and Walton’s viola concerto.

Once you have a handle on the tonal colours available, then you’re in a better position to navigate the next step: how

strings can be used in a song – which, of course, has an existing sonic palette of its own. What registers will best compliment the existing palette? What techniques might enhance the song’s mood or atmosphere? Do I need to prioritize a vocal or an important motif or hook? Are the strings themselves a hook? My second point is to **decide what role the strings are going to play**. This will dictate how you write.

In Radiohead’s “How to Disappear Completely,” the strings hover in a kind of atonal mist around the band. Quarter-tone clusters surge and retreat without ever really surrendering to the song’s harmonic structure, and the effect is chillingly disorienting. Compare that with the Nelson Riddle-style arrangements of the ‘50s and ‘60s where strings would melodically decorate gaps in the vocal, almost like another “singer.” Two very different aims; two very different scores.

When I started, I was interested in using strings to widen and open up a chorus (another well-used pop technique), but one of the things I noticed about my first attempts was that they were excessively pianistic. The first violin would take a very vocal-esque melodic line, the cello took the role of bass player, and the others would merely fill in the harmony following the basic rules of voice leading. They sounded great as a quartet, but within a song already dominated by piano, the sonic result was impossibly dense. I had to put my excitement at writing strings aside and assess **what their inclusion was going to contribute to the song**. If I want them to “sing” a line, I need uncomplicated harmony, thinner voicing, and appropriate space within the song. This is what I was aiming for in “Sound of Water,” where the strings play a returning “motif.” If I want the warm blanket effect, I thicken and broaden the voicings, such as in my song “The Rose,” the score of which is basically a page and a half of whole notes with no real melodies. If strings are going to be the central architecture of the song, rhythm is essential, as well as reigning in the other band elements. Great examples of



this are PJ Harvey’s “Man Sized Sextet” and Björk’s “Bachelorette.”

All of this leads me to my third point: **learn by revising**. By far, my best teachers have been my abundant and inevitable **mistakes**. I set out pencils with good erasers on the stands of each player whenever I do a session or rehearsal. There are **always** numerous edits, sometimes complete deletions, or even brand new sections written on the fly. With each adjustment, I gain new understanding – not only of these incredible instruments – but of music itself, our endlessly fascinating and complex art.

March 2008 saw the release of Sarah Slean’s fifth studio recording, *The Baroness*, on Warner Music Canada. A collection of paintings and a second volume of poetry by Sarah accompanied the album’s release. Formerly a classical piano major, Sarah has maintained ties with her classical and academic roots by collaborating with several of Canada’s finest orchestras and ensembles (TSO, National Arts Orchestra, CBC Radio Orchestra, *The Art of Time Ensemble*) and by composing, as well as conducting, all of the string arrangements for her material. Check out www.sarahslean.com.

Monitors & Placement

by Murray Daigle

The Truth

It has been said many times that studio monitors are the most important pieces of gear that an engineer owns. I agree. In fact, there are only two pieces of gear that have significantly changed my habits and improved the quality of my work overnight. The first was the computer-based DAW – finally leaving tape behind for good. I don't pine over memories of the "good old days"... trust me, it's WAY better now. The second was my pair of Genelec monitors.

I was actually roped into buying them by a very clever sales rep. My studio was in a serious growth spurt, and I was looking at buying a lot of new gear in the interest of upgrading to increase my clientele and rates. He lent me a few pieces of gear to try, but insisted I take the Genelecs. At the time, I wasn't unhappy with the cheap monitors I was using and I didn't see monitors as something clients would notice or be willing to pay a higher hourly rate for.

Out of nothing other than curiosity and a slight case of gear-slut-itis, I plugged the monitors in and put on a CD: Michael Jackson's *Dangerous*. I literally thought I could reach in between the speakers and touch his voice. I knew it was a good-sounding CD, but I had never heard it like that.

Next, I put on one of my mixes. Everything sounded wrong. Elements I thought loud were muddy and buried. The mid frequencies were harsh and disconnected, and there were a lot of low end bumps and noise jumping out. My first thought was, "Wow, these expensive monitors suck." But being a pretty open-minded guy, I decided to try a remix trusting the Genelecs. I was sure the mix would sound terrible when I took it out of the studio. I could tell because all the settings on my console were wrong. Every time I EQ'ed a track heavily or added a lot of compression, I could hear all this distortion in the top end. I also had to be very careful dialing in mid frequencies, as the speakers only seem to like things seated in certain positions. I also had to make careful filtering choices to pull the bumps, mud, and wooliness out of the low mids and bottom. Nothing on my console looked right, but somehow the mix seemed to glue together better; there was more depth and the clarity was incredible. I burned a CD and headed for my car

to listen, then to my home stereo, then the cheap boombox at my girlfriend's place, then to the bank, and then to meet the sales rep and pay him for my new monitors.

The fact is that good monitors tell the truth. They allow you to make the right decisions. Without them you are flying blind.

Lesson learned: buy the best monitors you can possibly afford!



Shop smart – avoid the hype and buy quality. There are a lot of great monitors out on the market today. Go with powered monitors. There are a lot of technical reasons for this, but for the most part, they are always better. Look for the most even frequency response and low distortion. Any other quality comes down to taste.

Here are some helpful guidelines to help you get the most from your really cool new speakers.

Symmetry

Best case is a completely symmetrical room. Then placement of the monitors that is symmetrical in relation to the room boundaries, both horizontally and vertically. If your right monitor is 6 ft. from the right wall, then the left speaker should be 6 ft. from the left wall. Pay attention to the ceiling as well, and take note of any irregularities in the vertical plane.

Location

Ideally, no speaker should ever be located within 4 ft. of any untreated wall. Generally, this increases the low-end responses and results in an overly boom sound. But how realistic is that in your project studio? Do your best. If you have to have them up against a wall, get some acoustic treatment behind them that will absorb some low frequencies.

The Triangle

This part is absolutely essential. Position your monitors so that they make an equilateral triangle with your mix position. The distance between the two monitors should be 1.25 - 1.4 times the distance from you. The speakers should be angled in toward you slightly – between 15-30 degrees is usually about right. Even with small nearfields, you want to be at least a metre away.

Height

The height of the speaker is often overlooked. You should always check the manufacturer's recommendation for this because it can vary significantly. If you lost your manual or there is no info available, start by getting the midway point between the woofer and the tweeter on the speaker at about ear level. Try some mixes and see how they are translating.

