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The Maritimes' Music Man

Vol. XXII No. 6



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FeedBack



Now On
The
CM Blog

Check out the *CM* Blog for some new content, including a wrap-up of the Verge Awards, video interview with Moneen, review of the Ocean Way Drums virtual instrument, and a free download of an exclusive acoustic track from our friends In-Flight Society.
www.canadianmusician.com/blog.

MONEY TALKS

In response to your suggestion (*Feedback*, July/August 2009), I did read the "Where The Money Is" [feature]. Articles like this one bring awareness to a source of income that a surprising number of musicians are unaware of... and until a year ago, I was very much in the dark about the whole process. But after putting in the research and work, I've since earned nearly \$9,000 from provincial and federal music grants in 2009. And to think I had never bothered to apply in the past! Thanks for all of the informative pieces.

Dale Boyle

Ed. Good hearing from you again, Dale. I hope a number of readers follow your example after reading the feature. There's a lot of money out there for musicians serious about their careers and art.



From The *CM* Facebook Page...

Quite simply the very best music publication in Canada, if not the world. *CM* has always put the working musician first, with great, informative articles and product reviews. Way to go.

Larry Godfrey

*Ed. Thanks for the support, Larry. Anyone else on Facebook should join the *CM* page for regular updates and great networking opportunities!*

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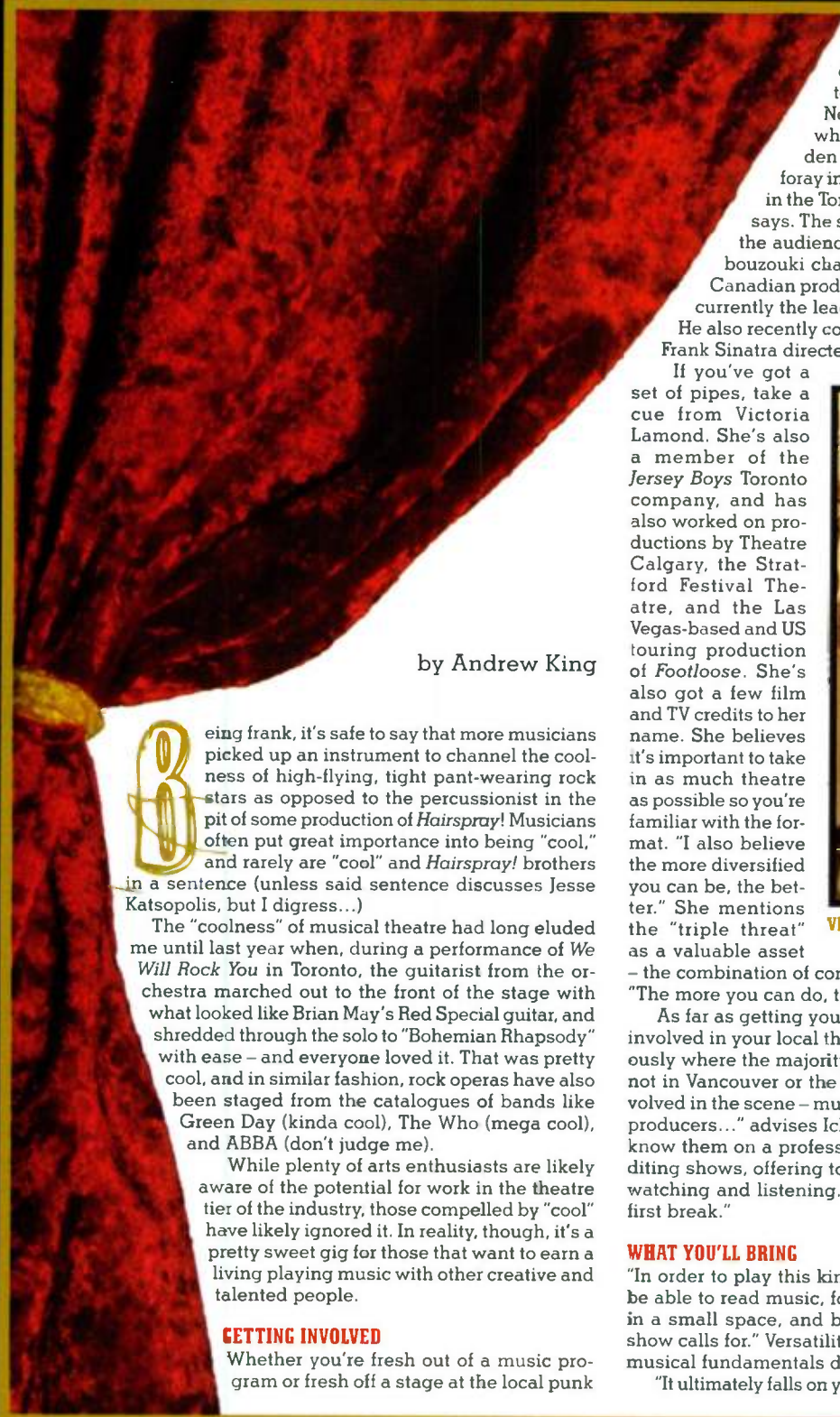
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Ever Thought Of



by Andrew King

Being frank, it's safe to say that more musicians picked up an instrument to channel the coolness of high-flying, tight pant-wearing rock stars as opposed to the percussionist in the pit of some production of *Hairspray!* Musicians often put great importance into being "cool," and rarely are "cool" and *Hairspray!* brothers in a sentence (unless said sentence discusses Jesse Katsopolis, but I digress...)

The "coolness" of musical theatre had long eluded me until last year when, during a performance of *We Will Rock You* in Toronto, the guitarist from the orchestra marched out to the front of the stage with what looked like Brian May's Red Special guitar, and shredded through the solo to "Bohemian Rhapsody" with ease – and everyone loved it. That was pretty cool, and in similar fashion, rock operas have also been staged from the catalogues of bands like Green Day (kinda cool), The Who (mega cool), and ABBA (don't judge me).

While plenty of arts enthusiasts are likely aware of the potential for work in the theatre tier of the industry, those compelled by "cool" have likely ignored it. In reality, though, it's a pretty sweet gig for those that want to earn a living playing music with other creative and talented people.

GETTING INVOLVED

Whether you're fresh out of a music program or fresh off a stage at the local punk

dive, it's possible you don't have a clue where to start dipping into this network of people. Neither did Levon Ichkhanian a few years back, when he was playing at the Toronto Music Garden with his group, Café Mediterrane. "My first foray into the theatre world occurred a few years ago in the Toronto production of *The Lord of the Rings*," he says. The show's contractor and music director were in the audience at the Music Garden and offered him the bouzouki chair in the orchestra. Since, he's toured with Canadian productions of *Spamalot*, *Three Mo' Divas*, and is currently the lead guitarist of the Toronto run of *Jersey Boys*. He also recently contributed to *Come Fly With Me*, the music of Frank Sinatra directed and choreographed by Twyla Tharp.

If you've got a set of pipes, take a cue from Victoria Lamond. She's also a member of the *Jersey Boys* Toronto company, and has also worked on productions by Theatre Calgary, the Stratford Festival Theatre, and the Las Vegas-based and US touring production of *Footloose*. She's also got a few film and TV credits to her name. She believes it's important to take in as much theatre as possible so you're familiar with the format. "I also believe the more diversified you can be, the better." She mentions the "triple threat" as a valuable asset

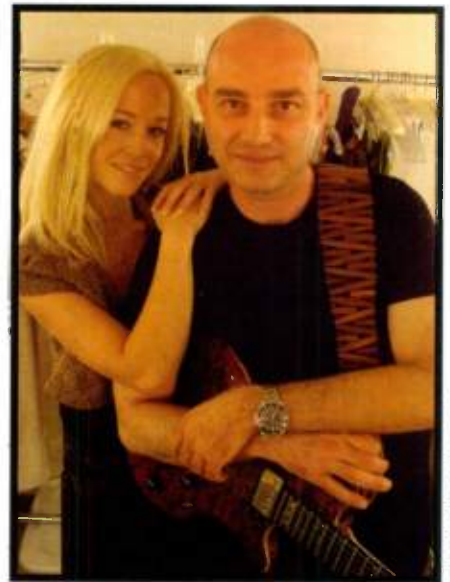
– the combination of competence as a musician, actor, and dancer. "The more you can do, the easier you are to employ."

As far as getting your foot into the door, get to know the people involved in your local theatre scene. While urban centres are obviously where the majority of work is, don't be discouraged if you're not in Vancouver or the GTA. "Get to know everyone regularly involved in the scene – musicians, directors, supervisors, contractors, producers..." advises Ichkhanian. "Networking involves getting to know them on a professional level – providing resumes, CDs, auditing shows, offering to sub-in for musicians. Someone is always watching and listening. It could be someone that offers you your first break."

WHAT YOU'LL BRING

"In order to play this kind of gig," explains Ichkhanian, "you must be able to read music, follow a conductor, be comfortable working in a small space, and be able to play the style of music that the show calls for." Versatility is your biggest asset once you've got the musical fundamentals down.

"It ultimately falls on your shoulders to know your work, sometimes



VICTORIA & LEVON BACKSTAGE.

PHOTO: MELANIE KLOOT

theatre?

with minimal rehearsal," adds Lamond. Also, don't be discouraged if you don't find immediate success. "Much of it comes down to simply being right for the part, which can be completely out of your control," she says.

As the guitarist that shredded through Brian May's "Bohemian Rhapsody" solo can attest, the types of musical roles to be filled in these kinds of productions can stray pretty far from the stereotypical "musical theatre" persona. Leave your preconceptions backstage.

"The ideal musician is someone who can deliver a consistent performance night after night, keep their ego in-check, is a team player, and can work well under the demands of a live theatre show," says Ichkhanian. Willingness to try new things and grow as a performer is also important. Adds Lamond: "Especially on long-running musicals, being strong and resilient is beneficial. We can work very long hours and very late nights, and it can quickly tire you out if you can't keep up to the schedule."

For you orchestra hopefuls (or those that might be after reading), there are a few arrangements for getting equipped for the gig. "Either the production has already decided on what gear is needed for the show, or you will be asked to give them a list for approval of what you think based on the soundtrack." Some productions will provide the gear, and others will rely on you to be self-sufficient.

KEEPING UP WITH THE SCHEDULE

Prior to working on any show, you'd be given the music score for immediate practice. Then, pre-show rehearsals can vary from a few days to a few weeks leading up to opening night. These are full working days. "During this time," explains Ichkhanian, "you may rehearse with the orchestra and cast, do dry runs of the show, and previews in front of a paying audience." If you have an onstage part, you'll need to get fitted for wardrobe. Come opening night, most productions run eight shows each week – five evening performances and three matinees.

"When you work in theatre, many of your nights and weekends are booked, and some shows go on the road with long periods away from home," offers Ichkhanian. "Having said that, the euphoria that you can feel being part of a great production is amazing. The fascination to me is seeing how all the intricate parts of the show with a diverse group of different departments all fit together to create a work of art."

A nice benefit of this semi-regular work is the paycheck that comes with it, though it's not likely to be a full-time gig. "As we are employed by different companies sometimes every few months, it's not a career where you'll necessarily move up the ladder; you can be in a large, long-running show one day and back to smaller theatre work the next," says Lamond. "The size of productions vary greatly, especially in Canada, and therefore, wages can fluctuate greatly as well."

That said, those that show dedication and a good work ethic will be more than covered. Says Ichkhanian: "Musicians that continually practice their craft, have proven to be consistent performers, and are personable with a good reputation are sought-after and work steadily."



PHOTO: JOAN MARCUS

(L-R) QUINN VANANTWERP, DANIEL ROBERT SULLIVAN, MICHAEL LOMENDA & JEFF HADDEN IN JERSEY BOYS.

CURTAIN CALL

Though it can offer well-paying and semi-permanent work, theatre isn't all milk and cookies. "The lifestyle is ever-changing and very uncertain," says Lamond. "I think you need to be able to enjoy the unknown, and especially enjoy what you do to make it all worthwhile." Anyone that's ever grinded it out in the bar scene can certainly empathize with such stipulations, as can a jazz student set to compete for limited work with 30 of his or her peers. Many with a true passion for music and performance are probably more than willing to "enjoy the unknown."

Though you may not be landing the glorious gigs on your first foray into this form of entertainment, there is room for some pretty enviable – and cool – gigs. I mean, how many wannabe guitar heroes would think it uncool to travel across the country playing with a wish list of gear or hear roaring applause night after night? "It's very satisfying knowing that all efforts have been acknowledged through cheers and standing ovations show after show," says Ichkhanian. With thousands of people cheering during his solo, I bet the *We Will Rock You* guitarist felt connected to Brain May – and that's pretty cool.



Andrew King is the Editor of Canadian Musician.

Local Music Industry Unites At Niagara Music Forum

The second annual Niagara Music Forum (NMF) took place October 17, 2009, bringing a group of passionate musicians and industry members to the Four Points Sheraton in Thorold, ON.

The speakers included Jim Norris, Publisher of Norris-Whitney Communications; Steve Stumble, President of Stumble Records



David Cox, President of CLK Creative Works and former A&R for Universal Music.



After the Earth rocks the NMF.

and Organizer of S.C.E.N.E. Music Festival and Hot Rod Hootenanny; David Cox, President of CLK Creative Works and former A&R for Universal Music; Paul Sanderson, Entertainment Lawyer, Sanderson Entertainment Law; Paul Morris, Music Director for HTZ FM; Jason Johnston, Owner of Revolution Audio; and Van Taylor, Buffalo Promoter, Producer, Publisher, and Musician.

There were 50 attendees comprised mostly of determined musicians who came out to ask questions, take notes, and network. Nik Duncan, coordinator of the NMF says: "This year's Niagara Music Forum was flowing with knowledge, opportunity, and resources. Organizations like Music Dish Network, SOCAN, and the AFM provided great material for the attendees to get further connected and informed."

For more information on the NMF, visit www.niagaramusicforum.com.



Laurence Currie (right) & Moe Berg (middle) taping an episode of *MasterTracks* with Stereo Coast Stellar.

Think Your Track Is A *MasterTrack*?

MasterTracks, a program on the recently-launched AUX television station, gives independent artists the chance to be featured while recording a track at Metalworks Studios with producers Laurence Currie and Moe Berg.

Independent artists interested in applying for the program can do so by submitting contact info and links to music to mastertracks@aux.tv. All artists that submit go on a list for consideration. Berg, Currie, and *MasterTracks* producers then decide which bands make the cut. Once a track is chosen, the band is invited into the studio to cut the track and film the episode.

Check out more information on *MasterTracks* and AUX at www.aux.tv.



Winner Alexander Sevastian performs.

Roland Crowns 3rd V-Accordion Festival Winner

Alexander Sevastian was crowned champion at the Roland V-Accordion Festival National Finals, held September 24, 2009 at the Hansa Haus in Mississauga. The competition showcased three semi-finalists who were chosen out of dozens of entries from accordion players across the country. As first place winner, Sevastian is now preparing for his performance at the International Finals, November 20-21 in Rome, Italy, where he will be representing Canada. Visit www.roland.ca for more information.

SABIAN Vault Tour Visits North American Dealers

The SABIAN Vault tour recently wrapped up, beginning September 25, 2009 in Canada and wrapping up October 21 in the US. The tour brings SABIAN craftsmen out to demonstrate hammering and lathing techniques, and showcase hundreds of SABIAN prototypes.

Terry Ryan, Canadian Sales and Artist Relations Manager for SABIAN, comments on this year's tour: "It went very well. Any time a manufacturer can meet with drummers and consumers to gain feedback about its product and prototypes is positive."

Ryan Hamilton of Just Drums comments on the tour's Toronto stop: "It's cool that these customers are able to come in and buy a cymbal that nobody else has – total one-of-a-kind cymbals." For more information, visit www.sabian.com.

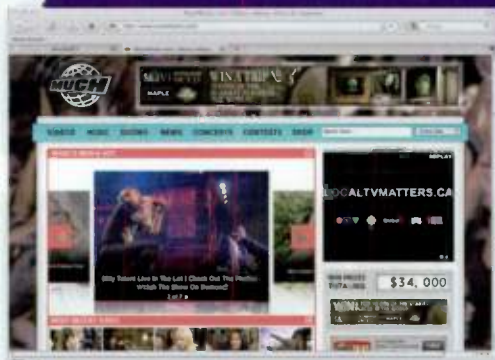


Musical Canadian Couple Honoured By Tiffany's

Raine Maida of Our Lady Peace and wife Chantal Kreviazuk were recently honoured by Tiffany & Co. as the recipients of the 2009 Tiffany Mark Award, presented at a private cocktail celebration at the store's Bloor St. location in Toronto. The Mark Award honours Canadian men and women who are making their mark both professionally and in their communities through efforts on behalf of charities and organizations about which they're passionate. The two are avid supporters of War Child Canada, also working with the Canadian Mental Health Association, Polar Bears International, and more.



Chantal Kreviazuk & Raine Maida at Tiffany's



VideoFACT → MuchFACT

Originally created in 1984 as VideoFACT, MuchFACT is now funded entirely by MuchMusic and MuchMore, undergoing the name change in September 2009. Along with the name change, MuchFACT expanded its PromoFACT EPK program to include not only traditional EPKs, but also digital music videos, digital EPKs, or other digital music-related content intended for viral distribution.

MuchFACT considers applications from Canadian artists requesting co-financing for music videos, websites, and EPKs six times a year. For more information, visit www.muchfact.ca.

RCM's Koerner Hall Calls To Musicians

The Royal Conservatory of Music's Koerner Hall is now officially open after a festival of celebratory performances beginning late September 2009. The performance space represents the final phase in the transformation of the Royal Conservatory's national headquarters, the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning in Toronto.

The hall boasts an N1 acoustical rating – an alluring aspect to performing musicians. The opening festival featured acts like the trio of Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke, and Lenny White; Bela Fleck; Keb' Mo'; and Ravi Shankar.

For more information on the venue, the TELUS Centre, and the RCM, visit www.rcmusic.ca.



Photo: Lana Pesant

Nominees Announced For Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards

Marking its 11th anniversary in 2009, the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards has announced nominees in 25 categories, honouring Canadian recording artists, videographers, and music industry professionals in the Aboriginal music scene.

Leading the way with six nominations is Digging Roots, followed closely by veteran Buffy Sainte-Marie with four. The awards are highlighted by an evening of live performances and will take place November 27, 2009 in Hamilton, ON in conjunction with the 16th annual Canadian Aboriginal Festival. "This is an incredible mosaic of talent. All of the nominees deliver a unique interpretation of aboriginal heritage and music," says Catherine Cornelis, Co-Executive Producer of the Awards. Visit www.canab.com for more information.



Digging Roots, nominated for 6 CAMAs.



CIRPA → CIMA

After over three decades of conducting business as CIRPA, the Canadian Independent Record Production Association has changed its name to the Canadian Independent Music Association (CIMA). "This reflects the reality of the music business today," says Bernie Finkelstein, CIMA Chairman.

The association's current emphasis on developing business and trade opportunities both within Canada and abroad is a leading theme of the new organization. "We will continue to develop services that assist our members to build their businesses in whatever way we can," says President and CEO Duncan McKie. Visit the association's new web page at www.cimamusic.ca.

Make Your Mark At NXNE 2010

The 16th edition of NXNE (North By Northeast), set to run from June 16-20, 2010 in Toronto, is currently accepting artist submissions. Bands can visit www.nxne.com and follow links to submit a band or film for consideration to appear at the festival. Submissions are being accepted until January 31, 2010. Submissions received before December 31, 2009 cost \$25. Come 2010, the fees rise to \$35.

These performers join thousands of emerging and established musicians performing at and attending the event. The festival brings out 250,000 fans to 50 venues across the city, with media from around the world covering the happenings. Visit www.nxne.com for more information or to submit.

