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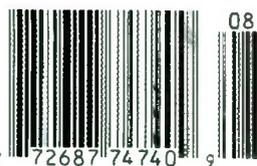
**GRADY**

**MATT MAYS  
& EL TORPEDO**

the business of being

*Bif Naked*

Vol. XXVII No.4



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Musicians of course remember Gordie Johnson from his days in Big Sugar, but after disbanding that group, Johnson relocated to Austin, TX where he joined with musicians Big Ben Richardson and Chris Layton to form Grady.

### 44 **Matt Mays & El Torpedo**

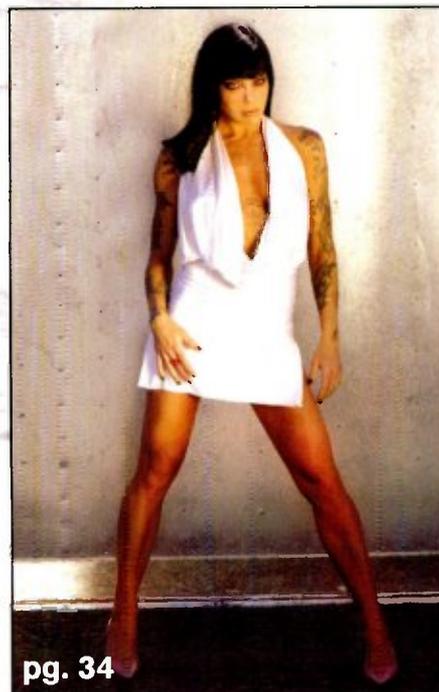
by Karen Bliss

Recorded at Sonic Temple Studios in Halifax, NS, Matt Mays & El Torpedo's self-titled record launched the single "Cocaine Cowgirl". Find out the story behind the making of this record as *Canadian Musician* goes into the studio with the band.

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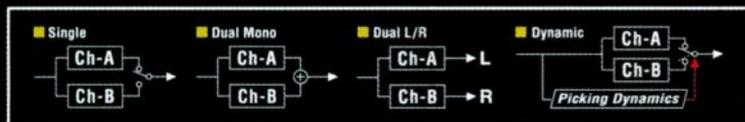
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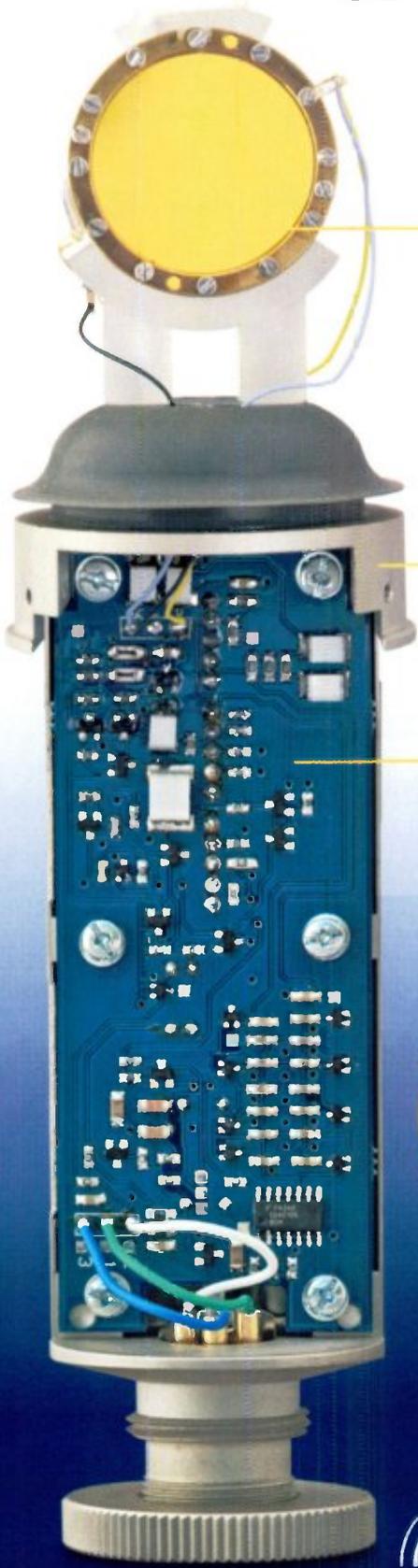
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## The Link Between Music And Psychology

Dear *CM*,

Just a quick note to say that I particularly enjoyed two recent *CM* columns: Vivian Clement's "Guitar and the Art Of Singing" and Diana Yampolsky's "Pavlovian Conditioning". Clement and Yampolsky both highlight the link between music and psychology and this resonates with me and my research ([www.daleboyle.ca](http://www.daleboyle.ca)), which examines the use of music as a teaching tool in a psychology course. It's great to see that *CM* touches upon so many facets of music, and that the quality and subject matter of the columns are always high. Good work Vivian and Diana!

Dale Boyle  
Montreal, PQ

## Speed Rules!

Dear *CM*,

In the article about drumming, Gregg Bowman was talking about how fascinating it is to explore the limits of human potential regarding speed. I definitely agree, since I myself do play piano, and whatever piece I play, I always, always, *always* experiment playing it at a fast speed. There's this one piece that I've played for about five years now. It's memorized, and when I play it, you cannot tell notes apart. That's how fast I've got it down! I bet all guitarists, drummers and bassists and all other musicians do this as a hobby!

Thanks a lot!!!

Anastasia Filippova  
Submitted by e-mail.

*\*Ed – Don't forget that there's something to be said for slowing a song down as well...*

## Studio Playing Tips Required

Dear *CM*,

My name is Steve and I am a guitarist currently studying music at York University. I am studying jazz but am also very flexible and can play different genres of music. I was wondering if you could address studio playing. How to go about getting studio work and things to practice and work on to prepare as a player in order to be able to play in that type of setting would be helpful. If at all possible, it would be very interesting and educational to hear Levon Ichkhanian's view on this subject because I know that he writes for your magazine.

Thank you for your time and I would appreciate the consideration of this subject.

Stephen Poloni  
Woodbridge, ON

*\*Ed. Could be a good idea ... I'll definitely mention it to Levon.*

## The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of...

Dear *CM*,

Hey guys, I wrote you last month about the "Avoiding Career Suicide" article. My drummer woke me up at 3:20 a.m. when he knows I have to be up at 6:30 a.m. to tell me that what I wrote was on page 9 of the new issue with David Usher on the cover. I was really happy to see that you cared enough to put that in the mag and pass it on to Kevin Young. Thanks for putting our Web site ([www.theryde.ca](http://www.theryde.ca)) in there too. It really means a lot to us and getting exposure is what we need! I'll send you guys a press kit for the "Showcase" section at the back of the mag. You guys rock!

Later,

Boris Novak  
Toronto, ON

*\*Ed. We're glad your drummer's nocturnal activities include reading CM. Maybe there's a new drummer joke in there somewhere...*

## On A Musical Journey

Dear *CM*,

Firstly thank you for your magazine it is my favourite reading material. I am a Canadian artist and I am currently working on my third CD. When I first started sending out my material I was impatiently waiting for replies and cursing the labels that rejected my music. On my second attempt I tried to put together some tunes that would be more mainstream and marketable thinking this may be the problem. I have now come to realize that I just have to write from my heart like I first started out. If I make it, I make it, and if I don't, I don't. In the end I have left behind a piece of my heart and a trail of myself in my music for my friends

and family to enjoy. I have received nothing but great encouragement and praise and I think people who have listened to my music were touched, and really, isn't that more important than signing a deal? I will continue my musical journey until I leave this earth – the only difference is now I am doing it for the right reasons. Thank you for your magazine and being true to Canadian content.

Donald R. Pardy  
Petawawa, ON

## It's Time For A Manager



**S**tarting out as a local band and making it to a national success is every performer's dream. As a band grows they need the guidance of a manager, but finding the right one can be a pain.

After mastering the local scene at the pub down the street, many would be tempted to start searching for an artist or personal manager right away. However, it may be a good idea to start by being your own manager, this way you can gain the experience of what the task requires and you would have a better idea of what to look for in a manager.

Skills that are needed are organizing musicians, arranging rehearsals, transportation, accommodations, photo shoots, bookings, advertising and keeping accounts. These skills can be easily obtained, as there are some colleges that offer various classes in manual and computerized bookkeeping and accounting. As your band grows you'll see that keeping up with these tasks can be tiresome, this is when it's time to hook up with a manager, leaving you and your band free to be creative while writing, performing or recording.

As an artist, you will need someone who will be effective, reliable, honest and keep you completely informed. They should get you noticed and help negotiate great contracts. They should know every aspect of the music industry and should feel comfortable being critical about what is good and what isn't. The manager should be getting you gigs, publishing and record deals, while you should agree to go to meetings, appearance, record sessions and confirm that you aren't contracted with any other management.

It's up to the artist to get the attention of a manager, preferably one in your field of music, by contacting them and sending out press and/or publicity packages. It's important to note that you do not work for your manager, instead you engage a manager to supply his or her services that are outlined in the terms of his or her agreement.

There are three different types of management that are available to artists. The first is a professional manager who often has more than one client and usually have great contacts in the industry. This allows them to get the interest of A&R personnel and the respect from publishing and record companies.

Another option is a management company with a group of managers. The manager is paid a share of the company's commission. By having a manager within a company, this will give you the opportunity to work with other artists who already have the respect and bargaining techniques mastered. It would be wise to develop a plan if your 'key man' leaves the company or is fired.

Be aware that the company would have plenty of contacts but would not be as personally involved in your career.

The third option is an amateur manager. Although they may not have any contacts, have the full understanding of the industry or have a lot of free time to handle the task, an amateur manager could have that determination to bring your band further into success. They would be there to help you get what you want out of your career.

Managers gain income by the commission of what you and your band make. This rate is usually between 10 and 20 per cent. Commissionable income includes live gigs, publishing and record advances, royalty and PRS payments, personal radio and TV appearances, sponsorships, and merchandising. Also, never sign a contract that entails a percentage of your gross earnings during a live performance. Because this is such a high amount, you could end up losing profits, it's best to put live performances in the net category.

There are different rules that you should follow when dealing with management. Never sign an agreement or contract without a music business solicitor, such as a lawyer, and do not use the same solicitor as your manager.

Always make sure that the contract you sign allows you to walk away after a year, and the term is for no longer than three years. A manager may expect to still be paid for a period of time after they no longer work with you.

Control the finances yourself. Do not let your manager open any type of bank account in your name, an honest manager will happily bill you for their commission or deduct their fee from any bookings or deals.

Expect to pay for expenses outside the office such as flights and hotels, and never give anyone power of attorney. You need to read and sign every contract yourself, keep copies and ask questions. Do not hesitate to seek a second opinion or legal advice if needed. It would also be wise to hire an accountant to check financial transactions on a regular basis.

There are different terms that you can include in your agreement. One is restricting your manager to a 'sole management' where they only work for you. Although it would limit their income, if you become a national hit you will need a committed manager. Also try to include a tour manager. Usually hired by the artist or manager, they will deal with the day-to-day functions while on the road. This would include getting the band from one gig to the next, collecting fees and booking flights and hotels. They are usually paid a straight fee or retainer.

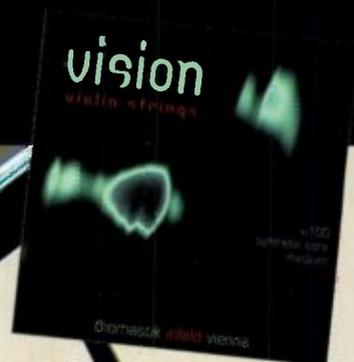
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# CHANGES

## West 49 Is Plugging Into The Music Scene

Canadian skateboarding retailer, West 49 has set up a leading edge Web site that will give local, new artists a chance to be known nationally instead of just locally. All genres of music and band information can be uploaded for other musicians to hear and read, even if the artist doesn't have a record contract.

"We want to encourage all new musicians to put their music on our site so we can help them start a career in the industry and show today's youth the value of music," says the Director of Marketing for West 49, Cindy Mielke. "The new site is a way for us to help promote Canadian bands and give them the exposure that they may not have gotten otherwise. We are currently in the process of accepting all types of artists and expect the response to be huge."

Musicians can upload their original songs as MP3 files as long as it is non-offensive material, and the audio quality is clear. Along with uploading music, musicians will have access to the site's industry info page. This page will have instructions on how to apply for VideoFACT grants to fund their musical career and contacts for labels and booking agencies.

The general public will have the opportunity to sign up as a West 49 Loyalty member. From there they will have access to download songs and learn about the artists. "People sometimes worry about the morality of downloading music, but on our site the bands are involved in the process, and they participate because they want to be heard," says Mielke.

West 49 has 59 stores across Canada and has donated over \$400,000 to schools, community events, charity organizations and skateparks since 1995.

For more information, visit [www.west49music.com](http://www.west49music.com).



## Five New Courses On Berkleemusic.com

The online extension of Berklee College of Music, [Berkleemusic.com](http://Berkleemusic.com), has added five new online guitar courses and five new college-credit guitar certificate programs to its curriculum.

The new courses include Guitar Scales 101; Amps, Effects, and Getting Your Guitar Sound; Guitar Chords 101; Blues Guitar Workshops and Recording and Producing for Guitarists. These courses are instructor-led, providing a personal interaction between the student and instructor. Weekly scheduled chats are set up and allow for lesson discussions between students. Students are also able to upload assignments as MP3 files for the instructor to review.

The guitar certificate programs run from one to three years and provide the student with a background in production and guitar, songwriting and guitar and foundational guitar skills. New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accredit all online courses and all courses that Berklee College of Music has to offer.

For more information, visit [www.berkleemusic.com/news/guitar](http://www.berkleemusic.com/news/guitar), or call (866) 237-5533.

## Searching For Rockstars

Currently, Canada is searching for the ultimate band. With the rockstar search spanning the country, it is Canada's largest search.

Unsigned artists and bands, both male and female, will have a chance to show off their musical abilities in front of celebrity judges, top industry personnel, guests stars, and National Press. Open to all formats of Rock, Pop-Rock, Urban to Heavy Rock, it is time to showcase the inner rockstar.

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To enter register at [www.sonicbids.com/rockstars](http://www.sonicbids.com/rockstars) and submit online or by mail. Submit one or more songs to the contest, and you could walk away a winner. The contest closes August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005.

The top bands and artists will compete in front of a live audience for the grand prize. Admission to all the shows will be free. The show will kick off during September 2005 frosh week, with live shows at many popular venues across Canada including: Montreal, Ottawa, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Regina, London, Halifax, and back to Toronto for the final live battle of the bands.

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

## World Vision Receives \$10,000



Canadian Music Week presents a cheque for \$10,000 to World Vision on behalf of Tom Cochrane for the "Make Poverty History" campaign. Picture left to right are Sharon Marshall, Communications Director of World Vision; recording artist Tom Cochrane; Neill Dixon, President of Canadian Music Week.



## Rogers MusicStore – Getting Your Tunes On Cells

Feeding the spontaneity that goes along with the music experience, Rogers Wireless, powered by Melodeo Mobile Music Service, has released Rogers MusicStore. This is the first mobile music service in North America that provides customers with the dual functionality of buying and downloading full tracks to their computer and/or cell.

Record labels, EMI Recorded Music, Universal Music, Warner Music and Sony/BMG are all signed with Melodeo to provide customers with MP3-quality songs from the hottest artists of today.

It is a completely legal way to download your favourite music and share with friends. Customers can buy then download a full track from [www.rogers.com/urmusicstore](http://www.rogers.com/urmusicstore) and send their friend a 30-second clip of the track. That friend can then decide if they want to buy the full track or not. Senior Director, Marketing of Melodeo, Stan Sorenson, calls this “immediate gratification.”

That’s great that this is available for customers, but what does that mean for you as an artist? Sorenson says that file sharing extends the reach of the music, which creates all the more fans for the musicians. This especially helps new and independent artist get more visibility. With Rogers MusicStore, customers pay per full track so there isn’t any loss of revenue and you get your royalties.

If you’re signed with a record label it will state in your contract whether or not your music can be produced into digital. If it is then the label can sign with Melodeo to have your songs purchased by customers, your fans.

“In order to provide any music there has to be a contract in place that gives Melodeo the right, either directly or indirectly, to offer that track,” says Sorenson. For example, if every artist with Warner signs a contract that says their music can be digitalized then Melodeo has access to Warner’s full catalog.

Although Melodeo has yet to sign with an independent artist, don’t rule yourself out as an option. He includes that any independent artist can contact Melodeo and work out a deal to get in on the goods. It would be best if you could digitize your tracks so that it could easily be converted to the format that Melodeo works with.

For more information, contact: Melodeo, Inc., 520 Pike St., #1700, Seattle, WA 98101 (206) 812-4300, [info@melodeo.com](mailto:info@melodeo.com), [www.melodeo.com](http://www.melodeo.com).

## Domenic Troiano Scholarship Launched



Domenic Troiano

After the recent passing of guitar legend Domenic Troiano, John Harris of the Harris Institute for the Arts and Jim Norris of *Canadian Musician* magazine have created the Domenic Troiano Guitar Scholarship.

Troiano earned his status as one of the greatest guitarists by playing an integral role in The Mandala, Bush, The James Gang and The Guess Who. He has also scored music extensively for film and television and is a member of the Canadian Music Hall of Fame.

The scholarship, named in Troiano’s

honour, is \$1,500 to be presented annually to a Canadian guitarist who will be pursuing a post-secondary guitar education in Canada or elsewhere. A committee of established Canadian guitarists will review the submissions and select the scholarship winner.

Eligible music programs are any university, college or private institution guitar program. The scholarship funds will be forwarded directly to the chosen institution of the winner.

Application deadline is October 31, 2005. The recipient will be notified by January 1, 2006.

To apply, or to donate funds, visit [www.domenictroiano.com](http://www.domenictroiano.com), call (416) 367-0162, or e-mail [clinton@domenictroiano.com](mailto:clinton@domenictroiano.com).

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## Apply Now For 2006 Canadian Music Week

Applications are now being accepted for the 2006 Canadian Music Week (CMW) "That Was Then, This Is Now" festival that will run from March 1-4, 2006, downtown Toronto.

The deadline for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual CMW festival is Oct. 31, for Canadian bands, and Nov. 30, for international bands. If you apply early, before Aug. 31, you will have a chance to win a Gibson SG Standard Guitar with the case, courtesy of Yorkville Sound. Any band that submits before Aug. 31, will

qualify for the first selection round, and will be notified if they were accepted in September. All bands that apply after the early date will be notified in December. All applicants will receive a year's free subscription to *Canadian Musician* magazine.

The CMW festival sets the opportunity for bands from all genres, from rock, blues, punk, hip-hop, metal, electronica, jazz to country, to be seen and heard by 3,000 faces in the industry. Past headliners include Three Days Grace, Fefe Dobson, Barena-

ked Ladies, Train, Esthero, The Pretenders, Daniel Lanois, The Zoobombs, Ben Lee, Fat Boy Slim and Alanis Morissette.

Canada's largest entertainment event combines two informative conferences, a trade exposition and five award shows. The CMW festival will be held at the Fairmont Royal York hotel in Toronto.

For more information and showcase application forms, visit [www.cmw.net](http://www.cmw.net), or bands can apply online at [www.sonicbids.com/cmw2006](http://www.sonicbids.com/cmw2006).

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## True North Records Celebrates 35 Years At NXNE



Bruce Cockburn

To coincide with the North by Northeast (NXNE) Music and Film Festival theme, "Celebrating Independent Success Stories", True North Records celebrated its 35<sup>th</sup> year.

On June 9, 10 and 11, Canada's longest running independent label celebrated while Bruce Cockburn was featured as a celebrity interview and Joel Kroeker, Colin Linden, The Rhoestatics, 54.40 and The Golden Dogs performed at Lee's Place.

Guitar master, Cockburn, gave his first appearance at NXNE, and did his first celebrity interview at the Holiday Inn with journalist Nick Jennings. In his 35-year music career, he's released 27 albums with his 28<sup>th</sup> being released in October.

Bernie Finkelstein founded True North Records in 1969, cumulating over 315 releases, 40 Juno Awards and 37 gold and platinum records to be credited for. Today, the label has licensing ventures with Cooking Vinyl in the UK, Plump Records in New York, Fuel 2000 in Los Angeles, Tone Cool in Boston and Guitararchives in Vancouver. The label also distributes recordings by The Guess Who, Shawn Colvin, Howard Jones, Oysterband, Susan Tedeschi, Double Trouble and the North Mississippi Allstars.

For more information, visit [www.true-northrecords.com](http://www.true-northrecords.com).

## Steven Page Releases "The Vanity Project"



Steven Page

Recently, Barenaked Ladies lead singer Steven Page released a self-titled album called *The Vanity Project*.

Released by Warner Music Canada on June 21, 2005, *the Vanity Project* showcases Page's collaboration with co-writing partner Stephen Duffy. Eleven songs on the 12-track album are co-composed by Page and Duffy. Page wrote the twelfth song, "So, Cal".

The album features Page's distinctive voice on all 12 tracks, with music preformed by both Page and Duffy. Guest performers include Barenaked Ladies' Kevin Hearn and Page's brother Matthew.

Page and Duffy have been writing together over the course of Barenaked Ladies' career. Together they have co-written on many of the band's gold, platinum, and multi-platinum albums. Songs include "Jane", "Alternative Girlfriend", and "Call and Answer".

*The Vanity Project* has been in creation over the past four or five years. Written, preformed and produced in between Duffy's songwriting and production work, and in Page's spare time from Barenaked Ladies, the album is a potent blend of songs.

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



## Canadian Musician Blog Launched

For those musicians looking to get a blog-reading fix, they don't have to look any further. *Canadian Musician* has launched a blog on the magazine's Web site, located at [www.canadianmusician.com/blog](http://www.canadianmusician.com/blog). Our staff and regular contributing writers will be dropping by to post blog entries on a variety of musician-related subjects. Drop by to add some comments! This is your chance to interact with our contributors!

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It's a bittersweet time for us here at Dean Guitars. It was only several months ago that we renewed our relationship with Dimebag Darrell, a relationship that originally began when Dean Zelinsky met Darrell when he was only sixteen years old. Darrell started his career playing the Dean ML model and single-handedly made the guitar famous.

At the request of his family, we have decided to press on with launching the Dimebag Darrell Dean Guitar line. It's an extensive line of guitars that Darrell had a major hand in designing.

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## Band Aid Grants Sweep Across Canada

The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (CARAS) has announced that Canadian elementary, secondary and separate schools have the opportunity to apply for a \$10,000 Band Aid grant before the August 1, deadline. It's a great organization for schools that have music programs but limited funds.

Band Aid is apart of MusiCan, CARAS' Music Education Program, and provides the grants in the form of musical instruments to the schools.

Quoted from a press release, Srinka Wallia, Director of Music Education for CARAS, says, "It is essential to develop a student's creativity and talents, as well as their academic abilities. Unfortunately, these programs are frequently the hardest hit during budget cuts."

The CARAS Music Education program was developed in 1997 and has donated nearly \$1 million to schools and affected over 45,000 students. MusiCan also has Scholarships to Music Industry Arts Programs, provides funding to affiliated programs and the Band Aid program.

The platinum Juno nominee compilation CD, and annual contributions from EMI Music Canada Inc., Sony/BMG Music Canada Inc., Universal Music Canada, Warner Music Canada Ltd., and also the Songwriters' Circle and the Juno Cup all support MusiCan.

Several Canadian stars have supported the program by presenting the grants to the schools. They include 54-40, Susan Aglukark, Jann Arden, Jully Black, Jane Bunnett, Keshia Chante, Jim Cuddy, Doc Walker, Kathleen Edwards, Great Big Sea, Ryan Malcolm, Matt Mays, Alanis Morissette, Nickelback, Jimmy Rankin, Sam Roberts, Remy Shand, Shaye, The Ennis Sisters, Shania Twain, The Tragically Hip, Hawksley Workman and many more.

Recently, *Canadian Idol* winner, Kalan Porter presented two \$10,000 grants on behalf of CARAS Band Aid to Athens District High School in Athens, ON and South Crosby Public School in Elgin, ON. These are two of the 29 schools across the country that received the grant this year.

Over 125 applications have been received this year for the Band Aid grant, and with MasterCard Canada as the main sponsor, CARAS is able to increase the number of grants awarded this year.

Schools that are interested can download an application form from [www.carasonline.ca](http://www.carasonline.ca) to apply before the August 1, deadline.

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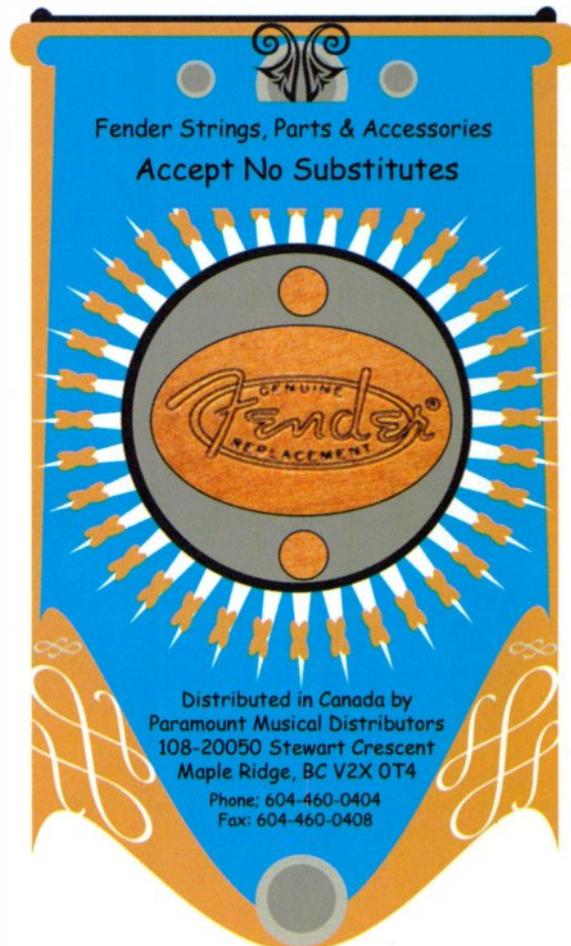


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## ECMA Presents First Sarah McLachlan Scholarship To PEI Musician



Sarah McLachlan

The East Coast Music Association (ECMA) and Sarah McLachlan presented the first annual ECMA Sarah McLachlan Scholarship to PEI musician, Jacques Arseneault at Pier 21 in Halifax on June 1.

