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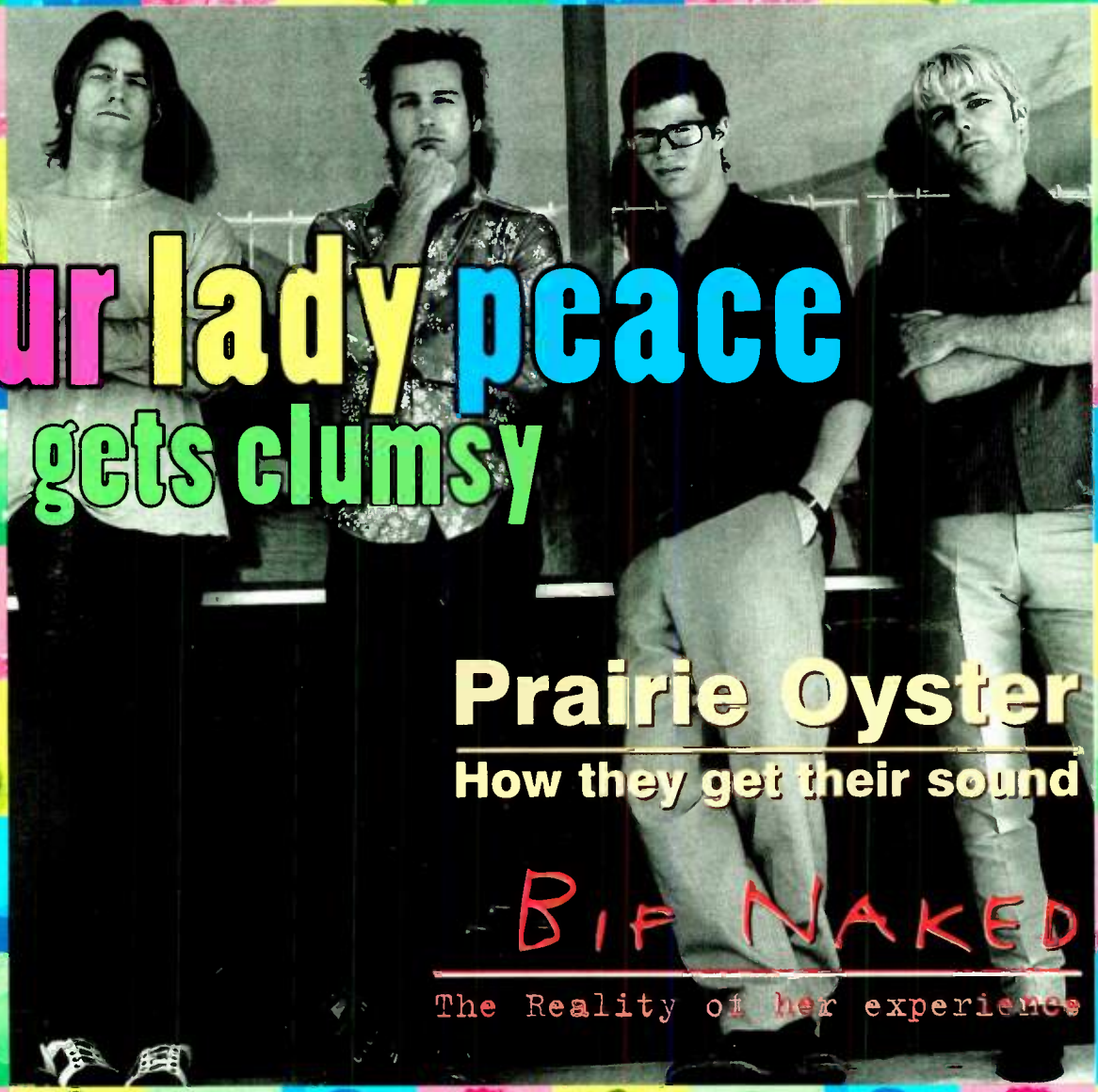
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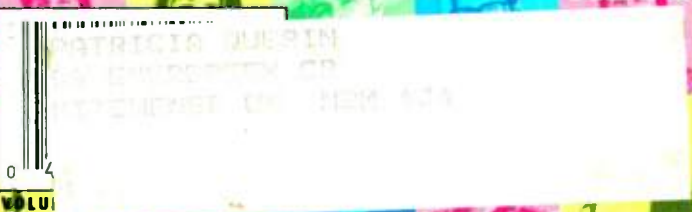
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Joan Besen, and more**

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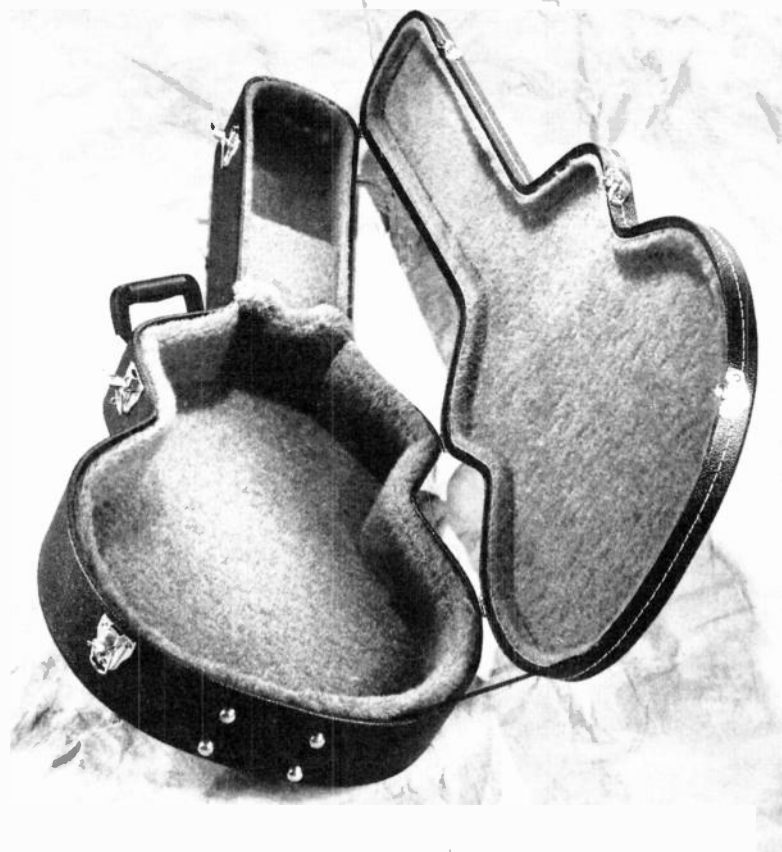
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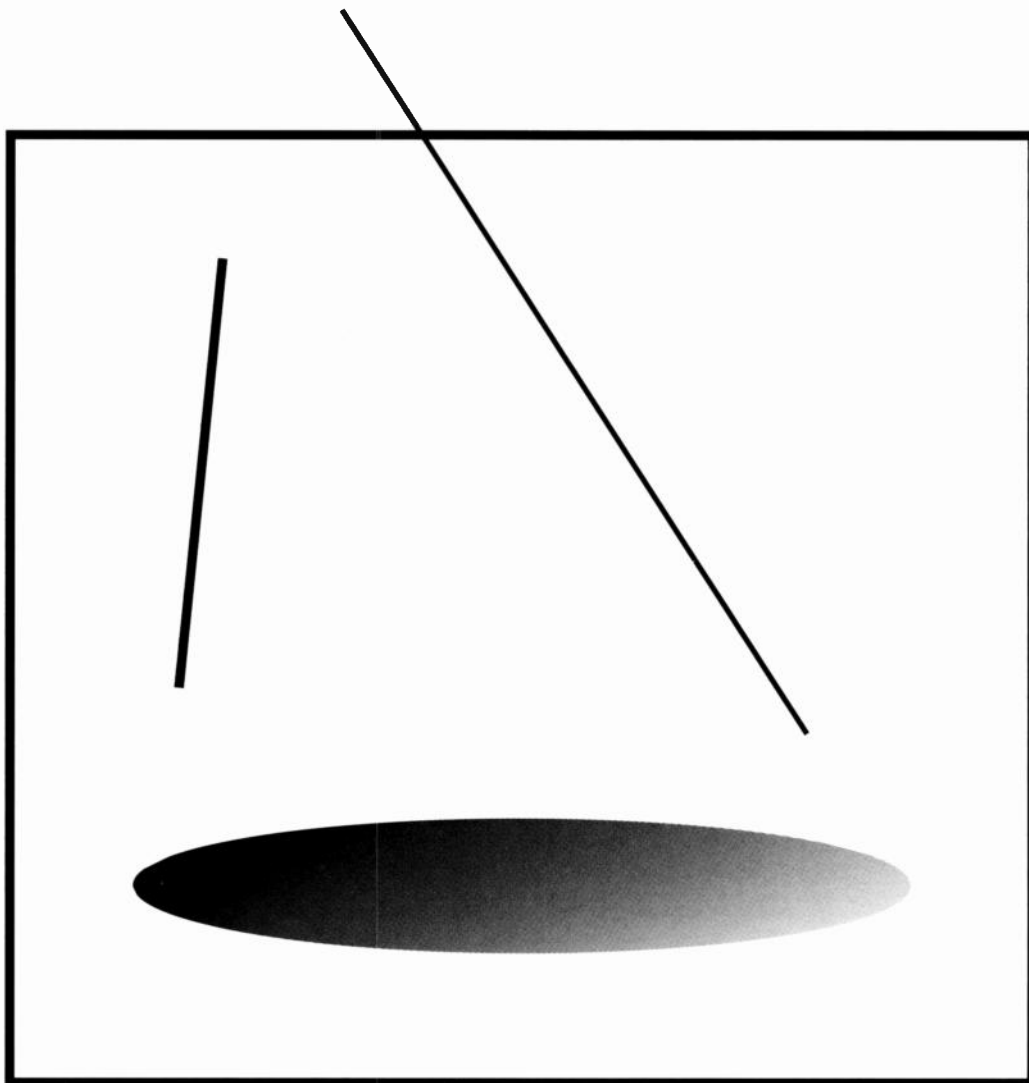
For Showcase '97 submission forms and/or a CCMA membership application, get in touch with us today:

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ISSN 0708-9635

INDEXED IN THE CANADIAN PERIODICAL INDEX.

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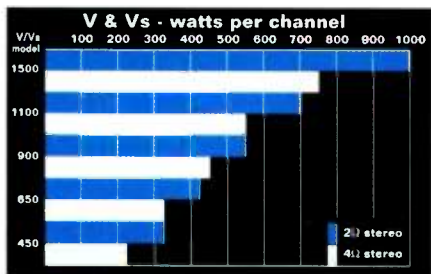
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TORONTO SAYS YES TO METRONOME CANADA

It looks like Toronto will soon become home to what promises to be Canada's largest music-related cultural centre.

The City of Toronto Executive Committee recently voted unanimously to support the Metronome Canada proposal to transform the historic Canada Malting Silo Complex on Toronto's waterfront into a facility to integrate all facets of the Canadian music industry.

The Metronome Canada Foundation, a non-profit corporation, proposes to create the first cultural facility built with private sector funding. It will include offices for the music industry, a Canadian Music Hall of Fame, an 800-seat concert theatre, the Humber College Music Program, a Canada Malting Museum, community and music-related retail, a research and development centre, restaurants and the "Riverboat", a floating exhibit celebrating Yorkville Avenue in the 1960s.

Metronome Canada will be actively campaigning for support from within the industry, and capital for the project will be sourced through public fundraising, corporate sponsorships, heritage and cultural foundations, special events and industry contributions.

For more information about the project, contact John Harris at the Metronome Canada Foundation, 118 Sherbourne St., Toronto, ON M5A 2R2 (416) 367-0178 or (800) 291-4477, FAX (416) 367-0271.

DEAR FEEDBACK: HELP!!!!!!

Help! My E-Mu Proteus2 recently lost a large chunk of its memory — patches 64-127 to be exact. I took it to the local dealer and was informed "dead battery". I replaced the battery, but am still faced with DEFAULT in 64-127. So now what do I do? These sounds are some of my favourites, and I use them for performance frequently.

I live near Ottawa. Is there a repair shop specializing in E-Mu in this area? Please help this pathetic techno-twit!

*Ian Hepburn
Ottawa, ON*

* Ed: I am informed that Steve's Music are an authorized E-Mu dealer, and have an Ottawa location at 308 Rideau St. where you can bring in your Proteus2. Although there is no repair service at the Ottawa store, they do authorized E-Mu repairs at their Montreal location and will send it there for you. Their number is (613) 789-1131.

Any readers needing similar information regarding repair services in their area are urged to contact us through Feedback. We'll do our best to put you in touch with someone who can help solve your gear-related dilemmas.

KNOCKED OUT BY KNOCKOUT

Thank you for the brief, albeit great article on Knockout Pill (Showcase, Feb. '97 CM). They are my favourite southern Ontario band and I've been watching them develop for the last year. Definitely ones to watch for!

What would be interesting is for your publication to talk to young, up and coming bands like Knockout Pill about their experiences as an indie group as well as some technical info. Deb and Shannon, two great female guitarists, both have unique styles, sound, equipment and, above all, can play.

The big bands can afford all the bells and whistles, but what about the little guy (though I suspect Knockout Pill will not remain so for much longer)? How do they develop their sound on a limited budget?

*Frank
Toronto, ON*

* Ed: How do bands develop their sound on a limited budget? Check out this issue's look at Home Recording for some great ideas on affordable recording gear that yields professional results.

Write To Us!

Address your letters to FEEDBACK,
c/o Canadian Music Co.,
300 Front Street East,
Toronto, Ontario M5E 1B3.
Tel: (416) 593-1111. Hours: 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
E-mail: feedback@cmco.com
Web: <http://www.cmco.com>

...Bands visiting the Toronto area for Canadian Music Week (or any other occasion) should pick up a copy of **T.O. Nite**, a free live music guide that comes out every other Wednesday and has the most comprehensive listings of open stages and acoustic and electric jam nights across the city. What's more, the publication gives listings for smaller clubs and nitespots that offer live music — ones you won't see advertised or mentioned in the larger entertainment weeklies — and has a handy club map and personal planner incorporated in its pages to help you plan your musical outings. The publication is available at numerous Toronto clubs.

For more information, contact: **T.O. Nite**, 2142 Yonge St., Toronto, ON M4S 2A8 (416) 608-0607, FAX (416) 322-3131.

...**FACTOR** (Foundation to Assist Canadian Talent On Record) will be hosting a panel at Canadian Music Week entitled "**Money for Nothing**", during which they will provide details about FACTOR's existing programs and new programs.

"Money for Nothing" will be presented on Friday, March 7th from 3:00-4:00 p.m. in room 103A of the Toronto Convention Centre.

For more information, contact: **FACTOR**, 125 St. George St., 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5A 2N4 (416) 368-8678.

... **The North By Northeast Music Festival (NXNE)** comes to Toronto June 12-14. Bands from Canada, the U.S. and parts abroad will converge on 24 Toronto clubs and two outdoor stages for three

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nights of music showcases. During the two days of the festival, the place to be is conference headquarters, the Toronto Hilton downtown, to take in industry panel discussions, mentor sessions, a music industry trade show and an acoustic stage.

For more information or to register, contact: **NXNE**, 185A Danforth Ave., Second Floor, Toronto, ON M4K 1N2 (416) 469-0986, FAX (416) 469-0576, e-mail: inquire@nxne.com, Web Site: <http://www.nxne.com>

... **The Canadian Country Music Association** is now accepting applications from country artists for **Country Music Week 1997**, to be held in Hamilton, Ontario next September. A number of artist showcase opportunities are available during the week-long festival, which includes seminars, conferences, and culminates in the 1997 Canadian Country Music Awards Show.

Acts interested in vying for showcase opportunities should submit a full infor-

mation package including contact info, bio, photo and cassette or CD of their music to the Association for consideration. The first deadline for submissions is April 30, 1997.

For more information, contact: **CMW Showcase '97**, c/o Canadian Country Music Association, 3800 Steeles Ave. W., #127, Woodbridge, ON L4L 4G9 (905) 850-1144, FAX (905) 856-1633.

...**Music West**, Vancouver's annual new music festival and conference, is scheduled to run May 8-11, 1997 at the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre, with a number of local clubs participating in presenting festival showcases. This year, the first annual Pacific Music Industry Awards, honouring the most notable talent on the west coast music scene, will kick off the festival on May 8th. The festival includes a number of lectures, workshops and panels on industry-related topics, and a new addition for the '97 festival will be individually priced seminars to allow a larger segment of the musical industry to participate. You can also become part of history at this year's Music West Conference, as they endeavour to surpass their 1994 Guinness World Record Breaking Guitar Marathon.

For more information on the festival, contact: **Music West**, #306-21 Water St., Vancouver, BC V6B 1A1 (604) 684-9338, FAX (604) 684-9337, Web Site: <http://www.musicwest.com>.

...Musicians in Saskatchewan will want to pick up a copy of **GEMS (Guide to Entertainment & Music in Saskatchewan)**,

EAST COAST MUSIC AWARDS & CONFERENCE '97

Valentines Day weekend was one to remember for everyone who attended the ECMA Conference, Trade Show and Awards held this year in "Canada's Most Honest City", Moncton, NB. From Spanky's 72-hour Showcase Marathon to the Workshops covering topics which included: "Your first paying gig", A&R, Releasing an Indie Record, Copyright, Changes in Canadian Radio and Marketing Yourself to the nightly Mainstage Showcases at Hotel Beauséjour and the ECMA Concert Series at the Capital Theatre, music was everywhere in the city that weekend. And what music! Showcases and concerts featured such artists as: **Damhnait Doyle, Great Big Sea, Barachois, The Punters, Laura Smith, Lina Boudreau, Four the Moment, Annick Gagnon, big picture, Sandbox, Bruce Guthro and more.** The diversity of music and the quality of musicianship was outstanding and one can definitely see why Canadian music is dominating International airplay!

The Trade Show featured over 45 exhibits and from the comments we received from both the exhibitors and the attendees was a great success!

The Award Show was hosted by Natalie MacMaster and Roland Gauvin (Les Méchants Maquereaux) and was broadcast live on the CBC on the East Coast, presented nationally on February 28th. If you didn't see it, check with friends to see who taped it — it should NOT be missed.

Next year the East Coast Music Awards are celebrating their 10th anniversary and the event is moving to Halifax. Organizers vow to rise to the challenge to make the event even bigger and better than this year. So mark February '98 in your calendar (check out future CM's Events for actual dates), pack your long johns. You've gotta be there!

Alan Doyle from 'Great Big Sea'



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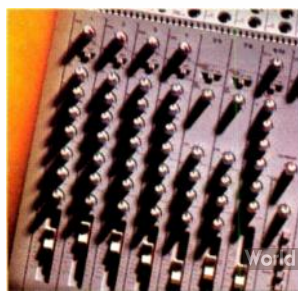
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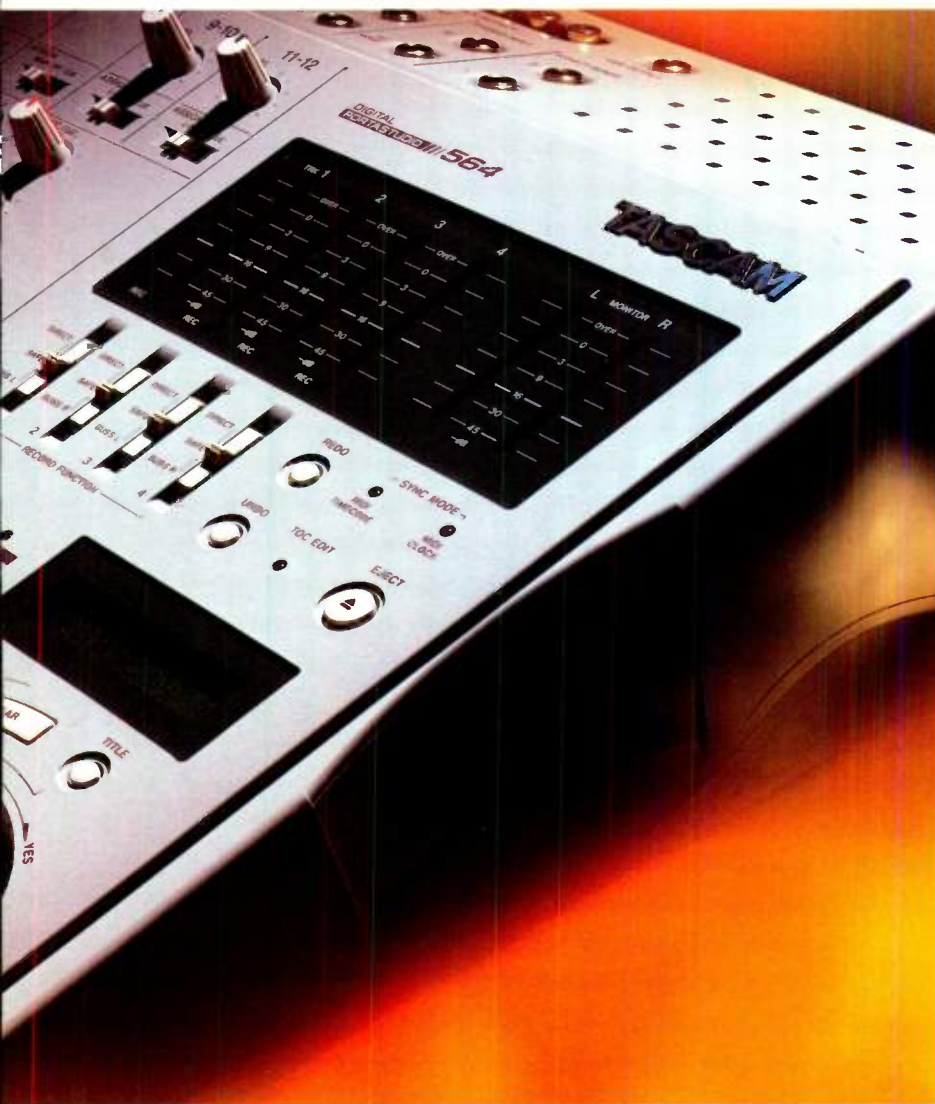
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... Saskatchewan has also become home to the recently established **Songwriting Centre Canada Inc.**, which is offering workshops in authorship, copyright and production under the direction of experienced songwriters and producers.

For more information and workshop schedules, contact: Joel Scott, Executive Director, Songwriting Centre Canada Inc., PO Box 1360, Moose Jaw, SK S6H 4R3.

... Over 70 prizes and fellowships are administered and given out yearly by the **Canada Council**. Over the years, as more corporations and individuals have come to the Council to facilitate their giving to the arts, it has come to be acknowledged as an authority in running prize and fellowship programs and managing endowments.

The **1996 Virginia Parker Prize**, established for young performers of classical music who demonstrate outstanding talent and musicianship, was recently administered by the Canada Council to trombonist **Alain Trudel**. Born in 1966, Alain is one of the very few trombonists pursuing a career as an international soloist, made his first appearance with the Montreal Symphony at the age of sixteen, and has won a number of major prizes. The Virginia Parker Prize is worth \$26,000.

For more information on the Canada Council and its various fellowship and endowment programs, contact: The Canada Council, 350 Albert St., PO Box 1047, Ottawa, ON K1P 5V8 (613) 237-3400, FAX (613) 566-4407.

... The **Canadian Country Music Association (CCMA)** recently enacted a tour support program geared towards travelling country artists. The Canadian Country Tour Support Program encompasses several grants designed to increase the number of Canadian country artists who go on tour. The program is operated by the CCMA, with funding from the Country Talent Development Fund, which is supported by contributions from Canadian radio broadcasters.

Grants are limited to 50% of the total eligible tour budget, to a maximum of \$2,000, and may not exceed the shortfall of costs over income.