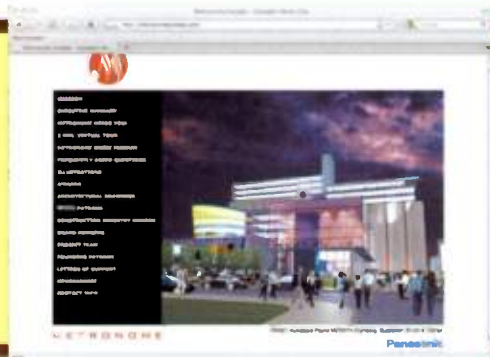


Dinosaur Bones rock NXNE 2009.

NEW SITE FOR CANADA'S MUSIC CITY

Metronome Canada, the non-profit initiative set out to transform Toronto's Canada Malting Silo Complex on the waterfront into "Canada's Music City," has revamped its online presence with an improved website. The project, set to include a museum, 800-seat concert theatre, music industry offices, restaurants, and more, is currently awaiting funding approval from the Provincial and Federal Governments.

The site features an executive summary of the project, the "Metronome Needs You!" call to action, a two-minute virtual tour of the proposed facility, a FAQ section, and more. Visit the site at www.metronomecanada.com to show support for the project.



Apple's App Store Downloads Top 2 Billion

Apple has announced that more than two billion apps have been downloaded from its App Store. There are now more than 85,000 apps available to the more than 50 million iPhone and iPod Touch customers worldwide and over 125,000 developers in Apple's iPhone Developer Program. This figure includes more than half a billion downloads in the third quarter of 2009 alone.

"The App Store has reinvented what you can do with a mobile handheld device, and our users are clearly loving it," says Apple CEO Steve Jobs. The capabilities of the iPhone extend to the musical realm, with apps like drum machines, sequencers, and vocal auto-tuners available. Visit www.appstore.com for more information.



Liam Titcomb Raises \$50,000 For War Child

Liam Titcomb ended his personal busking tour of Canada September 26, 2009 with a homecoming show at Toronto's Hugh's Room. The event marked the end of a 60-day, 50-city, 99-show journey that covered the country from St John's, NL to Victoria, BC, and raised \$50,000 for War Child.

War Child CEO Lisa Zbitnew says: "This was a remarkable journey by an extraordinary young man. \$50,000 is a tremendous achievement and a huge boost for the charity." For more information, visit www.warchild.ca and www.liamtitcomb.com.

Gearing Up For Nova Scotia Music Week



Dave Carroll

Molson Canadian is presenting the 2009 edition of Nova Scotia Music Week, running November 5-8, 2009 in Yarmouth, NS. The event will culminate with the Music Nova Scotia Gala Awards Show, which will feature performances from

acts like Joel Plaskett, In-Flight Safety, Dave Carroll, Classified, and others.

Nova Scotia Music Week will also host the "Music Is A Service" conference. Topics range from "Forget the Recording and Focus on Live?" to "Getting the Deal and Hitting the Road," as well as a full day of digital training with a focus on digital marketing, the design and implementation of a publicity campaign, and online social media. The event will also host 28 domestic buyers from the Bringin' It Home community presenters program and other festivals and events from the coast.

For more information, visit www.musicnovascotia.com.

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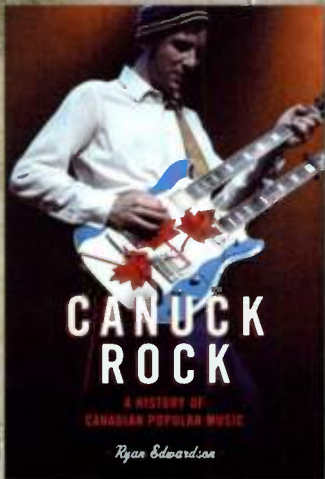
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War Child Marks 10 Years With Retrospective Album

War Child Canada is releasing a retrospective album, titled *War Child: 10*, on November 17, 2009, to mark the 10th anniversary of the charity's founding in Canada. The album, which will be released by Universal Music Canada, will feature a selection of some of the music donated to the cause over the years, as well as exclusive new recordings.

"Since the charity was founded in 1999, the support of the artist community and music industry has been incredibly important," says War Child Canada CEO Lisa Zbitnew. "This album reflects the remarkable breadth of that support." The album features tracks from artists like Coldplay, Radiohead, Wolfmother, and others. Visit www.warchild.ca for more information.



Chronicling Canuck Rock

Author Ryan Edwardson has dropped *Canuck Rock: A History Of Canadian Popular Music*, published by the University of Toronto Press.

The book addresses what it means to be a Canadian musician, and how nationality matters, by delving into the myriad relationship between music makers, the industry, radio and press, government, and fans. Combining archival material, published accounts, and new interviews, Edwardson explores how music in Canada became Canadian music.

"Nicely done," says CBC's Jian Ghomeshi. "This is an impressive and comprehensive addition to the existing material recounting the Canadian story in modern popular music." Find out more at www.utpress.utoronto.ca.



Polaris Prize Gala Gets F***ed

Toronto's F***ed Up was named the winner of the fourth annual Polaris Music Prize at the Gala ceremony at Toronto's Masonic Temple. The band took home \$20,000 for *The Chemistry Of Common Life*, which the Polaris jury calls the Canadian Album of the Year.

"Until the very moment they made the announcement, I thought there was no way in hell that we would win," says vocalist Damian Abraham. "This is incredible. I'm more shocked than everyone at CTV." The band was selected by the 11-member grand jury, chosen from this year's 182-member jury of Canadian journalists, bloggers, and broadcasters.

This year's gala was the first to feature live performances from all 10 shortlisted acts. For more information about the prize, visit www.polarismusicprize.ca.

Survival Of The Fittest For Urban Artists

The 1st Survival Of The Fittest is a contest for Canadian MCs and urban artists with four prizes up for grabs. Full details are available at www.cardboardbeats.com/mccontest.

Judges for the contest include Mic Boyd, D-Sisive, MasiaONE, and Moka Only, among others. Submissions are currently being accepted, the deadline being February 20, 2010. The final judges' decision will be announced April 1, 2010. Prizes up for grabs include an Apex condenser mic, Shure SM58, Cakewalk's SONAR Home Studio 7, and more.



The Audio Recording Academy Of Toronto Expands

TARA Toronto is adding another studio to its educational facility. Already with four studios, including the EMI Music Publishing Studio Lab, the academy is adding a fifth. "Absolutely everything we do at TARA is about education," says President Michael Stephenson. "Our students are granted every opportunity to learn the many aspects of the recording industry before they graduate."

For more information, visit www.taratoronto.com.



ECMA Releases Economic Impact Statement

The East Coast Music Association (ECMA) just released its economic impact statement for the period of 2007-2008. The results demonstrate a direct sales estimate by Atlantic-based artists and companies of approximately \$1 million.

In addition to the direct sales number, the total amount of in-Atlantic ECMA operating expenditures over the same two-year period is estimated at \$3,725,764. The net inflow of dollars from visitors to the Atlantic region as a result of those

year's events is estimated at \$490,000. In total, the combined direct impact of the ECMA represents \$5,214,101.

Su Hutchinson, the ECMA's Executive Director says it's important to acknowledge the reach of Atlantic Canadian music. "This economic impact study exemplifies this very fact – how far East Coast music extends and the successes our artists achieve all over the world from a business development perspective." For more information, visit www.ecma.com.

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War Child Supporters Go Busking For Change

War Child's Busking For Change initiative once again turned the streets of Toronto into a stage. Over 50 artists were out at 14 locations across the city trying to raise funds for the charity. Through its 2009 busking initiatives, War Child has raised in excess of \$100,000, and is continuing to bring in money.

"War Child is very fortunate to have the support of the music community, and Busking For Change is a stellar example of that support," says CEO Liza Zbitnew. "Over 50 musicians braved the autumn elements and played, in some cases, from 7 a.m. well into the evening. The generosity of these artists is both awe inspiring and humbling. The talent, as always, is amazing!"



Max Kerman of Arkells



KoSA Centre For The Arts Opens In Montreal

Montreal is now home to the KoSA Centre for the Arts, a new performance and event space that officially opened in September 2009.

The KoSA Centre for the arts is a four-story, free-standing, multi-faceted complex on Crowley Ave. The venue aims to present and host activities like live performances, cultural activities, corporate events, and special occasions. The main performance hall has a capacity of 300 seated and 400 standing. There's in-house sound, lighting, stage, and technical backline available, including a Yamaha Grand piano, amps, mics, drums, and a selection of world percussion instruments. For more information, visit www.kosacentre.org.



Cristina Martin & band showcasing.

PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES AT CONTACT EAST 2009

The 2009 edition of Contact East brought together talent from across the country and talent buyers from the east coast and overseas to Moncton, NB. Running from October 1-4, 2009, the event featured several talent showcases, conference sessions, and networking events for visiting delegates.

The Professional Development Ses-

sions included topics like: International Touring, an Overview Of Department of Canadian Heritage Funding Programs For Cultural Presenters, and E-Marketing. Showcase artists included the likes of Christina Martin, Dave Carroll, Nudie & The Turks, Amelia Curran, Dr. Zoo and others. For more information on next year's event and how to apply, visit www.contacteast.ca.

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Milwaukee, WI
November 11-14, 2009
440-543-5366
info@aosa.org, www.aosa.org

PASIC 2009

Indianapolis, IN
November 11-14, 2009
317-974-4488, FAX 317-974-4499
percarts@pas.org, www.pasic.org

GameSoundCon 2009

San Francisco, CA
November 13-14, 2009
425-956-3725
info@gamesoundcon.com,
www.gamesoundcon.com

Music In Media Interactive Conference

Hollywood, CA
November 20-22, 2009
eventinfo@hmmawards.com,
www.hmmawards.com

Midwest Clinic 63rd Annual Conference

Chicago, IL
December 15-19, 2009
847-424-4163, FAX 847-424-5185
info@midwestclinic.org,
www.midwestclinic.org

MIDEM 2010

Cannes, France
January 24-27, 2010
514-660-9724, FAX 514-764-0149
www.midem.com

Hillside Inside 2010

Guelph, ON
February 6, 2010
519-763-6396, FAX 519-763-9514
hillside@hillsidefestival.ca,
www.hillsidefestival.ca

Mobile Beat Las Vegas 2010

Las Vegas, NV
February 9-11, 2010
515-986-3300, FAX 515-986-3344
custserv@mobilebeat.com,
www.mobilebeat.com

2010 International Folk Alliance Conference

Memphis, TN
February 17-21, 2010
901-522-1170, FAX 901-522-1172
fa@folk.org, www.folk.org

East Coast Music Awards, Festival, & Conference 2010

Sydney, NS
March 4-7, 2010
902-892-9040, FAX 902-892-9041
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KoSA Cuba 2010

Havana, Cuba
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Canadian Music Week 2010

Toronto, ON
March 10-14, 2010
905-858-4747, FAX 905-858-4848
info@cmw.net, www.cmw.net

SXSW 2010

Austin, TX
Music: March 17-21, 2010
512-467-7979, FAX 512-451-0754
sxsw@sxsw.com, www.sxsw.com

MTNA National Conference

Albuquerque, NM
March 20-24, 2010
513-421-3135, FAX 513-421-2503
mtnanet@mtna.org, www.mtna.org

2010 Juno Awards

St. John's, NL
April 18, 2010
416-485-3135, FAX 416-485-4978
info@carasonline.ca, www.juno-awards.ca

"I Create Music" ASCAP Expo 2010

Los Angeles, CA
April 22-24, 2010
800-278-1287, FAX 212-595-3276
www.ascap.com/eventsawards

MUSEXPO 2010

West Hollywood, CA
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323-782-0770
www.musexpo.net

2010 Cape Breton International Drum Festival

Cape Breton Island, NS
May 22-23, 2010
bruce_cbidrumfest@yahoo.com,
www.capebretoninternationaldrumfestival.com

Montreal International Music Competition Violin 2010

Montreal, QC
May 24-June 4, 2010
514-845-4108, FAX 514-845-8241
info@concoursmontreal.ca,
www.concoursmontreal.ca

2010 COCA National Conference

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www.coca.org

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33rd Vancouver Folk Music Festival

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604-602-9798, FAX 604-602-9790
board@thefestival.bc.ca,
www.thefestival.bc.ca

22nd Beaches International Jazz Festival

Toronto, ON
July 16-25, 2010
416-698-2152, FAX 416-698-2064
info@beachesjazz@rogers.com,
www.beachesjazz.com

GMA Immerse 2010

Nashville, TN
July 28-31, 2010
615-242-0303, FAX 615-254-9755
info@gospelmusic.org,
www.gospelmusic.org

2010 Canmore Folk Music Festival

Canmore, AB
July 31-August 2, 2010
403-678-2524, FAX 403-678-2524
info@canmorefolkfestival.com,
www.canmorefolkfestival.com

National Flute Association Convention 2010

Anaheim, CA
August 12-15, 2010
661-299-6680, FAX 661-299-6681
conventionservices@nfaonline.org,
www.nfaonline.com

CCMA Country Music Week 2010

Edmonton, AB
September 8-12, 2010
416-947-1331, FAX 416-947-5924
country@ccma.org, www.ccma.org

CINARS 2010

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Yamaha DTXtreme III Special

by Chris Taylor-Munro

Yamaha's DTXtreme III Special immediately screams "not your average electronic drum kit." First off, it's mounted on Yamaha's new Hexagonal rack unique to the Special as far as Yamaha e-kits go. It's impressively simple component-wise and near limitless in its adjustability factor. Over the years, I have not been fond of rack systems, certainly not for acoustic kits anyway, but upon arrival at Yamaha Canada's product showroom (which really should be called the Toy Room), I was marvelling at the construction – or more correctly the de-construction – of this larger-than-average e-kit. Tucking it into the back of my VW Beetle after removing the pads, cymbals, and the cymbal booms, I was headed home to put the Special through its paces inside of 10 minutes.

What makes this DTXtreme III Special special aside from the rack is the extra tom pad for a total of five (one 12" snare and four 10" Toms if you will) shells, three PCY cymbals (two 13" and one 15" for the ride), a hi-hat stand (a real hi-hat stand; not just a controller), and the KP125 kick pad, making for a rather complete set-up. With three individual trigger zones for the pads and cymbals, two for the hi-hat pad, and an input for a second kick trigger on the KP125, you can have 28 sounds at your disposal without changing your patch on what is essentially a six-piece kit. It's compact without feeling cramped by any stretch. The sheer size of the pads, cymbals, and rack make this kit the proverbial First Class of e-kits, so stretch out!

The onboard sounds have been improved both sonically and in the way they respond. The playability factor of the cymbals is great, especially the hi-hat pad – much improved over Yamaha's previous models and easily surpassing any competitor. One criticism is the pressure needing to be applied to the foot pedal – still a tad too much compared to a "real" hi-hat, but the best technology has to offer yet. Amazingly, I did not experience any crosstalk or double triggering, even with the sensitivity set rather high, which is a testament to the processing power of the module. The DTXtreme module is based on the Yamaha MOTIF synth and anyone familiar with it will be at home with its operation.

Buttons are logically placed and negate

delving too deeply into the dreaded sub-menus all too often associated with modules. Each trigger has an individual fader on the front of the module for instant control volume-wise that makes customizing the kit to your playing style a breeze. In conjunction with the faders, you have rotating knobs on each pad to tune the pitch for the toms and adjust the throw-off for the snare

– slick! The six individual outputs on the back of the unit are a blessing, allowing engineers separate control over each component for mixing.

The preset kits are an assortment of sampled Yamaha Pro kits with all types of wood represented. Once you've grown tired to the 1700-plus sounds, ranging from traditional percussion to some great samples of organs, wah guitar, trains, etc., you can introduce your own samples and create dozens of customized user kits. I have to admit I felt like Akira Jimbo at times creating these crazy musical, industrial-like compositions in my basement, often not emerging for hours. This kit is addictive in a video game kinda' way, but with practical merit for the avid hobbyist or the working professional. Even the play-along songs are close copies of bands like Green Day, Fall Out Boy, with some Pharrell-style R&B and even thrash! The auxiliary in allows you to hook up your MP3 player (or whatever) and drum along to your favourite tunes.

The module is no doubt going to impress those looking to integrate an e-kit into a home studio environment as it has USB, MIDI in and out, digital out, and stereo 1/4" outputs with the aforementioned six individuals. The DTXtreme III Special has the fun factor in spades which got me back to practicing more so than my acoustic kit has in awhile. That's a good thing. It was also nice to play with headphones and not worry



about my neighbours, regardless of the time of day. The pads aren't completely silent, mind you – a friend said it sounded like I was "whacking tires" in the basement. Not sure if that reference helps but there you have it. Price-wise, the kit is selling for around \$3,600 CDN on the street so not everyone looking for an e-kit to play from time to time will ever need the sophistication of the Special, but working professionals and those who can afford it would be crazy not to try one.

Chris Taylor-Munro is a Toronto-based musician and freelance writer.

Manufacturer's Comment

It is more difficult for real drummers to compromise on ergonomics than the feel or sound of electronic drums. Something that a manufacturer of acoustic drums would know is nothing replaces the excitement of playing real drums. We just hope adding the dimensions of personalizing sounds and song data, or even ultimately being able to jam with somebody in Australia, is cool compensation.

Sean Browne
Percussion Manager
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25th Modern Eagle II

new color - Angry Larry

25th Modern Eagle III

new color - Black Slate

25th Mira 245

new color - Charcoal Smokeburst

25th Santana

new color - Matteo Mist

25th Swamp Ash Special

new color - Scarlet Smokeburst

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Paul Reed Smith circa 1985 in the original Virginia Avenue shop.



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by Tim Millar & Luke Hoskin

two-handed tapping Tutorial

Tim: A technique that we are quite fond of is two-handed tapping. This is a useful technique to tap chords, play riffs faster than you could if you tried to pick them or hammer them on, or just give a riff a different sound.

To make this work and sound clean, you have to really attack the string to make it ring out properly, also keeping in mind the muting of the string is important. Luke uses a hair band on one riff to mute out strings that would otherwise ring. Also, sometimes switching to the neck pick up will give you a better tone for this type of playing.

Tim's "Bloodmeat" Tapping

Moderate ♩ = 120

Amin G Emin7 Emin Emin6

I had this riff handed down to me because Luke's part before this riff is pretty busy. It was a bit of a jump for him, and since I was doing some rhythmic stuff, it was easier for me to take it on. I remember being nervous when I first started playing it because the whole band cuts out at this point. Also, there's a bit of a tempo change there so I always have to push it. The riff is basically an A power chord with the minor 3rd tapped on, then a similar shape with a G power chord and the major 3rd tapped on, then a different shape which is a minor 3rd with the E on the bottom and the tapped notes form the chords Emin7, Eminor3 with an octave, and Emin6. Fingering wise, for the first two notes before each tap I'm always using my first then third finger and then tapping with my middle on my right hand.

Luke's "Bloodmeat" Tapping

Moderate ♩ = 120

Luke: If I could talk theory like Timmy, I would probably tell you that I am tapping a series of chords in the particular key we are playing in. Since I can't, I will tell you that

this is one of the riffs I am fonder of on this album. In hindsight this may have been an ear-catching intro riff. I dig it for it's fluidity and smoothness - and possibly because it is relatively relaxing to pull off live. (No pun intended! ... I'm serious. There are no pull-offs in this riff).

As Tim mentioned, the most important part with any of these two-hand tapping riffs is string muting. This one allows for the player to use her/his right palm to control the noise of the strings before and after fretting a note - especially the strings that aren't in use. It really requires practice to master this muting technique - something everyone except Bumblefoot* still needs to work on! The riff itself may look more complicated than it is with the 15/16 time signature in the first bar, but really, it's five groups of three notes, then when the 4/4 bar comes, it's four groups of three notes, then a group of four notes to total sixteen 16th notes.

*Bumblefoot's actual name is Ron Thal

Luke's "Sequoia Throne" Intro

This is the only riff I use a hairband for. If you've tried the hairband thing before, you will have found out that it isn't easy to find the right one. You need to seek children's hairbands for their smaller size and perfect tension. If you get one that's too tight, it will act like a capo; get one too loose and it defeats the purpose.