Annually, this scholarship will be presented to what the association sees as a deserving and eligible young musician from an under-served community. The candidate will be selected from the host province of the annual ECMA Awards and Conference, which rotates annually.

Originally from Wellington, PEI, Arseneault began playing the piano and accordion at five years old and later went to Paris to study the accordion with Frédéric Guerouet. He just finished his second year in the Bachelor of Music program and the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), where he studied organ with Dr. F. Alan Ressor and vocals with Stephen Bouey.

Arseneault is the recipient of both Bell and Ressor Awards at UPEI and won the Advance Organ Award. This summer he will be performing two solo concerts as a part of the Organ Recitals 2005 series in Charlottetown and Tignish, PEI.

Not only was the ceremony for presenting the ECMA Sarah McLachlan Scholarship Fund, but also for the ECMA to present The Directors' Special Achievement Award to McLachlan. She has won this six times previously, and other recipients are Peter Gzowski and Anne Murray.

For more information, contact: ECMA Association Head Office, 145 Richmond St., Charlottetown, PE C1A 1J1 (902) 892-9040, FAX (902) 892-9041, [ecma@ecma.ca](mailto:ecma@ecma.ca), [www.ecma.ca](http://www.ecma.ca).

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

## UMAC Partners With Indie Pool

The Urban Music Association of Canada (UMAC) has announced that they have partnered with Canada's largest independent music services provider, Indie Pool.

Creating another outlet to share information with UMAC members, Indie Pool will provide information about retail, on-line and digital distribution, manufacturing, merchandising and the Internet. This will help raise awareness among the independent musicians about the numerous options that are available today.

The UMAC was established in 1996 and

is a non-profit, member-driven organization, driven to build the Canadian urban music scene. They offer workshops, seminars and artist showcases to its members, and run the televised *Canadian Urban Music Awards*.

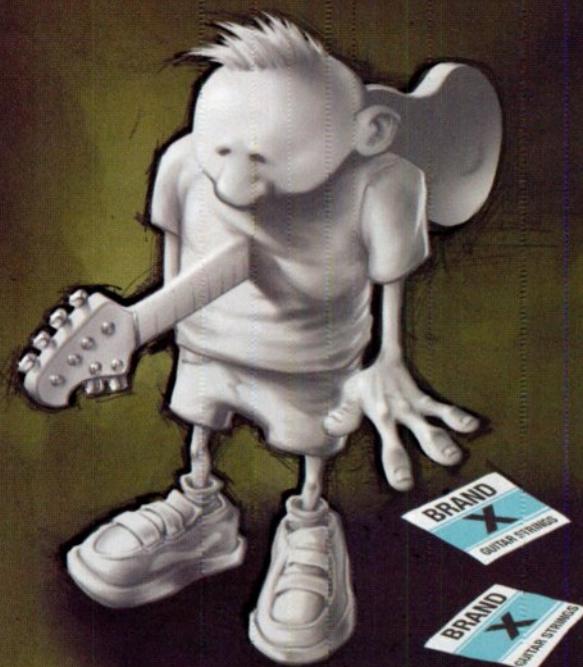
Indie Pool was also established in 1996 and has 7,000 Canadian independent titles in stock and 20,000 members. They provide CD manufacturing, distribution, merchandising, Internet services, bar codes, directories and more.

For more information, visit [www.umac.ca](http://www.umac.ca), or [www.indiepool.com](http://www.indiepool.com).

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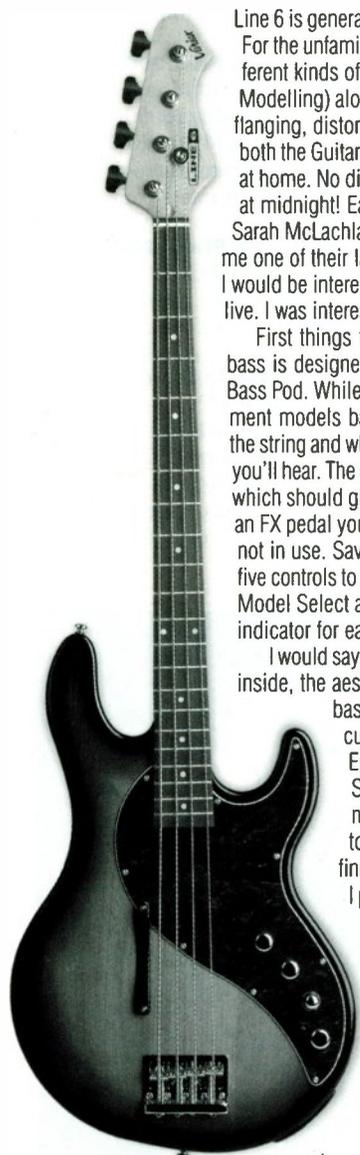
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## Line 6 Variax Bass

By Brain Minato



Line 6 is generally known for their Guitar and Bass Pods. For the unfamiliar, "pods" are units which simulate different kinds of guitar and bass amplifiers (called Amp Modelling) along with a variety of effects such as delay, flanging, distortion etc. Very handy little devices. I use both the Guitar and Bass Pods all the time for recording at home. No disturbing my neighbours with loud amps at midnight! Earlier this year, while in rehearsals for a Sarah McLachlan tour heading to Australia, Line 6 sent me one of their latest additions, the Variax Bass to see if I would be interested in trying it out and perhaps using it live. I was interested and I do now use it.

First things first: what does a Variax Bass do? This bass is designed with the same general concepts as a Bass Pod. While that unit models bass amps this instrument models basses; several in fact. Basically you hit the string and whatever model you've chosen that's what you'll hear. The electronics are powered by 6 AA batteries which should give you 10 to 12 hours of operation. Like an FX pedal you should keep the bass unplugged when not in use. Saves on the life of the batteries. There are five controls to deal with including Volume, Blend, Tone, Model Select and Red/Green Select (which is a colour indicator for each bass model).

I would say that besides all the digital modernization inside, the aesthetic is not unlike a classic old school bass guitar. (FYI: As a reference point, I'm currently using a 1970 Jazz Bass and an Epiphone Les Paul bass while on tour with Sarah.) The one sent to me has a maple neck with a rosewood fretboard connected to a contoured alder body with sunburst finish. I generally like the way it looks. When I picked it up it felt very comfortable which is always a good sign. It was very easy to play. The neck size was a nice fit especially for me as I have fairly small hands. It also felt comfy playing it sitting down or standing up.

The first thing I went through was the selection of bass guitar models available in the unit just to hear how they sounded. There are 24 different basses or bass sounds available ranging from

a vintage Precision to a Hofner to a Music Man to a 12-string bass (Think Cheap Trick) to an upright. I won't list them all. I plugged the bass into my Eden amp and then monitored out of the front of the amp using a pair of basic studio quality headphones. Nothing fancy. Just some headphones with a flat response. The amp was set pretty flat EQ wise. Most of the modelled bass sounds were quite good. Some were definitely better than others and some were just okay.

One really great feature is the ability to create individual settings within each bass model using the Blend and Tone knobs. Once you achieve a desirable sound you can then store those sounds which will be recalled exactly as you saved them. You can also re-adjust each individual model as many times as you like depending on what you require. The one thing I missed with creating/storing my

own sounds was the ability to save individual volumes. I'm using the Variax Bass live with Sarah to simulate an old Jazz and an upright bass. They are quite far apart tonally as well as in their gain structures and it would've been nice to be able to match the volumes/outputs of each model. Also it would be great to be able to match the volumes/outputs with my regular basses. Maybe in the future...

I have also been using the bass to record while on the road (more about that sometime in the future) just to see how it performs under those kinds of circumstances. What this allowed was a more objective point of view as I could record something and then sit back and hear how well it did against say my old Jazz bass. For example were there any tracking problems which would be really obvious under the microscopic scrutiny of recording? So far the Variax seems to be doing a good job. The studio setting is an area where this instrument would definitely come in handy. One could cover a lot of ground having several models within one bass.

Here are a few hard stats about the instrument:

- 21 medium profile frets
- 34" scale length
- 10" fingerboard radius
- Standard 1/4" guitar cable output jack
- Digital I/O R1J45 jack for future updates and additional sounds

Included XPS-DI direct box and power supply features:

- 1/4" standard guitar cable output for connection to any bass rig
- XLR balanced output for sending signal to a recording console or house PA
- Powers the Variax Bass using included TRS cable
- Powered by XPS-DI or on-board batteries (six AA or one 9-volt)
- Custom fitted heavy-duty gig bag
- Available in Black or Sunburst

So what do I think of the Variax Bass? The bottom line is it will never replace the look and feel of your favorite bass guitar. It won't but I don't believe that is the point. What the Variax is, is a well-made, modern marriage of old and new. It's an instrument that is easy to play, easy to program, easy to use and it comes with a large variety of very useful bass guitar models within one body.

There are, as stated before, 24 bass models which I can't get into in any great detail for this product review. The best way I can think of to check it out is to go online at [www.line6.com](http://www.line6.com). From there link onto Variax Bases and you can see and hear what the instrument is all about. There is a manual which can be downloaded in a pdf form and there is a demo video/tutorial to watch online as well.

Many thanks to Michele Wernick at Line 6.

The manufacturer's suggested retail price of the Line 6 Variax Bass is \$1,999 for the black model, and \$2,099 for the sunburst model.

For more production information, contact: SF Marketing, 6161 Cypihot St., St-Laurent, PQ H4S 1R3 (514) 856-1919, FAX (514) 856-1920, [info@sfm.ca](mailto:info@sfm.ca), [www.sfm.ca](http://www.sfm.ca).

### Distributor's Comments

Please note that the use of batteries in the Variax Bass are intended for wireless and emergency applications only. Under normal wired circumstances, phantom power is provided to the bass by the power supply through the XPS-DI footswitch and 1/4" cable, all of which come with the bass.

Brian Minato is the bassist for Sarah McLachlan. He is also a Vancouver-based musician/producer currently working with *The Blue Alarm*, *The Wild Strawberries*, *BWB*, *Sandy Scofield* and other artists.

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# Apple GarageBand 2.0

by Jeff Pearce

Let me start with the bad news. GarageBand is only available for Mac users. And it's only available on Macs running OSX.3 or later. Now for the good news – when you buy a new Mac, you will get this program free. If you have an older Mac at all, but are interested in songwriting and home recording, well, you should probably buy a Mac, if only for GarageBand.

This is simply because the program does a lot of things, very well, and is incredibly easy to learn and use. Ten minutes will introduce you to the basics, and a couple of hours will make you an expert. The built-in help menu will walk you right through the process.

There are two main components to making music with GarageBand. The first is that it is a multi-track audio hard-disk recorder. The number of tracks is only limited by how powerful your Mac is. The biggest challenge is wiring up whatever microphone or instrument you play into your computer. A line level device, like a keyboard, guitar effects unit, or condenser microphone might simply plug into the input of your computer, but any mic level device, like an electric guitar or dynamic microphone, will require some form of preamp. GarageBand can record eight tracks simultaneously but this will require a professional audio interface. Fortunately, these are no longer very expensive, and there are many varieties on the market. Once your instrument or mic is wired into your computer, you simply set your song's tempo, create a "Real Instrument" track, and start recording. If you are recording guitar, there is even a built-in tuner. Any audio you record can be fixed up a little using a neat timing and tuning fix feature, which effectively pulls errant notes as close to perfect as you want.

A good start to be sure, but that is only the beginning. GarageBand also comes with over 1,000 Apple Loops. These loops can be dragged into the program from a loop browser window, and will match the tempo and key of the song you are working on. This may seem familiar to anyone who has used the program Acid, and in fact Acid loops, AIFF, WAV, MIDI and Apple Lossless files can all be used in GarageBand. There are also four "Jam Packs" of Apple Loops available from Apple, and many others from third party developers with loops of almost every style of music. The loop browser lets you browse loops by style, genre, mood, instrument and by source, so if you wish for example to only look at distorted country bass loops that were included on Jam Pack 3 you can filter out all other options. Although you can audition the loops in the key and tempo of your song, the browser always displays the original key and tempo, so you can gauge how much weirdness will be created by the process of stretching and shifting the loop to match the song.

If you wish to make your Apple Loops library even bigger, you can even create your own from regular audio loops you might have, or from audio you record yourself. You simply adjust the length of your recorded audio and select "add to loop library." A dialogue will pop up allowing you to add descriptive tags to the loop, and then that audio will be available in any other song you create.

GarageBand also includes a wide range of virtual instruments that can be played with an added MIDI keyboard, with a virtual keyboard that pops up on-screen, with your computer's "qwerty" keyboard or by programming the notes one at a time in notation or on a time line. Most general MIDI instruments are represented here, as well as drum kits and a variety of synth pads and textures, and additional instruments are included in every Jam Pack as well.

Once any of these elements are in your song they can be manipulated with a wide variety of effects including the usual compression, reverb, delay and EQ. There is also guitar and bass amp modelling and a vocal transformer, which will do everything from creating harmonies to changing the sex of your lead vocalist (or changing him into a chipmunk if you want). There are also master effects for mixing your song, and your finished master can automatically be exported to iTunes.



Of course GarageBand has its limitations: You cannot change time signature or tempo within a song. There are no audio editing tools. The interface of the effects are simplistic, and browsing for loops could be enhanced by allowing the user to create their own groupings. But songs created in GarageBand can be opened in Apple's professional audio recording package, Logic, for further refinement. For songwriting and simple demos GarageBand is a better tool than Logic, simply because it is so easy to use. Also, anyone who already uses Logic will notice that any third party Audio Unit plug-ins are available for use in GarageBand as well. Also, anyone who has experience with the earlier version of GarageBand will notice the many improvements in 2.0, such as the built-in tuner, user created Apple Loops and the tuning and timing fixing features, making this a "must have" upgrade to what was already a killer application.

As a side note for any Nine Inch Nails fans, Trent Reznor has posted the first single "The Hand That Feeds" from the record *With Teeth* on [www.nin.com](http://www.nin.com), in GarageBand format, meaning anyone with the program and an Internet connection can download and remix the song.

For more information, contact: Apple Canada, 7495 Birchmount Rd., Markham, ON L3R 5G2 (905) 513-5697, FAX (905) 513-5793, [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com).

*Jeff Pearce is producer and musician best known for his work with Rye, Moist and David Usber.*

## Manufacturer's Response

GarageBand puts a complete recording studio on a Mac. GarageBand 2 adds 8-track recording, so users can record an entire band at once, plus pitch and timing correction to quickly fix those tracks that don't sound perfect. GarageBand 2 now displays and edits musical notation in real-time for people who know how to read and write or want to learn. With Apple's growing family of GarageBand Jam Packs, including the latest, Jam Pack 4: Symphony Orchestra, GarageBand users can create professional sounding music in their favourite genre. Visit [www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/](http://www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/) for more information.

– Apple Canada

# Eventide Anthology

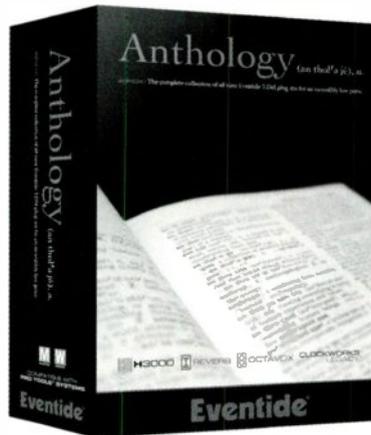
by Mike Turner

If you've ever used anything that you referred to as a 'Harmonizer' you owe Eventide a vote of thanks. In fact, if it really was a 'Harmonizer', it was made by Eventide. They own the term not just figuratively, but literally. Eventide not only invented pitch correction, but coined and maintains the registered trademark on the word Harmonizer. As time went on they developed some of the most impressive studio boxes ever built, pitch based and otherwise. The H3000 multi effects unit was instantly an industry standard and is still a studio staple close to a decade and a half after it's introduction. Add to this the descendants of that line including the DSP4000, Eclipse, Orville and most recently the H8000 and H8000A, you have a legacy that's undeniable.

With this in mind, Eventide have just released the Anthology plug-in bundle. Anthology is composed of The Clockworks Legacy bundle, two of the most popular effects from the venerable H3000, and contemporary effects drawn from the Orville hardware processor. Within Clockworks there are replications of the classic Eventide pieces, The Omnipressor, the Instant Phaser, The Instant Flanger and the original Harmonizer the H910 and its follow up, the H949. The Omnipressor is a dynamics processor. It can give you compression, limiting, expansion and dynamics reversal. I should mention that this is no shrinking violet when in compressor mode. Feel free to crush the source; the Omnipressor imparts a ton of attitude when in high gain reduction settings. The Instant Phaser is exactly what you expect, a really good phaser. Think of the big phase swirl in 'Kashmir' by Led Zeppelin and that's the original that this plug-in emulates. The Instant Flanger is the plug-in recreation of one of the first hardware products to recreate "flanging." It provides the ability to choose or combine modulation sources together, including the LFO, or input signal (envelope follower), or manual sweep, which can be controlled by MIDI. In the realm of pitch changing, The H910 is the recreation of the very first Harmonizer brand effects processor, and was adopted by industry luminaries like Tony Visconti who used it to create the unique snare sound on Bowie's *Young Americans*, *Low*, and *Lodger*. The next generation of the H910 was the H949 and it took pitch changing even further. It inserted pitch shifting into the feedback loop of a delay to create unique effects. The original was widely utilized by many top engineers and performers, including a young Jimmy Page, who adopted an H949, the only piece of digital gear to grace his rig.

With this heritage Eventide continued to push the envelope in signal processing with the creation of the H3000 Ultra Harmonizer. I remember encountering this box and losing a couple of hours just checking out some of its capabilities. I think if I had tried to learn all of what it could do, I'd

still be sitting there with a pair of headphones on. Derived from the H3000 Band Delay algorithm, the H3000 Band Delays plug-in features eight voices of tempo-based filtered delays with pan and volume controls. All eight filters are fully parametric with configurable low/band/high pass or shelving choices and a bandwidth control. Band Delays deploys an extensive function generator for modulation offering 19 waveshapes, as well as MIDI control, and includes all of the original presets derived from this algorithm found in the H3000. The H3000 Factory plug-in, based on the Factory algorithms from the H3000



features the ability to patch together any combination of 18 effects blocks. Available effects blocks include delays, amplitude modulators, envelope followers, pitch shifters, filters, and low frequency oscillators. The Function Generator again features 19 waveshapes as well as a white noise generator, MIDI control, and a side chain input. All delays and LFOs can be locked to system or session tempo. Each delay can be looped and offers a low pass filter. The filters are selectable band pass, high pass, and low pass with variable Q, and can be swept and modulated without audible artifacts.

All of the plug-ins up until this point support the Pro Tools Mix, HD and HD/Accel platforms. Eventide Reverb and Octavox only support the HD and HD/Accel Platforms.

Eventide Reverb is a multi-effect plug-in comprised of the best Halls, Plates, Rooms, Chambers, and Ambience from the Orville, combined with a full three-band EQ before and after the reverb, a compressor which can also be placed before or after the reverb, twin delays, and a bit reducer. I have to rave a little bit here, these reverbs sound great and the compressor is very useful. I ran this on an auxiliary as a vocal rev while mixing a pretty vocal-heavy tune. The compressor, keyed from the lead

vocal, in the pre reverb setting worked as a 'ducker' for the reverb. When there was enough space to hear the reverb decay, you could. But when there was lots of vocal information, the rev stayed out of the way. I also loved the 'wooden room' setting, very dimensional and detailed. Finally we have Octavox, which is derived from Orville and features eight voices of diatonic Harmonizer pitch shifting, each voice with individual delay adjustment and pan controls. Octavox also utilizes a 'Notation Grid', which allows graphic placement of notes on a musical staff within the chosen key signature.

I found uses for most of the things I discovered in the Anthology bundle and the sounds themselves are great but I would offer a caveat regarding the H3000 derived plug-ins. They are good recreations of the original units, including the controls. It may just be me, but the H3000 wasn't an especially intuitive processor and the plug-in is the same way. Granted, they're a 'tweak heads' dream and capable of fantastic control but for the casual knob twiddler they can be daunting. That being said, the factory presets are more than enough to keep you happy and working while you learn how to tweak to your hearts content.

The manufacturer's suggested retail price is \$1,199.

For more product information, contact: Eventide Inc., 1 Alsan Way, Little Ferry, NJ (201) 641-1200, FAX (201) 641-1640, audio@eventide.com, www.eventide.com.

*Mike Turner is a Toronto-based guitarist and producer who is co-owner of The Pocket Studios (www.thepocketstudios.com).*

## Manufacturer's Comments

Anthology is comprised of the best Eventide effects from over three decades of hit-making processors meticulously rendered as uncompromised software plug-ins for Pro Tools TDM. It includes the entire Clockworks Legacy bundle of five original Eventide hardware products from the 1970s, two of the most popular effects from the venerable H3000, and contemporary effects drawn from the Orville hardware processor. The combined retail value of the individual components is \$2,875. Anthology retails for \$1,195 US, making it an unprecedented value and a must-have for any Pro Tools studio.

— Eventide Inc.



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# The 10 Minute Guitarist

by Vivian Clement



Do you ever feel like you just never have enough time to practice all the things you want to because of time restraints? It's a modern dilemma. You truly enjoy playing your instrument and want to improve your skills but are inconsistent and unfocused because of so many other obligations. Well there is good news. You don't need tons of time to get yourself to the next level of playing. You need a simple plan that you can implement throughout your week with a little bit of discipline, consistency and focus. Let me introduce you to a technique, that if applied, will work marvelously into anyone's busy schedule and will produce astounding results over a relatively short period time.

In recent years there has been great breakthroughs in our understanding of how the brain – particularly the memory – operates. Because memory functions primarily by repetition, if we keep repeating one thing at different times throughout the day, we will not only be able to memorize a task but will also be able to master it over a short period of time. Isolated focus is the important key here. The theory is that mastering "one" task in short intervals is much more effective than trying to cover several subject matters over longer periods of time. The main premise is to take small increments of time (approx. 10 minutes) and learn everything you can about that one single element or technique.

For example, let's say you wanted to learn your five positions of the minor pentatonic scale. This is how you would go about doing it. You would set up your first practice time sometime before you go to work (this may mean having to get up 10 minutes earlier but as you will see it's well worth it). You take 10 minutes and practice your pentatonic scales in the key of C. The goal here is not speed and mindless repetition but to aim at completely knowing every note that belongs to that scale. Sing the name of the note as you play the scale (changing octaves with your voice when the notes get too high or too low) and memorize numerically what the

notes are in relation to the root. Be sure to look at your left hand to make certain you get a good visual picture of what the scale looks like. In addition you will want to work on making your technique flawless - your right and left hand need to stay close to the strings with minimum movement. Always work with a metronome to train yourself to stay in time (start very slowly and only increase incrementally when perfected). These exercises may seem irrelevant at first, but you are actually training your muscle memory, your voice, your ability to visualize as well as knowledge of the fretboard. The result is that by using as many senses as possible (increasing your memory association) you speed up the learning process. This is a little painstaking at the start but becomes easier with practice.

Your next time slot will be sometime during the day at coffee break or lunch. (Of course you will not have your guitar with you – unless you have a really cool boss!!) This 10-minute session will be used to visualize your fretboard. Being able to mentally see your guitar without having it in front of you is a very powerful skill that will really help you improve tremendously. Olympic athletes have their own visualization coaches that teach them to practice mentally for their particular sport. Draw out a fretboard while you are at home and put the notes of the scale on the fretboard so you can bring it with you at work. Try re-writing it and practice visualizing the notes on the fretboard by closing your eyes. If you find this difficult at first, just remember that visualization is like any other skill in that it needs practice to develop. After all, every time you dream at night you are visualizing events not seen with your natural eyes.

The next 10-minute session should be when you get home after work. This time you will be practicing with your guitar repeating the same exercises as before you went to work. Your last 10-minute session will be some time before you go to bed.

All together you will spend 30 minutes on your guitar and 10 minutes visualizing. Repeat this five days a week for the next few months and see how easy it will be to master your pentatonic scales – or anything else you want to master. What you will find is that you will soon begin to comprehend more of what you are playing. Your ear is being trained by singing the notes and you are improving your sense of time by working with a metronome. As a bonus you are becoming more familiar with the notes on your fretboard and your technique is improving. And thanks to your visualization exercises you don't always

have to look at your fretboard to know exactly where you are when you are playing - this helps if you also sing while you play guitar or when you are reading music. What you will also discover is once you get use to executing something perfectly, you will desire to play everything at that level. Try to keep your 10-minute sessions as consistent as much as possible and work them around your particular schedule. If you are unable to do all four sessions, work on only three. But don't exclude the visualization exercise, which is very important. The more 10-minute sessions you complete the quicker you will master the exercises.

Once you have completely mastered the minor pentatonic scale in the key of C, you will notice that you will not need to use up the whole 10 minutes. There will be some spare minutes left, which you will later use to review previously learnt material (reviewing will become a necessary part of your practicing time). The extra time is an indication for you to go to the next key - let's say D and repeat everything over again. At first, playing this new key will feel like you are learning from scratch but you will observe that your ability to master it will be much quicker. Never move to a new exercise unless you have totally mastered that one exercise, otherwise you will be memorizing bad technique.