For more information, contact: Canadian Country Music Association (CCMA), 3800 Steeles Ave. W., #127, Woodbridge, ON L4L 4G9 (905) 850-1144, FAX (905) 856-1630, E-Mail: ccma@sprynet.com

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EVENTS

WHAT • WHERE • WHEN

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20th Annual Greater Southwest Guitar Show

Dallas, TX
March 22-23, 1997
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Songwriters Association of Canada - Songwriters "Seminar at Sea"

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Costa Victoria
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Association of Concert Bands Exhibit/Convention

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25th Annual Brass Conference

New York, NY
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Musicora International Classical Music & Jazz Exhibition

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London Music Week

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Foundations Forum & Musicfest '97

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South Pacific Song Contest

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7th International China Sound, Light & Music '97

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1997 NAMM Summer Market

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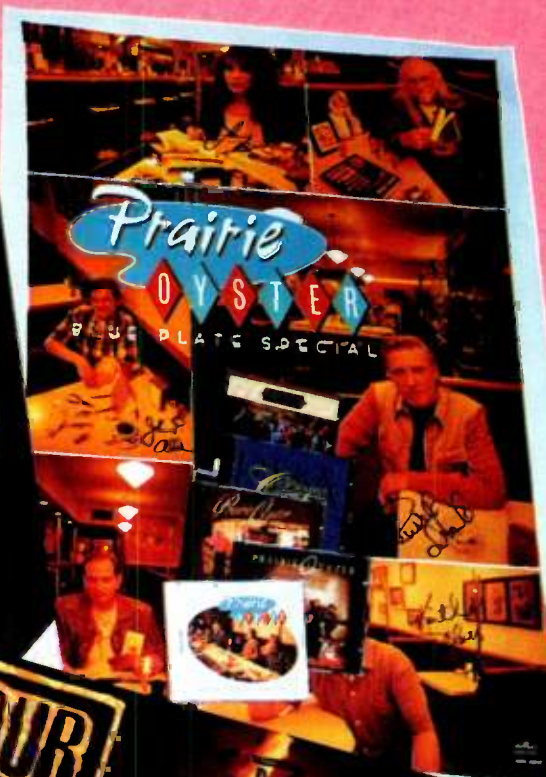
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S O U N D  C H E C K

Story Water

Art Turner
Reptil Records



"My music isn't what you'd call classical, jazz or pop," says guitarist Art Turner. "It doesn't really fit any category I've seen. It's just good, real stuff. Acoustic soul food with a real smoked Canadian flavour."

Turner's debut album, *Story Water*, is a powerful collection of fourteen original guitar compositions, featuring collaborations with some of the finest talents in music today, including Loreena McKennitt fiddler Hugh Marsh, Bruce Cockburn bassist/stick player Fergus Jemison Marsh, and Paul Winter Consort/Will Ackerman cellist Eugene Friesen. Guesting on the album is percussionist extraordinaire Rick Lazar, and the inimitable Windham Hill/High Street recording artist, bassist Michael Manning.

Turner's sparse, embryonic playing style may be dismissed by a lot of guitarists as derivative, underdeveloped and even monotonous — in most cases, it's the other musicians' contributions which provide the dynamics and form for the compositions — but certainly not uninspired, especially when you consider the artist's biographical history, which should provide enough inspiration for any musical artist serious about his/her craft.

The beauty of this album is that it is so embryonic — Turner has only been playing for a few years, and the fact that this album even exists is proof positive of the power of the human spirit.

Eight years ago, Winnipeg native Turner was one of the most sought-after talents in the field of photography; until a little-understood debilitating disease called Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) forced him to abandon his career, and left him bed-bound for several years. In 1993, friend and renowned Canadian luthier Linda Manzer built Turner a custom acoustic guitar in exchange for an old Hasselblad camera, and Turner taught himself to play as he continued his recovery.

Some basics in home recording and the desire to have favourite musicians guest on his musical project provided the momentum for what eventually became *Story Water* — an extremely listenable album of musical soundscapes from an artist whose vision and talents have yet to fully awaken.

Africville Suite

Joe Sealy
Sealy Records



Pianist/composer Joe Sealy's *Africville Suite* is a vibrant jazz album and a personal tribute to an important part of Canadian history. Musicians contributing their talents to Sealy's project include Dan Hill and vocalist Dutch Robinson (who, respectively, wrote the lyrics for and sings the poignant "Sometimes I Dream"); along with greats like saxophonists Mike Murley and Phil Dwyer, drummer Mark Kelso, bassist Paul Novotny and guitarist Rob Piltch among others.

The CD takes the listener on a musical journey of Africville, where Sealy's distant ancestors settled in 1848. Africville, on the shore's of Halifax's Bedford Basin, was Canada's oldest Black community until the wheels of 'progress' destroyed its character, its heart and, eventually, its existence in 1970. It's definitely a disturbing and unfortunate chapter in Canadian social history that I don't even recall being touched upon in my own formal high school studies — which kind of pissed me off when I considered that my last required Canadian Studies course taken, somewhere around '81, was not really all that long ago. I haven't sat in on a Canadian history class lately, but it seems to me they left out a few important chapters back when I was in school.

Canada's cultural history and makeup is as diverse as any country in the world, and it's great to see our musicians telling its stories through their music. *Africville Suite* evokes the spirit of a joyous community that once flourished here, giving it new life as it continues to inspire those who remember...

S O U N D  C H E C K

New and Notable

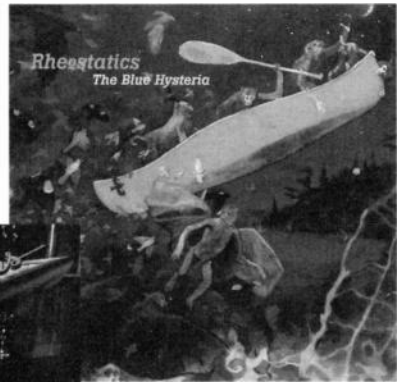
...*The Blue Hysteria* is the seventh album by the quintessentially Canadian **Rheostatics**. The four-piece outfit (Don Kerr - drums, cello, vox; Martin Tielli - lead guitar, vocals and album paintings; Dave Bidini - rhythm guitar, bass, percussion, vocals; and Tim Vesely - bass, guitar, organ, vocals) are known for their wry lyricisms, which just get better and better with every effort (want proof? — have a read of the lyrics to “Feed Yourself”); but seem much darker in perspective on this album, as if infused with the discomfort and restlessness a cold, bitter winter brings.

Not everyone gets the Rheos’ take on things, but with their increased exposure backing acts like The Tragically Hip, certainly more will have the opportunity to. Fans of the band’s truly original sound already consider them one of our country’s national treasures; I wonder how long it will take before they receive that Order of Canada they so rightly deserve?

...**Barney Bentall** has released the compilation *Greatest Hits (1986-1996)*, 17 selections which cover his entire recording career — from a newly recorded version of his early hit “Jelly Roll”, through singles like “She’s My Inspiration” and “Gin Palace”, to “Be Inside Of You” (the only new tune on the compilation), with a couple of cover tunes (by the Stones and AC/DC) tossed in at the end for good measure.

This album, while appealing to fans, really only

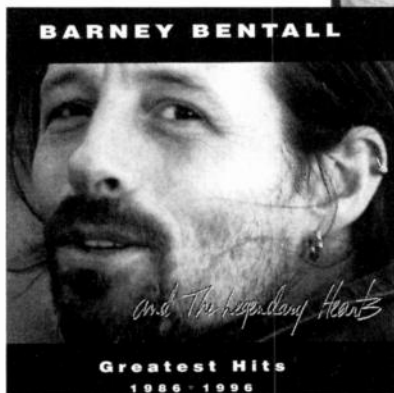
proved two things to me: one, history does repeat itself — and often, far too soon; and two, while I never thought it possible to nod off while listening to “You Shook Me All



Night Long”, I guess I was wrong.

Completely pointless. C’mon Barney, what the hell inspired this?

...Fans of electric blues guitar will want to check out **David Gogo**’s latest release, *Dine Under The Stars*. Recorded live at Nanaimo’s Queens Hotel, the album features Gogo’s new lineup of Rick Hopkins on keys, Dennis Marcenko on bass and Billy Hicks on drums as they rip through a few standards like “Hoochie Coochie Man”, “Don’t Lose Your Cool” and “Sweet Little Angel” — just havin’ some fun and gettin’ the lead out before heading into the studio to record the next album.



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INTERNET ON THE ROAD

If you are a working musician or involved in the music industry, you probably spend a lot of your life travelling. If you have come to depend on the Internet for communication and information, being without it will make you feel naked.

If you have a notebook, you can add an internal or external modem or a PCMCIA modem. Installing the same software as on your computer at home or office, will give you the same capabilities on the road. To avoid long distance charges, you will need to set up an account with a national provider such as Sympatico, iStar, Netcom or ACC

Netmedia or an on-line service such as AOL or Compuserve. This will give you local dial-up access across Canada and in some cases in the USA or abroad. Some local providers offer 800 service but it is generally very expensive. Many of the palmtop computers are equipped to provide e-mail capabilities and the newer models running a version of Windows 95 will give you access to the Web. Satellite and wireless access to the Internet are available as well at a greater cost.

If you're not carrying a computer, you can visit one of the Cybercafes located in most major cities around the world. For as little as \$10.00 an hour you can rent an Internet-ready Mac or PC in comfortable surroundings with food and drink. Most computers are also equipped with other software such as word processing, spreadsheets and graphics and are con-

nected to a laser printer. Since you are connected to the Cybercafe's mail server, you will need to change the mail server in the browser's mail preferences to your mail server back home to retrieve your own mail. Make sure you change it back to the way you found it when you are done. You can find a list of Cybercafes worldwide at <http://www.easynet.co.uk/pages/cafe/ccafe.htm>. Many of Kinko's Copies locations across Canada and the U.S.A. are offering Internet access and some hotels are offering the service as well.

With a little advance preparation and some resourcefulness, you don't have to leave home without your connection to the Internet.

RESOURCES

...**Soundcraft Online** is the Internet source for a guide to Soundcraft and its sister companies in the Harman International Group. Featured are product information, user lists, press releases, distributor lists and product support. Visit at <http://www.soundcraft.com>.

... **Roland Canada** has premiered its own website at <http://www.rolnada.com>. Information on their wide range of products, an online magazine, company information and links to other music-related sites are available at this well-designed site. Information is presented in both English and French.

... **Carver Professional** amplifiers has introduced their website at <http://www.carverpro.com>. Featured are product information, press releases, a what's new section and technical support.

... One the best surprises of the recent NAMM Show in January was the introduction of the **Music 101** site. Mostly focused on guitar, the site offers on-line lessons, interactive help with chords and scales and sessions with world-class guitarists such as Christopher Parkening. Instruction on other instruments will follow in the next few months. Visit Music 101 at www.music101.com.

... Toronto-based retailer **Saved by Technology** has moved its website to the Music & Audio Connection (<http://maac.com/music>) Browse their range of products, services and technical support in the Company Showcase or in The Music & Audio Mall.

... For a great selection of hotels worldwide including description, photos, rates and contact information, visit **The Hotel Guide** at <http://www.hotelguide.ch>.



... Norris-Whitney Communications operates **The Music & Audio Connection**, the international on-line resource for music-enthusiasts, musicians, music and audio professionals. Included are artist listings, free classified ads, products for sale, company showcases, music and audio resources, career information, music humour, discussion forums and file libraries. Drop by and visit at <http://maac.com/music>.



Steinberg WaveLab v. 1.5

BY PAUL COWAN

Steinberg, manufacturers of the world famous sequencer Cubase, have just released the newest version of their PC-based wave editor, WaveLab. This editor pulls ahead of the pack by offering real-time effects.

Steinberg has been present on the PC for a number of years, and they have been very sensitive to the needs and responses of their users. Although many of the real-time effects and plug-ins for WaveLab are appearing first in Cubase VST for Mac, the WaveLab program itself is PC native code and very stable. The company also has a stronger Canadian presence than many others with an office in Toronto.

When you first open WaveLab, the interface looks colourful and simple. As you use the program, you realize that this is not just a surface thing. The hot-keys in WaveLab are very similar to those which have proven themselves in Cubase. This means that editing is very fast and easy. Having used Cubase for some time, I was editing audio files together within minutes of installing the program. WaveLab also includes an overview window on top of every file that allows you to look at a large section of the wave as you are performing fine work in the edit window. Edits such as cut, copy and paste also occur in real time, even during playback! Crossfades are much easier to perform than with many other PC-based editors. The program also includes a batch processor and an audio database that can seek out all of the audio files on all of your hard drives. The spectral analysis tool included with the program is the fastest, most comprehensive and easiest to read that I've ever seen. Time and pitch correction functions were also high calibre. In short, this is the fastest and easiest to use of all the wave editors on PC. The fact that it will handle files of up to 24 bit resolution with a dynamic range of 192dB and a signal-to-noise-ratio of 144dB also means that it surpasses most available hardware capabilities and sounds amazing.

The original WaveLab program was similar to many of the other wave editors on the market in that it included most of the effects used in mastering as non-realtime processes. WaveLab 1.5 continues to use these high quality processes such as dynamic filtering, but includes real-time effects. These show up as plug-ins within its new master section. The master section offers real-time level metering



and master volume control as well as six spaces for effects to be inserted. The effects that come with the program include an Auto Panner, Stereo Chorus, Echo, Reverb, EQ-1 (two semi-parametric and one fully parametric filters), Grungalizer, Leveller, Resampler and Tools One (a phase correlation tool). For those of you looking for more master tools, available plug-ins include a De-Clicker, De-Noise, Spectralizer and Loudness Maximizer. Steinberg are currently adding more plug-ins to this list such as Audiotracks by Waves.

The addition of real-time effects in this program conquered a large problem that was coming up in my studio. People were coming to me for mastering who had been trained in the classic and tactile art of twisting knobs in real-time to set things like parametric equalizers. Using other editors, they were having trouble setting processes without being able to hear the changes as they were made. One person compared it to performing acoustic brain surgery while blindfolded. With the new WaveLab, clients are able to turn virtual knobs and hear how their music is being affected. This program is not designed merely for the recording studio however; its ease of use makes it a perfect editor for everyone from a beginner to a professional sound engineer.

The plug-ins that are included with the program sound good and look like rack-mount faceplates when they come up on the screen. The Auto Panner, Chorus, Echo and Reverb are exactly what they sound like, and they contain enough presets to get you going immediately. The EQ-1 looks like an EQ rail on a mixing console with sweepable high and low frequency filters and a fully parametric mid. The Leveller and Resampler are effective in making sure that your file resolution remains high at all times. Tools One can be used for chan-

nel swap, phase inversion and MS processing. The Grungalizer looks like something from the sixties, and can add effects such as pops, clicks, hiss and even AC hum found on older recordings for that "vintage feel".

The plug-ins that are also available are very useful in a mastering situation. Steinberg's De-Clicker and De-Noise allow the program to be used for audio reconstruction work on older recordings or recordings with background noise made under less than optimal conditions. The Spectralizer is an Audio enhancer for adding that extra sparkle, and the Loudness Maximizer can assure the best possible signal for you to work on.

In the Dec. '96 issue, you might remember that I reviewed another wave editor called Sound Forge. Although there is a great deal of duplication between the two programs, this could be seen as a partner to Sound Forge as well as an alternative. Sound Forge includes some complex filters which do not appear in WaveLab, such as a multi-band compressor. However, if you make your living in audio, the importance of available real-time processing cannot be overstated. Also, the effects such as reverb, chorus, dynamic control, etc. sound as different in these two programs as rack units from different manufacturers would. This means that instead of just duplicating these processes with both programs, you add many new tools to your arsenal. Both of these programs represent the best in available audio tools for the PC platform, and either will cover most of your editing needs. Although WaveLab is easier to use, especially for new users, I would highly recommend both editors if your budget allows for it. With a retail price of \$689, WaveLab is competitive with other editors and within most budgets.

For more information, contact: Steinberg North America, 9312 Deering Ave., Chatsworth, CA 91311 (818) 993-4091, FAX (818) 701-7452.

PAUL COWAN HAS WORKED IN MANY AREAS OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY INCLUDING LIVE AUDIO MIXING IN THEATRES AND IN THE STUDIO, LIGHTING FOR MUSIC AND THEATRE, BEING A CAMERAMAN, BUILDING RECORDING STUDIOS AND OCCASIONALLY HAVING TIME TO PLAY GUITAR AND BASS. PAUL IS CURRENTLY CO-OWNER OF SONIC CRUCIBLE RECORDING STUDIO IN TORONTO, ONTARIO.

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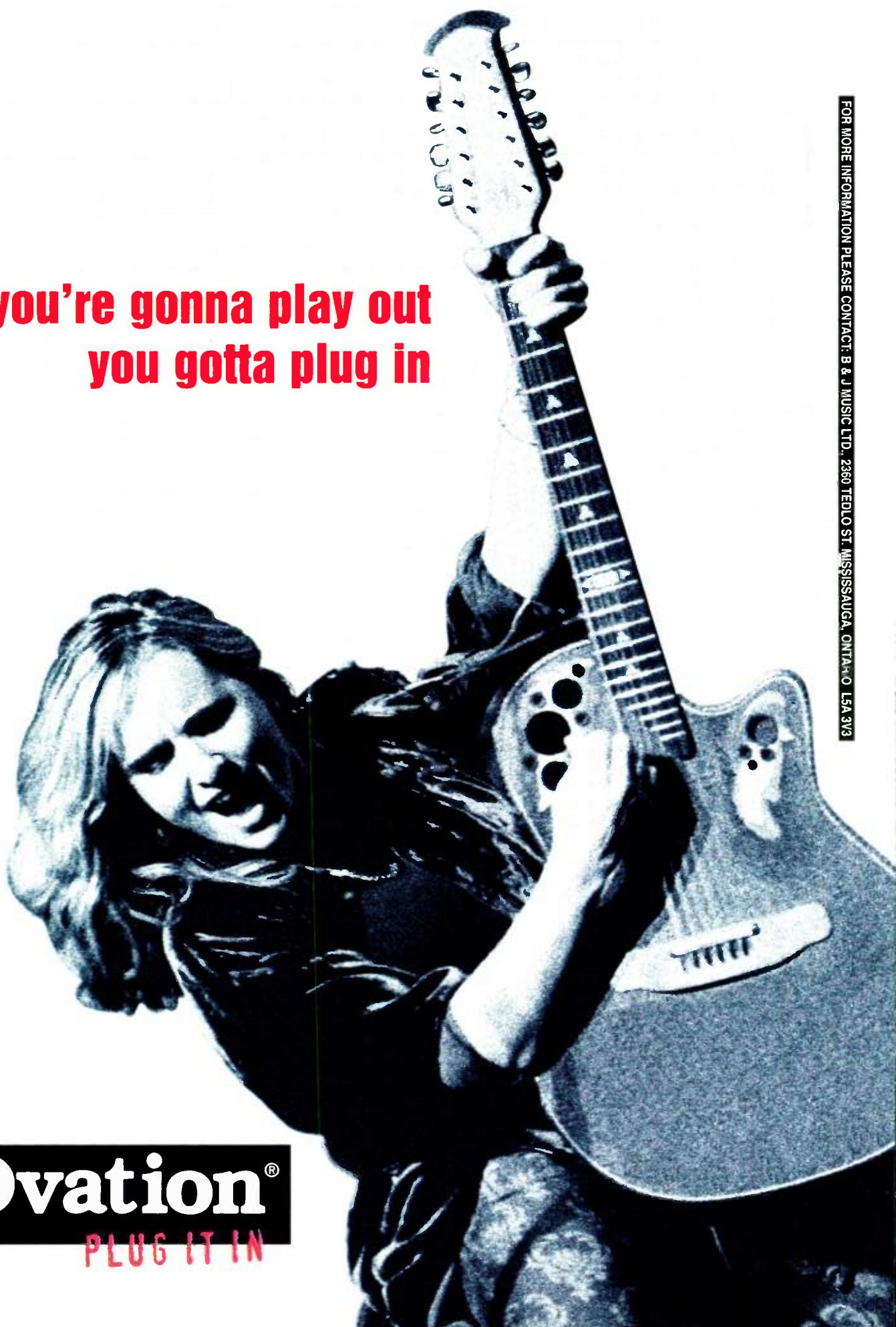
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BSS DPR 402 Compressor/Peak Limiter/De-esser

BY KEVIN DOYLE



The BSS DPR 402 compressor/peak limiter is probably one of the most versatile compressors on the market today. If you are really into using a compressor, you'll find that for a dynamic processor, this unit can do a lot.

The DPR 402 has an incredibly fast attack time (50 secs) and release time (5 msec) to achieve a constant, "in your face" drum sound. Slow the attack time down to 50 msecs and your drum sound becomes very punchy. This was the setting I used on Alannah Myles' "Black Velvet" to get that really punchy bottom end. To hear a good example of the fast attack and fast release times, check out "Change Comes Around" by Harem Scarem.

For lead vocals, this unit works great with one channel for compression, by just using the auto attack and release times, and the other channel for de-essing. I prefer to use the wide band de-essing setting with a fast attack time and fast release time. I find that a lot of sibilance problems occur in the 2-4K range, and with this setting you can access the problem

easily. What's great about this unit is the Mon S/C function, which actually lets you monitor the sound of the sibilance you are trying to remove, and pinpoint it. If you have a higher frequency sibilance problem, just switch the setting to HF only de-essing.

There is also the option of stereo de-essing your stereo compressed signal. The controls let you select the frequency and amount of de-essing desired. Since the release time is somewhat slow in this mode, I would only recommend using it for subtle de-essing, or you'll hear the high frequencies of your signal dropping out for too long.

Another feature that can be used simultaneously in the DPR 402 is the peak limiter function, which can be used in either Fast or Slow setting. The only drawback is that the Fast/Slow switch and the stereo link switch are both mounted on the back panel, which makes it awkward to get at when the unit is rack-mounted alongside other gear.

All metering is provided by LEDs and can

be viewed even when the unit is in bypass. In addition, there is an interface facility, which provides various input and output signals to the unit, allowing other dynamic controlling features to be utilized.

The DPR 402 has become a standard piece of outboard gear and you'll find it in studio racks everywhere. The unit is rugged and compact, and offers excellent dynamic processing — and the fact that I now have three of these units at my disposal indicates that I like to use them a lot.

Highly recommended.

For more information, contact: Contact Distribution Ltd., 38 Thornmount Dr., #1, Scarborough, ON M1B 5P2 (416) 287-1144, FAX (416) 287-1204.

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INTERVIEW BY CAROLYN HEINZE

Guitar[®] with Eric Johnson



Making his entrance into the guitar world during the mid-'80s, Austin, Texas-based guitar icon Eric Johnson rapidly gained recognition from colleagues and fans alike for achieving clean, wholesome guitar tones through rich, melodious solo work. Renowned as an accomplished player in the Texas guitar world long before the release of his groundbreaking debut album, *Tones*, Johnson has always maintained a reputation for perfection. His belief that the creative process is not something to be rushed has resulted in both criticism and admiration within the music industry for the artist, but almost everyone agrees that whatever Johnson produces musically is of the highest quality.

Johnson's third and most recent release, *Venus Isle* (the followup to *Ah Via Musicom*, which earned the guitarist a Grammy for the single "Cliffs of Dover") was in the works for four years before the artist went public with the album. During the recording of *Venus Isle*, Johnson set out on a self-improvement plan of sorts, as he concentrated on developing his vocal ability while at the same time learning more about playing rhythm guitar.

Accepting the Fact That the Primary Course of Action Doesn't Always Work

Eric: "With *Venus Isle*, I was trying to make it more well-rounded than some of the last records. I was trying to see more of a bigger musical picture. So the guitar thing could keep going and growing, but within the context of hopefully more of an inspired musical picture, rather than just a bunch of guitar leads without being in a nice framework. The point of *Venus Isle* was to head in that direction.

"I'm working on measures now in the way that I practise guitar to where I can practise the pieces I want to record more before I go onstage and play them, or before I go and record them. So, I hopefully have a little better skill at executing what I want to do. As far as this last record, *Venus Isle*, it was everything but spontaneous. That's why it took so long to complete. It ended up being a lot of stuff that I set out not to do. But I invariably got into a situation where I felt I needed to do the things I had intended not to, because I wasn't happy with what I was spontaneously doing."

