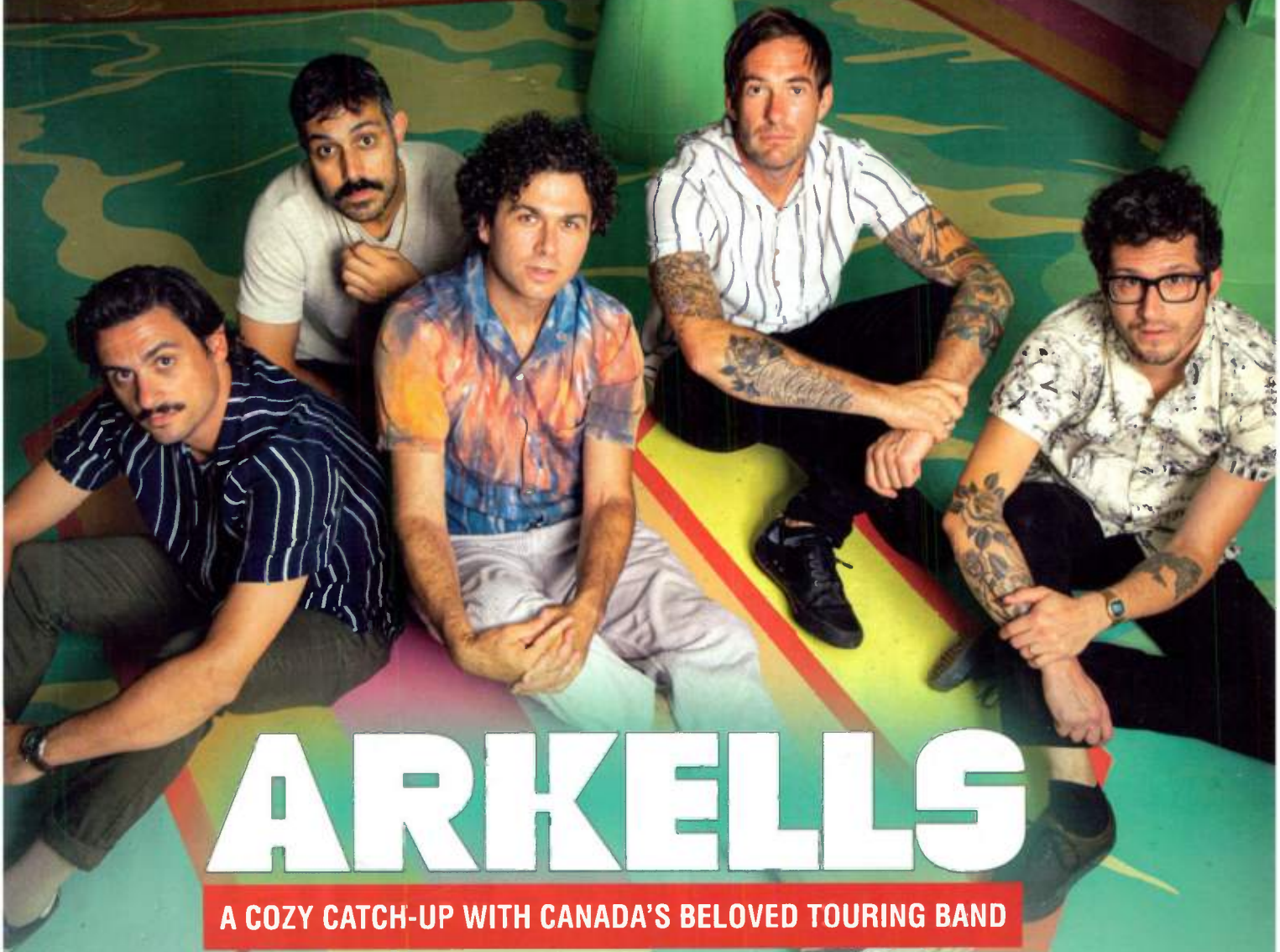


SELLING VINYL: DOES IT MAKE FINANCIAL SENSE FOR INDIE ARTISTS?



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By Michael Raine

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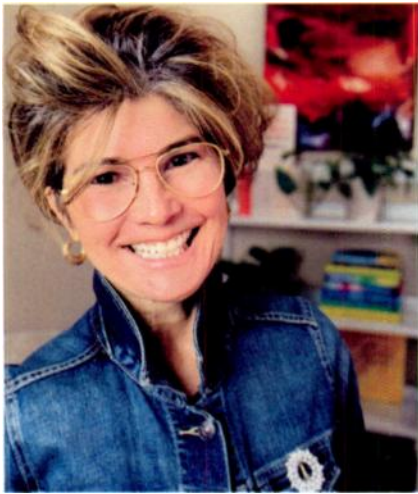


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It's Hard Out there for Musicians: What Can You Do to Take Care of Yourself?

By Catherine Harrison, Board Chair, Over the Bridge (www.overthebridge.org)



Imagine there's no music. It's pretty hard to do. Music is everywhere, providing background and context to our lives, our entertainment, our celebrations, our miseries. As humans, it connects us. It's critical that as the people who make the music, we take care of our health, mentally and physically, so we can continue contributing to one of our species' most valuable life forces.

As far as mental health goes, there are (at least) two things at play:

First, COVID-19 has brought stress to even the steadiest among us. It's rocking our "normal" status quo and cracking apart our certainty, autonomy, social connectedness, and possibly even our "identity," which includes the things that make us feel comfortable and safe. The music industry has been one of the hardest hit sectors. There were no venues, no gigs, no income, no side hustles. And often, no understanding from the mainstream population.

Musicians may be experiencing some sense of shame, guilt, responsibility, worry, possibly helplessness, as we wait for "normal" to return. Even as gigs and tours are booked, venues open up, and audiences gleefully gobble up tickets for live music again, deal-

ing with the rollercoaster of on-again-off-again gigs, along with residual "other life stuff," is tough to manage. And, although there are more examples of influencers sharing their own challenges in the media these days, there is still tremendous stigma associated with mental health and substance use, and this makes reaching out and asking for help feel like an insurmountable task.

Second, musicians might be particularly susceptible to the challenges of maintaining mental wellness. The simple act of expressing oneself through writing and performing comes with inherent risk of acceptance or rejection. Additionally, I'm sure many *Canadian Musician* readers can relate to the upside-down work environment they inhabit. A musician's time often vacillates from solo time to party time, and both ends of that spectrum can exacerbate depression and anxiety. Being a performer doesn't necessarily mean you're an extrovert. Often, the associated activities required of a performer (interviews, promo activities, touring life, etc.) can be stressful for introverts. It's also an incredible high to perform for others and share in the communion of musical experience. Coming down off that high, on a regular basis, can make it challenging to find balance and recover quickly enough to do it all over again. Sometimes, when not performing, you chase that elusive high through other less healthy means.

Also, at work venues and after events, many musicians find that substance use is encouraged and even expected. In terms of schedule, the world runs from nine to five, but not you, which makes it tough to get good quality sleep, regular physical activity, and healthy eating. Crucially, paycheques are often/mostly erratic, offering little stability and no benefits. Ever heard the "wanna work for exposure/free pizza and beer?" compensation package? Stressful to be both underappreciated and behind the eight ball financially. And while at home, there is often the feeling of being misunderstood and underappreciated by family, friends, and community.

Is any of this resonating with you? If so, what can you do to take care of yourself?

First, get aware of your own mental fit-

ness. You might consider journaling, talking to others, reading, learning a mindfulness practice. Find actions that support your mental fitness and commit to practicing them on a regular basis. Learn to manage distractions and negative self-talk chatter. Be present. Cultivate empathy. Practice gratitude and compassion – for yourself and others. Learn equanimity (which means, as Paul said, "Let it be.")

If you don't know how to do these things, that's okay. Now is the time to begin to learn. And just because you learn these skills, and practice these skills, doesn't mean you won't feel the negative stress and pressures anymore, or you won't have bad days. It just means you can weather the storm(s) in a more healthful and balanced way, and support others to do the same.

One upside of this "virtual" world is that there are tremendous opportunities to share and receive information, knowledge, and expertise. If you don't know where to start, reaching out to a peer support organization like Over the Bridge can be a great first step.

Founder and program director, Ace Piva, says, "Peer support is important because it gives you a non-judgmental and supportive safe space to talk about what's going on. You don't have to change your language for people to understand where you're coming from. You are welcomed into a group where everyone gets it. Musicians often burn the candle at both ends. We are there for each other."

Creating music is a valuable and incredibly cathartic release for emotional pain and suffering, and for processing the full human experience, with all its trials and tribulations. Get it out on the page, through your instrument(s), alone or with your band. Transform the energy into something meaningful and transcendent. And connect to others so you can learn to improve your mental fitness now and in the long run.

Over the Bridge is a Canadian non-profit dedicated to mental health and recovery in the music community. To donate, go to www.overthebridge.org/make-a-donation.

SELLING ALBUMS ON VINYL Is It a Sustainable, Long-Term Revenue Model for Indie Artists?

BY AHMED HAROON

Resurgence in vinyl sales has been a common theme when discussing indie releases on both sides of the Atlantic in the past decade. As per stats published by MRC Data, a corporate agency that compiles metrics for music and entertainment enterprises, vinyl album sales surpassed CD sales for the first time in 2020 and continued to do so in 2021. This is a given considering, during the pandemic, live music has suffered heftily. This has meant that music consumption has shifted towards digital and physical music sales including streaming.

Often for many music fans, motivation for buying vinyl has varied largely. Many want to support their favourite artists or bands, which have lost their major sources of income during lockdowns. Others want to buy vinyl releases for the sake getting a collector's item.

According to a poll specialist research company, ICM Unlimited, 48% of respondents who buy vinyl don't even play their records. Many don't even own a turntable. For music fans, the experience of buying vinyl is mostly about owning something material and physical that symbolizes ownership of a piece of their favourite artist's musical legacy. For many, the visual appeal of the artwork, lyrics, or liner notes that come as part of vinyl packages and associated booklets (if any), hold significant value.

What first seemed to be a novelty poster trend brought on by middle-aged music lovers, who only seemed to want to buy their cherished, classic albums for the love of the vinyl medium, has gone onto surpass any cynicism from music industry experts. As per another report from MRC, the 2021 mid-year data shows how buying patterns for albums have been in an overall decline, however, sales of vinyl LPs shot through the roof in 2021 compared to 2020 with an overall change of 53%. Though, that undertone of mistrust and fragility from critics for the vinyl-selling boom has never truly dissipated.



PHOTO: EGLE P. FROM PHILABAY

LOGISTICS, TIMELINE & SALES

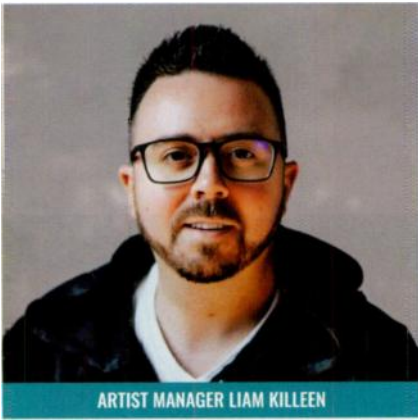
Pre-pandemic, the average time to get vinyl pressed was seven to eight weeks. The process requires making sure that the final masters for any recorded music do not have any distortion, skips, or errors. Before any test presses are produced, lathes are tested to check whether they are in working order to cut vinyl samples aptly. The music is then recorded onto lacquer discs in real time. They are then dipped into molten metals; the resulting metal sheeting is removed to produce a 12.5-in. metal stamper. This is instrumental in creating test copies for vinyl to make sure the mix and the quality of the music is intact before a full production run is agreed to with the plant.

Liam Killeen is an artist manager at Coalition Music for indie acts such as Ubiquitous Synergy Seeker (USS), The Tea Party, and The Proud Sons. He's been consistently exploring new ways for helping indie artists have sustainable careers. So, he's well aware of the perks, challenges, and difficulties of releasing music on vinyl and notes how the pandemic has upended the release schedules for his acts.

"March 13th, 2020, is a day of infamy for most of us in this industry, because that's when it stopped. That was the last day that I saw any person to the left and to the right of me. Just so happened that USS delivered their final record to the labels. We were working with a vinyl manufacturer at that time that was like, 'Hey, we're at eight weeks; best case scenario. We're 12 weeks; worst case scenario.' And then there was part of me that was like, 'Oh, three months? That's crazy!'" he recalls.

Of course, Killeen points out, when the shutdown began and concerts ended, artists began to search for new ways to monetize their catalogs. For many, this meant releasing albums on vinyl for the first time, or releasing colour vinyl and other special editions. This coincided with the pressing plants having to operate with skeleton staff because of social distancing and other safety measures.

"At a certain point last year, I was sending those records to the same providers and that whole 'eight to 12 weeks' became 12 to 16, or 16 to 20 weeks. We're now looking at probably 24 weeks, and I actually just put in a vinyl order on Monday for 200 7-in. records and I



ARTIST MANAGER LIAM KILLEEN



ORATES TAISHI FUKUYAMA

was told 34 to 40 weeks! Plants were understaffed because they had to be, but production had to keep going. And then it's like, well, there are people that make the stampers and there are only so many of those people making stampers, and there are only so many lathes to cut these records. And it's not like they're being produced year over year, and it's like, 'Well, we're just going to bump up production of those.' We're working with what we've got. So, it had to bottleneck at some point, and it's bottlenecked now."

Taishi Fukuyama, the chief marketing officer for vinyl crowdfunding platform and distributor Orates says: indie artists are now getting wait times of up to eight or nine months, and plants are often asking to pay upfront for a minimum pressing of 300 or 500 copies. "You're kind of forced to make a financial commitment upfront, and also, that process will require a lot of back and forth on like, 'Well, what if I did a book and coloured vinyl with a matte finish?' What are the actual options that the plant offers?"

Fukuyama says that indie artists have to do their "due diligence" and make a business decision: specifically, whether it's actually cost-effective to make a lumpsum investment towards an initial 500-copy vinyl print run; whether it's important to set up an ecommerce store or get warehouse space for storage; how the latter are going to be integrated, etc.

He itemizes a list of questions for DIY artists before going for a vinyl release: "Have you set up a warehouse to store them and does the warehouse integrate with the ecommerce cart? Or have you at least set up a storefront, and who is going to ingest those records at the warehouse to set it up as a SKU there? And then, what is your return policy, and who's going to handle customers for those shipments that go out of the warehouse? Or if you decide to have the 500 records delivered to yourself, every time you get a sale through your website, are you going to be the one that goes to the post office

and write out shipping labels one at a time?"

In terms of how many sales are needed for artists to recoup the investment, Killeen explains that an average vinyl copy will cost around \$14 to produce, and artists can sell them anywhere from \$25 to \$40, depending on the size of an artist's brand or fanbase. These markups can be set up based on how exclusive an artist wants their vinyl releases to be, and whether they can absorb the costs of marketing, producing, holding stock, and selling the stock.

"How many grams [does it weigh]? Is it clear? Is it a custom colour? Is it a splatter? How crazy is your packaging? And at that point, if you look at it, are you still going to sell the record for \$25? You know, there's the cost of running your store, there's the cost of the manpower to actually pick and pack it, and then take that to the post office, and how often are you doing that? Are we boosting all of our posts on social media?" Killeen says.

In Killeen's experience, an indie artist needs to know they can sell at least 100 vinyl copies for it to start making any sense. Anything under 100 units and artists are referred to companies who only handle small print runs. "If you're doing under 100 copies, you're paying upwards of \$26 to \$40 per piece. So, at that point in time, if you're only able to sell those for \$15 or \$20, you're operating at a loss."

A production run of 200 to 300 units is a great starting point for burgeoning acts who want to use vinyl as part of their merchandising strategy to get fan engagement and bring new fans to their online stores. "The great part about vinyl is that it is highly shareable. It's very Instagram-able, and if you have great artwork and a beautiful disc on it, it's likely people will share that and maybe you're going to get people going back to your site to see more about you. It's just another form of promotion," Killeen adds.

In terms of where indie artists are selling their vinyl records – online stores versus live shows – Killeen reckons it's a 70/30 split. "De-

pending on the kind of artists that you are, if you're folk or Americana, if you're a little more shoegaze, and it's more of a mellow crowd; absolutely, I think that you would see your live merch numbers do great in that realm. But if you've got something where it's a super energetic show, it's a big drinking crowd, things like that, [a fan] is not walking into the door thinking, 'I need to have this collector's item on my person all night.' You're going to do better with a toque, with a snapback [hat], with a t-shirt, with your \$10 sort of item. I've found, personally, within a lot of the alternative and rock and hip-hop genre – which is where I'm primarily living these days – live is a tough go. These are either audiophiles or they want it for the bragging rights."

CHALLENGES ON VINYL PRODUCTION & COVID IMPACT

Global issues pertaining to supply chain problems brought on by the pandemic, shortage of raw materials, and a limited number of vinyl makers all over the world has now precipitated the demand and backlog of orders to a breaking point. According to *Mixmag*, an incidental fire at Apollo Masters in 2020, which is responsible for more than 70% of the world's lacquer production, diverted global demand to MDC, a small-scale Japanese lacquer producer. On top of that, there has been a global shortage of PVC (poly-vinyl chloride), a material largely produced in Texas, due to severe cold weather spells.

At the moment, demands from major labels to re-press classic back catalogues onto vinyl has driven some labels to cancel plans for vinyl releases for new or developing artists. This has also resulted in the pressing plants giving higher priority to large-volume orders from bigger artists. Reportedly, Adele's latest album pushed back the schedule for many releases because Sony pre-ordered more than 500,000 vinyl copies from already-burdened vinyl plants for a Nov. 19th release date. As well, according to *Mixmag*, ABBA's new album jammed up queues for vinyl presses from other mainstream acts such as Ed Sheeran and Coldplay for the Christmas period.

There may be a dire need to open up new plants around the world to fulfill the current vinyl demand once logistics and supply are restored. It's not yet certain, though, how long the surge in vinyl demand will last – but from what the current evidence points to, indie acts have a lot to consider with respect to timing and preparing their album releases on vinyl.

Ahmed Haroon is an Editorial & Content Assistant at Canadian Musician.

ASSOCIATION UPDATE

WOMEN IN MUSIC CANADA

Women in Music Canada is inviting the hundreds of women and underrepresented gender identity artists and industry professionals across Canada to register for its new, official **Women in Music Canada Directory**. The aim is for the directory to be a valuable resource not only to identify and connect with other women and underrepresented gender identity professionals across the country, but also a way to expand one's professional network and gain more career opportunities. Directory registration was publicly launched on Nov. 29, 2021.

Women in Music Canada is a registered non-profit organization and one of the largest music industry associations in Canada. It's dedicated to fostering gender equality in the music industry through the support and advancement of female-identifying professionals and creatives at every stage of their career. The goal is to strengthen the social-economic balance of the music industry by providing professional development, support, and resources for the community.

For more information, contact WIMC: info@womeninmusic.ca, www.womeninmusic.ca.

MUSIC CANADA

In late November, Music Canada CEO Patrick Rogers joined his counterparts from Italy, Germany, the United States, Australia, France, and Great Britain, for a livestreamed panel discussion on the key trends of the global music ecosystem, and how they are shaping the future of the global music sector.

In a panel hosted by Enzo Mazza, chair of Federazione Industria Musicale Italiana (FIMI), the directors and CEOs of some of the national music market groups shared their international perspectives on key trends in the global music ecosystem.

"Canada recently reached a new streaming milestone," Rogers said. "Last week, MRC Data reported that Canadians had streamed over 2 billion streams a week for the first time. This puts Canada in a very positive streaming position for the size of our country. We think this is a great

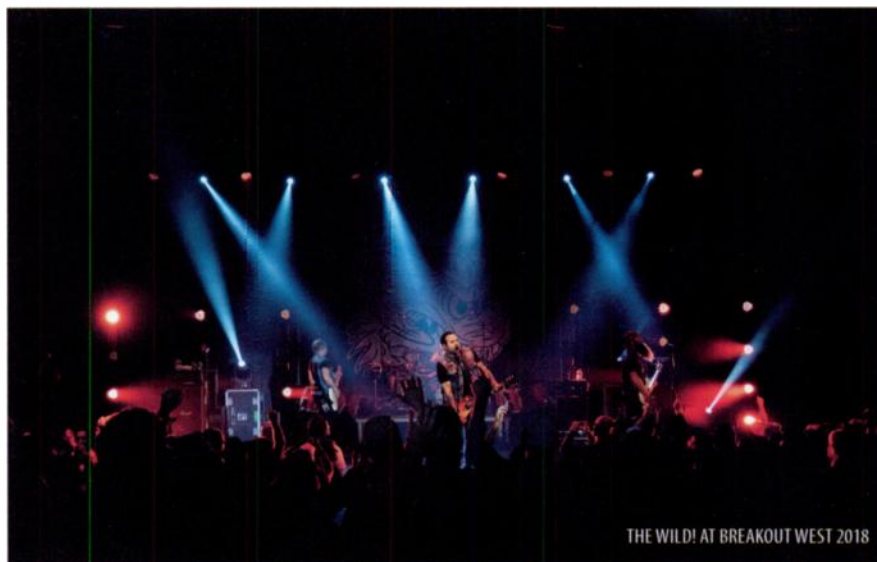


PHOTO: ARNON DESLIVA

number to highlight, because it captures: all licensed services, all languages, all size of artists - big and small. And most importantly, it's 2 billion a week. It's such a huge number that I really enjoy sharing this with policymakers, as we try to get our heads around it."

In addition to Rogers, the panel featured insights from Frances Moore (CEO of IFPI), Florian Drücke (Chairman and CEO, BVMI), Mitch Glazier (Chairman and CEO, RIAA), Annabelle Herd (CEO, ARIA), Alexandre Lasch (Director General, SNEP), and Geoff Taylor (Chief Executive, BPI).

The full panel is available to watch on-demand via Milano Music Week's YouTube channel.

CIMA & MUSICONTARIO

At its Annual General Meeting, the Canadian Independent Music Association (CIMA) elected its **new board of directors**. CIMA members re-elected incumbents Shauna de Cartier (Six Shooter Records), Sandy Pandya (ArtHaus Music/Pandyamonium), Kieran Roy (Arts & Crafts Productions Inc), Kesi Smyth (604 Records), and Iain Taylor (Cadence Music Group) to three-year terms. As well, Amanda Rheaume (Ishkode Records) and Jake Gold (The Management Trust Ltd.) were re-elected to one-year terms. Newly elected one-year term board members include Gourmet Délice (Bon-

sound), Meagan Davidson (Tiny Kingdom Music), Susan de Cartier (Starfish Entertainment), and Daniel Turcotte (Monstercat).

These directors will be joining incumbents Tim Potocic (Sonic Unyon Records), David "Click" Cox (CLK Creative Works), Gord Dimitrieff (Aporia Records), Simon Mortimer-Lamb (Netzwerk Music Group), and Justin West (Secret City Records).

The incumbents will be completing their three-year terms (2020-2023) under CIMA's modernized governance rules. Last year, CIMA members approved bylaw changes that will see the board of directors transition to three-year terms for directors over the next three years. The board will now comprise 15 elected directors. In addition, new rules give the Board the authority to appoint two new directors to one-year terms. The purpose of these new appointments is to give the board the flexibility to add directors to balance ethnic or cultural diversity, gender, skillsets, geography, and/or genres of music.

For more information, contact CIMA: 416-485-3152, www.cimamusic.ca.

WESTERN CANADIAN MUSIC ALLIANCE

The Western Canadian Music Alliance has announced that it will be holding a second **BreakOut West** in 2022. This newly-announced edition of the music

festival and conference will be held in Calgary from Sept. 28 to Oct. 2, 2022. The 19th annual BreakOut West in Winnipeg, now scheduled for Feb. 2-6, 2022, was previously scheduled for the fall of 2021 and moved due to the ongoing uncertainty surrounding COVID-19.

"As a past president with BreakOut West and now working with Alberta Music as interim executive director, I couldn't be more excited to have the event coming to Calgary," says Christine Rogerson. "Following the tough years our industry has seen recently, we are keen to enliven the music community in Calgary, bringing original, live music safely to venues and fans."

In partnership with Tourism Calgary, the Province of Alberta, and the National Music Centre, BreakOut West will return to the city after having previously celebrated there in 2004 and 2013. Venues throughout Calgary's downtown core and in the Music Mile will welcome musicians from across western Canada and internationally.

For more information, go to www.breakoutwest.ca.

MUSIC PEI

Sounds Just Fine, a company in the U.K. operated by music industry pro Neil Pearson, have been contracted to deliver **Music PEI's Artist Mentorship Program**. Pearson has decades of experience in a variety of roles in the music industry, with a particular focus on artist and project development. He has worked with a number of international artists, including Canaanians Rose Cousins, The Small Glories, Tomato/Tomato, Dave Gunning, and more.

The program will accept 12 artists, and each artist will have one month to complete the program. It will include: three one-hour sessions over a one-month period (video conferencing or phone) in addition to email communication; help setting goals and targets with individual artists depending on where the artist is in their career and release schedule; and help identifying and supporting areas of need and importance.

Each artist will have different needs, but areas anticipated to be covered could include: audience development and growth; release strategy; how to sustain and build momentum between releases; career strategy and planning; building a team; building relationships and networking; and creative development and support.

There is no fee for this program, and artists will be selected by a jury in collabora-

tion with Sounds Just Fine. Artists must be exporting or export-ready and a permanent resident of Prince Edward Island.

To apply, go to Bit.ly/peisoundsjustfine.



THE HUNTER BROTHERS ARE UP FOR TWO SASKATCHEWAN MUSIC AWARDS

SASKMUSIC

On Dec. 2nd, SaskMusic announced the nominees of the 2021 **Saskatchewan Music Awards**. The awards are intended to honour excellence and celebrate the achievements of Saskatchewan's music industry members over the past year. The 2021 awards event will take place in a streaming format on Jan. 20, 2022, via SaskMusic's social media pages. Performers for the virtual event will be announced at a later date. The announcement also included the longlist for The Best Saskatchewan Albums of 2021.

The SMAs are being held in conjunction with the Very Prairie Music Summit, an educational event for the Saskatchewan music industry, which will also be held online from Jan. 21-23.

The Hunter Brothers are up for Country Artist of the Year and also have two songs nominated for Single of the Year, "Been A Minute" and "Diamonds." Jess Moskaluke is also up for Single, Video, and Country Artist of the Year.

For more information and the list of nominees, go to www.saskmusicawards.com.

ALBERTA MUSIC

Through the support of the Edmonton Arts Council, **Alberta Music Cities Convention** tickets are being made available to Edmonton-based musicians and music professionals at a discounted price. Tickets for eligible attendees are set at \$10 for an online ticket and \$30 for an in-person ticket (a total of 90% in savings). Music Cities Events is also subsidizing the ticket cost for all other artists and industry in Alberta

outside Edmonton at the same rate. The event is taking place in Canada for the first time from Feb. 9-11, 2022, in Edmonton and Calgary.

The Music Cities Convention is the biggest global event exploring the use and importance of music in the development of cities all around the world. The event provides a stage for the latest best practices to be presented and problems debated by thought leaders from the worlds of city planning, music, economic development, tourism, academia, events, property, non-profit, and private/public bodies.

To access this program, fill out the form at bit.ly/MusicCitiesConv.



IAMTHELIVING PLAYING MUSIC BC'S LET'S HEAR IT! LIVE

MUSIC BC

Applications for **Let's Hear It! Live** – Music BC's regional concert series and emerging artist showcase – are now open for 2022. The series will offer a chance for emerging artists from British Columbia to connect with fans and members of the music industry.

Applications from all genders, ages, cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, and other measures of diversity are highly encouraged, with three different artists being selected by a jury of local industry representatives for each showcase. Now in its fourth year, the Let's Hear It! Live program has featured over 55 emerging and unsigned artists from around BC, with concerts streaming from Vancouver, Kelowna, and Victoria.

Applications accepted on a rolling deadline. For more information and to apply, go to www.musicbc.org/programs/lets-hear-it-live.



PHOTO: PEXELS FROM PIXABAY



New CLMA Website Breaks Down Concert Regulations by Province

The Canadian Live Music Association (CLMA) has launched a new website designed to help musicians, agents, promoters, venues, and others navigate the constantly-changing COVID regulations for live events in each province/territory.

The website can be found at Canadianlivemusic.ca/concertguide and provides a centralized breakdown of all available information, designed to make regulations easily digestible. CLMA notes that the webpage is based on available information and says to still consult provincial regulations as this information is subject to change and should not be taken as legal advice.