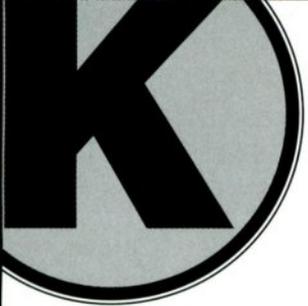
Let's review the six points of the 10-minute sessions.

1. Focus on one exercise only in one key
2. Combine several senses for association
3. Repeat three to four times daily (always include the visualization exercise)
4. Be consistent
5. Review previous material with time left over
6. Change keys only when exercise is mastered

These exercises are really easy to do and build confidence since you will see yourself progress on a continual basis. I suggest having a few regular time slots throughout the week just to play whatever you want on the guitar. This way you spend some disciplined time as well as some time just to jam and experiment.

If you decide to work on these 10-minute exercises please feel free to e-mail me your comments and observations at my e-mail address below.

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



# Left Hand Performance Enhancements

by Kevin Young

A few years ago I injured my hand in a small, but painful, accident involving a skateboard, an indeterminate object hidden somewhere in the darkness, and some swiftly approaching concrete. I fell badly ... with all my weight on one hand, and directly in front of a packed patio of suitably amused tourists. Although it wasn't a serious injury, (I could still play – just not very well) for a couple of weeks afterwards I felt as if I were playing with two good, strong fingers and three half cooked hot dogs sloppily duct taped to my remaining knuckles. In an effort to bring my errant fingers back up to snuff, I began revisiting old exercises and techniques and generally spending more time than usual with my left hand. Tried and true, scales, arpeggios and inversions etc. are a great workout, but the tedium of repetition may get to you after awhile. If so, here are a few other options to enhance dexterity and strengthen a sagging left hand.

Substitute another structure as the basis for your practice. Written music in any style provides enough of a framework from which to draw from and develop your own exercises and can be far less monotonous than traditional technique. Although any sheet music will do the job, a collection of charts, or a book of transcribed solos are a good place to start. The more choices you have, the more likely you are to find something that focuses heavily on the area you want to work on. Old Bebop charts and transcriptions are particularly useful owing to their swift and varied melodic and harmonic movement. The whole idea of these exercises is to keep the player entertained and thinking, rather than simply blasting through scales. Tricky fingering, large leaps, rhythmic complexity and odd voicings in the head are a plus, the more challenging the piece, the better.

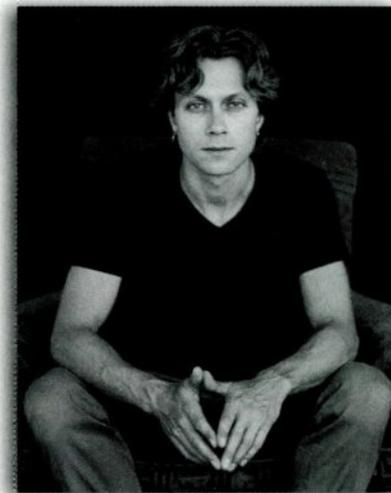
Begin simply; run through the chart a couple of times providing only basic accompaniment in the left hand; either a walking line, or just the changes in block chords on the beat just to get comfortable with the harmonic movement and the timing. Now drop the right hand and play the melody in the left hand. Aim for fluency to begin with and then slowly work up to speed. Your left hand may not be as used to ripping through

the same sort of sequences your right hand is and this kind of practice (particularly with a variety of charts) can do quite a bit to increase your dexterity. When you get the melody to the point where it is smooth and fairly effortless to play transpose it into all keys. If a specific passage or type of movement in the head is particularly hard to get your fingers around, isolate it and play the problem passage first in simple repetition and then transpose it according to the harmonic changes of the tune you've chosen.

Now work through the changes only, first in block chords and then arpeggios. Try to string the arpeggios together in such a way as to make the movement from chord to chord as simple and fluent as possible. It's probably a good idea to do this exercise in time and allow the chart to dictate how long each arpeggio will be. If you have a simple II-V-I progression over the course of one bar (say F# min7-B7-E maj 7) use an ascending pattern for the first chord, descending for the second, then ascending and descending for the third, and so on. Now take this new set of exercises you've created, alter their feel and rhythm (i.e. straight and swung eighths, triplets etc.) and then transpose them as well.

If you can achieve the same ease and fluency with these exercises that you strive for with scales and traditional technique then you'll greatly increase your dexterity and strength as well as entrench a library of licks in your physical memory that are sure to come in useful.

The previous exercises focus on speed and dexterity but if you wish to put more emphasis on accuracy and comping there's no need to run back to working through inversions; a chart can come in handy for that as well. This time begin with just the harmonic movement as the basis for your drill. Try to avoid looking at the keyboard at all. Keeping your hand completely relaxed, and adopting a comfortable (and hopefully correct) posture, move through the changes allowing your hand to rise and fall to the keyboard confidently, as if you knew exactly where they were to land. Chances are that the first few times through you won't and this can be frustrating, but with time it pays off. It's important to keep your hand relaxed and accept the inevitable wrong notes



without tensing up, or stopping and starting over. Stay in time and go back and work on the problem areas once you've made it through the head a couple of times.

Start with the chords in a relatively simple form (eg. root on the bottom and no more than four parts) and build up from there. This type of chordal movement may seem a little exaggerated but it's the exaggeration that makes this portion of the exercise so effective. When this becomes comfortable move on to the next inversion, building the chord from the third, then the fifth, and so on. How far you get into extensions is up to you.

Now return to the top and in the same manner play through the changes again making movement from chord to chord as economical as possible; identifying and utilizing shared notes and visualizing the shape of the next chord before you reach for it. Remember to try to avoid looking at the keys. For continued practice, transpose the changes into all keys.

Using a chart is just one structure on which to base these drills. You may find that substituting a piece you have learned entirely by ear or a structure of your own devising more suited to your specific needs. The intent is to find something entertaining and challenging to expand your grasp of technique, and by extension, your chops.

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

# A Different Approach To Bass

by Brian Minato

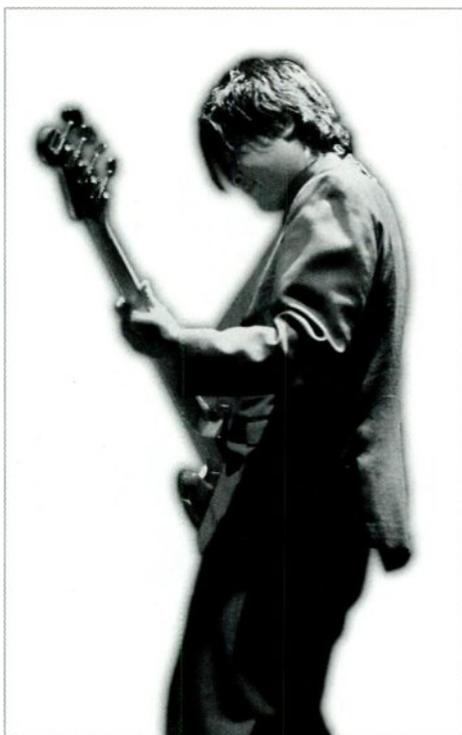
I started playing bass by accident. My brother had a drum set and two guitar-playing buddies who needed someone to play along. Thrashing through makeshift versions of “Wipeout”, “Black Magic Woman” etc., we never went beyond the basement. Now, here I am writing a column about bass. Life is a funny thing. Having had, over the last few years, experiences ranging from playing a shopping mall to playing at Madison Square Gardens to noodling on the piano with Billy Talbot at Neil Young’s ranch, I thought I would try and talk about bass situations and my approaches to them.

## Less Is More, More Or Less...

Playing in bands with larger formats such as more musicians/sequencing etc. has presented challenges to me. Usually, I like to find a groove that has a warm roundness to it in terms of tone and feel. A strong bottom end foundation allows the other band members to “let go” and do their thing whether it be singing or playing their instruments. Working with Sarah [McLachlan] has taught me that a little can often go a long way. The sound and space of one note can say a lot more and mean a lot more than 20 notes if placed well. Finding that place is not easy but when you do the feeling is amazing.

Speaking of space, the concept of playing at slow tempos is one that I have tried hard to work at in the last eight or nine years. Listening to each note and giving it the full value requires the experience of time. Playing a lot and working with good musicians are great ways to develop this technique. I recommend listening to Miles Davis’ *Kind of Blue* or Brian Wilson’s *Pet Sounds* records as examples of spacious playing.

Playing to a sequenced part or drum loop is difficult when combined with the human element. Humans are not note perfect and machines cannot react or change quickly. I believe that the rhythm section for the most part should be the only musicians hearing



these pre-programmed parts. Unless of course said parts are essential for others to hear. Indication of an arrangement change is an example. Most musicians are listening to the rhythm section so I find having the bass and drums locked in with the loop/sequence is enough...

## Effects Pedals

Another concept I have been fooling around with is the idea of manipulating bass sounds via effects pedals. The sound and tone of a bass is a wondrous thing – yet at certain times, colouring the textures can cause you to play and think in different ways. A perfect example is a three-piece group I played with (bass, drums, guitar) which was a little more experimental, using different pedal effects comes a little more naturally. Using echo, distortion, flanging, tremolo etc. has resulted in bass parts I might never have come across before. There are certain times where we sound like one big instrument with both our instruments swirling together. Don’t be afraid to use pedals. Just make sure the part or idea you’re trying to develop has meaning to the song...

## Write For Yourself

Writing your own songs, whether it’s a 60-second snippet or a 60-minute epic is essential to developing as a bass player. I’ve had the good fortune of being able to work on some really excellent records and I’ve learned so much as a result. But there is nothing like working on your own stuff. Being creatively in touch with the music, words, melodies etc. will make you stronger as a musician and will ultimately lead your bass playing down some interesting, varied paths. Good luck.

*Brian Minato is the bassist for Sarah McLachlan. He is also a Vancouver based musician/producer currently working with The Blue Alarm, The Wild Strawberries, BWB, Sandy Scofield and other artists.*

## "Drummer" ... A Career?

by Adam David

Blessed with the good fortune to earn most of my living playing drums for some 30-plus years now, I'm compelled to share certain revelations with those of you pondering if it's even remotely possible to do so today and in the years ahead.

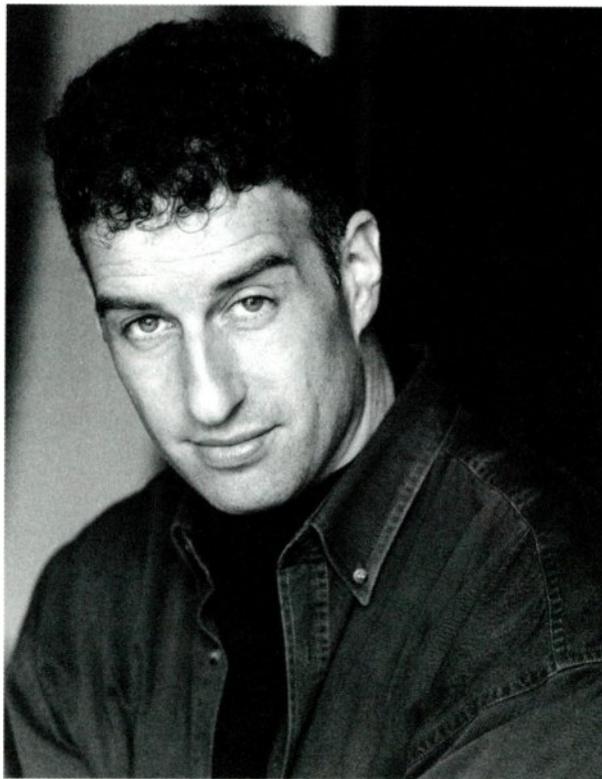
Dissenters will always be there. "No steady work, no security ... Musical trends change constantly ... Technology's replaced real musicians," etc. These truths have always existed. (When the bass drum and high-hat pedals were introduced, approximately 100 years ago, two out of three drummers became unemployed!) But consider what magic it is that we drummers provide: *rhythm* – the foundation to almost all popular music, for hundreds of years! What we do, regardless the genre, or place on the planet, is create that essential heartbeat, the engine that drives and supports the other musical cornerstones – melody and harmony. A good drummer will always be in demand.

With invaluable guidance from many teachers, I was bound and determined to immerse myself in the jazz world. There seemed no other music that provided such freedom, soul and passion. Most of my inspirations were jazz players and composers. During my late-teens/early-twenties, following an intense study period in New York and Los Angeles, I returned to Toronto, only to be offered a tour with an established country artist. A youthful, arrogant voice inside proclaimed, "Oh man, do you really want to be on the road, playing *country*?!" Thankfully, my parents – both seasoned musicians – advised, "You've got debts, few gigs, what's the problem?"

Accepting that tour was one of the most beneficial, pivotal moments in my growth as a musician and person. With incredible humour and patience, several in the country (and later, pop/rock) community helped me

to realize the importance of:

- Laying down a simple, appropriate groove.
- A well-written *song*.
- Hearing when NOT to play. (Other players, audiences don't always want to hear your latest drum chops.) Making a selective, few



notes feel good isn't easy, but usually preferred.

- Great artistry exists in all musical genres. Check out new sources constantly.
- Sensitivity to your fellow players – on and off stage – should always be a priority.
- Always nod a gracious smile to your lead singer/bandleader, no matter what they're saying, or how they use a tambourine!

For years to come, while honing a less-is-more approach, I continued to explore and feed my first love, jazz. Upon discovering an interview with the great spirited, innovative drummer, Elvin Jones, I was struck by

his comment, "Whatever the style you're playing, be the most authentic you possibly can, in that style." In other words, play *the music*.

I later learned that Elvin – probably my greatest influence – had spent much of his formative years playing in R&B bands around Detroit. Seems we all have to take a variety of gigs to keep working. The amazing result though, is that the broader range of styles only serves to make us deeper, more versatile musicians. Today, I relish the experience of playing in country bands, reggae bands, rock, blues, orchestral, big band ... you name it. To quote the legendary Duke Ellington, "There are only two kinds of music: good and bad."

So when young students ask me, how to build a career from playing? I usually encourage, "Listening and playing in as many musical genres as possible, as often as possible."

More stylistic familiarity makes you more employable. Ultimately, you will find your own sound. (Learning to read and understand basic notation/harmony helps – not as hard as most think – increases respect from fellow band mates.)

Keep those *ears* open. Go experience your favourite players, *live*! Ask them questions, analyze and experiment. And finally, play whenever, with whomever you can. You never know when someone's going to dig your playing and offer that upcoming tour, recording or club date. Make

every note count and *groove* joyfully!

*Toronto based drummer-actor-teacher, Adam David has played with Ray Charles, Michelle Wright, Oliver Jones, Tommy Newsom, Shirley Eikhard, Charles Brown and Tommy Hunter. Now in his 26<sup>th</sup> year as percussion specialist for the Toronto District School Board, he was awarded a 1981 Canada Council grant to study with Ed Soph & Peter Erskine. A Yamaba endorsed clinician, he has composed and conducted percussion ensembles extensively. Adam also appears regularly in film and TV. Contact Adam via E-mail at [drumdog@sympatico.ca](mailto:drumdog@sympatico.ca)*

# What's That Adjudicator Thinking?

by Alex Dean



For approximately 10 years I've been involved as an adjudicator with Musicfest Canada. This is, as the name suggests a Music Festival that involves kids of all ages in various types of bands and ensembles from schools across Canada. There are two levels, the first is a Regional Competition where the kids compete for Gold, Silver or Bronze medals in their provinces – standards set by the Musicfest Board and to some degree by the adjudicators. The second level is the National Competition where the kids compete for a National Gold, Silver or Bronze and get to hear bands and musicians their own age from all across Canada. This National level is usually a week of daily competitions and nightly concerts.

This May the city of Richmond, BC hosted the event. Concerts included: VocaJava a vocal group, Hugh Fraser with the VEJI band (with some of the greatest musicians in Vancouver) and the National Concert Band conducted by Dr. Jeremy Brown (assisted by Dr. Mark Hopkins) that featured the remarkable flutist, Susan Hoepfner.

I was lucky enough when I first started, to work with some extremely knowledgeable people who helped me hone my adjudication skills. I also took conducting classes and studied with some great conductors. Having

said this, I feel most comfortable with Jazz Bands.

The first thing I examine when working with a band is their repertoire. Whether it's a big band or an ensemble I like to see if the music matches the players. If I see a band of 10-year-olds playing some Maria Schneider charts or some of Miles Davis' more challenging compositions I wonder what the instructor is doing. Sometimes I'm wrong, and it sounds fresh and I love it – but not that often. Some adjudicators like the kids to look like they're having fun ... I'm not one of those. I like to think if the music is great then that's what I'm there to hear. I know it's not a very showbiz attitude, but I'm not very showbiz.

If I'm listening to a big band I like hear the music do what it's supposed to. If it's supposed to swing I like it to swing. If it's R&B I like it to groove pretty hard.

If the trumpets are going to come in I'd sort of expect them to do it together most of the time. Dynamics are important in a big band and often the band doesn't get quiet enough to make the loud sections work. Sometimes this is because the rhythm section likes to play louder than they need to in a big band setting. This also can throw the pitch off in large and small bands because the acoustic instruments can only play so loud.

When I'm listening to a small group I like to see that the music is memorized.

I believe sometimes students go to a club and if they see a band reading original charts that they've only played once and think it is okay not to memorize the music. If the student band is playing original music that they've only seen a few times then the music doesn't need to be memorized, but if they're playing standards that they've had for a while then it should be memorized. Better yet learn it off the CD! If I'm listening to a small band I like to guess if the students have heard a recording of the tunes they're playing or if they've read it from a book. Sometimes I can guess the version they are listening to.

When I listen to a solo, whether it's a big band or a small one, I listen for the changes. Is the soloist playing on the changes (if there are changes) and is the soloist making music? By that I mean melodies, lines – whatever

you want to call it that outline the chords and reflect an understanding of the music – and if possible the history of the music he or she is playing. A pretty tall order for school kids, but I *have* heard it.

Finally, what I look for in a large or small band is whether the students treat each other and their instructor with respect. I'm of the opinion that in a band everyone is working to make it happen. Not so the instructor looks good or the guitar player or sax player look good but to make the best music they can. Nothing ruins my day like a player that treats the band like an oil painting while they solo endlessly and say nothing and an instructor that lets him or her do it on every tune. Nothing makes me happier than an instructor that lets as many people solo as want to. It is after all about fun and learning.

This year at Musicfest about 150 Jazz Bands competed. I don't think I heard all 150 of them but I heard many. As an adjudicator I get the best of it. I always try to remember that the music I hear in 20 minutes, the band and the instructor have been working on all year. It's quite an accomplishment in this era of cutbacks to the arts even to have a band program let alone a Jazz Band. Congratulations to all who persevere!

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

WOODWINDS

## Is It Better To Play Sharp Or Out Of Tune?

by Chase Sanborn

*"True intonation is one thing that the average listener demands of a performer. It is taken for granted that any brass player appearing before an audience will at least play in tune."  
- Raphael Mendez*

Intonation can be a frustrating pursuit for the brass player. We wrestle with several major obstacles as we strive to play in tune. (This may explain why the members of the brass section are usually the first ones at the bar after the concert.) Here is a little insight into what you are up against, and some tips for improving your intonation. To begin, a short history lesson:

### B.V.

Before the invention of valves, trumpet players were limited to notes contained within one harmonic series. Some trumpet players became specialists at playing in the upper register, where there are more available notes. This increased the melodic possibilities, not to mention the risk of hernias. Meanwhile, the trombone players could use the slide in combination with the harmonic series to play any note they fancied. The age of the technically advantaged trombone player was soon to end, however.

### A.V.

After the invention of valves, brass players gained tremendous technical facility (except the trombonists). Pressing down a valve channels air through a slide, effectively lengthening the horn and creating a new overtone series. By utilizing seven different lengths of tubing, producing seven complete overtone series, the valved instruments could now play a chromatic scale. Everyone started practicing "Flight of the Bumblebee".

### The Problem With Valves

While a system of three valves does produce all the notes of the chromatic scale, it is not perfect. As tubing is added, the instrument gets increasingly out of tune with itself. What has become known as 'standard' fingerings generally are the ones that use the shortest amount of tubing (there are some exceptions). These are usually the most in-

tune fingerings, but sometimes an alternate fingering can help the player adjust for intonation.

### Slides & Extra Valves

Trumpets have moveable slides on the first and third valves. Even the beginning player soon learns to extend the third slide for low D and C#. Low E and high A will probably sound better with a little first-valve extension, and there are other situations where the slides can help you play in tune.

Some instruments employ a fourth valve, providing more valve combinations. On lower brasses, where the pitch problems are magnified due to the greater lengths of tubing, manufacturers have devised elaborate compensating valve systems. As if carrying around a tuba wasn't bad enough in itself.

### Lipping

You can raise or lower the pitch with your air and lips, commonly referred to as lipping a note. Fine players lip notes up or down instinctively, adjusting their pitch to the other players around them. Using slides and alternate fingerings helps the player avoid lipping too far away from the centre of the note, as tone quality will suffer.

### Tuning Up

Getting your instrument 'in tune' is a study in compromise. Professional brass players find the best overall position for the tuning slide and generally just leave it there, sometimes 'pretending' to tune up at the start of the concert. (Don't tell the conductor.)

### Equal Temperament vs. The Overtone Series

Pianos and electronic instruments are tuned on the basis of equal temperament; each octave is divided into 12 semitones. This produces a 'tempered' scale, and allows the instrument to play in all keys. Brass instruments, however, are based on the overtone



series, and produce a 'just' scale. The two systems of intonation are not particularly compatible, and because piano players have historically been too lazy to tune their 88 keys to match anyone else, we brass players are often stuck trying to blend just tuning with equal temperament. Working with an electronic tuner can teach you about the intonation tendencies of your instrument, and help you to hear subtle variations in pitch.

*Chase Sanborn is a trumpet player based in Toronto, Canada. His books, Brass Tactics and Jazz Tactics have earned praise worldwide for their insightful yet light-hearted and humorous look at the world of brass playing and jazz improvisation. Upcoming projects include the Jazz Tactics DVD. Visit [www.chasesanborn.com](http://www.chasesanborn.com) for information on Chase's books and other products, including the CenterPitch Universal Intonation Tool.*

# 5 Kick-Ass Tips for a Tight Bottom End!

by Alec Watson

It seems we are inundated with ideas for firming and toning bottom ends every time we line-up to exit the grocery store. You know what? Unless those tips emphasize that one needs to start by eating less calories than they expend, then those tips are a waste of time! Aye, those tips are neigh Scotch and they are CRAP! It occurred to me, however, that 5 tips for a tight bottom end in audio could actually be worth reading about ... well at least I hope they are; I am sure you will let me know.

## Start With The Source

Yeah, that's about as good a tip as eating less calories than you expend; but really, this is where it starts. Now we are not just talking good tones here; we are talking about production. As you can well imagine, if there is "air" or space right before the kick drum is struck, it is going to be MUCH punchier. Now you probably don't want to go and mute every track milliseconds before the kick drum is hit, but keep in mind that doing this *would* actually give you the punchiest source. In other words, if you are going for punch, have the instruments played in a manner that will emphasize punchiness. You would (or wouldn't) be surprised at how many acts want their tracks mastered to sound as punchy (in the bottom end) as a Weezer record, but they give you mixes that contain layers and layers of distorted guitars that don't leave any room for the kick or bass.

## Align The Kick And Bass Tracks

This will make a HUGE difference. Yeah, yeah, purists (bass players) are going to whine: "You moved my bass out of time from where I played it. It just doesn't feel the same." To this I say - cry me a river and when you're done sniveling, play in time and then I won't have to move your track! I generally don't do much editing of drum time (even though it may need it) as this opens quite a can of worms. My preference would be to get a great studio drummer and leave their track fairly organic. I then check the bass playing against the kick. If there are any bass notes

ahead of the kick, I'll cut them and nudge them back. If there are a few late notes, cut 'em and move 'em up. If you are really anal (or have an assistant) phase align (make sure the transient spikes are going the same way at the same time) the attacks of the kick and bass tracks.

## Multi-band Compression

Now we all know that a little compression can go a long way towards making a kick or bass punchier sounding, but not all of us (at least not those analog hold-outs) have a rack full of multi-band compressors at their



fingertips. The multi-band has a huge advantage over a "regular" compressor; not only can you compress different frequencies to different ratios; you can change the attack times of the different bands! COOL! Let's think about the physics of a low note for a minute. A kick drum reproduces a whole frickin' wall of frequencies. By changing the attack times of the compressor in different frequency ranges, we can completely change how the kick drum "punches." Low frequencies have long cycles; try setting your attack time to a fairly slow - 45 milliseconds; in your mid bands try 15 milliseconds, and in your upper frequencies try 5 milliseconds. Look at your gain reduction and set all three bands to similar levels of gain reduction and WHAM! Punchy kick drum. The same trick works very well for bass!

## HEAD ROOM!

It's easy to run out of headroom when you are working with dynamic instruments. Make sure you don't let your kick drum or bass end up clipping. Those angry little red lights are there for a reason. Check your track meters, ALL OF YOUR PLUG-INS, any busses and of course the mains. Nasty red lights *anywhere* in you recording or playback chain will pretty much destroy your chances of deafening the neighbours of the kids with the big subwoofers.

## Don't Make You Mix Bottom Heavy

Okay so I just wrote several hundred words telling you how to make the bottom end punchy. Keep in mind that most of the "punch" we perceive actually comes from upper-mids. Try the "multi-banding" a kick and then turn off the upper frequencies - result? -no punch! These upper frequencies are also very important for bass. If your mix is bottom heavy going to mastering, good luck on having the mastering engineer tweak it into a punchy sounding mix. Use all these tricks, but make sure the overall EQ sounds well balanced and you will be in good shape.

Most important of all (and this certainly goes for me), the fewer the instruments (the more room in the track), the easier it is to make your mix sound punchy.

By the time this column gets to print I will have my Web site, aptly named [www.alecwatson.com](http://www.alecwatson.com), up and running. I will post some before and after examples of these tips and more on there.