A hairband can act as a good technique builder. If you are working at your sweeping or legato technique, it will mute out the strings and allow you to play your phrase more clearly until you have the string muting thing down pat.

I think if you had your alternate picking and string skipping abilities down to a science, you might not need to tap this little number. Since I don't (and especially didn't when I wrote this), I found it much easier to tap. In the end, I like it for the smooth sound you can get without letting the pick touch the strings.

It is important to get in the habit of holding your pick between your thumb and index finger - then you don't have to swap the pick to another finger combination when you decide to tap. In this riff, I use my middle finger to tap most notes, except at the beginning where there are two taps in a row. For that I'm using my ring finger, then middle finger consecutively. Remember to start slow and gradually speed up.



by Michael Kaeshammer

stride Piano

What Is Stride Piano?

Stride Piano is a jazz piano style that evolved from Ragtime. Its main practitioners are James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Willie The Lion Smith, and Luckey Roberts. Other pianists who mastered the style are Art Tatum, Eubie Blake, and Cliff Jackson. In the '20s and '30s, pianists were required to entertain solo for long hours. This style of playing the piano developed because it covers the whole spectrum, made people dance, and can sound as big as an actual band. Listen to James P. Johnson and his use of 10th in the left hand, then put on some Fats Waller and listen to how he developed the inversion of 10th in the left hand from James P. Johnson's style. Although all these pianists played stride piano, they all had a very distinct way of playing it; everyone had their own voice.

Suggested Recordings:

James P. Johnson – *Father Of The Stride Piano* (Columbia Records)

Fats Waller – *The Joint Is Jumpin'* (Bluebird Treasury Series)

Luckey Roberts & Willie The Lion Smith – *Harlem Piano* (Fantasy Records)

Learning Stride Piano

Concept: To learn stride-piano, it's important to first of all understand the concept and principle of it: the left hand covers the bass notes and chord-progression by jumping back and forth between the two, while the right hand outlines the melody and improvises over top of it. In general, the bass notes fall on beats one and three (or the downbeat in odd time signatures) while the chords fall on beats two and four.

To heighten the great effect of syncopation, it's recommended to turn the beat around in your left hand at times. You do this by playing two bass-notes or two chords in a row while your right hand is unaffected by the beat being turned around in the left hand. Do the same thing a couple of bars later to turn it back to the original groove. Make sure your left and right hands are independent from each other. This will create tension and release.

Lifting: Lifting means copying what you hear on recordings and it's a lot easier than it might sound. The best teachers are the masters, so pick a song that really speaks to you and gets you excited. Play a bar and pause it, and start lifting bar by bar. Start copying the left hand first, practice it slowly until it's in your hands, then copy the right hand only and do the same. Once you can play them independently, put them together and practice them slowly. Make sure you play in time; don't ever practice faster than you can play in time, no matter how slow you have to go. (Practicing with a metronome helps to keep you in-check.)

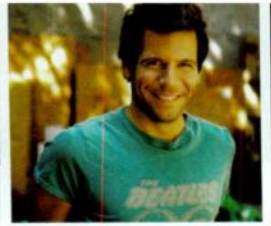
Practice: Muscle memory is the key here. Everyone can play stride piano, but lots of pianists don't, simply because they haven't put the time into learning the style. Practice and lift slowly at first and you will be surprised how fast your ears and fingers will progress and pick things up faster and faster.

Groove: It's vital to make sure that your left hand grooves and swings and is not played too "straight." This can be achieved by putting accents on the downbeat of each bar or accenting the chords on beats two and four. Be adventurous and try different approaches; explore how you can make your left hand swing.

Tenth: Depending on the size of your hands, it might not be physically possible for you to reach a tenth in your left hand. Not to worry; there have been lots of great pianists with smaller hands who played amazing stride piano. There is a trick called "rolling the tenth," which basically means you play the two notes very fast in succession. It has a great effect and will give the impression that you can reach anything with your hands.

Approach To Stride Piano (& Playing In General)

Once you've learned your trade and have collected your tools to play stride piano (or really any type of music you choose to express yourself with), it's very important to bring out your own personality and the message you want to convey with your playing. Older styles of music (especially in the jazz genre) are often played and copied exactly the same way as they were played back in the day rather than used as inspiration to put the music into the contemporary and current world. Think of how players like James P. Johnson and Fats Waller would play stride piano today with all that has happened in music and the world since the '20s and '30s. Embrace your own heritage, your own experiences in your life, your own ideas of playing music, and be yourself.



by Steve Zsirai

Steve Zsirai is an in-demand session bass player, living and working in Toronto. He currently performs with David Usher, Royal Wood, Justin Rutledge & Jill Barber. Check out: www.zsirai.com.

practice in Pairs

I was asked to submit a piece for *Canadian Musician* giving technical tips on bass playing, and while I have a ton of respect for that sort of thing, I felt it wouldn't be as colorful a submission as if I wrote the history of how I became a professional musician in Canada's vast landscape of struggling artists. Maybe I can inspire someone else to follow their dreams in spite of all the fears and challenges such a leap of faith can present, or maybe it's just an entertaining segment to give someone a laugh. Either way, take what you will and know that at the end of the day, with focus and hard work (oh, and wicked hair), anything is possible.

I kind of randomly stumbled into the world of music. The story is this: My best friend at the time got a drum kit as a birthday present. We knew a kid down the street who had a guitar and was rumored to be able to play "Smoke on the Water." That left the bass guitar for yours truly. After a few jam sessions and lessons at Dominic's Music Store, the power trio Matropolis (yes, with an 'A') was born. It was during this time that I developed my personal motto that I carry with me to this day: "Wide Stance, Tight Pants."

My musical journey eventually brought me to Humber College in Toronto to study jazz. I arrived there thinking I was the cat's meow when it came to all things bass. Predictably (considering my motto and all), that feeling didn't last too long. I remember it so clearly – strolling into my very first ensemble rehearsal. The instructor walked around to each of our music stands and placed sheets of music on each of them. The first song we were going to perform was something called "Rhythm Changes." Before I knew it the drummer counted us all in and away we went. Well, away everyone else went; I couldn't keep up. The only way I was able to play along without getting lost was if the teacher literally stood beside me, counted out loud and pointed as each bar went by. Everyone in the group was looking at me in disbelief as I struggled to keep up.

I kept thinking to myself as I played the tune, "What a stupid title, 'Rhythm Changes.' The rhythm doesn't change; it stays the same the whole way through." "Rhythm Changes," I later found out, is simply a modified form of the chord progression of George Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm," which forms the basis of countless (usually uptempo) jazz tunes. Anyway, the song eventually mercifully came to an end. The instructor (still at my side) promptly asked the drummer if the "ritard" (which is short for *ritardando*, a musical term meaning "gradually slower in tempo") was intentional. The guitar player, without missing a beat, shot me a smarmy look and proudly responded to the question: "No, we just couldn't find anyone else to play bass."

It was now crystal clear to me; I had some work to do in terms of figuring out this jazz thing. I worked hard that year, practicing and learning my jazz theory, ear training,

arranging, repertoire development – the whole deal.

But what really helped me the most in terms of musical development was connecting with a fellow student, a guitar player named Jamie. Every single day at school, we'd sit together in one of those tiny little practice modules, turn on a metronome, and run over the musical concepts we were being taught. We trusted each other and knew that it was okay to "screw up" while practicing. We asked a lot of questions and helped each other figure things out. Slowly but surely, we learned together. I knew things were looking up for me when my aforementioned ensemble instructor, who to this point in the year had only referred to me as "Bass," suddenly referenced me as "Improving Bass." Oh, to be king.

Here I am 10 years down the road. I'm lucky to play with some of Canada's most talented musicians – a place I wouldn't have gotten without hours and hours of jam sessions and practices. To this day, my most useful and most enjoyable practicing comes from my weekly "duet" sessions with guitar players I love. The focus of the sessions is almost always on time and feel.

Whether we're playing a slow blues, an up-tempo vamp in five, or a Neil Young tune, the objective is to make it musical and to make it feel great! This way of practicing not only continues to help me improve as a bassist, but the sessions also really help to inspire me creatively. Surround yourself with people you admire and respect musically and you can't help but be motivated to improve.

But really, who's kidding who? Your sound as a bassist really comes through your stance...



Ted is an active member of Canada's jazz scene, teaching at Humber and Mohawk College, and is a well-regarded clinician and adjudicator. Ted fronts his own quartet, Ted's Warren Commission, which has

Mike Herriott is a Toronto-based trumpet player, currently performing with *Jersey Boys*. He has toured the globe with shows and various ensembles, recorded with his own projects and well-known artists, and appeared as a soloist with orchestras and bands across Canada.

NATASHA KOMODA, KIMONO PHOTOGRAPHY



by Mike Herriott

daily Warm-Up part 1

Maurice André once said that playing the trumpet is like building a sand castle on the beach; every morning, the tide has washed away the previous day's work and you have to start from the beginning all over again. For this reason, it is important to make sure that you build a solid foundation on which to base your day's work. This idea can be applied to all brass instruments.

Every morning I go through this process of reminding myself of the fundamentals of sound production. There are four stages: Posture, Breathing, Buzzing, and finally, Introducing the Horn (in Part 2).

Posture

I find it's not enough just to tell someone to not slouch; it's important to understand why good posture is beneficial.

Stand Tall

Before touching my horn, I do a series of exercises related to posture and breathing. The first step in this process is to stand with your feet shoulder width apart and imagine that the crown of your head is attached to a string that is suspended from the ceiling. It seems more common these days for us to lose the arch in the back of the neck from poor sitting habits.

Secondly, slide your shoulder blades down toward the ground – not inward but downward. This causes your shoulders to move down and back. As well, it will raise the sternum, which opens up the chest cavity. Also, you'll notice that the arch in your lower back becomes more pronounced. It is the combination of these inward and outward curves that provide stress relief to your skeletal system and internal organs. You'll note that once you've achieved a good posture position, taking a deep breath is made easier.

Breathing

The great Canadian trombone player, Ian McDougall, has told every one of his students:

1. Always take in as much air as you can, and...
2. Keep the air-flow constant.

In-Out No Stops!

The first breathing exercise I do involves working on the seamless in-and-outflow of air; the Continuous Breath. Keeping the throat muscles relaxed and open (just like when you yawn), inhale and then exhale in what feels like one motion.

Practice inhaling and exhaling in this way (tempo should be a quarter note equals 60 BPM; inhale over one beat and exhale over three to five beats) until you feel that you're breathing in one fluid motion. (Pace yourself so you don't

hyperventilate – count to three after each exhale).

All the Way Out

Now with your exhale, you want to push the air out until you have nothing left. When you do this, you'll really feel your abdominal wall muscles go to work. You'll notice that your immediate instinct is to use these muscles to breathe in again. Remember to watch your posture throughout; you don't want your chest to collapse during this exercise.

Like Yer About to Burst!

Take in as much air as you can. (Inhale over three beats at the same tempo as before, exhale over five to six beats. This will increase a bit with repetition.) While maintaining all of the concepts that we've already addressed, start taking in larger breaths. Focus on filling up from the hips to the collarbone. After about five more breaths, you should feel that your lungs are really stretching with each inhale. Allow this sensation to internalize by allowing your thoughts to stray once you have gotten the knack of it.

Buzzing

Holding your mouthpiece lightly between your index finger and thumb at the base of the shank, place it on your embouchure and buzz a mid-range note. When making the sound, it is important to find the balance between the resistance generated by the aperture of the lips and the compression from your air source. This is where we find the true centre of pitch.

Remember to start the note without the tongue. Practice whispering the word "hey" and feel what happens to your breathing muscles when you do so. Now do the same thing with these muscles to start the note. You'll notice that the note starts immediately. It is important that the air is there for the beginning of the note and doesn't creep in partway through. Now focus on holding the note steady for at least 10-15 seconds. Repeat until you are satisfied with the results and then continue a few more times while allowing your mind to drift onto other things.

The Siren

Still with just the mouthpiece, starting on the same note as before, glissando up and down very slowly and evenly. At first, I'll usually go up and down approximately a fifth and then increase the interval as I progress. It is important to smooth out any interruptions in the glissando. Try and make it sound just like an air-raid siren. If you have enough air, you can go up and down twice in one breath but it's more important to make it even and seamless. Remember to not use your tongue to start the note. This exercise should be done until it's internalized, as before.



Chad VanGalen is a two-time Polaris Prize shortlist nominee, most recently dropping 2009's *Soft Airplane* and *Snow Blindness Is Crystal Antz*, the debut from his instrumental/experimental electronica-oriented project Black Mold.

From an interview with Chad VanGalen

Old becomes new again: playing with vintage Drum Machines

Circuit Bending: the creative short-circuiting of low-voltage electronic devices like drum machines or digital synthesizers to create new musical instruments and sound generators. It usually involves dismantling the machine and adding components like switches and potentiometers that alter a circuit.

A Breakdown

Now, I have nothing against modern drum machines. I use the Electron Machinedrum quite a bit – that's a great machine – as well as the JoMoX XBase, which is like a copy of Roland's TR-909 with MIDI, so you can program the shit out of it. That said, you can really play around with older drum machines, and get some really cool, original sounds. I keep my eyes on eBay or pawnshops for good deals on old gear. I mean, I got my Alesis HR-16B at a pawnshop in Vancouver for around \$10. These older models are just way easier to play with and manipulate. Their circuitry is right out in the open, they're bigger, and more easily-accessible.

Right now, I'm mostly using my HR-16B, which is the precursor to the SR16 – a terrible drum machine. The HR 16B is the black version of that giant grey calculator-looking HR-16, and was originally marketed as the "dance" version of that machine in the early '80s. I like it because the EPROM shift has a few different sounds in it – different from the original HR16, which was geared towards a live percussion-type sound. The HR 16B is more of a straight-up electro/dance machine.

The track "Swimming To Food" (from Black Mold's *Snow Blindness Is Crystal Antz*) is based around that. It's a great machine because you can shift each drum sound by 32 steps, so basically, you have 18 pads you can assign for any drum sample. Usually, I use the top row of nine pads for a whistle sound, then when you start pitch-shifting the whistle sound, you get nine different variations on one particular sound.

The Roland TR-707 is another digital machine I have that I've circuit bent the crap out of, also adding a modular patch bay. It's a fairly common drum machine used for circuit bending. I like the Roland machines for live use because they have the track lighting, but with my Alesis, I can take the Quantize function off, roll the BPM down to 20, record total nonsense – just super-fast, non quantized nonsense – and then after circuit bending, you can push it up to around 300 BPM. You can then pitch-shift each one of those sounds for this crazy, granular synthesizer. Add your circuit bending to that, and it's crazy.

Getting Started

I first got into this stuff by drunkenly playing around on an old

Yamaha synth that I had. I ended up breaking it apart, and in the process, accidentally touched the circuit board and started getting crazy sounds out of it. Now, there are dedicated online forums revolving around circuit bending – diagrams of circuit boards and where they've got their bend points, what kind of resistance you can put between them, etc. The community's grown quite a bit, but I got into it by fluke. Luckily, nothing was plugged into the wall.

To start experimenting, the Casio SK1 is a good entry-level, battery-powered unit. If you're interested in getting into the process of circuit bending and sound manipulation, play around with battery-powered equipment. I just lick my fingers and touch the circuit board to find the bend point. Then, you can solder two wires to a footswitch so you can always flip it back to stock – the way it functions out of the box. Once you get into the newer products, it's harder to access the circuits.

Drum machines are different because they need to be plugged into the wall, so I wouldn't recommend starting to work on something plugged in like that. I don't want to be responsible for any injuries!

More Fun With Circuit Bending

I had this old Hohner MIDI-controlled keyboard, which I circuit bent with a modular patch bay, and it just became so glorious. The Black Mold track "Dr. Snouth" is just that keyboard being triggered by a MIDI drum machine, and it's totally bent. The interesting thing about that is that it's a stereo keyboard, so all of the glitches were happening in stereo. It's one of the highest-fi sounds I've ever heard in terms of high-pitched insanity, and it's a lot of fun.





by James La Brie



Discipline & Exercises

I think it's vital for singers to keep their mind clear and support their physical strengths through exercise and vitamins. I jog 5 km a day and make sure I get a good night's sleep every single night. Abstaining from the lures of substance and its soothing qualities should be saved for when you're not depended upon by your band and fans to deliver the goods.

I have heard far too often of singers blowing their voices out within two weeks of a tour. It's a different animal out on the road. You are traveling, the food is not always what you would like, and there are many people to meet and shake hands with, hence leading to cold viruses and what else. You're fatigued and miss your family.

But isn't this what you dreamed of? Damn right, and it's important to never lose sight of this. This is what you as a child chased after. There is no feeling like it. When you're on stage, the energy and vibrations from the fans is indescribable. You feel like you're 70 ft. tall and have limitless reserves of jet fuel pumping through your veins.

Dream Theater usually tours for a year behind every album and has been doing so since '92. We have been known when doing "An Evening With..." (that's just ourselves with no support act), to play for over three hours.

I warm up 45 minutes before every show with stretching, lip bubbles, humming scales, and an exercise vocal coach Jaime Vendera showed me. It is an exercise to create vibration and buzzing in the palate and upper passageways of your mask or facial bone structure. You begin one octave below middle C and work your way up by 5ths. Make sure you do so with a volume no louder than your spoken voice. It is not about volume or power; it is about the buzz and vibration.

Do not go any further with your top note than middle C, keeping it very light. You want to slowly bend up to the top note and then back down to the starting position. There are five vowels to sing:

1. Start with "E" as in "me," very light up and down.
2. Then "OO" as in "you" up and down.
3. Next is "O" as in "flow."
4. Then "EH" (any Canadian should get this).
5. Lastly "AH" as in "father."

Credit Where It's Due

To further support the above, it wouldn't be complete without shedding light on two important people that have enabled me to continue growing, developing, and maintaining a vocal consistency while on tour. One of them has already been touted.

In the latter part of 2002, I began studying with Victoria Thompson. She showed me so many useful techniques, with breathing, support, and most importantly, warming up and cooling down. I still to this day do a vocal warm up she put together for me.

The other is Jaime Vendera, whom I began with about a year ago. He also showed me some great technique in strengthening the voice and keeping it in optimum shape. He too stresses warming up and cooling down. Pavarotti said it best, "You can never stop learning about the voice."

I can assure you singing for Dream Theater every night requires that I be in the best shape I can. Without the knowledge, discipline, and tools from study I by now would either have no voice or would've received so many steroid injections Lou Ferrigno would look like mini-me when standing by my side.

My message to all you singers is, there will always be critics but if you think you've got what it takes and have something special then don't listen to the pessimists; forge forward and realize your dream. Study – you will thank yourself when a tour is upon you. There are many different vocal styles out there, each with its merits. Who's to say yelling can't be beautiful?

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World Radio History

Joel



In an age where sales of the iTunes single seemingly outweigh those of the album as a gauge of success, a notable number of major recording artists have abandoned the craft of creating a full release worth of meaningful music. While this may be the result of a perceived unimportance or outright inability, the bottom line is that the amount of good records – substance from start to finish – is diminishing with each passing year.

With his aptly-named 2009 triple record, *Three*, Joel Plaskett has done what so few others seemingly can, three times over. The album's three discs each offer their listeners a complete and satisfying musical experience, united under a consistent musical theme while still boasting distinct nuances of musical flavour. The album was a major artistic ontaking for Plaskett, put together and recorded in his own project studio, dubbed Scotland Yard. It was here – his sacred musical stronghold – that I visited for an intimate discussion of how he approaches his compositions and the tools he uses to document them.

New Scotland Yard

After taking in my surroundings and appreciating the various instruments and pieces of equipment that adorn, but don't crowd, the small studio space, we're able to start talking music – Joel in the producer's chair and me on the piano bench. The first order of business is Scotland Yard, the source of his latest work and subsequently the venue for our interaction. Located just outside of Halifax, the studio is housed in a small shed-like structure in a residential neighbourhood.