Balancing Discipline with the Creative Flow

Eric: "To be creative, you can be very dissipated. I think that being really, truly creative is allowing a creative moment to happen through you rather than from you.

"I don't really know how much we can take credit for. We might have been just at the right time, at the right place, and the radio was tuned into the right frequency that picked up that idea. And, that idea will spark another idea, and all of a sudden you have a composition. That's just the half of it. Then you have to finish the composition. A lot of time, finishing the composition is the discipline part; you have to be focused. Because otherwise you'll get 200 song ideas, but never get anything finished."

Striving For Perfection

Eric: "I'm really lucky right now. I'm working with a guitar technician named Jeff Tweedy — he's understanding of my neuroses!

"It's like a violin player that moves his soundpost around for two weeks trying to find that perfect sweet spot. All these little things make a difference. I'm struggling with the guitar as an instrument; I'm trying to fool with it to get the best scenario. As I do, I take notes and try to figure out a certain logistical consistency to it, to where I can replicate, over and over, the sound.

Electric guitar, to me, can be very ruddy

sounding. It's not really one of my favourite sounds. But there's always those happy accidents. Sometimes, the most neanderthal-type sound can also have the most beautiful happy accident, and become the most beautiful sound. It can have those moments of being bigger-than-life, and incredibly brilliant. It's that fascination with from where it came — it's kind of interesting.

"I've set out to try to figure out a way to harness different physics. How I can use the polarity of the electronics, the phasing and all the parts to get a better sound. It's taken a lot of work, and to me, I hear a difference. That's what inspires me to shift gears and keep going, rather than stay in the same place with the same sound."

Trendiness

Eric: "I'm less gimmicky than some acts are by the very nature of the status quo of the time that pop music has dictated. That very nature is the thing that ends up trapping it a year later. Whatever wonderful vortex you fall into is the same one that will trap you in a year or two, or three or four. It's like a piece of jewelry that shines really brightly, but if you look at it closely, you go, 'Well, that doesn't really turn me on. It's not that pretty'.

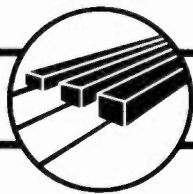
"It's definitely a viable thing, and there's definitely room for it. It's as legitimate an artform as any. But, maybe it doesn't quite catch your eye the same, so you steer a little clear of it and you try to look at something a little different. One of the fringe benefits of not adopting a gimmick is that it doesn't quite put you in a corral where you become a victim before you even create something.

The Student in Everyone

Eric: "I'm trying to figure out a way to shift gears into some new music styles. It's hard. It's always a learning experience to keep growing. I don't think it's necessarily being hard on yourself. It's almost like being easier on yourself, and relaxing and opening up, and allowing yourself to learn more. Then you can create more sensitive music that's extremely powerful.

"I think that maybe that's some lesson in itself for us all — to remain a student, no matter how good you get. A lot of musicians still study, even when they get good."

ERIC JOHNSON IS REVERED IN GUITAR CIRCLES AS ONE OF THE GREATEST PLAYERS OF OUR TIME. HIS MOST RECENT RELEASE IS VENUS ISLE (CAPITOL/EMI)



BY JOAN BESEN

KEYS

For Blue Plate Special

I have always enjoyed the side of piano playing which involves its use as a percussion instrument. The piano rhythm parts buried in the joyous glue of the great New Orleans party records of the '50s, the more clearly audible rock 'n' roll and country rhythms of Jerry Lee Lewis and Pig Robbins, fascinate me. Along with the more obvious fills and solos, much of what I do with Prairie Oyster consists of this type of playing. Depending on the type of song, some of this is very freewheeling and of the moment, and some is very carefully worked out. I also enjoy using oddball keyboards with sounds I like for pad and textural work. Let's explore what I played on our latest album, *Blue Plate Special*.

1. "She Won't Be Lonely Long"

A classic Oyster-style shuffle, in which Russell and I carefully work out a walking bass and left-hand piano part. I play this on single notes and play the double-time off beat shots as chords with my right hand. It gives the bottom end a nice, rich sound. Depending on the style of shuffle, or the sections within a song, I might use higher or lower octaves in the left hand, leave out the left altogether in order to give a more spacious sound to the track, hold low octaves on the downbeat of each bar, and various other change-ups. Different effects can be achieved by how staccato or legato the right hand chords are hit. Bouncier tends to sound more Bakersfield, and smoother is more Ray Price-style.

2. "Whatcha Gonna Do?"

Very free-style improvisational rhythm part. More funky in verses, more straight in the bridges. The opening line of the first piano solo is a tribute to Jerry Lee's style of left and right hand call and answer.

3. "The Water's Deep"

Folky-type part played on a lovely tube Wurlitzer. It's a gentler and more bell-like sound than the black, curved-top type.

4. "If My Broken Heart Would Ever Mend"

A gentle, more swing-style shuffle than "She Won't Be Lonely Long".

5. "Blue Moon"

My attempt at a Spanish/cocktail fusion.

6. "Lona Gone Daddy"

A harder shuffle than "She Won't Be Lonely Long". I wait it out until the first chorus. Notice Russell and I don't actually start the walk until the second bar. We pedal on the tonic of the 4 chord for the first bar. This is a very typical example of the kind of minute arrangement detail which has always been a hallmark of the band.

7. "In The Summertime"

I wanted to marry classical New Orleans Mardi-Gras double shuffle and rhumba to country, because the groove and humour suit the vibe of Roger Miller so well (it's the only cover tune on the CD). "Let the Four Winds Blow"-type rhythm part in the verses consists of double hits on the 1 and 5 notes of each chord in the left hand, alternating with double hits on the chords in the right. Bridges are straight 1, 5 boom-chick country. The first solo is stolen from the Mardi-Gras style version of "Little Liza Jane" — a traditional



solo which shows up frequently in New Orleans music. Professor Longhair rhumba during guitar/violin solo.

8. "Unbelievable Love"

Acoustic piano basic part follows bass in left hand and plays syncopated right hand part. Black-top Wurlitzer plays horn-type shots. Celeste plays Celeste part! Very sneaky Casiotone MT 40 melody support part on bridges and flute trill at the beginning.

9. "Sunday Driver"

Played on a Thomas Young well-tempered tuned 19th century Steinway upright which sounds to me like parlours and church basements. I'm no Bobby Brown (the great fiddle-tune pianist — not Whitney's naughty husband), but I tried my best.

10. "There She Goes"

Triple-tracked acoustic a la Phil Spector.

11. "One Way Track"

Voice Classic Keys sound #11 with wah on. This plays eighths all the time with no wah during most of the song, and gives extra bounce to the guitar and snare parts, then I hit it harder to make it wah during the ending. If you can't tell what this part is, you will notice it clearly when it drops out during the first half of the last verse.

On a personal note, this is the only track I have ever played on (in what is close to a thirty year career) of which, given the opportunity, I would not change a single note. Everything else, I swear — just one more take, no really, just one. I mean it. No, this will be my last try, really ...

12. "Into The Blue"

An unusual venture into a hip-hop groove (which we love) and layered keyboards. Along with the acoustic piano part (I happily discovered I could play an E and a B in the right hand through the entire song while just marking the chord changes with left hand octave whole notes — I love things like that), I used a bunch of Casios, a DX100 and other stuff I can't even remember to create various textures which come and go throughout the song.

Please address any questions to the homepage, and while you're in Sam's or HMV buying *Blue Plate Special*, get a copy of *Two Pianos — No Waiting* (on the National Treasures label) for too much blues piano.

Keep Boogieing!

PIANIST/KEYBOARDIST/SONGWRITER JOAN BESEN PLAYS WITH PRAIRIE OYSTER, AND IS ACTIVE AS A LIVE AND STUDIO SESSION PLAYER. SHE DIVIDES HER TIME BETWEEN TORONTO AND NASHVILLE, AND CAN BE HEARD ON THE NEW ALBUM *TWO PIANOS — NO WAITING*, ALSO FEATURING SCOTT CUSHINE AND DOUG RILEY.

CM

FREE!!

Two Pianos — No Waiting CD to the first e-mail I get which correctly identifies the quotation in the intro.

Go to our Prairie Oyster homepage at <http://www.io.org/~oyster/>



BY PETER MURRAY

THE BOTTOM LINE

The internet has opened up a whole new world of communication and greatly facilitated the exchange of ideas and information. Whereas the video medium, not too long ago, revolutionized the way music instruction (among other things) could be disseminated to the public, the net has introduced an interactive — even personal — component that was previously only available from one-on-one tutelage.

In my last column, I was bemoaning the fact that bassists seem to lag behind drummers in their celebration and use of community; drummers seem to support and teach each other, while bassists stay home. But I neglected to mention that while bassists may tend to be introverted, they can be eloquent communicators given the right forum. My case in point is one of the true gems of the net: The Bottom Line.

The Bottom Line (a.k.a. TBL) is a digest-format newsgroup where registrants receive daily issues via e-mail. Hundreds of participants from around the globe post questions, comments and advice related to bass playing, which can then be responded to by anyone else on the list. If you have questions about gear, theory, technique, players, styles, sounds etc., you can post it to TBL by e-mail and be replied to by any subscriber who chooses to respond. Or you can simply eavesdrop on the action and jump in if and when it suits you. You could get advice or info from a ska bassist in Boston or a jazz player in Tokyo — or maybe one of the pros who frequent TBL: Richard Davis, Max Bennett, Tim Bogert, Tony Levin and David Hungate are only a handful. Luthiers and amp manufacturers are also on the line, including Michael Tobias, Roger Sadowsky, Steve Rabe (SWR) and John Hall (Rickenbacker).

Often the discussions can be quite technical. If someone posts a query about which amp he or she should buy, for example, a slew of posts will follow that offer detailed praise and/or criticism about specific brands and models and their features. For many this can be tiresome, but for others it's a great resource; how else could you get such varied feedback based on hands-on, professional experience? So you'll see questions like: Anyone tried a Bass Whammy pedal? What strings will sound best on my acoustic-electric bass? What tonal characteristics can I expect from a graphite neck? Should I get a 15" cabinet or a 2x10" cab? Do monster cables really sound better than normal cables? This last question, for example, was quite controversial and those following the thread were treated to lengthy electrical formulae and calculations from a bassist/electrical engineer in Japan.

Other times, the threads are advice and opinion oriented and can be very exciting. There have been threads on nightmare gigs, favourite basslines, underrated bass players, cover bands vs. original bands and playing for

free. One subscriber asked for advice about whether to go to medical school or run off with his band, and recently a TBL subscriber from Ottawa had a legal/moral dilemma involving a hot bass he had purchased and fallen in love with. Both of these bassists solved their dilemmas with help from fellow bassists worldwide. Now there's a bass community for ya!

The Bottom Line is run by a former pro bassist and computer whiz in New York named Steve Manes. His colourful story includes playing on Broadway musicals, two years at Berklee, starting up a recording studio (Roxy Recorders in NYC), writing the BBS software Magpie, opening a French restaurant in Brooklyn Heights and racing motorcycles. Steve also runs three motorcycling mailing lists and a NYC dining newsgroup.

As Steve can testify, the calibre of the posts is high. "The folks who subscribe to TBL know what the list is about and are mature enough to keep it on track without annoying interference from me," he provides (via e-mail, of course). "The questions from new players and

the musical observations from the more experienced musicians provide the grist that keeps the list bubbling with so much interesting discussion. TBL essentially runs itself, which is terrific because it lets me sit back and enjoy it as a subscriber. There are occasional technical challenges, of course... like changing ISPs or dealing with software bugs, but I enjoy this stuff."

What excites Steve about TBL? "Meeting and speaking with so many bass players in an open environment without the pressure of competition for the same gigs. The NYC music scene is as broad as it gets, but unless you're in the Will Lee/Marcus Miller strata of heavyweights, you tend to work with the same group of people over and over again, and as long as I've been here I'm always amazed by the fact that the scene is really a bunch of circles within circles. Now, expand that to an international scale, where people can speak with session players in Australia and club daters in Hong Kong. TBL is such a terrific resource. I wish I'd thought of it."



Last spring, a slightly confused Carol Kaye popped onto the conference one day, obviously new to the net but eager to communicate. The reaction on the TBL was quick and elated; Carol is known as the "world's most recorded bassist," having played on thousands of albums ranging from The Beach Boys and The Monkees to Nancy Sinatra and Joe Cocker, and provides a great resource both as a studio legend and as a seasoned educator.

"I found after jumping in with not much computing experience that TBL offered me a chance to learn to write on the computer while sharing some experiences," says Carol, "and what better place than with a bunch of bass players?"

After many posts over several months, Carol delved into left

hand technique and I dared to respectfully challenge her method. The conflict was brief but remarkably heated, and stirred up a healthy debate amongst TBL members. I was very pleased, knowing that everyone, Carol and myself included, had learned from the experience. Though we pissed each other off at the time, we recently met in person and realized there had been no hard feelings. But when the subject matter is so important to those involved, the dialogue can be extremely impassioned: last month Carol and her old colleague Chuck Rainey had an intense online exchange over who had actually played on the music for M.A.S.H. It got personal and TBLers were stunned to watch the arrows fly in "public" view.

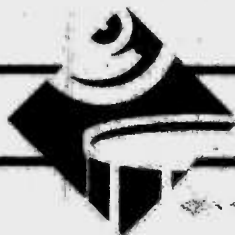
Carol sums up, "TBL offers so much, to not only bassists but to all musicians; the way we think and feel about music is there, as well as scads of info about amps, instruments, strings, gigs, practicing, getting jobs, etc. We are all 'one' on this 'Bottom Line', and that's a good feeling."

Steve Manes is tickled about

Carol's contribution to the TBL. "Carol Kaye has been our most valuable contributor. I can't say enough for her and the time she spends helping new players with difficult concepts. Yeah, I know the controversy surrounding her and her resume claims, but my experience with her is that she's a great player who's not so full of herself that she feels above starting an e-mail discussion about how to improve his or her playing. Carol is a flesh-and-blood example of why the internet works. She's a gem."

What do I like best about TBL? It combines my love of the bass with hot gossip, juicy rumours and heated exchanges; educating and illuminating whilst counteracting the allure of daytime soaps. To subscribe to The Bottom Line, send an e-mail to server@magpie.com and include the text "subscribe bass-digest" in the message body. You'll instantly join a thriving international community of amateur and professional bassists. While you're on the net, feel free to say hi to me at pmurray@inforamp.net, or visit my website at <http://www.synapse.ca/thermidor>.

PETER MURRAY IS A BASS TEACHER, SESSION PLAYER AND PRODUCER IN TORONTO, AND IS THE AUTHOR OF ESSENTIAL BASS TECHNIQUE. HIS BAND, SURRENDER DOROTHY, HAS INKED A WORLD-WIDE DEAL WITH UNIVERSAL RECORDS, AND HAVE JUST COMPLETED A LENGTHY EUROPEAN TOUR IN SUPPORT OF THEIR DEBUT ALBUM, SERUM.



BY PAUL DELONG

Drumming in



We all know that a drummer's role is to keep good time, play the right groove with the right feel, read the chart correctly (if there is one), play tasty, unobtrusive fills and generally please the musicians around us. That's not what this article is about, however. This article is about the other side of the coin. It's about pushing the envelope of solo drumming as an art form. I feel a constant need to challenge myself with things that initially seem impossible to execute at the drumset, and I hope that some of you thrill-seeking drummers out there feel the same way!

With that in mind, and with a tip of my ever-present hat to Max Roach, Terry Bozzio and Rick Gratton, I offer you "The DeLong 3D Ostinato".

The right hand is playing a broken double between the ride cymbal and second tom, while the bass drum "overlaps" thusly:

RIDE CYMBAL
TOM

BASS DRUM
H.H. FOOT OR GAJATE PEDAL WITH
COWBELL

With the left foot playing quarter notes, a sort of revolving 4 against 3 ostinato is set up between the ride cymbal and hi-hat foot.

Once you've got this under control and flowing smoothly, the next step is to solo over it with the left hand! Since we're dealing with a sixteenth note subdivision, the first thing to do is to run through all the possible sixteenth note partials:

When you've covered all the combinations, you're ready to progress to using some sixteenth note "melodies" such as those found in Gary Chester's book, *The New Breed*:

In 4/4, your right hand ostinato will resolve every three bars, but by this point you won't really be concerned with that anymore. Once the coordination is there, you can just close your eyes and let it go!

Now, for the really interesting part.

One day, while playing this, my brain slid into a parallel universe, and all of a sudden I was hearing my ostinato like this:

Now the ride cymbal is playing a quarter note pulse while the hi-hat foot is playing 3 against this "4" pulse. The next step, now that I was hearing triplets, was to explore some Afro-Cuban 12/8 type patterns with my left hand:

PLAY ON SNARE AND TOMS ETC.

Now I was free to drift back and forth between the two feels. Nothing had really changed, just my perception of what I was playing. It's kind of like one of those 3D computer-generated pictures.

So, take a deep breath and dive in; and if you feel guilty practising this self-indulgent stuff, look on the practical side. You're really developing your control, musicality and sense of time, which can only improve your overall playing. I guarantee you'll enjoy the process!

BEST-KNOWN FOR HIS SUCCESS WITH KIM MITCHELL, PAUL DELONG'S CAREER ALSO TOUCHES ON FUNK, FUSION, JAZZ AND LATIN, WITH OTHER MAJOR AFFILIATIONS INCLUDING SAX GREAT TOM SCOTT, PAT METHENY VOCALIST DAVID BLAMIRE, GUITARIST BRIAN HUGHES AND VOCALIST/KEYBOARDIST LAWRENCE GOWAN. A TEACHER AT TORONTO'S HUMBER COLLEGE, ONE OF SABIAN'S MOST POPULAR DRUM CLINICIANS AND A FIRST-CALL SESSION PLAYER, HIS RECENT ACTIVITIES INCLUDE THE CANADIAN PRODUCTION OF THE WHO'S TOMMY AND AN ALBUM WITH HIS OWN GROUP, THE CODE.

BY CHASE SANBORN

Our lips, that fragile bit of tissue necessary for eating, loving, smoking and brass playing, are the crucial link between our bodies and our instrument. Nature surely did not design them to withstand the daily onslaught that brass playing puts them through; yet survive they do, and in the hands of many fine brass players they even thrive.

NICE CHOPS

Your lips, once formed to play an instrument, become your *embouchure* (or *chops*). On a brass instrument, they must not only be able to endure a piece of hard metal pressed against them, but they also must be able to produce the essential vibrations that create the sound. Everything we do to produce and control the sound is an action to control the vibration of the lips. Simple, no?

Well, no. Show me a brass player who doesn't complain about their chops from time to time, and I'll show you a player with low standards. (Incidentally, I often say that this is the quickest path to playing satisfaction: lower your standards. Unfortunately, for this plan to work you also must convince the listeners to lower theirs.) We all suffer good days and bad days, and the embouchure usually gets the blame.

HIGHER, LOUDER, FASTER!

90% of the time, 'chop problems' have to do with the high range. To produce a given pitch, your lips must vibrate at a specific frequency, or speed. Higher notes require faster lip frequencies. It is in the quest to make the lips vibrate faster (to play higher notes) that bad habits often form at the embouchure.

SMILE!

In earlier days, brass players were taught to ascend by stretching the lips back, as in a smile. This works -- but only to a point. As an example: stretch a rubber band and pluck it and you hear a pitch. Stretch it tighter and the pitch goes up. Stretch it too tight and it breaks. Your lip is subject to the same limits. It will (hopefully) not break, but it will cease to vibrate once stretched too much -- and that point will occur much lower in your range than modern day music requires. Endurance will also suffer greatly. Stretching the lip thins it out, and makes it more vulnerable to another deadly sin:

PRESSURE

Pressing the mouthpiece against the lips causes them to vibrate faster, thus playing higher notes. Unfortunately, too much pressure causes them to bruise and blister, taking away much of the enjoyment of playing a brass instrument (and often listening to one). Now mind you, there is pressure on the embouchure when playing. Pressure increases with higher notes. I will add my voice to the chorus that states that no-pressure systems are

shams that have no place in the real world of playing. (After hearing Arturo Sandoval play a huge double-C at a clinic recently, he was asked if he used pressure to play that note. His reply: "You bet I did! If you can play that note without pressure, I want to hear it right now!") The point is not to use excess pressure, and not to rely on it for your high notes. The minimum pressure that is actually required to play is just enough to maintain a seal between the mouthpiece and your lips, so that air doesn't leak out under the rim. Any more pressure than this must be counter-balanced by muscular tension in the embouchure.

LIPS: PART 1



PUCKER UP!

The puckered embouchure is the opposite of a smile. Pucker is not a completely accurate term, as the lips are not pouted forward as if to receive a kiss. They are still rolled inwards, as when saying the letter 'M'. The entire embouchure area contracts forward towards the rim of the mouthpiece, as if to grip it. The mouthcorners tighten down firmly, though not rigidly, against the sides of the teeth. This forms them into a natural pucker, which acts as a cushion between the mouthpiece and your teeth, the better to counteract the pressure from the mouthpiece. It allows the lips to continue vibrating further up into the range. As your tongue and jaw move during playing, your facial muscles are also constantly moving, adjusting your lips so that they can continue to vibrate on the airstream that is being sent through them.

In addition, your facial muscles compress your lips together. This compression will help create the faster vibrations, as long as the air pressure being delivered from the lungs is increased to overcome the added resistance of the compressed lips.

CO-ORDINATION IS THE KEY

The action of your lips and your lungs are entwined together. They must work in unison or you will not get the results you are looking for. When they are co-ordinated, all of a sudden playing gets easier. If you watch a great player play a high note, you will probably see a high degree of muscular effort (although with some players, the exertion is not

that evident to the observer). But the muscles are working together, they are not straining against each other. This is an important distinction: *playing a brass instrument is an act of physical exertion, but it is not about straining*. If you feel you are straining, and the note does not sound easy and relaxed, then you have conflict in your playing that must be addressed.

YOU WANT ME TO PUT THIS WHERE?

The subject of mouthpiece placement has received much attention. You will find reputable sources who recommend a vertical placement of 50/50 top and bottom lip, others who say 2/3 on the top, and still others who recommend 2/3 bottom. Who to believe? I feel the truth was spoken concisely by Arban in an early edition: "There is no absolute rule for the position of the mouthpiece on the lips, for this depends on the shape of the mouth and the evenness of the teeth." (Mind you, Arban later stated that he personally thought that 2/3 on the bottom was best. Oh well.) There is a consensus that extreme deviation from the centre is probably to be avoided, but there are lots of stories of exceptions, including players who could play anywhere on the embouchure from one side to the other. Common sense rules here: place the mouthpiece where it is most comfortable and sounds the best, and then forget it.

DO YOU SEE RED?

The one rule of mouthpiece placement that applies to everybody is: don't place the rim on the red of the lips. This membrane will not vibrate or endure the punishment dished out by brass playing. Playing 'on the red' will cause problems in range, sound and endurance.

If you possess this habit you must change your placement. This is never easy, but the rewards will be worthwhile in this case. Any embouchure change should be done under the guidance of a knowledgeable teacher. If this is impossible, look in a mirror to assist you in placing the mouthpiece on the white of the lips, and *start off slow*. Play simple lines at first, as if starting on the instrument all over, to gently teach yourself the new placement and to work on the vibrations of the lip. Don't push for high range too fast. Though changing an embouchure is a process that takes time, in this case you are replacing a very detrimental habit, and you will likely notice improvements in some aspects of your playing very quickly. Other aspects may take a little longer, but eventually everything will be improved.

My next article will continue this discussion of lips, including wet or dry embouchures, puffed cheeks, facial hair and other assorted and sundry topics.

CHASE SANBORN IS A FREELANCE TRUMPET PLAYER IN TORONTO.

BY PAUL LAMOUREUX

Diminishing Returns

(in a symmetrical world)



One of the most refreshing sounds in the melodic vocabulary of any improvising musician is a shift to something which really stands out as soon as it's played. Such is the case with scales and patterns which are symmetrical (i.e., based on a repeating pattern of intervals). The most common symmetrical scales are chromatic (consecutive half-steps), whole tone (consecutive whole steps), and the two diminished scales (Ex. 1), which we will examine here. Over the years, I've heard several different names for these scales: symmetrical diminished or whole-step/half-step

diminished (abbreviated: whole-half), and symmetrical dominant or half-step/whole-step dominant (abbreviated: half-whole).