*Alec Watson is a Producer/Engineer that works from his destination studio on Vancouver Island. He always tries to have a tight-punchy bottom end.*



# Taking Care Of Your Voice

VOCALS

with Rob Thomas

CM brings you an interview with Rob Thomas who is currently taking a break from his group Matchbox Twenty to support his solo record, *Something To Be*.

### Did you ever take vocal lessons?

I didn't take vocal lessons until I got signed. There's a big difference being in a local band and playing on weekends and then all of a sudden doing it six nights a week plus interviews all day and all night, you start to realize that maybe your voice can suffer. I have a really great vocal coach out in Atlanta – she is a rock and roll vocal coach – and she understands that I'm going to be getting high and I don't want someone to yell at me. I simply want her to get my voice in the best shape that she can. She understands that...

### How do you maintain your voice when you're on the road?

I don't talk to anybody. (Laughs) You just get better at it. The first thing you learn is that you can't party every night if you want to sound great. You have to pick your battles and you have to at some point limit when you sing. We play three shows in a row and then take a day off. I can't drink as much as when we were an opening act, because you only play for 45 minutes. Now I'm singing six nights a week for two hours. It comes down to simply maintenance: you can't be a fuck up because people are paying money to hear you.

### How do you prevent vocal stress or damage?

I have a harder time I think than the real technical singers because part of what makes my voice sound the way it sounds is singing incorrectly. It's like I'm a boxer every night, to get a growl in your voice you sort of have to beat yourself up a little bit. So, wear and tear sort of becomes part of my voice. It makes it even harder to maintain because you have to really be sure that every time

you're not on stage, you're not doing anything to fuck it up.

### When you are recording vocals, is there a specific time of day in which you prefer to hit the studio?

When I'm writing I usually come in at 1 p.m. and stay to whenever. I like to come in and feel like it's a job. Once I get in and start going through demos I could just work all day. Vocals are better at night I think. You let your voice kind of warm up and let your body warm up.

### How much warm up time do you need before stepping into the studio?

It depends. Some nights I'll go in and if I feel rough I'll take a half an hour before I go in and some nights I'll just walk right in.

### How comfortable are you with people watching you record your vocals?

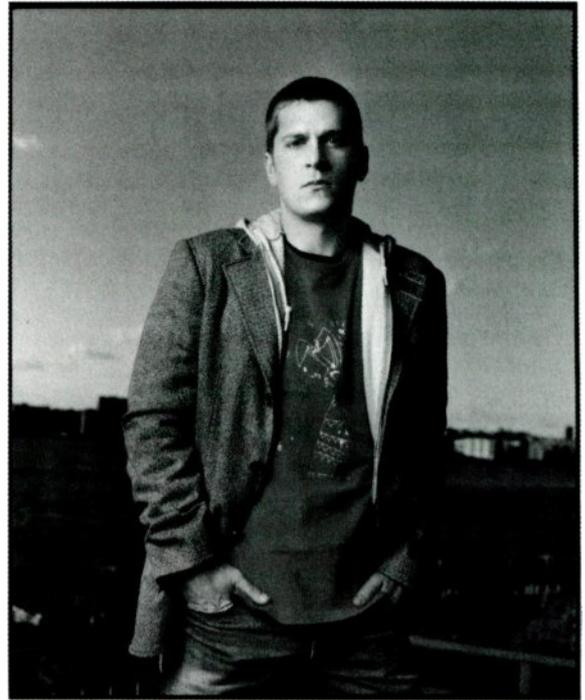
I used to hate it. I've always, for years, just turned off every light in the room. This year there was a woman who was filming a documentary about the record so I had to learn to forget about her being in the vocal booth with me.

### How would you describe a good day in the studio and a bad day in the studio?

A good day is when you walk out with something that didn't exist when you walked in. A bad day is when you walk out with the same exact shit you had all day.

### What advice do you have for those who are starting into vocal lessons?

I think it's really important that when you're on your own time, worry about doing your vocals, worry about your pitch, worry about doing your warm-ups, worry about working



through the scale so that your voice can hit every note that is in the scale, and then when you're singing the song, forget it. Forget everything that you've worried about. Don't worry about your posture, don't worry about your breathing and don't worry about your gut because sooner or later that will come second nature. Some people are so concerned with how they're singing that they forget what they are singing. If you take Bob Dylan, Tom Petty: the reason that they can make you cry is that they don't have these technically great voices, but they mean every word they say. And it really shows in between what they say and how they say it.

*Rob Thomas is best known as lead singer for Matchbox Twenty.*

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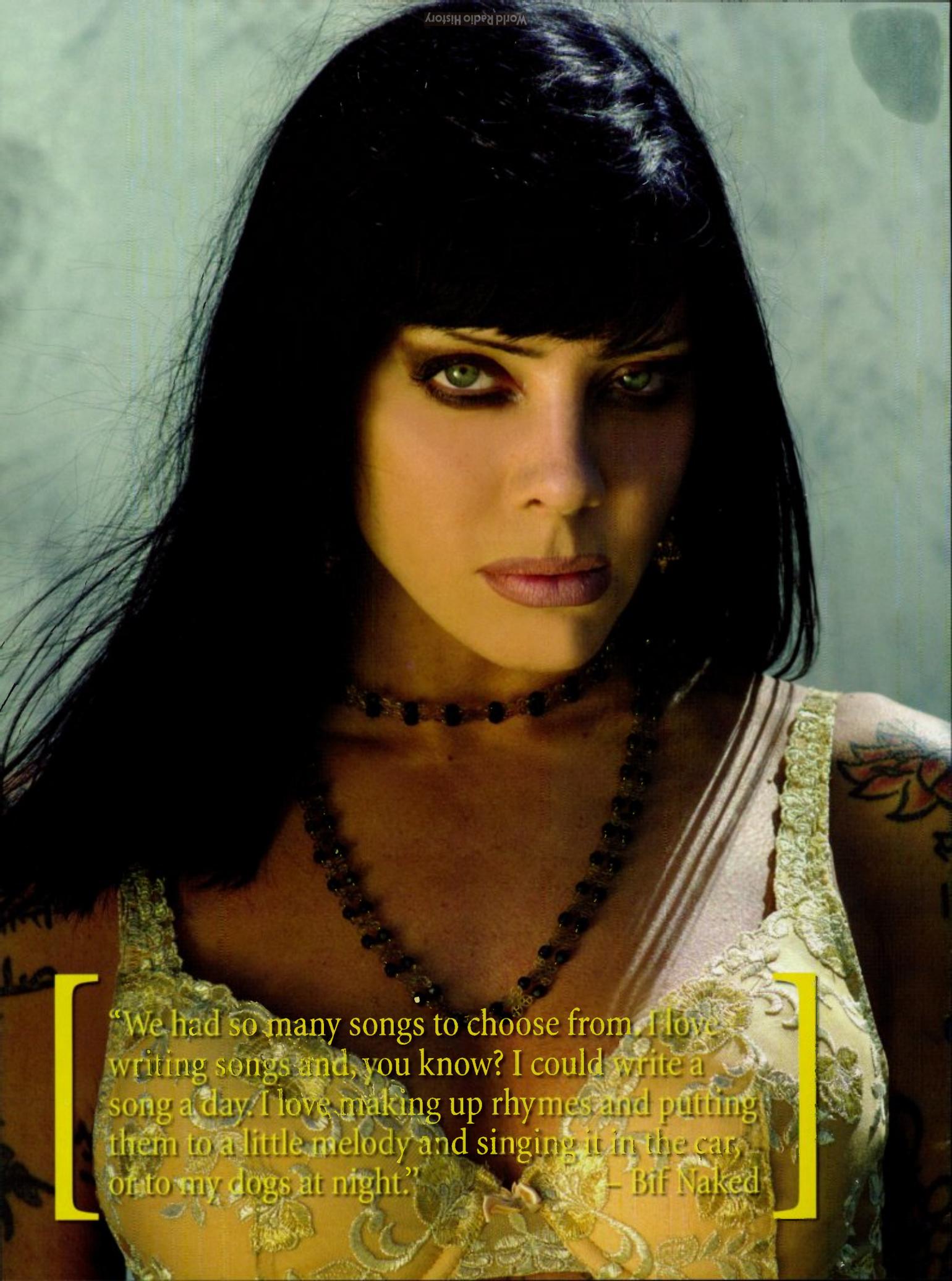
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“We had so many songs to choose from. I love writing songs and, you know? I could write a song a day. I love making up rhymes and putting them to a little melody and singing it in the car, or to my dogs at night.” — Bif Naked

In her early days in the business Bif toured hard and lived hard, cutting her teeth in a variety of Canadian hardcore acts, including Gorilla Gorilla, Chrome Dog and Dying To Be Violent. All the time she was intent on learning the business from the inside out, as well as refining her voice and image, but it wasn't until she went solo in 1994 with her first EP, *Four Songs and a Poem*, that she was able to escape the boundaries and restrictions on her songwriting that are often inherent in creative collaboration and seriously get down to the business of being Bif.

Since then, she's been made a career out of being herself and although, inevitably, there have been comparisons between Bif and other hip and heavily tattooed female artists of the moment, there's no one quite like her. Sometimes it seems like a fine balancing act, a study in opposites, balancing the harsh punk rock icon – all tats and piercing against the incredibly fit, vegan, girly grrrl. But there's no Rock Star pose in conversation. She's at ease with herself in a 'here I am, take or leave it' way. Her image, some might say, doesn't always seem to go with the music, or the life. But she never compromises either side, or seems to fear being provocative in person or on record.

That being said, it isn't always easy being herself; when she says in her 2005 New Year's message "that 2004 was emotionally taxing" she's putting it mildly. Rough or not though, she's holding firm to a resolution to have more fun and sounded more than ready to tackle 2005 when we sat down to talk about stalkers, fighting, and her new album, *Superbeautifulmonster*.

# Bif Naked

by Kevin Young  
Photos by Albert Normandin

## On The Business Of Being Bif

**Canadian Musician:** The record is all over the map emotionally and you have said it's been an emotionally draining year – It shows on songs like "Abandonment" and "Let Down".

**Bif Naked:** Yeah, it's been a tumultuous couple of years. I've had experiences with some pretty violent, little stalkers – I was pretty isolated. I couldn't leave my house. I had police protection. Abandonment was a difficult song for me to write – I was in a very seedy hotel room with a young man named Jimmy Allen. I wrote four songs with him. We probably wrote 80 songs for *Superbeautifulmonster* and whittled it down to 13. The bulk of the songs I was writing were negative and upsetting. The problem that I have when I'm writing guitar riffs, they all sound like some type of Norwegian Black Metal. I can't seem to do anything else on a guitar or a bass guitar. So working with co-writers has been a great thing for me.

**CM:** There does seem to be some very celebratory songs as well.

**Bif:** Definitely. No matter what bad things happen to me in my life, I'm still always able to fall in love and I find that, in my mid-30s, I have this heightened awareness of my physiology. That's a polite way to put it, but I found that I wrote a lot of songs about lust. I call them my wedding songs.

**CM:** There are definite pop sensibilities that come through on the record. I don't know if that's you, or the co-writer?

**Bif:** Or the producer ... I'm grateful to work with Peter Karrol, because he's been with me since I was, probably, God, I don't know, 21? He gets me as an artist and I feel like I can really be myself. We also worked with Paul Silveira and "Let Down" is Kevin Kadish, who is just the greatest. I'm his #1 fan.

**CM:** I'm not familiar with Kevin Kadish.

**Bif:** He's an artist I wrote a whole bunch of songs

with and "Let Down" is a Kevin song. I had no idea it was going to be picked for the first single – and I'm so delighted. I wrote "Everyday" with Kevin and "Funeral of a Good Grrl" with Kevin. And the Metallica cover, that was Dave Fortman producing. He just came off of the Evanescence record.

**CM:** Where did you record?

**Bif:** At Her Royal Majesty's Studio in Vancouver, where I live. We did the drums at Mushroom and then we mixed at the Armoury.

**CM:** How did the process of making this one differ from making *Purge*, or *I Bificus*?

**Bif:** We had so many songs to choose from. I love writing songs and, you know? I could write a song a day. I love making up rhymes and putting them to a little melody and singing it in the car, or to my dogs at night.

**CM:** You have dogs?

**Bif:** I have two fluffy, white, fru fru dogs named Nicklas and Anna.

Bif is clear that the job of being Bif comes with the occasional hiccup or bump – like buying back your masters to get your music out, or the aforementioned stalkers. That said, you can tell she still loves to do it; it's a balance between business as business and business as pleasure. But when she talks about her life outside of that it sounds as if, just beneath the surface, a well of irrepressible joy that's just about to burst out. Nicklas and Anastasia play a large role in Bif's online letters – beyond being her companions, the dogs are cartoon characters that pop up regularly in her online messages. Now, as Bif describes the dogs, I remember reading somewhere that she was about to unveil a new cartoon character...

**Bif:** That's the *Superbeautifulmonster*. It was kind of an accidental title – I've drawn a cartoon of

him. The day we started doing the hard recording, when we finally selected the songs we were going to re-record, I said, 'You know, it's going to be a *Superbeautifulmonster* record. And the name kind of stuck.

**CM:** So when you demoed the record...

**Bif:** No one likes my titles. When my first record came out, I wanted to call it *Satan's Girlfriend*. And then, when *Purge* came out, I was going to call it *Nang Sim*, which is a ball squish martial arts move.

**CM:** That's a great name.

**Bif:** And then *Superbeautifulmonster* ... I'm so excited. I feel like I'm having a baby. I haven't had that feeling before and it's really ... I'm a different person than when *Purge* came out and that is the benefit of having five years between records all the time. You know, five years, it's a big change. You go through a lot different things in your life and I just feel like a completely different person.

**CM:** How?

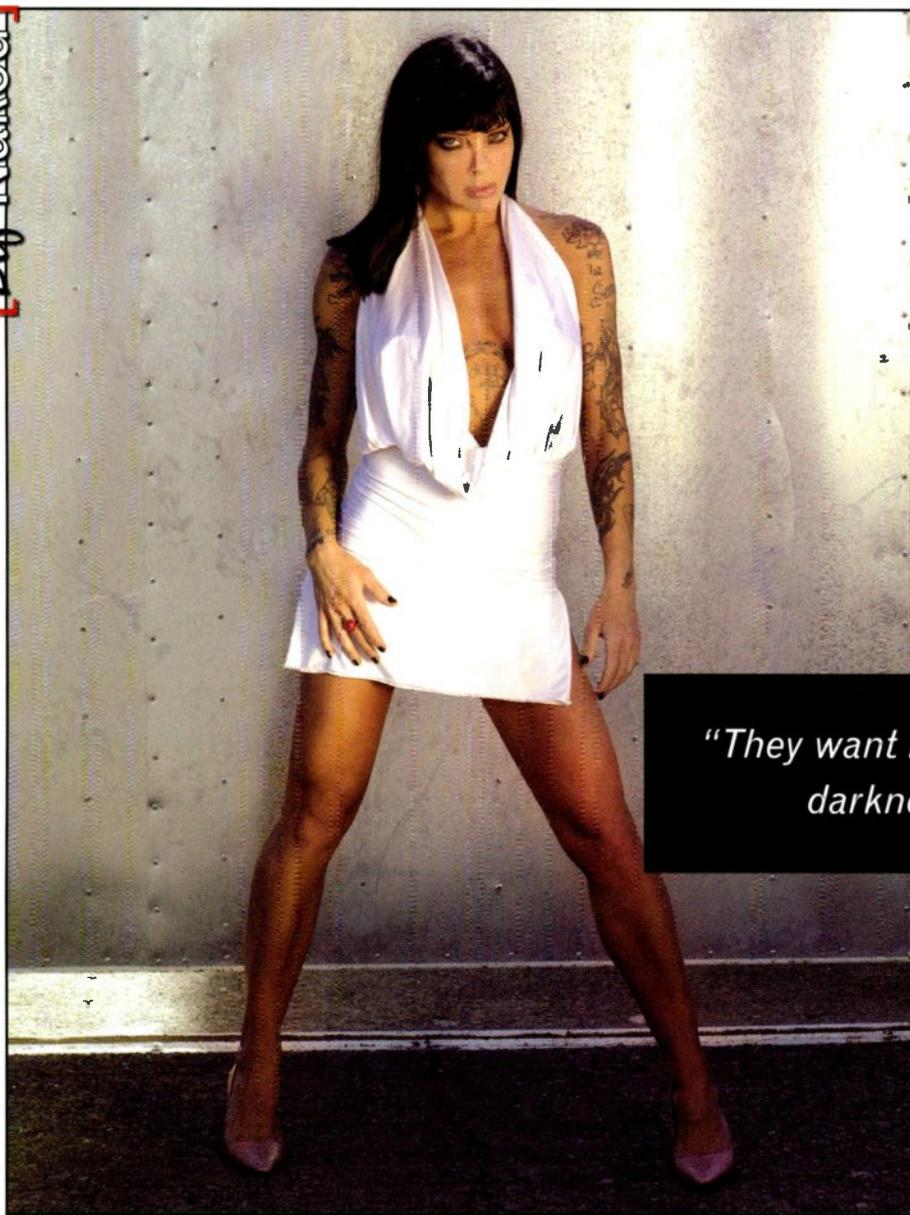
**Bif:** I fight now. I get in fights now. I like it.

**CM:** With the band? With random crowd members?

**Bif:** People who are disrupting, who are impolite, you know, somebody that won't stop their car to let an old lady walk across the street. I'll block their car and beat them over the head with a short stick.

Although I'm not certain whether we're talking knockdown, drag-out fistfights or verbal battles, I leave it. Bif gives you the impression of being well able to take care of herself and counts martial arts among her many interests. It's just one of the ways she has for expressing herself.

**CM:** I read that you paint and donated some of your work to Rock For Choice as well.



*"They want me to be the princess of darkness." – Bif Naked*

one thing I did, I was able to tour support the band, our vans and gear for the whole summer. Every dime I ever made pretty much went back into the gas tank of the record company. I just think that's the way everyone should be.

**CM:** But it isn't...

**Bif:** And that's okay too. Everyone has to find their happiness where they can.

Evidently, Bif is a person who finds happiness in a great many pursuits – which probably has contributed to the longevity of her career. With such a well-defined image, there is the danger that people might tend to focus more on Bif the personality as opposed to Bif the recording artist. But if being pigeonholed artistically, or as a personality concerns her, it certainly doesn't show. At the heart of it, you get the sense that Bif is very much at ease with who she is and comfortable with allowing her fans see all the various aspects without apology. She's driven not only to follow her many passions, but to stretch out and challenge herself within each of them. A tendency that's as evident as much on record as it is in the frequent handwritten letters she posts at [www.bifnaked.com](http://www.bifnaked.com); a series of running monologues

that touch on both personal and professional issues – a mixture of politics, cartoons, and personal that are as forthright as her music.

Even though *Superbeautifulmonster* definitely has qualities of the darker bands she loves – feelings of loss and rage are well represented on tracks like "Abandonment" and "Let Down" – there's a fair bit of orchestration as well even on the heavier tracks. Groovy synth work and sweeping piano and string melodies (courtesy of John Webster, David Hodges, Mike Norman, Dave Baron) that build quickly are suddenly blown out of the mix by the crashing guitars of Todd Kerns and Doug Fury. There are celebratory moments as well, tongue in cheek songs like "Funeral of a Good Grrl" and "That's Life", that prove Bif's not afraid to make a self deprecating comment here and there and showcase her ample sense of humour. In addition, there are moments that are almost delicate, for instance, strangely enough, a cover of Metallica's "Nothing Else Matters" and the Gospel choir's BG's on Henry, courtesy of Marcus Mosely and the Gospel Experience. All of it still bracketed by plenty of short burners that mean business. Clearly, Bif enjoys pushing the envelope on record as much as she does in all her artistic and personal pursuits...

**CM:** You mentioned something about playing roles that are a stretch for you. I wanted to know: you have such a powerful image and you've maintained an identity and had a good long career...

**Bif:** I'm trying to think how long – I've been on tour for over 15 years. I'm fortunate because my career has been really long – I grew up doing this – and it's been gradual.

**CM:** Do you find people are surprised when they start to get to know you?

**Bif:** Oh yeah; people think that I've got Rottwei-

**Bif:** We play for Rock For Choice every year, whenever we're here.

**CM:** When did you start painting?

**Bif:** Oh God ... Grade Ten? I'm a hack. I am a pop hack. I make cartoons and ultimately they're the paintings of my cartoons. And I'm into text – I'm really into Hindi script. My mother wanted, her whole life, for me to be able to read and write Hindi and I'm still shitty at it, but I try and incorporate it in my paintings to honour her.

**CM:** And she really likes your records?

**Bif:** Yeah, which is such a relief, you know? Cause ultimately, each and every one of us is still a five-year-old inside, wanting to please our parents.

**CM:** You do a lot more than just music; I didn't realize that you acted as much as you have or that you had done so much TV that – Rick Mercer's *Monday Report*?

**Bif:** So fun, he was such a lovely man and I got to sit in a smart car with the mayor of Vancouver who's a really, philanthropic guy. It was such a nice day. It was fun; it wasn't work.

**CM:** CNN?

**Bif:** That was when I was giving makeup tips for one of the entertainment segments. I did it with the

editor of *Jane Magazine*. Stuff like that is fun for me.

**CM:** Buffy?

**Bif:** We performed on *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* – three songs on one episode. That gave us a lot of fans that probably wouldn't have previously tried to investigate our stuff.

**CM:** Is television something you're leaning more towards?

**Bif:** Less and less. All it takes to get on a TV show is to be famous, and this is the goal of every reality TV show contestant – to be famous. A lot of the stuff that came across my manager's desk, it was plentiful, but it lacked substance. I just wasn't interested. I did do a feature called *Lunch With Charles*, the first feature I was the principal in. It was beautiful and it was a really maturing experience for me.

**CM:** So features are something you're more interested in?

**Bif:** Depending on the role. The girl I played was a real hippie girl who believed in unicorns and fairies. And that is something that is so far from people's idea of me that I really wanted to do it. It was just a lovely experience and I made enough money doing that – we shot it during April and May, and in June I went off on the Warped tour – and, based on this

lers, that I drive a Harley, or whatever. And it always makes me laugh because I mean I can sit there and go, 'Well no, honey. Biffy wakes up at 5:30 in the morning every day. I like going to the gym and eat raw, full vegan food and I go to the dog park with my dogs.' And they can't wrap their head around it – and some don't like it, they like their projected idea of what I am.

**CM:** What made you decide to start the label?

**Bif:** My manager, Peter Karrol. When the label that I was originally signed to folded – a month after my CD was manufactured – we had a good long conversation about what we should do. I thought my career was over. I thought that was it and I was gonna go back to school, and Peter said, 'No, we're gonna form a company and we're gonna get your masters and we're gonna start licensing them' and that's what we did. We went overseas to Europe and started licensing it.

**CM:** And you've done really well there, particularly in Germany?

**Bif:** It's the first place I went, so, as a result, I toured there the most.

**CM:** What about the US?



**Bif:** I've been really, very fortunate in the US – when *I Bificus* came out, doing Leno was a thrill. I was thrilled to meet him and I was thrilled to meet Kevin Eubanks, he's an amazing musician. To this day, I can't believe these people ever even fucking heard of me. Who would fucking believe it?

**CM:** What other artists are on your label?

**Bif:** There's Britt Black – her record just came out. It's exciting; I've known her since she was 10. And there's The Heck, who are the second coming of Jesus Fucking Christ as a rock and roll band. Their record is coming out this year. The thing that makes me want to work with a band, to want to sign them, is that I think that they're the cat's ass. Fresh Bread, that was my first signing, which was Rob, from SNFU. It was phenomenal – The Vincent Black Shadow. Yeah, the girl's a star. She is a fucking star...

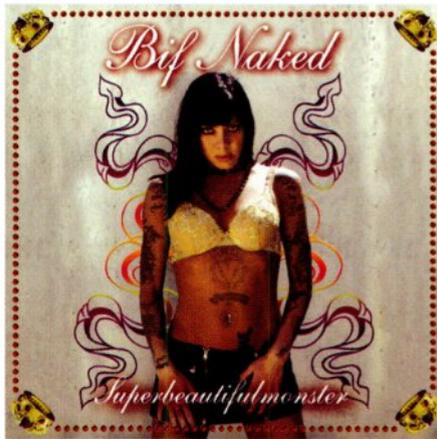
When Bif praises other artists – whether giving a heads up to fans about the new COC record, or her own artists, or her biggest influences, she does so unreservedly. She's equally happy to sharing the spotlight with other songwriters on *Superbeautifulmonster* as she is sharing the highlights of her career from a 'fan's eye view' perspective and does so in a way that shows that her years in the business have done little to dampen her enthusiasm.

**Bif:** Being on a SNFU record and being in a video with Joey Shithead was one of the high points in my

life, more exciting than Leno; really and truly. Joey, he's got a book out, and my name is in there. I was so proud of that. I showed my mom and said, 'Look, Joey Shithead mentioned me,' and she said, 'Watch your language, dear.'

**CM:** I also wanted to talk about your cover of Metallica's "Nothing Else Matters"...

**Bif:** It made me cry singing it in the studio and I cry if I listen to it. So I try to avoid listening to my record, quite honestly. I met Metallica in 1995 at a hotel in London, England and I went to see them play the following day at a place called Donnington. It's a hundred thousand, drunk British people. They come in with these jugs of beer or wine or whatever. They drink it all while they get to watch COC, Warrior Soul, and Slash's Snake Pit. Then they piss into these jugs, poke holes in them, and whip 'em over the crowd. Needless to say, even though I so desperately wanted the real view of the band, I stood backstage and wouldn't venture out, cause Metallica took the stage, and shortly, into their set played "Nothing Else Matters"... I was done – I couldn't watch one more song – when I was a kid I saw the Scorpions, Iron Maiden, but that was the highlight of my fucking fan life.