The space came up for rent in late 2007, while Plaskett was on the road with his music. He began renting the space, despite being nowhere near the east coast, so that once he returned from his travels in February 2008, he'd be able to put it to use. At that year's Juno Awards ceremony, Plaskett met with well-known engineer Ken Friesen, who told him about a 2" Studer tape machine that was up for sale – the very one that now occupies the back corner of Plaskett's musical playground.

"I'd been thinking for awhile that I wanted my own space for recording," remembers Plaskett, "so I began investing to make *Three*. I bought the tape machine, and just got this new board," he says, gently rotating back-and-forth in a well-worn office chair in front of his Toft Audio Designs console. "I sort of dove into studio land and started setting this place up. It took me awhile to figure out where to put everything." Under the console is an array of vintage-look-

Plaskett

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY ANDREW KING

THE MARITIMES' MUSIC MAN

ing preamps and compressors, as well as some modern-looking tools and DIs. "It's fairly basic," says the modest music maker. It was very shortly after setting up the space that Plaskett began writing and recording *Three*.

The recording sessions for the three discs began in May 2008 and concluded that September. All but two songs ("Gone, Gone, Gone," which was done at Parkdalian Sound in Toronto, and "Wishful Thinking," done by Doug Easley down in Memphis) were recorded at Scotland Yard, with all 27 being sent down to Texas to be mixed by Canadian producer Gordie Johnson of Big Sugar and Crady fame—a regular collaborator of Plaskett and his Emergency's.

That Warm, Fuzzy Feeling

With his set-up at Scotland Yard, Plaskett has a limited number of tracks available to him when recording to tape, and he wouldn't have it any other way. "I've been loving the limitations of the machine," he says in what might initially come off as contradictory. "It's only 16 tracks, so it keeps the arrangements sparse. It leaves a lot of space in the music, which I really like." Having spent that last week or so digesting, dissecting, and ultimately delighting in *Three*, I understand immediately what he means.

Along those same lines, he appreciates not being able to fall back on a computer for edits or tweaks. "I actually have to sing a vocal track; I can't do five takes and then compile one." Sure, the temptation is always there, probably most apparent in the early hours of a mid-week morning, but Plaskett stays honest and true to his craft and takes pride in this attitude. After all, it puts emphasis on the source—the performances he's feeding into his minimal mic set-up.

Plaskett is a Sennheiser endorser, working closely with the company's Canadian operations, meaning he constantly has the opportunity to play around with some of the latest mics from Sennheiser and Neumann alike. The vocals for *Three* were mostly done on his prized Neumann M-150, which he was initially given to try out but ended up purchasing outright.

"Having such a simple set-up tells you if your arrangement is good," he attests. "I don't feel like I'm dialing in the most amazing sounds of all time—not by any means. But I like the sounds I'm getting, and I'm bigger on arranging the music properly." This attention to arrangement and input is evident throughout *Three* and his back catalogue too. He's used to setting up mics, hitting record, and then playing with his levels through trial-and-error.

"I'm still learning a lot of things," he humbly admits, though it's not like he needs to. The overall sound he's achieved with *Three* isn't indicative of one stumbled upon by a musician still learning his way around the controls. Were it not for the indiscretion of the credits inside the album's packaging, I'd have been none the wiser.

When he's ready to mix, he can convert his 16 tracks to digital and clean them up a bit. "The sounds of the buttons on the tape machine will sneak in; even the whir of the fan is audible sometimes," he says, but this isn't much of a deterrent. "It's not the cleanest audio you've ever heard, but then I don't necessarily want that. A lot of records have a bit of dust on the needle."

Plaskett's Playthings

Here's a quick taste of some of the gear Joel's currently using:

The Big Stuff

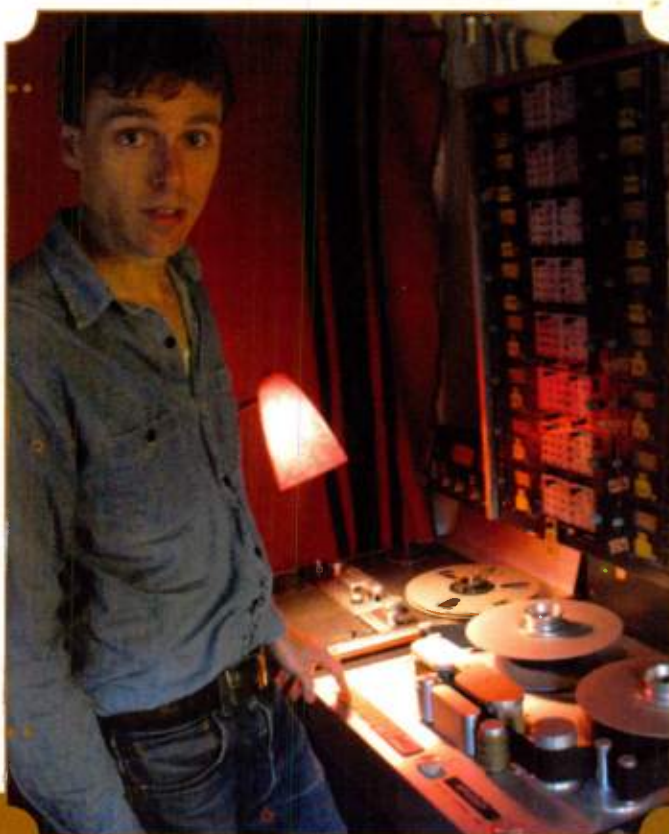
- Studer A-80 16-track 2" tape machine
- Studer A-810 1/4" tape machine
- Toft Audio Designs ATB 24 analog console

Preamps & Compressors

- Universal Audio 6176 preamp and comp
- Universal Audio LA 610 preamp and comp
- SSL XL channel strip
- Summit DCL 200 stereo comp
- Avalon U-5 DI

Main Mics

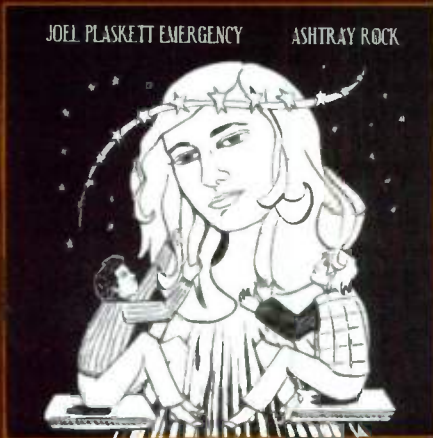
- Neumann M-150 tube
- Royer 122 ribbon
- Neumann KM 184
- Neumann TLM 103
- Sennheiser 604
- Sennheiser 421s
- Shure SM7 & SM57



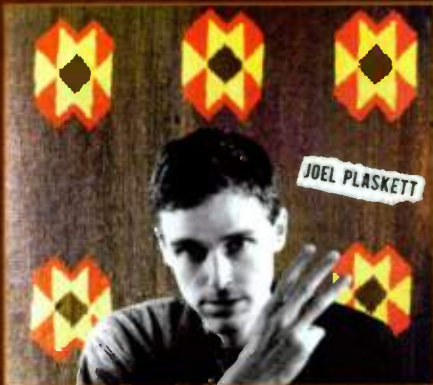
Joel Plaskett

Picking Plaskett Apart

So many Plaskett tracks, either with The Emergency or flying solo, contain those instantly-identifiable moments of musical bliss – the type of perfectly-toned passages that make a good song great and make gear-savvy fans ask, “How the hell did he do that?” Here’s a breakdown of a few of our favourites from his recent releases:



“Drunk Teenagers” (from 2007’s *Ashtray Rock*)
On the fuzz-lader lead guitar line. “That’s a Roger Meyer fuzz pedal, which only sounds good if it’s warm; you have to put it on something hot, like a warm piece of outboard gear, for it to sound good. It’s a Stratocaster through that and a phazer pedal, directly into a preamp.”



Through & Through & Through (from 2009’s *Three*)
On the thick, crisp horns: “That’s David Christensen and Rick Waychesko, a trumpet player who used to play in Tower of Power and stuff – a really cool cat. David and Rick tracked together on one ribbon mic, though I may have double tracked them – the two of them on one mic twice. It’s a tenor sax and trumpet, which I think is a fairly classic set-up for rockin’ soul horns.”

Wishful Thinking (from 2009’s *Three*)
On his use of a drum machine: “That song owes a big debt to JJ Cale. He was one of the first guys to use drum machines back in the ‘70s. Because drum machines are so consistent, there’s no nuance to them. Once you’re on that train, it just goes; you’re looking out the window at different things. I like them when I want other things in the mix to percolate a certain way. It draws you into the words. For that song, it was an old Hammond, but I also use a Roland when tracking here.”

In The Numbers

The studio is armed with an array of inviting instruments, strewn across the room in a tidy-but-functional fashion. His Ludwig drum kit has quite obviously been compiled and set-up to his exact liking, and sounds pretty good on record, too. A rack of axes, mostly Fenders, with a few hybrids with unmarked headstocks, hides behind the upright piano.

Sitting atop the piano is a bottle of Johnny Walker Red Label, which attentive fans will recognize from the lyrics to *Ashtray Rock*’s “Penny For Your Thoughts” as one of his simple pleasures. I get the sense that the scotch is more likely a leftover of a late-night listening session rather than any type of overindulgence. I guess a parallel exists between Plaskett the musician and Plaskett the occasional drinker. Good tastes in moderation allow flavours to be relished instead of overloaded and subsequently overlooked – a principle so clearly embraced on *Three*.

The concept behind the record was, evidently enough, all in the numbers. “I had a bunch of songs starting to percolate, and then stumbled upon the idea of making it a triple record,” he says with a grin, as though he were back in the spring of 2008 when the idea first came to him. “I started looking at all of the songs with the same word three times in them, and thought, “Maybe I should make a record of things in threes.” Then it was, “Maybe I should write a triple record.”

The 33-year-old (yeah, I know) decided to create a triple record with 33 songs – no coincidence. He ended up laying down beds for all of them, finished and mixed 30, put 27 on the record (nine on each disc), and finally released the other three on a 7” called *Three More*. “I saw it as a challenge to myself,” says Plaskett on what propelled him. “I had the material, you know? But I started making stuff up once I had the theme of the record, and it became more apparent that I could just create as I went.”

The fact that the record was a solo endeavor granted him that ability to create as he went, a method of composition that he feels let his creativity thrive. “I just kept adding to it – adding more parts for the girls to sing, and connecting more dots on a thematic and lyrical level.”

The girls of whom he speaks are Rose Cousins and Ana Egge, from Halifax and New York City respectively, both with burgeoning music careers of their own. The two are featured on the majority of the 27 tracks, almost always in unison. Originally, the two flew down to Memphis to sing on “Wishful Thinking,” but during the process, Plaskett decided he wanted them on the entire record, which meant bringing them both to Scotland Yard for tracking. “They’re always singing on one mic, together,” he says to explain the interesting tone of their voices. “It becomes this weird mix of two voices becoming one. As soon as you put them together, you get this thick but delicate vocal sound.”





The album also features contributions from his father, Bill, members of The Emergency, and others. "It was fun, but a lot of work," says Plaskett, looking back on the process. "My mind was totally racing for months and months and months." In what's perhaps a behaviour shared amongst the creative, Plaskett found himself unable to sleep on several nights before getting up and getting an idea down to paper. "You're afraid it'll be gone by the time you wake up," he laughs. Still, achieving something noteworthy rarely comes without suffering and sacrifice. "I'm really glad I did it," he says in summation.

So are most listeners, it would seem. The album was shortlisted for this year's Polaris Prize, as was *Ashtray Rock* the year it was released. Still, he recognizes that taking in three full discs of material may be a tall order for some. "There's a lot of repetition, so to some people, it probably comes off like the same song or idea over and over again, but that's sort of the point," he explains. "It's



A Tour Of Scotland Yard

Visit www.canadianmusician.com/multimedia for a fun, lighthearted tour of Scotland Yard with Plaskett himself. The artist he's currently producing, who can be heard in the clip, is Steve Poltz, originally from Halifax but currently residing in San Diego. Check him out at www.poltz.com.

supposed to be a journey. It's about travelling and the time it takes to get home. I felt that if I wanted to tell this story and make it an accurate representation of the way I perceive the journey."

Three's A Charm

Whether it's his solo work or that with The Emergency, any CD that bears his name is pretty easily identifiable as a Plaskett piece. The two entities are indeed different and considerably unique in presentation; however, his lyricism, trademark delivery, and several melodies beneath either banner relate quite closely to one another.

"The Emergency stuff is really collaborative," says Plaskett, explaining the difference when it comes to writing for one project or the other. "There are different personalities that show up in the Emergency stuff. Our drummer, Dave (Marsh), for example, brings a lot of energy and unpredictability to that equation. It informs the music and makes it more collective." That's an important thing not to lose sight of when making a good rock record, and this isn't lost on Plaskett.

"When you're putting together good rock music with other people, you need to rehearse so you can hit your marks. That's not to say there's no spontaneity, but you have to be well-rehearsed." With *Three*, though, he didn't want to rehearse. "I just wanted to make it up, writing a lot of it on the spot. There's a different vibe to it, for sure."

He seems to bounce between the two headspaces quite comfortably, understanding the creative benefits of each. "There's so much to be learned from playing with other people that you'll never achieve on your own," he acknowledges. "Even when I say, 'I want you to do this,' it's somebody else doing it with a different perspective."

Between the two projects, Plaskett's become a household name on the east coast and well across the nation – but not without hard work. "Canada's a big country, and it's a hard nut to crack," he says of his years on the road. "I've been keeping at it, though, and it's been getting better and better. I feel really lucky about that."

His most recent tour in support of *Three* found him playing some respectably-sized soft seat theatres and drawing significant crowds – especially when you consider his surprisingly modest album sales. "I've never really sold a lot of records. *Three* has been the best-selling record of mine so far, but it's still not a lot, especially considering the live draw I have."

The state of the record industry is a tired subject, but to hear someone like Plaskett's take on it – someone who's been through it all and only continues to prosper – seems like too great an opportunity to pass up. "There's just so much talent, but it's a hard climate right now," he says of the Canadian scene. "We're trying to re-educate people about the value of music. Records are so easily traded and ripped and passed along for free that artists just aren't making the same money they used to from record sales, so record companies aren't putting money into bands anymore to any great degree."

The music on *Three* is rooted in tradition, with strong influences of folk, rock, and country from years passed; however, that appreciation of the past doesn't apply to how he treats his career. The time and money he's invested into Scotland Yard only helps him in his plight to become more self-sufficient, and it's already begun paying off. "Maple is a really good label for me," he says, "but at the same time, the record industry is in such a flux that it's nice to feel a certain degree of independence. It's nice having [Maple] behind me, and they're doing a great job, but I like having that element of control over my own career."

Three encapsulates this ideal perfectly, and though it has enough catchy and identifiable material for the current swarm of single-hungry music fans, it's nonetheless a beautifully-crafted album. "In today's iPod world, people will often just pick a few songs, put them on a playlist, and rock to that," says Plaskett. "And that's fine, but I put it together to be a full record."

The repetition he alluded to earlier is indeed present, but hardly as a deterrent; instead, it unites the 27 individual tracks and tastefully weaves them together. After all, he says, "That's a lot of what the life of a musician is – doing the same things over and over again." And that's not a bad thing; Plaskett, like most who make an attempt of bringing their music to the masses, wouldn't have it any other way. ■



Andrew King is the Editor of Canadian Musician.

Those 4 Elements Of

Songwriting



BY LUTHER MALLORY

When I was 16, I was brand new to the idea of writing songs. Before that I had been taking for granted that songs even had to BE written. They were just... there.

My brother played guitar, so my dad bought me a bass so we could play together. The previous owner of that bass had carved the word "shit" into the front of the body so I always felt really encouraged when I played. Soon after that, my brother bought a 4-track recorder and we both began trying to write songs and record them. All these great bands we were listening to like Faith No More and Fishbone wrote such great, memorable songs and we wanted to know how. What's the process?

One day, I caught a Smashing Pumpkins interview on TV and some kid asked Billy Corgan how he writes songs. I perked up. This could be the ticket. Corgan turned his weird, bald head towards the kid and said, "I don't really know," or something to that effect. That's where he left it. The VJ started grilling him about what he looks for in a girlfriend or something, and I burned my ZERO T-shirt.

Despite all my rage, as I got some distance on songwriting, I began to realize more and more that Billy Corgan was right. He was right in that songwriting isn't an exact science and every songwriter has a personal process that usually doesn't make a lick of sense to anyone but them. Good songwriters tend to have

to be either self-aware or self-conscious enough to convey something human in their songs. Whether it's confidence or hesitation, it has to be something bigger than the song itself that the listener can relate to. Before that happens, though, the fundamentals of songwriting are pretty formulaic.

We have to be technicians and know how to build it before we can have a solid enough platform to start preaching from. The intangible emotive element has to be preempted by something tangible and almost conclusive that nearly every song has. Those four elements of song writing: Melody, Rhythm, Lyrics, and Coolness.

Nothing is really conclusive about songwriting. It's a matter of taste and non-competitive. No one's songs are ACTUALLY better than anyone else's because it's not mathematics; it's whatever tickles your ears. Here's a thought I'd like to run by you about how those elements may add up to something certainly not conclusive, but perhaps a little bit curious when we relate them to the greatest, most successful songwriters of all-time.

The Idea Is This:

Based on critical acclaim, mass success, and standing the test of time, for the sake of the idea, we'll call The Beatles the best band ever. If that's the case, we'll say that The Beatles, because they're the best band ever, are therefore the

best at writing and incorporating those four elements into their songs. From here we can, inconclusively, analyze any other established artist or band by weighing their use of those elements against The Beatles' to see how their critical acclaim and mass success stand up. This will, hopefully, work simply as a case study for the crucial importance of those four elements of song writing.

I'll give an example with Beck. If I break down Beck's music the way I see it, referring mostly to his hits and singles, he generally writes songs that are rhythmic and cool, but doesn't usually focus on melody and lyrics in the sense that he's usually talking/raping and he seems to often take the gibberish angle in his lyric writing. That's cool and it's part of what we like about him, but if those four elements are fundamental to what turns people on about music, creates interest and familiarity, or takes you to a place you've never been, then not focusing on two of those four elements may very well cut your audience in half. As well, if Beck is mostly dealing in coolness, in my opinion, the coolest Beck song still isn't as cool as "Come Together."

Now, not everybody is trying to be the best and biggest band in the world, and if you want to write songs that are instrumental and atonal on a dollar store kazoo, I'd like to hear it. My purpose is to simply introduce an idea about a possible relation between those fundamental elements of songwriting and the songwriters who have had critical acclaim, mass success, and have stood the test of time using them. Beck chooses to write songs that focus on rhythm and coolness because that's his interest, but I've also heard great melodies and great lyrics in Beck songs. You have to learn to be a well-rounded songwriter before you can start purposely taking things out of context and have people still "get it." You wouldn't decide to learn how to fly a plane and not bother to figure out what that row of buttons does.

Of course, there are plenty of arguments; plenty of debate to be had; plenty of factors like genre, image, luck, experience, The Jonas Brothers. These days, bands focus on marketing, headband placement, and jump kicks before they even consider the endless craft that is songwriting and it might be about time to refocus...

Here to weigh in on those elements and give us all an idea of their own processes are three tremendously talented

Canadian songwriters. Meaghan Smith, a singer/songwriter from Halifax; Nathan Ferraro of The Midway State from Toronto; and David Macmichael of The Danger Bees from Halifax.