The mathematical construction of the diminished scales means that any pattern based on them can be transposed up or down in minor thirds without ever leaving the scale (Ex. 2). Throw in a few connecting chromatic passing tones for good measure and you have a sure-fire "ear-grabber" when it's played in the middle of a solo (Ex. 3). Also, since the scale has eight chord members instead of seven (as in traditional majors and minors), patterns of four and eight notes fit nicely into 4/4 time (Ex. 4). Of course, making up three-note patterns and playing them as eighths in 4/4, with accents on each group of three, is a lot of fun too! (Ex. 5).

The half-whole diminished scale (or symmetrical dominant, sometimes abbreviated "sym. dom.") is a logical choice when playing over a dominant 7th chord, because it includes the crucial notes

which define the chord quality (3rd and 7th). However, the real attention-getters in the scale are what I call the "colour notes". These are (Ex. 6):

- 1) the flat 9th (b9), which is colourful and dissonant due to its position a half-step above the root of the chord;
- 2) the sharp 9th (#9), a half-step away from the third of the chord; and
- 3) the inimitable sharp 11th (#11), one of the most distinctive sounds in jazz or any other style based on the tempered tuning system.

The way that I first learned to "hear" the sound of these scales was to play them in tetrachords: a fancy name for a group of five notes of the scale. Learn the first five notes of the scale, ascending and descending, then do the same with the last five notes. Notice that they share the "middle" note of the scale. Put them both together and... voila! (Ex. 7).

One of the features I like best about these scales is that there really are only three different ones;

- 1) The "C" family, which has the same notes as the Eb, Gb and A scales, and finally,
 - 2) The "C#" family, which has the same notes as the E, G and Bb scales,
 - 3) The "D" family, which has the same notes as the F, Ab and B scales.
- It sure beats learning 12 of everything, as with typical majors and minors.

The usefulness of these scales is inherent in the fact that they avoid locking into any given key centre. In fact, they can be very useful in "floating" around a tonal centre, hitting as many consonant notes as dissonant ones, creating a deliberate, but structured tension.

If you like the "symmetrical" sound as much as I do, stay tuned for an upcoming column on my personal favourite: the whole-tone scale (or: "I can't believe I PLAYED the WHOLE thing!").

example 1 SYMMETRICAL (WHOLE - 1/2 STEP) DIMINISHED

SYMMETRICAL (1/2 STEP - WHOLE STEP) DOMINANT

example 2 C⁰

example 3 C⁰

example 4

example 5

example 6 C⁷

example 7 Tetrachords

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BY RITA CHIARELLI

Touring and the Art of Vocal Maintenance



Hey Again!

The last time I wrote (April, '95), I explained the training and process of singing in "il bel canto". This is the classical style of singing I was trained in. The interesting thing to achieve, I said, is that "not sounding trained" sound (hey, it's the blues!) I work so hard to get. I talked about power and longevity, and said that singing properly is the key.

What I want to talk to you about in this article are the other things I do to keep the "pipes" at their best. You see, vocalists are always fighting other forces which affect the voice. And, when you are on tour, these forces are many. Since I last wrote, I've toured across Canada twice and Europe four times. Each tour averages about 30 one-nighters with the luxury of two days off. In that time, we travel thousands of k's — I'll tell ya, that's a lot of wear and tear and a lot of singing, baby! — so I'm going to share some of my secrets with you. These are some of the things that help maintain your voice on that grueling tour. Although singing properly is the key, vocalists are always fighting outside elements, and sometimes we need

HELP!

Dryness

Calgary, 11:30 p.m.

"Has anybody noticed how D-R-Y it is in here?!"

That was me on my first tour out west. Now ladies and gents, I'm a pro dealing with this problem. The secret is moisturizers and/or vaporizers. I keep two of these going in my hotel room at all times when I'm touring out west. This is no joke. Big concert dates are cancelled in this part of the country all the time — especially by those unsuspecting Americans who come to our "little dust bowl" and don't know what hit them. Be prepared! I wouldn't attempt to tour out west without these.

But, when you leave the oasis that is your hotel room and that dryness hits your throat, then what?

Well, I've tried two things that have been very successful. One is a prescription item a specialist wrote up for me a few years ago. Basically, it is a throat spray that works like saliva. It lubricates your vocal chords (artificial saliva, you might say), therefore, they don't become dry because that dryness causes major irritation. I found the spray to work pretty well. An easier and inexpensive remedy is a good lozenge. I keep one (or part of one) in my mouth all the time, under my tongue when I'm singing! Now, this is not an ad campaign, but I've tried about a hundred different types of lozenges and the best one for me is the Hall's Lemon Centres. I buy the 10-pack special.

Hoarseness

Now, this is a tough one. You see, this happens to everyone (even Pavarotti). Your voice gets tired because your body is tired because you haven't slept well or long enough. Or maybe you haven't eaten well, or how about that 10-hour trip to the gig? Bottom line is you get hoarse. The best remedy is rest — I mean, do not speak all day. Save it. This helps, believe me. Not talking during the day gives the throat extra healing time 'til that evening performance. And don't whisper — that's worse. Whispering can really hurt because you over-exert to be heard. If you have to communicate, write it down! One more note — the absolute killer thing you can do to destroy your voice is to talk to people on your break. Music is usually playing loudly, so you try to talk over that and everyone's voice and, I promise you, there is hardly anything worse. I politely decline conversation at this time but if I must speak to someone I ask them back to my dressing room. A natural product that I discovered, again, after trying many is a throat complex made by NOVA. Good health food stores carry this product; in my opinion, it is one of the best. I always buy a supply before going on tour.

Foods

Certain foods and drinks mess up the throat, so here's a small note on what to avoid (again, from experience):

Peanuts, potato chips, chocolate, coffee, meat and its by-products. All these should be avoided before singing. They are for all their own reasons, deadly on the vocal chords. They either gum them up or irritate them. Herbal teas with lemon & honey is where it's at. Here is a tea recipe that was given to me on my last tour. I arrived in Robert's Creek, BC, tired, hoarse and cranky. It was just a few hours before the concert so Donna, who lives on the herb farm we were staying at, went to work. After a hot bath with lemon verbena in it, she poured a shot of SWISS herbs mixture, and many cups of tea made with fresh ginger root, mint, lemon and honey. I can't express enough how rejuvenating it was. I make this tea for myself all the time now.

Well, I hope some of these tips help other vocalists deal with the problems that arise on the road. 'Til next time, happy touring!

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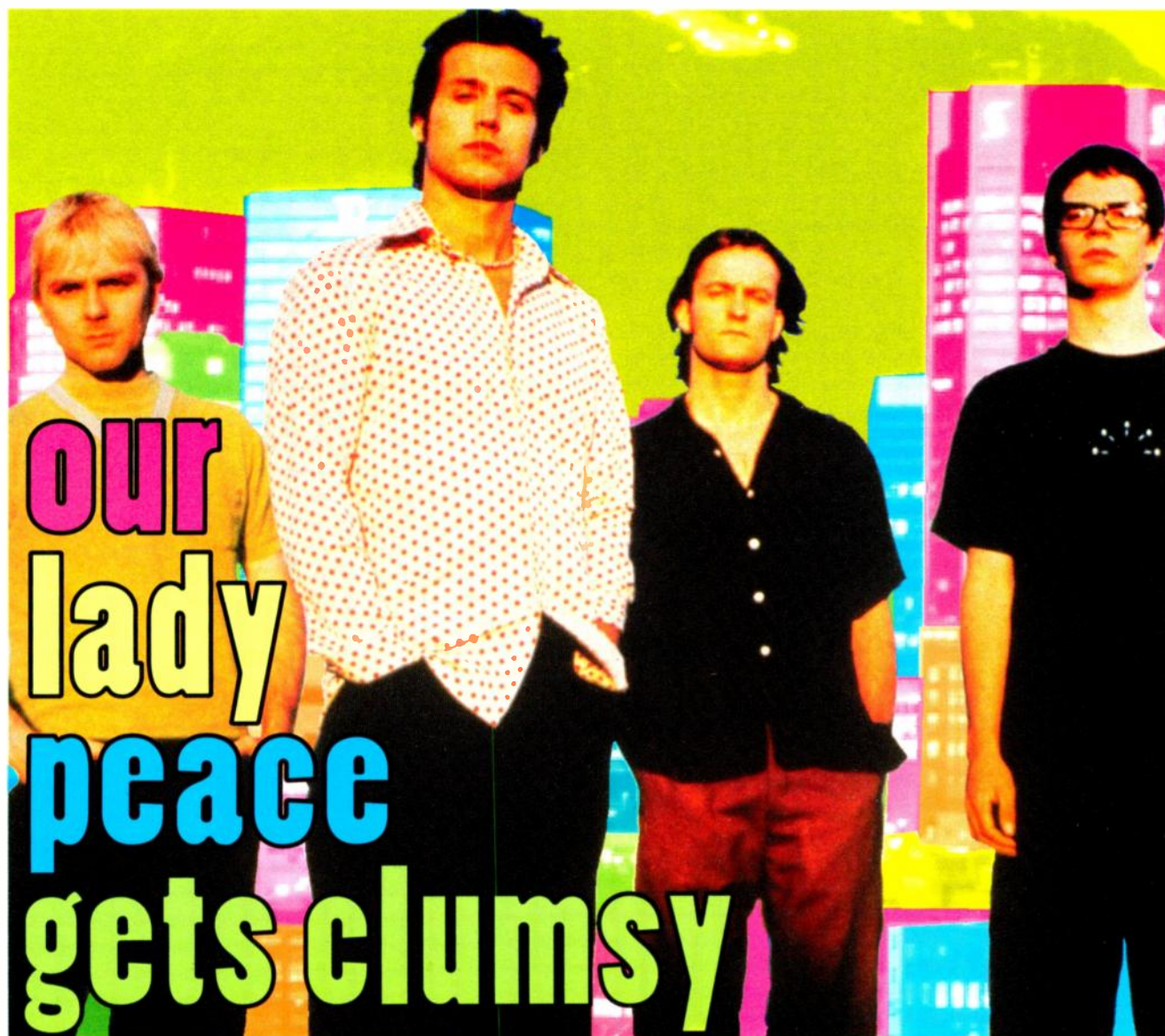
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photography by Kevin Westenberg (except as noted)

Following the cheesy piano keyboard path on the floor of the otherwise spectacular Sony Music complex in Toronto leads to an enviable rehearsal space where Our Lady Peace has assembled to do a photo shoot. Various pieces of gear stake their claim on the place.

by Karen Bliss

Clean and spacious, if not a little cluttered, the room is just one of the perks made available to Our Lady Peace when it signed with Sony back in 1993. Another is the CD manufacturing facility on the premises, which enabled the guys to proof the artwork for their latest album, *Clumsy*, making sure the blacks didn't print purple and the yellows were the right hue.

"We drove assembly crazy," says guitarist Mike Turner, whose momentary concern is ensuring that his Mesa/Boogie amp is back from the repair shop by the end of the day, because the band heads out the next day on a warm-up tour of Canadian colleges. *Clumsy* hits the streets just days later.

As Turner strums out Smashing Pumpkins chords and vocalist Raine Maida noodles on his guitar, co-manager Eric Lawrence

comes in, armed with a stack of compact discs hot off the press. One by one they check it out, Maida, Turner, drummer Jeremy Taggart and bassist/keyboardist Duncan Coutts. The cover depicts a man powerlessly clutching a swing in his teeth; on the inside is his puppet alter-ego, decrepit, alone and tortured. It's what the band envisioned.

The lead single from the album, "Superman's Dead", was released before Christmas and has leapt tall charts in a single bound. *Clumsy* would prove to do the same. With sales of 26,000 the first week, the album debuted at Number 1 on *The Record's* retail charts, a feat matched by one other Canadian band in history, The Tragically Hip. Obviously, fans were anxiously awaiting the arrival of a new OLP album.

Upon releasing its eastern-tinged rock debut, *Naveed* in 1994, Our Lady Peace toured its ass off for two-and-a-half years with everyone from Sponge and Bush to Van Halen and Page & Plant. By the time they came off the road late last summer, following a tour with Alanis Morissette, *Naveed* had sold a half-million copies in North America, split evenly between Canada and the United States. Not surprisingly, after playing 500 live dates, the band had developed into confident, adventuresome players, and the ruggedly handsome Maida into a charismatic frontman.

When the individual and group shots have been taken, the band relocates to Sony's artist lounge for the interview. No one seems the least bit offended when it's suggested that *Naveed* has a homogeneous sound and that *Clumsy* is by far and away a supe-

rior album. The band has learned how to use space — how to be heavy without bombarding, how to be organic without being folksy, and how to use synth, percussion, piano and mixing tricks to give the songs subtle nuttiness.

In one word, *Clumsy* breathes. "We learned to not play," says guitarist Mike Turner. Where *Naveed* came alive because of the heavy groove and most likely would not have translated simply on an acoustic guitar, the new material is built on melody — gentler in places, fierce in others, but with assorted textures which don't mask the song.

"There's a lot more dynamics (on *Clumsy*) and that's something you learn from being a live band, after 500 shows," says Maida. "Because live, you don't have the tricks of the studio, you have to use dynamics. That's something we became better at. We're much stronger at songwriting now. We just wanted to open up (the parameters) even more on this record, and having (new bassist) Duncan, who sings, plays cello and piano, that gives us a lot of different sounds. I mean, this is about a career," Maida adds. "It's not about selling a lot of records on the first two and then going on to solo projects."

Produced once again by Arnold Lanni, *Clumsy* ranges from the melodic rock of "Superman's Dead" and "Automatic Flowers" to the more left-field "Carnival", which threads a loop of sampled chatter with a soldiering beat then ignites for the chorus; and "Car Crash", which has a disturbed, lazy vocal and meandering eerie accompaniment. Only the middle eastern quality of "The Story of 100 Aisles" links this album to *Naveed*.

Even the lyrics are less spiritual and more personal. In essence, the entire album is about perception, how changing your thinking has life-altering potential. The idea is crystallized in the vibrant melodic pop of the title track, about decisions, and the startlingly moving "4am", about forgiveness.

"They're not as ambiguous," says Maida of the new lyrics. "It's more personal, but I'm just more comfortable talking about things. The stage for me, as a singer, is such an honest medium now that I'm not scared to be myself and say the things that I want to say."

Our Lady Peace paid its dues in front of discriminating eyes. Formed in 1992, they never took the DIY route by pressing an indie CD or becoming staples of the Queen St. club circuit. Instead, Raine and Turner attended a music seminar put on by *Canadian Musician* and approached producer/songwriter Arnold Lanni (Frozen Ghost, Sheriff) after he "shredded" his fellow panelists for declaring there was a formula to songwriting. "That meeting was the turning point for us," says Maida, then just two credits shy of his degree in criminology from the University of Toronto.

They booked time at Lanni's Arnyard Studios and made two demos with original bassist Chris Eacrett and some guest drummers. Lanni liked what he heard through the walls and hooked them up with his manager brother Robert and partner Eric Lawrence of Coalition Entertainment. "When we first started working with them, they weren't a live band," says Lawrence. "They had only played a couple of shows together, but they had great songs. One of the best things, working with a developing band, is we share in the success."

Convinced of this act, they invited record companies down to see them perform in the studio, even though they didn't have a permanent drummer. The day Sony Music Canada president Rick Camilleri, vice-president of A&R Mike Roth, and director of music publishing Gary Furniss showed up was the same day the band was holding auditions, but fortunately, the label sensed the drive and talent behind these neophytes and, despite the obvious risk, offered them a deal after hearing all they had to offer — a few songs and some ideas. It was purely faith and instinct.

"The first things that blew us away were the songs, Raine's presence and the guitar sounds and riffs that Mike had. It was more the ideas that they were generating," recalls Camilleri. "That's really what did it for us. We walked out of the studio that day and we just believed that Raine was a star. It took us all of 10 minutes to decide."

Taggart, one of the guys who auditioned that day, was immediately invited to join the group. "I was behind the glass," recalls Lanni, "and I wouldn't say a lot as they auditioned all these drummers, but Jeremy played maybe eight bars into a song and I ran into the control room and said 'this is the kid right here.'"

In the spring of '93, with the lineup solidified, Our Lady Peace officially signed to Sony in Canada, but with only three songs recorded, there was a lot of work to be done. They went into pre-production from spring right through the summer, renting a place in Mississauga, Ontario where they would jam all day and record it on a regular cassette player. Lanni would show up every day, helping with the song arrangements. Production began in the fall at Arnyard Studios and finished in January '94.

"I think we were so ignorant, that's why we weren't intimidated," says Turner of the recording process.

"We were completely limited by our inexperience on the first record," adds Maida, "which is fine though because *Naveed* was really like our independent record. That's what the whole plan was from the beginning. We did these first three songs and we recorded them to a level where we thought we need to be, if we'd released them independently. The seven more that we had written or were writing during the time that we got signed, we didn't feel any of the pressure. We just wanted to make a small little record that we liked."

They weren't the only ones who liked that small little record. Containing eventual hits "The Birdman", "Supersatellite", "Starseed", "Naveed" and "Hope", *Naveed* took off at home, and the following year was released in the U.S. on *Relativity*. Spearheaded by the success of the single "Starseed", the band found itself in the midst of a grueling six shows a week, as well as guest performances on Conan O'Brien and the now defunct Jon Stewart Show. But as things progressed, Eacrett wasn't cutting it. In September, he was kicked out of the band. "It was both on a personal level and musical," says Maida. "There were a few instances when we were trying to write on the road and the directions were so different that it was going to be really hard to make a second record."

With ten days notice before another U.S. leg, Coutts, who played in a high school band with Maida back at Scarlet Heights in Etobicoke, was called in to audition. He had played with Maida and Turner at the original auditions but opted to finish school. "Two days later, they said, 'well, do you want to come on the road?'" recounts Coutts.

"We have a tour booked in America, 6000-seat arenas," adds Turner with a laugh.

"Yeah, by the way. . ." Coutts deadpans.

His presence offered a whole new dynamic to the rhythm section, says Taggart. "Chris playing was very monotonous. Duncan's way more melodic and tends to have more of a wavy path instead of a continuous line."



Duncan Coutts



Raine Maida



Jeremy Taggart



Mike Turner

(continued on page 37)



Producer Arnold Lanni: Deliberately Clumsy

THE TOOLS

"My console is an Amek Mozart console. It's a 48-input. I have an Otari RADAR, which is 24-track digital. I also have 24-track analog, although we didn't use it. We went all digital and I have every known gadget known to mankind in terms of effects boxes and compressors and microphones, just your regular array of tools. On this album, we used a Kurzweil K2500 a lot and an Akai 900 and the SADIE system, which I used a lot for sampling. And we must have used 15 or 20 different Marshall heads to get one we liked. I don't think there's a make out there we didn't try — everything from Mesa/Boogie to Marshall to old Gibson to Fender, Hiwatt, Vox — you name it."

THE METHOD TO THE MADNESS

"Story of 100 Aisles"

"When the guys came off the road, that was one of the first songs they played. It could have been on the *Naveed* record. So when Mike played it on guitar, I said that sounds like I've heard it before, why don't I take Raine's voice, double it, put one out of phase, introduce the one in phase as we go up — that's why when you hear his voice at the beginning, it sounds really small and brittle."

"Clumsy"

"At the beginning, we recorded a sampled piano, put it into my workstation, screwed around with the motion — in other words, instead of going left to right, we'd stop it, start it, stop it, start it, so that it sounded like a toy piano. We EQ'd it, put it in the space and made it sound like someone just stepped on it. There's one part in the song where we had that middle breakdown. We didn't want to do a guitar, because we wanted the guitar to keep playing and the band wants to be able to play everything live, so that was like a turning point. We tried a whole slew of things and one night, I said, let's pick up the 58, we'll sing into an Eventide 4000, which is an effects processors, found a couple of patches, fooled around with them, and tried to emulate a cross between a guitar and a kazoo, but with the effect of the voice."

"Car Crash"

"We wanted it to sound cold, so we opted for sounds that were electronically generated, we put stuff into samplers and cut it up and put it through all kinds of different boxes. And in the chorus, you actual-

ly hear a sound in the left — which is supposed to be a little bit annoying and a little bit distancing. We didn't want anything organic. The song starts off in one time and the drums come in and screw up the time purposely by introducing a hi-hat off time. Then, we had this crescendo guitar, but we wanted this song to sound cold, detached, isolated — and so we wanted the vocals to be like when a child talks in a very innocent voice and he's in his own little world. Much to Raine's credit, much like a good actor, he was able to pull himself inside the song and deliver it."



"Carnival"

"We sent Duncan and Jeremy out with some portable DAT machines. They went everywhere for a couple of days, from outdoor carnivals to indoor malls and airports and hotel lobbies — just to get as many different sounds as possible. They brought it in, we assembled it all and towards the end, Mike put some on his computer (utilizing CakeWalk). I put some on my computer (a SADIE workstation), and we assembled it and just flew it into the recording. We also had other things. The next door neighbour at my studio operates a machine shop, so one day I sent Mike over to tape this huge machine punching a

hole though metal, and we slowed it down and you hear it in every verse just underneath the snare."

"Shaking"

"In the middle, there's a breakdown there where we wanted to get almost surrealistic with it, but not too outside. So we put the room mic into an amplifier and re-mixed the amp, got it so that it was distorted and then we compressed it at a ridiculous ratio and then regenerated it again — put it on tape, then got the original room mic as well, put it on top so that it had the kind of body of the regular drum, but I had this sort of compressed, out of phase sound coming out of the amp. Then I chewed the vocal so that it sounded like everyone was coming out of this garbage can, and I think there's a guitar in there, too, which we EQ'd and put into a weird effect, just to make it sound like all of a sudden, out of thin air, there's this little band playing."

"Hello Oskar"

"We put a couple of mics on an amp and put the mics out of phase — which makes it sound a little funny — and we moved the mics around until we found a space that sounded very different, took that signal, put it into an effects box and dressed it up that way. We also knew that in 'Oskar', we wanted the bass and drums to drive it. What we opted for first was that the bass never got lost and when we miked the drum kit, Jeremy's a very aggressive drummer, so a lot of the tone that you're hearing comes right off his riff anyway, the way he attacks his drums, but his snare drum has a very signature sound. Part of it is how he plays it; the other part is how we mic it and compress it. We just knew we wanted a specific drum and bass tone, and then we fit the guitar on top of it later."

"4am"

"The band jammed it out a little bit, but not a lot because we didn't want to deliberate over this. On the first record, I don't think Raine played any guitar. But on this record, he played some guitar and there's a string out of tune purposely. I said, 'I want you to play it and sing it as if nobody was here'. Sometimes, you have to give up so much of yourself that you're almost embarrassed. And because of the subject matter, I think he sang a lot of the vocal with just the assistant. And once that guitar tone was laid down, we deliberately didn't fool around with the tune. We wanted everything to sound as uneventful and immediate as possible. We didn't want to get great huge sound. We plugged into the amp, put up a mic and literally left it. What did change, though, was we had an original mix and we spliced in a different mix to capture the right mood. Basically, what you hear is Raine on microphone just singing a song about him and his dad."

(continued from page 35)

"It was weird," says Coutts, who had been playing in a local Toronto band, "because I was coming from a two-guitar oriented band; they were much different players than Mike. Mike makes up these crazy chords that I don't even think I'd seen a guitarist play before, so that was a different dynamic, and then stepping into a big tour was different — but these guys made it very easy for me to do."

The band tried to write on the bus and at soundcheck, but when they returned to their rehearsal space and started writing together as a band again, they ditched many of those ideas. Between tours, they would book a couple of days at Arnyard and do songs off the floor. In January of '95, they rented a cottage near Bracebridge, Ontario, and Lanni carted up his Otari RADAR, preamps, microphones, samplers, keyboards and guitars to begin writing for the new album.