Obstruction

I know this may seem obvious, but make sure there is nothing blocking the path between you and your speakers. Ideally, you don't want anything even close that can cause uneven reflections. When I edit at home on my laptop, the screen gets in the way because my monitors are far back on my desk. When I flip the screen down, there is a significant difference in the sound. Fortunately, I don't ever mix at home.

Take A Stand

If at all possible, buy professional, studio-calibre speaker stands or at least some kind of acoustic isolation product so that your monitors don't sit directly on your desk or console's meter bridge. The vibration through the surface, desk, or console causes very undesirable results.

Read The Manual

This is just good overall advice when buying new gear. New monitors are very sophisticated in their design and many have electronic and acoustic modeling components that need proper set-up to work properly. Also, keep in mind that manufacturers are always striving to bring cutting-edge technology to the marketplace, which can gradually change or even be contrary to accepted standard practices.

Murray Daigle is an 18-year veteran of the Canadian and international music scenes with a reputation spanning the globe for his work as a producer and sometimes artist. Murray also owns and operates MDS Recording, one of Canada's premier recording facilities.

Snakes & Ladders

by John Watt

In this column, we'll talk about audio snakes used in live performances, including FOH snakes, XLR stage boxes, and all the connections involved. I will also discuss troubleshooting common problems with this equipment.

FOH Snake

Depending on your venue system, snakes can range from 24 channels to 56 channels. Small 24-channel snakes used in nightclub-style venues should be made no longer than 125 ft. to the stage with a possibility of eight returns for monitors, a talk-back mic, and L&R speakers or crossover signal flow.

Before your snake leaves the shop, it should be checked for signal path or phantom power (48 V) use on all channels. This eliminates problems right from the start. All cables to be used should be checked as well. Checking 48 V on a snake can be easily done with a phantom-powered mic.

Having small 6-channel sub snakes on stage can be helpful for quick and easy patching. Remember: most smaller input snakes are all one piece, so the box and the XLR connections should be secured together when packing them away.

Larger Snakes

Forty- or 56-channel snakes are a different ball game. These snakes are most commonly accompanied by their own stage split with a monitor fan out, record fan out, and FOH fan out. On large stages (80-100 ft. in width), having sub-snakes are a must for multiple patching and multiple running of different artists.

Trying to use one patch system for a 20- to 30-channel artist can be a nightmare without these 12-pair XLR detachable stage boxes. Now these boxes can be CPC multi-pin detachable and most high-profile sound companies use this system.

In festival situations, sometimes 12 to 14 12-pair XLR input boxes can be found in use. This allows for quick changeovers for the artists involved. The stage boxes are easy to patch and assign to horn sections, drums, keyboards,

and front live vocals. Allowing the box to be detachable gives you the advantage of checking lines for the next artist to perform while the current artist is on stage.

Having a sound patch tech at festivals is a must for the stage in this situation, as well as doing live check on all inputs, and having two 56-channel snakes will help make the entire performance run smoothly.

Digital Snakes

All digital snakes are 4-wire BNC. All well-constructed digitals are NOT the dollar store BNC. Digital snakes must be used with the digital patch bay and split for FOH and monitoring.

Most lengths are 10-25 ft. for jumping the split and 125-300 ft. for monitors and FOH.

If you are interfacing analog patch split to digital, you must patch from the analog snake to the digital patch bay. Your number of inputs can be from 24 to 56 channels.

Multiple patching with digitals should be stored and channel assignment done at the system console. In festival or multiple-artist situations, a hard copy should be made in case of a system crash.

Troubleshooting

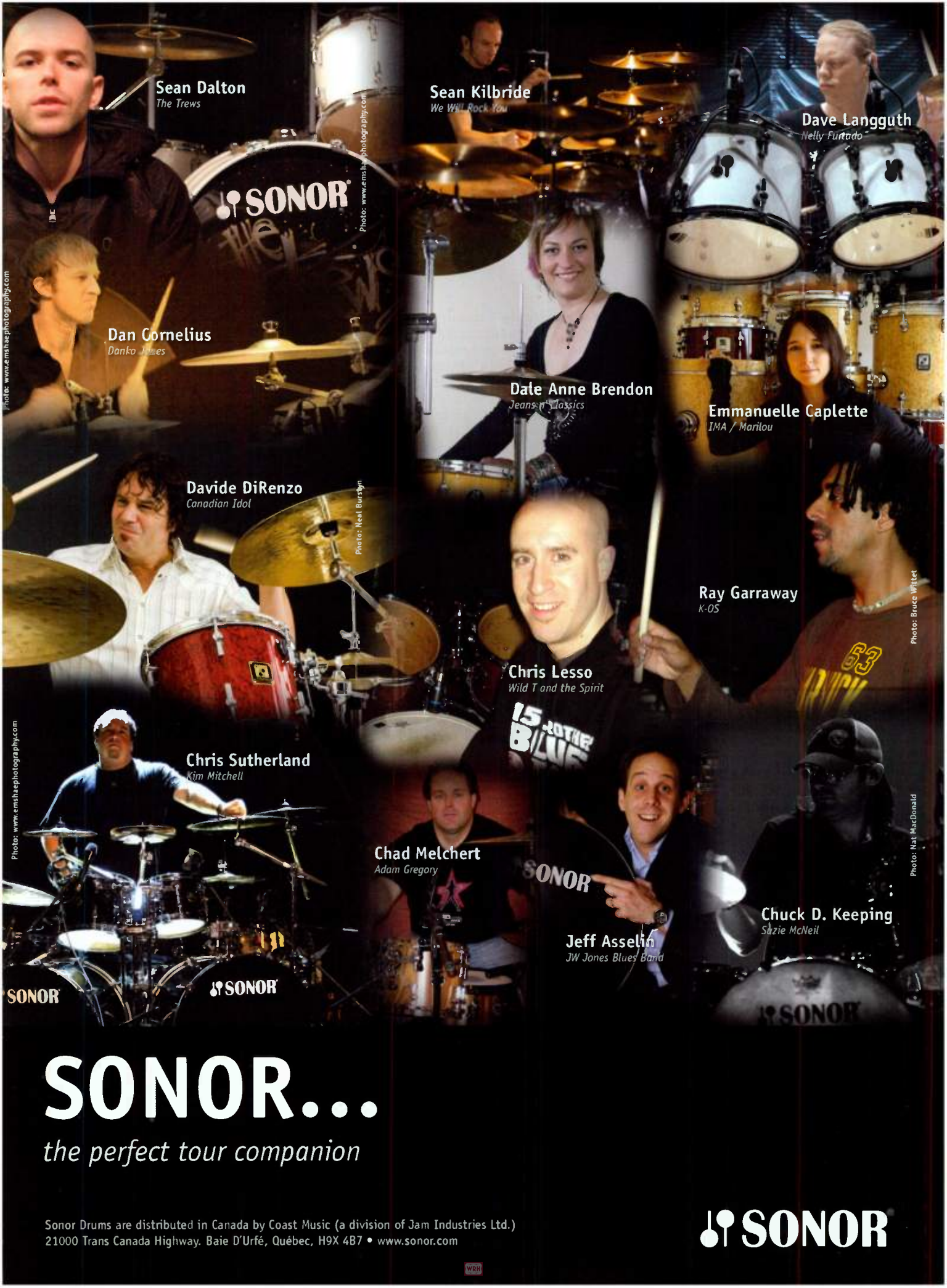
Troubleshooting on all snakes should be done at the shop, but with patching, just like everything else, human error is possible. Running down problems should be left for the patch tech. This person alone can be the difference between 10 seconds and three minutes.