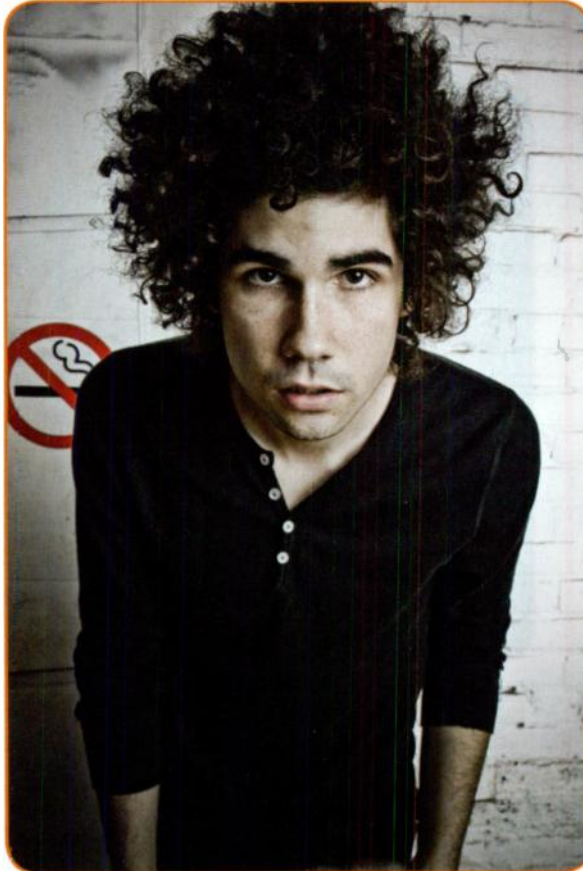
Coolness

I like the term "coolness" instead of something like "style" because style is a very general term; if a songwriter has control enough to create a vibe or a particular atmosphere that's in some way their own – that's cool. When we begin as songwriters, we all have trouble defining our sound. How do I decide what direction is best? What's my angle? Most dauntingly, how do I develop a sound of my own? Meaghan Smith calls it a "musical identity crisis." It's a gift and a curse for beginner songwriters because it's often a result of having such diverse and various influences that you simply can't decide if you'd rather play death metal or folk music, but it's also a major frustration because you feel like you can't figure out which direction to go in.

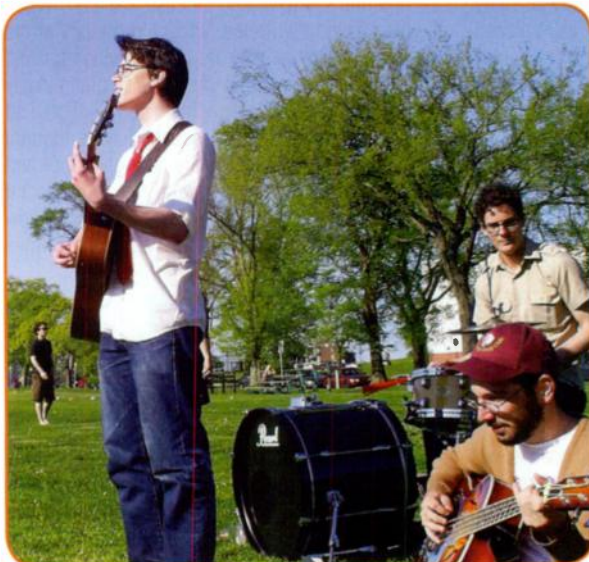
For my own crisis control, I made a conscious decision to quit trying to decide on somebody else's template and instead just write what I thought sounded good. Simple. I stumbled on some chords I liked and decided to let the song go where it wants. The only rule was: "If my ears like how it sounds, then it's good." The result was my first real honest to goodness "I'm proud of this" kind of song.

Smith struggled in much the same way. "I was asking myself, 'What kind of musician am I?' I was trying to write all these songs and none of them were working. So, I went and met my friend and we had a drink together and he said, 'Meaghan, you should just relax and write some really bad songs.' It was the best musical advice anyone has ever given me because that's exactly what I did. I went and I wrote some really terrible songs on purpose and it was so refreshing and just really fun. After that, I kind of figured, you know, if I know how to write a bad song, then maybe I know how to write a good song. I know what I don't like, so maybe I know what I do like."

What I call "coolness" Ferraro calls the song's sonic soundscape. "The sonic soundscape is one of the most important things to a song for people to relate to. You



LEFT: NATHAN FERRARO OF THE MIDWAY STATE.
BOTTOM LEFT: DAVE MACMICHAEL & THE DANGER BEES.
BOTTOM RIGHT: MEAGHAN SMITH.



Those 4 Elements Of SONGWRITING

Getting Ideas Down

Inspiration or ideas for songs can strike at any time. Here are some tools that can help you get those ideas down and documented for future development...



Zoom H4n

The H4n offers 4-track 24-bit/96 kHz recordings and features two built-in mics, XLR and Hi-Z inputs, 50 onboard DSP effects, time stamping, a 1 GB SD card, and more.

www.zoom.co.jp/english

TASCAM DR-07

The DR-07 includes a pair of small condenser mics for true stereo sound as 24-bit WAV files or MP3s, as well as USB 2.0 connection, line in, auto-gain setting, and more.

www.tascam.com



EDIROL R-09HR

The R-09HR offers up to 24-bit/96 kHz audio without compression to a removable SD card, as well as built-in electret condenser mics, a wireless remote control, and more.

www.edirol.com



Sony PCM-D50

The PCM-D50 offers 24-bit/96 kHz audio, MP3 playback, dual digital limiter, two built-in electret condenser mics for X/Y or wide-stereo recording, and more.

www.sonymstyle.ca



Yamaha Pocketrak CX

The Pocketrak CX records 16-bit/44.1 kHz WAV files or MP3s, an X/Y stereo mic configuration, peak limiter, training features, 2 GB of onboard memory, and more.

www.yamaha.ca

Marantz PMD620

The PMD620 is a 24-bit SD recorder with built-in condenser mics and speaker. Other features include non-destructive editing, WAV or MP3 recording, onboard editing, and more.

www.d-mpro.com



could have a really beautiful song, but if the sound of it is wrong and it doesn't fit the mood of the song then it can take the listener to the wrong place and just be totally off."

Ferraro is a bit of a cheater when it comes to his own "sonic soundscape" development in that he sees the soundscape of his songs with colours — perhaps a mild case of Synesthesia, a neurological phenomenon where two of your senses are hard wired together. I don't know much about it, I just kind of wish I had it. "It's pretty obvious to me when something is wrong. When I wrote "Never Again," it was blue and it's always been blue to me. We had an acoustic guitar in the recording of that song but the sound of the acoustic was more of a green

Ferraro's lyric writing process, loosely: "I try to put the listener in a place. I'm very visual and it makes a bigger emotional connection when I can relate back visually to the experience I'm writing about and what I'm feeling. When I listen to a song that I really relate to, it's never the 'we are one' or big statement lines that make me feel anything. For some reason, when I hear a line about a yellow taxi driving away, that's what makes me feel emotional. It's the little human things that come out that I relate to the most. That's how I try to write."

Macmichael's lyric writing/apologizing process, loosely: "Lyrically, I'll have a subject like a person that I want to address in mind, so, a girl that I'm breaking up with or someone I'm having



shade in the song so we took it out."

We can't all see our songs in colours, and more than any other element, coolness is often credited as much to production and arrangement as it is to songwriting. "I felt like The Danger Bees didn't have a sound at all on our first three releases," says Macmichael. "I felt we were recording these songs in the most bare bones way possible. If any band covered those songs as basically as they could, they would sound exactly like us. I picked the guys that I'm playing with now because I knew they were good arrangers and for them to come in and give the songs their own personal touch would help build on the otherwise skeletal, basic way that the songs could have come out."

Lyrics

Lyric writing, in my opinion, is the most overlooked, under-appreciated element, especially for beginner writers. A lot of young writers treat lyrics as a side note; a necessary, but unimportant piece of the song the same way a lot of vocalists approach singing: I can talk, so I can sing. Not likely.

Every songwriter has a different approach and a different motivation for lyric writing, but every good songwriter understands the importance of good lyrics. Good doesn't mean poetic or perfectly understandable; it means well thought-out lyrics that have a purpose, feel cohesive, and maintain a consistency.

turbulence with. I'll go about writing the song in a way that I'm delivering a message to them while putting myself in the best light possible (laughs), whether it's me just being really sorry, or mournful, or regretful. It's a way of presenting myself in a polished sense. So the songs are often vehicles to communicate, and usually apologize to the people in my life."

Smith's lyric writing process, loosely: "When I write I have to write the lyrics and melody at the same time because they are so intertwined for me. The melody dictates what the lyrics are going to say and the lyrics dictate where the melody will go. I sit down with my guitar and I usually have a thought or impression that I feel really strongly about and that's what prompts me to write the song, so I'll just start singing and however it goes, that's how it goes. Then I'll go back over it a bunch of times and fix things."

Rhythm + Melody

In terms of what works and what doesn't work, Rhythm and Melody have combined forces to produce the absolute worst and best songs we've ever heard. The melody is usually up front, working to create that familiarity for the listener. It may be the element that most easily makes or breaks a song since the listener is often relying on it to be good enough to remember. There is, of course,



no melody without a rhythmic pattern for notes to exist in, so the two elements are forever bonded. Usually, before lyrics and certainly before coolness, the beginning of a song starts with rhythm and melody. If you don't know enough to wrangle a decent melody or rhythmic pattern, the dream of non-parental fans is over.

"There is a lot more to defining a song in its rhythmic patterns than in which notes you choose," says Macmichael. "A friend once told me 'notes are finite, but rhythms are infinite.' People will say that song 'a' sounds like song 'b' if they have the same beat behind them, but if two songs have the exact same notes and chords but one is swinging in 3/4 time, no one usually notices the similarity."

Melody relies on rhythm to give it context, and cadence to control the movement of the piece. Cadence is a well-studied science. It's the math behind what makes a musical phrase sound concluded, or like it's transitioning to the next part. This becomes instinctive for many experienced songwriters but Macmichael speculates about whether that is a consequence of all the well-written music we've always heard or if it really is simple mathematics. "Some people think that melody is all about consonance and dissonance and the only thing that determines what makes a good or bad melody is how familiar it is to the listener, but I'm from the school of thought that there are mathematics at play that make one melody more satisfying to the brain than another. I don't write thinking about what is mathematically working, but that's why I think I like some melodies more than others."

For me, cadence is something that, if we don't learn theoretically, we end up figuring out by trial and error anyway. I've always been better at writing with rhythm over melody in mind and I think, even though we're always learning, it's smartest to write considering our strengths. Rhythm seems to be mine, so I lean that way.

Ferraro usually takes the "melody first" approach in his writing. "Melody has always been the most important thing to me," he says. "It's what gets me off. Unless I'm trying to say something with a specific lyric, it always starts with a melody. When I get the melody, the rhythmic syncopation

of certain words will sound right with it and from there I'll discover what the song could be about lyrically."

Some songwriters who take the "melody first" approach can either end up with a very strong, focused melody, or get stuck on lyrics and find themselves on RhymeZone.com trying to find that one three syllable word for the end of the first verse that has to rhyme with "Kerouak." Jamming in lyrics can make the whole thing feel stiff. Smith's approach allows her some melodic, rhythmic, and lyrical freedom. "By writing the lyrics and melody at the same time, I'm never trying to fit anything into anything else rhythmically, so there's less restriction." The result of this kind of writing is often a looser, less tense rhythmic feel, and often a nicely back-phrased vocal feel that falls where it wants and creates a soulful vibe.

Those four elements of song writing are part of the foundation of what we're all trying to master. Nathan, Meaghan, David, and myself have our methods to share, but, like Billy Corgan once taught me, no songwriter can completely relate to what we do personally. A great songwriter becomes great because he or she's figured out how to turn their own inspiration, and influences, and self-awareness, and self-consciousness into a personal window into his or her thoughts and feelings. For that reason, one's method must be one's own.

The emotive element of songwriting may indeed be the most important, but without the context of a well-written, well structured song, the message is often lost. Ferraro insightfully wraps us up: "If you were painting a picture with no frame around it and no plan in mind, and it wasn't fitting into anything, then at the end of the day it would just be a blob of paint. If you can learn the craft and keep learning, then eventually you can forget about the frame and be creative within those boundaries naturally. That's the pinnacle for me." ■



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.

M-Audio MicroTrack II

The MicroTrack II offers 24-bit/96 kHz CompactFlash WAV or MP3 recording, TRS and line inputs, a T-shaped condenser mic, analog input limiter, and more. www.m-audio.ca



Olympus LS-11

The LS-11 offers 24-bit/96 kHz recording in WMA, MP3, and WAV formats, as well as built-in mics, onboard editing, the ability to partially erase and divide files, and more. www.olympuscanada.com



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Alesis ProTrack

The ProTrack slides onto the iPod to record 16-bit/44.1 kHz audio. It includes a pair of combo XLR/1/4" inputs, built-in stereo mics, phantom power, a switchable limiter, and more. www.alesis.com



Blue Mikey

The Mikey stereo condenser mic attaches to the iPod for recording, offering three gain settings, a movable head, built-in speaker for playback, and more. www.bluemic.com

BUILDING On Your

BASS

BY ANDREW KING

There's the old adage that the guitar is harder to play and bass is harder to master, which sometimes does ring true - especially in a band with so many notes flying around," says Arif Mirabdolbaghi amidst our interview about his instrument

"Sometimes it comes down to having the wisdom and experience of which notes you're going to highlight," he continues. "How are you going to nurture the chord and maintain the groove of a song under this whacky amount of 16th notes coming your way?" Mirabdolbaghi is the bassist of progressive metal act Protest The Hero, so one can easily empathize with him with regards to the swarm of 16th notes flying his way at any given time. Though none of our other panelists come from metal bands, they're certainly accustomed to playing in groups that often find a dizzying whirlwind of breakneck bars coming at them.

Over his career, Billy Sheehan has played with some of the best in the business. The former Mr. Big bassist has kept company with everyone from Steve Vai to Billy Gibbons. He has his own signature bass, designed in conjunction with Yamaha, and several instructional DVD titles to his name - no stranger to the instrument or those that play it.

Brandi Disterheft is a jazz bassist and composer from North Vancouver, and the winner of the 2008 Juno Award for Tradition Jazz Album of the Year. She's had the opportunity to study under Rufus Reid, Rodney Whitaker, and Oscar Peterson, currently studying in New York with Ron Carter.

Denis "Turtle" Arsenault comes from Moncton, NB's outlaw country act The Divorcees. Perhaps the only player not constantly accompanying a busy band (at least with his main act), he's been nominated for an ECMA through a previous project. Despite being more active in the country realm, he's also a fusion fanatic and can certainly keep up with his company.

What all of these players have in common, aside from an obvious passion for the low-end, is their continual striving to progress on their instruments, both in terms of technicality and musicianship, and also how they approach interacting with others. That is, after all, the primary role of the bassist - to keep other musicians anchored in melody and rhythm. It's that "wisdom and experience" that Mirabdolbaghi's mentioned that each of these players continues to develop, regardless of where they are in their careers.

TECHNOLOGY FOR TONE

Finding your appropriate tone is an important aspect of both your establishment and development as an artist. Even though they've been playing for years (and in Sheehan's case, becoming arguably the most recognizable bassist in rock), these artists continue to play around with their rigs to either improve their tone or find better and easier ways of achieving it.

Sheehan is a self-described "creature of habit," and prefers to keep his gear relatively consistent, relying on his hands for improvement. "In a way, though, I've always been a gear head and tweaker," he admits. "I like the 'new' version of the MXR (Dunlop) Dyna-Comp. I've heard it's made from circuit boards they found from the '70s. It's a great little comp." Even with his more-than-established signature sound, he's "always on the prowl for inspiring gear."

Despite the impressive level of mastery he's achieved over his bass, Mirabdolbaghi is a young musician, and still active in his tonal development. He recently adopted a second cabinet (2 x 15) in his live rig. "The inclusion of the two 15" speakers creates this nice pocket of sound," he explains. "If you stay within it and stand a bit downstage, you can almost get everything you need to hear from the show without relying too much on the monitors." Making your gear work for you, and not the other way around, is vital to a comfortable rig, and makes it a lot easier for you to grow as a player.

I used a '57 (Fender) Precision and an old Ampeg Flip-top. Words can't describe how satisfied my ears were when I hopped on that bass. It was like going back home. The tone was natural and balanced - just sweet"
 - Denis "Turtle" Arseneault



Turtle found a rather deadly studio tone while recording The Divorcees' *Last Of The Free Men* at The Bathouse Studios in Kingston. "I used a '57 (Fender) Precision and an old Ampeg Flip-top," he shares. "Words can't describe how satisfied my ears were. When I hopped on that bass, it was like going back home. The tone was natural and balanced - just sweet."

Though Disterheft's playing style calls for a more organic set-up, her attention to technology is still crucial to her performances. The majority of her tone can be attributed to her 1920s Pfretzner bass, but capturing that tone as truly as possible is an art in itself. "I use an Acoustic Image amp with a double input for mic and DI," she explains, currently sitting with a balance of 75 per cent of her signal coming from an AMT clip-on mic, and 25 per cent DI.

As Sheehan's slightly touched upon, there needs to be a balance between technological growth and your growth as an actual player. A great player can sound great on lousy gear; a lousy player will sound lousy regardless of the tools at his or her disposal.

I've always been a gear head and tweaker. I like the 'new' version of the MXR (Dunlop) Dyna-Comp. I've heard it's made from circuit boards they found from the '70s. It's a great little comp."
 - Billy Sheehan



GROWING AS A PLAYER

Disterheft's growth as a player has largely been guided by some of the masters under whom she's studied, currently working one-on-one with Ron Carter - a jazz legend and one of the most recorded bassists of all time. "We've been working on sound and technique," she says of the sessions. The sessions entail everything from Disterheft holding corks in her hands to develop the technique that allows her to get the biggest sound with the least amount of effort to hearing stories about Carter's collaborations with Miles Davis. "It's quite inspiring - really learning from the master."

Atop the more conventional ways of musical growth are some rather abstract and outside-the-box ideas. "You *must* continue to grow," states Sheehan. "That doesn't mean 'play faster,' by any means. I learn something new each time I pick up [my instrument]. You should be as creative in your approach to learning as you are a player. Play slower. play faster, play left-handed - anything to jog yourself out of complacency."

Coming from a band that embodies the very idea of "shreddery," Mirabdolbaghi's been looking to a more traditional, musical approach to improvement. "My idea of improving the last little while has been figuring out what not to play - figuring out where I can have my moments and embellish, and where I can hold back and be a more traditional player."

That zest for improvement is born directly from inspiration - whatever it is about music and your instrument that drives you to improve. That inspiration can certainly be elusive, regardless of skill level, but it's those that find it often who are most likely to strive. "I think inspiration comes in waves," says Disterheft. "It comes in spurts of weeks or months. You might lose interest, but usually all it takes is that new album or a breathtaking performance to really inspire you."

Currently in New York studying, Disterheft finds inspiration in her anonymity. "Just coming to New York and being out of my environment, starting at the bottom of the barrel is very inspiring. I have to prove myself at each jam session." Of course, studying under a teacher that has the power of



PHOTO: ANDREW KING

QUICK PEEK: ARIF MIRABDOLBAGHI

Bass: Spector Euro 5 LX

Amp: Aguilar AG500 head through a Doyle 4 x 10 & Doyle 2 x 15

Effects, Etc.: BOSS Chromatic Tuner, BOSS Bass Synth, Tech 21 SansAmp DI



BUILDING On Your BASS

inspiration is sure-fire. "It's always good learning from someone else because it keeps you on a schedule."

Turtle's love of jazz allows him to explore concepts that might not traditionally be associated with country, but are still relevant. "If you're listening to a good jazz record with a well-rounded lineup, you're listening just as much to notes not being played," he says. "I slowly learned to take that laid-back, more musical approach."

Similarly, Mirabdolbaghi's found a new musical circle that lets him bring new ideas back to Protest The Hero. Lately, he's been playing with alt. country artists on a contrabass – a visit into Disterheft's world, you could say. "I realize what a far cry a contrabass is to an electric, but I still approached my first country gig with a sense of arrogance," he admits. "I realized, though, that within this technical context (of Protest), every 16th note is accounted for. Here, there's less room for error. What shocks me about these country shows is the openness of the groove."