**CM:** You go all over the place in terms of sounds and the record has a theatrical quality to it – are you looking to sort of play that up live a little bit?

**Bif:** From your mouth to God's ears, you know? I hope so. I wanted to try and have lots of different vocal characters. We've been playing the "Question" song the last year on tour and that's my favourite song live – we really Sabbath it out.

**CM:** What about "After A While"? It almost seems deliberately placed at the end of the record. Is it at all about the exhaustion of making a record?

**Bif:** No. I wanted it last because of the way the song ends, with that cold ending. That was one of the first songs we wrote when we started. I was really messed up, mostly from boys, not really from my job. That was all about control and what became about control for me was my diet. So, when I got upset I wouldn't eat – it wasn't about constant fasting. It was about trying so desperately to find control in my life. I have no control over leaving my apartment and somebody jumping out of bushes at me, which has happened. I think the problem with our western world is people's fascination with celebrity and people gotta find something better to do.

**CM:** And people don't necessarily see you for who you are and they expect you to be extreme?

**Bif:** They want me to be the princess of darkness.

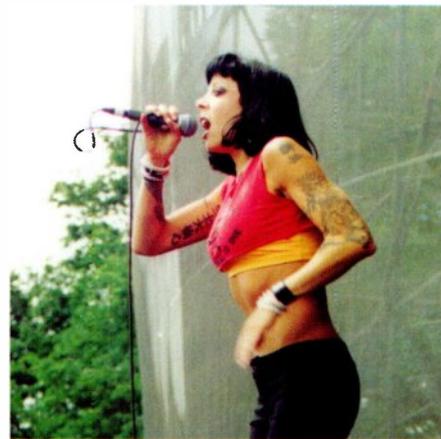
**CM:** And you're not, but, having said that, the straight edge thing can be viewed as extreme to a certain extent.

**Bif:** Absolutely.

**CM:** But, to change your life, you've said you needed something that had to be to like a religion. Was that the appeal of straight edge?

**Bif:** At the time, it was the influence of my friends; like Chi Pig, and Gail Greenwood, who are straight edge. Then, just through all the touring that I did over the course of eight or ten years, I was straight edge. Of course the first five years of touring I wasn't, and I had a great time. That being said, I would get told what kind of straight edge I could be from all these really militant straight edgers; they're crazy motherfuckers – I'm not making a political statement. It's all about me being conscious of myself and eventually I got fed up with getting razzed from all these straight edge groups. I was like, 'Man, I don't want to be associated with none of you jackass, motherfuckers – it was really upsetting. I will still call myself a straight edge. It works for me in my life and I've finally got my whole fasting thing under control; I was pretty much a diagnosed anorexic by the end of the *Purge* tour. Yeah, it was a real interesting ride.

**CM:** You seem back and much more positive now.



**Bif:** I'm having a ball. Honestly, I think life is phenomenal. The summer tour is getting ready. I'm putting the record out so I'm just thrilled.

**CM:** Is the record being released simultaneously in other markets as well?

**Bif:** No. It never has been, and even though I fight for it every time, it probably never will. In hindsight, it's better. I can put it out in Canada and deal with touring Canada to support it and six months later it's going to come out in Italy and Spain, so I'm going to go over there and tour, three months after that it'll come out in the US and then the UK... It actually works out better because it enables you to do all the touring you need to do.

Though no firm tour dates are available on the site at the time of this writing, Bif's latest messages hint at some upcoming show "in the rainforest," in the Yukon and welcomes back band members Damn Dan (DOA, Econoline Crush), Dug Fury, and Scotty Sexx. She also says that the record is making the rounds of the powers that be in the US and pegs a release date for sometime in June.

For more info and updates on Bif Naked and HRM Records check out... [www.bifnaked.com](http://www.bifnaked.com) and [www.hrmrecords.com](http://www.hrmrecords.com).

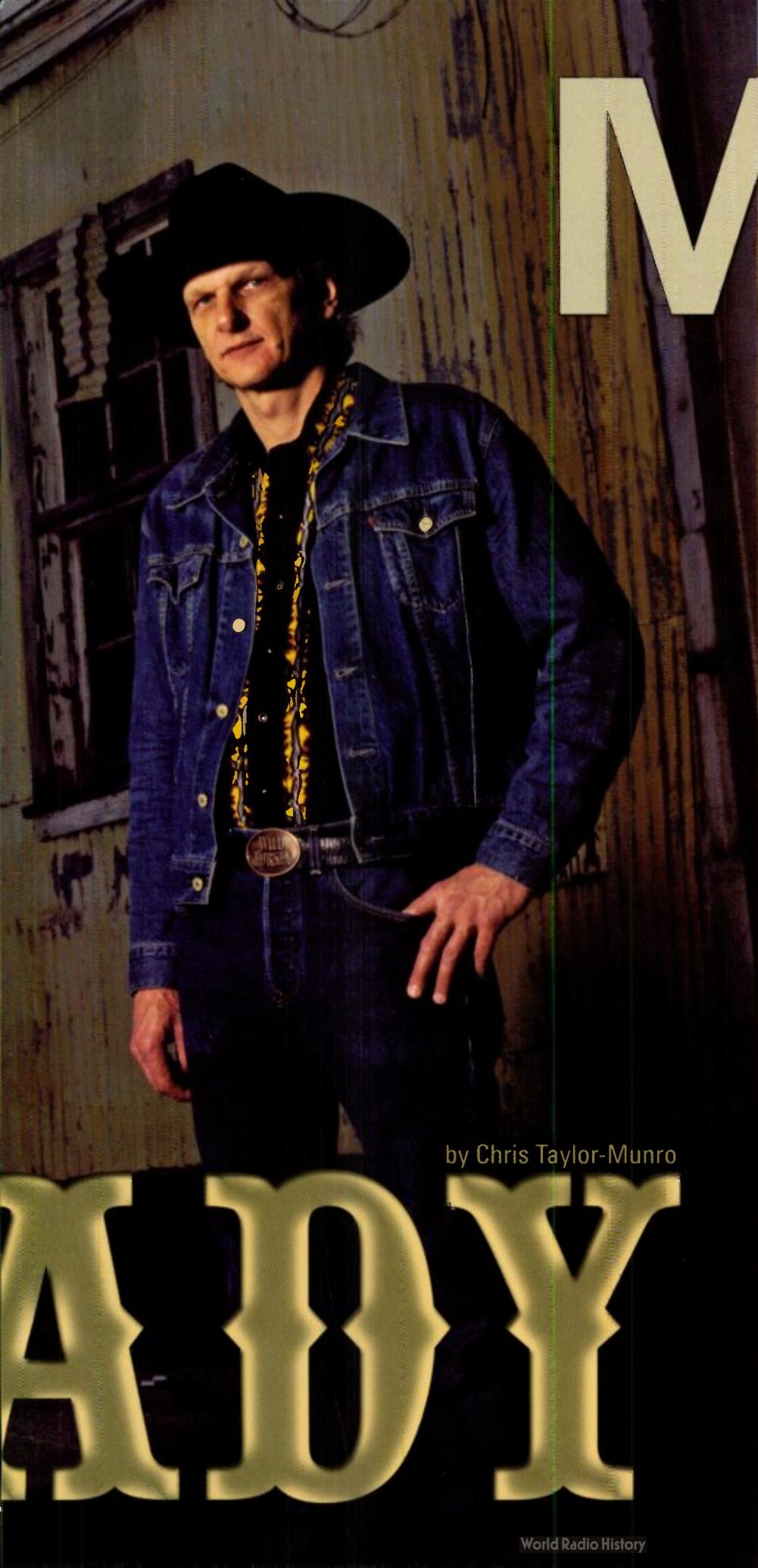


Kevin Young is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

*"There is a whole street that has dedicated itself to punk rock and heavy metal. It leaves you with that feeling you can do anything if you're committed and you give the people a good show." – Gordie Johnson*



# GR



# M

any Canadian musicians have made the trip to Austin, Texas for South By Southwest to gain exposure showcasing for the record industry with the hope of gaining new territories and expanding their fan base but Gordie Johnson (Ex-Big Sugar frontman) has chosen one of the US' most musical cities as home for he and both his musical and immediate family.

Johnson (aka Grady) and fellow Canadian "Big" Ben Richardson on bass headed south to begin what he calls "one of the most un-premeditated moves in our career," to join Chris "Whip" Layton of famed, Double Trouble, the late Stevie Ray Vaughan's rhythm section. Let me introduce a trio that sounds like three individual locomotives bearing down on their next unsuspecting listener. Let it rip!

Metal blues? Is that what to call it? By 'it' I mean Grady's hard cut fuzz ... turn up your stereos because it sounds better that way ... in your face and oh yeah! Loud. Rock. Blues. The cover of *Y.U. So Shady*, Grady's debut disc is an adorable caricature of a little girl chewing on a great big piece of meat ... from Texas, no doubt! Lots of grit.

Johnson begins by setting the scene for Grady's evolution. "I was producing some songs for a French artist and flew Chris (Layton) up from Texas to play drums on the session and we had a night off. We were just hanging around in Toronto when I had a house there. Big Ben (Richardson) called me up, 'Hey if your buddy Whipper's here ... he's a good drummer. Do you want to play at Grossman's (cool Toronto landmark) tonight? I can call the bar and we can set up in the corner.'" Johnson continues, "Grossman's! You know, like, 60 people and it's jam-packed! So we borrowed some gear and went down, set up and rocked out for three hours. We didn't talk about songs or rehearse anything just tried to keep everything stripped down and raw. Someone recorded *that* and bootlegs started going around and we all got copies a couple of months later. Goddamn! That sounds pretty good," Johnson says with a chuckle, "for not trying AT ALL. And it kept growing on us the longer we had the bootlegs. We kept calling each other up and saying 'Hey Man! Can you remember having more fun than that ... EVER? No! And it sounded good. You know because it's not always the same thing ... sometimes you feel like you're really *getting it* on stage and then you hear it back later and it's like, hmmm! Guess you had to be there. But no! You didn't have to be there. It was all as good as that."

With Big Sugar winding down Johnson and Richardson sat in a kitchen contemplating what musical direction would lie ahead. Johnson poses the question "Well Big Ben what are you going to do to after Big Sugar? Do you want to go out and do sound for somebody or tour manage, or do you want to go to Texas to start a new band with me?" Without hesitation Ben gave the nod and said, "Let's go to Texas." Johnson and Richardson played their last gig to date with Big Sugar on New Year's Eve, 2003 in frozen Edmonton and were booked in Austin (warmer for sure) the very next night. Johnson with family soon to follow, and Richardson (rock'n'roll his only family) headed to Austin with a single suitcase each and three guitars to couch it for a while. "No guts. No glory,"

by Chris Taylor-Munro

# GRADY

Johnson adds. This sounds like the beginnings of some yet to be discovered singer songwriters, but this after seven album releases, numerous radio/video hits and sales totaling some 500,000 copies in Canada alone with Big Sugar; mid-life crisis would be fitting if they'd bought a convertible, but music was dictating this path for sure.

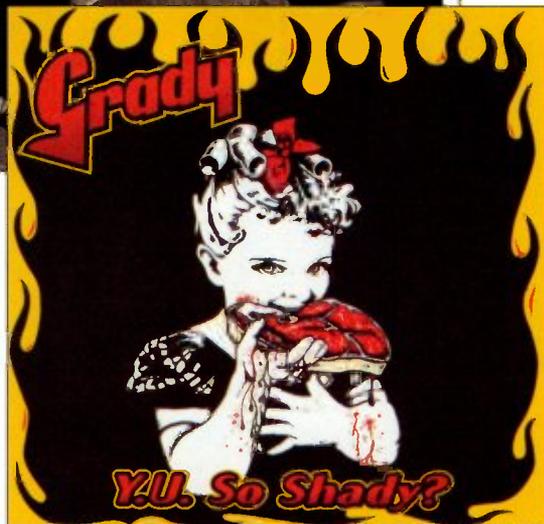
"It was getting pretty cozy, pretty easy being in Big Sugar," Johnson says with a pause. "We could have just kept booking tours. We wouldn't have

rock part come out, you know?" Johnson says in an exhausted manner. He adds "I don't dig on all this other stuff ... I'll do it if I have to, but I like to play music. I want to write new music."

Austin, TX is known for its roots music and country artists: Stevie Ray Vaughn and Willie Nelson to name a couple respectively, but offers more with the ever-growing popularity of South by Southwest. "There is a great underground rock scene in Austin. Some edgy innovative stuff goes on here. There is a whole street that has dedicated itself to punk rock and heavy metal. It leaves you with that feeling you can do anything if you're committed and you give the people a good show."



had to keep on making records ... just playing the same songs, same venues. That would have all been fine, but we have never had that philosophy or played music with that attitude. So I had to do something quite a bit riskier, here!" Austin has seen the likes of Johnson periodically for the better part of a decade and was the unquestionable choice of towns to start over. He continues, "When you play Edmonton on New Year's Eve, (by comparison) someplace that is 75 degrees outside is really appealing no matter what the music sounds like. But I think it's the greatest music city in America ... it felt really natural. Any time I had some time off or felt like making music just for fun I'd call the Whipper and come down and play with Double Trouble. I had been threatening to come down here for years so I just did it." Johnson admits having to make some adjustments that as it turns out would be a liberating reminder of the days gone by. "No tour bus. No security guard. No guitar tech. Just slug your stuff through the alley. Tune your guitar in the alley. Throw your shit on stage. Play for 30 minutes. Collect your \$15 each and go home," he laughs somewhat maniacally. How can anyone be sure when making life-altering decisions? Johnson reflects and continues to laugh out loud, "I asked a bunch of my contemporaries if that's what they had to do to keep playing music would they? Most of them said 'No!' But it's invigorating. At the end of Big Sugar, music was the last thing on my to do list. I would have to talk to lawyers, talk to the record label, talk to my manager, have a meeting with the band, do some interviews. Oh! Wait a minute, when does the pick-up-the-guitar-and-



Johnson has taken more than inspiration from the streets of Austin as they were voted "Best New Band" at this year's Austin Music Awards. Even the eye-catching artwork for the disc and Web site are by a local artist named Billy Perkins, whose poster art and exhibits have been recognized throughout the scene. Johnson comments, "The band and Billy have a mutual admiration for one another's work so he was asked to come up with something for the album and he shows up with that (the meat eating girl)! We were like, 'My God', laughing. 'That's pretty much what it sounds like.'"

The first track on *Y.U. So Shady* (by the way the album title is taken from an episode of '70s TV show *Sanford & Son*) is "Hammer in My Hand", a fat, mid-tempo, hip-hop, shuffle feel with guitar tones reminiscent of Black Sabbath that has perked the ears of a growing number of program directors on FM rock radio from Austin all the way back north. Johnson's slide and snarly guitar riffs with

simultaneous caterwauling vocals reveal a new meaner persona than most Big Sugar fans are used to hearing. I asked how Johnson felt his playing had changed since playing with a trio versus five or six members on stage with BS. "I don't know if it's louder or just seems to have more impact ... there's less clutter. My playing has changed, you know. I hadn't listened to Big Sugar in a long time and recently someone sent me a bootleg of a live show. I was like 'Goddamn! Who is that guy?' I don't play like that. I don't even play in those tunings anymore. It seems like my concept of music crystallized. Living in a new place, I guess. I didn't set out to change my style or practice a new way. Even playing some of the old songs I'm playing in a different tuning." The first version of *Y.U. So Shady* released has some reworked Big Sugar tunes. The trio needed something to sell off stage, but have since replaced the Big Sugar songs with three new tracks for the release sold here in Canada. For the Big Sugar fans that hope to hear some of the hit list, all is not lost. "We play some of the BS songs live depending on the night. We don't do any reggae stuff so if people are expecting 'Turn the Lights On' they ain't gonna' get it. That's another band and another time," Johnson says with an optimistic upbeat 'who knows?' tone in his voice.

The Grady boys are playing fast and furiously throughout steer country in every honky tonk, biker bar and truck stop that will have them as well as hooking up, whenever possible, for outdoor festivals with the Arc Angels for which Layton still drums for often pulling double duty on any given night. I asked how the reaction has been so far. "You've got punkers standing next to rednecks and everything in between. They get loud and sweaty along with the band."

The trio has kept things consistent (scaled down) gear wise now that each is humping his own. Johnson comments on his typical setup nowadays. "I only use my Gibson SG signature series ... a couple of single necks and a double neck. I have about 30 Gibson guitars lying around the house, but like using the select few. Amp-wise the first gig Grady played I used a Fender Twin because it was a small room. I still use my Garnet. I use it as a preamp. I just need a loud, clean amp. In Canada I used SVT bass rigs because it's the most power you can get in a tube amp, but here in Texas I use a couple of Fenders. I usually have a 400-watt amp up there and plug my Garnet into that and away we go."

"The Whipper" as Johnson likes to call Layton uses Fibes drums, a Texas drum company that's been around for 30-plus years. His setup is modest with snare, hi-hats, a ride cymbal, floor tom and two honking bass drums one in front of the other for the earth shattering kaboom. His sound is open sans external EQing with little or no compression going on. The drums sound as big on disc as they do live. This theme carries over for the entire production of *Y.U. So Shady*. The plug and play-live off the floor was the method of choice for recording with no overdubs. [Layton and Richardson] cover all backing vocals while providing a rock solid foundation for the guitar mayhem surfing above. "What you hear on disc is what we sound like live," Johnson states.

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World Radio History

# GRADY

Johnson describes the process of writing and working through the new material. "I pretty much write the songs with the exception of one track, 'Black or White' (co-written with Big Ben). I just start playing them and the guys start playing what they think goes with that and next thing you know, it's Grady." The freedom Grady seems to have bestowed upon the writing process is obvious in Johnson's comment. "Big Sugar became a highly arranged musical outfit. You had to really work things out in order for it to feel loose enough. Everyone had to know what his role was. With Grady the songs are so stripped down that if Big Ben just plays the way he plays he'll be playing the right thing."

The album's second track, "Woman Got My Devil" is a 160 beats per minute raucous tune with vocals and guitar riff supporting each other that conjures up images of blazing across the desert at break neck speeds with nothing but open road in front of you. The middle section just prior to the guitar solo is a sweet moment Grady reveals its head banging potential and highlights Chris' ability to rock out with balls to the wall versatility with so few components to speak of drum-wise.

Track three, "Joe Louis" has two of the more prominent guitar hooks on the album trading back and forth between clean highs vamping during the verse and dark tones on the choruses. The rhythm section swings with a four on the floor get-out-of-my-way-strut Texas style. One of the album's best!

"Three Minute Song" is a mix of Ramones/Sex Pistols Punk Rock with Johnson's favourite new guitar tone and showcases the trio's ability to harmonize vocally during one of the poppier moments of the album with high energy from start to finish.

"Black or White" is road-house material that creeps along with strong sexual innuendos, but listening carefully Johnson is probably singing about his guitars. Nonetheless I took the opportunity to get serious and asked Johnson how moving from Canada to Texas feels from a political and social standpoint. "I might as well be living in India for as different from Canada as it is. On the surface it seems the same ... everyone speaks English ... it's not the same English, but you don't have to be here very long to all of the sudden realize you're in a VERY different country from Canada. Especially the further south you get. South of the Mason-Dixon Line is yet again a different America than I was used to."

"Ride Like Hell" is a reworked Big Sugar tune that is nothing short of a barnburner in its new form. Big Ben's distorted bass growls coupled with Chris' kick stompin' makes for a trashy toe tappin' hoe down.

The remaining five of the eleven tracks are a mix of up-tempo and down-tempo tunes that will leave your senses feeling assaulted in that



"Graded" kind of way. The album will give anyone in need of a pick-me-up a good swift kick in the ass if you're in the mood to rock out to some blues driven metal. *Y.U. So Shady* was recorded by Vic Florencia, produced by Johnson and executive produced by Layton at Pedernales Recording Studio, a country club some 30 miles west of Austin that was bought and turned into a studio in the 1970s by Willie Nelson. The list of artists and gold records to the studio's credit is impressive as it is endless and is now joined by the Lone Star's (via Canada) meanest sounding trio, Grady. ●



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

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**T**he big red 1972 Gretsch Nashville is front and centre in the photograph on the album insert of rootsy rock 'n' roll band Matt Mays & El Torpedo's self-titled release. Like the patriarch at a family reunion, it dominates the gathering.

"I had that back when I was 19 or 20 in the Guthries," says Mays, now 25, who played guitar and sang for the alt. country band before venturing out on his own. "I basically mowed lawns for two summers to buy it, but I finally got it so it's my main squeeze. I use it every night – almost the whole show. I'd take it over the nicest oldest guitar any day. It's just one of those special guitars that I think was made differently at the time."

Although there are older, more esteemed guitars in the photo as well, they don't belong to Mays or members of El Torpedo. They're like the distant relatives who come for the party but never to be seen again. They were brought up to Halifax in a cargo van by American producer Don Smith and include gifts he received from Keith Richards and the Beach Boys, a '51 Esquire and a '66 Rickenbacker 12-string, respectively.

There are 23 stringed instruments in all neatly assembled that day at Sonic Temple Studios and captured in all their glory by Halifax photographer Morrow Scot-Brown.

"We used all those guitars," says Mays, himself owner of about a dozen. "We were set up with them all around us, laying on couches and on stands and basically everywhere, hanging off the walls. We all brought every guitar we had. We all collect guitars so that's quite a few, and Don brought a couple of nice ones up.

"We were taking some pictures in the studio and we were looking at all the gear and we were like, 'Jesus, there's some nice guitars here.' We just thought we'd line them all up and organize all the gear and all of our own amplifiers and just take a shot of it, for us, basically, and it turned out so cool that we thought it would look good in the album for fellow guitar people who appreciate nice looking instruments. It's a nice photograph."

For Mays, who doesn't own any new guitars and loves vintage gear (he buys much of his gear at Halifax's Gig Street), the excitement in his voice is palpable when he tells of the handwritten note to Smith from Richards that's still in the guitar case. "It's one of the first electric guitars ever made and it's this really old beat-up guitar," relays Mays.



# MATT MAYS & EL TORPEDO



"I love that about guitars when they're beat-up. They're just so much better and this was just absolutely beautiful. It played so well. It was just a classic guitar."

Mays played the Esquire on the band's first single, "Cocaine Cowgirl", for the solo at the end. "I wanted to use my Gretsch on that song, but it just didn't work. Well, it could have, but the Esquire sounded so killer that there was no argument."

He ended up using the Esquire on a good portion of the album and the Gretsch on over half. He also used the Beach Boys' Rickenbacker on a couple of songs, and finally bought one for himself.

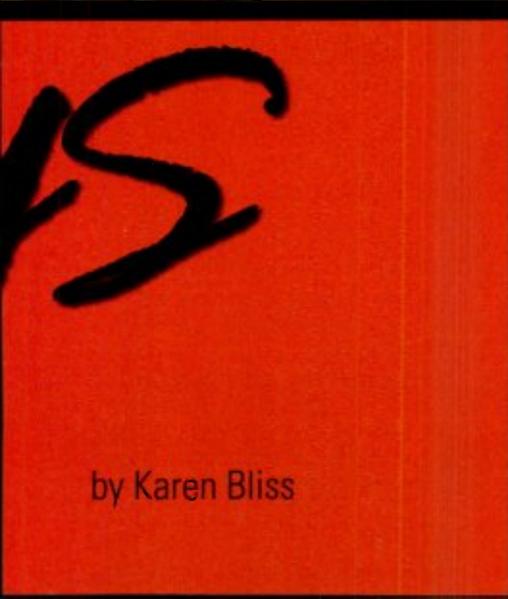
To Smith, whose credits include Tom Petty, U2, Bob Dylan, Roy Orbison, The Rolling Stones and Canadians 54-40 and The Tragically Hip (who he is scheduled to work with once again this summer), guitars are nothing to be precious or protective about. He clearly enjoys loaning them out and sharing their legacies.

"They ask and I tell them," Smith says of some of the younger musicians he's produced, excited by the prospect of playing a guitar once played by a legend or by the sheer age of it. "Sometimes it freaks them out a little bit, but that's OK. Enjoy a great guitar. It was made to play. I have them to play music with, not hang on a wall."

Smith says he wasn't at all surprised that Mays, a guy in his mid-20s, would be drawn to music like Tom Petty, and the Traveling Wilburys.

"I think everybody's influenced by something. I mean, even the Rolling Stones were influenced by Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters and they were in their 20s too; the Beatles were in their 20s too," points out Smith. "You never know from one session to the next what they're influenced by and what they're like, and I like them when they're influenced by really great songwriters and great bands. If they're influenced by bad songwriters and bad bands, I don't talk to them again and there's a lot these days."

Mays thinks Smith got a kick out of the fact that he likes acts who got their start before he had even started life (although Brad Conrad is the oldest member of El Torpedo at 35). "Not a lot of people our age are really into that. But we're really into it. We've always been huge Traveling Wilburys fans and Petty fans. We love that stuff," says Mays.



"It's classic to us and I think he dug that and I think he knew we had a respect for him because he worked on all that stuff and it was mutual respect and love for just straight ahead songs, recorded as straight ahead as it possibly can be, and that's what we went for."

Born in Hamilton, ON, but based in Dartmouth, N.S., Mays played in the Guthries from 19 to 22, and began working on his self-titled release when he was 21, releasing it on his manager's label, Sonic Records (distributed by Warner Music Canada) in the fall of 2003. He then hit the road with his newly christened band, El Torpedo: Andy Patil (bass, vocals), Tim Baker (drums, percussion, bass), Jarrett Murphy (guitars, vocals), and Conrad (organ, guitar, pedal steel).

"We haven't changed at all since we first started in anything we do – the way we dress, the way we play. We've been very good at pro-

perfect producer for their first album as a band. Knowing this, in January of 2004, their manager Louis Thomas sent Smith a copy of Mays' solo debut, along with some of the demos they'd been working on as a band. Smith liked what he heard and not only asked for more, but wanted to see them perform.