When it comes to fixing the problem, small ones such as phantom power or weak signal could be the XLR or DI. Most troubleshooting can be prevented with simply checking all equipment before it leaves the shop and simply taking the time to do it right the first time. Usually no signal on channels indicates either pin one, two, or three has interruption onboard, possible non-assignment of 48 V, or bad mic line cable. A quick process for this problem can be what we call a "homerun," in which you run the line directly to the FOH split, eliminating all connections in between.



Festival-style larger input snakes, such as 3-way, 5-way, and broadcast snakes are equipped with a ground lift switch, phase reversal, and pin-1 lifts. Having 5-way split with isolated outputs is very helpful when adding in outside activity such as guest consoles for in-ears or full mixes. At this point, snake systems of that calibre can be expensive, but it usually pays for itself with the least amount of problems. The best way to stay on top of snake problems is to check them when they come back from your show. One more thing: when putting together XLR cable for shows, the amount of cable is very important. A good example is 24 inputs equals 48 XLR line. Have a good show!

John Watt has been actively involved in live sound and show system technologies for over 20 years with companies such as ShowPro, Jason Sound, Wall Audio, and A-1 Audio. As a sound tech, he has worked with artists such as Alanis Morissette, Our Lady Peace, Ozzy Osbourne, The Tea Party, Collective Soul, Stab!lo, Amanda Marshall, Jann Arden, Bruce Cockburn, I Mother Earth, and Blue Rodeo. He has also worked on the Benson & Hedges Symphony of Fire. John is currently the Shop Manager at Metalworks Production Group and the house tech for the Kool Haus/Government, a 50,000 sq. ft./4,000-seat venue in downtown Toronto.



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US Taxes Often Surprise Canadian Musicians

by Wendy Wixson, CPA, MS

After reading Andrew King's Indie Insider (*CM* July/August 2008) about taking your tour Stateside, you made the decision to pursue glory down south. The performances are scheduled, the US work permits are in place, and you are headed to the US for a great show. You dream of energetic crowds, great performances, and cash in your back pocket. Your thoughts are nothing but pure bliss until the promoter shakes you back to reality with the mention of US withholding taxes...

When a Canadian artist performs in the US, the venue or promoter is required to withhold 30 per cent of the artist's gross receipts and remit to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). In addition, many of the individual states have their own withholding requirements. For example, California will withhold another 7 per cent to bring your total withholding to a monstrous 37 per cent!

Tax is withheld on the total proceeds you receive from the venue and does not take into account out-of-pocket costs. For an artist who is already shelling out a lot of money for an agent, travel, hotel, and crew costs, withholding can suck up that last penny you earned in the US, or more. The good news is, with a little advance planning, there are ways to reduce the withholding requirements. First, let's walk through the methods to avoid the withholding altogether.

Generally, if your gross income earned from US performances is less than \$3,000 and you are in the US fewer than 90 days, there is no federal withholding. California has a similar rule that says if your gross payments are less than \$1,500 in a calendar year, there is no California withholding. But let's get serious – you ultimately want to build a US market for your music and pay the bills. You are not going to do this by keeping your US receipts under \$3,000 per year.

There is an income tax treaty between Canada and the US, which raises the threshold slightly. Under the treaty, a Canadian artist can gross up to \$15,000 CDN per year before federal withholding

kicks in. But be careful – gross income not only includes your performance fees, but also any travel or other expenses reimbursed by the venue. To claim this benefit, provide a completed IRS form 8233 to the venue or promoter. Your manager may be familiar with this form and able to help you.

Many of the US states do not follow the treaty. There may be situations where you are taxed by a state, but not the federal government due to treaty benefits.



Since this treaty exemption is based on annual earnings and it is often hard to know what your earnings will be before the end of the year, not all venues will accept this withholding exemption. If you meet the treaty exemption and the venue withholds tax anyway, you will need to file a US income tax return to claim your treaty benefits and request a refund of the withholding.

The sure bet for all artists to reduce federal withholding is through a Central Withholding Agreement. These agreements are negotiated in advance of your US tour with a group in the IRS that specializes in such agreements. The IRS will issue a letter providing for withholding on the performers' net income after

deductions instead of their gross income. The withholding rate will vary depending on your expected annual taxable income in the US. These agreements are extremely valuable in situations where you have large guarantees or there is expected to be nil or minimal net income from the US tour.

Central Withholding Agreements are generally enacted at the individual level. If you are a member of a band, a separate agreement is negotiated with each bandmember. Even if you tour through a corporation, the agreement is usually still with the individual bandmembers. If you have a manager, he or she should be able to handle your reduced withholding request with the IRS.

Finally, the IRS may also include any additional income earned at the performance, such as merchandise revenues, in the Central Withholding Agreement. It is important that your tax advisors understand what income is subject to withholding and taxed in the US. The US and Canada often have different rules regarding how income is categorized and taxed; therefore, advance planning is necessary to reduce or eliminate double taxation. Double taxation is a bad result for anybody!