The website is populated by CLMA staff with help from its membership. For each province, it provides a clear answer to common questions about capacity restrictions, mask and vaccine requirements, whether standing and dancing are allowed, if reservations are required, etc. On the homepage is a link to each province's COVID-19 protocol website should someone require further clarification.

For more information, go to www.canadianlivemusic.ca/concertguide.

Canadians Streamed 2 Billion+ Songs in One Week for the First Time

On Nov. 17, 2021, Music Canada and MRC Data (formerly Nielsen SoundScan) revealed that Canada had hit a significant milestone in music listening. For the first time, Canadians listened to more than 2 billion audio streams in a single week.

"With the Canadian audio streaming market currently up over 12% year over year from 2020, we certainly expect to see more record weeks in the future," says Rob Jonas, CEO of P-MRC Data.

"Two billion on-demand audio streams in a week is a huge accomplishment for Canada's music marketplace," adds Patrick Rogers, CEO of Music Canada. "This number includes streams from licensed services like Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon, and TIDAL. These services provide music fans with on-demand access to more than 70 million licensed songs — a level of access that is leading to more music being played and consumed than ever before."

When looking deeper into these streaming numbers, pop, rock, rap, country, and alternative rock had the highest volume increases over the past few years.



SOCAN Launches Redesigned Website

Canadian performing rights organization SOCAN launched its redesigned public website in December, which its creators say offers a more modern look, easier navigation, and a more intuitive, informative, and user-friendly experience.

SOCAN says the primary goal of the redesign was to give its members, licensed businesses, and partners an easier way to join and/or learn about the organization.

"We wanted a website that was easier to use – a place where visitors can find the information they're looking for quickly and easily. The needs of music creators, publishers, music users, and our partners are varied, and now they can navigate quickly to the tools, resources, and benefits that are most important to them," says project lead and communications and marketing manager Nicole Van Severen.

The site also offers a company FAQ and integrated content from *Words & Music* magazine as well as greater member visuals across the website. The new site is optimized for all devices and mobile platforms.

For more information go to www.socan.com.

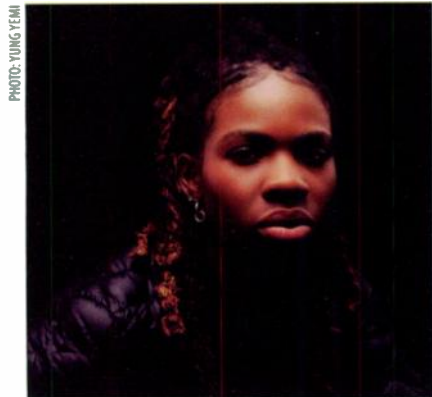
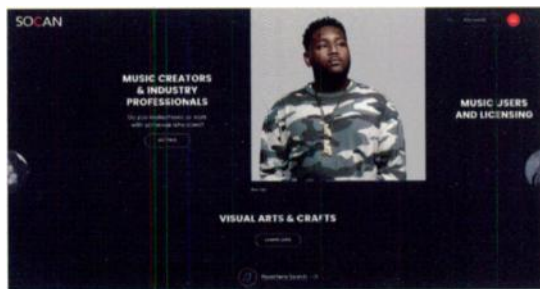


PHOTO: YOUNG YEMAI
HAVIAH MIGHTY

Haviah Mighty Launches \$10K Giveaway for Black-Owned Businesses

In January 2022, acclaimed Canadian rapper and producer Haviah Mighty launched her Black-Owned Business Giveaway, which sees her donating \$10,000 amongst a diverse network of Black-owned businesses to help them further expand and thrive. She invited entrepreneurs to pitch their business ideas – both existing and future, big or small – for an opportunity to win up to \$1,000 each to support their journey.

Finalists have had the chance to pitch their business ideas to Mighty on Instagram Live in January, with winners being selected soon.

The initiative arrives in alignment with Mighty's latest mixtape, *Stock Exchange*, and its messages about value systems of both economic and creative forms.

"I'm a Black entrepreneur myself and I'm so excited to be able to hopefully contribute to the scene a little bit. We need, as a Black community, to thrive. We need to work together and I'm really excited to see your initiatives, your ideas, your visions, and support them as much as I can," Mighty said in her announcement on Instagram.

An advertisement for TONewoodAMP. On the left is a vertical image of a wooden acoustic guitar. The background is a solid orange color. The text reads: 'NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: GOOD VIBES' in large, stylized, white letters with a blue and purple shadow effect. Below that, in bold black text: 'ACOUSTIC EFFECTS NO AMP REQUIRED'. Further down, in smaller black text: '#1 AND ONLY VIBRATION TECHNOLOGY DEVICE FOR ACOUSTIC GUITARS' and 'MAGNETICALLY ATTACHED · EASY INSTALL, NO TOOLS'. A quote from Mike Dawes: '"Every acoustic player should have one." MIKE DAWES, fingerstyle master'. Below the quote is a QR code and the text: 'SCAN TO WATCH MIKE'S DEMO OR VISIT US AT TONEWOODAMP.COM/DEMO'. At the bottom is the TONewoodAMP logo (a red 'W' in a square) and the brand name 'TONEWOODAMP'. Social media icons for Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are at the very bottom.



London Becomes First Canadian City to Receive 'UNESCO City of Music' Designation

The City of London, ON, in conjunction with UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), has been designated a UNESCO City of Music. It is the first Canadian city to receive this designation.

"This designation reaffirms that London is an international hub for music and culture - home to incredibly talented artists, songwriters, producers, sound engineers, venue and festival operators, and world-renowned music education programs," says London Mayor Ed Holder. "We are a community with deep roots in the creative field, and where music is a vital part of our economic and cultural identity. The UNESCO City of Music designation is a recognition of the ongoing commitment and dedication to the development of the music industry by all those involved in the music sector."

London is developing internationally-recognized, award-winning artists, producers, and engineers through post-secondary schools at Western University, Fanshawe College, and the Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology (OIART). London was the second municipality in Canada to approve a Music Strategy (2014) and hired a London Music Industry Development Officer in 2015. The London Music Strategy outlines priorities to advance the city's music sector and the community.

The City of London now joins the 295 existing member cities and 59 other Cities of Music in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network (UCCN) across 90 countries. Members have made a commitment to being part of the network to share best practices, develop partnerships that promote creativity and the cultural industries, strengthen participation in cultural life, and integrate culture in urban development plans. Member cities also commit to leading the charge towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the local level.

**AND THE
WINNER
IS...**



DALLAS SMITH

Dallas Smith, Tenille Townes, Brett Kissel & More Earn 2021 CCMA Awards

In late November in London, ON, Canadian country music was celebrated at the 2021 CCMA Awards, with four artist-category awards handed out at the CCMA Music Industry Awards and eight additional awards handed out during the televised and livestreamed awards show.

Taking home the coveted Entertainer of the Year award for the third consecutive year was Vancouver's Dallas Smith, who also celebrated wins in the Single of the Year and Male Artist of the Year categories and his second consecutive win in the Top Selling Canadian Album of the Year category. Celebrating two artist category wins were Tenille Townes, Brett Kissel, and The Reklaws. Townes held onto the title of Female Artist of the Year for the third consecutive year and saw her album *The Lemonade Stand* secure the Album of the Year title. Kissel won the Fans' Choice honour for his third consecutive year, and added the Video of the Year award. The Reklaws won for Group or Duo of the Year, and also took home a win at the CCMA Music Industry Awards for their collaboration track with Dean Brody that landed the title of Top Selling Canadian Single of the Year. Proving that she is one of Canada's fastest rising stars, Robyn Ottolini not only celebrated her first-ever CCMA Awards performance, she also took home a win for Rising Star.

For a full list of nominees and winners, go to www.cma.org.

Curbside Concerts Canada Wins International Music Cities Award

On November 9, 2021, Music Cities named Curbside Concerts Canada the winner of Best Innovation to Support Musicians or Music in Cities. The Music Cities Awards is a global competition designed to acknowledge and reward the most outstanding applications of music for economic, social, and cultural development in cities and places all around the world. The awards also aim to promote best practices and demonstrate the value of music to the world.

Nominated alongside the U.K.'s Everything Is Music and Denmark/Sweden's Low-Fi Concerts, it is Curbside's eighth industry nomination and first international win.

"We are humbled by this award and the support of the international Music Cities community. It highlights the need and value of arts in our society right now," says Amanda Burgener, co-founder, president, and citizen of the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3. "Thanks to the great work of our Curbside team, we are providing safe income opportunities and living wages for musicians. The music industry has been hit hard in the past year and audiences are eager to enjoy live music again. We are here to help create better access to safely-delivered live music experiences, while contributing to local music economies."

"Our jury was extremely impressed with the work Curbside Concerts is doing and the impact that you are having in your community," says Alice Feltro, events manager at Music Cities Events, part of Sound Diplomacy Group.

The company is in operation from British Columbia to Ontario, nearing its 1,000th gig, and has already paid more than \$250,000 to musicians. For more information, go to www.curbsideconcerts.ca.



ROBERT ALLAN WRIGLEY & DOUBLE TROUBLE PERFORMING A CURBSIDE CONCERT



Seneca

You Love Music, So Do We.

Turn your musical passion and skills into a dynamic career. Seneca's one-year independent musician certificates are the perfect preparation for life as an independent, working musician.

INDEPENDENT MUSIC PRODUCTION

(Start in January, May or September)

INDEPENDENT SONGWRITING AND PERFORMANCE

(Start in September or January)

APPLY TODAY.

senecacollege.ca/music

Nate Swift, Graduate, Independent Music Production

Photo by: Sandra Byars

AND THE AWARD GOES TO...



NEW FRIENDS

New Friends Wins *It's Your Shot* 2021 Competition

Slaight Music has crowned pop rock band New Friends the winner of the *It's Your Shot* 2021 songwriting and artist development competition.

New Friends takes home the grand prize valued at over \$100,000, including recording, distribution, radio promotion, publicity, and marketing support via 2021 label partner Hidden Pony Records, along with a professionally-produced photo shoot, artist biography, and music video. Additionally, they will receive business mentoring, personalized development of their brand, and live performance opportunities in 2022.

"We are extremely honoured and grateful for Slaight Music and the Slaight family's generosity and interest in our group," says New Friends' Conrad Galecki. "As a young aspiring band, it is always such a surreal experience to know that we have support from some of the biggest names in Canadian entertainment."

"This year we received over 700 entries for *It's Your Shot* and the calibre of talent from across Canada is amazing. Congratulations to New Friends; the whole Slaight Music team is very excited to start working with them on their musical journey. We would also like to thank the 25 industry judges that participated in helping us in getting to the finalist decision," says Ali Slaight, manager of artist development and music repertoire for Slaight Music.

New Friends is a pop rock band formed in London, ON, where its members attended Fanshawe College's Music Industry Arts program in 2018.

For more information, go to www.itsyourshot.ca.



SNOTTY NOSE REZ KIDS' CIMVA-WINNING VIDEO FOR "REAL DEADLY"

Deadline Extended for 4th Annual Canadian Independent Music Video Awards

Dropout Entertainment has confirmed the details for the fourth annual Canadian Independent Music Video Awards. This year's winners will receive the biggest cash prize yet, with \$1,500 in cash and more prizes to be announced. Although an in-person event was planned, the awards will now be concluding in an online awards presentation and show.

The nominations deadline has been extended by two weeks and is now 11:59 p.m. EST on Jan. 26th. The only requirements for submission are that the video was released in 2021, the artist must not be signed to one of the three major record labels, and it must be Canadian content as determined by the MAPL system.

Public voting on the videos begins on Jan. 30, 2022. For more information, go to www.dropoutentertainment.ca.



Liona Boyd & Other Music Industry Figures Among Latest Order of Canada Honourees

On Dec. 29, 2021, the Governor General of Canada, Mary Simon, announced 135 new appointments to the Order of Canada. The new appointees include two Companions (C.C.), 39 Officers (O.C.), one honorary Member, and 93 Members (C.M.). Among the

AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

latest honourees are eight individuals who have impacted Canada's music industry.

Liona Boyd has been promoted to an Officer of the Order "for her significant and sustained contributions to Canada's musical landscape as 'The First Lady of Guitar.'"

John Estacio of Edmonton was named as a Member "for his expertise as a composer and for his contributions to Canadian opera."

Yves Lambert of Sainte-Mélanie, QC was named as a Member "for his role in the revival, modernization, and promotion of traditional French-Canadian music."

Andrew Paul MacDonald of Sherbrooke, QC was named as a Member "for his contributions to contemporary Canadian classical, jazz, and electronic music, as an educator, composer, and performer."

Jackie Richardson of Thornhill, ON was made an Honorary Member, by appointment. She is honoured "for her contributions as a Canadian jazz legend, and as a leader and mentor to young performers in her community."

Duff David Mostoway Roman of Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON was named as a Member "for his contributions to the Canadian music industry as a broadcaster and executive, and for his steadfast promotion of Canadian talent."

Reginald Schwager of Toronto was named as a Member "for his indelible contributions to the Canadian jazz scene as a leading guitarist and composer."

Lastly, Ian Tambllyn of Chelsea, QC was made an Officer of the Order "for his enduring contributions as a folk music icon, adventurer and cultural ambassador for Canada."

MARK YOUR CALENDAR...

SOCAN & SCGC Invite Hackers to Revolutionize Cue Sheet Process

The Screen Composers Guild of Canada (SCGC) and SOCAN will host the Cue-Sheet-Palooza Hackathon, which is currently scheduled as an in-person event on Feb. 26-27, 2022, in Toronto. The event will provide software developers and designers, along with music and tech industry mentors, the opportunity to showcase their creativity to "not only rethink, but redefine the cue sheet process for screen composers and music publishers," according to organizers.

Cue sheets are lengthy documents that identify all of the music and its stakeholders in a particular screen production in order to accurately distribute royalties. It's often been a tedious and outdated process. As such, the Cue-Sheet-Palooza Hackathon will seek ways to improve and modernize how royalties are paid to music stakeholders for screen productions.

Developer teams will use sponsor APIs (application program interfaces) or SDKs (software development toolkits) and other technology to create a more efficient, user-friendly payment process for music professionals. Musii, a music industry-focused AI company, and Jaxsta, the largest public-facing, dedicated database of official music credits, are the initial technology partners. SOCAN will also introduce its Cue Sheet

API, which it bills as a "game-changer" for music creators and stakeholders.

Participants of the Hackathon will have the opportunity to work with experienced industry mentors. Teams will compete for cash prizes, and the winning team will also receive registrations for Canadian Music Week 2022, taking place in April.

For more information, go to www.screencomposers.ca/cuesheethackathon.

2022 'Screen X Screen' Music & Tech Conference Scheduled for February

The second annual Screen X Screen online music and technology conference is set to take place from Feb. 8-10, 2022. The event is organized by Darryl Hurs and his Toronto-based team at Indie Week.

Screen X Screen conference programming will emphasize livestreaming, gaming, AI, virtual reality, and tech in the music industry. Keynote speakers and panelists will discuss new and emerging technology and online trends, and how businesses and artists can access this technology and generate income and monetization.

The regular price for conference passes is \$79 CDN. For more information as it becomes available, go to www.screenxscreen.com.

2022 Folk Alliance International Conference Moved from February to May

Both out of caution and as an evasive business viability decision, organizers have announced that the 2022 Folk Alliance International conference and showcase has been postponed for three months from the original February dates to May 18-22, 2022, in Kansas City, MO. It will remain a hybrid event with both in-person and online components.

All current conference registrations will be automatically moved forward to the new dates. FAI will provide a refund to any of the 1,000 current registrants who cannot make the new dates.

"This has been a difficult decision to make, but after working with event safety consultants at Majestic Collaborations, the Kansas City Health Department, the Office of Emergency Management, and the Westin Crown Center Hotel team, we determined this was the most responsible way to proceed," FAI said in an email statement on Dec. 21, 2021.

FAI Executive Director Aengus Finnan says it was a harder and more complex decision than cancelling the 2020 conference. Given the massive surge in COVID cases because of the Omicron variant, the increasing travel restrictions and costs for international attendees, and other stakeholder considerations, Finnan says that moving the dates was the only viable option.

For more information, contact FAI: 816-221-3655, fai@folk.org, www.folk.org.



MO KENNEY AT FAI 2019



Linus Entertainment
 Founder & President
GEOFF KULAWICK

For the full conversation, listen to the Dec. 22, 2021 episode

CM: When you founded Linus Entertainment in 2001, the recorded music industry was at a real low point thanks to Napster. So, why would you launch a new label at that time?

Geoff Kulawick: You know what, times of great change, I think, are actually great times to be entrepreneurial. While all the

major labels were cutting, they were cutting A&R and that left openings to sign artists who were being dropped and who actually had some kind of sales history and a touring career. So, we were able to sign artists like Gordon Lightfoot and Ron Sexsmith that might not have been at the top of the charts or the pinnacle of their careers, but certainly viable artists who create really great music. So, it was a good time to start a label.

Also, being in Canada, there was a lot of great support for independents and we were able to leverage FACTOR and later Radio Starmaker and other funding opportunities to help reduce the risk of investing in emerging and Canadian sound recordings.

CM: What do you make of the debate that happened around Bill C-10 and the idea of extending some form of the CanCon funding and support system into the streaming world?

Kulawick: Absolutely, I really think that if you're a distributor of music or other cultural content in Canada, then you should be contributing to the production of

Canadian content. Otherwise, it'll just be sucked out of the Canadian economy, because it's much cheaper to release and produce recordings and movies that are already funded from the United States or Europe and push it into other markets. If we really want to have a Canadian cultural identity, we need production to continue.

The key here is that these distributors – whether it's Spotify, Netflix, Google, or Facebook – that are distributing cultural content and extracting the majority of ad revenue and subscription revenue from Canadians, then they need to make the contribution to funding content that they don't own. There is no benefit if they produce content with Canadian creators and then own it, because they do it anyway. It just puts independents out of business. So, when these things are looked at from legislators, they need to keep top of mind that contributions from these global tech giants and distributors need to put money into a fund where they don't own the content that they're funding — that is key.



AHI

For the full conversation, listen to the Nov. 24, 2021 episode

CM: As you were saying, your daughter was around one-year-old when you decided to throw yourself into a music career, and you were in your mid-thirties when you signed your first deal with Thirty Tigers. Compared to most, that's

a relatively late stage in life to launch a music career and for things to start taking off for a "new" artist. That's a pretty gutsy move; you must've been pretty driven?

AHI: My wife is more driven than myself; I think I make wild decisions in my life. So like, I dropped out of university and when I did it, I was just sitting in philosophy class and I was just looking at my T.A. and thought, *I don't want to be here anymore*, and I just got up and left in the middle of class [laughs]. Or like, when I backpacked across Ethiopia or Canada, it was just like, "I'm going." So, I make fast decisions and just do it, but I'm also very cautious at the same time. So, I don't do anything until I'm ready to go, and then when I go, it's full steam ahead...

The biggest thing for me is, I always loved music and knew it would be part of my life, I just didn't know how. I didn't ever want my children to ever see me failing, or quitting, or not following my passion. The biggest thing for me when my daughter turned one was just knowing who I was as a person before going out into the industry. I knew who I was as a person and my relationship to the world around me, and not just going out and spewing out music. You know, it's easy to lose yourself in this world no matter what you do – you could be a musician or working at factory or you could be a teacher, it's easy to lose yourself. I always wanted to retain myself and that was more important to me than jumping into the industry.

Listen to new episodes of the *Canadian Musician Podcast* every Wednesday at www.canadianmusicianpodcast.com. All episodes can be found on the website or through Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.





NOTE: The following events are still on the calendar as of press time for this issue, though they may be affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its fallout going forward.

PHOTO: CARAS/PHOTO



Daniel Caesar at the JUNO Awards



Digging Roots at Folk Alliance International

PHOTO: DENNY MEDLEY

The Artisan Guitar Show
Harrisburg, PA
April 8-10, 2022
nofrets@artisanguitarshow.com,
www.artisanguitarshow.com

Canadian Music Week 2022
Toronto, ON
April 19-23, 2022
416-543-4749
conference@cmw.net,
www.cmw.net

Prolight + Sound 2022
Frankfurt, Germany
April 26-29, 2022
info@messefrankfurt.com,
www.prolight-sound.com

Dallas International Guitar Festival
Dallas, TX
April 29-May 1, 2022
972-240-2206
info@guitarshow.com,
www.guitarshow.com

Musikmesse 2022
Frankfurt, Germany
April 29-May 1, 2022
info@messefrankfurt.com,
www.musik.messefrankfurt.com

MAY

East Coast Music Week
Fredericton, NB
May 4-8, 2022
800-513-4953
ecma@ecma.com, www.ecma.com

Music Biz 2022
Nashville, TN
May 9-12, 2022
856-596-2221
info@musicbiz.org, www.musicbiz.org

JANUARY

NAMM's Believe in Music Virtual Gathering
Online
January 21-22, 2022
760-438-8001
info@namm.org, www.namm.org

Blues Summit 10
Toronto, ON
January 28-31, 2022
416-538-3885
info@torontobluesociety.com,
www.torontobluesociety.com

25th Maple Blues Awards
Toronto, ON
January 31, 2022
416-538-3885
info@torontobluesociety.com,
www.torontobluesociety.com

FEBRUARY

BreakOut West
Winnipeg, MB
February 2-6, 2022
204-943-8485
info@breakoutwest.ca,
www.breakoutwest.ca

SCREENxSCREEN Music & Tech Conference
Online
February 8-10, 2022
www.screenxscreen.com

MEX Las Vegas DJ Show
Las Vegas, NV
February 21-24, 2022
905-730-7773
themobileentertainmentexpo@gmail.com,
www.mobileentertainmentexpo.com

MARCH

South by Southwest (SXSW)
Austin, TX
March 11-20, 2022
512-467-7979
www.sxsw.com

MUSEXPO's Creative Summit
Burbank, CA
March 20-23, 2022
www.musexpo.net/musexpola22

MUSEXPO's Global Rock Summit
Burbank, CA
March 24-25, 2022
www.globalrocksummit.com

APRIL

Canadian Folk Music Awards Weekend 2022
Charlottetown, PEI
April 1-3, 2022
844-763-2362
info@folkawards.ca,
www.folkawards.ca

AKG Lyra & Ara USB Microphones

By Andrew Leyenhorst

A long-time stalwart of the audio world dating back to 1947, AKG carries a sterling reputation for its studio microphones (vintage and modern alike), headphones, and beyond. Now, the Vienna-founded, California-headquartered manufacturer is offering its sound to everyone with their new Lyra Ultra-HD and Ara USB microphones. They're elegant, simple, intuitive, and splendid-sounding condenser mics available at an extremely attractive price point.

Geared towards voiceover and music recording alike, these microphones deliver high-end specs and loaded functionality, with the Lyra acting as the big sibling. Let's begin dissecting these...

Lyra

The Lyra Ultra-HD – or Lyra for short – is AKG's answer to the question, "What if you grew the ideal USB microphone in a lab?" This plug-and-play, USB 2.0 mic is loaded up on features and offers surprising specs given its price tag barely eclipses the \$200 CAD mark – beginning with its hi-res 24-bit/192kHz conversion capability. Both input and output-wise, the Lyra demonstrates tremendous clarity.

In terms of sonic technicalities, the mic delivers a full-range frequency response of 20Hz to 20kHz at levels up to 129dB SPL, while the headphone output stretches from 20Hz to 22kHz.

To delve further into the hardware, the Lyra employs four AKG-proprietary, permanently-polarized backplate condenser capsules, and subsequently features what the manufacturer refers to as "capture modes" – Front, Front & Back, Tight Stereo, and Wide Stereo – allowing the mic to be appropriated for a wide variety of circumstances and sound sources. These are selectable via one of the control knobs on the back of the mic, neighbouring the Microphone Gain knob. Found on the front face are the headphone output pot, the mute button, and a small bank of LEDs to signify the selected capture mode.

I'd argue that the biggest compromise when it comes to the Lyra, though it applies to both, is in the build quality. The mic looks good and is fairly compact, channeling a sleek, modernized vintage character; however, it's all plastic aside from the grille. The build is undoubtedly solid and is certainly serviceable, but as I noted, it's a pretty obvious compromise. That said, it's one

that's worth being made, as the performance of this mic is stellar.

As far as the control layout, I do feel it would be preferable for the mute button to be placed on the back and the mic gain pot on the front, as dialing up gain via reach-around feels a bit counter-intuitive on the fly. Also worth noting is the detachable desktop base, allowing the mic to be mounted on any standard mic stand or boom, adding to its versatility.

In use, this is another one of those products that, quite simply, just works; you plug it in, and it goes. It sounds really, really good and is quite smooth and natural on a variety of sources from voice to guitars to percussion. The stereo modes are also fun to play around with, and add a unique dimension to the mic's repertoire. My one qualm is that, especially for "studio" voiceover applications such as podcasting, or other cases where you need to keep recordings dry, you need to be very careful with placement and mic gain, even in the Front mode; it's very easy to capture more room sound than you might like, as the mic is not very directional. The other thing to keep in mind when monitoring directly through the headphone output is that there is no way to balance the input signal versus the output signal – so achieving an ideal headphone mix while also setting the input gain appropriately can take a bit of work, depending on what you're doing.

Don't let that dissuade you, however; it's a killer unit, and I would immediately recommend it to anybody in the market for a USB mic given that it sounds absolutely splendid, is easy to use, and can be deployed for pretty much any small-format application – on top of looking pretty. It's tough to go wrong with the Lyra for what it offers.

Ara

The Ara, an even-more-affordable option, essentially strips down the Lyra to its basic functionality and a smaller, but still elegant, form factor. The main differences lie in the fact that while the Ara can still handle hi-res, 24-bit audio, its sample rate capability caps at 96kHz rather



than the Lyra's 192kHz, and instead of four capsules and capture modes, the Ara has two (Front and Front & Back).

Sonically, the input frequency response still extends for the full range of 20Hz to 20kHz, but the maximum SPL tolerance is slightly reduced to 120dB. No matter, though, as the Ara also sounds fantastic. It also includes a removable base like the Lyra, allowing it to be installed in a wide variety of applications.

My one gripe with this one is that it does away with the input gain knob altogether, instead opting only for two knobs on the front face for capture mode selection and the headphone out (which can be pushed in to activate the mute function), but that's just me being a picky engineer, since adjusting preamp gain within your device's system settings works fine.

Overall, these two mics from AKG are a very welcome addition, and a newly shining beacon amongst the tumultuous storm that is the USB microphone market. They sound great, they're easy to use, and will find themselves at home in just about any application from music recording to video calling to podcasting.

Andrew Leyenhorst is a Niagara-based freelance producer, engineer, mixer, and Consulting Editor at Canadian Musician.

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Godin A5 Ultra Fretless Bass

By Hal Rodriguez

Godin's A5 Ultra Fretless bass is an impressive instrument that covers a wide range of tones and provides a one-of-a-kind playing experience. The Canadian-made, five-string bass is equipped with both a Lace Sensor bridge pickup and LR Baggs saddle transducers that arm the player with electric and realistic upright tones that are flexibly controlled by an onboard preamp. The 2-in.-thick chambered body, richlite fingerboard, and long thumbrest give the bass a luxurious playability that feels like a hybrid of a premium electric and acoustic bass.

Specifications & Feel

The A5's body is made of Canadian Laurentian basswood with a solid spruce top in an attractive natural finish, and the body features two chambers designed to reduce feedback at loud volumes. The 34-in. neck is made of hard rock maple, with a Graph Tech nut, and a 16-in. fingerboard radius. The upper bout of the bass houses a custom-voiced LR Baggs onboard preamp with volume, bass, middle, and treble controls, as well as a "Fat Switch" and Saturation control. The volume and tone knobs for the Lace Sensor bridge pickup are located next to the preamp on the side of the bass, and can be blended with the saddle transducers.

With five strings, a 1.8-in. nut width, and a wide 15-in. lower bout, the A5 looks like a large bass, but still weighs comfortably at around 8 lbs. thanks to its chambered body. Although it doesn't have any body contours on its back or where the right arm would rest, it feels immediately comfortable to play sitting down or standing up, and the string spacing and slim neck profile give it a fast playability. I was surprised how easy it was to get used to even though I play four-string fretted basses most of the time.

The richlite fingerboard has an attractive sleek look, uncluttered with fretlines, but the fret markers are conveniently visible on the side of the neck to guide your intonation. I especially enjoy the cutaway at the neck-to-body joint and rounded heel at the base of the neck, which make playing at the highest frets and position unusually easy.