"I did not tell Matt (about any of this) until I introduced them after the show," says Thomas. "Matt loves that type of sound and I thought it would be worth the price of a plane ticket for them to meet."

The L.A.-based producer was in New York working on Japan's Tomio as well as a Sly & The Family Stone project with Steve Jordan, John Mayer and Buddy Guy, and on a day off in February, flew to Halifax to see Matt Mays & El Torpedo play at the Marquee Club. Afterwards, Mays was told Smith was there and the two sat in the hallway shooting the shit.

The Sonic Temple, the studio co-owned by Thomas, put in a new AMS-Neve V-III console and Smith says he brought a couple of hundred thousand dollars worth of his own personal gear with him to Canada. "I know what it is and I like it, and some countries in the world don't even have it – Fairchild limiters, and I have really old Class A Neve and Pultec, also Class A; and a whole case of microphones – some Neumanns to old RCAs to the newer, just even a simple SM57. I have anything you can think of that you might need to use."

Besides all the gear, Mays says Smith also brought a "vibe kit" – not sure if it's the singer's word for it or Smith's. "He had had his incense and his sage and his blankets and lamps and everything and he would suit up the studio to make it a little more vibey because he's all about the *vibe*."

Indeed, when Smith is asked how he liked the studio, he used the word three times. "Just

## MATT MAYS & EL TORPEDO GEAR LIST

### Guitars/Basses

- '73 Gibson SG
- '74 Gibson SG
- '68 Gibson 335
- '82 Gibson L6
- '57 Gibson Les Paul Jr.
- '67 Gibson J-45
- '60s Gibson Parlour Acoustic
- '68 Fender Telecaster
- '95 Fender Telecaster
- '82 Fender Telecaster Thin Line

- '51 Fender Esquire
- '63 Fender Precision
- '51 Fender Precision
- '72 Gretsch Chet Atkins Nashville
- '66 Rickenbacker 360-12
- '63 Silvertone Archtop
- '57 Silvertone U-1
- '74 Guild 12-string
- '58 Epiphone Flying V
- '69 Vox Typhoon
- '70s Takamine Hi-Strung

- '70s Sho-Bud Maverick Pedal Steel

### Amps

- '69 Fender Oval Showman Silverface
- '66 Fender Vibrolux Blackface
- '63 Fender Concert Blackface
- '54 Fender Tremolux
- '66 Fender Deluxe Blackface
- '65 Fender Princeton
- '63 Fender Bassman
- '72 Fender Bassman 4-10
- '70 Ampeg V-4

tecting what we have and we would rather tour Cape Breton as ourselves rather than change and have just a bullshit career," says Mays. "I think that's helped El Torpedo in a nutshell is we just care about each other and the music we play."

With their penchant for that cool, raw rock 'n' roll feel, a guy with Smith's pedigree and live-off-the-floor approach to recording would be the

"I talked to him for a long time," says Mays. "He told me all these great rock 'n' roll stories and we just talked about gear and guitars, and we just smoked a copious amount of cigars and basically just said, 'Let's do a record together,' and walked off into the night. And about a month later, he came back up and spent a month recording with us."

a great *vibe*. Really nice *vibe*. That was the main thing. I went up there because I liked the *vibe* of the studio."

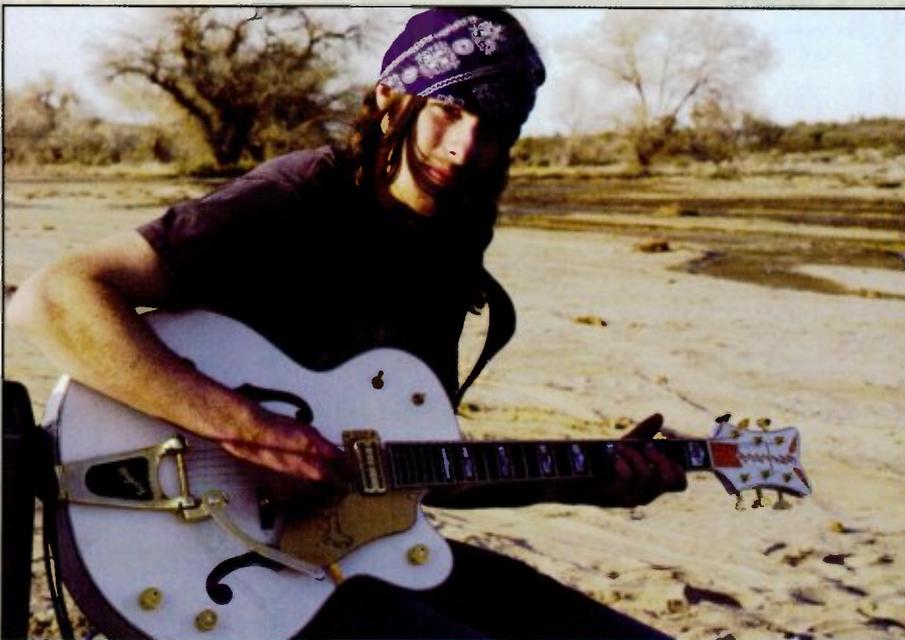
They spent about three weeks recordings in analog and used Pro Tools in the final stages.

"We went to 2-inch tape, through all sorts of old gear and then we mixed it with Pro Tools," says Mays, who, along with El Torpedo, co-produced the album ("Don might argue that," he laughs).

"So we just rearranged a few things and cleaned some things up because when you're live recording, you're basically recording everything and we used a lot of tape. So we had all this stuff and the only way to do it is to go into Pro Tools these days. Either that or you literally use razorblades to cut up tape, and you're essentially doing that with Pro Tools. So I don't feel bad about that.

"The last record was also done analog on a smaller machine in Ultra Magnetic Studios and we actually mixed it to tape, as we did with this record too. So once we recorded it to tape, we actually mixed it down to a 2-track tape machine, which just makes it sound older and cooler. I would do that with the old record too and once we mixed it down to 2-inch tape, it went into a computer and Pro Tools.

"I don't understand computers and Pro-Tools very well so I can't really elaborate too much," Matt says, "but just to make it sound tape-y (we) fired it to tape again. We wanted it to have that old sound. Even if you go into a com-



puter, you can always go back to tape and make it sound tape-y even more."

Mays and the band do a lot of their demos on their own. The lead track, "Stand Down At Sundown" and "On The Hood" were self-produced with the help of local engineers.

"We were really confident in our abilities, so working with Don we sort of foresaw some friction, but there wasn't any at all," says Mays. "He was really cool. If I said, 'No, no, Don, I really want this part to be in, then he's like, 'Ahhhh I don't know,' I'm like, 'No, we have to put it in. It will drive me nuts if we don't,' he's like, 'Cool. No sweat.' And same with him. If he was like, 'No, you gotta cut that part out; it's just not working,' then next day, we'd be like, 'Yeah, yeah, you're right.' So it would just be really cool.

"If anybody really wanted something, we could have it and that was sort of the rule and if anybody had any ideas as crazy as possible, it

my nose is plugged up, so that might have something to do with it. I had to finish all these vocals (laughs) but I sound kind of stuffed up, but it does have that sound.

"He's got all these old compressors and things from the '50s that just make you sound cool and old sounding. But yeah, I just sat on the couch with a 58 and just sang laying on the couch sometimes, just getting into it. It was really kind of cool in that sense. It was very unorthodox. If it was a good vibe, then that's all that mattered because what it lost in sound quality it gained in performance basically."

Eleven of the 14 songs on the album were recorded with Smith, and then Mays and the band added three more. "Move Your Mind", Mays says, was recorded "years ago" at Ultra Magnetic, but was remixed. Interestingly, it is this song that jumps out on the disc because at number 7 in the track listing, it has a heavy,

player who drove slow but had a pretty fast backhand in "St. Georgie's Lane".

"I just think that comes from my influences, like Gordon Lightfoot and Bob Dylan and Neil Young and dudes like that, and Lucinda Williams, just people who write so personally and cool," says Mays. "There is so much substance (in their music), I get used to that because I listened to it so much. By no means am I comparing myself to those guys, but all I listen to is stuff that's really honest like that – and especially when I was going through my 'learning how to be a songwriter' phase.

"So I guess I just can't write anything that doesn't mean anything to me, especially if I have to sing it every night."

And he has been singing the songs every night, almost. After wrapping up an extensive Canadian tour in May and June, the band will continue to tour over the summer, mainly hitting festivals and a few in the US. In September, they

'81 Klempt Showstar 2-12  
'60s Beltone Combo  
'60s Silvertone 1-10  
'60s Silvertone Combo  
'60s Kent 1-15  
'40s Radio Communication & Engineering 1-8  
**Drums**  
22" WFL Bass Drum  
20" Gretsch Bass Drum  
24" Gretsch Bass Drum  
14" Ludwig "Black Beauty" Snare  
14" Ludwig "Supraphonic" Snare  
14" Gretsch Snare

13" Leedy Tom  
16" Leedy Tom  
13" Gretsch Tom  
16" Gretsch Tom  
Various Zildjian Cymbals  
**Keys**  
Hammond Organ & Leslie Cabinet  
Farfisa IP-233 Organ  
**Effects**  
Palmer Speaker Simulator  
Boss Blues Driver  
Ibanez Tube Screamer  
Maxon Tube Screamer

Electro Harmonics Big Muff  
Electro Harmonics Memory Man  
Electro Harmonics Small Stone  
Morley Wah Pedal  
Acetone Space Echo  
Roland Re-201 Space Echo  
Fender Reverb Unit x2  
Ebow

didn't matter. The rule is we try it no matter how stupid it was.

"Don was just full of weird stuff. For instance, I was singing vocals on this million-dollar condenser microphone with headphones on, by myself in the studio, doing vocal overdubs," he recounts of cutting "Travellin'" and "What Are We Gonna Do Come The Month Of September".

"A lot of the songs actually we did this way. I sang live vocals with our live performance, but I'm really picky about my voice and really self-conscious, so I ended up re-singing a lot of the songs. Plus, I was getting a lot of the band's noise in my microphone and the recordings sounded a lot dirtier than it does now. Anyways, I had this really expensive mic and I couldn't get the vibe. I wasn't very relaxed and Don can sense that like a shark can sense blood. If there's something like a ripple in the force (laughs), he can see it. So anyways, he just said, 'Well, just come down to the studio and just sing it with an old microphone on the couch and we'll just blast it.' I was like, 'Well, we really can't do that. The vocals won't sound that good,' and he was just like, 'Whatever.'"

Says Smith: "(I told him) 'Sit down and relax. Don't stand there in front of a microphone and perform to a wall,' so to speak."

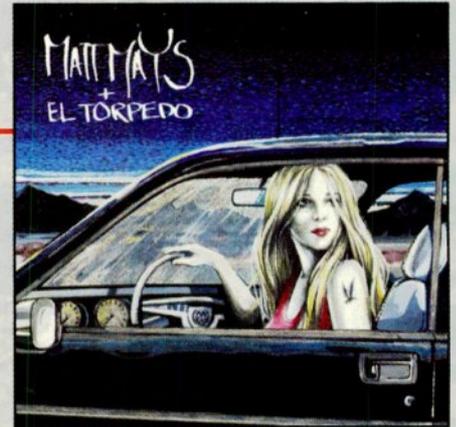
So that's what Mays did, cut his vocal right there on the couch. Strangely, Mays singing is tougher and rawer on "September". He reveals that's because he was sick. "You can hear that

crunchy rock groove as prominent as the Gretsch in the photo (although it's a '60s Telecaster on that song).

"That's what we wanted," says Mays. "We had 11 songs and I was like, 'Louis, this record's just not done yet. It's just not complete. There needs to be some more colours on it.' That's basically it. We just added a couple more tunes. And that song, 'Move Your Mind,' I really like for exactly the reason that you say. It's that it sticks out. It's a bit of an intermission. If it's getting too same-y then listen to this or whatever. That's why."

The other two post-Smith tracks are "Stand Down At Sundown" and "On The Hood", both of which were recorded at Sonic Temple, exactly the way they had done it with Smith: live off the floor. "We just tried to capture the same vibe in the same day in the same situation, both live off the floor and just overdubbed acoustic guitars and things like that, vocals too, for both of those," says Mays.

And while Mays may be self-conscious about his voice, he doesn't feel the same way about his lyrics. If they don't come right out of him, he doesn't waste his time with it. "If you work too hard on anything, you think about it way too hard, then it's going to end up sounding like that," he theorizes. But his lyrics do sound like he worked hard on them and that's not a bad thing. They are stories of people and places told from a unique perspective, such as the walk on the wild side "Cocaine Cowgirl", or the tennis

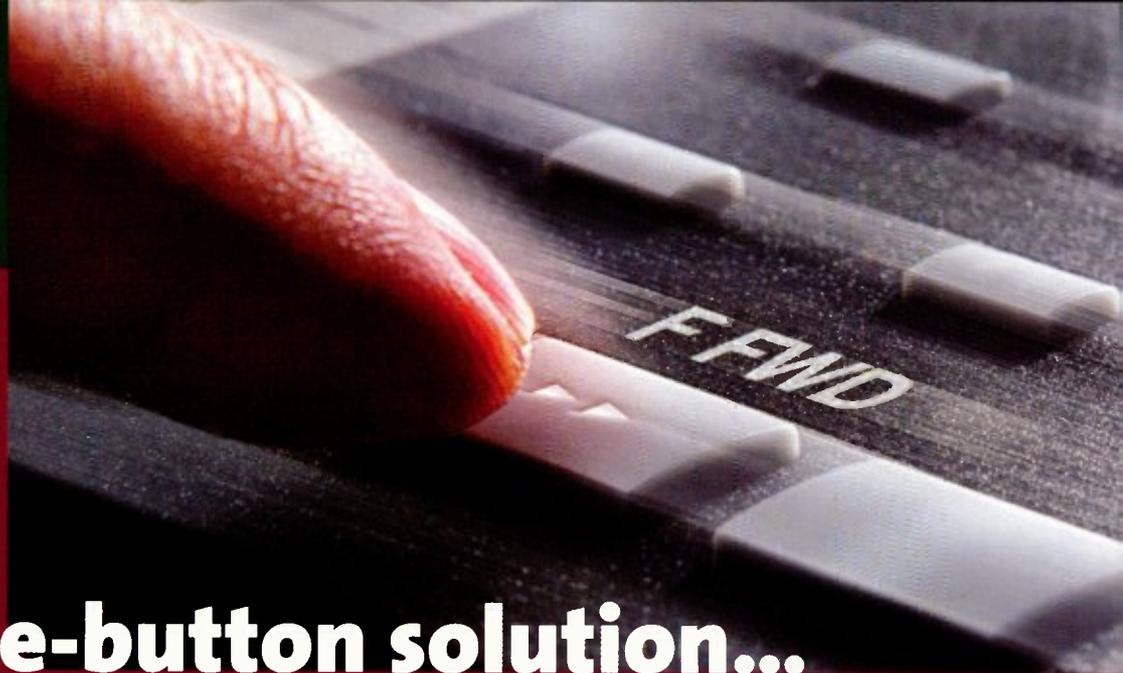


will play university and college dates, interrupted by showcases at music conferences Popkomm in Germany and NEMO in Boston. The album is off to a great start. "Cocaine Cowgirl" is a top 5 hit at rock radio and the proposed follow-up is "On The Hood," a hook-laden response to people who told him the album didn't contain any hits. How wrong they were. ●



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

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# musician SOFTWARE COULD 2005 BE A TURNING POINT? ware

BY ALEC WATSON

every year it seems “the software” article gets a little harder to write. No, it’s not because the software is becoming more difficult to use; it’s because computers and software have, for better or worse, taken over music as we know it. Case in point: the recent cover of *Mix* was void of the usual “fantasy studio” photograph; instead, it was bright orange and scrawled across the cover was the phrase: “Who Cares about Quality?” Well as a matter of fact – I DO! And I am willing to bet you do too. It is because of caring about quality that this article is getting harder and harder to write.

At one time, in the last millennium, computers and software were useful tools for digitally editing a 2-track mix. In fact, you could even use your computer to sync all your MIDI programming to a 2-inch tape deck – technology was awesome! There were literally a handful of computer programs out there; it was mainly keyboard players, with tyrannical thoughts of replacing every annoying attitude in the band with a simple quiet little box hooked up to a tiny glowing computer monitor, that accounted for most of the purchasing. Today, the computer often *IS* the studio. And we’re not just talking about homegrown basement studios either. (My apologies to the editor in advance – he’s going to be receiving all sorts of hate mail from “big” studio owners explaining why their million-dollar facilities can’t possibly be replaced by a computer). Not only is the computer the multi-track recorder, it is the mixing console, reverbs, compressors, delays, exciter, choruser, guitar amplifier, physical modelling EQ, tuner, score editor, real-time analyzer, synthesizer, sample player, virtual guitar player, bass player drummer, drum machine, MIDI recorder/player/editor, digital audio editor, disk duplicator, audio to video synchronizer, video editing suite, audio mastering studio ... heck, you can even use it as a word processor to write magazine articles about it! So, ah, yeah, it’s a little hard to cover all this information in one article.

Here’s the plan for this year’s article: if you are somewhere between “new to computer recording” and “muddling your way through recording,” and you want to know what kinds of wonderful gadgets are out there, then this article is for you. If on the other hand you are a fairly experienced computer music producer, then you might find this article a little light weight, but I promise an entertaining read and I will include some little gems to make it worth your while.

## Hardware Not Found At The Hardware Store

Well, before delving into the wonderful world of software, let's have a quick chat about hardware. I still get a lot of e-mails from people asking whether they should "go Mac or PC." The two platforms are a LOT more similar than they used to be. These days, most of the major manufacturers write their software for both platforms. Often, from the same package and even the same CD or DVD, you can install the appropriate Mac or PC version into your computer. Sure, there are some pieces of software that have only been written for one platform or the other, but you will almost certainly find a comparable product that is cross-platform.

Does one machine sound better than the other? If we are talking about annoying cooling fan noise, then YES, some machines definitely sound better than others! However, if we are talking about the quality of the audio recording, once those tiny electrical waves have been converted to numbers, there really isn't going to be a difference between a Mac or a PC. The difference found in careful microphone placement, recording technique and excellent musicianship, delivering good tone, will FAR outweigh any minor difference in quality between almost any machine. (There I go getting myself and the editor in trouble ... again. Sorry Jeff!)

fine digital audio manufacturers have got you covered. Almost all the manufacturers make somewhat scaled down versions of their main products. These versions will not be found wanting in quality; they are generally a little more user friendly, significantly less pricey, and completely compatible with their "big brothers." Programs such as Apple Logic Express 7, Cakewalk Home Studio, Pro Tools Le 6.9, MOTU Performer, and Steinberg Cubase SE are often at least one-third the price of the full versions. You might find that you are limited to a measly 24 tracks of audio (which was good enough for most of the great records for a couple of decades) or you might only be able to sample at a puny 96 kHz (twice the sample rate of a CD), but if these restrictions don't seem like limitations, and for most of us they shouldn't, the scaled down versions represent excellent value for money. How does one decide? Here are some thoughts: 196 kHz 24-bit recording probably sounds pretty darned good, but if your audience is going to listen to your recordings on (at best) a 44.1 kHz 16-bit compact disc, or (at worst), some insidious little ear-bud, blaring the washy garbage of a poorly converted MP3 (not that I have an opinion on this), super high sample rates and bit depths are unnecessarily taxing on your computer and hard drive. John Broadhead of Edirol Corp. was nice enough to supply the following chart regarding storage space vs. sample rate bit depth.



MOTU Digital Performer 4.5



Cakewalk Sonar 4



Apple Logic 7

## DAWs

After the purchase of your computer, the biggest and most important purchase you will make is with the choice of recording software. Sometimes referred to as Digital Audio Workstations, the programs available today are incredibly powerful and most are quite outstanding. The high-end recording programs have generally added another "number" to their names in the last year. For 2005, the choices are (in no particular order) MOTU Digital Performer 4.5, Steinberg Cubase SX, Digidesign Pro Tools 6.9, Cakewalk Sonar 4, Steinberg Nuendo 3, Apple Logic 7, and Magix Samplitude Professional.

Phew, how do you choose? Well, don't choose yet, I need to make it more difficult. That list of digital audio workstation programs represents the high end of the spectrum; they can be found in professional work environments all over the world ... for you, they might be overkill. Perhaps you are a songwriter and don't need the ability to mix, edit and record 100 tracks of audio in full Dolby 5.1 surround while simultaneously synchronizing to the high-definition letter box film you are composing for. Well the

Now if that all seems too technical for you – don't worry; there have been some pretty good records made on 44.1/16 systems.

When choosing a piece of software to record on, consider whether or not you have to be compatible with other people. If everyone in the band has a PC, then your choice is perhaps a little easier. The manufacturers have agreed on a couple of standards for being able to move multi-track audio between platforms and it works fairly well. If you want super simple compatibility consider going with a scaled down version of one of the "big" pieces of software.

When it comes to Digital Audio Workstation software, I can tell you that with features like surround sound recording, high sample rate and bit depth recording and a whole host of great plug-ins, you are not going to go too far wrong with any of those programs. These systems have been refined over many years now and they are all outstanding at what they do.

| Bit Depth | Sample Rate in kHz | MB per track minute | MB per stereo minute | MB per 8-track minute | MB per 16-track minute | MB per 24-track minute | MB per 32-track minute | MB to record/master typical 4-minute song | MB to record/master loaded 4-minute song | Disk sustain rate MB/sec |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| 16        | 44.1               | 5.0                 | 10.1                 | 40.4                  | 80.7                   | 121                    | 161                    | 363                                       | 969                                      | 3.4                      |
| 16        | 48                 | 5.5                 | 11.0                 | 43.9                  | 87.9                   | 132                    | 176                    | 396                                       | 1,055                                    | 3.7                      |
| 24        | 44.1               | 7.6                 | 15.1                 | 60.6                  | 121.1                  | 182                    | 242                    | 545                                       | 1,453                                    | 5.0                      |
| 24        | 48                 | 8.2                 | 16.5                 | 65.9                  | 132                    | 198                    | 264                    | 593                                       | 1,582                                    | 5.5                      |
| 24        | 96                 | 16.5                | 33.0                 | 132                   | 264                    | 396                    | 527                    | 1,187                                     | 3,164                                    | 11.0                     |
| 24        | 192                | 33.0                | 65.9                 | 264                   | 527                    | 791                    | 1,055                  | 2,373                                     | 6,328                                    | 22.0                     |
| 32        | 96                 | 22.0                | 43.9                 | 176                   | 352                    | 527                    | 703                    | 1,582                                     | 4,219                                    | 14.6                     |
| 32        | 192                | 43.9                | 87.9                 | 352                   | 703                    | 1,055                  | 1,406                  | 3,164                                     | 8,438                                    | 29.3                     |
| 24        | 384                | 65.9                | 131.8                | 527                   | 1,055                  | 1,582                  | 2,109                  | 4,746                                     | 12,656                                   | 43.9                     |
| 32        | 384                | 87.9                | 176                  | 703                   | 1,406                  | 2,109                  | 2,813                  | 6,328                                     | 16,875                                   | 58.6                     |

## Plug It In, Plug It In.

Well let's talk about my favourite aspect of DAWs: Plug-ins.

Plug-ins are specialized programs that run inside your DAW. There are two main types of plug-ins: effects and virtual instruments. Effects being things like reverbs, delays and compressors and virtual instruments being pianos, organs, guitars and synthesizers. Where some virtual instruments are still in their infancy, most digital effects are kick-ass. The following mentions do not reflect an endorsement, but rather as there are literally 100s of great plug-ins out there (more than I could reasonably mention in this article), I have to pick some, so here they are:

For high quality bundled effects at a good price, check out TC Electronic, Waves and DSP-FX. I am lucky enough to have all of them, and have used them for several years. Each of these effects bundles comes with a whole host of plug-ins such as compressors, reverbs, delays, etc.

I love the TC compressors, easy to use and they sound great; their interfaces are simple and you will have no trouble operating them on your first go. The Waves plug-ins tend to have more technical interfaces; if you used analog recording gear, than you won't have a problem with these. If you have not worked in a studio, you may find the controls a little overwhelming. Waves' gates and de-essers make it into almost every mix I ever work on. DSP-FX has one of my favourite all time effects: the Aural Activator, it is an exciter that is very controllable and sounds great. I could use different gates and different compressors, but don't go touching my Aural Activator (perhaps it's just the name I like?).

Some of my favourite individual effects are:

**BBE Sonic Maximizer:** only the people at BBE *really* know how these work, but they make guitars and toms sound great – fat in the bottom and present in the top. TC has added a plug-in called "Character" to their lineup, it is somewhat BBE like (perhaps very BBE like), I prefer what Character does to the upper-mids of an instrument, but BBE still wins for what it does in the bottom.

**Antares Autotune:** love or hate what Auto Tune has done to modern music, it is a fantastic asset to add to your arsenal. Autotune is really the Essa Tikanen of plug-ins. He pisses you off to play against, but he's great to have on your team. Autotune is up to version 4 these days and better (or worse depending on your point of view) than ever. For Autotune on a budget, have a look at RBC Voice Tweaker. If you have a TC Electronic Powercore system have a look at Intonator.



### Synchro Arts – Vocal

**Align:** while we are on the topic of vocals, here is a new plug-in that rules if your music requires really tight harmonies. Much like its name suggests, Vocal Align, very accurately aligns phrasing through time stretching, while maintaining pitch and tone. COOL! The lowly assistant engineer, once feeling important because of his ability to align vocal tracks, is going to be relegated to making coffee ... again.

**Antares Infinity:** is a plug-in that seamlessly auto loops audio for you. One of the hardest things in creating samples, especially things like wind instruments is getting them to loop seamlessly ... at least that used to be a problem. (Currently only for Mac)

**Drumagog:** this is a PC only plug-in that specializes in drum replacement (much like Digidesign's old standby: Sound Replacer). I like to use it to layer samples to be blended in with the acoustic recorded drum tracks. This can really add some controlled punch.