Are you a US citizen living in Canada? If so, the US tax implications are even more interesting, and advance planning is even more important.

Remember: the goal is to open up a new market for your music, have fun, and come home with some cash in your back pocket. With a little advance planning, and of course some good music, the cash will stay in your back pocket – where it belongs.

Wendy Wixson is a Senior Tax Manager in the International Services Division of Moss Adams LLP, and has over 15 years of public accounting experience. She has published several articles in trade and business journals applicable to international business, foreign athletes, and entertainers. Wendy has presented on US-Canada cross-border taxation and other international topics to a number of groups, including the Canadian Society of Certified General Accountants and Council for International Tax Education (CITE). Contact: wendy.wixson@mossadams.com.

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Richmond Guitars Dorchester

■ With its vintage looks and retro styling, the Richmond Dorchester is one of the Quebec-based company's first two guitar offerings.

The guitar features a 25 1/2" scale, with two classic-sounding Lace Aluminator humbucker pickups housed in a double-cutaway chambered body with a silver leaf maple centre and poplar wings. The pickups are controlled by separate volume and tone knobs, along with a 4-way switch that allows players to select between various sound combinations, including the first position which enables the neck and bridge to be in series, giving the player a fatter tone and more output.

The Dorchester's bolt-on rock maple neck features the worn-in feel of an ergocut rosewood or maple fingerboard for comfort. The instrument is finished off with high-ratio Kluson tuning machines, a chrome roller bridge with fixed tailpiece, a nordic white extended pickguard, and truss rod cover with matching binding on the back. The instrument is currently available in Black HG or Cherry finishes.

For more information, contact Godin Guitars: 514-457-7977, FAX 514-457-5774, info@godinguitars.com, www.godinguitars.com.



Rode M1 Dynamic Live Performance Mic

■ Rode has introduced its new M1 live performance dynamic mic, which features a solid die-cast body and sturdy dynamic capsule. The M1's tactility, with attention to balance and ergonomics, make it ideal for vocalists.

Among the M1's features are a high-output dynamic capsule, gold-plated XLR connectors, an internal pop filter for reduced plosives, and a feedback-rejecting pickup pattern. This is all housed in a solid metal body.

The cardioid mic boasts a low handling noise, and carries a frequency range of 75 Hz-18 kHz. The mic's sensitivity is measured at -56dB, +/- 2 dB at 1 kHz. It weighs 360 g and is around 17 cm tall. The mic is designed and manufactured in Australia, and offers a lifetime warranty. Included accessories are an RM1 stand mount and zip pouch, with an optional desk stand and tripod available.

For more information, contact Audio Distributors International (ADI): 450-449-8177, FAX 450-449-8180, info@adi-online.net, www.adi-online.net.



BOSS DD-7 Digital Delay Pedal

■ BOSS has introduced the new DD-7 Digital Delay pedal, which takes features from its predecessors and expands the available tools with new types of delay, including Modulation Delay, classic-modeled Analog Delay, expanded delay time, and more.

The DD-7 offers up to 6.4 seconds of delay time – a marked increase from its predecessor, the DD-6, and offers up to 40 seconds of sound-on-sound recording in Hold mode. Its Modulation Mode offers unique chorus-type sounds, and its Analog Delay mode models the warm sound of the BOSS DM-2.

Users can also control tap tempo, delay time, feedback, and effect level via an optional external footswitch or Expression pedal. The DD-7's stereo output enables the creation of custom effects, such as spatial audio sweeps via true stereo panning. The stereo outputs can also be used to create separate dry and wet signal paths, convenient for recording and live performance control.

For more information, contact Roland Canada Ltd.: 604-270-6626, FAX 604-270-6552, www.roland.ca.

Mapex Meridian Series Kits

■ The new Mapex Meridian Series features maple and birch shells, replacing the company's Pro M and M Birch Series. Meridian kits will feature a new tom holder, tom mount, bass drum spurs, new lugs, and ITS system. In addition, the kits will come packaged with the new Mapex 700 Series hardware.

One new feature of the Meridian series is that there are no contact points between the Isolated Tom Mount (ITS) system and the drum shell, ensuring maximum resonance. New clamp-style tom holders allow smooth operation while adding or removing toms from the hex rod, and offer stability for hanging toms. The Meridian lug design is lightweight and minimizes metal contact, allowing for more shell vibration. Rubber gaskets provide cushioning between all wood and metal parts, protecting the wood shell and enhancing overall sound.

The Meridian bass drums all feature recessed bass drum claws, and the new bass drum tom holders offer players the ability to add-on the attached boom arm. Meridian series kits come in a number of finish options and configurations.

For more information, contact SF Marketing: 514-780-2070, FAX 514-780-2111, info@sfm.ca, www.sfm.ca.



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Audio-Technica ATH-M50s Studio Headphones

Audio-Technica has debuted a straight-cable option for its flagship ATH-M50 professional studio monitor headphones: the new ATH-M50s. The headphones were created for end users who prefer straight-cable professional studio headphones for tracking and other applications.

The headphones' design was engineered to provide maximum comfort in applications ranging from studio and recording uses to personal listening. The ATH-M50s headphones feature a collapsible design ideal for portability and storage. Employing Audio-Technica's 45 mm large-aperture drivers with neodymium magnet systems and CCAW voice coils, the ATH-M50s headphones have high SPL capabilities while delivering accurate sound with full bass and high-frequency extension.

The headphones also feature a closed-back cushioned earcup providing additional clarity and isolation in high-volume listening situations. In addition, the circumaural earpieces swivel a full 180 degrees for easy one-ear monitoring. The ATH-M50s' have a lightweight and adjustable cushioned headband for listening comfort. An OFC wire cable at the left earpiece terminates to a gold-plated 1/8" connector with a professional screw-on 1/4" adapter included.

For more information, contact Erikson Audio: 514-457-2555, FAX 514-457-0055, info@eriksonaudio.com, www.erikson-audio.com.



Levy's Pro Series Gig Bags

Levy's Leathers has introduced its Pro Series gig bags, with models available for electric guitar, electric bass, and acoustic guitar.