Sound

One of the first things about the A5 that stood out to me was how much it already sounded like an upright bass when unplugged. On the low strings and registers, it blooms organically like an upright but with more sustain, and there's even enough volume for practicing in quiet environments without an amp. On the higher strings and fret

positions, the bass sings and becomes extremely expressive with slides and vibrato.

Plugged into my Ampeg head and small cabinet, the Lace Sensor bridge pickup delivers a thick tone with plenty of midrange to cut through a loud band. With the tone all the way up, this pickup provides enough body and clarity for bassists with chops that like to take centre stage. By turning down the tone and playing closer to the neck, the A5 turns out a warm, low-end thump, almost like a Fender Precision bass, suited for reggae, soul, blues, and folk music.

By turning down the Lace Sensor's volume and turning up the LR Baggs transducer's volume, the A5 makes a dramatic sonic transformation. Instead of being midrange-focused, it now sounds like an upright with more of a smiley face EQ. All the detail that you hear when playing the instrument unplugged comes through the amp unhindered. It's impressive how much the A5 captures the nuances you hear when listening to an upright bass: the movements of the player's fingers on the strings and the charming, percussive noises are all there. Walking basslines sound sublime and perfect for jazz players. I also experimented with blending both pickups and enjoyed the A5 with the saddle pickups all the way up, but with just a little of the Lace Sensor dialed in for extra midrange cut. Expanding on the A5's versatility the "Fat Switch" adds more thickness to the tone, and the Saturation control functions, almost like a clean boost that adds more gain.

Summary

If you enjoy the sound of an upright bass but are reluctant to purchase, learn, or transport one, Godin's A5 Ultra merits your attention. Whether you're a supportive bassist that mostly plays in the lower registers, a virtuoso that needs to play solos across the neck, or both, the A5 can provide you with the wide spectrum of tones you need to cover many styles of music, from reggae and folk to jazz and fusion. Its hybrid electric-acoustic character also makes it an ideal second or third instrument for the bassist that is looking for something a little different to add to their arsenal. Most of all, it is a finely-crafted instrument that is hard to put down once you start playing it.

Hal Rodriguez is a musician, published writer, and educator based in Toronto. Contact him on Instagram @jazzscribe.



Synchro Arts VocAlign Ultra Plug-In

By Adam Gallant

VocAlign by Synchro Arts has recently been overhauled and in this issue, we are testing out VocAlign Ultra to explore all of its new features and utilities. While the company's flagship product, Revoice Pro 4, represents a tremendous amount of power and value, VocAlign takes some of the most time-saving aspects of that suite and condenses them for users who may be using other tools for primary pitch correction. In its early days, VocAlign was the go-to tool for automating the arduous task of editing ADR dialogue to match production dialogue in audio post-production. After a short time, the software was adopted by the music community to speed up lengthy edit jobs on sung vocal doubles, harmonies, and other layered music sources. This latest version has been optimized for implementation in music production.

With this latest release, we find the interface to be completely overhauled with a modern-looking and fully resizable GUI. The UI clearly displays the audio waveforms you are looking to match (referred to as the "Guide"), the audio that will be reshaped (referred to as the "Dub"), and also the final render that the software will output. Views can be expanded to show details about both time and pitch changes that will take place, as well as how aggressive the software will work in specific areas. The UI has been designed in a way that makes it easy to hunt down any potential areas susceptible to artifacts. In the upper right corner, there is a toggle to switch between the Basic and Advanced views. In the Advanced view, we see detailed controls such as a Transpose option, alternate pitch algorithms, and settings for pitch ranges on the Guide and Dub tracks.

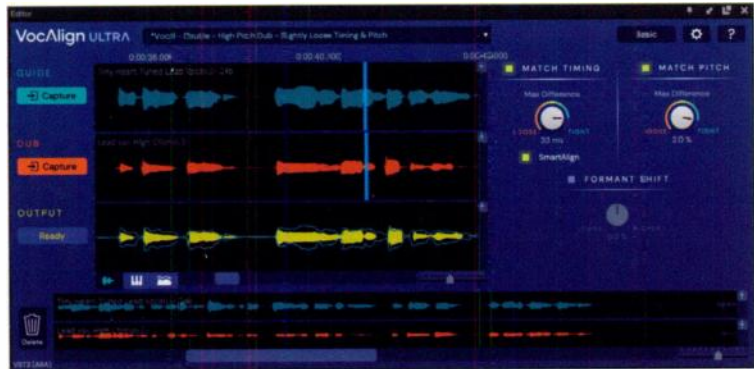
VocAlign Ultra brings in algorithms built for Revoice Pro, and one such feature is SmartAlign. This process looks both at the track to be corrected and the guide track and it makes intelligent decisions about what edit paths to take when matching those clips. With SmartAlign enabled, users may find some "loosening" of the time matching capabilities is warranted as the software can do an exceptional job of lining things up. The Max Difference control parameter comes into play here. Users can dial in the amount of correction quickly and independently for time corrections and pitch corrections. Also, the SmartAlign algorithm can be disabled with

a single click. Broadly speaking, the software is much more flexible and transparent sounding than I recall it feeling in previous versions.

Perhaps the most exciting new feature is the Match Pitch tool. Previous versions of VocAlign simply focused on matching the timing between clips, but now we have the ability to also match the pitch in very controlled and versatile ways. The timesaving capabilities here are phenomenal. For example, are you tired of tuning each layer of background vocals? Try tuning one layer of background vocals and simply match that tuned file to all the doubles that follow. For complicated matching, VocAlign Ultra has Sync Points and Protected Areas. These are user-defined target points on your Guide and Dub tracks that VocAlign will ensure remain in sync or are left untouched when processing.

There are also well described and well-organized presets that are great for exploring the full features of the plug-in. There are presets for instruments, dialogue, rap, and of course, sung vocals. For dialogue, we see the ability to match inflection via the Match Pitch algorithm — a great level up for handling ADR when the dubbed performances aren't as desirable as the sometimes-unusable production dialogue.

With the ability to futz with pitch, users will find there is more room for creative exploration in this latest version. For example, shifting the formant on doubled vocals in music can create width and depth by adjusting the timbre of a source without affecting its pitch. The Transpose knob in the Advanced view can be used to add subtle pitch shifts up and down to hard panned BGs or Doubles to create a classic "microshift" sound. For sound designers looking to add unique effects to dialogue, the Formant shift can be really unique sounding when abused.



Use it to match alternate takes and create a thick-sounding villain or a voice with ghostly computerized characteristics.

Also, VocAlign has been ARA2 enabled. ARA (Audio Random Access) increases the amount of communication between a DAW and a plug-in with information such as audio data, tempo, and pitch for an entire song rather than just at the moment of playback. The ARA version of VocAlign can capture and process multiple clips in one pass, whereas the Pro Tools AudioSuite version is restricted to a single Guide and Dub print at a time. For the VST3 or AU formats, VocAlign can be instantiated on an insert slot on the track whose timing you want to correct. Simply side-chain a feed from the Guide track and capture the audio in real time before aligning it. Synchro Arts are keeping up with the demands of their users by adapting these formats.

Without a doubt the most valuable aspect of VocAlign Ultra is its ability to save vast amounts of time on editing. If you're working in dialogue, matching ADR, or flying in alternate takes, this tool is an absolute must. Also, it does a much more transparent sounding job than editing "by hand" in Pro Tools. In the world of music production, the instant results one can achieve are mind-boggling. Clean up doubled vocals in a track in a few seconds, and tune all your background vocals in a massive session in a few minutes. This is the kind of plug-in users look back and think, "how did I ever work without this?"

Adam Gallant has worked in all facets of digital audio production, from music composition to location and post audio for television and film. He currently owns and operates The Hill Sound Studio in Charlottetown, PE.



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Being Radically Me

How Finding Your Own Voice is the Best Business Plan

By John Orpheus, a.k.a. Antonio Michael Downing

“Who are you and what did you come here to say?” was the question I asked myself the night I learned my greatest lesson as a performer.

I was in southern British Columbia, 3,500 kilometers from home, and I was about to play three 45-minute sets to an empty biker bar. Well, it wasn't quite empty, but let's just say there were five people there who didn't look like they came to hear my punky, hip-hop band kick out the jams. The one thing I'd never been on stage was intimidated, but that night I was. Nothing like an empty venue to make you question your life decisions, right? Before the third song, I asked for a minute and thought to myself: “Who are you and what did you come here to say?”

I knew that I'd come all the way there to say something, and if I said it, I'd be happy, no matter how many people came to the show. But if I didn't say it, I'd walk off the stage feeling regret. I performed the rest of the show with this in mind: *make yourself happy, say what you came to say*. Take it or leave it, I wasn't going to let anyone not hear the real me. The five bikers came to the front and rocked out. After that set, they called their friends and after the second set, those friends called their friends. By the end of the night, we were playing for a decent crowd of 95 people who were pushed up to the front of the stage and screaming like we were rock stars. The lesson was clear: once you stop paying attention to the audience, that's when they start paying attention to you.

I decided from then on to always be radically me.

Being an artist can be hard. There are thousands of music careers launched every day. Why should anyone listen to you? What do audiences look for when they connect with an artist? The answer is, personality; that elusive soup made up of charisma, skill, style, or what hip-hop heads call “swag.” There's a spark that happens when we see an artist be fully themselves. It seems like we know them in an intimate way, like they've shown us who they

really are and it seems familiar and unique all at once. This is currency on which the whole music business is built.

The pressure to succeed often drives new artists to copy the swag of others who are already successful. It's easy to get validation if you can do something people instantly recognize. But when is the last time you lost your mind over a musician because they were just like another musician?

The single rule for finding your own voice is to be true to who you are. Sounds easy, right? Almost cliché. But go ahead and answer it: “Who are you and what did you come here to say?” Many artists never ask this question. They are more worried about, “How can I get more streams?” or “What are people doing that I can also do to be more successful?” This will get you lost in the ocean of similar sounds.

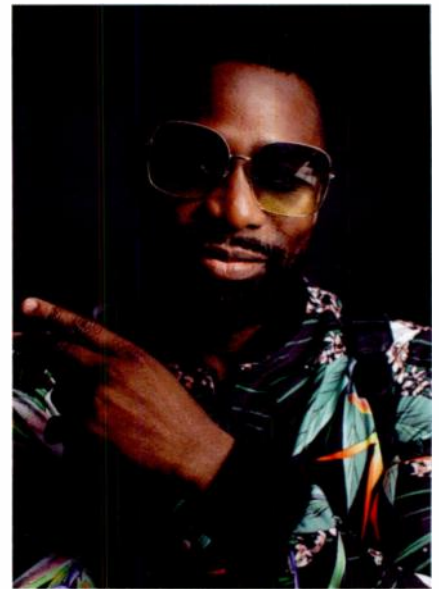
To understand who you are and what you have to say, you have to understand why music thrilled you in the first place. I fell in love with performing as a kid in south Trinidad watching preachers stomp and wail and dance and sing on the pulpit. This is my style on stage now: swaggy Baptist tent revival. But also, I got to see Carnival every year. Carnival is what enslaved Africans all over the diaspora developed so they could feel free. In Trinidad this is a national religion. It's a party, involving all night fetes, dancing in the streets, big colourful costumes and characters, Soca music, steel band orchestras, and lots of rum. If you put these two things together, Carnival and fire and brimstone preachers, that explains where my whole swag comes from.

But it wasn't always like this. Prior to 2015, I'd played punk rock, classic rock, blues, soul, dance pop, and even toured with Britpop legend Liam Gallagher from Oasis. I kept changing styles like I was trying on coats that could never fit. But then I went back to the Caribbean and back to Carnival. Stepping off that plane instantly connected me back to the things that I adored about Trinidad. This is when I first fell in love with music.

So, I suggest that you go back to when you first got captivated, seduced, and enthralled by music. More importantly, go back to when you first got captivated with life. This is what makes

us all unique — that we each have our own way of seeing and we learned it in a specific time and place. Here is an exercise: write the story of your life in 10 sentences. Sound easy? Try it. Ten single sentences and every one a moment that reveals who you are. The story of you.

If you do this thoughtfully, honestly, and with a willingness to be vulnerable, you will likely surprise yourself by what you write. You might even find yourself laughing and crying and living through it all over again. Start here and then bring this energy into your songs, wardrobe, photoshoots, and videos. After all, this is who you are, and I humbly suggest, this is also what you have to say.



John Orpheus' (a.k.a. Antonio Michael Downing) memoir, *SAGA BOY*, was published in 2021 by Penguin Random House and has been shortlisted for both the *Speaker's Book Prize* and the *Toronto Book Award*. It is a visceral, vulnerable memoir about Blackness, identity, and his quest for home. The companion album, the critically-acclaimed *SAGA KING*, combines hip-hop swagger, Afrobeat energy, and dancehall charisma into a unique vision rooted in the African diaspora. www.johnorpheus.com.

Guitar Talk with Big Sugar's Gordie Johnson

By Hal Rodriguez

Canadian Musician contributor Hal Rodriguez recently had the chance to catch up with one of Canada's greatest guitarists, Big Sugar frontman Gordie Johnson. Hal Rodriguez is a musician, published writer, and educator in Toronto. Contact him on Instagram @jazzscribe.

CM: Big Sugar's most recent album, *Eternity Now*, was released over a year ago. Looking back at it, what are you most proud of on that record?

Gordie Johnson: It's very different from so many records that we've made over the years where I worked with a group of different songwriters and compiled a running song list. It could be any of these 24 songs and we pick the 12 best and put them on the record. This record was very different. It was a moment in time where we sat down, wrote a record, recorded it, and mixed it. We sat down and did it, so it was really on theme. I'd gone through a lot of changes in my life and put a lot of past trials and tribulations behind. I really felt like I was starting a new chapter in my life, personally speaking. I was feeling all these feelings and had a lot of life experiences to draw from to write that record.

The record came out the week before the worldwide lockdown. All of our tour dates were postponed. The whole thing just got turfed, so then, it was a bit anti-climactic [laughs]. You get this thing done: "Yes! I can tell everyone my story... as long as they're on YouTube" [laughs]. The real payoff is standing up to a microphone and breathing life into those songs and performing them for people. So, that day is still coming, hopefully.

CM: The track "The Better It Gets" has that distinct Big Sugar guitar riff and distorted tone. Is that your signature guitar and are you still using a Fender Pro Jr. through a large cab?

Johnson: Ah, very interesting, you did your homework. I love that Fender Pro Jr. It's like taking a very underpowered 15-watt amplifier and trying to drive a 175-watt cabinet. I've got 75-watt Eminence speakers in my 4x12s, so that little amp trying to push all those speakers really suffers, but the speakers stay tough. I like that combination. A lot of guys like to have a big clean amp and they push it until the speakers distort and that has never been my method.

I use so many different ways to record guitar. One thing that is consistent, though, is I use my Garnet Herzog as my front end of my tone. It's like a distortion pedal, except it's the size of an amp and the quality of the sound coming out of it is unlike any pedal. It really is like having an amp in front of your amp. You can drive that amp really hard, but then you can pull the output back so it doesn't fry the amp you're going into. It's a brilliant design. Gar Gillies designed it in the '60s and I've never played through a better circuit. There's no better amp distortion for me than that sound. I've plugged it into everything: an Ampeg SVT, a Roland Jazz Chorus, and a 100-watt Marshall head. I've plugged it right into a PA before and it sounds the same [laughs].

So, stop worrying so much about having that perfect, fancy, bespoke amp. That's nice if you want to haul that around with you all the time; I just take my Garnet with me and I'm good to go. But yeah, I think that was my signature SG, which I put a Bigsby vibrato on.

CM: What was it like having Alex Lifeson participate in recording the title track?

Johnson: He's a really funny dude and a lovely man. He's always been such a great supporter and very encouraging. I'm playing his guitar on the song, which sounds – not by mistake – exactly like Rush from 1979 [laughs]. I thought I should either call him and ask him to play on it or I'm going to have some explaining to do later [laughs]. At least if I implicate the guy who's responsible, it gets me off the hook for being a copycat. He immediately said yes and he sent his solo the next day, but not only did he send me that, he sent me acoustic guitar parts, mandolin, Turkish banjo, and a whole folder of prog rock awesomeness to put on my song. I was like "Yeah! Whoa!" [laughs]

CM: You have a deep knowledge of the blues as you can play the whole spectrum from fingerstyle acoustic Delta tunes to blues rock slide guitar. Who were your heroes and what do you think was important for your growth as a player?

Johnson: I didn't go in a very straight line in terms of influences. I didn't even start out as a guitar player; I started out as a bass player and to this day I still play bass. So, I was already coming into guitar with a bunch of different influences. I think like a bass player structurally and compositionally, and maybe that's why Big Sugar riffs are so important to us. In terms of all the genres of music, I felt as a guitar player that the blues was the most expressive where your guitar should be like another human voice, as opposed to getting into

blues because it was an opportunity to just solo forever. To me, what separates the greats from the goods is that the greats play like another human voice. That's a duet between a singer and a guitar. So, that's where I saw the blues as a great building block foundation to put all my music on.

Instead of studying blues guitar players who did that, I listened to guys who played steel guitar in church; they're mimicking human voices. I listened to saxophone guys like Sonny Rollins. You can hear the lyrics to other songs that he's quoting in a song that he's playing. I listened to Louis Armstrong like crazy. I memorized every trumpet solo ever recorded by him and those phrases come out of my guitar playing often. I never limited myself to listening to guitar players. I love Tony Iommi, but I never sat down and learned any Black Sabbath. What's the point? He's already crushing that. I'm listening to Miles Davis and figuring out what he's doing, you know?

CM: You play so many instruments and styles of music. Are you diligent at practicing or do you just play whatever strikes you at the moment?

Johnson: I guess I'm diligent with practice, but it's more out of necessity. If I have a drum gig coming up in Austin, I'll go down to the studio and play drums for an hour every night. I'll play stuff that I can play just for cardio and stamina, but then I spend a large portion of my hour working on stuff I cannot play at all and just tough it out [laughs]; "I wish I could play 'Sexy M.F.' by Prince and I'm going to sit here until I can do it!" I actually worked on it for enough nights where I could really play it. I play drums in the studio a lot out of necessity. I don't have all day to wait for a drummer and it's COVID, no one's coming over. So, I'd just go down and practice. Before I knew it, I was recording entire records and artists would call me, "Can you produce a record?"

CM: You must've spent a lot of time learning tunes and the roots of music. Were you playing in cover bands a lot in the beginning or were you already writing originals?

Johnson: I've had years of not even contemplating that writing your own songs was a thing. When I started out, I got really good at the bass really quick and I started getting noticed and getting phone calls. We're talking about the 1970s. I got hired to play at weddings and bars and I wasn't even in high school yet. We weren't playing original music. We were playing disco and pop songs of the day like Fleetwood Mac, Santana, and Earth Wind and Fire. So yeah, I practiced and listened to the radio every night and tuned my ear so I could learn stuff really quickly. So, I got quite good at that and played in cover bands in Detroit. You had to play five 45-minute sets, six nights a week – that's a lot of songs. No repeats and all dancefloor music. So, you learn to learn quick and be effective. That was my training for a decade before I even contemplated that I could write my own songs. By the time I moved to Toronto, I was playing with blues, jazz, and reggae singers and they all had different repertoire.

CM: You've been friends and collaborated with other celebrated guitarists like Warren Haynes, The Black Crowes' Rich Robinson, and Joe Satriani. What do you think has been the most important thing you've learned from hanging out with them?

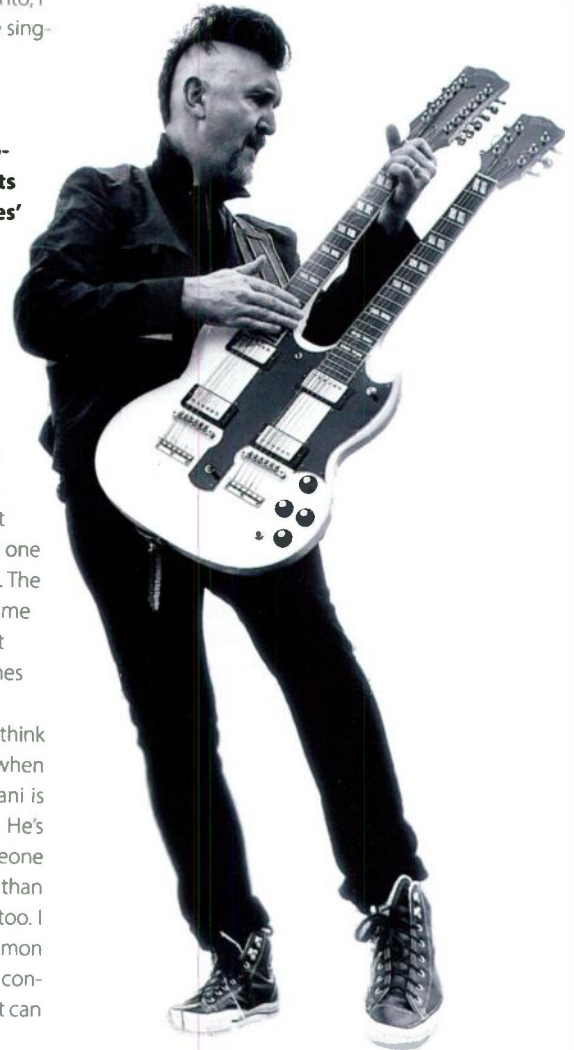
Johnson: One thing I'll say about all my best guitar-playing friends, it's the sense of humour. Rich Robinson - you wouldn't know it from his public persona, but he's one of the funniest people walking the Earth. The times I've spent with him, I spent more time holding my face in my hands laughing at what he's just said. Even musically, it comes out when we play together.

Warren Haynes is the same way. I can't think of a time when I've laughed harder than when I've been with Warren Haynes. Joe Satriani is another legendary musician and funny. He's a guy who laughs very easily. When someone else is telling a joke, no one enjoys it more than Joe and he's kind of like that as a player too. I see that in his playing. I'd say that's the common thread with all my guitar homies. If we can connect on that level, then I know musically, it can

go anywhere. There's a great musical freedom when you relate to somebody on that level first.

CM: What's on the horizon for Big Sugar?

Johnson: We hope to see the world open up again so we can come out and play. When we come out, we'll have a whole different lineup. I feel like Big Sugar is going to go back to being a three-piece power trio. For the longest time, we've been carrying a really big band. At one point, we were going out with twelve people on stage. There is something about the fluidity and agility you have with just three guys: bass, drums, and guitar. I've got a core of guys who sing really well, so the vocals become a bigger part of the presentation and we're able to touch on all the eras of what we've done.



Music May Heal, Even in the Most Dire Places Imaginable

By Darcy Ataman

A lone drum sits in the middle of a concrete courtyard, the only noticeable symbol of expressive creativity and joy in the central prison in the city of Bukavu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I'm there to present Make Music Matter's Healing in Harmony music therapy program (HiH) to the local authorities who run the facility, along with representatives of the UN mission to region (MONUSCO) who are there to advise, but not impose, upon the local authorities how to potentially improve day-to-day operations. While it is Make Music Matter's duty and mission to heal trauma in communities where the most vulnerable and fragile reside, deployments of HiH must be carried out with strong local partnerships, community buy-in, and a relatively secure space where our participants (who we deem "artists") can gather, create, and collectively heal.

All of these factors were distended in my head as MONUSCO and the local army led me into the intake area before being allowed to enter the penitentiary. I noticed a church group outside who were singing and praying before entering the visitation section. Throughout the eastern DRC, I was pleased to see music used as a way of setting oneself into a strong mindset, but was pained to find out they were there to deliver meals to the inmates because any nourishment from the institution itself rarely made it past the guards or workers.

As I entered the local manager's office to give my HiH presentation, the malodor of human waste and death assaulted me. While I presented alongside Make Music Matter's lead psychologist, the second matter that gave me pause was that all of these stakeholders and support workers were also (understandably) heavily traumatized.

After the initial well-received presentation, I was escorted through the "safe" parts of the facility by MONUSCO and two heavily-armed members of the Congolese army. The open starkness of the tour guide's report shook me. For example, the facility was originally built for 500 inmates but currently housed at least 1,600. There were no individual cells unless you were

a VIP (i.e. someone important from the gang who controls life on the inside), therefore the majority of the prisoners lived and slept on the ground in open concrete courtyards. There was a courtyard for women, including their children. The most disturbing moment was when I held a newborn baby who was born inside the prison, realizing that she will never have a chance at life. There was an area for adolescents and the largest space was for the adult males. I was able to interact with inmates in the women's and adolescent section. Under no circumstance was I permitted to enter the main courtyard.

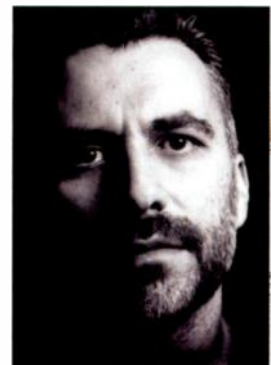
From one of the guard towers, I noticed a pit in the courtyard and was told it's an improvised torture area devised by the ruling gang. There was an attempt to destroy and dismantle this area but the prison gang demonstrated their authority and the pit remains. Due to corruption and the worst example of trickle-down economics, none of the prison staff, including the guards, receive their salaries. The only way to survive is through bribes from the inmates. The adult male inmates come and go in the evening, committing further robberies and crimes, then providing a cut to the guards.

This is the delicate yet nefarious ecosystem where another potential HiH site may soon be born. The DRC government is notoriously reticent about music and art that contains viewpoints that could be interpreted as opposition. Local artists, such as Tfhalamuana and Alash, have been periodically jailed. Their songs are officially banned as they actively address the status quo and lethargy of the current regime. If Make Music Matter was to operate in this facility, I needed more clarity from a trusted source to reconcile these contradictions.

After returning home to Canada, I spoke with my Head of Security, Asifwe, from a private firm that I utilize when I'm in the region. When I asked him about the lone drum in the courtyard, he informed me that there are multiple drums in every prison courtyard and they are officially used as song and dance breaks each day for both inmates and staff. He added, "When we are traumatized, we need joy." He told me that he listens to music in his native dialect, Lingala,

which is filled with songs about how to live a fulfilling and peaceful life by loving one another. He also said that perhaps the use of these drums is a cost-effective and non-invasive way for the prison authorities to allow emotional release and some stability. Asifwe also reiterated a common ethos of Make Music Matter and HiH: "Music in Congo is seen as a way to heal the sick because everyone can be in communion with each other through singing." Considering the only prison doctor was also an inmate, I was beginning to see why such strong interest was shown in exploring the implementation of HiH there.

It is fascinating to see that in a place where access to food, proper shelter, bathroom facilities, and bathing opportunities are not seen as fundamental human rights, that music and its ability to bring equilibrium in concert with each other is not only acceptable, but welcomed. With that in mind, Make Music Matter is continuing to discuss ways in which to turn the initial lone drum into a programmatic marching band of hope and healing for the both the innocent and guilty who reside there.



Darcy Ataman, M.S.C., is the founder and CEO of Make Music Matter Canada and Make Music Matter USA. MMM uses music therapy and the creative process, plus an emphasis on local leadership, to empower marginalized individuals and communities. Darcy is also a music producer and the co-founder of AAA Records & Publishing alongside producer David Bottrill.

Challenge Ageism in Music & Open Your Mind to Endless Possibilities

By Colette Chand

Ageism, does it exist in the music industry? You bet your top dollar it does. If you're a musician between the ages of 25 and 45, you've probably had a run-in with it, and you may be asking yourself, "Am I too old to be doing this?"

This is a common and very valid question when considering today's musical climate with 14-year-olds breaking (e.g. Billie Eilish) and TikTok becoming the new fame machine. Finding new musicians in their 30s and 40s on a mainstream level who are breaking out has become a bit harder, so experiencing feelings of insecurity and self-doubt when it comes to this is easy.

Whether it's booking a show at a festival or an opening spot for a headliner, many musicians over 25 have been told by promoters something along the line of, "It's going to be a really young crowd; I'm not sure if you'd be the right fit for this." And if you're a woman, you've likely heard this 10 times more than a male musician (sad, isn't it?).

Granted, some may say ageism isn't a big deal in our industry; however, many beg to differ. Thankfully, not all promoters or industry figures will size you up based on your age and infer that you're unmarketable or lack potential. There are certainly enough industry figures who have made ageist remarks towards musicians, women in particular, and I have heard time and time again from many of my female clients that their motivation was fueled by these kinds of comments.

Challenge that style of thinking and help open your mind to endless possibilities. 2Chainz became famous at age 36 and went on to have an illustrious career for almost a decade now. Sheryl Crow got famous at 32, Sia at 41, and my favourite one of all – Louis Armstrong – at age 64! These artists should serve as examples and living testaments that having mainstream

success after 30 is not impossible. Remember, if it can be done once, it can be done again.