I realized that within this technical context (of Protest The Hero), every 16th note is accounted for. Here, there's less room for error. What shocks me about these country shows is the openness of the groove.
- Arif Mirabdolbaghi

GROWING AS A GROUP

Interaction with other musicians is perhaps the most effective means of developing as a bassist. Once the technique is at a high level of competence, it's figuring out where the bass belongs in any given musical environment that separates the skilled from the masterful.

"My albums don't feature me so much as a bass player," says Disterheft. "When I buy a bass player's album, I don't want to hear all these bass solos in a row. That's boring." She's more of a traditionalist, looking for the bass to be pumping out solid low-end lines, featured sometimes, but not regularly. "I'd rather the other players grow out of that," she says with an air of wisdom beyond her years. Her latest album, *Second Side*, bears more of a pop influence and does well highlighting her collaborators like Holly Cole and Raneé Lee.

Arsenault is comfortable enough in his playing to sit back, lock into a simple, efficient groove, and let his band mates come to the forefront of the mix, be it live or in the studio. "If you listen to my playing on [*Last Of The Free Men*], you'll hear some really simple ascending or descending chromatic runs – nothing flashy, but it supports the song." Supporting the song – and your band – is still the primary function of any bassist in any genre, especially one as lyric-heavy as country music. "It lets the guitars and vocals come front and centre. I don't need to draw attention to myself."

With his band's success starting when none of the members could vote, Protest The Hero fans have watched Mirabdolbaghi & Co. grow as players over the years, though a lot of that growth between albums can be attributed to his playing with his Protest mates and other musicians alike. "I don't see music as a monogamous relationship," he says. "When I play outside the band, I feel I can

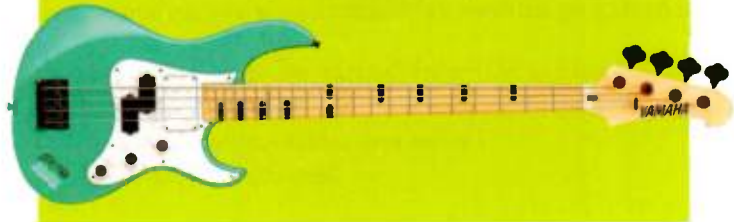


QUICK PEEK: BILLY SHEEHAN

Bass: Yamaha Attitude LTD II (Billy's signature bass)

Amp: Ampeg

Effects, Etc.: Pearce preamp, Avalon Pre/Compressor/EQ, Neve Stereo Compressor



benefit the band by taking something back and sharing it with them. They can do the same, and we're all more mature players because of it."

Sheehan's list of collaborators reads like the search engine results if you were to type in "modern musical virtuosos." Those he's worked with on his latest outing, *Holy Cow!*, are no exceptions. The album includes guest spots from Mr. Big's Paul Gilbert, Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, Dug Pinneck of King's X, and Ray Luzier on the skins. "What incredible talent," remarks Sheehan. "Over the years, I've been fortunate to play with a lot of incredible talents. They've all left their mark."

When I buy a bass player's album, I don't want to hear all these bass solos in a row. That's boring. - Brandi Disterheft

GETTING SETTLED IN THE MIX

Once you've established a solid technical framework – even one as reputable as Sheehan's – there's still room for progression. You can either find new ways to expand that framework or new ways to work within it. "If I'm not being challenged by something difficult, I find a challenge in something simple," says Sheehan. "I'm always listening to new stuff (sometimes: only new to me) as well



Moderate ♩ = 120

SHREDDING SOME "BLOODMEAT"

Mirabdolbaghi has personally transcribed the tapped bridge to "Bloodmeat," the first single from the band's 2008 release, *Fortress*. Check it out live on the band's new live CD/DVD *Gallop Meets The Earth*.



Access the transcription with his notes at:
www.canadianmusician.com/multimedia.

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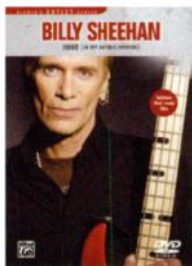
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BUILDING On Your **BASS**

as revisiting and being re-inspired by what came before me."

What Turtle tries to bring to the band is not only a solid instrumental foundation, but also a solid musical foundation that fits into the framework of the classic country his band aims to create. "I find that modern country is losing the roots of what the music was all about," he says. "I'm a bass player, so I'll listen to bass players. Now, you have slides and slaps going on, and I feel it's straying from the original art form. That's what I'm trying to bring back." Is he capable of some fancy slides and slaps? Sure, but knowing what his band's music calls for is what makes him a valuable asset to his band mates. "I've stepped it up a bit, but it's still nowhere near what I'm used to playing with fusion and whatnot. I'm keeping it as tasteful and basic as I know how."

Disterheft can be found in New York jazz clubs until 5 a.m., just jamming and learning from her peers. "If you want to be one of the best, on the road all the time, you always need to be up on your game," she says. Her "game" is that of being able



IN HIS HUMBLE OPINION

Check out an exclusive look at Billy Sheehan's latest instructional DVD, *IMHO*, currently available through Alfred Publishing.

Access the clip at: www.canadianmusician.com/multimedia.

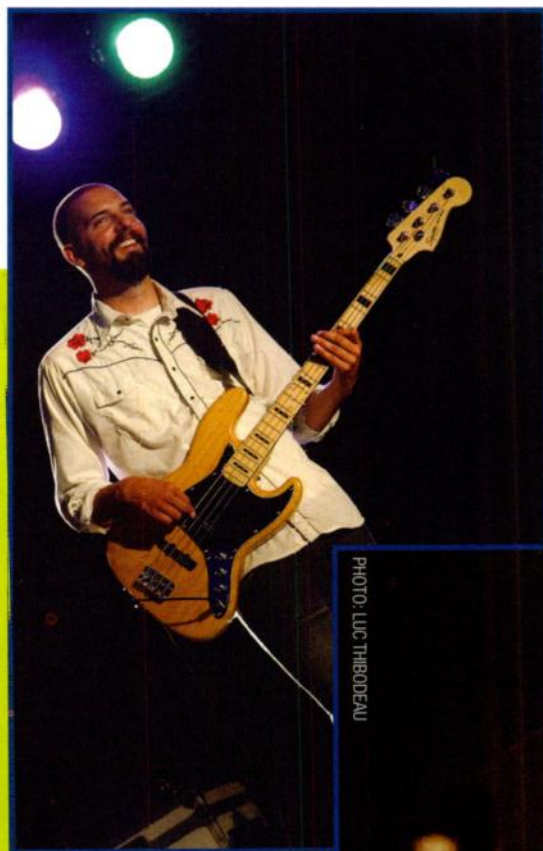


PHOTO: LUC THIBODEAU

QUICK PEEK:
DENIS "TURTLE" ARSENAULT
Bass: Fender Vintage Modified Jazz Bass (for country, above); Dingwall Afterburner 2 5-string with fanned frets (for jazz, right)
Amp: Fender Bassman
Effects, Etc.: None



PHOTO: LUC THIBODEAU



QUICK PEEK:
BRANDI DISTERHEFT
Bass: Pfretzner 1920s-era stand-up
Amp: Acoustic Image Coda+
Effects, Etc.: Applied Microphone Technology clip-on mic, David Gage Realist pickup to DI

to not only competently keep up with the musicians with whom she's sharing a stage, but also add her own flavour to the mix.

Mirabdolbaghi stresses the importance of the bass in any musical setting. "If we're holding a B, and the rest of the band shifts to an E, everybody has to wait until we drop down for it to feel 'right.' In a sense, we're masters of the movement in music. Maybe that's why verbs are so commonly associated with the bass – take the bass for a walk, a little bounce in the beat – something like that." His point is a good one, and bassists should be well aware of their influence in any given musical setting, despite any lack of appreciation from the average listener. "It's almost this maternal, supportive role of keeping everyone together," he adds.

"You're not necessarily going to get accolades for it, but there is plenty of admiration from the other people involved in this secret club of ours."

THE NEVERENDING STORY

As our players have all attested, the thirst for improvement as a player and performing musician is one shared by all of the greats. Without it, you're simply not bringing much to the music you're creating, especially if you're doing it with others. Think you've fossilized in your abilities or interests? Think again.

"Go back to what turned you on in the first place," advises Sheehan. "Revisit the first few records or songs that made you realize this is what you want to do. Relearn them as if you'd never heard them before. Go after the piece you gave up trying to learn and get it once and for all." Most important, he says: "Consider how lucky you are to have found a connection to music in the first place. We're all very lucky for that."

Sheehan is perhaps living proof that the journey never ends, with Turtle, Disterheft, and Mirabdolbaghi all offering proof of the success you can find with that early determination. "When you see those guys that have been playing for 40 years, they just have this mastery and control that's remarkable," says Mirabdolbaghi. "I still feel like a wide-eyed child in their presence." For someone with his obvious skill (did you try the "Bloodmeat" tapping yet?), that speaks volumes as to what it takes to master the instrument. "I guess that's part of the romantic exchange between musicians."



Andrew King is the Editor of Canadian Musician.



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PERCUSSION IN 2009: TALKING SHOP

BY CHRIS TAYLOR-MUNRO

All drummers, regardless of age or ability, love to talk shop. Whether it be some "hybrid rudiment" (yes, hybrids are everywhere – now even drumming has them), the latest piece of gear we can't live without, the new kid blowing people away with freaky technique, or the raucous bunch gathered backstage after a gig sharing funny exploits, most drummers love to talk about their passion for drums.

MEETING OUR PERCUSSIVE PANELISTS

CM has once again rounded up a panel of very active players with advice on playing live, touring, practicing, staying healthy, what it takes to get gigs, and making sure you have a little fun along the way.

Nailing down our first contributor was a challenge indeed. Originally from Long Island, NY, currently on a world tour with Dream Theater, Mike Portnoy is forever in constant motion. The self-proclaimed "obsessive-compulsive workaholic" chats with CM from Helsinki, Finland before heading to his pre-show massage. "Rough," you say? It's probably the only time the man sits still. Portnoy's catalogue of DVDs, both instructional and live, crowns him the busiest drummer alive.

CANADIAN MUSICIAN • 1491

PERCUSSION IN 2009

Posture is just one of the considerations for your set-up and having that comfort factor goes along way too. Keeping comments: "I'm going to say the most important part of my kit is my drum throne. When I don't play with my own throne I don't feel comfortable. It can feel too bouncy or you feel like you're tilted forward. I'm used to a saddle seat and if I get a round one, I feel like I'm going to fall off."

Morgan's must have piece of gear: "As of now I'm more dependant than I would like to admit, on my double bass pedal. The pedal feels amazing and its not one I see giving up anytime soon. DW 9000, baby!"



CHUCK D. KEEPING

Says Trager: "We do a lot of fly-in shows so I'm no stranger to having to choose just one or two components. I'd have to go with cymbals on this one. Bass drum pedal is also important, but not a must." Each player has a different element that provides continuity so they can concentrate on their music. Without sounding elitist, having quality gear that's in proper working order does more than just look good when you show up for a gig. Eventually, it becomes so familiar that your instrument is simply an extension of your musicality.

Having that familiarity, especially when it comes to tuning, is a two pronged approach, as Portnoy explains: "I'm not tuning to intervals or melodically like Terry Bozzio does. I want them to be tuned kind of generically from high to low. I want them to feel good in terms of tension on the heads and I want them to sound good in terms of ascent and descent as I go up and down the toms. I'm not a tuning guru that spends an hour tuning each drum." Portnoy laughs. "I'm kind of a hit-and-go kind of guy. Really."

"When you're slouched over, the sound of the kit gets very tight. If you open up and have your body be the sounding board, you're just going to sound better."

Terry Clarke



KEEPING THE BEAT

A breakdown of Chuck D. Keeping's beat-keeping tools:

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- Vic Firth 5B wood tip sticks

READY FOR THE STAGE

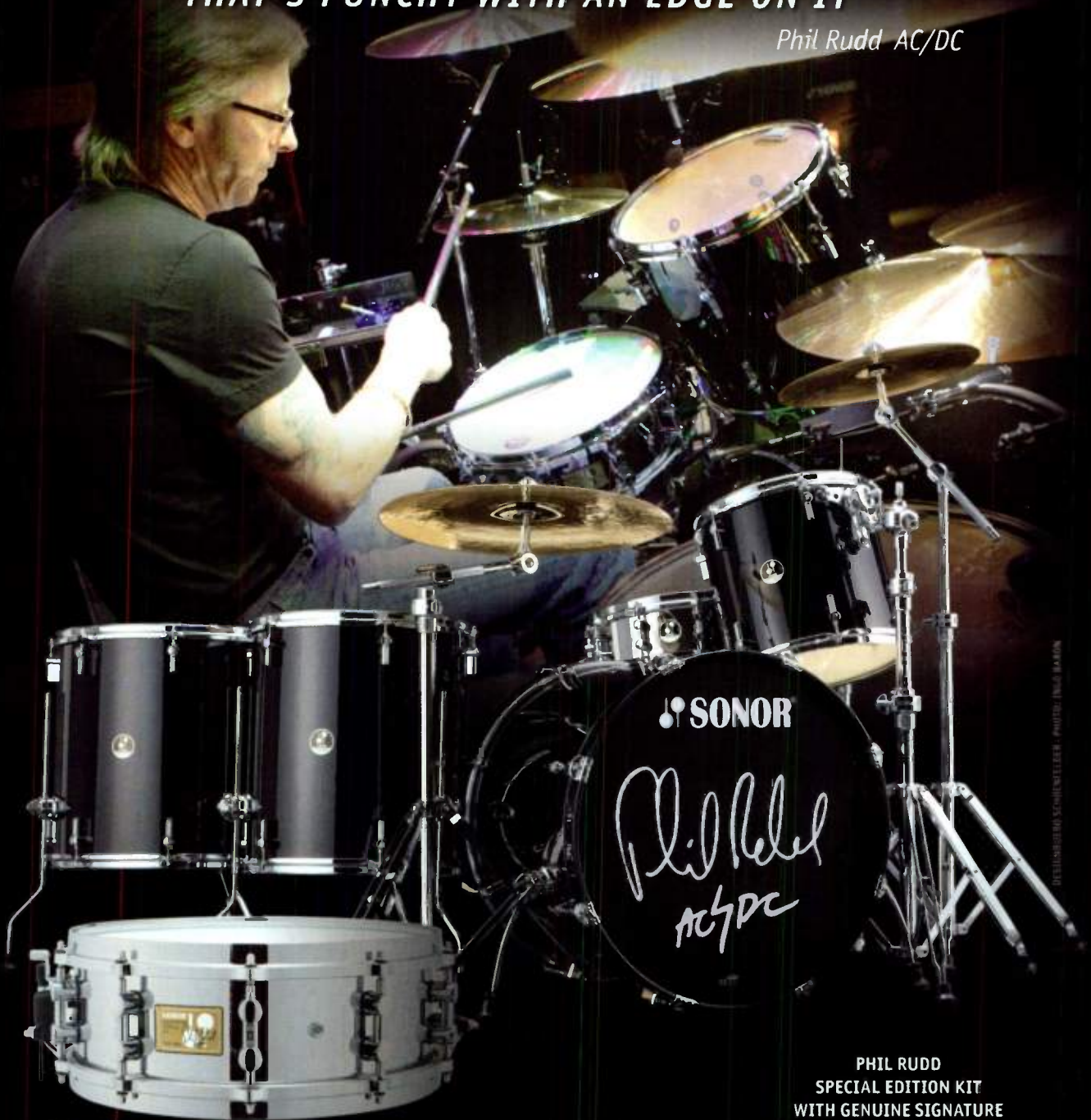
Opinions on how to warm up before a show vary with this year's contributors, or at least the ritual does, anyway. Morgan's warm-up "consists of a series of rudimental sticking techniques and transitions between them on a practice pad with varied tempo and varied dynamic." Keeping's rituals have changed since his beginnings: "I used to be so uptight about my warm-ups I would even carry a list of rudiments. I would show up 45 minutes before a gig and sit with my practice pad, go through all of my rudiments, and try to get into my own zone, even if I was told 'You only have five minutes until you're on.' I would try and rush through all of my rudiments. Now, I find what works best is hanging with the guys you're playing with, joking around, creating a good atmosphere backstage. It's a communal thing and I find that's the best warm-up. Sure! I'll have my sticks out and tap something out on the bottom of my shoe."

The genre of music, of course, has great bearing to what extent you feel you need to prepare yourself as Morgan and Keeping's pre-show warm-ups entail. What is essential is getting the blood flowing to the limbs and easing into your performance. If your show is bails-to-the-wall out of the gate, then yeah, you'd better work yourself up to that state before hitting the stage. If the gig crescendos at a more lax pace, then you'll begin to warm up by virtue of playing alone. Do whatever prepares you to have the best show possible.

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PERCUSSION IN 2009

CATCHING UP QUICKLY

Electronic drums have certainly been making great technological strides of late, coming closer and closer achieving that authentic drum sound while offering a slew of additional features. Check out our review of the Yamaha DTXtreme III kit in the Road Test section!



Speaking of shows, that's what playing drums is all about for each of these great drummers, and each has a tale to tell. Perhaps such entertaining tales from the road may (or may not) inspire you to keep that passion for your instrument.

Shares Trager: "The coolest and most interesting road story of the last year would have to be when we played in Detroit back in February and Kid Rock came out to the show. After the show, we were invited over to Kid Rock's

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house to hang out. Nickelback was also in town, so Chad Kroeger came and joined us. The night culminated in a two-hour-long jam consisting of some classic tunes. It was definitely one for the books and all I can say is I wish someone had recorded it!"

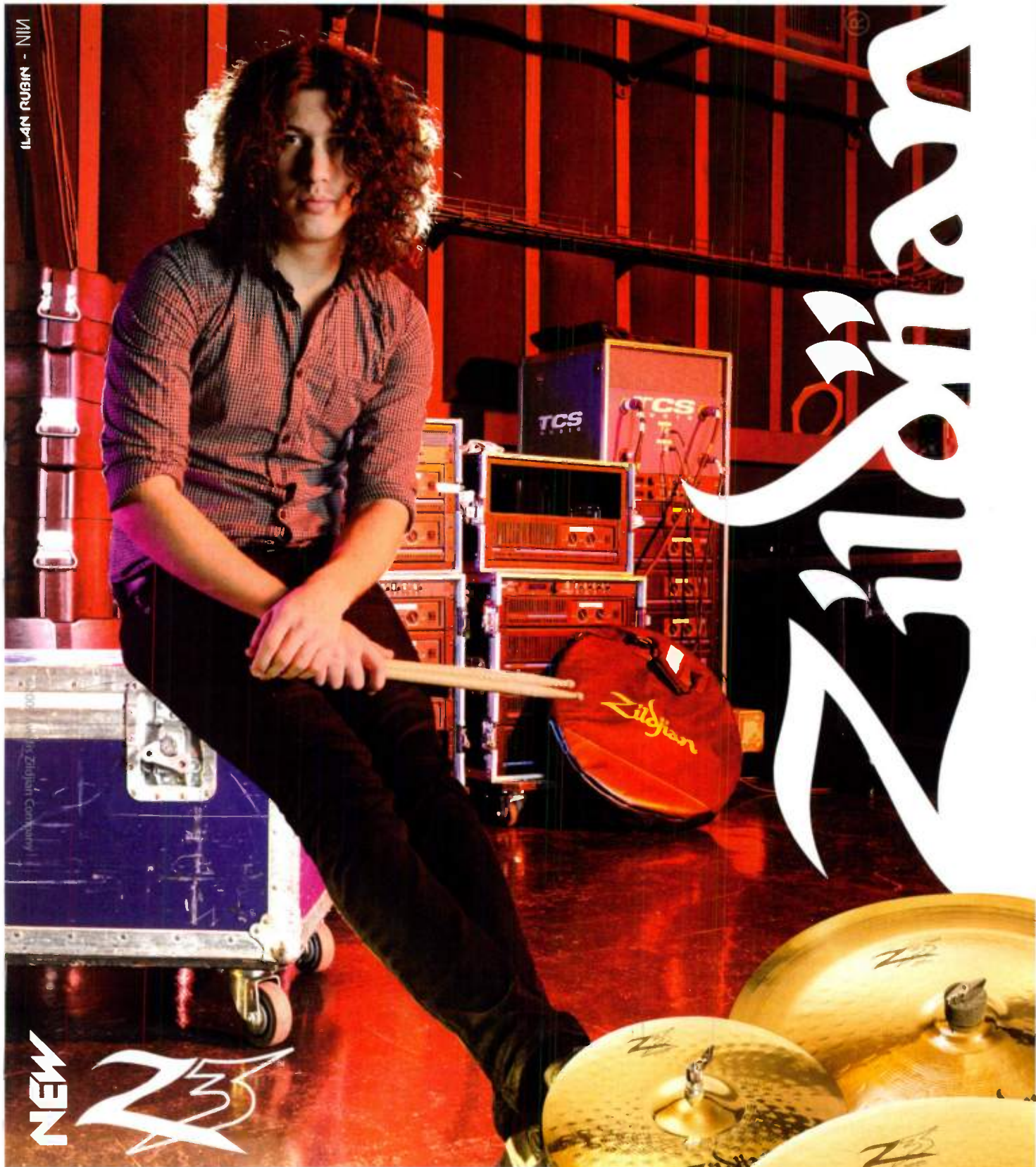
Morgan gives the crowd something to behold. "When I first started touring, I used to play in my underwear. On our first tour, we were playing this Christian venue. There was a hole in the underwear I was wearing that night, and I figured, 'No big deal,' I'll be behind a kit and the snare will be covering my partially exposed junk. Turns out there was an overhead camera that night, with a huge movie theatre-sized screen above my head showing our set from bird's eye view. I'm pretty sure I offended some conservatives that night and put on shorts to play from that night on!"