Each bag is constructed with two-tone polyester and rubber shell, 1" foam padding, and headliner lining. The bags come equipped with three exterior accessory pockets for accessories, hide-away backpack shoulder straps, interior string and bridge protectors, endpin reinforcement slings, and hide-away rain cape. Pictured is model CPS20 for acoustic guitar.

For more information, contact Levy's Leathers Ltd.: 204-957-5139, FAX 204-943-6655, levys@levys-leathers.com, www.levysleathers.com.

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American Audio Pocket Recorder

■ American Audio's compact Pocket Recorder offers a portable digital audio recording solution. The unit records in both WAV and MP3 formats for clear onsite recordings.

The battery-operated recorder features two built-in condenser mics and stereo audio inputs for true stereo sound. The unit also comes with two small lavalier mics that are ideal for recording interviews. Its interface is specially designed so users can easily switch between mic, guitar, and line-in recording sources.

Featuring 128 MB of internal memory, the Pocket Recorder records audio files directly onto an SD card. It can accommodate SD cards up to 4 GB in size. A USB port allows users to connect the device to a computer, so they can play back or manipulate the files once recording is completed.

Other features include a volume control for input and output level adjustments, a stereo earphone jack, and DC power in. The Pocket Recorder operates on two AA batteries or via a DC 5 V adapter (not included). The unit measures 6" L x 3.5" W x 1" H and weighs 6 lbs.

For more information, contact Sounds Distribution Inc.: 905-428-9062, FAX 905-428-6510, sdinfo@soundsdist.com, www.soundsdist.com.



Continental Rat Rod

Sparrow Continental Rat Rod & Twangmaster

■ Sparrow Guitars has announced the availability of Continental versions of its Rat Rod and Twangmaster guitars. The Continental level guitars are manufactured entirely in Vancouver from Canadian lumber and are the top of the Sparrow guitar line.

The Rat Rod Continental model features a solid African mahogany body and neck, eastern rock maple cap, and African ebony fretboard. For components, the guitar features Classic and Classic Plus pickups by TV Jones, a bridge by Graph Tech, a bone nut, and tuners from Grover. Consistent with the Sparrow Rat Rod line, the Canadian model also includes stainless steel frets and Sparrow strings.

The Twangmaster Continental model features a Pacific northwest alder body and eastern rock maple neck. It also features Bill Lawrence pickups, Graph Tech saddles, bone nut, and Grover tuners. The Canadian models also include stainless steel frets and Sparrow strings.

For more information, contact Sparrow Guitars: 604-253-3034, FAX 604-253-3008, info@sparrowguitars.com, www.sparrowguitars.com.

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Paiste Black Alpha Cymbals

■ Paiste has announced the introduction of Black Alpha cymbals, which have been created in collaboration with drummer Joey Jordison of Slipknot. Initially, Paiste has launched the Slipknot Edition, which consists of the 20" Metal Ride, 17", 18", and 19" Rock Crashes, an 18" Rock China, a 14" Sound Edge Hi-Hat, and a 10" Metal Splash.

Black Alpha Cymbals are created using current technology and then hand hammered using traditional methods, a combination that enhances performance. Paiste then applies black ColorSound coating to the cymbals, and the series logo and model designations along with the Slipknot logo are silk screened in gold onto the cymbals' black, shiny surface.

The Slipknot Edition models are bright, aggressive, and focused. The core set consists of a metallic Ride with an icy wash, coupled with cutting, sturdy Crashes and energetic Hi-Hats. A loud China and a Splash with attack round out the set. The ColorSound adds bite to the initial attack, focuses the overtones, and adds raw presence to the overall sound character of the cymbals.

For more information, contact Yamaha Canada Music Ltd.: 416-298-1311, FAX 416-292-0732, www.yamaha.ca.



Ibanez SR4000E/SDR Bass

■ The new SR4000E/SDR bass from Ibanez, available in 4-, 5-, and 6-string models, has recently been made available.

With a 5-piece SR Prestige 34"-scale wenge/bubinga bolt-on neck, a wenge fingerboard, and mahogany body, the instrument is available in a Transparent Black finish or Stained Red with Cosmo Black hardware. For extra punch, the bass comes with a PWC III-EQ Power Curve III 3-band EQ that allows players to adjust the mid-tone shape of the instrument's output. It comes loaded with Bartolini Pickups in the neck and bridge positions.

The bass also carries an on-board on-off switch for passive tone sound, also usable as an emergency switch. The necks of these Japanese-made instruments also feature special mother of pearl and abalone inlays.

For more information, contact Efkay Music Instruments Inc.: 514-633-8877, FAX 514-633-8872, howardk@efkaymusic.com, www.efkaymusic.com.



Numark Omni Control Computer DJ System

■ Numark has recently introduced Omni Control, its professional DJ control surface with a built-in audio interface. This computer DJ system comes complete with software including both Native Instruments Traktor LE 3 and MixMeister Fusion Live DJ

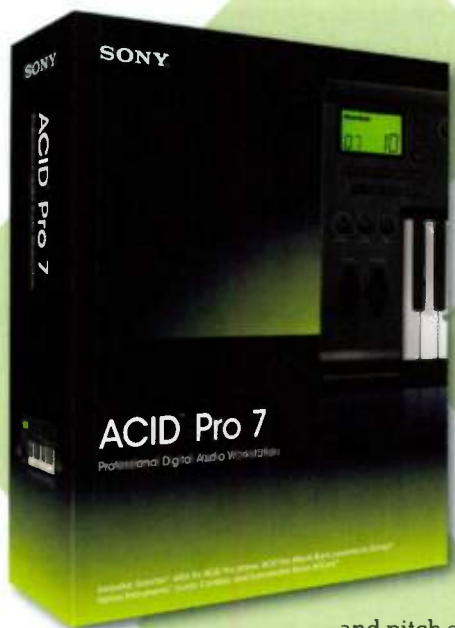
software programs.

Omni Control is a complete computer DJ system consisting of a hardware controller with built-in audio I/O. The unit's heavy metal construction and sturdy, firm knobs, faders, and buttons keep it in place even under the most energetic performances.

The mixer is designed to plug directly into any sound system and perform. A clean, built-in 24-bit professional computer audio interface feeds the audio signal to two stereo outputs and headphones. Low-latency 44.1 kHz and 88.2 kHz audio ASIO drivers deliver true sound. The unit also offers a mic input, allowing DJs to talk over the mix.