If ageism is really an issue in the music industry, then artists should be asking themselves another essential question: what matters more, a record deal or dedicated fans? Regardless of who it is, whether a manager, booking agent, record label execs, A&R, or music producer, it all comes down to hard work, talent, and connecting with fans. If you can connect, relate, and sweep your fans off of their feet with your music, nobody will care how old you are. Fans just want quality music that they can relate to.

All things considered, ageism is most explicitly seen in mainstream music. If you look outside of the mainstream scene, such as independent artists, you will see that many artists are actually breaking out after the age of 30, and thriving.

The now well-known rapper M.I.A. from the U.K. was a visual artist up until the age of 31 when she suddenly decided to start making music independently, and got signed to an independent label. Her first mainstream hit, "Paper Planes", didn't even materialize until 2008 when she was 35 years old!

From the *Canadian Musician Podcast*, I learned of another example of ageism being less of a factor for independent artists. Toronto-based folk-soul singer-songwriter AHI didn't start focusing on a music career until he was around 30, and only in his mid-30s did things start to take off for him. All that mattered to his fans was that he had a great voice, and great songs. His fans didn't care about his age, or his height, or his weight. They felt a connection to him and AHI's music brings them a certain feeling that they love, and that's all they care about.

Perhaps these examples of indie artists may be a good sign that focusing on the mainstream

and their unspoken "age restrictions" is not an accurate representation of how the music business truly works. At the end of the day, the only fact that truly matters is whether or not people enjoy your music. In today's music climate, the great thing is that as long as you know how to market yourself, connect with your audience, and continue to make the great music that you do, breaking out into a new market isn't exactly an impossible task as long as you just stay the course.



Colette Chand has worked in the music industry for over a decade and is the founder of 10TH FLR, a conglomerate of artist managers, consultants, grant writers, social media content creators, and music lovers. With a "for the artist, by the artist" ethos, 10TH FLR provides knowledge and services to assist artists with building their careers. www.10thflr.com.

My Pandemic Experience as a Touring Instrument Tech

By Jeramy "HooGie" Donais with Roger Lotring

The unknown of when I would work again was probably the biggest adjustment when touring stopped because of the pandemic. I've been in this business since I was 17 years old, so not knowing when I could resume making a living — doing what I love — the day-to-day of that was really hard.

Aside from salary, I just missed live shows and the feeling I get, looking out at a crowd and seeing people forgetting about reality. The escape we bring to people, that gives me the greatest joy.

Not being able to support my wonderful family was definitely my biggest fear while the industry was shut down. I worried about losing everything I've worked so hard for over the past 24 years. Financially, I did my best to expand my horizons outside the music business. I actually ended up flipping a house with my better half. I also spent the summer helping my buddy with concrete work and laying driveways.

I wasn't used to not having a purpose. I wasn't used to everyday home life, either, but my family — definitely my youngest children — they really enjoyed having me home. There was definitely a learning curve, though. Here in Canada, we spent a lot more time in lockdown than other places, so all of us were always together, rather than me being home, then away.

I'm vaccinated, so my family didn't have any major concerns about me going back on the road. If anything, it was normal for my older kids. My youngest daughter, though, she would ask, "Where is daddy? Is daddy at work?" She wondered that quite a bit until she got used to it.

Being a Canadian citizen, going back to the U.S. was actually extremely easy with my work visa. America welcomed me with open arms, every time! The challenge was returning to Canada. The first few times, I felt like a criminal because they wanted to lock me up — quarantine me — for two weeks. I was just tired of being locked up after coming home from the U.S. I lost six weeks of my life being quarantined.

Once Shinedown went back out, there were still daily protocol requirements. For me, it's just being wise, wearing a mask when I'm around people who aren't traveling with me. I use hand sanitizer and wash my hands as often as possible, and I don't party in bars or go out on days off. I'm there for business, not pleasure.

Interaction with people now, during a typical day on tour, is limited. We don't have guests come out to the shows. Normal day-to-day things, such as VIPs, things like that are all gone. I don't want to risk being the person who infects the whole tour because I invited a guest.

Even with the industry trying to recoup the financial loss of bands not being able to tour, some people still hit me up for comps. I just don't understand it. And it seems to be people I barely know, like, "Hey, man, I was thinking of coming down..."

What struck me most about the way people complied — or didn't comply — with COVID protocol is that, daily, it was drastically different from venue to venue. All I figured was, I'll do my part — mask, hand sanitizer — and do my best to keep away from everyone. I can't make anybody else do theirs. We were doing shows in front of an average of 10,000 people a night but there were a few festivals with over 35,000 people.

Another concern wasn't necessarily contracting COVID; it was more that if I did get it on tour, I would be stuck quarantined in America for 14 days following a positive PCR test.

But COVID still affected our tour. We started rehearsals in July, and right off the bat our drummer, Barry [Kerch] — who is vaccinated — tested positive. From then on, we all tested every few days until we knew we were in the clear. I continued testing myself weekly, more so as a peace of mind thing to make sure everything was fine.

Then, with 10 shows left on this last run, Eric [Bass] — who I tech for — also tested positive. Man, what a mindfuck! I do upwards of 18 bass changes every show, and let me tell you, the boss can sweat! I was very fortunate to not have contracted COVID. I tested myself daily for a full

week, just to be sure.

But as an organization, we knew we had to continue the tour, having fill-in musicians and even replacement technicians on standby. We didn't miss a beat and continued successfully without anyone else getting sick.

Like I said, I'm vaccinated. It works for me. But it's really disappointing to think there might be touring personnel who present fake vaccination cards. I understand if you don't want to get the vaccine. If you don't want to get the vaccine, that's one thing. But if that's your choice, live with it.



Jeramy "HooGie" Donais is a tour instrument/backup tech and production professional from Chatham-Kent, Ontario with over 20 years of touring and studio experience. Over the years, he's worked with the likes of Shinedown, Breaking Benjamin, Sam Roberts Band, Theory of a Deadman, Finger Eleven, Staind, Lamb of God, Treble Charger, and others.

Roger Lotring is an author, music journalist, and radio DJ, whose work has appeared in the pages of Classic Rock, Metal Hammer, Metal Edge, Prog, and at ESPN.com

SILVER SKY

SE

JOHN MAYER
MODEL



TONE FOR ALL

PRS PAUL
KEED
SMITH
GUITARS

YEARS IN THE MAKING: ARKELLS

A COZY CATCH-UP WITH CANADA'S BELOVED TOURING BAND

BY ANDREW LEYENHORST | CONCERT PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATHAN NASH



PHOTO: CAITLIN CROMENBERG

L-R: ANTHONY CARONE, MICHAEL DEANGELIS, MAX KERMAN, NICK DIKA, TIM OXFORD

*So put your hands
up high
Baby walk with me
I see it in your eyes, it's
something you believe
You got the scars
to show
It didn't come for free
It's been years in the
making*

- From "Years in the
Making"

From the fall of 2017 into the summer of '18, I was lucky enough to have the rare opportunity to spend my days cooped up in the studio with a wonderful group of musicians who I came to know simply as Max, Mike D. Tony, Nick, and Timbo. And while the group's general outward sense of homeliness and camaraderie with their fans has seen to it that they're on a first-name basis with just about everybody anyway, working on a record with them for as long as we spent on 2018's *Rally Cry*, their fifth LP, was a true eye-opener that Hamilton's Arkells aren't just the face of Canadian rock right now – they're genuine sweethearts, who have ascended to the highest tier of our nation's marquee artists based on the

fundamental principles of being themselves, being gracious at every turn, and being whatever they choose to be at a given moment. The other contributing factor is, of course, that the quintet is an engine that simply doesn't stop.

This certainly hasn't changed in the interim; September 2021 marked the release of the sixth all-original Arkells LP, *Blink Once*, and in August of 2020 the band put out *Campfire Chords*, containing fully-produced, acoustic reimaginings of classic tracks from *Jackson Square* (2008) to *Rally Cry*, plus one new track. To give you a further idea of their work ethic, the new record *Blink Once* was actually almost finished before the pandemic even began, and before an acoustic record had even been conceived of.

Luckily, I had the chance to reconnect with these old friends of mine and joined frontman and sometimes-guitarist Max Kerman alongside bassist Nick Dika for a cozy catch-up at a small café in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood to chat about the last couple years, the new record, their recent hometown Grey Cup halftime show, and life in general.

CM: I'll start by asking, where did the cycle for *Rally Cry* end and *Blink Once* begin? I know "Years in the Making" was the first single to come out last year, with *Campfire Chords* in between the single and *Blink Once*.

Max Kerman: Time is a mysterious thing during COVID [laughs]. So, originally the plan was for "Years in the Making" to come out around February 2020 – it came out when it was supposed to come out – and then we were supposed to roll out songs for what would become *Blink Once*, because 80 percent of the record was finished. And then, we were probably gonna put out *Blink Once* at the top of 2021; like, it was going to be a long rollout from March to the top of the next year. But then when the pandemic hit, we're like "Ah, we've got all these songs, but we don't want them to sort of evaporate into thin air," because we were seeing other artists and friends of ours that were putting out records in the middle of the pandemic but couldn't tour them or do anything with them. And it's like, "Oh, that sucks that the songs don't get a chance to live in real life."

Nick Dika: Even the bandwidth that people had for music was kind of different – like, everyone's clinging to the news and there's a ton of other super important stuff going on, so it's kind of weird being like "So, here's a pop rock song!"

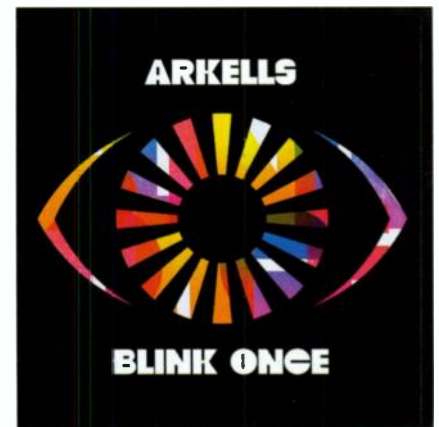
Kerman: Yeah, it's like... *What does anything mean?* And also, we couldn't really be together to finish the album either. So, in the spring of 2020, we started just with an acoustic version of "Years in the Making" because we wanted something to accompany the studio version. Then we're like, "Oh, we can

kind of do this from home separately because we know how this song goes." And then we're like, "What if we started to work on a full acoustic record from home?" So, Tony would usually start with a keyboard track, send it to me, I lay down vocals, send it to Mike, who sends it to Nick; and that's how *Campfire Chords* came together. And then we're like "Okay, we can do this!" There's something to be said for working within the confines of the context you're given – and the context was, *you can't leave the house*.

So, we decided to put *Blink Once* stuff on hold and work on *Campfire Chords* to keep us busy. We had a goal, to put up that record at the end of the year, and then once we got through that and the vaccine announcement came, we're like "Okay, if there's a vaccine, that means shows will start to come back – that means we can think about finishing *Blink Once* and getting a release plan together for that.

There you have it; in between recording *Blink Once* through the back end of 2019 into 2020, and finishing the record later in the year, the quintet put together a whole other 19-track record, complete with a brand-new tune, "Quitting You", just for something to do in lockdown. Like I said, they don't stop. That said, let's talk about the new stuff.

The bulk of the recording for *Blink Once* was completed at Lucy's Meat Market in Los Angeles from late 2019 into early 2020, as mentioned, marking the band's return to California where they'd recorded *High Noon* (2014), albeit at a different studio. "Yeah, we're big L.A. guys," Kerman and Dika both joke. "We do like L.A. actually, a lot," Kerman levels. "Most of *Morning Report* (2016) and *Rally Cry* were done up here [at Noble Street Studios in Toronto], but I think we just wanted to change it up. We worked with these two amazing producers, Ryan Spraker and Tom Peyton [plus engineer Pete Min], who are newer to us, and we learned so much from them. It was a different exercise altogether." Kerman then clarifies that the band were intro-



duced to the production duo in a "blind date" set up by management, and the two parties hit it off. Additional recording would see the band return to Noble Street for the track "Truce", produced by Derek Hoffman alongside the group, with engineering by Trevor Anderson, a frequent Arkells collaborator who also mentored me at Noble Street. Hoffman is also an ongoing collaborator with the band, having offered additional production on "Only for a Moment" from *Rally Cry*, as well as producing the band's two Christmas singles, "Pub Crawl" and "The Last Christmas (We Ever Spend Apart)".

The result is yet another Arkells record that stands completely on its own within their discography; the band is a lot of things, one of these being a band that doesn't make the same record twice. There has been consistent development and clear evolution from each LP to the next, and *Blink Once* continues to redefine the "Arkells sound" – which at this point, is something uniquely theirs, and instantly identifiable to almost anybody who's had their ear to the airwaves for the last 14 years.

Over the years, the quintet has grown from a straight-ahead, amps-in-your-face alt rock band to a sound that is still pretty alt rock, but in a way that redefines what it means to be alternative in such a context – and *Blink Once* really drives this home. These are songs that transcend genre, the group instead alchemizing a wide variety of influences from Paul Simon to Beck to Kanye West to create something that's *really* difficult to qualify – and that's what makes it all so great. Tim Oxford's drums are blended



ARKELLS WITH THE NORTHERN SOUL HORNS AT THE GREY CUP HALFTIME SHOW

tastefully with electronic samples to create a really engaging hip-hop vibe throughout the record, and Anthony Carone delivers unbridled versatility whether he's playing the delicate chords of "Strong" or banging out the stanky blues on "Swing, Swing, Swing". Michael DeAngelis' guitar work weaves its way through these songs in an incredibly tasteful way, whether it's the distorted octaves on "Truce" or the big chord stabs on the strutting "Nobody Gets Me Like You Do", and of course Dika is as locked into the pocket as ever, with bouncing grooves and lovely, warm tones.

"I feel like because the songs are very different on this one, a lot of times the references were very different," explains Dika. "Like, 'One Thing I Know' was that '80s, George Michael 'Freedom' vibe; that's not gonna be a reference on a song like 'Strong.'" Kerman tacks on, "If you go through the songs, 'Liberation' was sort of Paul Simon – kind of 'Graceland' with those chords – but obviously doesn't sound like him, but the underlying idea was a Paul Simon thing. 'You Can Get It' (notably featuring K.Flay, the first feature in Arkells history) had like a Kanye West sort of vibe; 'All Roads' is sort of like Phil Collins or Peter Gabriel, and actually

Mike's demo for that song was inspired by 'How Do You Sleep?' by Sam Smith as the reference point, on 'Strong', Tony really wanted to do a signature Adele kind of piano ballad; 'Truce' is sort of like a Bleachers nod," the frontman continues.

Of course, it wouldn't be an Arkells record if it wasn't getting you deep in your feelings as you're dancing around the room. One of the most defining aspects of their music has always been the lyrics, rife with visceral storytelling and a "softness, some kind of understanding", to quote the iconic *High Noon* single "Leather Jacket" – and on this record they're as potent as ever; the album's title supports this notion.

"Blink once and it's gone, blink once and somebody or something changes – kind of dealing with change – that was a bit of a theme... Blink once and you're in a fucking pandemic," Kerman explains, the last bit more in jest, though with a lot of the record being written pre-pandemic, much of the record certainly has taken on new meaning when framed through that lens. However, the truth behind many of the songs is that Kerman is actually singing about real people and experiences, and as he often does, writes from *their* perspective rather than his own.

"Strong" is a good example of this, a track about the band's dear friend Barbara Tatham, whose voice is also featured on the interlude "Little Moments". I could recall previous songs in a similar vein from the *Rally Cry* sessions where I got to hear Kerman discuss some of the meanings of the words, like "Only for a Moment" or "Don't Be a Stranger", which led me to ask him and Dika about how the group approaches writing about delicate subjects dealing with real people and situations.

CM: When you're writing songs like "Strong" or "Arm in Arm", where it deals with a difficult situation involving somebody that you know, how do you approach writing the lyrics and being delicate to make sure that you're hitting the right notes emotionally and doing so tastefully?

Kerman: That's a good question. You sort of have to trust your gut. I think with sensitive material, it can get sort of schmaltzy or over-the-top or corny pretty quick...

Dika: I feel like it's about telling it as a story more than doing, like, a meditation on something. If you tell it as a story it sort



NICK DIKA & TIM OXFORD; ARKELLS LONG WEEKEND, BUDWEISER STAGE

of gives it some colour.

Kerman: Nick is right; I think the trick is that if you can hone in on some little details that tell a much bigger picture, that's usually the trick to any good song. So, just the line "Dance with me tonight / Like everything's alright", that kind of says it all. It's just like, "Can we get away from this hard situation and just enjoy each other and pretend nothing wrong is happening?" So then, there's an underlying tension there that speaks to the moment.

This, of course, can swing the other way as well, with uplifting power songs like the triumphant "One Thing I Know", a track about celebrating the things that make us unique and understanding that living truly to oneself is the ultimate liberator.

On his approach to crafting lyrical perspectives in general, Kerman comments, "I'm generally pretty bored with myself [laughs]. I don't find anything I do particularly interesting, so my ears always perk up whenever I hear somebody's story that ought to be told; and every day I'm hearing interesting stories, right? Like, stories are what inspire me to write songs; it's what inspires you

to write, when you hear something that knocks you over. I like to keep my ear to the ground for other people's stories, because that's where the magic is.

Something I learned about the band through the *Rally Cry* sessions as well, was that they like to spend a lot of time building songs *in* the studio rather than the more traditional approach of coming in with the songs completely ready to go. On the 2018 effort, the songs were in constant motion as new approaches were tried, new sounds were experimented with, and no idea was left un-toyed with. With this in mind, I was curious if *Blink Once* was handled the same way.

CM: The thing that kind of stood out to me with *Rally Cry*, especially compared to some of the other records that I've worked on, is the fact that there was a lot of building and breaking and playing with the arrangements in the studio, rather than having that all mapped out beforehand. There was some stuff from the demos, but there was a lot of "Oh, let's try something else here instead," and completely changing the guitar tone; or, "instead

of doing this, let's do this" and stuff like that, rather than coming in with everything ready, recording it, and getting out. Was *Blink Once* like that at all or was everything prepared before you hit the studio?

Dika: It was probably more so in that direction, actually. We built a lot [in the studio]. Ryan, one of the producers, he'll get you to play something and try it four different ways, and then he kind of sits within them and sees which ways make the most sense. There are videos that Max has posted from in the studio of someone playing, recording something, and I'm like, "Oh, that's *definitely* not what the part is on the record" [laughs].

I feel like it keeps it fresh. Because we've been recording and playing for a long time now; so, when we made our first three records, we'd sit in a room, and we'd play it. To be able to do things differently, definitely there's challenges; if I'm playing bass, and I don't know what the drums are doing going into a chorus, it's like, "Hey, I'm just gonna try a few different fills, and maybe one will work with what everything else is doing." So, it's a different way to do it, but I think that's fresh.



NICK DIKA, MIKE DEANGELIS & MAX KERMAN AT THE ARKELLS LONG WEEKEND; BUDWEISER STAGE



ANTHONY CARONE'S SIGNATURE STOMP; ARKELLS LONG WEEKEND, BUDWEISER STAGE

Kerman: Yeah, it's an exercise in ceding control; and the band's always been that way. I think the band has always been an exercise in *how do you see beyond your own tunnel vision for what something ought to be?* And how do you remain open to possibility? And it's hard, you know, with five guys working on something, and having five different impressions of something that doesn't exist yet. I mean, that's really hard. And I think with adding other producers and songwriters into the mix, they're helping shape it, and it's that much scarier in some ways. But it's also really exciting. Because if there's sort of a mutual trust with each other that everybody is doing their best to offer what's best for the song, then you can create awesome stuff.

CM: With these songs, were you jamming them out at all before they got to the studio or was it mostly just demos?

Kerman: We didn't jam a ton, to be honest, going into the studio. But

yeah, there were some demos.

Dika: I feel like you can almost be more creative when you're sending demos around. You can be more creative in how you either contribute to it or work on something. Because if you're in a room with five people – like if the drummer and bass player just start fucking around underneath all the time – it's gonna be hard to do anything on top, right? But if you're just sending demos, you can slow down the beat, or if you have ideas, you can add a melody on top. So, I find in a lot of ways in terms of actually getting ideas across, sending music around is [more efficient].

CM: Going into this record, did you have any specific ideas for how you wanted to continue to evolve the sound of the band, or was that something that was discovered in the studio?

Kerman: I think the idea was to just keep pushing and not being afraid to try new

things; that's sort of what we've been about, and I think that instinct has always served us well. And, you know, I think as a musician, I've always felt envious of artists in other genres in the way they work. You know, whether it's the style of production, or the process by which they actually make the music itself, there's all these things that exist outside the paradigm of a band. And I was always asking, like, "How do we put that in our own framework? How do we steal tricks from other people that are making interesting music and include them in the context of a five-piece rock band?"

Overall, *Blink Once* is the culmination of the group's constant desire for evolution, ability to shapeshift and synergize, and a creative yearning to always push their own envelope – and it's a joy of a record that takes you on just about every kind of trip in its respectful sub-40-minute runtime.

Of course, with the long rollout for



ARKELLS LONG WEEKEND; BUDWEISER STAGE

the record, it meant that some of the new songs have had a chance to see the light of the stage, as the group's Arkells Long Weekend at Toronto's Budweiser Stage this past August saw three days of shows bring Southern Ontario's Arkells faithful together for the first time in what had felt like an eternity. "We've played about four [*Blink Once*] songs live; they're so fun," according to Kerman. "'All Roads', 'You Can Get It', 'Years [in the Making]', 'One Thing I Know'... They're really just a blast." And then, most recently, the band headlined the Grey Cup halftime show in their hometown of Hamilton at Tim Hortons Field, where they've played multiple marquee shows over the past few years.

"The Grey Cup halftime show couldn't have gone better, especially given that everything could've gone wrong," says Kerman. "There's probably about 200 people working on the show that have to be executing their job at a high level for the performance to work, and everyone came through; it felt great

in the moment. Our collective band that includes The Northern Soul Horns and Arkettes felt so locked in. But watching it back was when we could finally breathe a sigh of relief; the camera blocking, the lighting, the pyro, and the crowd are things we couldn't control, but it all looked spectacular. Having the added charisma of K.Flay and The Lumineers got the show to an 11/10. It's something I think we'll all be able to look back as an important moment in our career," he concludes.

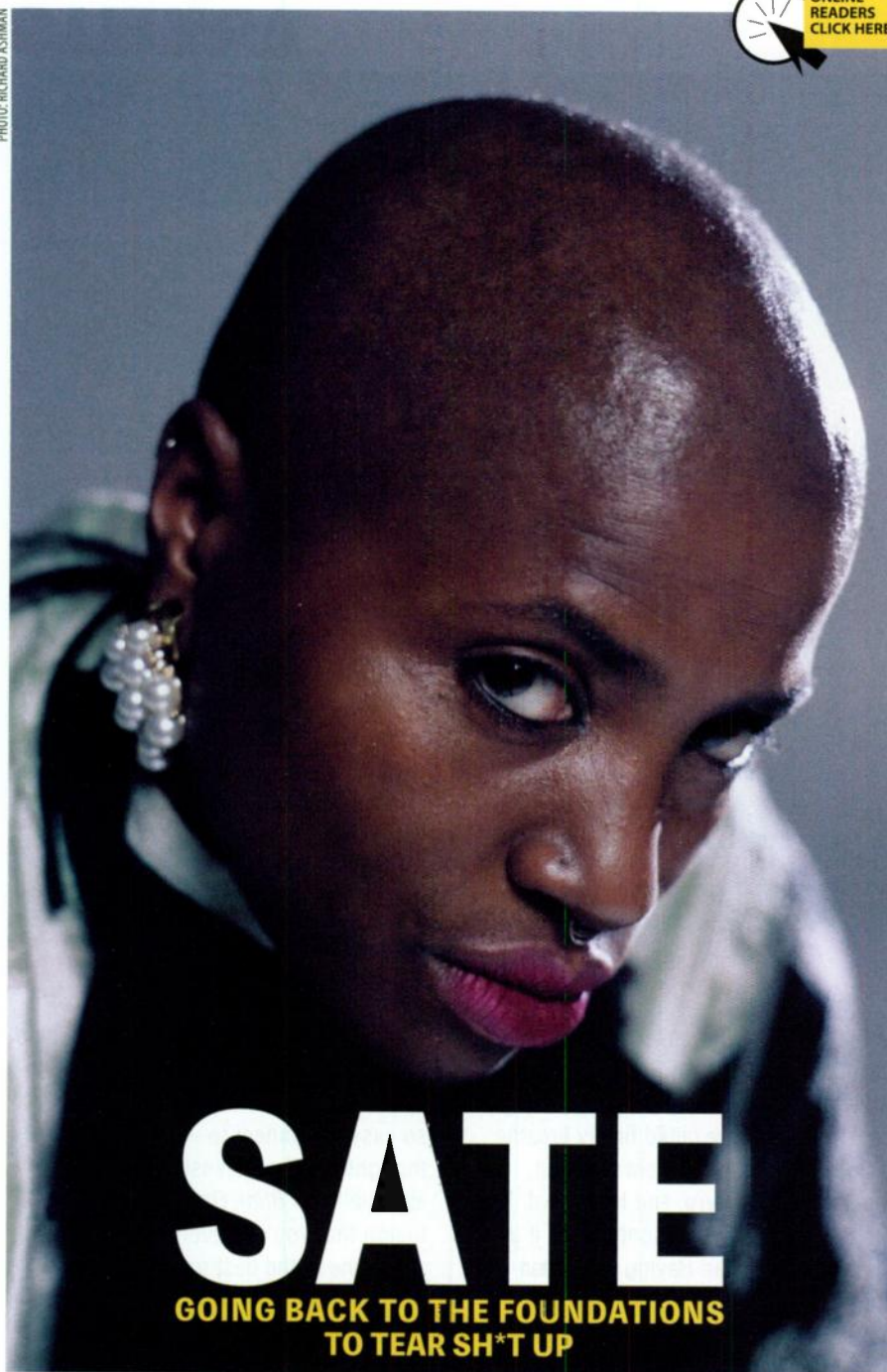
Pandemic conditions permitting, the group will embark on the *Blink Once* Tour throughout all of 2022, including arenas across Canada.

All in all, the Arkells are at a point in their career where they're truly just enjoying riding the wave and doing what feels best for the band – and in doing so for themselves, they've created a catalog that has seen numerous evolutions, shots in the dark, and now in retrospect paints a picture of tremendous growth,

both in the music and in the men behind it. That's what makes them such a special band, and why their music is so easy to connect to – it's real, it's thoughtful, it's endlessly creative, and especially on *Blink Once*, it's a musical fusion that you've never heard before.

"One of the best parts of the job is getting notes from folks that are like, 'Oh, this song really means a lot because it speaks to me and something I've gone through in my life.' And people write and share really sort of intimate details about something they're going through and how our music has helped, but that's amazing because we have that in our lives too. There are so many musicians and songs that we lean on when we're going through hard times – so if we can be that for somebody else, that's an amazing honour."

Andrew Leyenhorst is a Niagara-based freelance producer, engineer, mixer, and Consulting Editor at Canadian Musician.



SATE

GOING BACK TO THE FOUNDATIONS
TO TEAR SH*T UP

BY MICHAEL RAINE

“When

we’re talking about the roots and the foundations of punk, it’s the blues. That’s actually how far I went; I went back to the foundation. I just express the blues differently,” states SATE, who is without a doubt one of the most enthralling artists in Canadian rock at the moment.

She is a powerhouse vocalist and songwriter, and a rare type of live performer. Her music and performances are supercharged with mystery, sexuality, and raw rock and roll energy. Just go on YouTube and watch SATE’s 2017 performance from the German live

music program *Rockpalast*. Like one convert wrote in the comments, “Does anyone know what’s going on here?!?! She sings like that live?!?! There’s no auto tune (sic) in this mix!!! She’s on FIRE!!!!... Why is SATE not a household name?!?!?”

With her new independently-released album, *The Fool*, SATE’s star is on the rise in Canada. There’s a glowing article in the *Toronto Star*, her song “Know My Name” in Sportsnet promo videos, the album has gotten effusive reviews by outlets like *Exclaim!* and *Spill* magazines, the latter of which said, “Effortlessly blending masterfully curated tones and raw, unbridled attitude with elements from a wide range of influences, SATE has raised the bench-

mark for up-and-coming artists of all types, but especially in rock and alternative rock/pop.” And influential CBC Radio host Errol Nazareth said, “SATE is this city’s most charismatic and ferocious lead singer. If you disagree, you probably haven’t seen her tear up a stage.”