"We started jamming along with each other every minute of the day," says Lanni, who would be producing again, "and we would have about 60 or 70 cassette tapes full of ideas that we would put on and tape the whole day; and then whenever we'd get bored with that, we'd put on our skates, go outside to the lake and have a hockey game."

Our Lady Peace Play...

Raine Maida: Audix OM-8 microphone, Peavey 5150 Combo amp, Jerry Jones electric guitar

Mike Turner: (2) Gibson ES-135s, Digi-tech GSP-210p, Ibanez TS-9 Tube Screamer, MXR Phase 100, Boss VB-2 Vibrato, Ibanez AD-9 Analog Delay, (2) Mesa/Boogie Trem-O-Verb Combo amps (each with 2x12 Mesa/Boogie Satellite Cabinet), Alesis Quadraverb II multieffects unit, Rocktron Rack Interface Mixer (parallel dry and wet)

Duncan Coutts: Sadowsky Vintage 5-String, Music Man Sting Ray-5 and '63 Fender Precision basses (Dean Markley strings), Aguilar DB 680 Tube Pre-Amp, (2) Carver PM 950 Power Amps, Marshall Club Man combo amp, Bag End 4x10 and 1x18 cabinets, Alesis QS-6

Jeremy Taggart: Ayotte Custom Drums (12", 14" & 16" toms, 18x22" bass drum), Axis bass drum pedal, Zildjian cymbals (19" Med. Thin Crash, 20" Crash Ride, 20" K Ride, 14" K Hats w/rivets), 6-1/2 x 14" Greg Keplinger Snare, Remo drum heads (clear Emperor on toms and bass, coated Emperor on snare, clear Ambassadors on bottoms)



photograph by Joel Smith

Recording began in March and continued on and off the rest of the year in between tours, vacations or simply a day off. It was the same studio, Arnyard, but the guys weren't the wide-eyed rookies they were with *Naveed*. "They were much more focused," says Lanni, who had watched like a proud father as OLP became successful.

"I think we have a much better idea of what the studio is capable of now than before," says Turner, "but we certainly don't think we know as much as Arnold."

"We might not know exactly what we want, but we know what we don't want," adds Maida, "so we try a hundred things and discard the ideas we don't like. Arn just lets us make our own mistakes. At the end of the eight hours, we might go back

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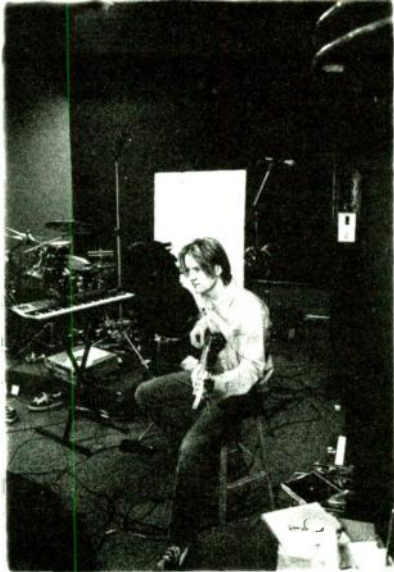
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to the original idea, but Arn never stifles our creativity. He's more like a fifth member. We use him as a sounding board, in the same way U2 use Brian Eno. It's an amazing dynamic.

"We did so many demos and different versions of the songs," he continues. "So many colours. I think the record took longer because we were doing that, experimenting, whereas if we were to take the first version of every song, it wouldn't have been as dynamic. There's a lot of different textures on this record, compared to the other one, in terms of spaces and tempos. There's some slower stuff and there's some really, really aggressive stuff."

Lanni, the guy who lambasted the formulaic way of songwriting at the music panel, relishes the freedom he has and



photograph by Joel Smith

gives to Our Lady Peace on *Clumsy*, and textured the songs with faint gurgles, hums, sputters and grinds (see sidebar). "As soon as we felt that something started to sound too predictable, we mixed it. Even if it sounded abrasive or against the grain, at least it sounded fresh," he explains.

"Psycho-acoustics play a huge part in making a record. This is a grade one kind of example, but you don't hear a lot of sad songs on a banjo, you don't hear a lot of happy songs on a cello. The emotion that those instruments evoke is very important, so after a song is recorded, we wanted to surround the melody with different sound bytes without going overboard. If you didn't understand the lyrics, and all you were hearing was just the way it hits the human spirit, it has to make you feel what the singer is feeling."

For his part, Maida, whose voice both strengthened and suffered on the road, took some lessons from Toronto vocal coach Bill Vincent prior to recording. "I was very inexperienced at the beginning and I blew out my throat," he reveals. "In

"We started jamming every minute of the day," says Lanni, "and we would have about 60 or 70 cassette tapes full of ideas that we would put on and tape the whole day; and then whenever we'd get bored with that, we'd put on our skates, go outside to the lake and have a hockey game."

the last year of touring, I had the beginning of nodes, so I had to get my shit together . . . to have a career."

"...or sing Rod Stewart," quips Turner.

On *Clumsy*, it's obvious his vocal performance has improved since *Naveed*. He now uses his voice as a full instrument, veering from plaintive to dementia to rage to falsetto, adding yet more colour to the songs. "I've been able to do all those things I used to hear in my head when I was beginning in music," Maida says, "which tends to be more like those female singers with acrobatic voices. I've been able to implement that more on this record, so hopefully that'll keep happening as I get better as a singer."

"...and slowly turn into a woman," cracks Taggart. **CM**

Karen Bliss is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

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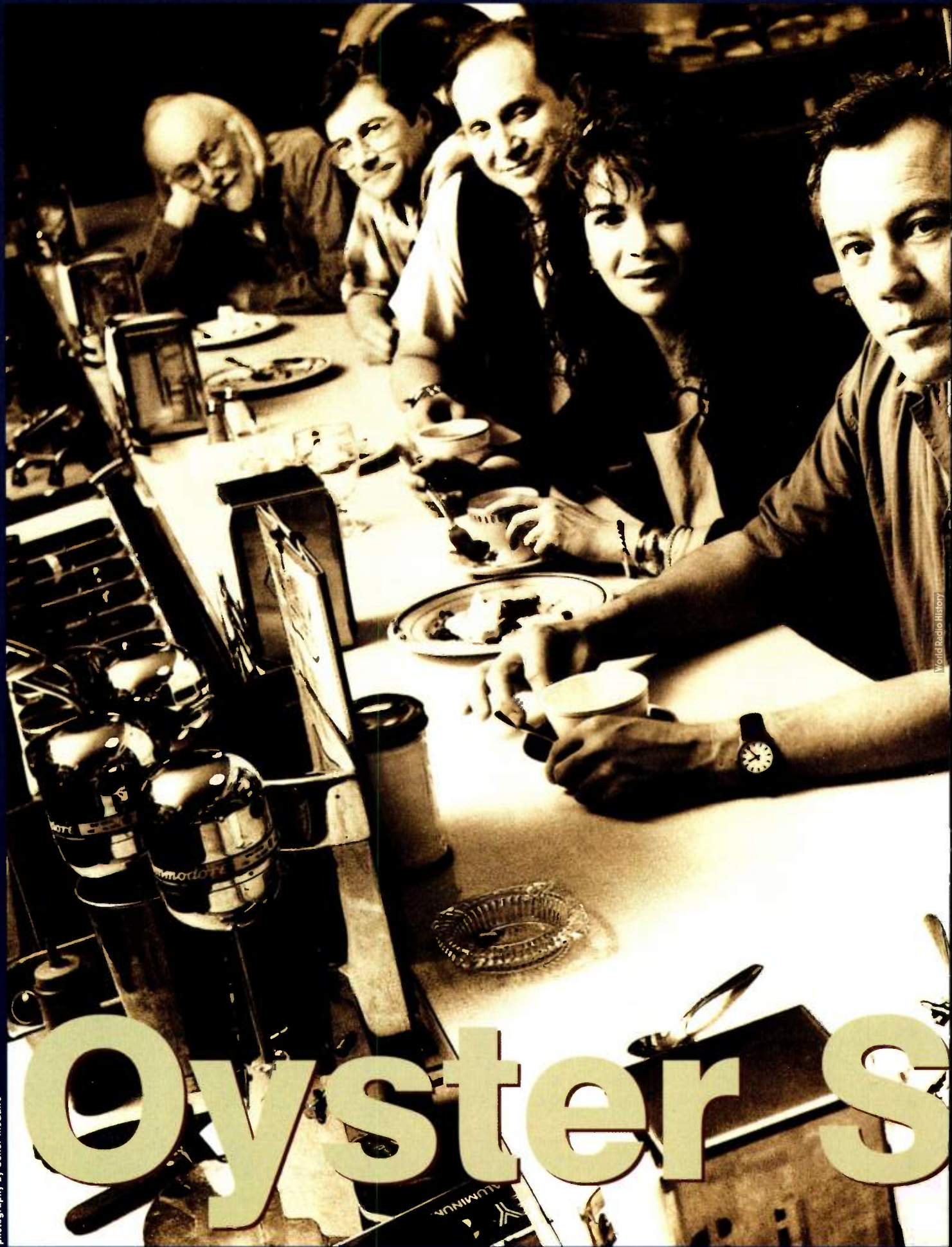
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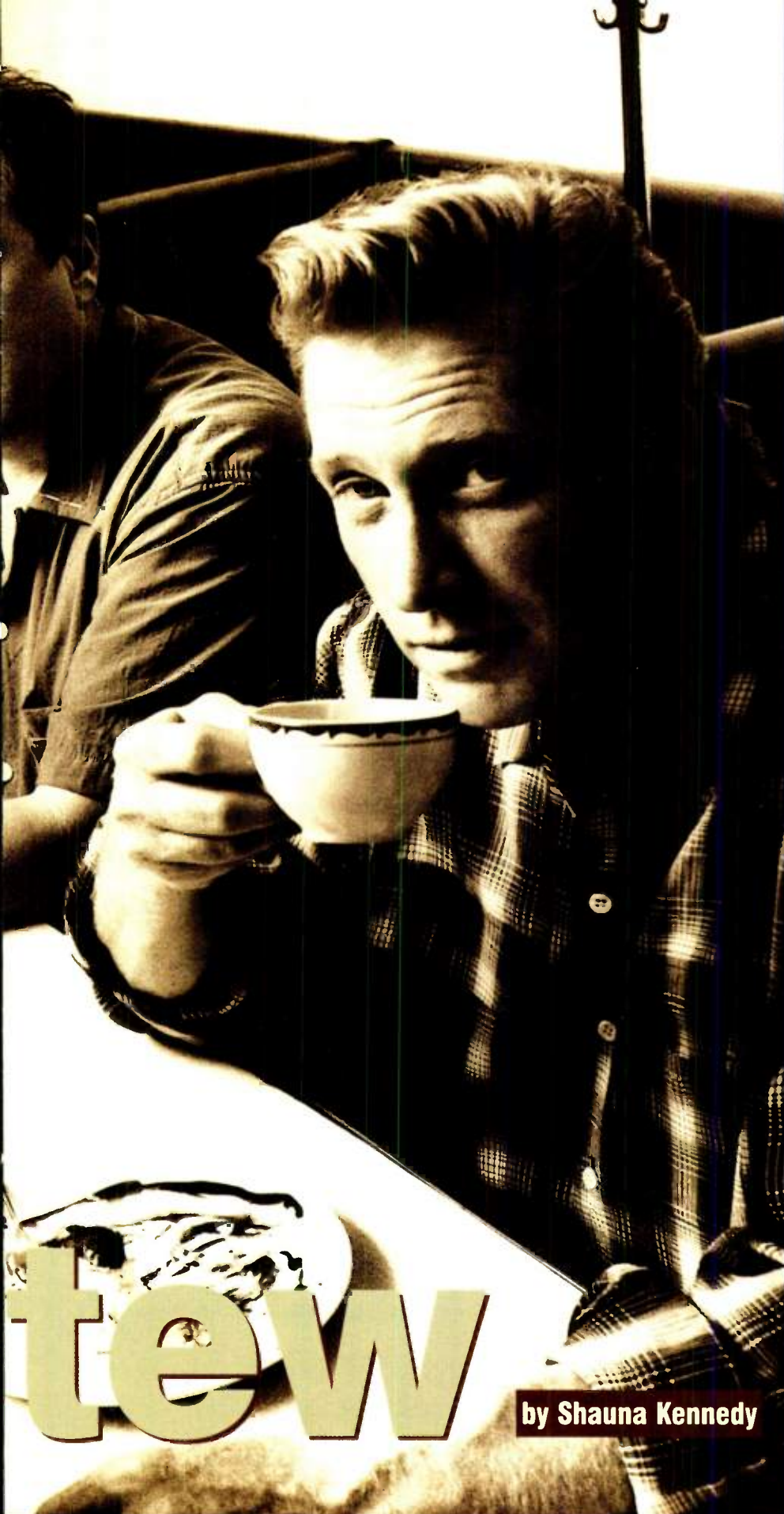
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Oysters



teew

by Shauna Kennedy

"I sometimes find it difficult to really talk about what this band is, just because it has been together for so long. Good and bad, it's still my favourite thing to do, to play with Prairie Oyster. But when it comes to actually figuring out *why* it works so well, it's almost an intangible."

So says Keith Glass, guitarist, vocalist and one of Prairie Oyster's three principal songwriters. Along with pianist/keyboardist/vocalist Joan Besen and lead vocalist/bassist Russell deCarle, they've all written songs for the sextet, now entering their 23rd year as a band and on the heels of their latest release, *Blue Plate Special*.

I discovered, in speaking with four of the Oysters, that when you consider the collective breadth of all the members' musical experience, it adds up to about *two centuries*, and provides a virtual melting pot of ideas and inspirations from which to dip into, something that's contributed to the band's highly crafted sound. While they've hesitated to align themselves as a "country" act stylistically, they've enjoyed much success and, at press time, stand nominated for the 1997 Juno for Country Group or Duo of the Year, an award they've won consecutively for the last three years.

The old adage of "too many cooks" doesn't apply here. Prairie Oyster has always been able to draw upon its collective diversity to create a sound that's fresh and, while always moving forward, retaining a sense of where it came from. Perhaps that's the key to their longevity.

"I think I'm actually enjoying playing more than I ever did before, if that means anything," says Glass. "I sort of feel like I've had a rejuvenation. I really find that in the last few years I'm just getting off on playing a lot more."

Multi-instrumentalist John P. Allen has been a full-time member of Prairie Oyster since '84, and contributed the instrumental "Sunday Driver" to *Blue Plate Special*. As a musician, he finds his role in the band a constant evolution. "I've enjoyed branching out more from just playing the violin, as I did when I was first with the band, to adding mandolin; and I'm getting to play a lot of rhythm guitar now. For someone like me, who primarily plays a melody instrument like the fiddle, it's fun to be part of the rhythm section for a change, and be able to move between that and soloing."

(continued on page 44)



An Oyster Tone-ography

How does Prairie Oyster get their sound? Oyster instrument technician, John "Skully" McIntosh, takes us on a tone-ographic journey through the band's extensive equipment.

Moving from stage left to stage right, here's a run-down of the equipment used by the members of Prairie Oyster in the creation and performance of their music — not only what they use for live performances, but additional gear used in the recording studio, as well as a few interesting pieces to be found lurking at home that surface from time to time for a special guest appearance.



Joan Besen

Joan Besen's live rig consists of a Korg SG-1D digital piano, which she and many others still consider to be one of the best-sounding digital pianos around. I delivered her spare to Ontario Place one day to be used as the sound source, connected via MIDI, to an acoustic grand piano played by Little Richard. He specifically requested an SG-1D. Visually, everyone watched him play the grand, but were listening to the SG-1D. Never believe everything you see.

Under the piano sits a Korg CX-3 organ; great sounding, and a lot easier on my back than a B3. On top of the piano is the mighty Casio MT-40. Small in stature but big in sound, Joanie once told me she did an entire film soundtrack with this one mini keyboard. It has been modified, but more from a control aspect, and runs through a Boss CE-3 chorus pedal. Also in attendance is a Voce Classic Keys sound module, used to replace the Wurlitzers she played in the studio and the source of the 'Wah Clav' sound she used on "One Way Track". All of this gets plugged into a Peavey KB-300 for her own personal monitoring on stage.

On into the studio. All of Joan's piano tracks, with the exception of "Sunday Driver", were played on an acoustic grand piano (miked in a variety of "secret ways" by the inimitable Mike Poole, engineer, sound-smith and co-producer of *Blue Plate Special*) 'cause that's just the way it's got to be. "Sunday Driver" was played on an old Steinway upright with tempered tuning. A couple of Wurlitzer pianos found their way into the sessions, one of which was a beautiful old brown tube model. A DX-100, a

Celeste and one or two other Casios were among the "icing on the cake" — and let's not forget Joanie's voice, a major part of the Oyster's trademark harmonies. No organ was recorded on this album, but in the past, when called for, of course a Hammond and Leslie would be pressed into service.



Keith Glass

Taking one giant step towards stage right, we come to **Keith Glass**. Keith plays guitars and amps and guitars and amps and . . . ! His live array of axes and amps seems to be in a somewhat constant state of flux (I suspect, for no small part, at my encouragement) but hey, it's fun!

Last time I looked, Keith was using "Old Red", a '65 Tele that has been through the mill but is definitely one fine axe; a '67 Tele with a few question marks around it, and a '60s Harmony solid body, known as "Excalibur", with DeArmond pickups, Hagstrom vibrato (all stock) and a maple laminated genuine particleboard body. Don't laugh until you've heard it — that guitar is the source of more musos coming up after (or during) the show and asking, "what is that thing? It sounds great!" Most recently, a '60 Guild T-100D (a what?) known as "Big Red" has come into the fold. This guitar was purchased for a very reasonable price at the Nashville Guitar Show during the recording of *Blue Plate Special* after much prodding by me (I don't know why — it was lurking in the back, kind of ugly and it didn't work, but so what — the Bigsby alone was worth the dough); and after a little tender loving care, a set-up and a complete re-wiring, went on to record almost half the album. In retrospect, it's too bad Keith loves "Big Red" so much, as my final prod to purchase was "look, if you don't like it, I'll buy it off ya", but the Guild is really in much better and well-deserving hands with Keith.

For an acoustic, Keith plays a mid-'70s Mossman Plainsman with an EPM under-the-saddle pickup. All of these are plugged into an Electro-Voice wireless system. Keith also owns, and brings out from time to time, a '72 Tele Thinline, a '61 Fender Jazzmaster (used on the album), a Harmony Stratotone in a very unusual but beautiful red colour, a late '60s Guild Starfire, a National dual 8-string lap steel and matching amp (featuring the "sailing bird" graphics on the grill), and a '59 Gibson Southerner Jumbo acoustic. So what does the wireless plug into? On route to the amps, Keith's guitar playing passes through Boss DM-2/3 analog delays, a Boss CS-2 compressor/sustainer and a Schaller trem pedal (used as a spare, 'cause we all like real amp trem, don't we?) before becoming balanced to go to the amps. Keith didn't use any ped-

als in the studio, relying strictly on amp sounds and miking, but he did use a Univox Univibe on "Unbelievable Love".

As you might have guessed, the amp line is also a continual "revolving door of tone", but we do have our favourites and they definitely love to travel in pairs (if not herds). Heading up the list is a late '60s Silverface Fender Deluxe Reverb equipped with a JBL D120 12" speaker. Following this is the mid-'60s Blackface Fender Vibrolux Reverb, soon to have its 2 x 10" speakers also replaced with a D-120. This amp also has a Fixed/Cathode Bias switch. The cathode bias setting sounds great at lower levels or in tandem with another amp. The amp of amps is a mid-'60s Blue Diamond Ampeg Reverberocket with a Kendrick Blackframe 12" speaker. Did anybody say tone? I've never met a Blue Ampeg I didn't love, and neither has Keith. Rounding out the lineup are his late-'70s Ampeg Gemini and '59 Tweed Fender Deluxe. The tweed sees moderate use, being a little too dirty for Keith most times; but wouldn't we all love one and it ain't goin' nowhere. These amps are most often run in pairs through a custom-made box coming from the speaker output of one to the input of the other for common trem and reverb in both amps. As you will notice, all of these amps (except for the tweed) feature internal spring reverb, and that's a big part of Keith's sound. On the album, Keith mainly used the Vibrolux, the Reverberocket and a '70s Vox AC-30 in a variety of pairings. Before leaving for Nashville to record *Blue Plate Special*, I auditioned a '60s AC-30 at Coll Audio (a backline rental company in Markham, Ont.) that sounded "absolutely fabulous" but a little raunchy for Keith's needs so we rented the '70s model instead. Keith likes a crisp, clean sound which can be difficult to attain, especially with Tele's; you can't just get a bigger amp and turn it down. There is a fine line between clean and sterile, and for Keith's needs, the smaller amps work best. Of course I've had my hands inside these amps many times and will tell you they're sort of, pretty, almost, kind of stock. Keith uses Dave Wyre hand-wound strings and all his electrics are strung .010 - .052. Keith is also a major part of the Oyster "Vocal Army".



Russell deCarle

Moving to centre stage we find **Russell deCarle**, lead vocalist and the man with the "big bottom" in Prairie Oyster. Fortunately though, that big bottom is all in Russell's hands and his gear. Until not quite a year ago, Russell's mainstay was his '72 Fender Jazz Bass. While touring the Maritimes, specifically Moncton, N.B., Keith discovered

a '60 Fender "P" Bass mint — it even had both the bridge and pickup covers (which don't appear on most Fender basses anymore, because so many people took them off) and a brown tolex case to boot! This instrument is "The Bass Guitar". No "coffee table" woods and finishes, no extra strings, no pre-amps and mechanical gadgets, just tons and tons of great bass tone. Russ also plays a '52 P-Bass that is up for a refin as it was stripped by someone many years ago. This bass is strung with ground-wound strings for a more acoustic-type sound. The other basses all sport Dave Wyre hand-wound round wounds in a medium gauge. Occasionally, Russell's Peavey Dynabass will make an appearance as will his '70s Guild B-50 acoustic bass guitar, which he played on several tracks during the *Blue Plate Special* sessions. The Guild has bronze wound strings on it, is bigger than a boxcar and sounds tremendous through a Lawrence magnetic soundhole pickup (though he'd love to try a Washburn acoustic bass for live work).

Russell also owns a '47 Gibson Southerner Jumbo and a turn of the century Washburn parlour size guitar which features incredible inlays and appointments. Russell primarily just plays these guitars for enjoyment and songwriting, though the SJ comes out once in awhile and is fitted with a Fishman Matrix under-the-saddle pickup. Both of these acoustics were beautifully restored and brought back to life by Joe Yanuzziello of Toronto, a restoration specialist and builder of beautiful electric and resonator instruments. Russell has a variety of other interesting guitars including a Harmony Monterey archtop, a Kay electric archtop and "Night Trails", one of those cool, stencilled "cowboy guitars". All of these instruments are near at hand and take a turn at being played on a regular basis.

For amplification, Russell's longstanding Peavey Megabass is getting a well-deserved rest with the recent acquisition of an Ampeg SVT, still the king of bass guitar amplification. His SVT drives two Peavey 4 x 10" cabs for that classic P-Bass/SVT/8 x 10" sound. Live, Russell also uses an E-V wireless system but, like Keith, in the studio he plugs straight in. On this last album, Russell sent a combination of direct, through a tube DI, and

miked signals to the console. An early '70s Hiwatt DR-103 and single 15" speaker cab were used for amplification.

Bohdan Hluszko



Immediately upstage of Russell sits the band's drummer, **Bohdan Hluszko**. Although he owns several kits including a Canwood, a '50s MOT (Mother Of Toilet-seat) Rogers and a Ludwig Jazz kit, Boh's choice of drum kits with Prairie Oyster is his early seventies custom-colour Gretsch. This set consists of 10", 12" 13" and 16" toms and a 22" bass drum with a genuine calfskin batter head. Remo heads are preferred for the toms. For live use, Bohdan's snare of choice is a 4-1/2" DW maple; in the studio however, a number of snares were used including a Noble & Cooley, an original Ludwig Black Beauty and a variety of piccolos. Bohdan uses a Tama Cobra kick pedal and his cymbals are a variety of Paiste and Zildjian K's.