Rounding out the package of the computer DJ solution are both Native Instruments Traktor LE 3 software for traditional DJ mixing with effects and MixMeister Fusion Live software timeline-based mixing.

For more information, contact Intellimix Corp.: 514-457-9663, FAX 514-457-0575, salesinfo@intellimix.com, www.intellimix.com.



Sony ACID Pro 7 Digital Audio Workstation

■ Sony Creative Software has released ACID Pro 7 digital audio workstation software, which offers multitrack recording, 5.1 surround sound mixing, robust MIDI sequencing, and loop-based music production.

Now Vista-compatible, ACID Pro 7 software enables a faster and more flexible creative environment by providing precise control over the music creation process through enhancements such as a new mixing environment, MIDI track freeze, tempo curves, improved Beatmapping, and additional import/export options.

The software advances the application's DAW functionality with new features that make the music production process flow. The software provides extensive digital audio production tools that support many different production workflows in one complete application. In addition, ACID Pro 7 software now includes interactive tutorials to help new users get started quickly.

New features include an Audio and MIDI mixing console, MIDI Track Freeze, real-time rendering, more input buses, enhanced timestretch and pitch shifting with Zplane Élastique Pro, enhanced Beatmapping for tracks with multiple tempos, tempo curves, and support for FLAC, ACC, AC-3 Studio, and MPEG-2 formats.

The software comes with an additional bundle that includes an effects rack, Native Instruments Guitar Combos, and over 3,000 music loops and 1,000 MIDI files.

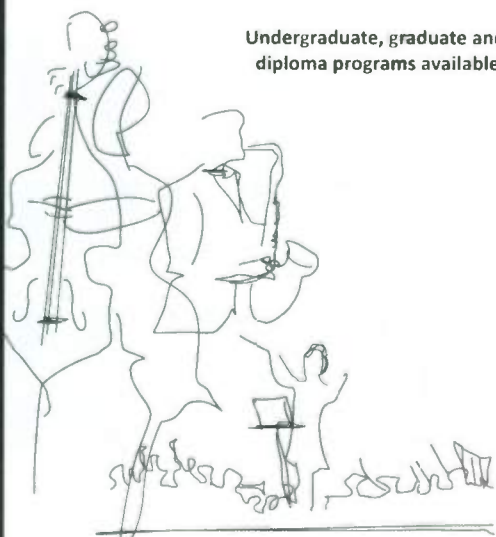
For more information, contact Sony Creative Software: 608-256-3133, www.sonycreativesoftware.com.

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Korg M50 Music Workstation

■ Korg has unveiled the M50 Music Workstation, taking the sonic essence of its M3 XPanded into a portable new instrument. The M50 is both a performing instrument and a full-featured studio solution for musicians, available in both 61- and 88-note models.

The EDS (Extended Definition Synthesis) sound engine delivers sounds and effects. New additions include a three-stage velocity-switched stereo piano programmed in conjunction with samples of the damper resonance. Also new are a number of vintage keyboards, including the Korg SG-1 Sampling Grand, electric pianos and clavs, and 1960s-era tape playback strings and flute sounds.

The workstation offers 256 MB of PCM data shaped into 608 Programs, as well as 384 Combinations by Korg's voicing staff. User-edited data can also be saved into the internal memory, with space for 640 Programs, 512 Combinations, and 48 Drums. The M50 offers several sound-shaping features, including low-aliasing oscillators, Filter topology, and detailed EGs (Envelope Generators), plus a Drive parameter and AMS (Alternate Modulation Source) Mixers.

A sequencer provides 16 MIDI + 1 Master tracks to shape musical ideas into productions. It features up to 128 songs and offers a high-resolution of 480 PPQ (parts per quarter-note). The M50 Editor and Plug-In Editor software lets users edit the sounds using a computer, and allows the M50 to act as a plug-in instrument for a DAW. An SD card slot provides management of Programs, Combinations, and Sequences, as well as sounds, songs, and other data.

For more information, contact Korg Canada: 514-457-2555, FAX 514-457-0055, info@korgcanada.com, www.korg-canada.com.

Planet Waves Varigrip Hand Conditioning Tool

■ Planet Waves has introduced a new hand conditioning tool for musicians dubbed the Varigrip Adjustable Hand Exerciser.

Designed to develop and maintain hand and finger strength, condition, and dexterity, the Varigrip's ergonomic design and variable tension provide customized conditioning for individual fingers, the entire hand, wrist, and forearm. The reversible moulded grip uncovers simulated strings to help develop and maintain finger calluses while players are away from their instruments. The Varigrip variable tension exerciser features individually adjustable settings for each finger, from light to hard, eliminating the need for separate models.

Palm-to-tip use strengthens forearm, wrist, and hand muscles. Practicing scale patterns builds speed and dexterity. Thumb-to-tip use builds individual finger strength along with forearm muscles. Thumb squeezes strengthen thumb-area muscles while increasing endurance. Fist grip strengthens and increases endurance of the entire hand and forearm muscles. Chord press builds endurance in the thumb and forearm for chord playing. Finally, flip the rubber palm grip to the piston side of the Varigrip to expose the simulated strings for callus building. Use the palm-to-tip, thumb-to-tip, or chord press exercises to build and maintain calluses while building muscle strength and endurance.

For more information, contact D'Addario Canada: 905-889-0116, FAX 905-889-8998, orders@daddariocanada.com, www.daddariocanada.com.



Behringer Real Sound Modeling Pedals

Behringer has added 16 new effects pedals to its collection of guitar, bass, and keyboard effects processors. The 24-bit Real Sound Modeling (RSM) pedals utilize advanced DSP algorithms developed by the company's team of acoustic, hardware, and software engineers.

Behringer's engineers have analyzed various parameters of musical instrument sound production – from room acoustics and instrument construction materials, to electronic modification and amplification methods. The result is a new line of pedals that model everything from room reverberation to tape flanging and echo, to acoustic guitar simulation and more.

The RSM pedal offerings include chorus, phase shifting, flanging, reverb, delay, echo, octave, dynamic formant EQ, acoustic modeling, rotary, harmonizing, and synthesis modeling. All pedals additionally feature 24-bit A/D/A conversion; rugged injection-moulded cases; sealed rotary controls; dual outputs for stereo or split-signal applications; bright On/Battery LED indicators; and are battery- or DC-powered.