This job, though, is something SATE was quite literally born to do.

SATE – we should get out of the way for those who don’t know – is the daughter of late, iconic singer Salome Bey — the recent Canada’s Walk of Fame inductee who earned the moniker of “Canada’s First Lady of the Blues,” on top of being a Broadway actress, Dora and Juno Award winner, member of the Order of Canada, and Grammy nominee. And so, SATE has been on stages since she was six years old. “Actually,” she corrects with a laugh, “she was eight-and-a-half-months pregnant with me doing a show with the ambulance out back!”

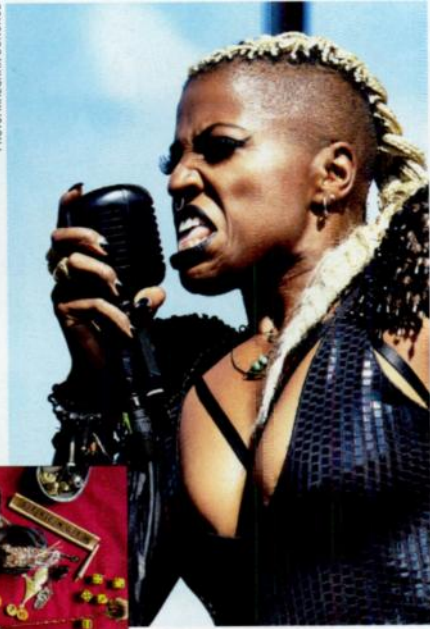
“You know, much to everyone’s disbelief, I can be shy,” she smiles. “I still hold that kid-like shy, tentative wonder, awe, or curiosity. Maybe that’s what it is, curiosity. I’m just sitting back and observing until I know what I’m getting into. But I remember always dancing. Always either being in my tutu or my tap shoes and I was choreographing in our living room, and I was just like, “Mom, put me on stage! I want to sing! I want to do that! I was *that kid*, and I went to a school for the arts, so I’ve always been that person. I wanted to create and I don’t know anything different than to be in that energy.”

After first releasing music under her birth name, Saidah Baba Talibah, including the 2011 album *(S)Cream*, she changed her stage name to SATE. In part, she has said, because people commonly assumed she was a “world music” artist simply because of her name. She also used to downplay the connection to her famous mother and left Bey out of her press bio. Of course, it’s not uncommon for the musical children of famous musicians to want to build their own artistic identities.

“But then I was like, ‘Wait a second, they don’t even know where I’m coming from,’ and that’s such a huge part of who I am,” she recalls about when she began to publicly embrace her mother’s legacy as part of her own artistic identity. “As a kid, you’re just like, ‘Whoa, amazing, I want to be like my mom, and I want to do this.’ But then, as you said, it’s that thing of like, ‘So, do you do this like your mom?’ Or even like, ‘So, you decided *not* to do what your mom does, and you went *this way*?’”

By “this way,” she’s referring to the louder, heavier punk-infused hard rock for which she’s becoming known. At first blush, it is in contrast to her mother’s blues and jazz music, but genre, SATE reminds us, does not matter and her mother knew this. Art, expression, and the process of getting there are what SATE was taught to cherish.

“I am so grateful to have chosen Salome Bey as my mother, and for her to have chosen me as her child, as the person who sits at her



feet in the end, it was like, 'Whoa, fucking goddess. Fucking holy shit at the things that you've done,' she exclaims.

"Just watching her and learning from her, and her reminding me of who I am. And just *process*, she taught me *process*. She taught me intention. So, the making-of is a gift. That's a gift that I'm bestowed. So yeah, it's fun. It's fun to explore and to be like, 'Oh, let's go down this path' and the adventure of creating, of being a vessel, of just opening yourself up and being like, 'Alright, universe, here we go.' And that's *The Fool*, right," she says, referring to her album and the hero of the tarot deck it's named after.

Tarot, numerology, and astrology, she says, are things SATE uses to help make sense of her journey in life. "Getting on stage, it's the same thing. That's really how *The Fool* came to be, besides seeing numbers and signs and all that stuff. But really, when it got down to me calling this '*The Fool*,' I realized that every time I step on stage, or I'm about to step on stage, or about to start a new project or anything, it's like, I'm stepping into this void, this unknown, this place, and there's no words for it. You feel it. It's exciting. It's scary as fuck. It can go anywhere; it really can go anywhere, and that's the fun part of art. For me, it's the opportunity, the invitation to surrender."

"You know, my mom, she grew up Mississauga and one of nine [children], and she's born in 1933. So, totally different upbringing and how she was going to express things. She really loved portraying blues women in her theatre performances. They kept casting her as Mother Earth and really wholesome, but she's like, 'Fuck this shit, I want to tear it up!' She never swore, though, I took it all for her [laughs]. But she was she was quite graceful and well put together. So, I would say I'm definitely an extension of my mother, and I'm an extension of the blues. Blues women were take-no-shit



THE FOOL ALBUM COVER

women in order to say what they had to say. You go listen to Lucille Bogan and come back to me and tell me where punk rock is coming from, you know? Like,

raunchy shit and being forward with what you had to say. Plus, my mom loves songs. More than being a genre, she would totally be like, 'Whatever you're doing, do it; *express*.' SATE says emphatically, dismissing any notion that punk began with The Ramones or hard rock began with Black Sabbath. "We're coming from Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters and Bessie Smith and Big Mama Thornton and Ma Rainey and all of them. You know, the women singing the blues were the first voices heard on record before the men. They were punk rock before punk rock."

So, it's fitting that SATE is friends with Densil McFarlane and Colanthy Humphrey of fellow Toronto-based punk rockers The OBGMs. As Black artists who are not just existing in, but really *leaders* of a predominantly white music scene and genre, they're allies in the good fight. (Side note: check out McFarlane and Humphrey in the role of SATE's backing band in the video for "Nobody").

"We talk about burning shit down. That's what we talk about. You know, the question always comes around talking about being a woman or being black. That's what I wake up with every day," she says. "I know that this is a conversation piece because we're talking around really understanding people's lived experiences in spaces. But it's still always in relation to white [perspectives], as opposed to it just being the music. I mean, it's a larger conversation. It's not just like, what is it like being or feeling, like... it's a larger, deeper conversation. It's many years of colonization, of manipulation, and patriarchy, and capitalism."

Those deeper topics reveal themselves again when we chat about being an independent artist. I mention, kind of matter-of-factly, that I'd assume she had some label interest

since the release of her *RedBlack&Blue* album in 2017. "That's sweet of you to say that," she responds, but says that being an independent artist is both a choice she's made and an obstacle placed in front of her. "If we go back to the colonization and patriarchy and the capitalism, racism, and sexism and all the things; those could be my obstacles and my challenges and the reasons why. I can focus on those, or I could focus on the successes and continuing to break down the doors, or walk into the doors that are open, versus trying to get people to see me that are fickle."

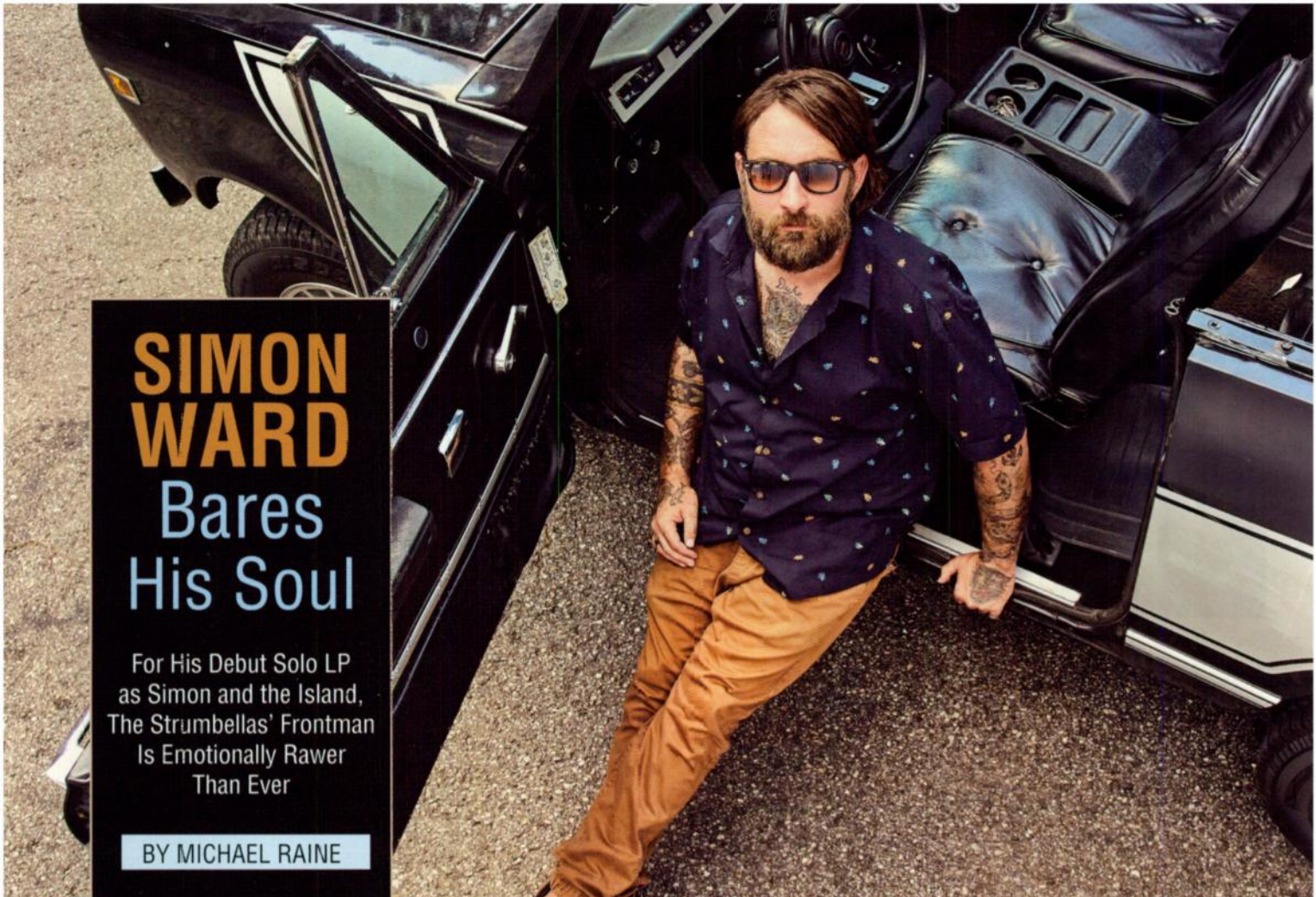
Control is important, and something not widely given up without earned trust and due value. For SATE, control is essential to keep leading the life and artistic career she envisions. "I have control over me. I'm not malleable. I'm a collaborator, but I'm not malleable. So, it's like, I'm flexible, but I've been told that I'm intimidating because I'm a Black woman on stage who's passionate and aggressive or assertive. It's like, even outside of being Black, as a woman on stage, to express those feelings – aggression and sexuality and all of those things that are made accessible for men – these are all the conversations and all of the things, all of the decolonization, and all of the unraveling and the fucking shadow work that has to be done for a lot of people," she states. "So, again, there's layers in *why am I independent?* It's for my sovereignty. But also, it's a grappling. It's like, do I fit in? I even had to work through that. Wanting to fit in. Desiring to fit in. That's soul searching."

For now, though, SATE is defining success her own way, and redefining it as she goes. There's the success she knows she's had, and which is obvious to anyone who hears *The Fool* and/or is lucky enough to see her live. She's had the courage to not just take the space she's owed in the rock world, but prove that she can do it as good or better than anyone else. And then there's the success she aspires to and strives for.

"Success for me, or what I saw as success, you know, Michael Jackson was success, or Prince and Madonna, that was success. Like, my mom was success. But, there's so many different levels of success," she says. "As I became an adult, it was like, adulthood is a fucking success, you know? Doing an independent tour with my band that I'm paying, and I don't have a label, and I don't have all of the machine behind me, but having a packed room and a successful tour, *that's* a success. So, it's redefining what you celebrate in your life and what you've accomplished. There are so many things that I really can celebrate, and say, 'Fuck, I'm a success.' Do I want more? Yeah, I want more, but I'm a success."

Listen to our full conversation with SATE on the Nov. 10, 2021 episode of the Canadian Musician Podcast.

Michael Raine is the Editor-in-Chief of Canadian Musician.

A photograph of Simon Ward, a man with a beard and sunglasses, sitting in the driver's seat of a classic car. He is wearing a dark blue patterned shirt and orange pants. The car's interior is visible, including the leather seats and dashboard. The car is parked on a gravel surface.

SIMON WARD

Bares His Soul

For His Debut Solo LP as Simon and the Island, The Strumbellas' Frontman Is Emotionally Rawer Than Ever

BY MICHAEL RAINE

Of the nine songs on *Simon and the Island*, his debut solo album, it's somewhat ironic that the only song written for the album, "Muse," is the one that sounds the most like a Strumbellas song. *Oh my god, I know you're struggling/And oh my god, I know you'll love again/I'll take your side/ no matter what you do/ You'll be my muse.* It's an instant singalong chorus that sticks in your head immediately. Really, it's a perfect chorus; the kind that Ward has unleashed time and time again in his main job with the mega-successful folk-pop band.

"The only song for the record that I wrote this year was 'Muse,' the first song on the record. I remember that this depression kind of blocked me creatively and I hadn't written anything cool in like three months. Then I sat down at this piano one day and I just banged out 'Muse' in about 10 minutes. And I sent it to my manager and to my brother-in-law, who's the producer on the record, and I was like, 'Hey, it's been a while since I sent you guys a song, but here's one,' and they really loved it. So, we almost didn't get it on the record," he recounts to *Canadian*

Musician over a Zoom chat shortly before the album's release in November 2021. Like "probably 70% of my music," he adds, it's written for his wife.

Ward's battles with depression and anxiety are not something he's hidden. In Strumbellas lyrics, and in media interviews over the last few years, especially following the cancellation of a Canadian tour in pre-pandemic 2020 because his struggles had reached a crisis point. Because of his emotional fortitude and desire to help others, he's held very little back in this regard. That said, he's rarely felt as *vulnerable* as he does throughout *Simon and the Island*, or as he did during our conversation about the record.

"I think my favourite quote is from Jon Kabat-Zinn... and he said, 'you can't control the wave but you can learn how to surf it.' That kind of stuck with me. So, are there coping mechanisms? I'm actually going through this total journey in trying everything," he shares. "Like, I'm trying medication, I'm trying meditation, I'm exercising, I'm going for walks, I'm reading self-help books. You know, the list that your doctors give you to learn how to cope and to help depres-

sion, I'm trying everything and I'm at a bit of a tough spot. I'm not seeing the results that I'd like to see through all these things. So, I'm just personally going through a journey of learning how to find my own coping mechanisms and I'm right in it."

Comments like this are hard to not think about while listening to a song like "I'm Not Doing Fine" from the album. The title alone says it outright, and each verse wades through the deep waters of depression. *An ugly mind/covered in mud/nothing works/cept drugs.* Ward whisper-sings over a slow snare beat and some subdued piano and strings, his aching voice completely at the forefront.

Within that journey, he describes his relationship with music as "a real love/hate thing." When it comes to, say, going for a walk and listening to music, he knows it helps him feel better, but the depression makes him not want to go for walks and listen to music.

"So, I haven't been listening to very much music or writing very much music and I'm super frustrated by that. But when I do force myself to go on a walk and listen to some jams, I do enjoy it, and it does bring



me up and makes me feel better. But for the most part, this demon has kind of blocked me creatively and I just don't find myself listening to very much music. Although, I will say, my kids love music and I'm right into it. Have you ever heard of *Z-O-M-B-I-E-S?*" he says, referring to the musical Disney show. He seems to perk up when discussing his kids' (three, seven, and 10 years old) love of music. Maybe that's influenced one his other recent writing projects, which he mentions while discussing why he went the solo route for this album.

"For me as a songwriter, I like to try new and different projects. For example, I just wrote a kids' song with the band Splash 'n Boots and am also writing songs in the EDM world. One day I even hope to write instrumental songs for films. I think it's both important and fun for me to try new things as a songwriter and this solo project just felt right to do it on my own and try a new musical adventure," he says.

Given pandemic realities, there was also a convenience factor that influenced the timing of this project. The producer, Brian Pickett, is also Ward's brother-in-law and lives on the same street. "So, for a year or whatever, we just walked to each other's houses and did this record together. It was really easy and convenient, and it just worked out as the only option to put music out."

Thankfully, and as he expected, his Strumbellas bandmates were completely supportive. "You literally couldn't have put me in a band with five nicer people. So, overall, they were just super cool with it," he says. "I would send them stuff whenever they wanted to hear it and just be like, 'Hey, check out this song I'm working on' and they were all very positive. They're such amazing people that it wasn't weird or anything."

Aside from "Muse," the other eight tracks on *Simon and the Island* already existed in some form before Ward decided to make a solo record. But what that really means is he had thousands of song snippets in the form of voice memos on his phone that had accumulated over the years. "So many voice memos! In terms of more completed songs, I would say I picked those from about 100. Maybe the eight that I picked, other than 'Muse,' are probably pared down from about 100 other songs I had," he explains. "Some were fragments. Generally, when I write music, I typically never write a bridge. So, I have 50 songs in my iTunes that I've made but they don't have bridges. So, for the whole record, all those bridges were written recently."

Given his preternatural gift for writing infectious choruses (see "Spirits," "Salvation," "Greatest Enemy," "War," etc., etc. from The Strumbellas' discography), it's not surprising that the majority of songs begin by writing the chorus. For these eight tunes, though, it was a bit of a different challenge.

"That's where 98% of my songs start is the chorus. Just because, in my opinion, it's the hardest part. So, I kind of work from that and then I just patch it together around that," he explains, saying he'll often bang around at the piano singing improvised lyrics until something comes out that makes him go, "Oh, that's kind of a cool line" and he builds around it.



"This was a bit of a different thing for me," he continues, talking about finishing songs found in the voice memos. He'd purposely listen to the unfinished songs while, say, doing the laundry and just see what caught his ear. Often it was the melodies that inspired him. Or, for one of the other standout tracks, it was an opening lyric.

"For example, 'Moon,' I love the line, 'All my friends are staying in/and I'm headed to the moon.' That one stuck with me and I thought, 'Okay, I got to finish that one because I really like that opening line.' That would happen with other ones, too, so this was almost a bit of a different process for me. I almost selected it based on just some fragment that I liked and not necessarily the chorus," he says. "I'd just sit down with a guitar and say stuff and sing stuff and I have zero plan. I'm not an A-type personality. I just go in and then I listened back and if I hear something I like, I finish it. It's almost too simplistic... I'm sure there's songwriters out there who have a plan but I don't. I just throw stuff at the wind and if I like it, I'll finish it."

Musically, he credits Pickett with the album's restraint. In Strumbellas songs, too, Ward has often written about his mental

health and other struggles, but the band's music often lifts the emotional weight of the songs. So, compared to his solo LP, his lyrics have never felt this exposed, largely thanks to the sparser instrumentation. But it was sometimes a case of building a song up and then paring it back again.

"As the instrumentation developed, it was, honestly, just whatever fit the song the best. There wasn't necessarily a plan going in, other than I really love strings, so I was like, 'Put lots of strings in; I love strings!' It was actually super fun because I would send him off a song and then three days later, he would send me back his version of the instrumentation. It was really cool because, say, I didn't expect to hear piano. So, a lot of it was his brainchild during that process. It was actually a really fun experience hearing somebody else's interpretations of my songs," he shares. He adds that being a bit more detached, and creating that element of surprise in the creation process made it "like my dream album to make." He also adds with a cheeky smile about working with his brother-in-law: "We'd talk about it and hang out and say, 'Oh, I like this... I don't like that,' and we do that together. But it was amazing for me because I just bossed him around and it was fantastic! But yeah, he did most of the instrumentation."

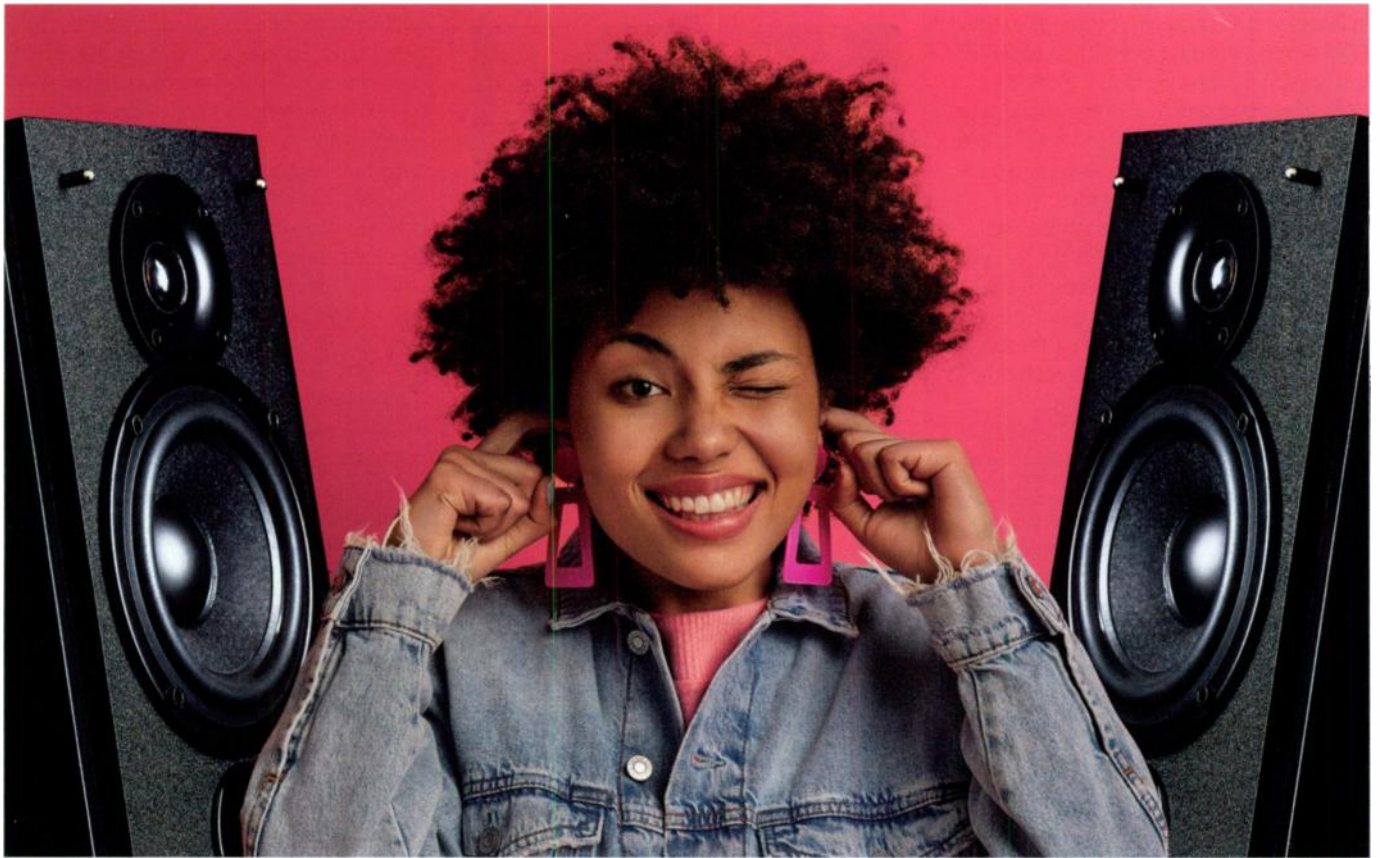
"I knew ahead of time that this album wouldn't be a radio album, and that definitely gives you some freedom and takes the pressure way off, for sure," Ward said to me ahead of its release. He acknowledges he's struggled with placing too much expectations on himself, both as a writer and commercial artist, and suffered when a song or album didn't do as well as he'd hoped. He also recognizes this may sound odd to someone on the outside who sees The Strumbellas playing to huge crowds or late-night TV audiences, releasing platinum-selling singles, and picking up Juno Awards. "So, I'm doing my best to just not have any expectations and hopes or anything like that. Maybe subconsciously I do, but on a conscious level, I'm really just proud of it. I'm happy that it's out there. I hope that, maybe, you know, a song gets on a TV show somewhere just for the artistic factor of it. Yeah, I'd love to see that. But I'd also love to get some messages from people saying that it helped them out during a hard time."

Michael Raine is the Editor-in-Chief of Canadian Musician.

Protect Your Hearing Before It's Too Late

For musicians, engineers, and producers, their ears are their most vital tool – so we must stop ignoring the damage being done to them

BY IAN COHEN



Turn the volume to 11! Originally from the classic rock mockumentary *This is Spinal Tap*, this cliché of all clichés sums up the entire situation with regard to musicians, and their generally uncompromising love for loud music. While practicing, performing, or producing, it's difficult to resist getting louder – after all, you're wailing. But to stay working and have longevity in the music business, musicians need to consider the positive effects of treating their ears with some mercy during the journey.

Listen to most music industry luminaries, and you'll hear (no pun intended) some pretty enlightening stories on the topic.

LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY

PERSPECTIVE – STEVE FERRONE

Just ask Steve Ferrone, the Grammy Award-winning drummer with credits that include 24-years touring and recording with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, as well as working with George Harrison, Chaka Khan, Eric Clapton, Anita Baker, and many others. Ferrone reveals that he has suffered some hearing loss, and it was a gradual decline.

"Ear damage, it's just something that we have, you know?" says Ferrone. "You don't really notice it coming on. It just happened over the years for me."

He described an event that occurred while touring with Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers: "We were playing in Boston, and in the heat of the battle I used one in-ear monitor headset, with a click, and that was about it. And, I'm sitting up there and playing, and all of a sudden, I hear this noise in my ear," Ferrone remembers. "I could still hear the click and I'm like, 'Oh, there's something wrong with my headset. And, I'm always hesitant to turn around and tell my roadie, 'Hey, there's something wrong,' because he starts unplugging stuff, and he unplugs everything... So, I just thought, you know, I'll just live with it. And when we finished the song, I said, 'Hey, there's something wrong with my headset, it's making a horrible noise.' But then I pulled my headset out, and the noise was still there!"

Ferrone continues: "I went over to Massachusetts General Hospital and I came out of testing and the guy said, 'Well, you've lost like 40 percent of your lows off the bottom end, and 30 percent of the highs.' And what that meant for me was, *I know I have problems*. So, for a descriptive, medical term for what's going on: my hearing is screwed!"

Luckily Ferrone says the noise did go away after some time, but musicians often choose to practice, rehearse, and perform at volumes that could cause injury to their ears. This could alter their careers and affect their health. It may also cause difficulty in their day-to-day ability to hear family, friends, and spoken word. Thankfully, the injury can be averted.

PERSPECTIVE – DAVE KOZ

Dave Koz is an 11-time Billboard number-one and platinum-selling contemporary jazz saxophonist and humanitarian. With me, he shares his stance on the need to develop logical steps to protect hearing in order to prepare for an extended career in music.

"For any musician starting out now, your ears are your life. If you don't have your hearing, you've got nothing, you can't play music," says Koz. "And so, starting good practices and good habits early in life will help keep your hearing at optimal levels, you hope."

Koz likens the process of being a professional musician to being a professional athlete – you have to be mindful of your body. For professional musicians, the ears are the most crucial part of a critical system that allows them to perform at the highest level.

"You only have two ears, and you can't trade them in for new models. So, it's like every other part of your body, you have to really focus on it," says Koz. "I think, sometimes, we are kind of taking our bodies for granted, but as musicians we have to approach our bodies not unlike the way professional athletes would approach their bodies."

He adds: "All the mechanisms of your body are working, and helping you achieve what it is that you want to achieve as a musician, as a recording artist, as a touring musician."

Koz recently watched and recommended a movie for musicians to watch titled *Sound of Metal*. The Oscar-nominated movie starring Riz Ahmed was released in 2019

and tells the story of a heavy metal drummer who loses his hearing. It does a good job of addressing the potential for rapid hearing loss caused by overexposure, and does so in a powerful and thought-provoking manner.

"It's one of those movies that for any musician to watch, it's like, 'This could actually happen to us too.' So, that freaked me out," he reveals. "I think if there was anything else that could kind of put the fear of God in all of us about our ears, it was that movie."