## The Reality of Virtual Instruments

Virtual Instruments have come a long way in the last couple of years. There are even several different types of virtual instruments these days. There are, of course, sample players, which allow to play back sampled notes from a MIDI keyboard that you plug into your computer (yes, yes, before someone writes me – these sample players usually come with a "virtual" keyboard on screen so



you can trigger samples right from your mouse). Actually, I shouldn't downplay the power of modern sample players. A computer sample player, unlike the keyboard and rackmount counter parts, can play samples that are literally gigabytes in size. This means a piano played from a sample player on computer, rather than having to fit into 64 megabytes of RAM (incidentally this would be a stat that keyboard manufacturers would still



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hype as pretty good ... get with the times all you keyboard manufacturers!) could be full length, unlooped, multiple velocity samples recorded at high sample rates and bit depths ... if that doesn't mean anything to you, it's not that different to comparing an early '90s minivan to a 2006 Cadillac Escalade. No, it still won't replace a real piano, but for recording, it is pretty damn fine. Of course, like an Escalade, the big samples take up a lot of resources – computer resources that is. If you are going to be playing really big samples, don't count on being able to play them into a huge multi-track recording in real-time. The modern sample player will of course play much more than a piano; the piano is just a very good example.

There is a new style of virtual instrument emerging – the virtual player. Of course this isn't *really* a new idea. All those home organ sales through the 1980s had all sorts of auto accompaniments (they just sounded bad). This new style of virtual player is a new take on that old idea. Virtual Guitars, Virtual Bases, and Virtual Drummers ... there is no replacing a good player in a good studio (at least not this year – or for a fair few more), but if you are programming songs or putting together song demos, these plug-ins are invaluable. The tones you'll get are generally really good and the ease of use is excellent; if they have a weakness it would be in their ability to play many styles. Yes, there are quite a few styles available, but for better or worse, they are all meat and potatoes. This means you will get excellent rhythmic time, but you will lack dynamics and musical spontaneity. For some this will be a problem, for others this is a bonus; you know which camp you fit into.

“Okay, I can't tell a lie, I am one of those kids that had a keyboard in the '80s and had no idea that it sounded like CRAP!”

– Alec Watson

Lastly, but not least, are the virtual instruments that use the processing power of the computer to physically model sounds. These physical models range from acoustic instruments to old and very cool sounding analog synthesizers. There was a time (we are still kind of in that time) that electronic keyboards made synth sounds that “sounded like” the old monolithic machines like the Moog. Yeah, we are talking about the “sounds-like” that you refer to in charades; “sounds-like” – but doesn't really. To the kids hearing these sounds coming off electronic keyboards, they were pretty good sounds and you could punch through hundreds of “patches” in a couple of minutes. Little did these kids know that back in the old days the word “patch” referred to the fact that pieces of electronic gear had to be literally patched in to other pieces of gear in order to *design* a sound. It could take 10 minutes just to create a favourite old sound – but it was worth it. Okay, I can't tell a lie, I am one of those kids that had a keyboard in the '80s and had no idea that it sounded like CRAP! I didn't really know until I got my hands on some of the physical models of the old synthesizers and played some of the cool sounds on my computer. WOW! Who knew that one note could sound so good? I recently read a very good article on why monophonic synths (synths that only play one note at a time) are so much more expressive than the polyphonic synths that I grew up on. The author of this article grew up in the days when synth “patches” were patched; don't tell, but I think he might be on to something.

Physical modelling goes well beyond analog sounding synths. There are really good physical models of everything from guitars to saxophones.



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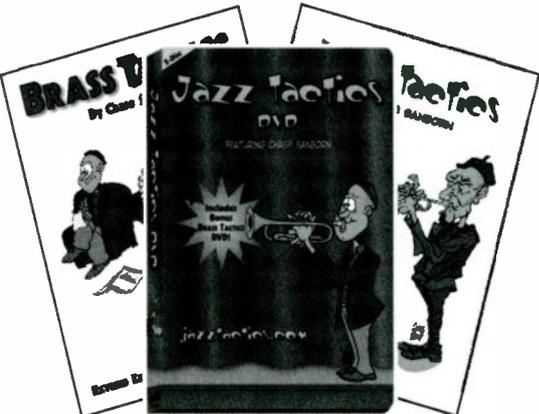
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Saxophones you say? I haven't heard any good physical models of saxophones. Well here is some funny food for thought. Yes, computers can make outstanding physical models of saxophones, unfortunately, you really need a controller with all the expressive control of a saxophone to be able to play it ... the perfect expressive controller for a saxophone probably looks suspiciously like a saxophone ... which leads to the conclusion that perhaps it is better just to play a real saxophone!?!)



### It's All Live, it's All LIVE!!!

Computers in a live setting – yikes! Software in the live arena has, in the past, been part of a kooky realm that belongs to the computer daredevils.

Even if you currently have a very stable system, you know that every once in a while something goes wrong; there really might be a ghost in the machine. What do you do when you are playing live? Do you stop and say: "Excuse me, please go back to what you were doing while I reboot." Of course your audience may actually be quite understanding regarding your request – yeah right. This is something that has changed in the last couple of years; no, not the audience's forgiving nature towards computer crashes, but rather, how brazenly brave one has to be to use a computer on stage.

Beyond running a simple MIDI sequencer (which hasn't made a computer sweat in many years now) it was those wonderful virtual instruments that first got me thinking about wanting to use a computer on stage. Playing HUGE piano samples, the streaming kind from the likes of Gigasampler, or that great organ sound found on the B-4 plug-in, made me really want to take a killer laptop on stage several years ago and wow the crowd with the big fat realistic sounds, but it was just so much easier to take a little keyboard up there and play puny sounds through big loud speakers. The little keyboard had NEVER crashed!

Now that you can have a "super-computer" as a laptop, utilizing software power for stage is not such a brave thing to do. I have even seen "bar bands" with laptop computers powering virtual instruments, backtracks and keyboard patching in real-time. Laptops on stage aren't just the instrument of the keyboard player anymore.

There are excellent real-time instruments like Reason (now up to version 3), and Cakewalk's Project 5. These sys-

tems have been put together not only to create outstanding synth systems for the studio, but they also specialize in real-time creation that you can take to the live arena.

There is no reason that you can't be running your stage microphones into a good sounding USB or Firewire mic preamp and using a laptop to control everything from vocal effects to amp modelling for guitar or bass. A guitar plugged into a laptop isn't going to have the same appeal as a stack of Marshalls, but I am willing to bet that a little software in a garden variety laptop would give a whole bunch of stomp boxes and amplifiers a run for their money. Just imagine all the effects and amp combos a guitar player could have automated at his finger tips; physically modelled power amp and microphone combinations, tube compressors, good (really good) reverbs and delays.

How about vocals? Vocal mics can be run into the computer; add maybe a little bit of tube compression (the software kind); you could auto-tune the bass players backing vocals or maybe just add a chorus; heck you could create a whole bunch of really good sounding backing vocals that follow the keyboard players chord changes all in real-time. Nope, computers and software aren't just for the keyboard player anymore!

### "He Shoots, He Scores!"

Well, here is a topic that I haven't given enough time to over the last couple of years: notation software. Yeah, I have, in the past, mentioned that there are some good applications that specialize in printing sheet music AND that the big recording applications have "pretty" good MIDI note to music notation, but it wasn't until my return to university this last year that I spent some serious time in the world of notation. As it turns out, I ended up with a particularly sadistic professor (he knows who he is, but to protect his family I won't mention any names) that took great pleasure in watching his poor students slave away at transcribing score (by candle light) till the early hours of the morning. Actually, there weren't really any candles, but there was a mountain of transcribing to be done and I learned all about the difference between a program that can notate and a notation program. Put simply there is NO comparison. Comparing a DAW recording application that can notate to notation software is not at all dissimilar to comparing an amphibious car to a speedboat. If you need to seriously transcribe music into notation there is nothing like the right tool for the right job. I was also very surprised at how new technology makes it so much easier. The new notation software can play audibly through good software synths; the result is a surprisingly acceptable

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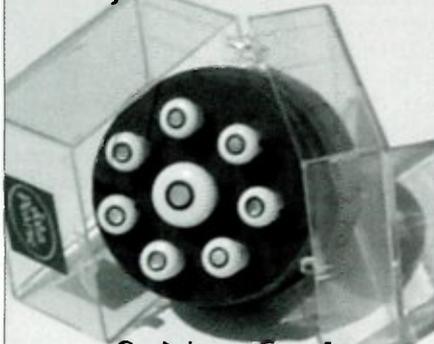


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rendition of your carefully crafted piece of music. It was also very interesting (though hardly surprising) how adept one's ear is at catching a mistake instead of relying on one's eyes to catch a mistake in the score.

I always thought the idea of a "good engine" that can playback written notation was a bit gimmicky; I couldn't have been more wrong.

There is also a growing number of applications that can turn sheet music into MIDI files via interpretation of scanned sheet music. To me this is "interesting" technology, but having tried this out on a few occasions it seems like it really is just a little more than a clever "timesaver." On the few occasions that I have tried this out, I have found the results to be less than perfect. I did however find that this was an interesting experiment in the difference between humans and computers. With all sorts of looping technologies out there, as well as virtual instruments, it sometimes seems like computers are really replacing musicians. If you find this getting you

T.C. Electronic's The Finalizer



down, I highly suggest taking an hour or two and scanning some sheet music; let your finely tuned 2005 computer "play" the music. The good news is that there is NO COMPARISON. Our silicon chip computers are still a few light years away from competing with nature's biological computers when it comes to artistically interpreting a piece of music. The bottom line here is that musicianship obviously only has a little to do with playing the right notes on a page of music.

But alas, I have digressed ... the list of notation programs is HUGE. They come in all sorts of price points. If you are serious about notation software have a look at Sibelius and Finale they are great tools.

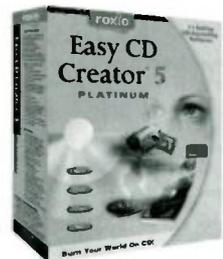
## "Mastering The Art Of Mastering"

Here is a little secret that not a lot of people know: mastering is really easy. After all, mastering is really just adjusting EQ, compression, and overall level on two tracks; how hard could that be? It IS in fact quite easy to adjust all those things on two tracks; it is of course surprisingly difficult to do it really well. There was a time (not very long ago) when mastering was only done in the realm of VERY expensive analog equipment; there was always a lot of voodoo added for good measure and sometimes you got your mixes back and they sounded good. A company by the name of T.C. Electronic came out with a nifty piece of gear called "The Finalizer" and the world of mastering was changed forever. There is now an ever-increasing competition to see how loud you can actually make a mix. Loud modern mixes are exclusively the domain of software and computer mastering. Analog electronics just can't process tiny electric signals in the same way a computer can manipulate and process data. This doesn't mean that software can't master mixes in subtle good ways; it just doesn't seem to be done that way at the moment.

One can master audio tracks in their DAW program; actually even Easy CD Creator and Nero have simple editors the permit rudimentary mastering, but not unlike notation software, the right tool for the right job makes life much better. A good piece of software that specializes in working with stereo audio for mastering makes the whole process much easier. Steinberg's Wavelab and Sony's Sound Forge are good mastering packages worth a look at. They allow for easy editing, signal processing, sequencing

and burning. These programs also turn your mixes into acceptable sounding MP3s (unlike a lot of other programs).

I haven't talked about CD or DVD burning in the past; it seems like everyone knows how to burn off a disc ... but how about mixed media discs? A mixed media disc is one of those discs that plays audio in CD player, but contains data that runs on a computer. If you have Easy CD Creator or Nero on your computer, you can make and burn



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  - July/August - Wide Mouth Mason, Danko Jones, Natalie MacMaster, Software Review 2000
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"The software environment allows us to demo quickly and cheaply, but then also use these tracks as the "real" tracks. We can even replace certain players with virtual players."

– Alec Watson

these types of discs. Now you may not be able to build your own Web site or create the data section of the disc, but you do have the technology to be able to burn them. If your band has a Web site and you have a Web designer, why not add the value added benefits of video, photographs and Weblinks to you band's CD? Wavelab by Steinberg offers some pretty good options to put together a pretty hot final product. It is a nice mastering program, but also offers the benefits of creating full multimedia CD productions as well as DVD audio.

## Shrink Wrapping Up

The library of available software keeps growing and growing for musicians. We can do more every year on our home systems, but is it better? I'll have to agree, for once, with the big studio owners that for the most part, the overall quality of what we listen to has been diluted. Sure, this has a little to do with some of the recording gear that we use at home being a little inferior to top quality studio options. To be fair though, gear is only a small part of the recording process. I still firmly believe that a project can be mixed on software alone, using digital-only plug-ins on a computer purchased at midnight from Walmart ... and only the very best ears might be able pick that it wasn't done at a big studio. (Of course good monitors and an excellent listening environment are necessary for good mixes). I believe that if there is a problem with suffering quality, therefore, it stems from a lackadaisical recording attitude. Yeah, there has always been a "fix it in the mix" attitude; this approach had now evolved to "don't worry we'll just edit it later." Most of us are probably just a little too comfortable with the "new" studio experience. At one time we looked at the clock to see how much time-wasting was costing us; serious preparation was necessary in order to maximize that expensive studio time. The software environment allows us to demo quickly and cheaply, but then also use these tracks as the "real" tracks. We can even replace certain players with virtual players. There is no need to set up an amp; we just plug the guitar into the computer. With the studio voodoo gone, some magic has disappeared when it comes to the urgency necessary to nail a performance. There is no "red light" anxiety for the player, the producer, or the engineer.

Not that long ago there used to be a lot of worry when it came to punch-ins; when was the last time anyone broke into a sweat regarding a punch? The computer and software environment has done great things for making recording magic accessible to the masses. It can make a mediocre singer or player sound like a pretty good one. But you know what? There is nothing like a great performance. I think *Mix* magazine is wrong, it is not quality that is missing in our recordings it is performance. Go ahead, use your whole arsenal of digital tricks – the new software is awesome; just remember to use it to record a performing art.

*Alec Watson is a Producer/ Engineer that works from his destination studio on Vancouver Island.*



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# Monitor Mixing Technology

by Fred Michael

**T**echnological innovation and economic reality have recently come together to create opportunities for touring musicians wanting better control over their stage sound. While all musicians would prefer an onstage monitor engineer to serve up the perfect mix, fewer and fewer venues can afford it. Here's a brief overview of new monitor mixing technology that puts the power into the performer's hands at a real-world price.

## In Ear Monitors

Wireless In-Ear Monitors (IEMs) have gotten so affordable, professional musicians can now outfit their entire group without taking out a mortgage. Combined with an inexpensive rack-mount mixer at stage-side, IEMs can give each performer a custom mix while lowering stage volume, helping the FOH engineer at the same time. In North America, Shure Bros. is the leading provider of IEM systems, offering a range of choices and price points. A variety of appropriate rack-mount mixers are available from Allen & Heath, Yamaha, Mackie, Soundcraft and Crest. You'll want a mixer that can provide at least four discrete mixes, but go for six discrete mixes if you've got that many players and can afford it. Also, remember, you can save lots of cash by providing wired IEM systems for stationary players such as percussionists and keyboard players.

## Stage Monitors

A percentage of players will always prefer monitor speakers rather than IEMs; they, too, can go the self-mixing route but will need more training in system equalization to avoid ear-bending feedback. The equipment package will be more complex, requiring outdoor equalization, amplification, and a speaker system for each open-air mix. Affordable powered and un-powered stage monitors are available from EAW, JBL, Electro-Voice, Yamaha and many others.

## A Step Up

For those of you already owning a system like those described, there's a new refinement of which you may not be aware. Aviom, Inc. has created a digital audio interface (Aviom A-16T) that allows personal mixing stations to be located close to each performer. The control surface (Aviom A-16) is available in a

rack-mount or mic stand-mount version and provides 16 discrete channels, more than enough for most mid-level groups. The user has control of level for each channel and master bass and treble; recallable presets allow the user to tailor mixes for individual songs. The master unit simply interfaces to your mixing console via the individual channel insert points; audio is distributed digitally to each mixing station with fast and cheap CAT-5 Ethernet cable in daisy-chain fashion.

## Getting The Mix You Want

Whichever setup you choose, you need to understand a few audio basics to ensure good results. I'll start with techniques for mixing floor monitors and then move on to mixing IEM systems.

The single most important determinant in achieving a good mix for yourself is proper gain-staging. By "gain-staging" I mean simply introducing signal of an appropriate level into your system and then maintaining that quality of signal throughout the entire amplification chain, from input to output to power amplifier. With this foundation of good signal quality, we can move on to the mixing.

Begin with your own instrument or voice; bring the level up until you have a strong but not overbearing volume. Next, check your tone; for vocalists and instrumentalists alike, it's important to try a range of pitches and dynamic levels so that you can check for obnoxious frequencies. If you like the sound so far, you can move on to "ringing out" the monitor; this is a technique that minimizes the possibility of acoustic feedback from vocal microphones during performance. While a little disconcerting at first, the process is quite simple and becomes straightforward with practice: With earplugs in place, slowly raise the gain of your microphone until you hear the onset of the first feedback tone; reduce your level slightly until the tone recedes. Now use your equalizer (a 1/3 octave graphic equalizer is best) to find that tone by raising the EQ faders one by one until the tone re-occurs; then, bring that fader down to the -3dB mark and repeat the process. In some cases, the same frequency will come up, in others, you will hear a new frequency; in either case, the process is the same. Carry on until you have isolated three or four problem frequencies and don't drop any single fader level beyond -6 dB, otherwise your tone will be severely compromised.

Remember, you are using the equalizer to minimize feedback while keeping as much tone as possible; too much frequency cutting will affect your ability to hear the monitor and turning up the volume will just bring on more feedback. If you are fighting a losing battle for volume, you probably have a deficiency in your equipment package; have it checked out by a live sound professional.

IEM technology eliminates the need for feedback equalization; you simply begin with appropriate gain staging for all of your inputs and then dial-up the mix for each user. Individual channel equalization will usually suffice for any necessary tonal changes. IEMs require more attention on setting input and output gains since the use of RF technology places limitations on available dynamic range, i.e., you can run out of headroom and the mix takes on an annoying, "squashed" quality that's very hard to get around unless you start all over again. You also need to be aware of the potential for ear damage; keep the mix comfortable but not loud in your ear.

There are other interesting sub-topics around IEM technology that deserve a separate treatment; I'll look at these in a future article.

For more information on any of the products mentioned, just do a Google search on the brand names. Questions and comments on this article can be sent to the e-mail address below.



*Fred Michael is President of Rocky Mountain Sound Production Services in Vancouver, BC. Fred can be reached at [fred@rmsound.com](mailto:fred@rmsound.com), or via the Rocky Mountain Sound Web page, [www.rmsound.com](http://www.rmsound.com).*



# Music Conference Preparation

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

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

## Introduction

Musicians have a variety of music conferences to choose from every year. This article aims to provide some helpful tips to the musician selecting and preparing for the typical music conference.

## Do Your Research

Your preparation should start before you even decide to attend a conference. Go online and find out more about the various conferences that are out there. All of them have Web sites. Some of the best and well-known conferences for Canadian musicians are:

Canadian Music Week – late Winter/early Spring, Toronto, ON  
 North By Northeast – June, Toronto, ON  
 New Music West – May, Vancouver, BC  
 CMJ – Fall, New York, NY  
 South By Southwest – March, Austin, TX  
 Midem – January, Cannes, France

All of these conferences have Web sites and most have application deadlines way in advance of the actual conference dates.

## Submit A Professional Package

There are numerous books and other learning materials which outline the key ingredients (i.e. music, bio, photo, etc.). Make sure it is all professionally done. A screening committee will review your material before you are selected (or not) to showcase. Put your best foot forward.

Supplement your submission by accessing referrals. For example, if you have an agent, manager or lawyer who can put in a good word for you make sure they do. There are hundreds of bands submitted for these conferences – you need to cut through somehow.

## Venue and Showcase Slot Is Key

Many bands travel long, long distances to showcase at less than favourable venues at less than favourable time slots. If your goal is to have industry types attend your show

obviously a well-located, popular venue will better serve your purposes. Again, research is key in this regard. Find out about the city and the venue you are slotted into. I would seriously reconsider expending substantial amounts of \$\$\$ to showcase if you are slotted into a bad sounding room with a makeshift PA and inadequate lighting.

Time slots are important too. Most conferences showcase bands on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Experience has shown that the best night to showcase is Friday. Some key delegates do not show up for the first night (Thursday) and many depart prior to the final evening (Saturday). I would not cancel if I was slotted on Thursday or Saturday, but if you have a choice: choose Friday.

## Competition Is Fierce/Be Realistic

Conferences do not lead directly to record deals. They are often one step on the way to initial industry interest or increased industry interest. Most of these conferences showcase a minimum of 400 acts over a three-day period and South By Southwest showcases over 1,000. Expect nothing and you will be pleasantly surprised if you get some industry interest out of it.

Prepare in advance of the conference to contact as many people as possible to get them your package and let them know about your show. A politely worded e-mail should suffice. Make up flyers or stickers with showcase venue and timeslot information to hand out to everyone you see. However, understand, the most heavily attended showcases are for bands that have developed a “buzz” months before the conference. Start developing your buzz *today*.

## A&R/Managers/Agents/Publishers/Journalists/Promoters/Lawyers

Many artists focus on record company A&R people and ignore other industry types that can be instrumental in their careers. These conferences are attended by managers, booking agents, music publishers, journalists, concert promoters, lawyers and other bands. Again, do your research and focus on some of these key players to help you build your team.

## Panels

Normally, one of the band members re-

ceives a pass to attend the panels. Someone in the band should use it. Panels can be a valuable source of information and can also provide access to industry types that can be approached after they finish their respective panel. Panellists attend the conference to meet new people and network too.

## Timing/Rehearsals

Time your set. I am always amazed by bands that have to cut sets unexpectedly because they have run out of time. Rehearse your actual set list and time it out. Leave five minutes for error. Many of these conferences run like clockwork and will turn off your sound if you run over. You will irritate other bands in the process.

Set times are normally between 35-45 minutes. This is more than enough time to exhibit your talents. Any extra time is unnecessary.

## Conclusions

Conferences can be an integral part of the growth process for any musician. Start building your buzz today; do your research; and, be reasonably in your expectations. We'll see you at the conference!



*Chris Taylor is a music lawyer with the law firm of Sanderson Taylor and works with Avril Lavigne, Sum 41, Nelly Furtado and Sam Roberts among others. Find him online at [www.sandersontaylor.com](http://www.sandersontaylor.com).*



# “I Got a \$ix-Figure Indie Label Deal Because I Joined TAXI”

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

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

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

## Who Hears Your Music?

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

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

## A Record Deal With Lots of Zeros!

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

## Madonna, Bowie, Jagger, and me!

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



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## It Worked for Me

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

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

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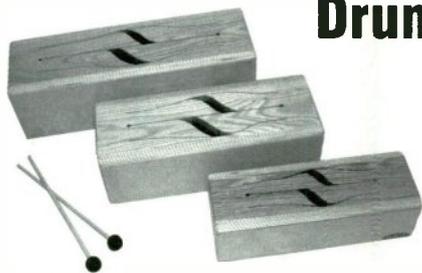
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where the four "tongues" are cut and are tuned to be played individually or as a set.

The TDS model is 4" x 5 1/4" x 13", the TDM model is 5" x 6" x 15" and the TDL model is 5 1/2" x 6" x 18". Ideally, the drums were designed to be played as a set, either three people on one each or one person on all three.

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

# BOSS GT-Pro By Roland



The BOSS GT-Pro rack processor is BOSS' most powerful processor now released. By combining any two of the 46 amp models, the GT-Pro will allow towering tones and is powered by dual COSM amp-modelling engines. The amp channels can be controlled by the strength of the players picking when they hit the Solo Switch.

Used as a rackmount guitar preamp, the GT-Pro has 44 effects categories, 200 presets and 140 user-patch locations. The player can choose from compressors, overdrives, delays, reverbs, choruses, EQs, wahs, even sitar and acoustic guitar emulator.

You can configure the 13 internal effect blocks in any order needed while externally, a trio of effects loops and a collection of outputs allow for flexible signal-routing configurations. With an improved signal-to-noise ratio the GT-Pro provides a pure signal path and its built-in ground lift switch helps keep signals clean.

The I/O flexibility is a must with four 1/4" analog audio outputs, two XLR outputs and three pairs of effects send/returns. It also offers a 24-bit coaxial output and the option for multiple signal paths for recording.

The GT-Pro comes with Mac/PC editor/librarian software and provides USB-Audio functionality.

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

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## Gibson Travelling Songwriter

Gibson Guitar's Acoustic division recently unveiled the first professional-quality travel acoustic guitar – the Gibson Travelling Songwriter.

Combining a travel-friendly design with what Gibson feels is a great acoustic sound whether unplugged or amplified, the guitar features a thin yet hollow body style. The Sitka Spruce top is designed with dome construction and the same scalloped bracing pattern as Gibson guitars from the 1930s for a true acoustic tone.

The body shape, designed from Gibson's historic square-shoulder family, along with its sculpted bridge designed after the famous Moustache bridge, give the Travelling Songwriter a distinct Gibson appearance. Gibson feels it is ideal for virtually any performing or songwriting situation. Its rear soundhole presents the player with improved acoustic volume in silent settings such as a home or office. When it comes to stage use, the pickup and onboard 4-band EQ and volume controls provide the songwriter with full live performance ability.

A custom travel case with a built-in guitar tuner is included. Also, the thin body and slightly shortened headstock enable it to fit easily into spaces that won't accommodate a full-depth guitar in a hardshell case.

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

## Seymour Duncan SFX-02 Tweak Fuzz



Seymour Duncan recently unveiled the SFX-02 Tweak Fuzz stomp box, offering users a six-position "Tweak" switch to voice the fuzz tone the way they want it.