For more information, contact Behringer: 425-672-0816, FAX 425-673-7647, www.behringer.com.



Traynor YGM-3 Tube Guitar Amp

Yorkville Sound and Traynor have released a handmade, point-to-point hand-wired vintage reissue of the Traynor YGM-3 tube guitar amp.

Originally designed by Pete Traynor in the late '60s and manufactured continuously by Yorkville Sound until the early '80s, the Traynor YGM-3 was employed by country, rock, jazz, and blues players for two decades. Parts for the Traynor YGM-3 Reissue were sourced from the original suppliers and built to the original design specifications wherever possible. The paper bobbin transformers were recreated for the YGM-3 by Hammond Canada, a source for Traynor parts since the '60s.

Handmade in Canada, the Traynor YGM-3 uses polypropylene capacitors, Switchcraft jacks, and Accutronics reverb tanks. A solid plywood closed-back cabinet construction, steel box chassis, true bias amplitude tremolo, and vintage Jensen Alnico speaker deliver a tone very similar to that of the original models.

For more information, contact Yorkville Sound: 905-837-8481, FAX 905-839-5776, canada@yorkville.com, www.yorkville.com.

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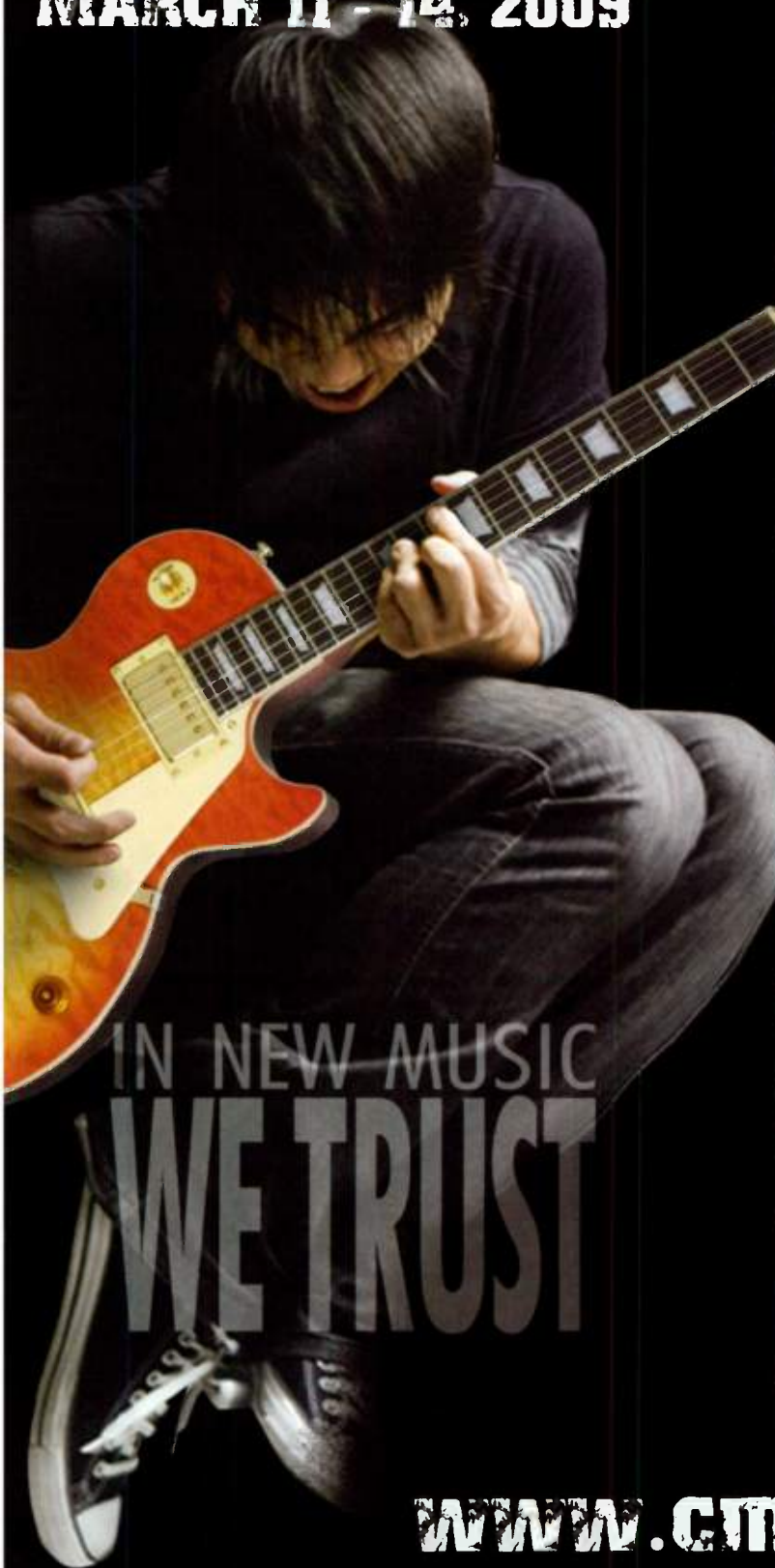
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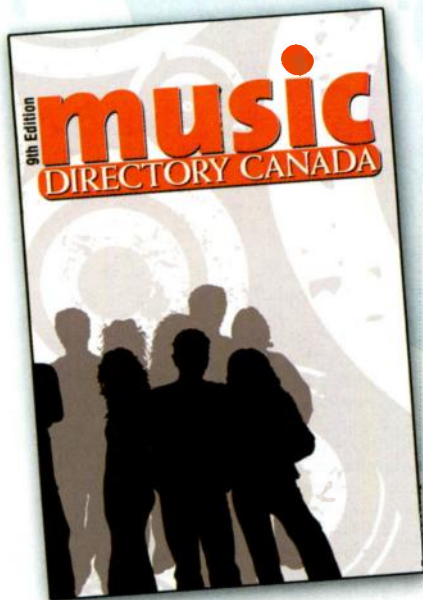
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by Doug Gallant



JEFFERY STRAKER

Contact: jeffstraker88@rogers.com

If ever an artist was ready for radio, it's Jeffery Straker.

If radio is not ready for Jeffery Straker, that, sadly, will be radio's loss, but I don't think finding acceptance at radio is going to be a major problem for Straker. I suspect the reaction of many in radio upon hearing the Saskatchewan-born tunesmith's latest project, *Step Right Up*, would be similar to mine.