Koz says one of the hardest things he's had to witness was a close friend and musical collaborator suffer significant hearing loss.

"The best learning for me has been watching him, and how he's been dealing with it," he says. "And when you see somebody that you know and love lose a significant part of their hearing, and what it does to their lives, it's a wake-up call."

PERSPECTIVE – OLA KVERNBERG

Ola Kvernberg is a Spellemannprisen Award-winning Norwegian jazz violinist and composer. He provides some suggestions for stage performers to consider.

"Take note from the experiences that make your ears ring and avoid them as much as you can. Approach any stage situation pragmatically, avoid cymbals and other high-pitched instruments, especially amplified, directly to the ear," Kvernberg advises. "Also, work with angles — it can be as simple as rotating your position on stage with just a few degrees."

Kvernberg also reveals that, "After my first four years of intense touring, my reintroduction to silence made me realize I had tinnitus."

Musicians and performers are not the only ones that have to consider their level of exposure. Recording engineers, mixers, and producers must also be aware.

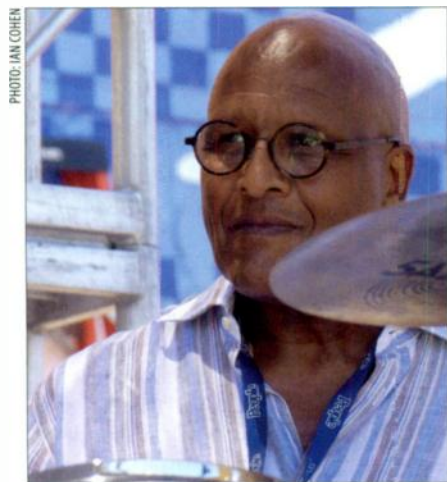


PHOTO: IAN COHEN

STEVE FERRONE

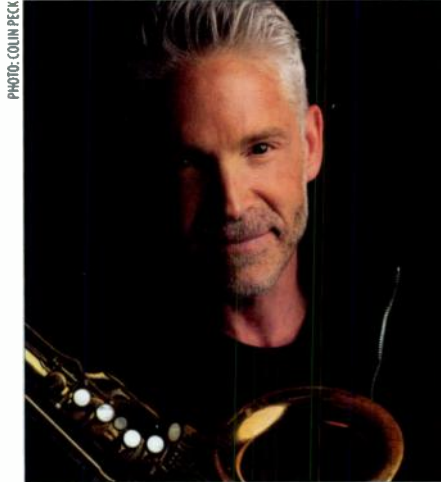


PHOTO: COLIN PECK

DAVE KOZ

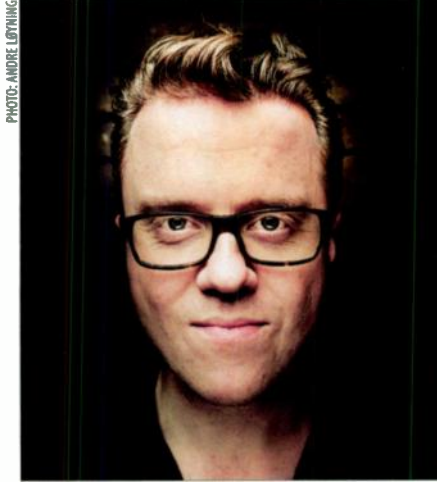


PHOTO: ANDRÉE LYNNING

OLA KVERNBERG

PERSPECTIVE – KEN CAILLAT

Ken Caillat is a Grammy Award-winning recording engineer and producer for Fleetwood Mac, David Becker, Taj Mahal, Lionel Richie, and many others. He gives a close-up view into his own tinnitus symptoms, and into the symptoms of others he works with. He also notes that some exposure couldn't be prevented, due to perceptions about having the music at quieter levels.

"I don't have much tonight, but every engineer I know has some tinnitus or some hearing loss, every musician," Caillat tells me. "So, in one of my ears, for some reason, the hearing is worse. But when I was a kid, and the volumes that the rockers wanted to be; they wanted it to be *loud*. So, you weren't a musician if you didn't have it loud."

Caillat has some additional advice in terms of a way to monitor volume levels from a mobile phone, even if it isn't considered fashionable.

"Turn it down. You know, most phones have a sound pressure level (SPL) app - try to keep things down... No matter how cool or uncool it may seem, try to keep levels below 100dB, and preferably 90dB."

Caillat shares a story of an experience he had being exposed to very loud guitar while recording Lindsey Buckingham from Fleetwood Mac.

"I had one situation where Lindsey was playing guitar, and he was plugged in and I said 'don't play for a second, because I've got to change the mic.' I went out of the control room to where he was, and I had my head and my left ear within two feet of the guitar cabinet, and he hits the chord. It came out of nowhere!"

Caillat discussed how fellow engineers, such as the late Al Schmitt (Henry Mancini, Steely Dan, Quincy Jones, etc.) use earplugs as often as possible, so that they can continue to have a career and work for as long as possible.

"The best engineers I know, like Al

Schmitt, wanted to be working. You don't necessarily make a lot of money in the music business, especially when you get older," explains Caillat. "So, he wanted to work until he was in his eighties and nineties. And so, he had earplugs for anything. He'd go to a concert and he'd put in earplugs."

PERSPECTIVE – RUSS LONG

Equally comfortable in the recording studio and the concert venue, Russ Long has engineered and mixed albums by Wilco, David Liebman, Dolly Parton, and toured with Amy Grant, Vince Gill, Paul Rogers, and many others. Long said that no matter how much equipment you possess, your ears are the priority for gaining and maintaining work in the industry.

"I don't care how many mics you own, what kind of monitors are in your studio, or what your gear collection looks like, an engineer's most important commodity is their ears," Long stresses.

Long explains that he saw some red flags when he heard about Pete Townshend's debilitating hearing loss, and that Townshend's story helped influence some of his audio engineering practices.

"Thankfully I read an interview with Pete Townshend early in my career that made me aware of the dangers of hearing loss," he explains. "So, I've always been conscious of not monitoring too loud, and taking regular breaks in the studio, and keeping the volume under control when I'm mixing live."

Long says that he brings earplugs wherever he goes, and he advised that engineers and musicians need to consider this as well.

"I always carry a pair of earplugs with me, and I use them whenever I go to a concert, or if in a situation where I'm exposed to loud music," he says. "When talking to young engineers and musicians, I can't emphasize enough the importance of getting a good pair of earplugs that protect your hearing, while still allowing you to enjoy the music."

EASY DOES IT

There are many ways to help reduce the exposure. The obvious way is to *turn it down*. Looking at additional tools for prevention, there are apps, such as the NIOSH Sound Level Meter app and others, that can be used discreetly during practice, rehearsal, and live performance.

As Long noted, earplugs are also beneficial. There are a wide variety of types and styles of "musician's" earplugs available. Some are passive, and some have electronics. Some are designed to work out-of-the-box, while others are custom molded. And some provide interchangeable or adjustable filters for controlling the amount of attenuation.

Westone, Earos, Earasers, Vibes, Decibullz, and even Fender are just some of the companies making hi-fi earplugs for musicians and audio professionals. Minuendo is another such manufacturer that makes earplugs for musicians (*Ed. Disclosure: Ian Cohen has done contract PR work for Minuendo*). Its chief product officer, Tom Trones, provided some insights related to earplugs, and some ideas on how and why to use them.

"I think the first key is to find some kind of earplugs that work for you. They should be comfortable, practical, and not ruin your listening experience," Trones says. "Also, I think it's really important that people be more aware of when to protect themselves. Even moderate levels can be risky if the exposure is over a prolonged period of time."

When asked about potential treatments on the horizon for tinnitus, Trones says that there isn't much help once a musician suffers hearing damage, so being proactive is essential. "Permanent hearing loss is so far irreversible," adds Trones. However, he cited a study published March 7, 2018, in the *Journal of Experimental Medicine* titled "New drugs could help prevent hearing loss," which point out that there is research being done that looks at ways to treat or prevent noise-induced hearing loss.

"There are some experimental compounds being considered by researchers that could eventually help treat noise-induced hearing loss," says Trones. He also reveals some information on technology Minuendo is working on related to earplugs. "We are currently developing electronic earplugs that measure the actual exposure to the ear, and then warn if the levels over time might be dangerous."

In terms of any other ways to increase consciousness in real-time, Trones says: "Another way to create more awareness could be to have a SoundEar noise monitor system installed - functioning as sound level meters in studios, rehearsal spaces, and

PHOTO: PY PAI



KEN CAILLAT

PHOTO: ERIC BROWN



RUSS LONG

concert arenas. When they light up red, it will give you a reminder to wear protection."

HEARING IS BELIEVING

Sensaphonics Hearing Wellness is a Chicago-based full-service hearing clinic for musicians. It also offers products, such as custom in-ear monitors and custom molded earplugs. Its president, Michael Santucci, AuD, provided some hope that opinions of earplugs have shifted into a more favourable light among musicians and concertgoers.

"I started in 1987, and it was laughed at to wear your earplugs. Now, I sit backstage with MusiCares at Lollapalooza and Riot Fest and we give away free earplugs, and literally there's 400 people in line to get them," says Dr. Santucci. "And these are people and artists, right? So, it's really changed. People are more attuned to it."

Dr. Santucci says that for any musicians who are reluctant to wear hearing protection, he recommends that they at least get tested yearly.

"If they don't want to wear hearing protection, they should at least do a baseline hearing test, and get an annual hearing check and monitor their hearing," he says. "Getting your hearing checked on a regular basis is really the basis of any hearing loss prevention program. It really can extend their career, and that's what it's all about."

Dr. Santucci also discussed a Vanderbilt University study that showed that in-ear monitor use doesn't automatically equate to lower volume.

"We did a study at Vanderbilt comparing getting your in-ear monitor levels to floor monitor levels. We wanted to see how much people turned down the in-ear monitor levels," explains Dr. Santucci. "We did 45 trials. Everybody turned them exactly the same, not even one dB between all the trials... and if you've been playing guitar at 100dB, you put on in-ears and guess what? You turn it to 100dB."

Dr. Santucci also points out that, although loud sound is the primary cause of tinnitus and hearing loss, it may not be the only cause.

"You can't assume it's about sounds," he states. "So yes, the leading cause in this country is loud sound exposure, but you could have mechanical issues in your jaw and neck."

TAKE FIVE

There are many resources to tap for the latest information, technology, trends, and education.

The American Academy of Audiology and Canadian Hearing Services are two such resources – they have links to resources, tools, fact sheets, articles, and a searchable database to find practitioners.



PHOTO: MOLONEY FILM

Tricia Lynn Scaglione, AuD, is an assistant professor of otolaryngology at the University of Miami. She is also director of the Tinnitus and Sound Sensitivities Clinic, and associate director of Clinical Education in Audiology for the UM Department of Otolaryngology. During a presentation for the American Academy of Audiology, Dr. Scaglione discussed a study that she conducted, together with Dr. Aurora Occa, Dr. Susan E. Morgan, Dr. Brianna Kuzbyt, and Dr. Richard J. Bookman. The study was published in *The Journal of Communication in Healthcare*, and titled "What would an evidence-based tinnitus patient education program look like? Findings from a Scoping Review".

Dr. Scaglione explains that the study aimed to evaluate the impact of tinnitus education, possible methods for delivering the information to patients, and to provide a guideline for teaching patients coping mechanisms for tinnitus.

"The whole purpose of the study was to develop guidelines that audiologists, ENTs, and other physicians can use, to provide tinnitus education in their practice," says Dr. Scaglione. "There wasn't an agreement of the delivery model that should be used for tinnitus education. It ranged from one-on-one to group models, internet-delivered, and even pamphlets. However, there was a general agreement about the information that should be portrayed to patients or delivered, and this included teaching patients that tinnitus management involves coping with tinnitus, not curing tinnitus."

Another resource is the In-Ear Monitor International Trade Organization (IEMITO). Its executive director, Mike Dias, described the goals of the IEMITO. "The mission of the IEMITO is to promote the uses and benefits of in-ear monitors," states Dias. "We specialize in providing information regarding earphones and in-ear monitors

that are generating sound, not passively blocking sound."

That said, when asked, Dias describes different settings when a musician may opt for musicians' earplugs, and mentioned some characteristics. "You see people going into physical environments like clubs or concerts, or anywhere where it could be potentially dangerous, and not doing anything about it," he says. "All musicians should have a custom-fit musician's earplug with a linear filter. And even if it's not a custom fit, there are some companies who are making wonderful products."

In terms of potential hearing health conservation benefits related to using in-ear monitors versus wedges while performing at a concert, Dias states: "If properly used, you can choose to listen at a lower SPL than you would be on a loud stage trying to catch a feed off of your wedge."

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LAST MAN STANDING

In closing, Ken Caillat shared some wisdom about bucking perceptions, so that you can work as long as possible, and so you can outlast anyone in the business.

"Don't let some 20-year-old bopper make fun of you, because when they get old someday, you know, you're maybe pushing them around in a wheelchair," says Caillat. "It's all about the last man standing."

This article was first published in the U.S. by JAZZed Magazine and is shared with permission to Canadian Musician.

Ian Cohen is a media and marketing professional. He writes about pro audio, immersive audio, audio storytellers, music creation/production, and artists. He's also a closet music producer and gear junkie.



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LEARN, EVOLVE, PROGRESS

OUR 2022 DRUMS & PERCUSSION SPECIAL

BY MICHAEL RAINE

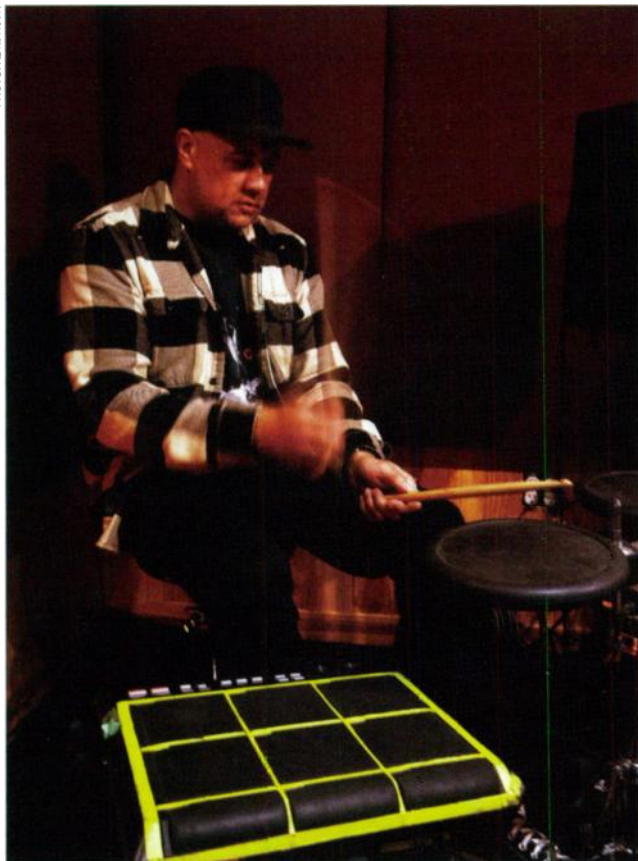
Each year when *Canadian Musician* pulls together a diverse group of musicians for our drums and percussion special, a theme emerges. Sometimes that theme is planned, and sometimes – like this year – you simply chat with a few interesting drummers and a theme (or two) seems to reveal itself. In talking with our five extraordinary drummers for this year's panel, one such theme was their thirst to constantly learn and improve. As well, it's evident that we're spoiled in this country by the vast array of cultural and musical influences in our musical scenes.

And so, let's get to the conversations with five unique and fascinating stick-wielders...

These interviews have been edited for length and clarity.

PHOTO BY JOSH SARGENT/REAR PEARLS

PHOTO: ADRIAN KAHN



KEYS N KRATES' ADAM TUNE

Alongside bandmates David Matisse (keyboardist) and Jr. FloFor (turntablist), Adam Tune has been the drummer for gold-selling, Juno-winning trio Keys N Krates. They're known for their unique bass-centric, sample-driven sound that blends electronic and hip-hop influences.

CM: What's been the process of you finding your own sound within Keys N Krates?

Tune: Well, it's progressed a lot. At first what happened was we were doing these, sort of, live remixes, and I was playing acoustic drums and Matisse was just playing a keyboard and there was no click track. It was just the three of us jamming and we actually went into a place called Puck's Farm and just did a live-off-the-floor record. We just basically played our show and then tried to play it as well as we possibly could and that was the very first Keys N Krates record. It was called *Almost 39 Minutes* and it was just us playing our show in a barn in King, Ontario [laughs].

Then, over the course of time, once we got our booking agent and we got into more of the jam band-type of scene, that started to meld with the electronic stuff and

we started playing festivals. At that time, we were starting to produce our own original music as Keys N Krates. That's kind of when the progression came, because we were doing that on laptops, and then we would go and do the show and I'd be on an acoustic kit and it wasn't really jiving. So, that's when I started to slowly incorporate electronic stuff. Now, except for the cymbals, I'm playing all electronic stuff...

The *Every Nite* EP was the first release that we put out when we didn't really have a home as a group until the electronic trap scene was like, "Hey, these guys are like a trap band." We're like, "Sure, whatever you want to call us, if you're going to book us, then sick, we're a trap band" [laughs]. So, then we would play these trap shows and that's when we started to make more electronic-friendly records that other DJs at these festivals could play. That's where "Dum Dee Dum" and those kinds of records came out.

So, we would have to take those sounds from Ableton, and then put them on pads, and then just figure out how to play the songs after. So, since the *Every Nite* EP, it's always been backwards where we always make the songs first, with no regards to how many hands I have, and then it's like, "we have to play this live somehow." Then we have to sit and figure out how to make this thing sound something like the album with only three of us and no backing tracks. So, that was kind of a bit of a struggle. But it always sounded kind of huge, though, because when you only have three people playing and you don't have so much going on, it actually sounds bigger, which is kind of cool.

CM: Over the course of your development as a drummer, was there a particular skill you identified that was the hardest to learn?

Tune: Well, to be quite honest, I'm really just a groove player. I've always admired the technical drummers, the guys with the gospel chops and that stuff, but I've never been that. I've always just been meat and potatoes, make people dance, and hold the groove down. So, I've always wanted to be that, even though I know during the show, there's not really a place for it.

I've always wanted to dive into being more technical, but we were so busy on the road and I was always fearful of learning the proper technique that I never learned a long time ago. You know how you sometimes have to regress a little bit before you can move forward? I couldn't really afford to do that while we're on the road. So, I was always afraid to go from, you know, playing heel down to heel up, even though I know that playing heel up is way better. I've known that for years, so I've always wanted to play heel up, but I wasn't about to mess with what was going on at the time.

CM: I saw you say in another interview that you were able to unlearn a bunch of bad habits during COVID. Was that what you were referring to?

Tune: Yeah, that exactly. I hadn't properly gone back to the basics of, like, really getting my left hand as strong as my right, which I should have done earlier in hindsight.

So, when I started drumming, I played in my mom's basement and obviously I didn't have shoes on in the house. So, I always played without shoes on. That was something for years and years, if I tried to play drums with shoes on, it just felt like bricks were on my feet, and so for years and years I have always played without shoes. Then, finally, during the pandemic, even when I'm in my house and practicing, I would put my shoes on and start to practice. I'm like, "Now I get to learn how to play with shoes," which is amazing! [laughs] You know how good that is for cold Canadian weather and playing outdoors? Just playing with shoes on is amazing. Or walking across dirty stages with no shoes on? It's just so crazy. So, I learned how to do that and I learned how to play heel up. Yeah, it's super embarrassing, the whole thing...

I also actually went and bought an acoustic kit again. So now I'm playing on an acoustic kit again, which is amazing and crazy. It's just quite embarrassing to hear it after playing a fully-electronic kit for so long and then to feel a real kit again is totally different.

CM: What is your go-to or favourite percussion setup?

Tune: I use a Roland SPD-SX [sampling pad] as the main brain, and then I use the Roland TD-30 kit for the electronic toms. Then I use two Roland KT-10 electronic drum pedals and then a couple of extra Roland PD pads — I'm not sure what specific ones they are, but just small round pads to add on. Then just 16- and 17-in cymbals of whatever the festival provides. I don't bring big breakables because we have so much stuff to bring as it is.

That's pretty much the studio kit, as well, but instead of loading the sounds into the SPD-SX, I trigger Ableton. So, today we were jamming, for instance, and I have the kit set up. So, we'll just load a bunch of sounds from Splice or any of these sample platforms, or our own sample stuff, and just load them into a drum rack and then trigger it from that electronic kit.

It was out of necessity, because we were getting killed at festivals. I would bring my acoustic kit and you'd be playing with these electronic DJs and you can never make an acoustic kit slap in a festival like you can a fully-mastered DJ mix. We were just getting buried, so we had no real choice except to switch to all electronic stuff.



JUNIOR SANTOS

*Master percussionist Junior Santos has performed professionally since he was 15 years old, first in his native country, the Dominican Republic, and in Canada since 1989. His debut solo album, *Compambiche*, was nominated for the 2021 Juno Award for Jazz Album of the Year: Solo. Santos has also played as a freelance musician with Laura Fernandez, Joaquin Nunez Hidalgo, Zeynep Ozbilen, and others.*

CM: Can you tell me about your musical background and how you got seriously into percussion? And how did you develop your own style over the years?

Junior Santos: I grew up in the Dominican Republic and my dad's a musician; he's a piano player and had his own band. He wanted me to play the piano, but the drums and percussion just called me — it was something natural for me. I was very shy and I always used to play around with the instruments in my house when nobody was watching me. So, I basically learned on my own. I think I was probably nine or 10 years old, maybe, when I started taking an interest in that.

I used to listen to a lot of jazz, plus merengue and other music from the Dominican. Basically, at one point, I

with Drake. So, it was a last-minute thing where Orin was kind of in a frenzy and didn't know what drummer to get, so he asked Anthony to give some options, and Anthony fortunately gave him my name.

Now, funny enough, I was actually at Canada's Wonderland the day that Orin hit me up on Facebook Messenger. You know how sometimes when people message you and if you take hours to respond, sometimes you lose the gig because they just move on? So, I was at the waterpark and I didn't have my phone for about four hours. I got back to my phone and thankfully the message was only a half an hour old. So, I got it and was like, "Hell yeah, I want to do this!"

It was crazy that I didn't really have to do an audition or anything because Orin trusts Anthony's judgment so much. But these two people who have kind of been within my life thought of me. And basically, my audition was the day that we had a rehearsal and were just getting the lay of the land at the *Launch* set. Hill Kourkoutis was the guitar player on the gig and I'd known Hill from before, too, so it all came full circle.

But basically, that gig was all about reading, so it got back to what Orin told me when I was in high school. It all came full circle. You know, we're learning music almost every day, for every new episode, for every artist on the show. So, that was one thing where my training and background in going to school at Humber really helped me with sightreading and stuff.

So, that was pretty much what the gig entailed. Also, having an electronic background, so using drum pads. I'm sourcing sounds, and Orin or Anthony would send me sounds and I'm putting it on my drum pad and having it ready to go for all the rehearsals and the shooting day. The drummer had to be someone who could read the music quickly and learn all the tunes. It was all pretty fast paced, but nonetheless, it was a great experience.

CM: Over the course of your development as a drummer, was there a particular skill that you found hardest to learn?

Gibbons: The one thing [in school] I disliked the most was transcribing; like having to play exactly what people play. That was a hard skill for me to do, so that took me a long time to learn. I really don't do that at all in my professional career now. But now that I look back at it, it was cool to learn things like that back then... Well, honestly, I actually do use a little bit of that when I'm learning other people's music, where I would kind of write down the groove so I wouldn't forget it. I can hear it and then write it down. Maybe an important fill that they did in the song that the artist wants me to do live, I would transcribe that.

CM: During the pandemic, was there anything related to drumming or music that you were taking the time to learn or work on, that you probably wouldn't have time to otherwise?

Gibbons: I was really producing a lot. For some reason, I got really inspired in the first four to six months of the pandemic. So, I was making a lot of beats and making a lot of music and collaborating with people a little bit. That was the skill I was learning, more so, and actually learning more about mixing and being a mixing engineer. So, I was really into that at the time, and still doing that to this day. But yeah, things definitely slowed down drumming-wise, which was okay, and it gave me time to learn more about production and mixing things. Even till this day, I'm still learning and doing that stuff.

Now in 2021, since about the end of June or July, gigs have been happening, thankfully, for me. I've been busy with that. Then along with having people at my home studio, there's basically ups and downs of the pandemic. But during those downs, I actually took up learning how to DJ, as well. Earlier in 2021 I bought a DJ controller and actually had a couple little gigs DJing. So, getting into that realm now, too.

CM: Lastly, what's your favorite or go-to drum kit and gear that you have to bring?

Gibbons: To be honest, I'm not a big gearhead and I'm terrible with gear names. I always feel bad when I go to gigs and people ask me, you know, what kind of snare it is? Like, is it birch or what kind of wood? Honestly, I have no clue! But one thing I really want to learn is more about my gear.

But from what I know, I like Yamaha kits. I have a Yamaha DP Series that I've had since I was like four and I still use it. I don't really use it on gigs anymore, but I've recorded it here a little bit and used it a lot over my career. Then I also have a Slingerland drum kit. I think it's from the '60s or '70s. But that's the one I primarily use now. It's got a big 22-in. kick and then big toms. I only use two toms right now, but it has the capacity to do four.

Then, if I'm on a gig somewhere, or if I have the ability to choose what I want like I did for *The Launch*, they got me a Tama kit. I don't know what series are or anything like that, but it was a huge kit and it was awesome to play. I think I brought my own snare, but can't remember what it was [laughs]. Sorry!

I do like Sabian cymbals. The AAX Series are my favourite. I was using Zildjian a lot when I was younger, but then I discovered the AAX cymbals. I think people at Humber were using them and I loved the sound of those. And 5A Los Cabos for sticks I've been using for the last few years.



SALIN CHEEWAPANSRI

*Salin Cheewapansri is a Thai-born, Montreal-based drummer who recently released her debut full-length album, *Cosmic Island*. She also drummed on Dominique Fils-Aimé's critically-acclaimed 2019 album *Stay Tuned!*, which won the Juno Award for Best Vocal Jazz Album of the Year and was shortlisted for the Polaris Music Prize.*

CM: To start off, how would you describe your own style or approach as a drummer?

Salin Cheewapansri: I think my style is a mix of definitely soul, funk, and breakbeats. There's a bit of an electronic music element to it, too.

CM: Over the years, was there a skill or aspect of your playing that you found the hardest to learn? If so, how did you approach conquering that?

Cheewapansri: Oh, that's a good question. Well, right now at this stage, it's to have a flow without hurting myself. Because, actually, I just recently got injured from overplaying. So, I'm trying to find a balance where I can play a lot without getting hurt. So, right now that's really what I'm figuring out; how can I play for long stretches without having any pain? Also, how do I keep up the endurance, you know? So, I do a bit of working out to get stronger physically while also playing relaxed. Also,

breathing — we forget to breathe and are just playing, playing, playing.

CM: For your album, *Cosmic Island*, you said the music was inspired by two places, Montreal and the Earth itself. So, how is that reflected in your playing?

Cheewapansri: For me, music is in another space and time, in a way, so with the album I'm trying to bridge that somehow. Also, of course, it's related to Montreal as an island, but at the same time, the music itself is a bit cosmic in a way, for me. I think "airy" would be the word.

CM: Whatever skill we may be talking about, everyone has a different ceiling and a natural skill set. So regardless of whatever that may be, what's your advice to other drummers about maximizing their potential on the drums?

Cheewapansri: That's a good question. I think it's a mix of being disciplined and consistency — and also listening. Also, having fun. Of course, you can work hard, but you need to enjoy it or have a little bit of fun doing what you do, or having a little bit of creative space. I mean, you can go far with technicality and stuff, but to really be using your voice, you need to have fun.

CM: You played on Dominique Fils-Aimé's acclaimed album *Stay Tuned!*, which was the second in a trilogy of albums exploring the history of popular Black music. That one was focused on jazz music. So, how did you work your own style or approach into what she was looking for?

Cheewapansri: I think for me it was the process. She was very clear about what she needed. So, for the second record I worked on, she was just like, "I just want you to come in and play whatever you feel." And that's why it has a bit of a collage feel. I never heard the songs before I started. Like, I remember her manager contacting me and was like, "Do you have your drum set?" I'm like, "I don't even know the music yet, so I don't know what drum set to bring to suit it? But I have this..." He's like, "Okay, just bring them." So, "Sure, I'm going with the flow, but can I just hear some stuff?" He said, "No, no, no, just come and you'll be fine."