Bohdan's interest in experimentation in the studio, to achieve a variety of sonic timbres, was exemplified by the wide variety of exotic percussion instruments he brought to the sessions, and his use of a floor tom for a bass drum on one track to get something just a little different.

John P. Allen



Just to Bohdan's right and back downstage stands **John P. Allen**, the band's bass singing multi-instrumentalist. On stage, John uses a variety of violins, including a Zeta 5-string solid body jazz violin, a more traditional Zeta Strados 4-string and an old Barcus Berry tuned up a whole tone which he uses for some Cajun fiddlin'. In addition to these fiddles, in the studio John used an early '70s German copy of the famous Guarnerius Italian violins. His mandolin is a '72 Gibson F-5 model strung with Gibson strings; and an early '70s Guild D-

50 dreadnought guitar strung with Dave Wyre 80-20 (bright) bronze strings rounds out Johnny P.'s selection of instruments. John's mandolin has a Barcus Berry pickup mounted inside the rosewood saddle and his Guild has a Fishman Matrix under-the-saddle pickup. On stage, John also runs through an Electro-Voice wireless directly injected into the sound system

Dennis Delorme



On far downstage right sits **Dennis Delorme**, another multi-instrumentalist whose primary function with Prairie Oyster is as pedal steel guitarist. Dennis' steel is an early '70s Emmons push-pull model; a very desirable guitar in pedal steel circles. On stage, Denny's Emmons runs through a Bosstone distortion unit, a Boss digital delay, an Electro Harmonix Small Stone Phase Shifter, a Peavey Valve Verb spring reverb and, finally, into a Peavey Session 400 amplifier. In the studio, Dennis used a mid-'60s blackface Fender Twin Reverb run into an open-back cabinet housing a JBL D140 15" speaker. Dennis played a '60s Dobro model D-60 resonator guitar on "Tonight There's A Blue Moon", and onstage plays this guitar on a variety of songs. The Dobro is plugged directly into the PA without any effects.

A variety of notable guests appeared on the *Blue Plate Special* "Guest Check" — some of them premeditated and some of them just "popping in" — and there was always a continuous stream of interesting instruments floating through the studio, whether they were being played or just brought in for "Show & Tell". Dan Dugmore once again brought in and played a beautiful old Gibson J-200 and his recently-acquired Southerner Jumbo. The Dirt Band's Jeff Hanna played washboard, but also brought in his Southerner Jumbo and we had Gibson SJ-Day at the studio, taking some great photos of the owners with their respective guitars. Bill Hullett played his lovely old Guild archtop on "If My Broken Heart Would Ever Mend", Jo-El Sonnier again played his button accordion and Toronto's Denis Keldie played keyboard accordion. Ben Mink and John Friesen literally "flew in" their string tracks from afar and Willie P. Bennett was "all alone" "in the summertime", but not really.

So there you go, a somewhat in-depth look at Prairie Oyster's recipe for their instantly recognizable sound. While all this gear is fun to play with, lest you think that purchasing all this stuff is the key, remember that the band themselves are the six major ingredients in their *Blue Plate Special*.





(continued from page 41)

Allen is quick to mention the contributions to the latest album by the Oyster's new drummer, Bohdan Hluszko. "Boh has played in so many styles with so much authority for so many years now," says Allen. "He can just play anything and it's added a lot to the sound. Boh is like the ultimate session drummer." Joan Besen relates that when the drum throne became vacant, Hluszko was a natural choice and perfectly suited to the collective. "I've known Boh for 26 years, and Keith and Russell have known him as long as I have," says Joan. "He's a very, very musical guy. Boh really hears songs well, is able to give good arrangement contributions and has a really wide catalog of stuff in different styles to base something on."

Having that kind of background, a combination of technical ability and an awareness of stylistic influences, is something all of the members share, says Besen.

"I think that we really, in order to go forward, have always needed to continue to educate ourselves in our past — just to be able to address the detail — and there's just a bunch of stuff that Boh knows about that, as a common group, we're all very interested in and we're able to explore easily. Because he really has a good grounding in that New Orleans second line feel that was the original role in rock 'n' roll, I can *really* play to that easily with him, which is a thing *my* style is very much rooted in, so I get a lot more free reign to be rhythmical and play around with that."

Working within such a large collective obviously presents challenges, but Prairie Oyster has managed to balance that, with each member fulfilling an integral role that satisfies them.

Dennis Delorme, "one of the original three survivors" in Prairie Oyster (along with deCarle and Glass) is recognized as one of Canada's top pedal steel players, and says his role in the band has changed considerably over the years, to a point where he's "quite happy to flow with what I am and what I do."

"I think the most interesting challenge for me in the band over the last few years has been to learn to work as a piece of the *band*, rather than looking for a place where I can shine," relates Delorme. "In the last few years, I've taken on a different perspective. It's a difficult one often; to participate in the band rather than being an individual so much has been quite a musical challenge for me. There's that residue of wanting the five minutes of glamour onstage, where you pull out all your great solos. That was an important part of music for me in the early years. Now, I'm seeing that the challenge has been to work in *context* with the other musicians, working in an ensemble rather than with five other people who support me."

Delorme, along with Allen and Hluszko, contribute a lot to the band's sound, and their involvement in the arrangement process is an important factor in the development of the band's repertoire.

In terms of how each songwriter's raw material is generally presented to the band-

members, "oftentimes," says Allen, "it will just be two acoustic guitars and voice, or sometimes piano and acoustic guitar and maybe bass, but maybe not. Then, we tear the songs all down and try to build them up again, and if they don't stand up to that, then they probably won't make it onto a record. We seem to be able to tell now whether a song's good enough to work."

Keith Glass, who penned four of the songs on *Blue Plate Special*, agrees. "When I finish writing a song, I know whether it's going to be right for us or not. My mind's ear can hear how we'd sound doing it — or not. In that sense, we've already eliminated one big step in the acceptance process, the song search process."

With the bandmembers spread out across Southern Ontario (Joan spends most of her time in Nashville) when they're not recording or on the road, being able to work away from each other and yet, retain a sense of the band as a whole, has become second nature. Says Glass, "It's not conscious, and yet I know what contribution they're going to make. Not to say that it's become predictable, but I know the kind of players everyone else in the band is. I know their strengths and that makes it easy. The song tailors itself to the band as much as the band tailors itself to the song."

"We do all share, just by virtue of our common age, a really similar background musically," Glass points out. "We all were exposed the same things growing up, so those are the things that contribute to our songwriting as well. Also, just the fact that we *have* played together for so long, things just happen fair-

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ly organically in terms of how the songs end up working with the band."

You'll find each members' musical interests are nonetheless varied, and their awareness of where their sound came from is something that makes Prairie Oyster a true roots band.

John P. Allen says he's influenced by "everybody from Don Messer to Duke Ellington — I listen to lot of big band stuff and show tune records, and everything from swing to bluegrass to rhythm & blues."

Delorme also has an interesting mix of influences. "Some of the most inspirational musicians were probably Jimi Hendrix, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker — not that they influenced me so much in the notes I play, but the sense of what they did musically," Delorme offers. "Closer to home, I would say David Wilcox in Toronto was a big influence on me in the '70s. He was the first musician I'd heard who was being a bit 'eccentric' with his playing, and I was attracted to that. There's a banjo player named Luke Wilson who also played much the same way and again, I was attracted to that idea that we don't always have to play by the rules, that the rules are there so you can break them and wake everybody up — including yourself sometimes.

"In terms of country music, my roots were really in old hillbilly music," continues Delorme. "A lot of the pre-war blues guys were also a big influence. Mostly I'd say the ones who really inspired me were the ones who were quite individualistic and were

always challenging to listen to. One of the things about Hillbilly music that attracted me was that it's, essentially, very *mantric* in quality. I really like drones, monotonic forms — East Indian music has the same quality for me — I find it very delightful to be surrounded by a constant or semi-constant kind of tone and on top of that, hear various embellishments — and really, old Hillbilly music, including banjo, was very much like that."

Joan Besen relates how her influences add flavour to Prairie Oyster's musical stew: "My heaviest influence always has been and always will be, really, pre-war blues; and most focused on New Orleans stuff, plus New Orleans R&B of the '50s which is definitely one of the roots of what we're doing," she offers. "As country music has developed, it's influence has become less and less in the public eye, but I find ways to put it in and keep it in. If I'm doing a blues thing, you'll hear those influences much stronger, much more specific, much more focused — I mean, that's the part of me that takes over. But I've always looked within the context of the band, and I do feel there's a way to use this here which is going to make our music more expansive. How can I think in my writing, how can I think in my arrangement contributions that will give that influence some play, but still not take the band to a place where it doesn't want to go."

But it seems that, stylistically, the Oysters have never been a band to place limitations. Genre marketing aside, says Joan, "It all

comes from the same place. For instance, we wouldn't have jazz as it is without a lot of things; but one of the later influences of jazz was definitely Django Rheinhardt, which was really pure Gypsy influence, and Gypsy is East Indian. And you can't remove that. I mean, Chet Atkins and Buddy Emmons are jazz players as much as they're *anything*. So quite legitimately, I don't see where they're separate *except* in the minds of people attempting to market it, which bless their hearts they're doing a job. But what it has to do with me as a *creator* of music I don't see, I never will see, and I will never address it.

"It's been real nice that there has been some outlet of commercial music that we fit enough into to establish a career that allows us to keep making records as far as that goes; but as far as actively ever having *made that* the goal, or done anything to either improve or worsen or address that in any way, it just wasn't a thing that was ever the point, *ever*."

"I know that it sounds like a cliché," says Keith Glass, "but we don't sort of 'ghetto-ize' ourselves by calling ourselves 'country' musicians. There's just *so much* music out there, why just limit yourself to one thing?" **CM**

John "Skully" McIntosh has been Prairie Oyster's instrument and amp 'technical valet' for the past four years, and operates Skully's House of Tone, specializing in the repair and restoration of amps and axes.

Shauna Kennedy is editor of Canadian Musician. The two will be tying the knot in May.



Matt Cameron
 Snare Emperor Coated/Ambassador Snare
 Bass Ambassador Coated/Powerstroke 3 Ebony w/hole
 Toms Emperor Coated/Ambassador Clear

Mike Portnoy
 CS Coated w/Black Dot/Diplomat Snare
 Powerstroke 3 Clear/Powerstroke 3 Ebony
 Pinstripe/Ambassador Clear

Jim Sonefeld
 Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Snare
 Powerstroke 3 Clear/none
 Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Clear



Her Nutty Profession

"I really hoped that I'd be the white female Eddie Murphy," reveals Bif Naked. "That was my hope in life. I used to recite *Delirious* verbatim for my sister and her friends."

BY KAREN BLISS

Instead, she entered another nutty profession — singing in a rock 'n' roll band.

Bif does have an unusual sense of humour. Sub-subtle. It's not your obvious sarcasm or knee-slapping silliness. A self-proclaimed class clown, she tried stand-up once and improv theatre several times in college, but ended up "falling into" the band thing. "There was more beer involved," she quips.

She wanted to call her solo debut *Satan's Girlfriend*, but "the grown-ups," as she calls

her more business-minded pals, warned against it. The album ended up being self-titled out of spite – if I can't have that, then I won't have anything.

Lyrical, aside from the song "My Bike", an amusing sexual metaphor involving her BMW, many of her lyrics are borne of a tormented soul with a strong spirit, like on the poignant piano-based ballad "Tell On You (a.k.a. Letter To My Rapist)" or the metallic dirge of "Make Like A Tree", about an abusive relationship she had. If there is a message in her songs, it could be to rise in the face of adversity. "A lot of the songs are either about love-lost or survival, because that's pretty much the reality of my experience," she says. The debut has sold over 20,000 copies in Canada.

After more than two hard years of jump-starting and touring behind her debut album, the vulnerable-to-venom-voiced singer/songwriter finally found time to record the follow-up. "It's just sitting in my closet, weeping, with a lonely box of titles," says Bif, "weeping and lonely, and waiting for me to tell it what to do."

She'll have to wait a tad longer. The curiously-named gal with the long jet-black hair, ruler-straight bangs, tattoo-decorated arms and mysteriously dark, pretty features just signed with Sony 550 in the States, the division which boasts such polar opposites as Social Distortion and Celine Dion. Epic will release it worldwide and Aquarius will get the license in Canada. But while Sony 550 is "pleased with 90 percent of the album," says her manager, Peter Karroll, "they're analyzing every song."

According to Karroll, who co-produced the album with Mike Plotnikoff, a new producer will be brought in who is more "song-oriented" and less of a sound engineer. Some songs will stay intact, portions of other songs will be salvaged, and others will be re-recorded entirely. Of course, it will be remixed. That way, says Karroll, the album will have the best possible chance at cracking the international market.

Meanwhile, Aquarius, who has been given the rights to the album in Canada because of its commitment to Bif's last album, will release a limited-edition spoken-word album, tentatively titled *Things I Forgot To Tell My Mother*. Bif says she was always "a little poem-writer".

Bif was born Beth in New Delhi, India, 26 years ago; the love child of two private school teachers who put her up for adoption. She was rescued by the Torberts, an American couple stationed in India and working for the Methodist Church as missionaries. They left India when she was two, settling in Lexington, Kentucky and, eventually, Winnipeg. For a gal who might seem brash, street-wise and independent, she talks fondly of her family.

She has a "little sister" Heather, who has joined Bif in Vancouver and, at 25, is not so little; and Shireen, 28, still in Winnipeg, who is married with two children. "She went THAT way – the kids and marriage," Bif comments. Her mother, Jeanette, has remarried and now works for a Winnipeg transit company. Her father, Ken, a dentist, teaches dental hygienists, and will return to India to teach in Nepal with his new wife. Bif wrote "Daddy's Getting Married" about the June '94 nuptials.

Bif's first exposure to music was her parents' Glenn Miller and Nat King Cole records. "We loved it – all of us kids," she says. At age five, she and Heather took piano, but quit four years later when the teacher banged their hands on the keys when they messed up. "We were afraid of her and never went back," she says. Always drawn to the fine arts, Bif took dance, specifically ballet, and performed spoken-word at festivals ever since she was in the second grade. Her mother saved all her poems. At the time, Bif was more interested in theatre and didn't discover her singing voice until she took on the role of Daisy Mae in a grade 12 musical production of *L'il Abner*. It was the first time she had sung in public.



At 18, she and a friend enrolled in a modelling agency in Winnipeg, under the impression that they would be moving to Toronto to be closer to the jobs. "Of course, when that fell through in the summer, I hurriedly applied for school for that fall," she says. "The only thing I could have ever modelled was, y'know, underwear or something. I wasn't tall enough."

In the two short months she attended the theatre program at the University of Winnipeg, Bif was introduced to band life via Junglemilk, a world beat collective. "There were about 15 people on and off in the group and about three girls who sang, including me. Everyone took turns and everyone played a percussion instrument, congas or bongos. It was really fun."

After dropping out of school, she adopted the nickname Bif Naked. She had been known as 'Bif' since high school, when a friend had trouble pronouncing her real name, Beth. She added "Naked" when she joined her first touring band, Gorilla Gorilla, as lead singer.

Searching for an image, she graced the stage in a different dress every night – or combat boots and a black bra. "I was young and didn't have much modesty, I guess." Three months later, at 19, she married the drummer, Brett Hopkins, already an old boyfriend.

It was with this band that Bif started writing her own lyrics. "At that time in my life, I was actually quite naive and innocent as far as anti-boy lyrics," she recalls. "Gorilla Gorilla was a very positive-mental-attitude type of project. Everyone was into the (Red Hot) Chili Peppers and the Jungle Brothers. It was this kind of love-in, pot-smoking attitude, so lyrically it would be anti-racism, anti-

drugs, positive sexuality, a little bit of angry feminist lyrics, but not much. I didn't get into any of that stuff until later."

The band – including Hopkins, bassist Ken Jamieson and guitarist Randy Steffes – which relocated to Vancouver, toured only in Canada and made two tapes, but Bif ended up leaving before the full-length one came out. "Gorilla Gorilla broke up two years after Brett and I broke up, so that was quite entertaining to continue to tour in a situation like that," says Bif.

"Breaking up with a band, or leaving a band, I find much more character damaging or reputation damaging than leaving a boyfriend. It's beyond bitter and it's beyond jilted. The character assassinations are always gender-specific, always, always – like, if a male singer quits a band he's an asshole, but if a female singer quits a band, well, she had to be fucking the band or fucking the management. It has to be something like that.

"The way I see it now, as sad as it is for your first band to break up, it was really meant to disassemble itself so that everyone could go on and do bigger and better things," she says. "Kent is the tour manager for NOFX. Brett does sound and tour managing for Pennywise, and Randy was soundman for Green Day and, last year, when they fired their management, they hired him to manage them for a year."

It was 1992, the height of grunge, and Bif had already started rehearsing with hard rock band Chrome Dog, managed by Peter Karroll (whose other clients were Annihilator and Rymes With Orange). "Gorilla Gorilla was very punk-funk and I was singing a lot of falsetto, a lot of vibrato; and with Chrome Dog, I wanted to sing very hard, raspy rock," says Bif.

The band made one tape, *Western Sisters*, and sold it off the stage as they toured up and down the west coast of North America to San Diego and back. Ironically, in Canada, Chrome Dog never ventured further east than Alberta. "It was a very diabolical touring schedule sometimes," recalls Bif. "It was literally sleeping in the van after drinking beer all night and getting paid \$25 to play a gig in Fresno. It was really paying your dues."

"I remember phoning Peter two days before we were supposed to go on tour with Annihilator and saying, 'I can't do this. I'm really sorry to leave you high and dry like this, but I just can't do this. It's just too damaging for me,' she recounts. "These people, I was convinced, were all misogynists. I said I was sorry and I felt very bad, and he just said, 'Take a week to think about where you see yourself going from here and give me a call.' I just couldn't believe he wasn't mad."

After much thought, Bif realized she wanted put out a CD. She began jamming at Undertones Rehearsal Space, next door to Annihilator, with guitarist Harry Degen, drummer Chico Misomali and bassist Dale Plevin. They performed a handful of live dates under the monicker Dying To Be Violent and did some writing and recording over the band's three-month existence.

Meanwhile, John Dexter of Plum Records offered to release her record. For the first time, Bif was flying solo.

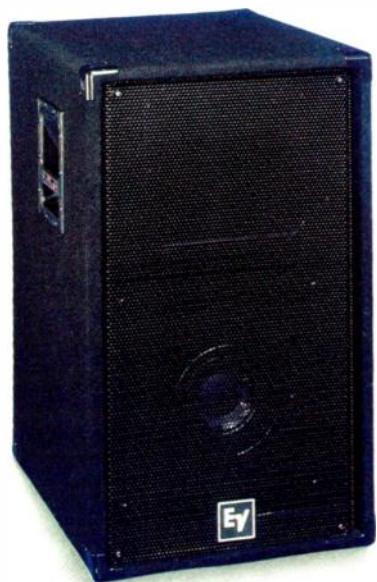
She started one-on-one with Dexter at his 24-track studio, The Hangar, in Yale-

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town. Every day, after finishing work in the print shop at the Greater Vancouver Real Estate Board, they would write and work on ideas. In May '94, Plum released an EP, *Four Songs & A Poem*, comprised of two co-writes with Dexter, two with Dying To Be Violent and a self-penned poem.

In the summer, after appearing in Moist's "Silver" video, Bif did her first Canadian tour opening for the Vancouver rock band. Joining her was then boyfriend, drummer Brad McGiveron, ex Chrome Dog bassist Rich Priske, both of DSK (now Meeker), and guitarist Sibohan Duvall. "I can't offer someone a lot of money, so I rely heavily on my friends who are available to tour," she says. In September, Bif appeared in another Moist video, "Believe Me", shot in Los Angeles.

All the while, she continued to write and demo for the full-length album. Dexter wrote most of the music, typically on piano and sometimes guitar. She recruited friends to play on it, including Priske, ex-Salvador Dream guitarist Russ Klyne, Pure guitarist Todd Simko, current Mudgirl drummer Niko Quintal - plus programming and additional keyboards by John Webster, and scratches and other noises by Pete Rumble (a.k.a. Neil Scobie).

She agrees the album is "kind of all over the place". The metallic "Make Like A Tree" and "Over You" were co-written with the blokes in Dying To Be Violent. The jangly melancholy of "My Bike" and "The Letter" were collaborations with McGiveron (a third track, "Only The Girl", was vetoed by "the grown-ups", but remains in the live set).

The piano-based "Tell On You (a.k.a. Letter To My Rapist)" was a poem Bif wrote

a long time ago, for which Dexter provided the music. "I was glad that I finally got to put it to music and lay it to rest," she says. The self-written "My Whole Life" was intended to be a capella (which is how she performs it onstage), but developed into a funky hip hop groove, and "Succulent", a co-write with Dexter, is another scratchy hip hop track.

"John came from Johnny Jett Records, which was a successful dance label. With 'Succulent', all the music was laid down first and I had to come up with a melody. I didn't think I could meet that challenge at all. I'd never done dance music before, and it was really refreshing for me."

The eponymously-titled CD was released in October '94 on Plum, distributed by A&M Canada. In November, the band - this time McGiveron, Priske and guitarist Dave Genn (Matthew Good Band, DSK/Meeker, Art Bergmann) - toured across the country opening for management-mates Rymes With Orange. By Christmas, news came that Plum had folded.

By then, Karroll's TKO Entertainment Corp. had gone into partnership with New Jersey-based Crazy Management (Ministry, Tad, Anthrax), headed by Jon and Marsha Fazula, who also ran Megaforce Records, and Bif was still hopeful. In January '95, Bif flew to New York to solidify things. They decided to buy back the master from Dexter, after which Bif formed Her Royal Majesty's Records to license it to other territories.

Not surprisingly, Bif finally lost her print shop job of five years because she was touring too much. She wasn't concerned; things were happening quickly. Jorg Hacker, A&R at Germany's Edel Records and a friend of Karroll and Fazula, licensed it for Europe

in May. "Suddenly, it wasn't just in my backyard," Bif notes. "I was very afraid, because it was a constant struggle not to get my hopes up."

It wasn't long before Bif was notified that Toronto director John Fawcett wanted to include "The Letter" in his first feature film, *The Boys Club*, starring Chris Penn and Devon Sawa. He ended up writing in a small speaking part for her as a liquor store owner. The night before the Toronto shoot, she was in L.A. for an indie distributor convention and went out partying with Testament. "I was really hung over. I had no idea how time-consuming four little lines were. It took all fuckin' day!" she says. Still, she'd like to do more acting. "It would be fun for me to do on my down time," she concedes, "but I'm waiting for Eddie Murphy." Of course.

Without a release in Canada, Bif returned to Europe with her band - drummer Sean Stubbs, bassist Tim Smyth and guitarists Greg Mark and David Oligade - to coincide with the release of the debut single, "Daddy's Getting Married". "It was my first bus tour and those guys were all my really close friends and it was the most fun ever," she says. "I had kind of resigned myself to never really doing anything in my home country. If I had to work in Germany and Spain for the rest of my life, that's awesome because then I can go home and have a cup of tea and relax. I was too overwhelmed and excited to remember, 'Gosh, I wonder what's happening at home?'"

By January of '96, just as "Daddy's Getting Married" became a Number One alternative hit in Germany, Montreal-based Aquarius Records decided to licence it for Can-



Bruce Cockburn is a member of Ottawa Local 180.

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 -I sure like to cuss and use many swear words.

ada with an option for another album. Meanwhile, in March, Bif headed to Europe to embark on a seven-week, 40-gig tour opening for Brooklyn bashers Life Of Agony (this time with Priske, Annihilator drummer Randy Black and a New York guitarist named The X-Factor).

"I had no idea how taxing it was," Bif says of the experience. "I had quit drinking and I know that's the only thing that allowed me to have the stamina to do a successful tour. I don't know how other people do it. I'm a loud obnoxious drunk, so I would lose my voice quickly in a touring situation."