Cycling through that Justin Gray-produced record I could not help but wonder why he's not already a star in this country.

Over time, he's evolved into a fine songwriter with great lyrical sensibilities who pens interesting songs about interesting people who've wandered through his life at one point or another – from a friend with bi-polar disorder to a school-mate who came out of the closet in junior high in a small town.

In addition to being a talented songwriter and an accomplished musician, he's also a dynamic performer, blessed with power-to-serve pipes capable of taking a big song like "Special K" over-the-top one minute, then drawing you back in with sighs and whispers for the ballad-like "Snowflake."

His music is a marvelous marriage of style and substance that draws inspiration from classic pop music, cabaret, and folk music. Listen to Straker's music for any length of time and you can hear the influence of several artists who, like him, have pitched their songs from behind the piano: Elton John, Billy Joel, Ben Folds, Rufus Wainwright, and going back even further, the late, great Peter Allen, who was immortalized on Broadway in *The Boy From Oz*. Some industry scribes have also drawn comparisons to Mika, which is not at all out of line.

Straker has begun to build a following in the west and in central Canada thanks to a series of live shows in key markets, one of them an opening spot for the Spice Girls' Mel C in Toronto.

He's also getting radio play in the Prairies and Ontario from both commercial radio and the CBC.

His talents were recognized earlier this year with a nomination for best pop album at the Toronto Independent Music Awards. He was also recognized with a nomination for recording of the year at the Outmusic Awards in New York.

Straker is very much an artist to watch.



Doug Gallant has been a reporter and entertainment writer with *The Guardian* since 1975. In a career spanning four decades he has developed, researched, and written profiles on more than 3,000 artists from every conceivable musical genre. Gallant produces a weekly entertainment column for *The Guardian* and is a regular contributor to CBC Radio's *Mainstreet*. He has sat on juries for *The Juno Awards*, *The East Coast Music Awards*, *the Maple Blues Awards*, *FACTOR*, CBC's *The Great Canadian Music Dream*, and *the Polar Music Prize*.

TREASA LEVASSEUR

Contact: Richard Flohil/Jadea Kelly Richard Flohil & Associates, 416-351-1323, rflohil@sympatico.ca.

Take equal parts Carla Thomas, Etta James, Mery Clayton, and Shirley Brown. Place in blender. Add spice, passion, and any combination of bass, keys, guitar, and harmonica. Punch up with horns. Serve hot.

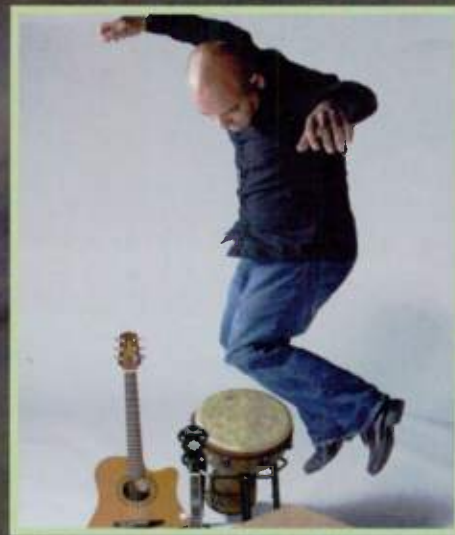
That, more or less, is how you build a Treasa Levasseur. Levasseur, a native of Winnipeg who's called Toronto home now for many years, is a highly versatile singer, songwriter, and in-demand multi-instrumentalist who at any given time plays with as many as three or four different bands, though she's been spending a bit more time of late playing with friend Claire Jenkins' band.

She has played everything from show tunes, heavy metal, and hip hop to sugary pop tunes during her career to pay the bills – but her real passion is old-school soul and on her most recent album, *Low Fidelity*, she pursues the material with a fervour befitting Carla Thomas during her hey-day at Stax Records.

The title track on that record has an insanely good groove, but it's only one of several tracks that could go some distance for Levasseur with enough airplay on a station with the right format. She's all over this stuff like a dog on a bone and with a voice that has power, range, and no small amount of grit to it.

You can usually find some very solid players behind Levasseur when she plays live, but she's got the goods to go it alone if she has to, playing piano, guitar, accordion, and mandolin. Her musical talents are such that they have endeared her to a number of other artists who've called on her to sit in with them, including *The Undesirables*, Evelyn Parry, Justin Rutledge, and Madison Violet.

Levasseur says one of her biggest thrills this year was getting the opportunity to play accordion on a session with *The Band*'s illustrious keyboard player/accordionist Garth Hudson – I dare say the ride is going to get even more interesting for her in the months ahead.



RYAN LEBLANC

Contact: Jamie Steel, Periwinkle Productions, 506-529-4585, steeljm@abnet.nb.ca.

Some of the most exciting acoustic music to come out of the East Coast of this country in recent years has flowed from the nimble fingers and exceedingly creative mind of multi-instrumentalist Ryan LeBlanc.

LeBlanc, who hails from St. Andrews, NB, fuses together choice elements of jazz, blues, and world music to create a driving, rhythmic, highly melodic brand of acoustic music that manages to both stimulate and calm you at the same time.

His highly-original material has many shades, colours, textures, and moods, and each piece has a distinct personality and character of its own.

Having seen LeBlanc perform live a number of times, I can also say that he is almost as interesting to watch as he is to listen to. In concert, he moves easily from guitar to clawhammer banjo to harmonica – all of which he excels at – as well as from cajon to djembe. He routinely uses his body as part of his percussion ensemble to interesting effect.

He can be absolutely mesmerizing at times. If you close your eyes when you listen to some tracks on his latest project the aptly titled *Against The Grain*, you would swear there were several players in the room instead of just one highly resourceful one.

LeBlanc's stock has been steadily rising, both nationally and internationally, thanks to a touring schedule that has taken him to dozens of stages on the festival and concert circuit both at home and abroad.

His multi-layered sonic soundscapes have found favour across Canada and the US as well as in the UK, France, Belgium, and Germany. This October, he was invited to play at the Open Strings International Guitar Festival in Osnabruck, Germany, where he was the only Canadian artist to perform at an event showcasing more than 16 acoustic guitar masters from around the world.



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