I would have liked to prepare something but there was nothing like that. I just go there with my drums and they play in the first song and they just play whatever, anything. That's why she made it jazz. I mean, some of the songs, I really tried to relate to the lyrics somehow. Like, what is that song that begins "nine little rocks"? ["9LRR"]? She explained to me the quote, or the voice, and how

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back in the day in the United States there was segregation between Black and white students and [the story of the “Little Rock Nine”.] That’s why I was like, “Oh, I really wanted to have that army feel.” I try to blend it with whatever story she told.

CM: For other session drummers, what’s your top advice?

Cheewapansri: Play less [laughs]. Yes, less is more in the studio. In a live show, that’s a different story, but less is more.

CM: Lastly, what’s your go-to drum setup right now for live shows?

Cheewapansri: It depends on the show. Right now, I have a Ludwig Breakbeat kit right now, just because I’m small and I hate carrying big drums [laughs]. I can tune it for whatever sound I need, so that’s really my go-to right now. I also have this Meinl Timbale steel snare, and I’m not sure if it’s 8- or 10-in., but I love having that sound next to the actual snare and having the two blend. Right now I really dig that set up.

For cymbals, right now I have a mix of everything. I have an Istanbul Agop 14-in. 30th Anniversary hi-hat with Paiste 21-in. traditional ride. I have a Zildjian K EFX [special effects cymbal]. Sometimes I’ll make a stack, like I made this stack of just whatever effects I have or to make it like a short crash. Then I have, also, like a small effects cymbal — I think it’s a Paiste effect cymbal, like a 10-in. stacked together.

CM: And what’s your favourite kit setup for the studio?

Cheewapansri: Firstly, I love my Rogers; I have a Rogers Holiday 20-in. kick drum and I think a 12- and 16-in. I also have a 13-in. but I like it less. It depends on the songs when I can add it if I need.

JULY TALK’S DANNY MILES

Danny Miles is the drummer for chart-topping, Juno Award-winning alternative band July Talk.

CM: I felt like the rhythm section on 2020’s *Pray For It* LP created a bit more air and space in July Talk’s sound as compared to earlier songs. And the latest single, “I Am Water,” is a little funkier. So, can you tell me



PHOTO: CALUM ELLIOTT-ARMSTRONG

how you and bassist Josh Warburton work out your parts when writing and recording July Talk songs?

Danny Miles: I would agree. We approached *Pray For It* a little more gentle and mature, musically, than our previous work, I would say. We also worked with Burke Reid, one of my favourite producers in the world. He works with artists like Courtney Barnett, Julia Jacklin, and The Drones. Burke really tried to create space in the rhythm section, and I would say definitely in the bass.

Josh is such a great bass player. His whole style is to lock to the kick drum. He likes to make everything in the rhythm section very tight and locked. Burke wanted to let the rhythm section breathe a bit more on *Pray For It* and really worked with us to go outside what we would usually write. I think it really made us grow as musicians. I think that *Pray For It* is a special and important album for us. I feel like it shows we are aren’t a one-trick pony as a band and adds some depth to our catalogue.

That being said, because we did this slower, moodier album, we wanted to come to work on new material that still had the musical and lyrical depth of *Pray For It* but more upbeat and fun. “I Am Water” was the first track released for the sessions for our upcoming album. We decided to have Kevin Drew of Broken Social Scene come in and act as a guide and another writer for the sessions. I have to say those sessions were some of the most fun I have ever had writing music. Basically, Kevin didn’t want

us to come in with any previous ideas. He also just wanted us to never say “no” and just go along with what the other members were doing. For “I Am Water” he basically pointed at me and said, “Give me a beat!” And everyone just started to go off of that, which is why I think it’s such a rhythm-heavy track. We also have Dani Nash playing percussion with us now and she was on the session, which really helps with groove and makes it so fun. I live in Hamilton now and we rehearse in Toronto and that day driving into the studio, I was listening to a lot of the U.K. band Shame. I love that band. They are basically a new wave punk band that has funky drums. It was a huge inspiration for my beat for “I Am Water.”

CM: How do you feel your own sound as a drummer has evolved over the course of July Talk’s discography?

Miles: I think *Pray For It* really pushed my style in a more singer-songwriter drum direction. Naturally, I am a high-energy drummer so that was a great challenge to have — to play more laid back and create a mood rather than bring the energy. With these new songs like “I Am Water,” I think I’m playing a lot more in the style I love and naturally want to play. I listen to a lot of ‘90s and alternative hip-hop — like Madlib, J Dilla, and Danny Brown — and a lot of Afro funk like Fela Kuti. I also love new alternative punk like Idles, Shame, and Parquet Courts. I think I have been able to incorporate a little more of those styles in the new July Talk songs coming out.

CM: Over the course of your development as a drummer, was there a particular skill that was hardest to learn? And how did you eventually conquer it?

Miles: I mean, I feel like as a musician you never stop learning. There is always something you can do to improve. I’m a self-taught drummer, but in recent years I have taken a few lessons from Glenn Milchem of Blue Rodeo and Adam Hay, a drum teacher in Toronto. I used them like an athlete would use a specialized coach to help improve areas that needed help. I think for me I have been doing a lot of work on technique recently and trying to break bad habits that I learned over the years. Again, still a work in progress. I think the only way you can conquer anything new on an instrument is to practice it over and over. It takes time, for sure.

CM: During downtime of the pandemic, was there anything related to drumming, or music generally, that you took the time to learn or work on that you wouldn’t have done otherwise?

Miles: As I said I am a huge hip-hop fan and I actually have a hip-hop group called Tongue Helmet with a few of my really talented friends — Timbuktu, Peter Chapman (a.k.a. Coins), and DJ Irate. We have an EP and a full-length album out, which I am very proud of. Tongue Helmet kind of has a Beastie Boys’ *Check Your Head* and *Ill Communication* vibe. Over the pandemic, though, I started to really focus on producing music myself. I have a little studio in my basement now with drums and a bunch of other instruments and gear and I produce a lot of hip-hop. I produced and co-produced a lot of the Timbuktu solo album, *It’s Alright in the Daylight*, which came out earlier in 2021 on Urbnet. All the above albums are out on all streaming platforms. I also recorded drums for five or six Eamon McGrath albums from my home studio. Eamon was on fire. Those songs will be starting to get released over the next year, I believe, and I’m excited for people to hear that because there are a lot of different styles of music incorporated with those albums.

CM: What is your favourite drum kit set up for live shows?

Miles: I use YC drums, Promark drumsticks, Istanbul Mehmet cymbals, and Remo drumheads. So, my kit is a YC drum kit with 14-in. snare drum, 13-in. rack tom, 16-in. floor tom, 22- or 24-in. kick drum (depends on what I’m doing), and I use 15-in. hi-hats, a 22-in. ride, and two crash cymbals (a 19- and 20-in.). I like to use a pretty classic, simple setup. It really is everything I need to play July Talk songs.

CM: What is your most used drum kit and gear in the studio?

Miles: I often have Jordan Gauthier, owner of YC Drum Company, drum tech the sessions. He will bring many different drum kits; usually vintage gear from Ludwig, Slingerland, Rogers, etc... He will bring 15 vintage snare drums and we literally just try stuff out and see what is best for the song we are working on. It’s a fun process and, honestly, we usually end up reusing the drums that we are loving for multiple songs. Same goes for cymbals, because cymbals definitely matter in the studio. As a drummer, live and studio are definitely different beasts. Both are different skills you have to develop as a musician.

Michael Raine is the Editor-in-Chief of Canadian Musician.

Stop Trying So Hard for the Industry & Try Harder for Your Audience

By Elise Roller

Having started out as a self-managed artist, I remember that very prominent switch in my brain when I realized there was a whole music industry filled with professionals who could help grow my career. My focus began to shift from doing things to connect with my audience to doing things to connect with that industry. The demands of keeping on top of the emails, applications, show bookings, finances, merch orders, socials, all while trying to accomplish the actual creation of the music I was doing it all for — it wasn't easy and I was convinced that if I could just build a team, they'd help me develop a fanbase to sustain my career.

I had it all backwards and never did make a career as an artist. Now, as an industry pro, if I could go back to those early days, the one thing I'd tell myself is to stop trying so hard for the industry and to try harder for my audience.

Whatever Hollywood is telling you about the possibility of being discovered by a major record exec who stumbles upon a dive bar and gets starry-eyed watching a small-town girl play an acoustic guitar to the regulars, then signs her on the spot and makes her a star — it's simply not true. The industry is competitive, and the world is full of talented, hard-working artists just like you. Being a musician does not make you special (sorry), but being a musician who is able to connect with and influence a specific group of people does. What is it you can offer to an audience that no one else can?

The greatest setback for an artist is failing to understand who they're capable of targeting and how to reach them. It's why so many will spend thousands in marketing and promotional costs only to turn up disappointing results. An artist's target audience should determine their every move: who they record with, how and where they release music, the content they post, the merch they make, where they tour, and so on.

A target audience isn't "people between the ages of 18-45." A target audience is a specific group of people who share similar interests, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, etc. What do they do outside of listening to your music? What areas do they live in? What do they buy? Who do they vote for? How do they discover music, and how often do they attend live shows, and which venues? What do they wear? Who are the artists they're already listening to? What kinds of visuals do they like? How do they interact with social media? If you're an artist and you can't answer these questions, you're not ready for the team that can help you reach those people.

Think of it as though you were opening a restaurant. The first thing you would do is determine who you are trying to engage with. Are you opening in the centre of a large metropolis and catering to busy businesspeople or are you in a quiet, suburban family neighbourhood? These very basic questions would surely determine your menu, price points, décor, how you market your establishment, and who you hire. Would you open immediately with a full-time manager that you must pay, or would you likely be there from morning to night, running the day-to-day until you have consistent customers who bring in a steady revenue? Would you purchase hundreds of fake reviews only to turn up every day to an empty restaurant? (This is the equivalent to fake follows and streams).

It's no different with your artist career. Like the new restaurant owner, in the first five years, you're likely to lose money, work 80 hours a week, and take on things you never imagined would come with your career of choice. And like any new business, the only way you're going to grow is if you have an undeniable product, with a recognizable brand, being marketed to the audience who will invest in it.

The only thing that matters at the end of the day is that your music reaches people. That's all you care about and it's why you want a team

— because you think the team will help you do that — and they will, but only you can plant that seed and figure out exactly what it is that makes you special and connects you and your music with a dedicated following. When you have superfans, the industry will come, and the right team players will begin approaching you.

Every person on your team should be your biggest fan, so pour your resources into building your audience and making your fans happy, rather than worrying about what kinds of numbers or messages or stats might impress the industry pros — you will be more inspired, more fulfilled, and ultimately, more successful. Don't you want someone who's so excited about what you're doing that they come to you?



Elise Roller is the founder of and artist manager at Misfit Music MGMT, an artist development and management company based in Winnipeg, MB. With an honest art-first, industry-second approach, Misfit helps music creators set realistic expectations, find sustainability in superfans, and celebrate the milestones it helps them reach. To learn more about Misfit's Artist Evolution services, visit www.misfitmusicmgmt.com/artistevolution.

'Unlearning' Your Voice Training to Get at the Heart of a Good Performance

By Emma Cook

When I was a kid I used to drive my sister crazy by singing all the time. Sometimes I didn't even realize I was doing it (although, as little sisters do, I'm sure there were plenty of times when I did it to purposely annoy her). I remember getting a karaoke cassette tape of Madonna's album *True Blue* and dancing around our living room belting out "Papa Don't Preach." There have been few loves as fiery as my love of Madonna as an eight-year-old. On a family trip a few years later, we stopped at a Bellamy's restaurant for dinner and they were doing karaoke night for a free meal. My sister and I took to the stage and sang "Like a Virgin," the irony of it going completely over our heads, but definitely not over the heads of the stunned family restaurant patrons.

If it had been left to me, I probably wouldn't have thought to start formal training in music – I don't remember ever thinking of it in that way. Singing just came naturally and there was never any theory in my mind when I was singing. But for my mom, if you liked doing something, it meant you should study it, so I auditioned for the Toronto Children's Chorus and my formal voice training began. My years in choir taught me to read music, gave me a huge repertoire of music language to draw from, and most importantly, taught me how to practice, practice, practice. I began taking private singing lessons and studied theory. One of the first things my singing teacher told me was not to sing like Madonna – she did everything wrong, apparently. I eventually moved onto a singing teacher that specialized in opera. Truth be told, I don't really like opera, I hated theory, and the recitals terrified me. But did I ever learn to sing! I could reach a high D with piercing clarity, I had enough breath control to get through a Brahms Aria and my pitch was unwavering.

When I was 13, I got my first guitar and began writing songs. I remember feeling like I was coming home. To me, this was the place that music felt the most natural. That mixture of music and emotion, raw and visceral. I was

prolific after that, writing my way through the angst of teenagerhood. I stopped with formal voice training and focused on learning guitar so I could accompany myself. But there was a problem – I was writing modern folk songs and singing them with a coloratura soprano voice. It's hard to explain, but it felt like I was trying to put a square peg in a round hole.

My first album came out when I was 21, and listening to it now, it's really interesting to hear the difference in my voice. I've spent my career slowly peeling away the layers of vocal training, both using what serves me while trying to access a more uninhibited sound. I believe that my training helped in many ways, such as breath control, pitch, and overall musicality. But, I still think training is less important than a raw and emotional performance that isn't technically perfect, or even how "good" a person's voice is.

So, here are a few tips I've learned along the way:

1. Listen to the kind of music you want to sound like. Imitation is the best teacher in my opinion, and I find that if I love how a singer sounds, listening to them on repeat can help lose some of the habits you've formed through training or otherwise.
2. Move. When I'm in the studio and doing take after take and trying to get pitch perfect and the timing bang on, it can sometimes take the soul out of the performance. This is when moving your body can really help loosen things up. Swaying from side to side, gently moving your hips, these can do wonders to get you out of your head and get a great technical performance without losing the emotion.
3. Visualize an emotion. This is harder than it sounds for someone who has years of training, but taking a minute to really call to mind an emotion can be pretty powerful before starting to sing. I find that strong emotions can usually trump overthinking, so if you're singing a breakup song, think of the breakup and I bet your performance will

be more powerful.

4. Break the rules. Taking liberties with time and phrasing can be a great tool for sounding more relaxed. Being a little behind the beat, talk-singing, or intentionally changing the phrasing – these are all things that can humanize your performance.
5. Ditch the vibrato. This was a big one for me, but I've learned to control my vibrato depending on the situation. Relaxing the back of your throat and not pushing as much air through can dial back the vibrato if that's the vibe you're after.

And last of all, don't try to be perfect. Ideally you give a great performance and it's pretty flawless (Adele, I'm looking at you), but ultimately, a performance can still be breathtaking without being technically perfect. There's a reason that Madonna is one of the most influential pop stars of our time and I'm pretty sure no one ever said she has the most amazing singing voice ever.



Emma Cook is a singer-songwriter from Toronto. She has played hundreds of shows all across Canada, including official showcases at CMW, NXNE, and Indie Week. Her fifth album, *Fight Left in Me*, was released in November 2021 and has landed on countless playlists and received acclaim from CBC's *Afterdark*, *Addicted Magazine*, *What She Said Podcast*, *City News*, and more. www.emmacookmusic.com.

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Applying the Rudiments of Drumming, Pt. 2

By Jerome Jarvis

The second of the standard rudiments for snare drum is the double-stroke roll. It's a very useful tool with which you may construct all kinds of patterns, odd times, and triplets, as well as being a key component of all the other rudiments. It's also a wonderful labour-saving invention, since it allows the drummer to play twice as many notes with the same energy as a single stroke roll.

I was introduced to it as the "mama dada" by an old-school parade drummer on our kitchen table with a pair of butter knives for drum sticks (in the traditional parade grip, of course).

Start by playing a slow 1/4-note single stroke roll (Ex. 1):

Ex. 1
4/4 | : R L R L | R L R L : | Now double each stroke to play two
 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4
 1/8 notes to each (Ex. 2):

Ex. 2
| R R L L R R L L | R R L L R R L L : | Don't worry about speed or "the
1+2+3+4+ 1+2+3+4+ bounce" for now – just keep control
 of the stick and the volume even. The first stroke of each double will naturally tend to sound louder. Here are some exercises mixing double and single strokes. These will help you to smooth out your roll.

(Note: Play these patterns as steady eighth notes in a loop. Bold-face L or R indicates an accent on that hand. Start slowly and maintain your starting tempo – don't speed up, feel the groove within the pattern, count out loud, keep your posture straight, and relax the muscles you aren't actually using to play the phrase.)

Let's start by building a simple pattern of one single stroke and one double (that should add up to three, OK?). So, here's a set of four triplets (Ex. 3). Play these as 1/8 note triplets:

Ex. 3
6/8 | : R L L R L L | R L L R L L : | Note that the single strokes are ac-
 1 an a 2 an a 3 an a 4 an a
 cented and the doubles are just taps. This is one of the main benefits of

using the double stroke: it gives the opposite hand a little extra time to be raised higher so the next stroke can strike with more force to sound the accent.

Play these triplets in sets of four (see Ex. 3) and alternate, leading with the right then switch to leading with the left. Here you will use a single stroke triplet in the last bar to switch the leading hand. Count this as 4/4 with a triplet (swing) feel:

Ex. 4
4/4 | : R L L R L L | R L L R L R | L R R L R R L R R L R L : |
 1 an a 2 an a 3 an a 4 an a 1 an a 2 an a 3 an a 4 an a

You can see that the two bars in the second half of the exercise are the mirror image of the first half.

Keep the triplet roll going steady as the pattern switches from leading with the right to leading with the left. This is a great exercise for balancing your left and right brains, as well as developing equal dexterity in both your hands. Play these four bars for as long as you can; you'll find it will change your mind! Once you get that rolling smoothly you can try these variations.

Triplet inversions: These should all sound similar – the accents will fall on the quarter notes (1-2-3-4) – but the stickings are completely different. In the first inversion, the accent is played on the first beat of the double stroke (try to avoid accenting the single strokes for these inversions).

Ex. 5
6/8 | : R R L R R L | R R L R R L : | And the same sticking reversed,
 1 an a 2 an a 3 an a 4 an a
 starting with the left. It's the mirror image of the same triplets:

Ex. 6
6/8 | : L L R L L | L L R L L R : | Can you guess where this is going?
 The last inversion puts the accent on the second of the double strokes, so you'll be putting more force into what was the naturally weaker beat. Working on this roll will set you up for playing a shuffle rhythm on the snare with your left hand while the right can play a 1/4 note ride, or wave at the soundperson. It's a very cool trick once you can get the backbeat feeling so nicely natural. But first we'll lead with the right hand for the sake of consistency (Ex. 7):

Ex. 7
6/8 | : R L R R L R | R L R R L R : | And finally, the third inversion lead-
 1 an a 2 an a 3 an a 4 an a
 ing with the left (Ex. 8):

Ex. 8
6/8 | : L R L L R | L L R L L R : | And before we finish this dou-
 1 an a 2 an a 3 an a 4 an a
 ble-stroke festival, let's try the im- possible (or at least tricky). Having

completed all the forgoing triple groupings, we can use the same components to play a bar of triplets using only double strokes. Again, the pattern should sound the same as above; but with wildly different sticking. Here we can have some fun and bend your brain some more:

Ex. 9
6/8 | : R R L L R R | L L R R L L : | You're going to have to get some
 1 an a 2 an a 3 an a 4 an a
 "snap" on the accented second stroke of the duplet. You'll find it easier if you've done some stick control

exercises: The wrist, elbow, and fingers work together for quick "pick-ups" and the down stroke is like cracking a whip.

Jerome Jarvis is a composer, author, teacher, producer, and session musician. Over the 50+ years of his professional career he has performed and recorded with artists such as Stan Rogers, Valdy, and more. www.jeromejarvis.com.



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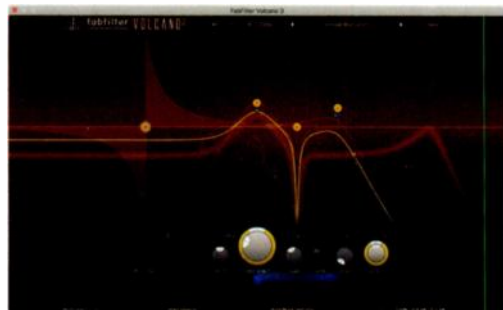


DW Ultralight Edge Snare Drum

Drum Workshop (DW) has extended its range of custom Collector's Series snare drums with the introduction of the Ultralight Edge snare. To be extra lightweight, it is crafted from Space Carbon, a high-grade material that is upcycled from private sector space program manufacturing.

The 5.5 x 14-in. Ultralight Edge snare is assembled by hand at DW's California Custom Shop using the same construction as previous Edge models. It utilizes a carbon weave cylinder fitted precisely over machined aluminum Edge rings, creating a high-tech hybrid that delivers brightness, articulation, volume, sensitivity, and unique tonality, according to the company. It can be customized in any of five DW Custom Shop drum hardware colour options. The Space Carbon centre makes this the lightest of all the Edge snares.

For more information, contact B&J Music: 800-268-8147, www.bjmusiconline.com.



FabFilter Volcano 3 Filter Plug-In

FabFilter has released Volcano 3, the latest version of its filter plug-in. It sees the introduction of a reimagined interface, new vintage-style filter shapes, per-filter saturation control, full visualization of modulation sources and targets, and more.

FabFilter says it redesigned Volcano 3 to make it more intuitive and immediate, while at the same time introducing new features and improving visualization of audio and modulation signals. The new filter display speeds up workflow with the selection of multiple filters at once, and presents a unified response curve with stereo separation, as well as a high-resolution spectrum display. Modulation signals are now visualized at both sources and targets with animated collars, while the source flow area gives an overview of all active modulations, and floating slot panels enable collective balancing of all sources modulating the currently-selected control.

The heart of Volcano is its bank of four analog-modeled filters. Expanding on the already-established High-, Low-, and Band-Pass types, Volcano 3 more than doubles the options with the addition of vintage-style Bell, High/Low Shelf, Notch, and All-Pass modes. Like the original trio, these are all highly non-linear for a palpably analog sound, and can be switched through an array of sonic colourations using Volcano's Style settings. Each filter also now incorporates its own variable saturation circuit, further increasing the character-shaping potential, along with a 6dB/octave slope option, while independent volume and pan controls bring added depth to parallel routing setups.

For more information, contact Music Marketing: 416-789-7100, cindy@musicmarketing.ca, www.musicmarketing.ca.



Gibson Jim James ES-335

Gibson has teamed with Jim James – the vocalist, guitarist, producer, and primary songwriter for My Morning Jacket – to create his first signature guitar, the Jim James ES-335.

The Jim James ES-335 is handcrafted by Gibson luthiers in Nashville and features two calibrated T-type pickups paired with dual volume and tone controls that are hand-wired with CTS potentiometers, a mahogany SlimTaper neck with an Indian rosewood fretboard, Graph Tech nut, 22 medium jumbo frets, and Kluson Waffleback tuners – paired with a lightweight aluminum ABR-1 bridge and Stop Bar tailpiece – anchored by steel thumb-wheels and tailpiece studs to keep everything solidly in tune. The signature guitar also has a 1970s walnut nitrocellulose lacquer finish, Jim James logo on the truss rod cover, and an owl emblem on the back of the headstock, as well as a custom Jim James owl emblem on the hardshell guitar case.

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of all Jim James ES-335 guitars will be donated to Gibson Gives, the philanthropic arm of Gibson.

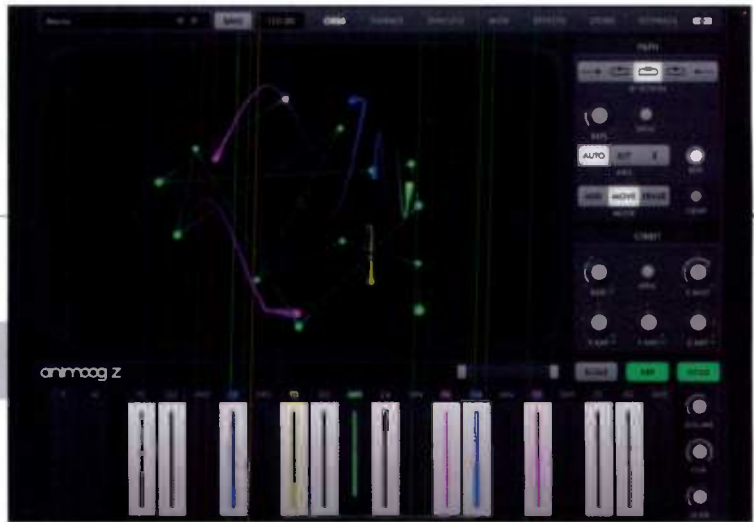
For more information, contact Yorkville Sound: 905-837-8777, canada@yorkville.com, www.yorkville.com.

Moog Animoog Z Sound Design, Production & Performance App

The Animoog anisotropic wavetable synthesis app released in 2011 was innovative in its approach to dimensional sound design and its interactive touch surface interface. Now, Moog has redesigned the app with more futuristic functionality and creative workflows for a new generation of producers and sound designers.

Animoog Z is a 16-voice polyphonic synthesizer that invites users to explore new concepts of multidimensional sound and performance. The app is powered by Moog's Anisotropic Synth Engine (ASE), which utilizes an orbit system to expand the concepts of wavetable and vector synthesis. This unique synthesis concept allows for dynamic navigation through the app's X, Y, and Z axes for evolving and layered sound. Animoog Z provides a more streamlined user experience, more powerful features, and availability on more platforms. This universal app is available for iPad, iPhone, Mac, as an AUv3, and through a VST wrapper for integration in all DAWs that support AUv2, AUv3 and VST3.

For more information, contact SFM: 514-780-2070, info@sfm.ca, www.sfm.ca.



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D'Addario Nexus 360 Rechargeable Headstock Tuner

D'Addario has launched the Nexus 360, a rechargeable headstock tuner.

Designed with Ned Steinberger, the Nexus 360 is the first D'Addario tuner to offer a rechargeable lithium battery that holds 24 hours of power with one charge. The discreet, clip-on design features 360-degree rotation. Players are able to see the tuner at any angle on any instrument, plus a super-bright, full-colour LED display offers clarity in any lighting situation.

For more information, contact D'Addario Canada: 905-947-9595, 800-268-6855, info@daddariocanada.com, www.daddariocanada.com.

Ampero II Stomp Digital Effects Processor

Hotone has released the Ampero II Stomp digital effects processor, which is powered by 20 of Celestion's most popular impulse responses (IRs).

The Ampero II Stomp features a tri-core platform for better signal processing. With a highly-customizable dual effects chain supporting multiple serial/parallel signal routing, up to 12 effects modules can be used simultaneously. The Ampero II Stomp also delivers an eight-in/eight-out audio interface, which enhances the experience for home recording. As a multi-effects processor, it now supports up to 2,048 IR sampling points, twice as many as the previous generation, enabling captured cabinets and studio acoustics to be reproduced with greater precision. The Ampero II Stomp combines the 20 Celestion speaker IRs with an additional 50 custom IR slots.

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



Waves Retro Fi Plug-In

Waves Audio has released the Retro Fi, a lo-fi effects chain plug-in.

The company says Retro Fi provides the tools needed to produce authentic lo-fi textures, warm analog sounds, and nostalgic vibes, like vintage cassette tones and deep vinyl grooves. This plug-in includes a large palette of lo-fi noises, spaces, devices, and textures. Retro Fi offers four modules/sections that can be combined, each with its own flavours.

Device is a complete analog colouring and tonal shaping engine, armed with newly-designed impulse responses, an era-specific Styler for retro tones, a squasher, a colourful compressor, and more. Space adds saturated echo and analog reverb (spring/plate) for colourful depth and spatial sounds. Noise boasts a library of over 60 unique textures, including diverse cassette and vinyl noises among others. Mechanics delivers the imperfections and mechanical wear and tear of old cassette tapes and vinyl records. This section has two independent modulation engines, each with its own adjustable wow, wobble, and speed. Users can also flip through 250 artist presets, curated by top producers and beatmakers in hip-hop, electronic genres, rock, and beyond.

For more information, contact Waves: 865-909-9200, info@waves.com, www.waves.com.





Sennheiser HD 400 PRO Studio Headphones

Sennheiser has launched the HD 400 PRO headphones for mixing, editing, and mastering.

The HD 400 PRO studio reference headphones are designed to give natural and precise sound reproduction to accurately assess audio mixes. To ease long sessions, the headphones feature a comfortable and lightweight open-back design fitted with soft velour ear pads. The unit includes both coiled and straight detachable cables, allowing the headphones to adapt to different use preferences.