She returned to Canada in April for the album's resurrection domestically on Aquarius. The album had a few editing and mixing touch-ups, and she did a separate French-language version of the pop-rock single "Daddy's Getting Married" called

"Mon Papa va se Maner". Come May, Bif kept the European line-up for the Music West showcase in Vancouver but replaced The X-Factor with guitarist Russ Klyne. By then, her album was licensed in the U.S. to Mayhem Records (Futurist Music Group). The band toured Canada, then went along the U.S. northeastern seaboard all the way to Chicago with Ian Astbury and the Holy Barbarians. In June, they flew to Europe to do the festival circuit.

To be sure, Bif was sick of the album. "I didn't know how many times I could sing 'Daddy's Getting Married'," she admits. "I thought that in '95 I would be making another record; and now it was well into '96."

When they returned at the end of July, she started demoing on a portable Tascam four-track at Karroll's digital TKO Wall Centre Studios, the same place she laid down the spoken-word album. She had writ-

ten a song with Priske, a couple with Klyne, some by herself and gave the band the demos to learn. Word then came that Mike Plotnikoff, who usually works with Bruce Fairbairn, had become available for a block of time at the end of August to the beginning of September.

"That was the only time he would be free for, like, three years," says Bif. "So I jumped at the chance to work with Mike in a co-production situation. I was really adamant about having some production opinions after the '94 release, even just having one say on the vocal or the guitar sound or an effect. I just wanted to feel like I had some input."

Although she had her say, production credit belongs to Plotnikoff and Karroll, with assistant engineer Gary Winger. In the studio, Bif brought in her trusted pals Priske, Black, Klyne and Webster. They did the first set of demos in July at Greenhouse Studios with Plotnikoff; and the second set two weeks later at Turtle with Larry Ansell.

In August, as Plotnikoff began work with Bif, "Daddy's Getting Married" became her first hit single in Canada, charting in the top 50 at CAR and top 30 at Modern Rock radio. Spirits were high. Plotnikoff used the beds from those sessions on the album and everything else - vocals, guitars, bass and keyboards - was recorded at The Warehouse, Bryan Adams' studio. "Mike is amazing. He's got the most acute hearing," says Bif.

Bif financed the recording herself. The idea was that Her Royal Majesty's Records would once again license it to Aquarius in Canada and Edel in Europe, leaving the U.S. open. But Jorg Hacker had moved over to Epic in Europe and again wanted to sign her; and in November, Epic-affiliates at Sony New York flew to Vancouver for Bif's last show of '96, a benefit for breast cancer research. Michael Caplan, Sony 550 vice-president of A&R, also wanted to sign her and negotiations were underway.

It's not clear when the new album will be released - or ready. Right now, not only will Bif have to go back into the studio for some touch-ups, but the song selection is still not final. She recorded 14 songs in all, including a ballad called "Lucky" and a "dance" tune called "Violence".

She's particularly proud of a faster song about abortion, "specifically mine", called "Chotee", which is Hindu for little. "It's a personal perspective song, but I didn't think, lyrically, any of the grown-ups would want it on there," she chuckles. "I'm hoping to keep that one on, in the form that it is. There are a lot of subjects that cannot continue to be taboo."

Her other fave is "Satanic Showtune", on which she plays piano just this once. "That's my biggest thrill in life, is having written a show tune," she says. "We put in some satanic things; it makes me hysterical, because it's hysterical, that shit. People are so freaked out by it that I think it's funny. Sadly, that doesn't guarantee it's going to get on the CD. But I think it's very funny and I'm convinced that most of my fan base will think it's funny."

Eddie Murphy included, we're Satan, er, certain. CM

Karen Bliss is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

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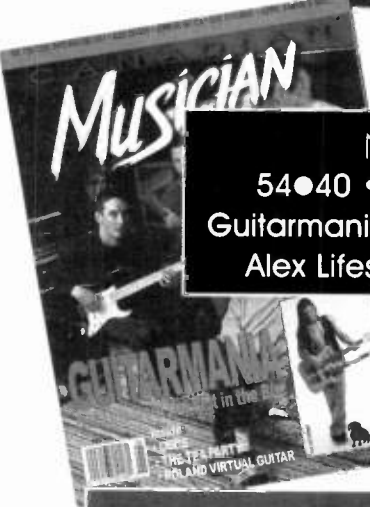
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From the simplest 4-track analog cassette deck to the increasingly popular digital 8-track machines, folks have been turning out actual records from the safety and comfort of their own homes. With the rise of relatively affordable digital multitrack recorders like the Fostex RD-8, the Alesis ADAT machines and the popular Tascam DA-88, the concept of a "keeper" take being recorded in your bedroom is no longer a low-tech, high maintenance proposition. Add to that the proliferation of MIDI and computer software like Pro Tools, Performer and Deck II and you've got digital recording and editing capabilities that weren't even available in the big studios ten years ago. "And the best thing," chimes in producer Michael Phillip-Wojewoda, "is not only can I do all this in my house, but I can do it in my underwear."

In the last few years Wojewoda, Juno award-winning producer of records by Barenaked Ladies, Rheostatics, The Waltons and fiddler Ashley MacIsaac, has done much of his work at home. He is adamant that affordable digital gear also affords the musician a greater balance of control in terms of content and availability.

"It allows for 'guerrilla tactics', taking the power to control the flow of the artists' work out of the hands of big companies and boardroom decision-makers. It democratizes the creating and distribution of music. But of course," Wojewoda cautions, "you can also have a lot of crap under the guise of technical excellence."

Wojewoda claims to have always loved to record at home, citing early bedroom multitrack experiments like three-track 'ping pong' recording between an 8-track cartridge player and a Sony 250 reel-to-reel tape deck. It got a little more serious when he spent his entire life's savings on a Tascam 144 Portastudio, the very first one ever made. Still, it wasn't until the digital revolution that his home and studio worlds met.

"Keeping the studio at home keeps things on a more humble scale, so you don't get caught up in it. The beauty of it is that it allows you to concentrate on the idea, which is really important!"

—Kurt Swinghammer

"As soon as I bought my Fostex RD-8 ADAT," he recalls, "I immediately locked it up to the 24-track and began using it on albums I produce. On The Waltons' *Cocks Crow*, I used my ADAT as an extension of the 24-track, so I ended up with

LL BACK HOME

23 tracks of analog (one track had the timecode running), plus eight tracks of digital (because the ADAT has a hidden ninth track for chasing code). I actually like the idea of using the analog for the rhythm section and the digital for layering vocals; I sometimes don't enjoy the coloration that you get when you record vocals analog. A lot of times, I'll take some tracks on the ADAT machine and import them into my Mac at home. I'm running Deck II, so I have four virtual tracks to work with all in the digital domain. I can edit or comp and even overdub stuff at home, and then take the ADAT back to the studio with the new sounds and lock it up. On Ashley MacIsaac's *Hi! How Are You Today?* album, I was doing that a lot; I actually did some pre-mastering. I noticed that the kick drum wasn't loud enough on one mix, so I found an isolated kick drum and literally pasted in another kick drum visually using the drawn wave shapes on my Mac. I did some rebuilding of tracks that way as well; it was like sculpting."

Speaking of sculpture, Toronto guitarist, songwriter and visual artist Kurt Swinghammer cites his visual art disciplines as an influence to get into home recording.

"In visual art, or at least the mediums I work in, I don't have to go out of my house, my studio, to create a piece of work", says Swinghammer. "So I was very accustomed to making things within my means, without having to rely on other people. That's totally a given with visual art. With music, on the other hand, there seemed to be all these barriers between coming up with something and realizing it all the way through. But in hindsight, I've been multi-tracking at home for twenty years now and it doesn't seem like there's ever been a time when I wasn't doing that."

Swinghammer, the musician, has scored films and television shows at home. Some of his work includes themes for Much Music and City TV's *Media Television*, as well as film scores for *The Falls*, *In The Reign Of Twilight* and *The Cockroach That Ate Cincinnati*. All of it done right in his living room.

"I can hook into SMTPE off my VCR, if I have something on videotape and I get a timecode on one of the audio tracks and tap into that," explains Swinghammer. "I either run it into my MIDI gear and write a sort of

Home is Where the Hardware Is

Jagori Tanna says that the gear I Mother Earth used for their home recording worked so well for them, that he has since moved it all into one place and started Mothership Sound.

"We have a fully automated Mackie console," Tanna explains, "24 digital and 24 analog tracks. We just added a Pro Tools system and we're gonna start doing digital mastering there. We have three DA-88 machines; we did the entire record on them with not one mess up."

Blair Packham records on a Tascam DA-88, a Mackie 24 x 8 mixer, a TL Audio dual valve preamp compressor, Panasonic SV-3700 DAT machine, a pair of Tannoy PBM 6.5 speakers, a Lexicon LXP 15, a Boss SE 50 and an Alesis Microverb, Microgate and Microlimiter. He has a Kurzweil K1000 for controlling the MIDI modules like his E-mu UltraProteus, which he says he uses primarily for orchestral sounds. In addition to a Roland S 330 sampler, he also has an Alesis D4 drum module and a Roland B8M, which he uses because the cymbals "sound better". Packham uses a Macintosh IIx with an Audio-Media II digital audio card running Mark Of The Unicorn's Performer software.

32-channel mixer." His processors include a Lexicon Alex reverb and an Alesis Microverb. He enjoys his Roland U20 and Akai F 950 mono sampler, Teac Z81, Yamaha DX7 and M3R ("all very dated and I hardly ever use them anymore"). His main mic is an SM-58, purchased from a lawn sale in Vancouver for \$10.00. "It's a little rusty around the cap, but it sounds fine for my purposes". The brain of Wojewoda's rig is his 040 Macintosh running at 40 MHz, with Nubus slots and a Power Book 150 which he also uses for sequencing. The MIDI is controlled by a Mark Of The Unicorn MIDI Express, which matrices his MIDI controller, giving him 96 MIDI channels. Along with a Panasonic 3700 DAT recorder and his trusty TL Audio stereo tube compressor, he cherishes his dbx 263 vocal de-esser.

Ken Myhr raves about his Studer A-80 Mark II 16-track two-inch machine. He monitors through a Mackie 24 x 8 board but never goes to tape through it, opting instead to go through two API 312 mic preamps and two API 550 EQs. His fave mic is his My-lab VIP 50 for vocals and acoustic guitars, plus an AKG 414 and a Shure SM-57. His new-



Michael Phillip Wojewoda uses a Fostex RD-8 ADAT machine, but says he's getting rid of his Roland 24-channel mixer, hoping to switch it for a 32-channel Mackie or Behringer mixer. He does have a 12-channel Mackie to record (the Roland to monitor), "but I'm gonna ditch both of those when I get a

est toy is a Joe Meek two mix compressor, designed by the pioneering UK engineer. "I've taken it into bigger studios and people listen to it and go, 'I'm not sure what it's doing, but I like it.'" He has a Roland S-750 sampler and runs Performer software on his Apple Macintosh.

template with MIDI, or through an interface into my digital 8-track."

Besides the obvious democratization that comes with the home studio, Swinghammer

offers a few insights of his own.

"Keeping the studio at home keeps things on a more humble scale, so you don't get caught up in it. The beauty of it is that it allows you to concentrate on the idea, which is really important. In a studio you deal with so many issues, awareness of the clock and self-consciousness. On one hand that keeps you on your toes, but hopefully at home, when it becomes second nature to record at home, you could

go directly from the original inspiration to the idea on tape. Hopefully you're using the gear as effortlessly as a pencil."

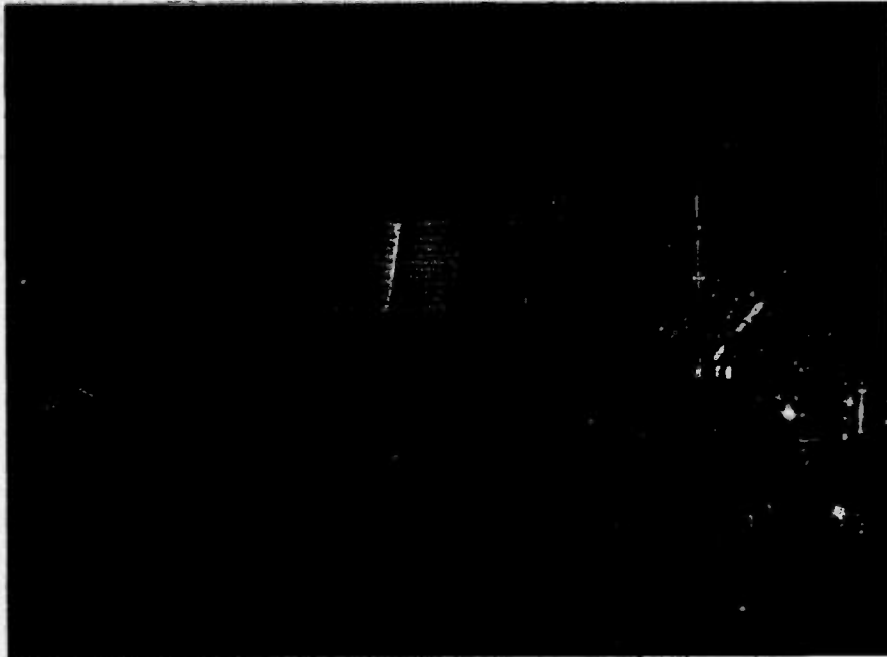
The modular aspect of a VHS cassette (for ADAT) appeals to Swinghammer in terms of long distance or remote collaboration recording.

"It allows people to complete pretty involved projects by passing tapes around. I just did something with Andy Stochansky (drummer with Ani DiFranco) where we did that, and we didn't have to be around each other, breathing down each other's necks all the time. That's an area where not a lot of people are really taking advantage of that possibility. You could ship a tape, or a safety copy, overseas and collaborate with someone in another country. And even though a lot of people are using many of the same formats, their unique living spaces — I record in my dining room for example — give back some of the characteristics and give each home studio a unique vibe."

Jagori Tanna, guitarist in I Mother Earth, is also appreciative of the good vibe, wherever it lives. Tanna says that his band recorded much of their newest album, *Scenery And Fish*, at their rehearsal space and other non-studio locales using DA-88s.

"It's a real handy tool to have all the recording stuff right there when you're doing experimenting," says Tanna. "We cut the drums in Morin Heights, then we transferred everything down to digital and went down to the basement of a friend of ours. The good thing about

working that way is that if you want to go away from something you're working on, you can just leave and nobody is reminding you how much it would cost to leave. I think for a band like us, it's absolutely necessary to have that free-



dom. It's not like some kind of major artistic thing or anything like that. Most of the time when we're in the studio, we're kind of flying by the seat of our pants. We're not really sure what we're about to record, so it's kind of hit and miss. Whatever gets it done is okay; to me, anything that's good is it.



Your guitar player could take home a digital tape and do his solos at home and, if it feels better, then that's great."

Producer/composer Blair Packham also swears by his DA-88. He also reckons that the time constraints of television scoring (including the series *Destiny Ridge* and various TSN themes) forced him to treat his home setup as more than just a demo studio.

"For the longest time," recalls Packham, "my studio, that I call Twiddle-town ('where the knobs all live') was just for doing demos of songs for my old band, The Jitters. Being a control freak (laughs), I wanted to further dictate

what the parts would be for the band to play. That way, I could show up at rehearsal and say 'here, play this'. The idea then was that I would have gone to a 'real' studio if I wanted to make a proper recording. But in 1994, I got the DA-88. I was starting to do sound-track work with Bruce Fowler of Modular Music. We were splitting up our show that we were doing so that I could work in my studio and he could work in his studio, thereby cutting our time in half. It also made

it so one wouldn't have to just sit there and watch the other compute, which is sort of like watching paint dry. To do that, I purchased a DA-88 and a Mackie 24 x 8 mixer. I was able to do my guitar parts and sequence pads at home and then bring them to Bruce's place where we would then transfer them, with timecode, to tape for the final mix. That was really the first time that I started doing something for broadcast or release right from my home."

The experience opened up new possibilities in Packham's approach to recording album tracks as well.

"I had been making a record with singer/songwriter Arlene Bishop at Studio 306 in Toronto, when I had the revelation that once we had the drums recorded, we could do all of our overdubs at home on my DA-88. I had an AKG 414 that sounded good on Arlene's voice, but we needed a really good compressor — so I got a TL Audio dual valve preamp compressor. That way, we could go direct to tape. We had a DA-88 tape striped with timecode, and we'd do a rough mix onto one or two tracks on the DA-88 in synch. Then at home, listening to that rough mix, Arlene could overdub vocals and I could do guitar overdubs to my heart's content. We could then go back to the studio and transfer the remote overdubs back onto the two-inch master tape and mix it. We then have the benefit of getting the drums recorded with a better mic selection and a big room, as well as the intimacy

of recording at home, all on one recording. I'm now able to work on projects that are meant for release at home. It's the difference between doing a demo and doing a master. You get the feeling that every thing you do now counts. And at a much cheaper price."

While producer/guitarist Ken Myhr has worked with digital multitrack, he's most excited these days by the sixteen track two-inch machine in his home studio.

"I've got a Studer A-80 Mark II," beams Myhr, "the finest in 1972 recording gear, when they got it right."

Myhr, a guitarist who has lent his vision to the work of Jane Siberry and Cowboy Junkies, is also making a name for himself composing for film and producing artists like Newfoundland's Damnhait Doyle and Toronto band Mrs. Torrance.

"My studio is essentially an overdubbing studio," states Myhr. "I find studios that will have an A-80 machine and then I throw my sixteen track head block on them. It's really great because I've found that bed tracks can be done really quickly in a big studio, if you're prepared. But it's during the overdubs, when you're experimenting with guitar sounds and vocal sounds, you may be taking up to four hours to get into some new sound — and that's hard to do in a big studio with some of the budgets I have. But at my house, it's like 'yeah, sure let's play around'. Ninety percent of the vocals on Damnhait Doyle's *Shadows Wake Me* album were done at my house. She was just so comfortable here that she sang three times better than in the studio, where she just wasn't that comfortable. It was night and day. A lot of interesting

things on the new Mrs. Torrance album were done here too."

Myhr says that the comforts of home definitely affect the artists who record there in

a positive way.

"The tracking room in my house is set up like a study. It's a very comfortable environment, very familiar to people. I find sometimes when I'm working with younger singers that they're not very comfortable with the 'goldfish bowl' of a big studio. It's an alien environment, it makes them nervous. The biggest thing is that you should cater to the artist and make sure that the artist is completely comfortable with the process.

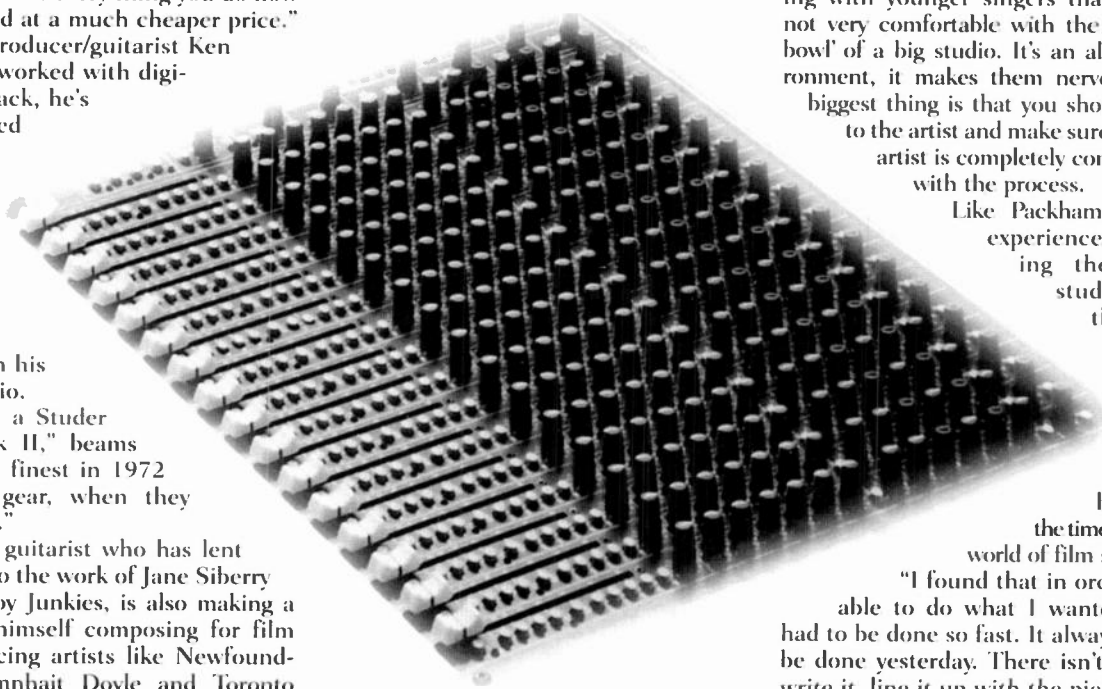
Like Packham, Myhr's experiences merging the home studio with the real world

began in the time-sensitive world of film scoring.

"I found that in order to be able to do what I wanted to, it had to be done so fast. It always has to be done yesterday. There isn't time to write it, line it up with the picture and then go out to a separate facility to record it. This way, I can write it and record it all at the same time. Also, when you first get the idea for something, you're really excited about it and it sounds more interesting than when you're at the end of the film and you go, 'okay, I'll play my parts now' — but they sound like crap because you're burned out."

All the above we spoke to were adamant that whatever format or location you use, the greatest factors are comfort and feel. So if you're comfortable spending thousands of dollars at a big studio with strangers watching you create, you've got it made. But for most musicians, time equals money and that eats up feel. And let's face it, if the music doesn't feel good, it doesn't matter how much or how little you spent to record it. **CM**

Paul Myers is a Toronto-based songwriter, musician and freelance writer.



"It always has to be done yesterday. There isn't time to write it, line it up with the picture and then go out to a separate facility to record it. This way, I can write it and record it all at the same time."

— Ken Myhr

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BY JIM BURGESS

This year's Winter NAMM show in Anaheim, California was the forum for leading manufacturers and software developers to offer a sneak peek at the new products they intend to ship in 1997. As a buyer for Saved By Technology, a retailer of computer-based music and audio production systems, it's my responsibility to assess the new products and pick the winners. Having stated my bias up front, here's an overview of some of the more significant new products:

Alesis has extended their Nano-series (so far including the NanoVerb and the NanoCompressor) of 1/3 space rack-mount devices to include three new MIDI sound modules.

The NanoSynth is essentially a sound module version of the popular Alesis QS-6 keyboard. Like the QS-6, it features 64 voices and 16-part multitimbral operation. 640 programs (512 presets plus 128 user-programmable programs) are created from 8MB of ROM waveform data. Signal processing based on the acclaimed QuadraVerb 2. GM compatible. The NanoSynth will include a Mac/Windows CD-ROM with sequencing and sound editing software.

The NanoPiano is a 64-voice piano module featuring Alesis' stereo phase-accurate grand piano samples. 8MB of ROM. 256 presets offer a wide variety of piano, electric piano, organ and other sounds. Signal processing based on the QuadraVerb 2.

The NanoBass is a 64-voice bass sound module featuring 256 presets based on 4MB of ROM samples. Why 64 voices for bass? Stack the sounds! The NanoBass offers limited front-panel editing.

Alesis has also released the QSR, which is a 1U rack-mount sound module identical to the popular QS8 keyboard, less the keys. It features 64 voices, 640 programs, and 500 multitimbral mixes with 16-part multitimbral operation. 16MB of ROM including the acclaimed Alesis phase-accurate stereo grand piano. Four-bus multi-effects processor based on the QuadraVerb 2. Includes Mac/Windows CD-ROM with sequencing and sound editing software. Two PCMCIA card slots let you access up to 32MB of sampled waveforms at once. Built-in Mac or Windows MIDI interface. Four outputs. Includes ADAT optical I/O for transferring 8 channels of digital information to ADATs and other digital audio devices.

On the signal processing front, Alesis has taken a unique approach with the Wedge, a new desktop signal processor featuring 128 preset and 128 user programs. Reverb, delay, chorus, flange, rotary speaker, autopanner effects and more. Compact size lets you position the Wedge right in the sweet spot. Four 45mm sliders let you adjust all parameters. Complete MIDI implementation including dynamic parameter control. Impulse Audition button generates white noise for easy auditioning of effects.