According to Seymour Duncan, the basic tone will be identifiable to players who remember the vintage fuzz tones of the '60s pop festivals. However, with the addition of the Tweak switch, the player is able to create an abundance of fuzz tones, making the Tweak Fuzz a versatile pedal for electric guitar and bass. The rotary knob for Tweak control engages one of six pre-set EQ resonances that give an overall "flavour" to the Tweak Fuzz, rolling off to the bottom end and influencing the performance of the Gain control. The Tweak Fuzz' circuitry is true bypass, so when the pedal is not "on", the guitar's signal passes through without affecting tone or gain. A single 9-volt battery or a regulated DC "wall wart", which is not included, powers the unit. The frame is heavy-duty, 1.6 mm sheet metal and the unit measures 4.62" wide x 5.10" deep x 2.2" tall and weighs only 2 lbs.

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

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## Spaun's Latest Hybrid And Exotic Burl Drum Kits



Spaun Drum Company has released their latest drum kits from the "out of this world" line, the Hybrid Drum Kit and the Exotic Burl Drum Kit.

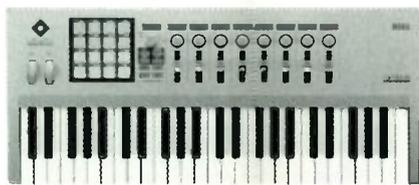
You can choose between the Custom Series 100 per cent Maple and the Recording Series 100 per cent birch on every kit. The Hybrid Kit allows you to combine the loud, focused qualities of acrylic with either warm Maple or bright Birch. The Exotic Burl Kit is available in a variety of colours including stains, candy colours, fades, burst and much more.

To ensure maximum tuning range from drum to drum, Spaun drums keep a constant shell thickness and does not use reinforcement rings as they can disrupt the natural vibration of the shell. While reinforcement rings raise pitch, create non-harmonic overtones and reduce sustain, Spaun shells have enhanced sustain with their solid brass lugs.

Spaun lugs were designed to be small and sturdy. They have no hollow cavities, which can create dead air space that limits the natural vibration of the shell.

For more information, contact: Spaun Drum Company, 425 W. Allen Ave. #101, San Dimas, CA 91773 (909) 971-7761, FAX (909) 971-7441, info@spaundrums.com, www.spaundrums.com.

## Kontrol49 MIDI Studio Controller



Korg recently released the Kontrol49 MIDI Studio Controller, which combines 49 full-size keys with a selection of pads, encoders, sliders and multiple displays.

Kontrol49 will give you the tools you need for performance, recording and sound design with its velocity-sensitive keys. The 40 performance elements include pitch and mod wheels, a vector joystick for control, a pair of assignable switches, eight pairs of assignable sliders and rotary encoders that have individual colour-coded LCD displays.

The main encoder can send bank and tempo information and the system has a native mode that allows external software to set assignments and write text.

The 16 velocity-sensitive trigger pads can perform a variety of MIDI functions such as triggering loops and samples, selecting sounds, toggling or switching parameters and sending MIDI messages. The pads can recall any of the complete controller assignments stored in the keyboard.

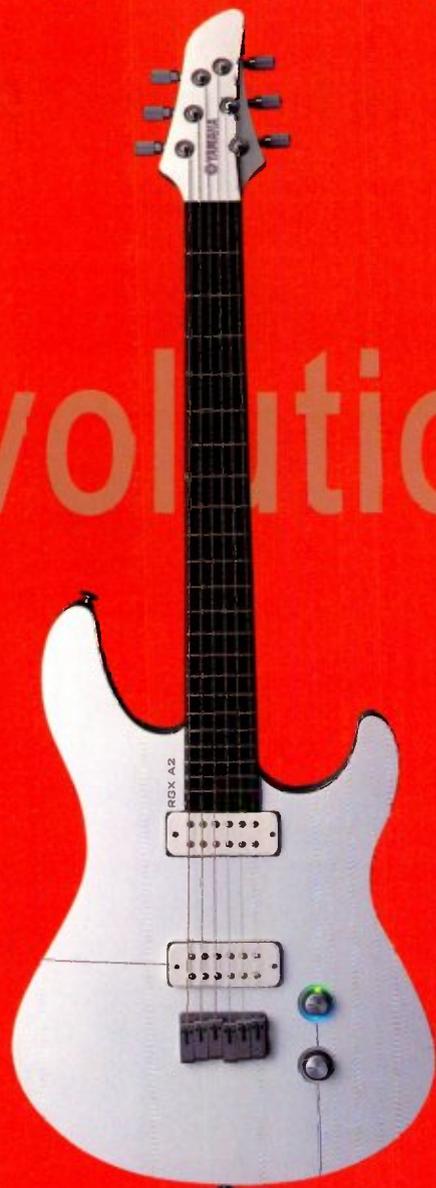
There is a foot pedal and footswitch input at the back of the panel for hands-free performance, as well as a MIDI input and two MIDI outputs. For direct computer connection there is also a USB port supplied.

Included is an editor/librarian (Mac/PC) software for creating, editing and saving custom scenes. It also comes with template scenes for many popular titles. The free CD-ROM bundle offers demo versions of the Korg Legacy Collection, Lounge Lizard EP-2 by Applied Acoustic Systems, Sample Tank 2 Korg Edition from I.K. Multimedia, Native Instruments VOKATOR and Reason 2.5 from Propellerhead Software.

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

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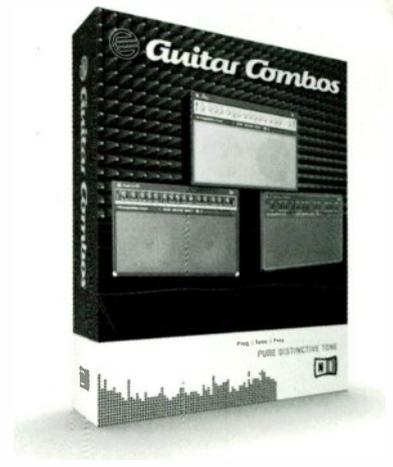


## Native Instruments Guitar Combos

Native Instruments has announced that Guitar Combos are now available in stores worldwide. This series of three electrifying amp emulations combine studio sound quality with ease of use.

The combos available are the Twang Combo, the AC Box Combo and the Plexi Combo. All three come with a classic tube amplifier with a speaker box and several effects, giving the musician and producer access to a wide range of guitar tones in software.

For more information, contact: Native Instruments USA, 5631 A Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90028 (866) 556-6487, FAX (866) 556-6490, sales@native-instruments.com, www.native-instruments.com.



## Yamaha FG Acoustic Series



Yamaha has introduced their first Yamaha FG acoustic to the new Yamaha FG Series.

This new line improved on tone and playability with its 15 new models, according to Yamaha. Features include solid Spruce tops, die-cast chrome hardware and a non-scalloped X-bracing. The inverted L-block creates a tighter connection between the body and the neck and creates a fuller low end. You can choose between Rosewood and Sycamore back and side woods, acoustic-electric cutaways, left-handed versions and 12-strings.

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



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## Peavey Zodiac Guitars



Featuring both J-style and P-style pickups, Peavey releases the Zodiac 4 USA and Zodiac 5 USA bass guitars, available in four and five-string versions.

Both models are built on a solid alder body with a stamped steel bridge, machined saddles and a three-layer pickguard. The 4-string Zodiac features a combination of P-style and J-style pickup and the 5-string features two J-style pickups. Both have two master volume controls and one master tone control to shape the sound desired.

The 4-string has a 34" scale and the 5-string has a 35" scale with 21 frets. Both have an 8" radius Maple neck to comfortably handle the Rosewood fingerboard. These bases also have all chrome hardware, butterfly tuners, a Switchcraft jack, 1 1/2" nut width and are available in amber, tobacco burst, moon burst and margarita.

For more information, contact: Peavey Electronics Corporation, 711 A St., Meridian, MS 39302 (601) 483-5365, FAX (601) 486-1278, webmaster@peavey.com, www.peavey.com.

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



## Radial Launches JDX Mix Eliminator/Combiner

A new type of direct box has been released from Radial, the Radial JDX. With the ability to connect with a 10dB line level feed or connected between the guitar amplifier head and the speaker cabinet, the Radial JDX is designed for both live and studio use.

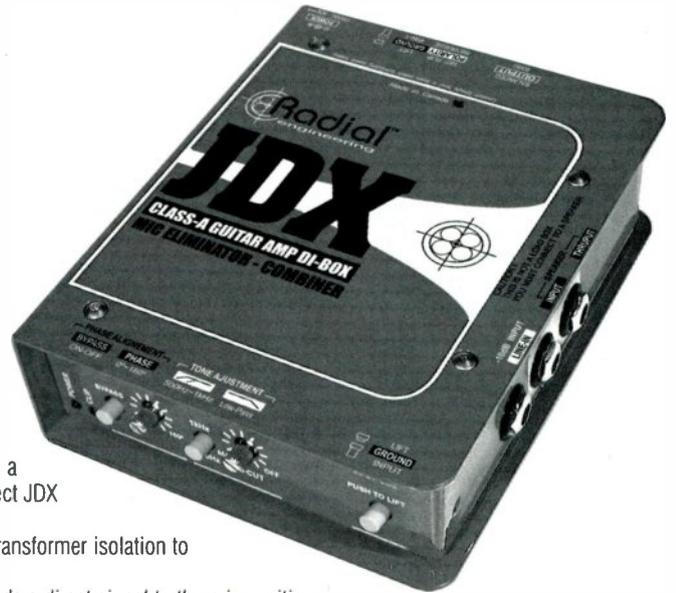
As it has a variable 0 to 180-degree phase control, it can be used alone or with a microphone. This also allows the engineer to time-align the miked sound with the direct JDX sound so they can work in unison.

Features include low pass filter with a variable cut-off point, dual ground lift and transformer isolation to eliminate ground loops and polarity reverse for full 360-degree phase shift.

Invisible to the guitarist, the Radial JDX taps the signal after the amp head and sends a direct signal to the mix position. This benefits the engineer as she can compare the miked signals with the direct signal to see which sounds better. When there is limited time to setup and do a sound check she can set the direct sound and the room's acoustics will not affect the direct feed.

Low-pass shelving EQ with choice of 500 Hz or 1 kHz cut-off frequency is available for pre-console equalization and is designed to cut offensive high frequency noise and hiss. The Radial JDX also comes with a 15 VDC power supply.

For more information, contact: Radial Engineering, 1638 Kebet Way, Port Coquitlam, BC V3C 5W9 (604) 942-1001, FAX (604) 942-1010, info@radialeng.com, www.radialeng.com.



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Get it anyway you'd like it- add a multiple speaker setup or choose from a couple of combo options. The BBT Bass System from Yamaha.

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## Selmer Paris Privilege Bass Clarinets



Selmer recently released Selmer Paris Privilege bass clarinets, appointing Conn-Selmer, Inc. as the exclusive distributor.

Two new models offer a 19-key instrument to low E flat and a 22-key instrument to low C. Both of these new models offer a quick response and a round, powerful sound.

They feature over 150 new parts including an E flat key at the thumb and a direct C arm for better dexterity. Securing a strong fit, there is a tenon and a metal stack among the fitting of the lower and upper joints. There are also two angled neck options, adjustable thumb rest with an oversized hook ring, removable stand with a round rest and a cordura-covered case.

For more information, contact: Conn-Selmer, Inc., PO Box 310, Elkhart, IN 46515 (888) 287-8196, www.conn-selmer.com.

## Firebird GX108 Amplifier

Behringer recently released the Firebird GX108 amplifier with a custom-made 8" speaker.

With a 1/4" mono jack guitar input, this compact amp also has a cinch connector for a tape input and output as well. A 1/4" stereo jack for phones output is also provided. The Firebird GX108 has a 15-watt/8Ω power amp output. The amp is 12.5" x 13" x 7.3" and weighs 13.2 pounds.

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



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With one foot firmly in the past, Saga reintroduces Gitane DG-250M Petite Bouche Jazz Guitar. With a long 670mm scale and solid headstock, this Gitane has the percussive impact and dark tone associated with the legendary instruments of the late thirties and early forties. Only about 20 of these amazing instruments were originally produced, under the clouds of war, in 1941 and 1942. Turn back the clock and swing with *Les Quatre de Paris* ... and your Gitane Guitar!

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## Pearl Reference Series Drum Kit

Pearl introduces the new Reference Series drum kit, which combines Birch with Maple and Maple with African Mahogany for the best sound possible.

As different size Toms create different tones, different woods, bearing edges and shell thickness all change the acoustic properties. In all Reference Series the 12" Toms are six-ply and 100 per cent Maple with a rounded 45 degree bearing edge. This is the only single wood shell in the Reference series.

As the drums get smaller in diameter from the 12", Birch is gradually added to add the presence needed for smaller diameter drums. As the drums get larger than 12", African Mahogany is gradually added to increase low end and add depth.

At the 14" Tom the bearing edge is changed to a full round over to add smoothness. At 16" the shells get thicker to eight ply to add volume. The 18" Reference Bass Drum has four piles of African Mahogany and two piles of Maple. The 20", 22" and 24" Bass Drums all have six piles of Mahogany and two piles of Maple with full round-over edges.

The 20-ply snare drum has six piles of Birch and 14 piles of Maple. The thick shell resists vibration and puts energy into the moving air.

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



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## Sennheiser Evolution e935

Sennheiser recently introduced the new addition to the Evolution line, the Evolution e935. This cardioid vocal stage microphone is designed to perform under pressure and cuts through the mix with its high output. Ideal for the working musician, Sennheiser says it's the first choice for rental companies.

The metal construction is rugged and reliable and has a shock-mounted capsule designed for low sensitivity to impact and noise handling. With insulation from other on-stage signals, this mic has a cardioid pickup pattern and reduces electrical interference with its hum compensating coil. The neodymium ferrous magnet with boron keeps the mic stable, regardless of the climate and the falcon ring keeps a consistent sound over time.

The Evolution e935 comes with a protective pouch and 1 MZQ 800 microphone clip. The mic is 1.85" x 7.12" and weighs 11.64 oz, or 330 g.

For more information, contact: Sennheiser Canada, 221 Labrosse Ave., Pte-Claire, PQ H9R 1A3 (514) 426-3013, FAX (514) 426-3013, [www.sennheiser.ca](http://www.sennheiser.ca).



## RKS Electric Dark Star Guitar



RKS Guitars has released the hollow body Dark Star electric guitar, great for anyone who loves a sleek, dark original look.

With fully chrome hardware and a rosewood fingerboard, this seven-pound electric is 37" long and its shell has a 3-stage polyester finish for a clean design.

The Dark Star's electronics and controls include two custom-wound, covered, coil-tapped humbucking pickups, a 5-position selector, and volume and tone controls.

For more information, contact: RKS Guitars, 350 Conejo Ridge Ave., Thousand Oaks, CA 91361 (805) 370-5858, FAX (805) 370-1201, [info@rksguitars.com](mailto:info@rksguitars.com), [www.rksguitars.com](http://www.rksguitars.com).

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## TC-Helicon Voice Pro

After 15 years of human voice research, TC-Helicon has developed their most comprehensive voice processor, the VoicePro. With a combination of proprietary voice processing algorithms, VoicePro creates limitless vocal sounds for music, game, post and commercial audio designer/producers. Allowing all aspects of a vocal performance to be altered once the performer has left the studio, this processor was designed to generate creativity and save production time.

Features include TC-Helicon's third generation VoiceModelling, Hybrid Shifting, and Flextime algorithms allowing pitch, time and character of a voice to be redefined and manipulated in ways that were never possible. The unique  $\mu$ Mod effect re-creates the micro shifted and vocal chorus sounds. VoicePro also comes with voice-optimized versions of timeless TC reverbs and delays.

Sound designers and music producers will benefit from a transducer algorithm that will make telephones, radios and other quality reducing devices sound better. Adding the VoicePro is easy with 24/96 analog and multi-channel digital I/O. This application-based user interface centres around a 320 x 250 colour TFT display and has 250 factory presets and four assignable parameters for instant tweaking.

For more information, contact: Power Group Ltd., 6415 Northwest Dr., #22, Mississauga, ON L4V 1X1 (905) 405-1229, FAX (905) 405-1885, sales@power-music.com, www.power-music.com.



## Dynacord M15



Dynacord has introduced an addition to the Cobra Line, the multipurpose powered loudspeaker, Dynacord M15.

It's complete with an active 2-way full-range cabinet with a 15-inch Electro-Voice EVX-155 for the LF range and a 3-inch Electro-Voice ND6 voice coil, neodymium for the HF range.

This loudspeaker is equipped with Integrated Power Tracking Class H amps with 460 W for the LF and 140 W for the HF range. A slide switch allows you to select between "Full-range" and "Mid-high" operation modes for monitor or delay applications. This design helps reduce thermal power loss, lower power consumption and reduces the overall weight. It is also convection cooled which kills that annoying fan noise.

The amps have a combined output of 600 watts and peak sound pressure levels in excess of 128dB/1 m, achieved with minimal distortion.

Providing wide horizontal coverage with its 80 x 55 degree coverage pattern, it projects twice as far as average passive enclosures and the coverage pattern is wide enough to avoid any alignment problems.

The Dynacord M15 also has Voice Coil Tracking Protection for maximum SPL with top operational safety. It also has a safe and lockable PowerCon mains connection and through socket.

This loudspeaker has an asymmetric enclosure design for supreme PA and monitor applications. It has an extensive range of flying accessories with integrated rigging rails. Because the frequency response is linear, the M15 gives less feedback.

For more information, contact: Telex Communications, Inc., 12000 Portland Ave., S., Burnsville, MN 55337 (800) 392-3497, www.dynacord.com.

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# Tapco Blend 6 Mixer



Tapco introduced the first model in the affordable, compact mixer Blend family, the Blend 6.

This high performance premium analog mixer doesn't have to sacrifice quality for affordability. The Mackie engineering team designed the 6-channel analog recording and live sound mixer and provided it with real-world features.

The features in the compact mixer package are two high-headroom, low-noise mic preamps, two mono mic/line/instrument channels, two stereo line channels, a two-band EQ per channel, 48 V Phantom power, two aux sends, an eight-segment LED metering and separate phones and control room levels.

For more information, contact: SF Marketing Inc., 6161 Cypihot St., St. Laurent, PQ H4S 1R3 (514) 856-1919, FAX (514) 856-1920, info@sfm.ca, www.sfm.ca.

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\*The model on image shot is RGA121 VLF.

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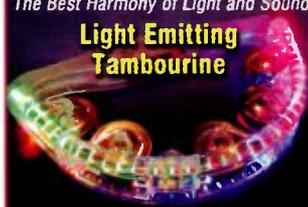
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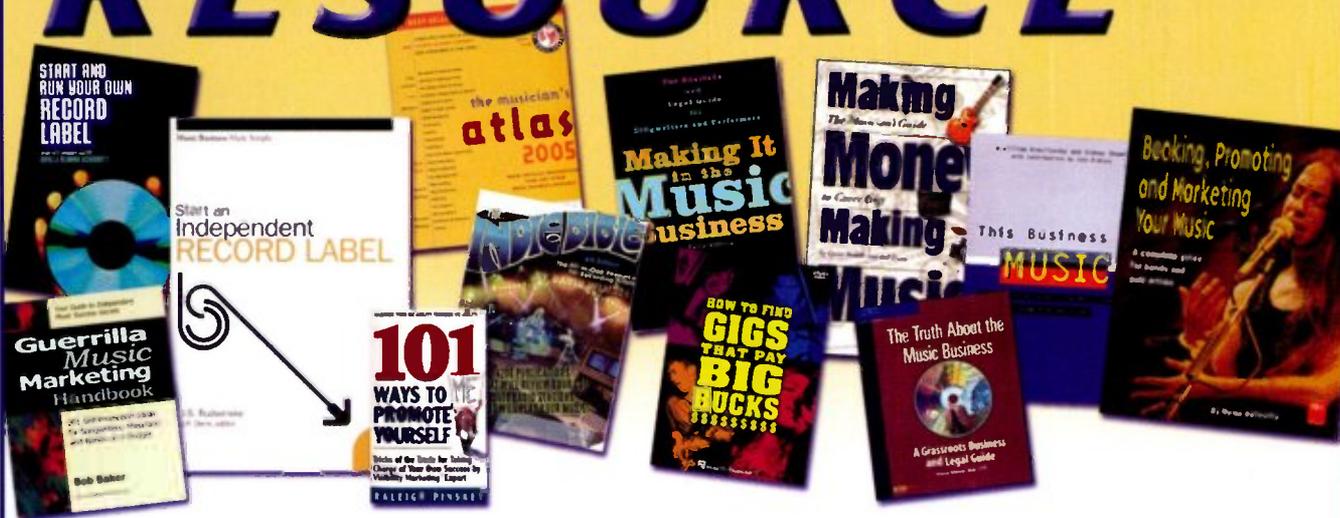
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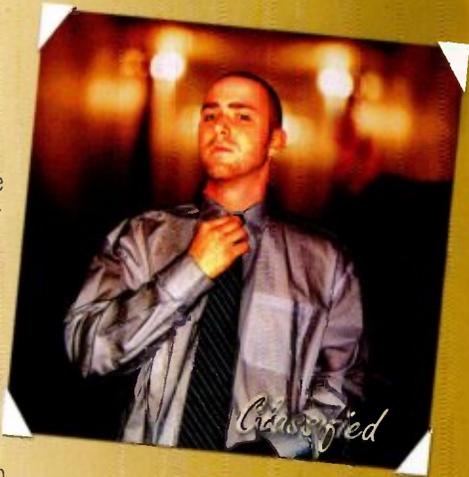
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# SHOWCASE

by Karen Bliss

**Who:** Classified  
**Where:** Halifax, NS  
**What:** De-Classify  
**Contact:** Urbnet Records, (647) 271-7736, info@urbnetrecords.com.

Halifax rapper Classified's latest album, *Boy-Cott-In The Industry* (on Urbnet/Outside Music), features cover art of picketers carrying such signs as "What Happened To Hip-Hop?" and "Pop Is Not The Answer." Inside, a bunch of guys are up against the wall. That's likely how most Canadian hip-hop artists feel. It just ain't easy. Not much has changed the past decade. It's been the same names dominating the domestic urban scene, with the odd breakthrough, usually given a leg up by fellow MCs. On what is calculated as Classified's tenth release, the MC, songwriter and producer (real name: Luke Boyd) gets help from Juno-winning Choclair and former Columbia artist Royce 5'9. Also guesting are J-Bru, Spesh K, Jay Bizzy, and Classified's brother, Mic Boyd. The video for "5th Element" received immediate play on MuchMusic. A long time in the hip-hop game, Classified has delivered an exceptional work, self-produced at his own HalfLife Studios. He rhymes about a lot of the usual stuff (the state of hip-hop, crap-hop etc.), but his music has soul, due in part to the addition of live instruments. He played keyboards, and brought in guitarists and bassists, and the cool touch of violin courtesy of Sean Kemp. "It's Just My Opinion", "Listen" and particularly "No Mistake" and "Problemz" are all accessible. This guy should be De-Classified.



**Who:** Eden Ants  
**Where:** Toronto, ON  
**What:** perfect picnic pop  
**Contact:** (416) 428-6958, info@edenants.com, www.edenants.com.

Produced by ex-Joydrop member Tom McKay, Eden Ants six-song EP, *hole.punch.litter*, invade pop territory with some adventure. From the quirky plea of "Moving Out" to the standouts (and potential hits) of killer stomps "Advertisements" and "Some Hope For Us", the band is all-out fun. Comprised of main songwriter and vocalist Adymm Ender; his brother, Rob Ender on guitar; Ryan MacMaster on drums; and Joe False on bass, Eden Ants have been at it since 2000, and with a name like theirs have actually gigged at family picnics, not to mention underground raves and a burlesque events. But they've been hitting the "normal" live circuit too. It was actually at a NXNE barbecue last year that Eden Ants met McKay and gave him a copy of its 2002 EP, *Losing Touch*, which reportedly sold out of all 500 units. McKay, whose production credits include Palomino and The Venafrò Cafe Orchestra in Glasgow, Scotland, began working with the band in Toronto in December. They cut the six songs at Rob Ender's KingSpin Studios, a residential loft where neighbours weren't too pleased with the "noise," and then McKay then asked his friend, New York-based Mark Plati (David Bowie, The Cure, Prince), to mix it. Call it perfect picnic pop, gay and cool at the same time.



**Who:** The Brat Attack  
**Where:** Winnipeg, MB  
**What:** the future belongs to them  
**Contact:** Underground Operations, 5 Cameron St., Toronto, ON M5T 2H1 stacey@undergroundoperations.com, www.undergroundoperations.com.

From *This Beauty Comes Chaos And Mayhem* is the third full-length from this sociopolitical punk act, but the first featuring 17-year-old singer Chanelle Birks. The album kicks off with fierce rolling drums that quite literally build anticipation for the raging anthem "One Solution [Chaos & Mayhem]", not to mention the rest of the CD. Her voice is more prominent on the uncompromising "Call To Action", while "Pro-Life Murders" has a snarky pop feel. Considering this was recorded when producer Mark "London" Spicoluk (of Closet Monster) was deathly ill, the whirlwind session sounds phenomenal. Spicoluk, who owns the label Underground Operations to which The Brat Attack signed, co-produced the tracks with Steve Rizun in their respective basements (U.O. headquarters in Toronto and the "basement of horrors" in Brampton, ON). The band is led by co-vocalist, guitarist and main songwriter Dave Zegareac, himself the founder of 3rd Generation Records, which put out The Brat Attack's first two CDs, 2002's *One Revolution Per Minute* and 2004's *Destruction Sound System*. Both had different female singers. Now with Birks joining Zegareac, Jonny Perrin (drums), Billy Bigford (guitar, vocals), and Matt Mayor (bass, vocals), and relentlessly hitting the road, the band will surely eke out a greater underground following – mainstream, if given some breaks. This is a call to action.



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

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