It wouldn't be the first time a drummer exposed him or herself, and it's guaranteed not to be the last. ■



Chris Taylor-Munro is a Toronto-based percussionist, educator, and writer.

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by Bruce Madole



Writing

"close to the bone"

As songwriters, we are constantly encouraged to write lyrics that cut "close to the bone" – digging deep into the most painful parts of our own lives to find the truths and true experiences from which a powerful lyric can be crafted.

Choosing The Truth

Everybody's got a little of their own pain to fall back on when it comes to lyric writing, but that doesn't mean we have to rely exclusively on our own realities for inspiration. Canadian novelist W.O. Mitchell once told me that the trick of writing fiction was to assemble a lot of little true details, that would resonate in people's minds and mirror some of their own experiences, and to fashion from them the one big "lie" that is a fictional story.

The same is true of lyric writing, except that we have a much more compressed space to work within – maybe as few as 16-18 lines of lyric, into which you must embed those telling and true details that will create the little "chime" of recognition in the minds and hearts of your listeners.

So the good news, and the bad news, is that the whole world is our oyster. But... how do we choose which particular truth we want to write about? It is certainly true that our own personal pains and personal experiences will yield the richest and most convincing vein (for mining the details), but you have to be able to manage the material and your own feelings in order to do that most successfully.

Crafting The Lyric

If you cry while you are writing the lyric, that's catharsis. If other people cry after hearing it, that's craft.

I have written some lyrics that made me cry while I was writing them, as well as lyrics that made the tears flow for listeners who just powerfully identified with the story. They were not always the same song. When a deeply true song failed to deliver, it was usually because somehow, in the process of delving deep into the details of a story, I lost track of how best to deliver those details to the audience. Or perhaps I just assumed that, having told the truth about a situation or an event, others would naturally "get" what the song was sharing, and so I failed to employ some aspect of the craft that would have told that story more successfully.

The more recent and raw and unhappy experience is, the harder it is to write about. Objectivity suffers, but the passions and feelings are big and fresh and powerful, and that too can be a remarkable source of power for the song. Using a trusted co-writer – someone not connected with the events in question – can be a vital aid to keeping the necessary creative objectivity.

Truth in songs is detectable, like freshness with fish, but craft helps to make it recognizable more efficiently and effectively. The songwriter's job is to show the listener, through the use of convincing and true details, exactly what the singer is going through and how they must be feeling about it. Leave the feeling to your audience – the showing and the story is up to you.

Issues & Limits – Well ... What About Them?

Are there limits on the amount of truth you can use? Sure: limits of taste, limits of confidentiality and privacy, legal

limits, moral limits, and so on ... up to (and including) the limits that may be imposed by the market for which you are writing. Your friends won't hang around long if you blab their secrets in song. Regardless, though, if you are writing for rock or pop markets, you may have fewer perceivable limits in subject or style than if you were writing for, say, country music or the gospel market.

Not Issues About Songs, But Songs About Issues...

Suppose that we are talking about writing songs about "issues" for gospel or country, in which there is a high degree of sensitivity or even volatility about those issues. Does this mean that you should "back away" from truthful writing? Not necessarily, but your chances of getting the song recorded by another artist will be limited by your success with the crafting of the story, the creativity and sensitivity of the story telling, and the willingness of other artists to take on the risks associated with the song.

Some country artists have taken remarkable risks with songs and come out unscathed – I am reminded of songs like "Independence Day" (recorded by Martina McBride), "Black-Eyed Susan" (recorded by Prairie Oyster), or "She Thinks His Name Was John" (recorded by Reba McEntire). Others have been crucified for an unguarded comment, let alone lyrics.

Make no mistake about it – doing a song on a sensitive subject can be a career-limiting or career-making move for an artist. A finely crafted "issue song" may hang around the artist's neck like an albatross – an all too public reminder of an all too memorable professional failure, or like a medal for public service. It's all in the eyes of the beholder.



Shawn Bradley is a music producer who also plays guitar in Ottawa's APlotAgainstMe, currently promoting their latest release, *Deuce*. Check them out at: www.aplotagainstme.com.

by Shawn Bradley

a pile of Recording tips

1. Tuning

When tuning a stringed instrument with a digital strobe tuner, a better result is achieved if you turn down the tone knob on the instrument to take out the high end of the signal. This eliminates the "click" and will send a better tone to the tuner. The tuner will read more consistently and fluctuate less.

2. Mixing 60 Hz & Below

For most non-bass sounds, anything below 60 Hz generally adds clutter to a mix. If you're able, try filtering out 60 Hz and below on all of the channels that don't require low end. (Ex. vocals, guitars, snare, overheads, horns, etc.) This should leave a better area for the low-end sounds (bass, kicks, synth, etc.) to sit in the mix. Listen to the effect and then you decided which channels most benefit from this technique.

3. Mono vs. Stereo

Play back your mixes in a mono (one speaker) set-up. Hearing the mix through a mono speaker will tell you a lot about what is going on with your mix. Also,

not everybody listening to your mixes will have a stereo speaker set-up. It is always good to check that the most important parts of your mix – vocals, solos, etc. – come through in both a mono and stereo situation.

4. Double Tracking Guitars

A little trick when double tracking stereo guitar parts is to choose a different pickup select on the guitar than the previous guitar track recorded. Ex. left guitar track could be recorded using the bridge pickup, and the right guitar track could be recorded using the neck pickup. The result is a slightly different tone from each guitar, which will help them find their own space in your mixes.

5. Muted Guitar

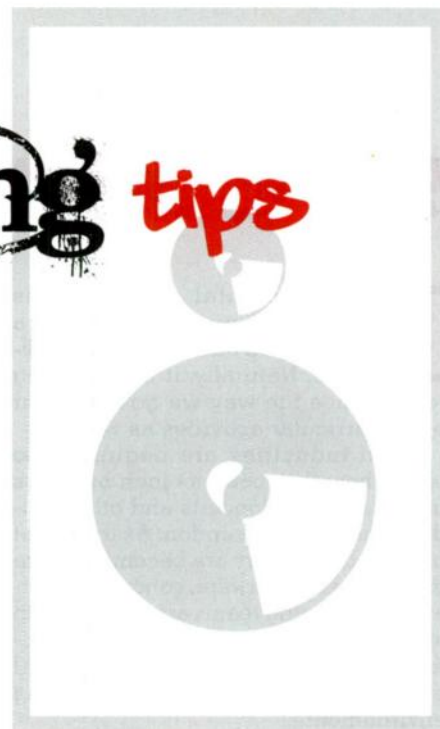
Want to get a cool muted surf/funk guitar sound with more freedom than having to palm mute? Find a scarf or any light fabric you can wrap around the headstock of your guitar. The fabric should be resting against the strings on the headstock, then tie the material well enough to hold but not too tight. Now play the guitar as per normal. Do you notice the sound change?

6. Kick Drum Mic Placement

When placing a microphone in front of a kick drum, align the mic towards the kick beater, pointing on a bit of an angle away from the hi-hats. This will eliminate cross-bleed into the kick microphone from the hi-hats. Hi-hats are notorious for creeping into other drum microphones.

7. Hi-Hats

It is not always necessary to put a microphone in front of your hi-hats when recording drums. For most rock and heavier music, the hi-hat will usually be picked up by the other drum microphones. An exception to this would be styles like jazz or country where a lot of intricate hi-hat parts are being performed. More often than not, I will mute or delete the hi-hat track as it is heard well enough from the overhead mics.



8. Batteries vs. Adapters

Pedals are great creative tools, but a downside of using them is a high amount of ground noise in your signal path. A way to lower the amount of ground noise is to use 9 V batteries rather than a power adapter for each stomp box. The less pedals and gear plugged into a common power outlet, the better. Eliminating the ground buzz can be a huge saviour.

9. Bigger Isn't Always Better

When recording guitar, using a high wattage amp or huge 4 x 12 cab is not the only way to achieve crushing guitars. A trick that a lot of the legendary guitar players of the '60s and '70s used was a single 15-watt combo amplifier. The lower wattage causes the amplifier to overload sooner, and the speaker to be pushed to its max. The volume will not be as loud as using a bigger amplifier, so adjust your levels with mic gain and compressor settings.

10. Walk Away

After working on a mix for a while, it can be very useful to leave the mix playing and walk away. Walk into another room, down the hall, basically anywhere you can hear the mix, but allow considerable distance between you and the speakers. Does your mix translate well at a distance? This tip will give a hint of how your mix might sound in bars, restaurants, stores, or anywhere music is not the main focus.



Exclusive APlotAgainstMe Content

Visit www.canadianmusician.com/multimedia for an in-studio video with Shawn as he shows how APAM tracked their single, "Leah Leave." You can also download an exclusive mix of the track, FREE!



by Greg Rushton

going green with your Production

Environmental awareness is becoming more and more of a concern in our day-to-day activities. Naturally, it is beginning to influence the way we go about our extra curricular activities as well.

Ergo industries are beginning to shape how they conduct their business in this regard. Concerts and other productions are no exception. As the target market, consumers are becoming more environmentally aware, concert promoters and planning teams are beginning to stress about capturing the environmentally friendly demographic of potential event goers as well as concern for the environment.

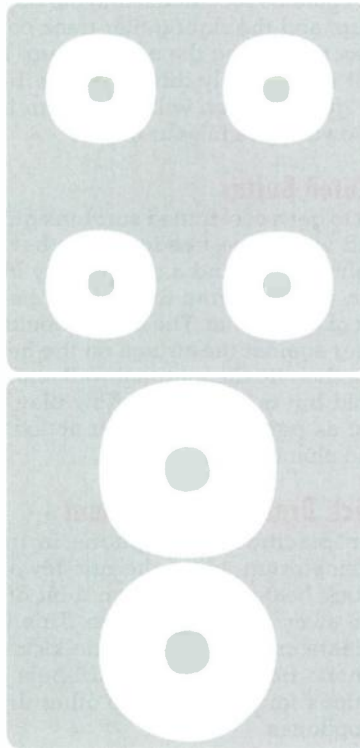
The first environmentally sensitive show I was retained to do was also my largest to date. As the show was for the Australian-born Earth Hour (now affiliated with the WWF), naturally wasteful consumption of energy was not an option. A great deal of effort and research was performed not only in the best interest of the environment but to minimize potential scrutiny of hosting a concert for an event where the collective group of people are asked to turn off their lights for one hour to raise awareness of power consumption.

As this topic could easily run for pages, we will briefly touch base on the key items and techniques utilized on my first enviro-concert; power, audio, copper, lighting, and carbon credits.

Originally the show was going to use two power sources: shore power and generator. The reasoning was because not quite enough shore power was available to power the entire rig, but it would allow us to use a smaller generator. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, a bio-diesel generator had to be used for all systems. Now that may seem like a major downfall towards the energy consumption effort, but one of our sponsors pulled through offsetting the power consumed back into the grid with carbon-neutral energy.

As for the sound system, careful consideration was given to the design and selection. We ended up utilizing the J Series line array from d&b audiotechnik. Not only are these arrays and amplifiers very power efficient, but the site comple-

mented their dispersion characteristics. As this took place on the street in front of city hall, the stage was positioned to allow the courtyard of city hall and a small memorial feature space to disperse sound within the audience area minimizing reflections off of the buildings lining the street. Many find it odd that we considered noise pollution when designing the site layout and equipment selection. Future events will incorporate arrays where the directivity at low frequencies would be increased, directing more energy into the audience.



Absolutely everything was a consideration, right down to copper consumption. We located everything as close to the stage as possible and we utilized digital consoles that did not need a large copper snake. Thinking on the larger scale, by reducing copper we effectively reduced space and fuel needed for trucking, labour for installation, as well as the physical resources such as the copper itself.

Lighting is one of the areas where

we had the ability to conserve the most amount of energy. Even with reservation from both the production company and our lighting consultant, we chose to fly an entirely LED lighting rig consisting of 22 Palco 3 fixtures with the exception of 12 highly-efficient metal halide Martin MAC moving head fixtures. These 34 fixtures covered the 40' x 40' stage with ample illumination.

As we were under the utmost scrutiny from our board of directors, carbon credits were purchased to offset the carbon impact of the transportation used by the bands to attend and perform at our show.

Since Earth Hour Barrie, I have been retained for a new environmentally friendly festival on a much larger scale, MarVal Festival, which will run July 29-August 2, 2010. I definitely see that as patrons become more environmentally aware, enviro-concerts will be the way of the future. Regrettably, the majority of enviro-concerts are being forced to be green not due to awareness, but because of limitations such as available power. Unfortunately, due to the equipment needed for such shows, cross rentals are often needed, which may drive up the cost of rentals. It is the big powerhouse production companies that have the resources to invest and will be able to grab the bull by the horns and be on top for the initial wave of enviro-concerts.

Tip For Musicians...

A good way to encourage potential patrons to attend a certain event is to help them feel as if they are making a difference, particularly by attending. This has been used for decades now. Just think of the shows where canned food is requested at the door.

In the past I have stated that the more people who show up, the more efficient it is; simple math can easily prove this. If you're using 100 watts for a show with one person, that's 100 watts per person; however, if 100 people show up, it's 1 watt per person. If you have 1,000, it's 1/10 of a watt per person. This is a great means to promote your show and encourage the public to participate and leave feeling they have helped the cause.

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But did you know that if you purchase a hardware product which includes Cubase AI AND the upgrade from AI to Cubase 5 or Cubase Studio 5 between **September 2009** and **January 2010**, you may be eligible for a mail-in rebate of **up to \$150?**

Full details are available at www.yamahapromos.ca.





by Giancarlo Soppelsa

The Final Stretch

Why your lawyer should check liner notes before going to press

Your album's liner notes are a place where you can provide album credits, print your lyrics, include song information, and display artwork. Yet, when it comes to liner notes, there is just as much room for legal vexation as there is for practical and creative output.

The purpose of this article is to shed light on some of the legal pitfalls that you, as an artist, may incur with respect to album liner notes and to convey why it is important that the notes be reviewed by a legal advisor before going to press.

Credit Information

Your album, as an end product, can be the result of collaboration between numerous individuals, companies, and organizations. Liner notes are an appropriate place to give credit where credit is due. Providing credit information can at times be a simple display of gratitude; however, it can also be a matter of contractual obligation. In the latter case, it would be a good idea to have the credits reviewed by legal counsel.

Different agreements with different parties (such as producers, guest vocalists, or record labels, for example) may spell out specifications as to how their credits should appear in the liner notes. A lawyer is in the best position to review the agreements and bear the responsibility of ensuring all credit wording and layout conforms to the contractual requirements.

Accurate credit information is also crucial when it comes to publishing in-

formation. The liner notes should provide every song's publisher as well as the publisher's performing rights society (SOCAN, ASCAP, BMI, etc.).

Libel & Personality Issues

Liner notes tend to be a forum where an artist chooses to write an opinion about something or provide a few anecdotes. The law generally recognizes freedom of speech; however, a line has been drawn in cases of libel. In these instances, something written (or an image) that seems factual and spreads false and malicious information to the public about a person, organization, institution, etc. can bring about legal action. Needless to say, a lawsuit at this juncture of your musical project would be extremely burdensome.

A legal advisor will be able to identify any statement you write or image you use that may be considered defamatory. This will, at the very least, make you aware of a potential libel issue, from which point you can modify your liner notes or decide to go ahead as planned.

There may also be potential for legal action against an artist even where there is nothing malicious communicated in the liner notes. For example, if your artwork includes a photograph with an identifiable person in the background, and that person does not want to be associated with your album, the subject may have certain personality rights and legal remedies. Avoid this type of headache by having a professional screen all photographed material first.

Copyright & Trademark

The first issue with respect to copyright and trademark in liner notes is any potential infringement by the artist. Copyright infringement could apply to song

titles, lyrics, or artwork that belong to someone else. Trademark infringement could occur if a logo or other symbol is used on the album. If you really do want to use someone else's art on your album, a lawyer can help you obtain the necessary license or liability release.

Copyright issues could exist even if you have no intention to infringe someone else's original work. For example, if your album includes a cover of a popular song that you obviously did not write, proper copyright notice will have to be given.

Another concern arising from copyright and trademark is protection of your material, be it songs or artwork. While our legal system automatically gives you rights over any original material that would be in your liner notes, registering a copyright will strengthen your claim against any possible infringer. A legal advisor is able to help you register either a copyright or trademark, such as a band logo, and can ensure that your interest in your original material is properly displayed in your liner notes.

Conclusion

By the time your liner notes have gone to press your album will have been almost completed. This is not the time for any unnecessary legal issues. Legal action brought against you, resulting from your album's liner notes, can potentially nullify all the time, effort, and money you have put into your project up to that point.

Your best option is to be pre-emptive. Avert any pitfalls before going to press or, at the very least, identify and anticipate legal ramifications so that you can better face an issue. There is no better way to take this approach than by having a lawyer check your album's liner notes before you go to press. Not only will this allow you to evade legal problems at the crucial final stretch of your project, but it also permits you to dedicate full attention to the final details concerning the completion of your album.

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

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Zoom Q3 Video Recorder

Zoom has introduced the Q3 Handy Video Recorder, which brings the same stereo mic capsules as Zoom's H4n to a camcorder. The Q3 is directed towards the filming of musical performances and rehearsals, as well as interviews, video podcasts, and more.

The unit is designed to be ready out of the box, including HandyShare software for editing and a 2 GB SD card for up to an hour of video recording time. The Q3 will also accept up to a 32 GB SDHC card for 16 hours of video. The Q3's USB cable allows direct upload to a computer, and the HandyShare software allows for easy posting onto YouTube, Facebook, and other social networking sites.

The camcorder records in an MPEG-4 SP video format at 30 frames per second. It outputs clear video at 640 x 480 pixel resolution. The unit's 2.4" LCD screen with a resolution of 320 x 240 allows for easy viewing on the go. The display also includes sound meters, allowing levels to be set and monitored while shooting. The onboard condenser mics' XY pattern gives users a balanced stereo sound, void of phase issues.

For more information, contact Omnimedia: 514-636-9971, FAX 514-636-5274, info@omnimedia.ca, www.omnimedia.ca.



Paul Reed Smith Sweet 16 Guitar Amp

The Sweet 16, PRS Guitars' new 16-watt amp, couples 16 watts of cathode-biased 6V6 output tube power and includes reverb, a full TMB tone stack, and PRS' transparent master volume circuit.