The HD 400 PRO features a wide frequency response of 6 to 38,000 Hz to give music producers the full account of their mix. The Sennheiser-developed 120-ohm transducers include a diaphragm made from a special polymer blend, which together with powerful driver magnets yields deeper but totally clear and well-defined bass, the company says. Distortion is below 0.05% (measured at 1 kHz, 90 dB SPL).

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

TASCAM Portacapture X8 Adaptive Multi-Recorder

TASCAM has introduced the Portacapture X8 high-resolution adaptive multi-recorder. It features 192kHz/32-bit float point recording technology, a 3.5-in. colour touchscreen display, large-format internal detachable mics to accommodate a variety of recording applications, six setup modes each with instant optimized settings, internal eight-track recording, and more.

The Portacapture X8 uses an app-like set of configurations that optimize the unit for various recording tasks, including multitrack recording, voice capture for interviews, podcasts, music recording, field recording, and ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) for capturing those unusual / sensory-related sounds. Combined with the recorder's intuitive Launcher system and the incorporated touch panel display, the Portacapture X8 is designed to allow users to focus on the recording without having to struggle with complicated settings.

The Portacapture X8 comes with two large 14.6mm-diameter built-in condenser microphones. With the TASCAM-developed HDDA mic preamps, these microphones are well suited for high quality audio recording. For easy setting of the available A-B and X-Y microphone patterns, the Portacapture X8 offers a detachable mechanism for configuration.

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



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PEAVEY VYPYR X3



Peavey VYPYR X Series Modeling Amplifiers

Peavey Electronics has released the VYPYR X Series of modeling amplifiers. This latest evolution of the VYPYR design includes three new models with updated styling, enhanced acoustic performance, and improved TransTube analog/digital hybrid technology.

The new VYPYR X2 and X3 models also come with Bluetooth remote control and audio streaming. Fully loaded with amps and effects, the VYPYR X Series is designed to provide a range of solutions with substantial value. The series carries on the tradition of the VYPYR guitar amplifier, circa 2008, which addressed common problems with modeling amps. Many modeling amps can't be heard in a live setting because of subpar digital distortion and EQ. Peavey's TransTube technology, improved in the new VYPYR X Series, provides a solution with true analog distortion that emulates real tubes. This also leaves the amplifier's processing power dedicated to the effects. As a result, VYPYR X amps can run up to five effects simultaneously.

The VYPYR X Series also offers improved processing and cabinet design with Variable Instrument Performance. Users can switch from electric guitar to bass to acoustic on the same amplifier. The VYPYR X2 and X3 models take utility a step further with up to 10 different instrument modes and 26 total onboard amp-accessible effects.

For more information, contact Peavey Electronics: 601-483-5365, directsales@peavey.com, www.peavey.com.

Roland JX-08 Sound Module

Roland has introduced the JX-08 sound module, one of the latest additions to its Boutique lineup of compact electronic instruments. The JX-08 offers a scaled-down recreation of the JX-8P, one of the last analog synthesizers produced by Roland in the 1980s.

The JX-08 reintroduces the unique sounds of the JX-8P in detail, coupled with new effects, a polyphonic sequencer, and more. The JX-08 features expanded polyphony, two-part multitimbral capability, and dual/split modes. It also includes 32 presets from the original hardware and 100-plus new patches tuned for contemporary styles. And to enhance the creative workflow, there's a full panel of hands-on controls derived from the companion PG-800 programmer unit for the original hardware. After crafting sounds, users can store their creations in 256 preset slots for easy recall.

The JX-08 features a built-in USB-C audio/MIDI interface for working with computer production software, along with full-size MIDI I/O for connecting with other MIDI hardware.

For more information, contact Roland Canada: 604-270-6626, www.roland.com/ca.

Mojo Hand FX Clarity Compressor Pedal

Mojo Hand FX has introduced the Clarity Compressor pedal.

This unit was designed to be a quiet and transparent compressor, featuring controls for Mix, Compression, and Level. Other features include push-button selection for Slope or Envelope compression options, and a 9V, centre-negative power supply. A durable "vein" finish is baked onto this U.S.-made pedal.

With the Slope button in the up position, the Clarity has a linear, traditional style of compression. The attack is fast, quickly grabbing signal peaks for a smooth response and feel. With the Envelope button in the Down position, the Clarity becomes dynamic and punchier, with a greater response to attack. It is more reactive to the input and therefore a heavier sounding compression, causing a slight bit of "pumping" from the compress/release cycle slightly distorting the incoming signal. This introduces a perceived "warmth" due to the heavier manipulation of the signal. This mode requires fine-tuning of the Mix knob to dial in the desired amount of attack, clarity, and overall compression.

For more information, contact Search and Distro Music Equipment: 519-512-0216, scott@searchanddistro.com, www.searchanddistro.com.



Godin Multiac Nylon Deluxe Guitar

Godin Guitars has launched the Multiac Nylon Deluxe guitar.

For the Multiac Nylon Deluxe, Godin built on what made the original Multiac unique, then incorporated a new LR Baggs preamp, custom-designed to its specifications. This system has two sound sources that can be combined, six individual HEX pickups, and a Lyric mic.

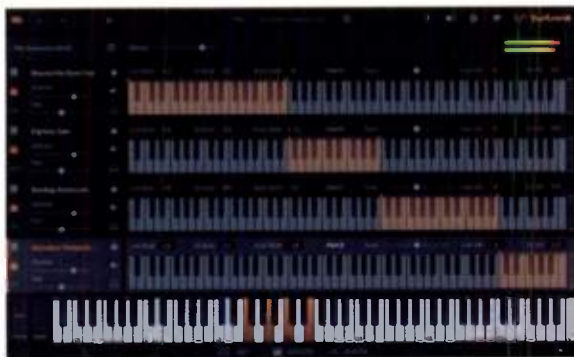
The Multiac Nylon Deluxe preamp complements the guitar's natural acoustic capabilities, providing enhanced tone and volume control via a three-band EQ, master Volume slider, Phase switch, Saturation slider, and a Lyric mic blend. The Lyric pickup is especially useful for players of flamenco or other expressive, percussive styles of music. Thanks to its placement under the soundboard, the Lyric captures both the natural sound of the guitar, and each rhythmic beat on the soundboard.

The six individual sensors mounted in the bridge pick up the sound and vibration of each string — providing a clear, defined, and dynamic sound from any playing position on the neck. The ability to mix these two sound sources, and correct them with the custom preamp, increases the versatility. The solid chambered mahogany body design allows for feedback-free use in both the studio and on stage. A spruce top, mahogany neck, and Richlite fingerboard and bridge, complete this guitar.

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

IK Multimedia Syntronik 2 Virtual Synth Collection

IK Multimedia has released Syntronik 2, which offers a comprehensive collection of rare and sought-after synths expanded with more models, enhanced sonic accuracy, and deeper editing. It's an enhanced successor to the previous release, adding 11 classic synths, advanced functionality, and a large number of new presets for the 22 original synths that take advantage of the new features.



Syntronik 2 offers 33 synths in all, available in four different versions or as individual instruments. There are over 5,500 presets that cover a wide range of sounds from 54 of the classic and/or rare vintage synthesizers. For fans of the original version, all of the Syntronik and Syntronik Deluxe legacy presets are also included and sound identical in Syntronik 2. An easy-to-use layering interface lets users quickly map and play up to four different synthesizer parts simultaneously, as well as create advanced splits for more flexibility and live performance, while a new controller for Syntronik 2 offers detailed filtering of sustain, PB, MW, and AT per part.

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

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Rupert Neve Designs 5025 Dual Shelford Mic Pre

Rupert Neve Designs has introduced the 5025 Dual Shelford Mic Pre, a limited-edition two-channel microphone preamplifier based on its Shelford Channel.

The Dual Shelford Mic Pre utilizes custom step-up transformers on the microphone inputs, which provide the first 15dB of gain. The Dual Shelford Mic Pre also features 72dB of low-noise class-A gain, a sweepable high-pass filter, the company's Silk Red and Blue circuit for two flavours of customizable harmonic saturation, and the dual output level transformers originally developed for the Shelford Channel. The -6dB output from these custom transformers allows the engineer to hit the "sweet spot" of the output stage more easily, adding rich harmonic character without clipping the next device in the chain.

For more information, contact YSL Pro: 416-867-9000, yslpro@yorkville.com, www.yslpro.com.



Dunlop Justin Chancellor Cry Baby Wah Bass Pedal

Dunlop Manufacturing has released the Justin Chancellor Cry Baby Wah pedal, which features two distinct tone variations with U.K. Filter and Wah modes. Justin Chancellor is best known as the virtuosic bass player for the metal band Tool.

The U.K. Filter mode uses a custom solid-state circuit designed to emulate the unique envelope-like filtering of the tone control on Chancellor's own instrument, which the company describes as thick and throaty with very pronounced peaks. This mode can be heard in the melodic, voice-like phrasing from the Tool track "The Patient". When combined with the built-in fuzz mode, the U.K. Filter generates smooth, synth-like tones. For those who prefer a more traditional wah sound, the Wah mode employs the classic red Fasel Inductor and the circuitry of a modified Cry Baby Wah for a more aggressive sound and lush harmonics.

Users can customize each mode with separate Volume and Q controls, and move between the two at any time by stomping on the Wah Select footswitch. In both modes, this pedal's custom circuitry maintains the thickness and heft of the low end by boosting the clean signal at 400Hz and blending it with the effect signal at the beginning of the rocker's sweep.

For more information, contact Coast Music: 514-457-2555, info@coastmusic.com, www.coastmusiconline.com.



Latin Percussion Wood Tapa

Latin Percussion (LP) has launched the Wood Tapa, which offers a new way to retrofit any existing snare drum with a Cajon-like top and textured top surface that can be played with the hands, brushes, or other soft implements.

The Wood Tapa quickly transforms most 14-in. snare drums into a super-sensitive, snare Cajon with an authentic, woody Cajon tonality. Users simply replace the batter side drumhead and counter hoop with the Tapa using existing tension rods. Rounded edges offer comfort when playing with hands as part of hybrid percussion or acoustic drum set ups. The Wood Tapa is constructed from Baltic birch and designed to fit most 14-in. snare drums and available in eight-lug or 10-lug options.

For more information, contact B&J Music: 800-268-8147, www.bjmusiconline.com.



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To view the online version of *Canadian Musician*, please go to: www.canadianmusician.com/online.

HOT GEAR



Gator Flute & Piccolo Mask

Gator has released the flute and piccolo mask to help stop the spread of aerosols during performances. All of Gator's PPE offerings are specifically designed to follow recommendations from the National Federation of State High Schools' (NFHS) performing arts aerosol study.

The wind instrument double-layer face mask allows musicians to play a flute or piccolo comfortably, without having to remove their face covering. The flute mask (GBOMFLUTEPIC-MSK) features a convenient slot for inserting the instrument, along with adjustable, elastic ear straps and a bending nose wire to ensure comfort and proper fit.

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

Nugen Paragon ST Mono/Stereo Convolution Reverb Plug-In

Nugen Audio has released its latest reverb plug-in, Paragon ST – a mono/stereo-only version of its convolution reverb software.

Ideal for music production applications, Paragon ST allows producers to sculpt and fine-tune their reverb to the needs of the track, at a lower price point. In conjunction with the new release, Nugen has unveiled music-focused features that will be included in Paragon ST, as well as the surround version of Paragon. Included among these updates are controls for stereo width, modulation, and mic distance, along with a pre-delay tempo lock.

Like its predecessor, the Paragon ST offers the realism of authentic Impulse Responses (IR) alongside the tweakability of a classic algorithmic reverb. Additionally, Paragon and Paragon ST feature spectral analysis and precise IR EQ, and zero time-stretching, which means no artifacts. Further, both reverbs provide unique technology for re-synthesis of authentic IRs, plus HPF and LPF per channel.

For more information, contact Music Marketing: 416-789-7100, cindy@musicmarketing.ca, www.musicmarketing.ca.



PDP Concept Select Metal Snares

Pacific Drums and Percussion (PDP) has extended its Concept Select range of metal snares with an additional size — the 5x14 in. snare available in 3mm seamless aluminum and bell bronze. These boutique-inspired drums are shallower versions of the 6.5 x 14-in. Concept Select metal snares launched in 2020.

The curated metal shell of each snare is emblazoned with a laser-engraved art deco insignia. All the snares feature chrome hardware: Dual-turret lugs, 2.3mm triple-flanged hoops, True-Pitch tension rods, DW Mag throw-off, 20-strand snare wires, DW drum heads by Remo with the Aluminum Concept Select snare fitted with satin walnut wood hoops and low-profile claw hooks for enhanced playing comfort.

The Aluminum Concept Select snare provides a warm, earthy timbre and the bell bronze Concept Select delivers a punchy, powerful, hard rock attack with a thick, heavyweight sound, according to the manufacturer.

For more information, contact B&J Music: 800-268-8147, www.bjmusiconline.com.



Boss RC-505mkII Loop Station

Boss has launched the RC-505mkII, one of two new flagship product models in the Loop Station product lineup, alongside the new RC-600. The five-track RC-505mkII brings next-generation power and flexibility to the tabletop looper, giving performers an expanded range of customizable tools for hands-on music creation. It features 32-bit sound, a large onboard effects selection, built-in rhythms, versatile connectivity, external control support, and USB for interfacing with computers.

Introduced in 2013, the tabletop RC-505 has been a common looper for beatboxers, vocalists, instrumentalists, and other looping artists. The RC-505mkII retains the features that made the original popular and adds new features. Each of the RC-505mkII's five stereo tracks now include customizable FX and Track buttons, making it easier to colour and control loops in the moment. Users can set up various parameters and trigger them with a press, hold, or double-click. Pressing the Undo/Redo button reveals a secondary layer to double the control options. Two external control jacks are also available for connecting footswitches or expression pedals, and each has its own dedicated set of parameters. And with the Assign function, users can set up to 16 additional targets for hardware control and MIDI operation. The RC-505mkII also includes 49 Input FX and 53 Track FX types to choose from – including new vocal harmony effects – and it's possible to use up to four in each section at once.

For more information, contact Roland Canada: 604-270-6626, www.roland.com/ca.

Your Search is Over



Otto Link Tone Edge EB

Your search for a classic Otto Link Tone Edge Early Babbitt (EB) ends now with JJ Babbitt's re-release of this iconic, versatile, vibrant tenor sax mouthpiece. Yes... this is the original EB and delivers everything you've been searching for.

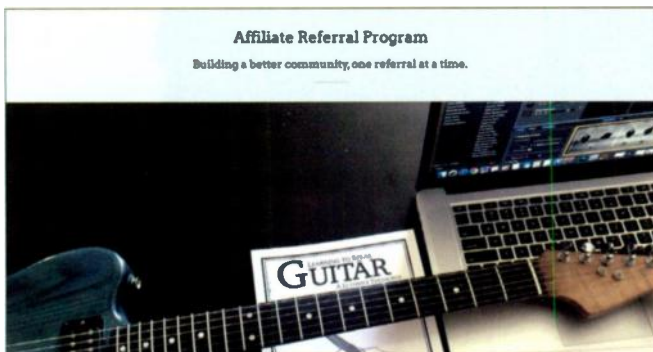
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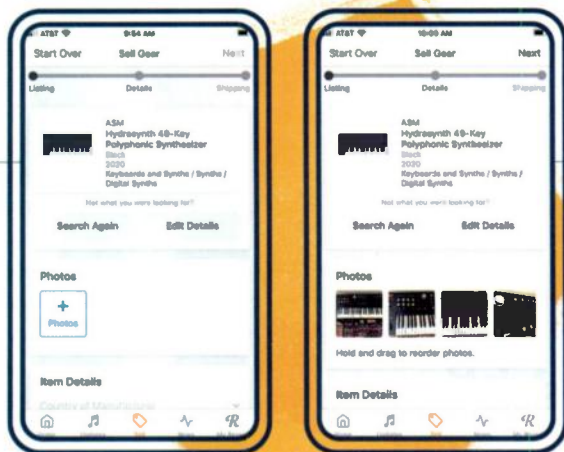


Personal Luthier has launched the online **Affiliate Referral Program**, which connects clients with local, verified guitar makers, technicians, teachers, and other service providers. Teachers, technicians, luthiers, or music store owners can enroll their business in the program — or anyone who wants to recommend their favourite local business. Personal Luthier then verifies the business' legitimacy. Clients seeking a referral to a local guitar service provider can request information via the online booking form.

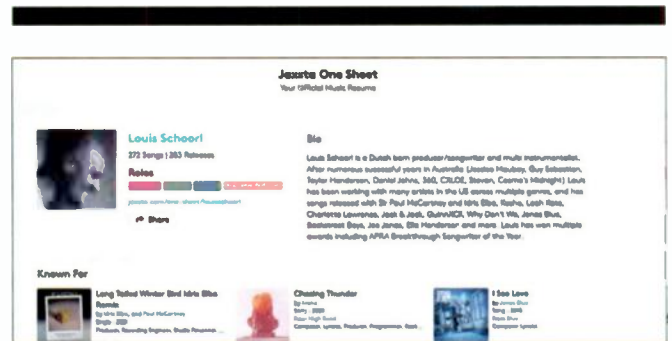
www.personalluthier.com/referrals.



LANDR has released **Chromatic**, a unique virtual instrument with exclusive artist-generated sounds. Professional artists, session players, and producers create the Chromatic sound sets library, which are constantly updated. Users can access a growing spectrum of new sounds grouped by artist, colour, and mood, all playable within an intuitive interface. Crafted by artists, a sound set provides access to playable instrument loops, vocal hooks, one-shots, and soundscapes, and also to the story behind the sounds. Numerous diverse sound sets will be added to the instrument every week, with artists such as 2020 Grammy nominee D Smoke and platinum-selling Montreal singer-songwriter Ariane Moffatt contributing exclusive content. Chromatic is available within LANDR's All Access Pass subscription, and also as a free download, with access to the full library of royalty free sound sets at \$9.99 monthly. www.landr.com/chromatic.



Reverb.com, one of the top websites for reselling instruments and music gear, has launched the new **Reverb App** for iOS and Android devices. The app is designed to make listing gear quick and easy. From their smartphone, Reverb members can list a piece of gear in a matter of minutes, leading to a quick, reliable, and secure sale, the company says. The app is designed to make it quick and easy to create the item's description, add photos, and also offers pricing tips and a shipping cost estimator. Sellers can also communicate with interested buyers through the app. www.reverb.com/page/reverb-app.



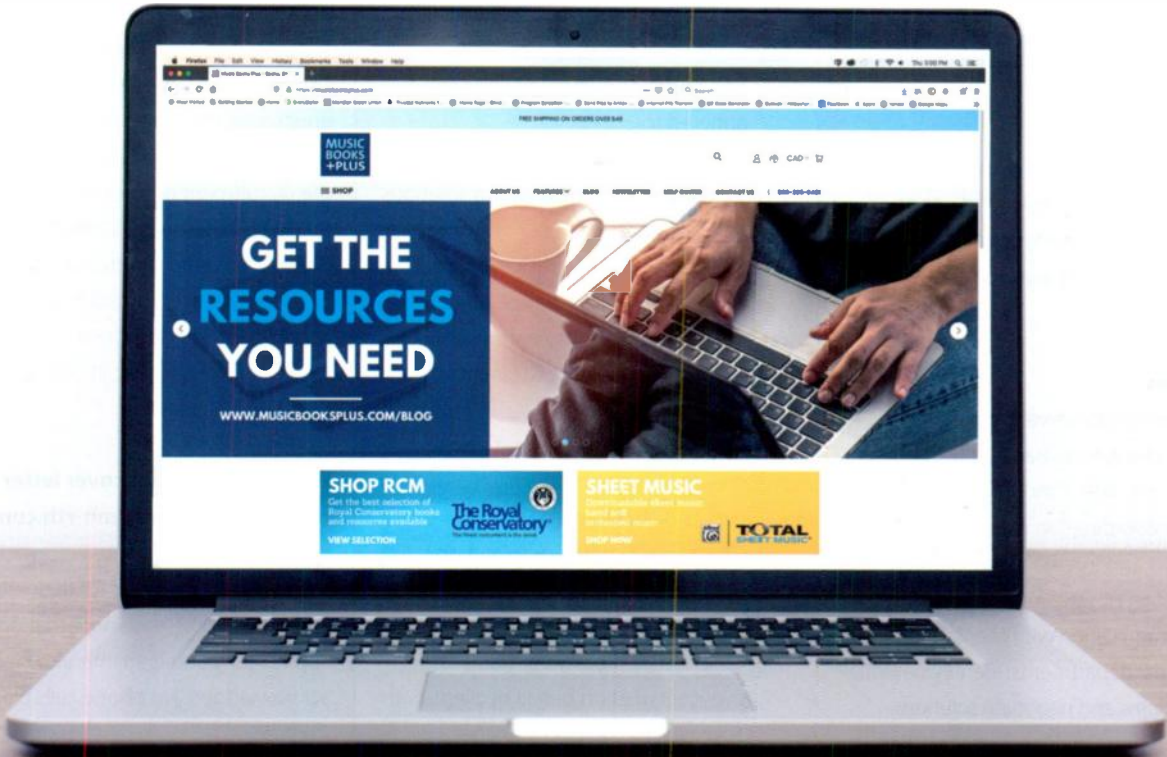
Jaxsta, the largest public-facing, dedicated database of official music credits, has launched the **Jaxsta One Sheet** for Jaxsta Plus members. It allows creatives to quickly and simply curate their work history within their Jaxsta profile and showcase it as a shareable official music resume. Whether an artist, session musician, engineer, mixer, producer, or songwriter — or a representative of these creatives — they can customize their resume to meet their immediate and specific needs, such as pitching for a festival or collaboration. All the information about the key releases or recordings a user has worked on comes verified from Jaxsta and features details about their role, release date, and album artwork. Each release is also linked to its Jaxsta page, featuring its complete list of credits. As Jaxsta's data is sourced solely from record labels, industry associations, and publishers — none of it is crowd sourced — the information on the Jaxsta One Sheet is official and can be trusted. www.jaxsta.com/one-sheet.



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EMPLOYMENT

Massey Hall / Roy Thomson Hall

Job: Event Coordinator

Do you have the desire to make an impact and be part of an exceptional team? Does a career with two of the world's pre-eminent concert venues interest you? Then read on!

About us

The Corporation of Massey Hall & Roy Thomson Hall, a charitable non-profit organization, owns and operates two of Canada's most iconic concert halls. Massey Hall has just completed the most extensive renovation in its history with a rejuvenated auditorium, enhanced amenities for artists and patrons, and will soon realize the addition of new performance venues as part of Allied Music Centre. Roy Thomson Hall serves as the home to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, welcomes the Toronto International Film Festival's red-carpet gala premieres, and plays host to a dynamic array of cultural events throughout the year. The Corporation is actively engaged in Artist Development and Education & Community Outreach initiatives as an investment in the next generation of artists and audiences.

Summary

The Event Coordinator is responsible for providing the highest standards of professional event management services to rental clients and house/co-pro presentations.

Job Duties

- Advance show/event requirements with client/tour manager leading up to event date; conduct site tours and chair coordination meetings with clients and internal departments
- Maintain positive, open lines of communication with clients and internal departments; identify potential problems and negotiate solutions which meet the needs of all parties

- Oversee events on-site, acting as liaison between the client and internal departments
- Perform artist liaison duties for house presentations, ensuring that artist requirements are advanced via tour manager or directly as required (i.e.: ground transport, accommodation, catering, payment, etc.)
- Troubleshoot problems and issues as they arise during events, making immediate decisions on courses of action to ensure the overall success of events
- Contract with third parties for externally provided items and/or services to meet event requirements within budget constraints
- Compile estimates of expenses for each event and provide revisions (with explanations) as event details change
- Collect deposits and insurance certificates from clients as required
- Keep internal departments informed of detailed event requirements through weekly calendar meetings and event coordination memos, and direct various department staffs accordingly on behalf of client
- Ensure that the Corporation's fire plan and health and safety policies are adhered to
- Identify potential problems and report to management, developing solutions wherever possible
- Prepare settlement package for each event within a four-day deadline post-event, or night-of-show as required, and release to Finance for implementation
- Create and maintain event files to ensure accurate historical records of events is available
- Direct event staff prior to and on event site on behalf of client to ensure smooth running event procedures
- Facilitate third party contracts for event services on behalf of client, with approval from Events Manager

- Ability to make last-minute leadership decisions on event site, maintaining hall's service standard and building rules and regulations, while maintaining client satisfaction

Requirements

- Certificate in program-hospitality or event planning
- 2-3 years' experience working within different venues within the industry
- Previous event coordination experience or experience working with corporate clients and promoters
- Demonstrated ability to deliver superior customer service
- Computer proficiency in Word, Excel, Teams, CRM, and Outlook
- Flexibility to work in different environments, evenings, and weekends as required
- Excellent communication, interpersonal, diplomacy, and influencing skills
- Strong problem solving, trouble shooting, and decision-making skills
- Good organizational skills with the ability to multi-task and work under pressure

The Corporation of Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall values diversity and is an equal opportunity employer. Applicants requiring accommodation at any stage of the recruitment process should contact the Human Resources Department. The Corporation is committed to providing employment accommodation in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Please submit your cover letter and resume to: careers@mh-rth.com.

We thank all applicants for their interest in this position. Please note that only applicants granted an interview will be acknowledged. No phone calls please.

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If you are an unsigned Canadian artist and would like to be featured in Showcase, visit www.applyforshowcase.com. Submissions are free - all you need is a ReverbNation account with a high-res photo.

SPECIAL “BECOMING EDITION 20 21”

In this special edition of Showcase, we're highlighting three Standout award winners from Lawson Vocal Studios' Becoming 2021 competition. LVS's annual Becoming contest finds and supports outstanding emerging artists and gives them the tools and resources to reach their full potential. Becoming 2022 auditions open in August. Find out more at www.lawsonvocalstudios.com.

KAIYA GAMBLE (STANDOUT ARTIST)

What:
Pop
Where:
Calgary, AB
Visit:
www.kaiyagamble.com



With a deeply soulful voice and wisdom far beyond her years, Kaiya Gamble is an emerging pop singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist based in Calgary. Her music has been described as a “beacon of light” with a message of empowerment, positivity, and hope. Gamble is an actively philanthropic artist, who regularly performs in support of charitable causes.

At only 14 years old, she has already performed for thousands of people, at over 40 high-profile events. Juno-winning country star Brett Kissel — one of Gamble’s musical idols — has said about her, “I hope someone is recording what I am about to say. You can put me on record as being the first to say that this young lady in three to five years will be opening for the likes of Alessia Cara and Shawn Mendes. I don’t usually endorse artists, but never have I seen such raw talent and force. Kaiya is the whole package.”

MYLA (STANDOUT PERFORMANCE)

What:
Adult Contemporary
Where:
Hamilton, ON
Visit:
www.iammyla.com



Celebrated vocalist and performer, MYLA, a.k.a. Jennifer Budd, is dedicated to telling deeply personal stories through her music. She released her debut album, *Lip Service*, in 2015 and won Best New Artist in 2016 at the Hamilton Music Awards and was nominated for “Gospel Song of the Year” at the 2016 Canadian Gospel Music Awards. She has shared stages with several notable Canadian artists, including opening for July Black.

2021 brought many changes for Budd, starting by changing her artist name to “MYLA,” which reflects the romantic nature of the music she creates. With new music, including the single “Unrequited Love,” she’s expanding her growing fan base and carving out her place in the Canadian adult contemporary market along with JP Saxe, Serena Ryder, and others. The future is wide open for MYLA to tell her stories and connect deeply with her audience.

SARAH STARK (STANDOUT ONE TO WATCH)

What:
Alternative Pop
Where:
Vancouver, BC
Visit:
www.sarahstarkmusic.com



Sarah Stark’s powerhouse vocals and soulful songs are not to be missed. Her lyrics are heartbreakingly candid, and her melodies are hard to keep out of your head. She exhibits the same vulnerability and confidence as artists like and Jessie Reyez (listen to her latest single “On My Mind”) and a production style reminiscent of Billie Eilish, which can easily be heard on her 2021 single, “Ghost.” Stark says that these women inspire her, not only through their musicality, but “general badassery.” She says she used to be dragged down because of her spunk and sass, but now she uses it as her superpower.

Stark was chosen as one of five winners in the 2020 Canadian Songwriter Challenge with writing partner Nicky Mackenzie, as well as placing in the top 10 in the FlairXL February singing competition.



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