Controls include bright switch, volume, reverb, treble, mid, bass, and master volume. All amps are hand-wired in Stevensville, MD using hybrid circuitry techniques for consistency and durability. Shielded cable is used for critical signal paths, pots, switches, jacks, and power tube sockets are chassis-mounted and connected via flying leads.

Power sections employ JJs 6V6 power tubes. They are cathode-biased to near class A, in a push-pull configuration. The four preamp tubes include two NOS Philips 12AT7s, a JJS ECC83S, and a Tung Sol Reissue 12AX7s in locations to maximize both clean and open-sounding lower volume settings to thick crunchiness at higher volumes.

For more information, contact Paul Reed Smith: 410-643-9970, FAX 410-643-9980, custserv@prsguitars.com, www.prsguitars.com.

Neumann KMS 104 Plus

With the KMS 104 Plus, Neumann is presenting a new model in its series of stage microphones, which boasts a cardioid directional characteristic, a transparent sound for optimal intelligibility, and reliability with respect to feedback.

In comparison to the KMS 104 and KMS 105, the acoustic properties of the bass range have been redefined and optimized for the requirements of female voices in the rock and pop field. As with the other Neumann stage mics, the housing, grille, capsule, and electronics are designed for the stage.

The mic's frequency range is 20 Hz-20 kHz, with a sensitivity of 4.5 mV/Pa at 1 kHz into 1 kohm. The rated impedance is 50 ohms, with a rated load impedance of 1 kohm. Maximum SPL is 150dB, with maximum output voltage being 12dBu. The mic weighs approximately 300 g and is supplied with a padded nylon case and the appropriate stand clamp.

For more information, contact Sennheiser Canada: 514-426-3013, FAX 514-426-3953, info@sennheiser.ca, www.sennheiser.ca.





BUGERA BTX36000 BASS AMP

■ Bugera is currently offering its BTX36000, also dubbed The Nuke, featuring 3,600 watts in a bridged mode and 2 x 1,800 watts when run in stereo or bi-amped mode.

The amp features an array of tone-sculpting options, including 3-band EQ with sweepable mids, Ultra-High, Ultra-Low, and Bright switches, and a 9-band graphic EQ. A built-in adjustable compressor and switchable limiter ensure distortion-free performance. Additionally, the amp boasts onboard Crossover with Balance control and provides XLR and 1/4" outputs to send the bi-amped signal to the front of house.

Two insert channels with preamp out and power amp in connections are also included, as is a footswitchable stereo effects loop. A footswitch is provided, which works for both FX and the graphic EQ. Tuner outputs are available on both the front and rear panels.

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

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See and hear the Roland R-09HR at your nearest authorized EDIROL dealer.



www.roland.ca

Steinberg CI2 Advanced Integration USB Studio

Steinberg has introduced the CI2 Advanced Integration USB studio, which comes with Cubase AI 5, a dedicated version of Cubase 5.

The CI2 houses two functions. There's the two-channel XLR combo interface, equipped with two mic preamps and phantom power, and one Hi-Z for direct and guitar input and a footswitch connector for interactive recording. Secondly, the unit features a controller section featuring the AI Knob that provides control thanks to its seamless integration into Cubase.

For beginners, the unit features a Project Assistant. The AI controller knob, with point and control support, controls any Cubase FX or VSTi parameter using mouse-pointer selection for speed. The unit is Mac- and PC-compatible, with cross-platform support for Cubase on Mac OSX, Windows XP, or Windows Vista.

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



LEVY'S ROCKABILLY GUITAR STRAPS

Levy's Leathers has added some glamour to an existing line with its new Rockabilly-style guitar straps.

The strap features a jeweled, enameled gold buckle set, which tastefully complements this 5/8" carving leather strap. A 2" moveable shoulder pad with foam lining and soft leather backing comes with the strap and can be used at the player's discretion.

This strap design will appeal not only to rockabilly players, but to country players and classic rockers as well. Pictured is model M37 in two of the several leather colours available.

For more information, contact Levy's Leathers Ltd.: 800-565-0203, FAX 888-329-5389, levys@levysleathers.com, www.levysleathers.com.

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M.V. Pedulla Nuance Bass Guitar

■ M.V. Pedulla Guitars Inc. has announced The Nuance, a new addition to its line of bass guitars, handmade in the US by Michael Pedulla.

The instrument was originally designed as an acoustic instrument. It features a bolt-on neck design, was selected for its warmth. A soft maple back with maple burl, arbutis burl, and red heart quilted maple tops add to the high end, while a hard maple two-piece quartersawn neck offers clarity and stability. A grade of ebony is used for the 22-fret fingerboard.

A fully-adjustable brass bridge and the standard Pedulla tuning gears round out the hardware. The electronics are powered by two custom-voiced Bartolini humbuckers, complemented by an onboard active tone system. The system includes controls for volume, pickup pan, bass boost and cut, treble boost and cut, and a midrange boost and cut switch, all powered by a 9-volt battery.

For more information, contact M.V. Pedulla Guitars Inc.: 781-871-0073, FAX 781-878-4028, www.pedulla.com.

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Hal Leonard Mastodon Crack The Skye Songbook



■ Hal Leonard Corporation has released a Guitar Recorded Versions songbook for *Crack The Skye*, the latest album from Grammy-nominated heavy metal band Mastodon. Note-for-note transcriptions in standard notation and tablature for all the songs on the CD are also available for download at www.guitarinstructor.com.

Mastodon drummer Bränn Dailor has said that *Crack The Skye* tells a story dealing variously with the art aesthetics of Tsarist Russia, astral travel, out of body experiences, and Stephen Hawking's theories on wormholes.

The Guitar Recorded Versions songbook for Mastodon's *Crack The Skye* features exact transcriptions for all seven songs, including the title track, "The Czar," "Divinations," "Ghost of Karelia," "The Last Baron," "Oblivion," and "Quintessence."

For more information, contact Hal Leonard: 414-774-3630, FAX 414-774-3259, halinfo@halleonard.com, www.halleonard.com.

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SONOR Phil Rudd Signature Snare

■ After a nearly 40-year relationship, SONOR and AC/DC drummer Phil Rudd have teamed up to create a Signature Snare Drum Model.

The Snare Drum is based on the drummer's preferred model, the SONOR Horst Link Signature Brass model, while adding new features and face. The snare is made out of a 1.2 mm chrome-over-brass shell and comes with the latest double-lugs that include the internal TuneSafe feature.

Die cast hoops add crack, while the overall sound is focused, dry, and cutting. All hardware comes in chrome. Like the Horst Link model, the drum features a diameter of 14" and a depth of 5". Phil's signature is engraved on a reissue of the Signature Badge, adding a vintage touch.

For more information, contact Coast Music: 514-457-2555, FAX 514-457-0055, www.coastmusic.com.



Native Instruments KONTAKT 4

■ Native Instruments has announced KONTAKT 4, a new version of the company's software sampler. The fourth generation adds NI's Authentic Expression Technology (AET), unique sample compression, an extended sound library complete with a new database system, and more.

With AET, the dynamic tonal behaviour of original instruments can be replicated in new and expressive ways. The technology enables the seamless transformation between the spectral characteristics of different sounds, achieved via a phase-corrected convolution technique based on FFT analysis of the original sample.

KONTAKT 4 also overcomes existing performance barriers through sample compression technology. Specifically developed for KONTAKT, the new NCW compression format reduces sample size by up to 50 per cent. During playback in KONTAKT 4, the sample material is decompressed to its exact original format with minimal CPU load, and without any loss in audio fidelity.

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



Jackson Mark Morton Dominion D2 Guitar

■ The Mark Morton Dominion from Jackson is now available in a more affordable version: the D2. The axe features the Dominion-style nato body.

The guitar boasts a 24.75" scale, and a bolt-on maple neck. The rosewood fingerboard is loaded with 22 standard frets and white dot position inlays. The instrument's hardware is all chrome. The bridge is a fully-adjustable model with an anchored tailpiece. The sealed die-cast tuners are adorned with the Jackson logo.

The guitar features a Duncan Design HB-101B pickup in the bridge position with Trembucker spacing, while the neck boasts a Duncan Designed HB-101N. Pickup switching is carried out via a three-position toggle switch. Onboard controls include separate tone and volume knobs for each pickup. The guitar comes with a standard Jackson gig bag.

For more information, contact Fender Musical Instruments Corp.: 480-596-9690, www.fender.com.





ROLAND JUNO-DI KEYBOARD

■ Roland has introduced the latest addition to its JUNO Series with the Roland JUNO-Di Mobile Synthesizer with song player. Weighing in at just under 12 lbs. and featuring a variety of quality sounds, the battery-powered Roland JUNO-Di is designed for musicians on the go.

The JUNO-Di is built with an intuitive interface and Song Player. Users can navigate through more than 1,000 customizable sounds ranging from grand pianos to strings or brass to exotic instruments.

The synth has a built-in mic input with dedicated Reverb and Vocoder, and has MP3, WAV, AIFF, and SMF playback capability via an optional USB Flash drive for backing tracks when performing live. With optional battery-powered operation, the Roland JUNO-Di can play for up to five hours without being plugged in.

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

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Reunion Blues Continental Case

Reunion Blues has introduced its rugged new RB Continental guitar case. The Continental is made with a water-resistant ballistic exterior that surrounds a new, lightweight Flexoskeleton protection system of high-density foam and EVA impact panels that offer enough protection to survive a 40-ft. drop.

Inside this new case, a velvet-tuck interior lining, solid-cell neck brace suspension system, and thick Softmesh-lined side panels cradle the instrument in a scuff-proof cocoon. Its roomy exterior pockets, Zero G palm-contoured handle, and hideaway backpack straps are all designed for easy and comfortable transportation.

A video is posted at www.reunionblues.com/rb-continental that shows the case being dropped from 40 ft. and the guitar inside coming out unscathed.

For more information, contact Reunion Blues: 800-950-1095, FAX 707-762-1899, john@reunionblues.com, www.reunionblues.com.



PLANET WAVES HUMIDIPAK GUITAR HUMIDITY CONTROL

Planet Waves has re-launched its Humidipak, the Automatic Humidity Control System, which makes necessary adjustments to ensure an ideal environment for a guitar. The Humidipak has been tested by several well-known acoustic guitar manufacturers.

The Humidipak is a true two-way humidity system for guitar that maintains the optimum humidity level for wooden instruments: 48 per cent relative humidity. The "two-way" system means that it actually emits or absorbs moisture as needed to maintain 48 per cent relative humidity. Place the Humidipak packets into your guitar, shut the case, and it works on its own.

The Humidipak kits include sound hole/headstock pouches and three packets. Player monitoring and interaction is recommended to ensure that no side effects from the use of the system will occur with a particular instrument or case.

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

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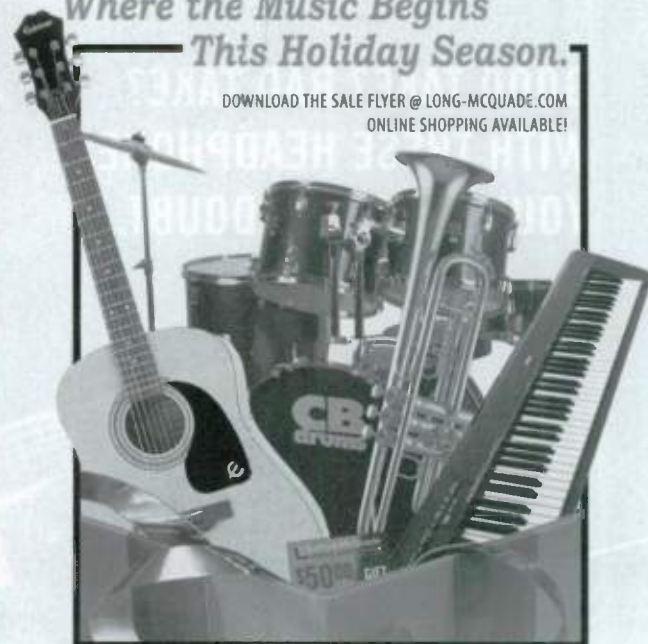
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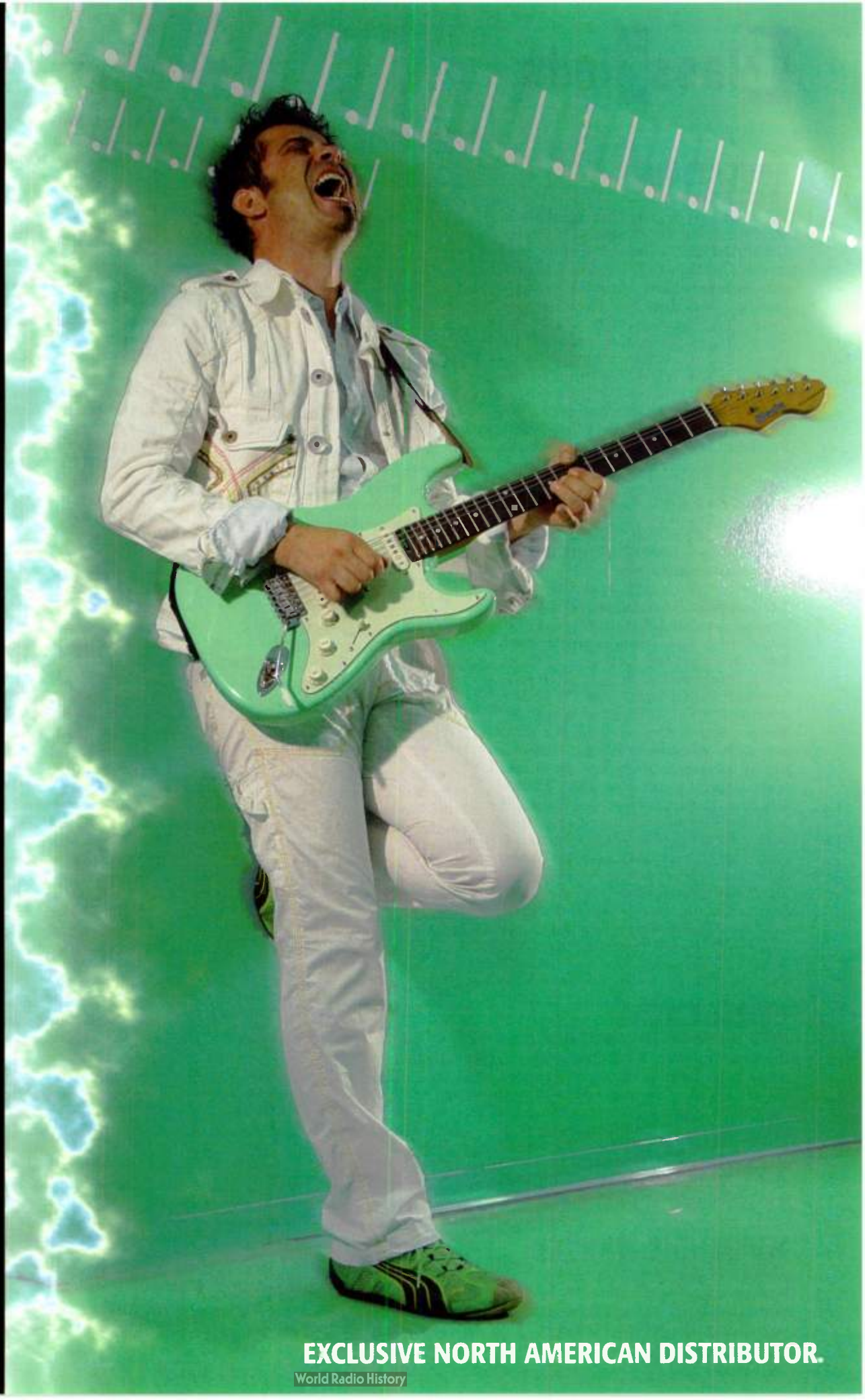
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by Ben Conoley



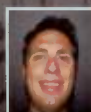
CARMEN AND CAMILLE

Where: Vancouver
What: Pop/Rock
Visit: www.carmenandcamille.com

If Carmen and Camille's 2009 single "Shine 4U" did not make an appearance on your summer playlist, it's time to get a head-start on planning for next year by adding the Vancouver duo to your must-hear list.

Twin sisters Carmen and Camille burst onto the scene with their 2007 debut, *Two*. The album caught on with the MTV crowd, getting plays on *The Hills* and *TRL*. Press recognition of the album landed them a television show, which is currently in development. They followed-up *Two* with 2009's digital EP, *Don't Play Me Out*. In between releases, Carmen and Camille filled time touring, which they do as a six-piece.

Carmen and Camille, who write their own music and lyrics, aren't the typical *TRL* fluff one might expect. The duo writes their own music and lyrics, with the end result being great indie pop/rock jams, the perfect music for a sunny summer day, or at least a day when one might want to conjure up the spirit of summer. Sure, they may not win over many indie-rock purists who refuse to listen to anything but 30-something-year-old men with beards, but who wants to invite them to the party anyhow?



Ben Conoley is a freelance journalist living in Fredericton, NB. He has written for *chartattack*, *Exclaim!*, *Alternative Press*, and more. Ben is also a proud member of the *Polaris Music Prize* jury.

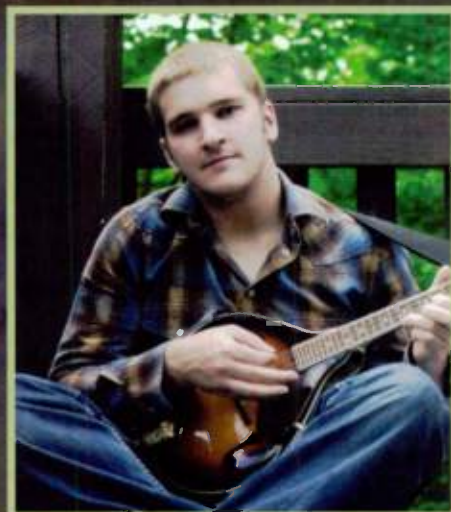
M.O.

Where: Montreal
What: Hip-hop
Visit: www.mdoto.ca

As a member of Montreal's long-running hip-hop favourites, FAMN, M.O. (his birth certificate reads Morgan Little) is using 2009 as an opportunity to kick off an exciting solo venture.

If hard work is what it takes to get one recognized in the hip-hop scene, M.O. should have no problem propelling his name up the charts. In 2003, readers of the *Montreal Mirror* voted his group FAMN into the 10th position in the paper's annual readers' poll. Four years later, FAMN had claimed the poll's number one spot. Their progress was fueled largely by heavy gigging and six independent releases.

M.O. is now ready to tackle the scene on his own. His video for "99 Problems (But My Kicks Ain't One)" – a play on Jay Z's similarly-named hit – is a checkmate in viral marketing. M.O. has been teasing fans with weekly tracks and has issued a mix tape (*Better Late Than Never*) in the run-up to his debut record, *Vicarious*, which dropped this fall. Expect the album to be musically ambitious, while on the lyrical side, M.O. provides self-reflective tales of his own experiences in life and as an artist. The album will also include a DVD featuring music videos, interviews, and live footage.



THE MOUNTAINS & THE TREES

Where: St. John's
What: Crust Folk
Visit: www.rockandroots.com

Who knew folk music could be so exciting?

While The Mountains & The Trees may play as a group from time to time, for all intents and purposes, the collective is the brainchild of St. John's, NF's Jon Janes.

The band's use of banjo, guitar, mandolin, harmonica, bells, and drums comes together to create lovely lo-fi folk that could only have occurred thanks to artists such as Hayden, Iron & Wine, and Julie Doiron, who showed that it's completely possible to be young and hip while still wanting to write music that fits best in a log cabin next to a wood stove or by a campfire on the Victoria Day long weekend.

At times, the band's songs are extremely minimalist, while at others, a full range of instruments and vocal harmonies work their way in. At first listen, one can't predict what direction a song will take. What's great is that this adventurous quality persists through repeated listens.

The Mountains & The Trees have to date released two recordings – 2006's *Paper Or Plastic EP* and 2007's *The Document*. Janes also threw together a free promo EP called *Hop, Skip & A Jump* to coincide with the 2009 East Coast Music Awards.

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