The new Alesis Studio 32 is a 16-channel, four-group inline monitor recording console in a compact and affordable package. Send 16 channels to a recorder while monitoring 16 channels from tape without re-patching. 16 phantom-powered mic preamps with XLR

inputs. Hi and Low shelving EQ plus fully-parametric mids. Six aux sends. 60mm faders.

Finally, the Alesis QCard Library of PCMCIA cards for Q-series instruments has been expanded and now includes nine cards with 4MB or 8MB of additional samples and patches including Rap/Techno/Dance, Latin, Hip Hop, EuroDance and more.

Digidesign was showing the almost-released Pro Tools v4.0 software, which provides dozens of new features including dynamic automation of TDM plug-ins, full support for QuickTime including spotting to picture, improved channel grouping, batch processing and more. As usual, the Digidesign booth was overrun by companies from around the planet showing off their TDM plug-ins.

Of the dozen or so new plug-ins coming onstream during the last few months, I want

The 1997 NAMM Report

to make special note of a suite of four TDM plug-ins from a previously unknown developer from Spain called DUY.

DAD Valve uses Physical Modeling technology to simulate the warmth of real valve circuits and comes complete with optimized responses for the 38 most common families of acoustic and electronic musical instruments.

DUY Shape uses Frequency-Dependent Waveshaping to provide a wide range of filtering and equalizing functions.

Max DUY provides seamless level maximizing using a proprietary ILO (Intelligent Level Optimization) algorithm.

DUY Wide is a spatial enhancer that permits sound placement outside of the physical stereo speaker locations.

The company also has a Digital DeClicker that's specially optimized to clean pops and clicks from digital recordings.

Also of note was Peak v1.5 from Bias, the program that starts where Sound Designer II stops. This fully non-destructive stereo editor features unlimited undo and redo — you can go back and reverse an operation you did 23 edits ago! Integrated batch processing including automatic creation of regions based on gate value. Transfer CD Audio tracks from your CD-ROM drive to your hard drive. Loop samples with Loop Surfer, which lets you ad-

just start and end points while the file is playing. Transfer to samplers from E-Mu, Kurzweil, Ensoniq, Peavey and more. Supports and converts between all common digital audio file formats including RealAudio for Internet-based audio production.

Also new from Bias, the SFX Machine is a plug-in for Peak, Deck II v2.5, Vision v3.5 or later, and Premiere. SFX Machine offers a huge collection of advanced effects processing tools (some examples: Ring Mod, Triggered Wah, Pitch-Tracked Panning, Crystal Glissando, Frequency Quantization and many many more). Random effect generator for instant creation of new effects types.

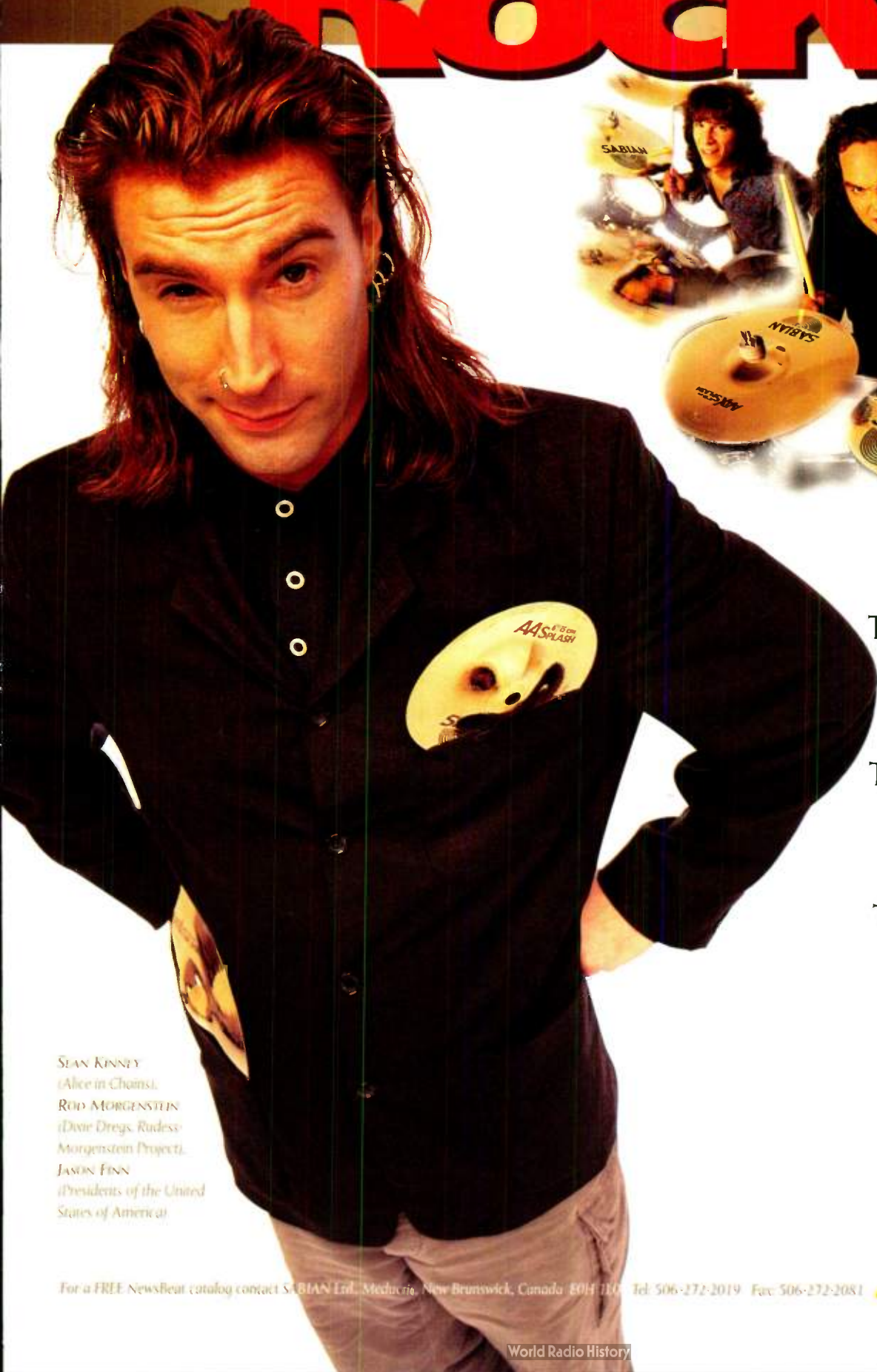
EMAGIC surprised everybody by unveiling Audiowerk8, an affordable high-performance PCI digital audio card for Mac OS or Windows 95. The 7" card offers two analog inputs, eight individual outputs and stereo digital I/O (S/PDIF). It includes VMR (Virtual Multitrack Recorder) software and is, of course, fully compatible with Logic Discovery and Logic Audio on both platforms. Expansion slots on the card accommodate such options as the Digital Out Expansion, which adds three additional stereo S/PDIF digital outputs for a total of eight channels of digital output, and the Optical I/O Expansion, which provides an ADAT Optical Link for outputting eight channels digitally to ADATs and compatible devices.

E-Mu has introduced Planet Phatt, a 1U rack-mount sound module created for Hip-Hop, Rap, Acid Jazz and Trip-Hop musicians. 640 presets, 32 voices, 16-part multitimbral. Like the Orbit, Planet Phatt features Beats Mode, an innovative and creative tool that uses 100 internal drum loops to trigger sound sets yielding over 10,000 groove ideas.

Mackie crossed the line from analog to digital with the new Digital 8-bus, a 48x8x2 digital recording console with integrated signal processing and advanced automation capabilities. Channels 1-12 feature line or mic inputs with phantom power and analog preamps plus inserts; channels 13-24 offer line inputs only. 24 analog tape sends and 24 analog tape returns are provided via 8-channel, 25-pin D-sub connectors. Optional digital I/O cards provide direct connection to digital multitrack recorders. 8 busses. Each channel features 100mm motorized faders, 4-band parametric EQ, comp/limiter/gating dynamics processor and 12 aux sends. 20-bit, 64x oversampling A/D; 24-bit, 64x oversampling D/A. Tape transport controls for external machine control via MMC. Built-in PC with 8MB of RAM, 500MB hard drive, a floppy drive and 33.6kbs modem for auto-downloading software updates; just connect a mouse, keyboard and SVGA monitor. Dedicated UltraMix II automation for snapshot and dynamic automation of all parameters. Built-in talkback mic with talk-to-slate feature. 7.1/5.1 surround sound mixing. S/PDIF digital I/O.

Opcode previewed version 3.5 of their flagship MIDI/audio sequencer, StudioVision. The new Power Mac native program now features formant-based pitch shifting (no munchkinization) and AudioMorf, which allows you to apply the formant or tonal characteristics of

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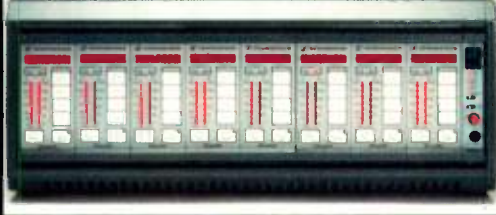
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World Radio History

one sound to another. Digidesign's TDM bus is now fully supported with busses and SampleCell TDM support; in addition, up to 48 tracks are available with Pro Tools III. Loading, editing and saving of QuickTime audio and MIDI tracks is also available.

Also new from Opcode is v2.0 of MusicShop for Mac (Power Mac native) or Windows. 32 tracks with a 32-track automated mixer; real-time editing and notation printing. OMS compatible.

Roland has unveiled the JP-8000, their first synthesizer to feature Physical Modeling technology to model "vintage" synth sounds. 49 velocity-sensitive keys. 8 voices; 2 multitimbral parts. Dedicated front-panel knobs and sliders make editing a breeze. Pitch bend/modulation lever plus a ribbon controller. Realtime Phrase Sequencer for playing and transposing sequences from a single note. Advanced arpeggiator. Motion control records front-panel parameter changes.

Further exploiting the power of Physical Modeling, the new V-Drums TD-10 Percussion Sound Module uses Composite Object Sound Modeling (COSM) to offer drummers an unprecedented level of expressiveness. The TD-10 offers over 600 drum/percussion sounds and 50 melodic instrument sounds. You choose the drum head type, shell materials and depth, microphone type and placement, and room ambience. 12 trigger inputs with superior triggering response — you can even play with brushes when used with the optional PD-120/100 V-Pads. 56 voices. Advanced effects processing. Built-in sequencer. Wave expansion slot for future sound libraries.

The JV-2080 is a new version of the popular JV-1080 synth module. Like the JV-1080, it is a superb-sounding 64-voice, 16-part multitimbral sound module; unlike the JV-1080, the JV-2080 features eight SR-JV80 expansion slots, three independent master effects sets, new Patch Finder and Phrase Preview functions for easy access to the huge selection of patches, and a large, backlit graphic LCD.

The VS-880 V-Xpanded is a new version of Roland's popular VS-880 Digital Workstation. Many new features including automated mixing, playback of six tracks in Master Mode, and (when used with the optional VS8F-1 Effect Expansion Board) 100 additional effects patches including Voice Transformer, Vocoder, LoFi Processor, Space Chorus, Vocal Canceller and more. Existing VS-880 owners may upgrade with the VS-880-S1 System Expansion Kit.

And for the guitarist in every crowd, Roland has created the affordable GR-30 Guitar Synthesizer, featuring 128 preset and 128 user patches utilizing 384 tones. Used with the GK-2A pickup (not included), the GR-30 provides lightning-fast tracking response. Built-in arpeggiator with preset and user-programmable patterns. Synth Harmonist adds two-part harmony to the guitar sound. Built-in effects processor.

Roland has expanded their SV-JV80 Wave Expansion Board Library with #10: Bass & Drums. 8MB of ROM provides 241 bass & drum waveforms and 204 patches. Bass sounds include extra bass effects such as slides and harmonics; drum sounds feature velocity-sensitive triggering and include 8 rhythm sets and 10 acoustic drum phrase loops.

The M-BD1 Bass & Drums Sound Module is a stand-alone module version of the SV-JV80-10 outlined above. If you don't already own an expandable Roland synth, this module delivers the same sounds at an affordable price.

Yamaha entered the sampler market in a big way with the new A3000, a 64-voice sampler that can be expanded up to 128MB via four 72-pin SIMM slots. Three DSP effects blocks including real-time time stretching, Lo-Fi effects, and phrase/loop effects. Plays back Standard MIDI Files, loads AIFF, WAV files.

The AN1x Control Synthesizer from Yamaha uses Analog Physical Modeling to deliver the warm, fat, punchy sounds of the legendary analog synths. Ten voices. Arpeggiator with 24 preset and 144 user patterns. 16-step Step Sequencer mimics analog sequencers. Assignable X-Z Ribbon Controller with Slide (X) and Pressure (Z) control of filter, resonance, modulation and more. Built-in effects and EQ.

The Yamaha MU90R Tone Generator is a 1U rack-mount 64-voice, 32-part multitimbral sound module with 779 waveforms

and 30 drum waveforms. 100 preset and 100 user patches. Six multi-effects blocks with over 100 effects types; Two A/D inputs enable these effects to be used on external audio sources. Built-in Mac or Windows MIDI interface.

Yamaha has provided guitar players with the ideal guitar-to-MIDI data converter: the G50. Used in conjunction with the G1D pickup, the G50 provides exceptionally fast tracking response, allowing your guitar to control the world of MIDI. Use it as a composition tool to play parts into your sequencer, or use it in live performance to trigger any combination of MIDI sound sources.

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BY RICK FINES

WRITING BLUES SONGS



"Everybody gets the Blues," Albert King once said. Can everybody write the blues? Well, it's also been said everybody has at least one good song in them, so I suppose a good number of those are blues songs. But just as people have said that anyone can write a country song — just add a broken heart, a pickup truck, etc. — you can run the risk of trivializing a musical genre. Chances are, you'll write good blues songs only if you're drawn to the music and hold an amount of respect for the originators and innovators of this great musical form of self-expression.

What is a "classic" blues song? A deep, personal expression? A heartfelt poem? Maybe a political protest, or even a light-hearted, scantily concealed call for affection? There are so many kinds of blues songs. Most tell a story, whether it be a story of love lost — or found — or some great news or tragedy, even everyday life. And most speak from personal experience. Hank Williams wrote blues, as did Billie Holiday, Chuck Berry — there aren't many sections of your record store that you won't find a blues tune in, because blues is a feeling, not just a genre.

Willie Dixon is by far the most well-known blues writer, and someone every blues fan should pay some attention to. You'll soon find that he's written a lot of songs you may have thought others had written — songs done by Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and Koko Taylor, to mention just a few. There are many people writing blues these days. Blues music has been constantly evolving. B.B. King writes differently than he did 20 years ago, for example. And there are people like Robert Johnson, Keb Mo. So far, the blues has been written, the blues has been written. Here in Canada, we have a wide variety of people writing in and borrowing

from a blues tradition. David Wilcox, Morgan Davis, Murray Porter, Rita Chiarelli (this list could go on and on — I haven't begun to list my way out of Ontario...). There are a lot of Canadian writers who count blues as a major influence on what they do, or even their main musical passion. All this is taking blues in new directions:

I don't think there are any contemporary pop, country, rock or jazz songwriters working today that aren't influenced by the blues or that don't have a number of blues songs in their repertoire. This is an ever-expanding genre of music that's attracting a large audience as its borders widen and blur between other genres and other audiences.

Blues music is a very particular form and is often written into the rhythmic scheme and simple yet standard 12-bar progression of a blues tune. You can look rather silly writing about Chicago if you've never left Winnipeg, and there's nothing to gain by substituting Mississippi for Mississippi. Write from your own experience, which includes a lot of influences, musical and otherwise, that are very different from

Robert Johnson's.

If you're going to write songs at all, it's important to be yourself — a writer must write from the heart to come up with good songs. And we can't forget the role of humour in songs. Songwriting is the best, and cheapest, therapy you can get. Perhaps a song will be too personal to share (for a while) by the time you've finished it. If you've got something to say, it is worth saying, and it will help your songwriting, if nothing else, just to put it down on paper (or tape). Who knows — you may write a song that other people ask to cover someday! At least you get the practice of songwriting, and you'll have something you can sing as a personal reminder of a time, a place, or a feeling.

I am happy to be able to play, write and record blues, and very happy to see blues reach new heights in popularity. I do believe, however, that there are still so many stereotypes, so many molds that we need to see past. There is a strong foundation to be found in the blues for songwriters — a music to build on, a music to learn from. There are new directions in blues songs to take. Make a song, make a blues to be told. ... write your own blues, and keep in mind that the blues are to uplift, either through uplifting lyrics, or through getting something out that's gonna hurt if you keep it in.

Good luck!

RICK FINES HAS RECORDED IN THE SUN STUDIOS IN MEMPHIS, PLAYED WITH MUDDY WATERS' LEGENDARY PIANIST PINETOP PERKINS, PLAYED THE JUKE JOINTS IN LOUISIANA AND PERFORMED AT JAZZ, BLUES AND FOLK FESTIVALS FROM NEW ORLEANS TO INUVIK. ONE OF THE BEST ACOUSTIC BLUES GUITARISTS ON THE CIRCUIT TODAY, HE IS KNOWN FOR HIS WORK WITH THE JACKSON DELTA TRIO, AND HAS RECENTLY RELEASED HIS FIRST SOLO ALBUM ENTITLED ARCADIA.

CM

BY STEVE PARTON

MICROPHONES ON THE STAGE



POLAR PATTERNS

The human ear is the most complex microphone I know of. It can determine the direction of a sound (providing that you have a second ear to work with), and tune in to a particular sound while tuning out other unwanted sounds. While microphones don't have these luxuries, there are some things that we can do to control what is and isn't "heard" by the microphone. This is done by using mics with certain *directional* characteristics.

Microphones all have *polar patterns*, which determine whether they will pick up sounds which originate directly in front of them, or sounds which happen all around. There are more than just two types of polar patterns, however, and some mics, known as **multi-directional** mics, will have several switchable patterns. This will explain those Led-Zeppelin-esque symbols found on some studio mics.

OMNI-DIRECTIONAL

When mics were first invented, they were all omni-directional; they picked up sounds from a spherical 360-degrees around them. This lack of directionality was a problem if the user wanted to pick up one specific sound within several sounds. If the goal was to pick up everything within the mic's capabilities (such as the cymbals of a drumset), the omni-directional mic would do just that. Most PZM microphones are omni-directional.

BI-DIRECTIONAL (A.K.A. "FIGURE 8")

Historically, the first attempt to make an omni-directional microphone more directional resulted in the invention of the bi-directional mic. (If you're a "names and dates" type of person, I have a sort of "Further Reading List" on the internet which I can e-mail to you). Here, both sides of the diaphragm were exposed to sounds, and so it picked up just as well on-axis (directly in front) as it did off-axis (directly behind). The least sensitive parts of the mic were the sides.

UNI-DIRECTIONAL OR CARDIOID

Although there are some people who still don't believe me, uni-directional microphones and cardioid microphones are **THE SAME THING**. Try this one on for size: "No, I don't want to sing through that carbonoid" (*pronunciation intact) mic; get me a uni-directional."

Uni-directional mics are most sensitive to those sounds arriving directly in front of the diaphragm, with the back of the diaphragm being the least sensitive. This

concept was best explained by Bill Seddon when I attended Fanshawe College: "Imagine a perfectly circular balloon. Take your microphone and stick it into the balloon so that the balloon gives, but does not break. This is a 3-D representation of the uni-directional polar pattern."

When you picture this shape, it resembles a heart, and so this is also called a cardioid pattern. A mic this directional works using multiple entry points and phase cancellation in order to reject the sounds from behind. Without these ports, the mic would be omni-directional. This explains why rock singers and rappers have feedback problems when they wrap their hands completely around the blast filter of the vocal mic. When the ports are covered by a hand, the required phase-cancellation can't happen, and so the microphone, now omni-directional, feeds back just as if you were pointing it towards the monitors.

SUPERCARDIOID AND HYPERCARDIOID

In the attempt to control what is and isn't picked up by the microphone, supercardioid and hypercardioid mics were born. They are much more directional than cardioid mics. The supercardioid has better rear-rejection, while the hypercardioid has better side-rejection characteristics.

THE PROXIMITY EFFECT

The proximity effect deals with a microphone's **frequency response** (now would be a good time to look this one up). As the distance between the microphone and the sound source decreases, the amount of bass response increases. A male singer will have much more low-end on his voice when his lips are pressed against the microphone's blast filter than when he is two inches away. This is the main reason for including a High Pass Filter (HPF) on some mics (and consoles). An HPF is almost habitually activated for the voice, be it male or female, and will attenuate (lower) perhaps below 75 Hz. A professional singer will use the proximity effect to his or her advantage depending on the desired effect.

Simultaneously, the proximity effect is not always a bad thing. Sometimes an increase of bass is good, as in the case of a kick drum, cello or bass guitar amp.

Next issue, we'll find out what to actually **DO** with these microphones. For any live sound questions, I can be now be e-mailed at: musicnow@ftn.net

STEVE PARTON IS IN THE MIDDLE OF WRITING A BOOK ON LIVE SOUND, IN BETWEEN PERFORMANCES WITH HIS BAND, THE BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS.

BY KEVIN DOYLE

Over the last couple of years, I've had the opportunity of mixing a lot of projects recorded in home studios. Some of the artists that I've worked with have had a lot of success, such as Army Sky, Eddie Schwartz, Gowan and Harem Scarem.

Almost all of the recording was done primarily in their homes, and later brought to me to mix in a bigger facility. However, the mixes they did in their home studios were very well done, and sounding almost as good as if they were done in a larger, professional studio.

Instead of explaining different setups, I'll let you know the most common pieces of equipment and techniques they used.

For recording formats, most people use ADATs or Tascam DA-88s for recording, with the lead slightly going to the ADAT system, although I prefer the sound of the Tascam DA-88. Most people would have two or three of these units, and sync them up as the recording process gets more involved. However, it wasn't uncommon for some people to submix eight tracks to a DAT and then bounce back the submix to the eight track recorder and utilize the remaining six tracks. For the more fortunate, it was not uncommon to use three 8-track recorders running in sync most of the time.

As for recording consoles, Mackie's name comes up very often. It seems to me that Mackie is going to get the lion's share of the home recording market. I recently used two small Mackie consoles on a remote recording in Russia, and they performed well. The microphone preamps are clean and the signal path quiet. Although the EQ features are basic, I used outboard EQ instead.

One of the most common setups I, and a lot of others, use is to purchase two really good microphones (condensers preferred) and two mic preamps that have phantom power, a lot of headroom, and are quiet.

For example, for recording vocals, I would suggest a 414, TLM or Audio-Technica microphone. All of these mics are good quality condenser microphones for the money, and sound great. You can access different polar patterns, low frequency rolloffs (there is a lot of rumble in home studios) and mic pads (for those screaming singers).

From there, I go into a high quality mic preamp (e.g., Drawmer, GML or Neve) to get a good clean signal to tape. If you need to be cost-effective, try to get a mic preamp that has a good quality compressor too, like the Drawmer 1960. Any old Neve mic preamp comes with a great equalizer like the 1073 or 1084. With any old Neve equipment, you will have to get someone to build you a power supply.

After going through the mic preamp and

equalizer, I'll insert a compressor if I feel I need one. I find that, for the money, dbx makes really good compressors that are good on almost anything.

I feel the next stage of the signal routing is very important. I will take the output from either the EQ or compressor and go directly into the recording device. By doing this, you eliminate putting the signal through the board, and the signal stays a lot cleaner. Some people insert a good quality fader in between,

Yamaha SPX 90s, Lexicon reverbs and, more recently, Roland products. Roland has introduced many good quality processors that have hundreds of presets ranging from concert halls to flanging and almost anything in between. When shopping for a mixer, try to get one with at least four auxiliary sends, and one that allows you to access the buss outputs as sends. Try to always have at least eight extra inputs for FX returns, which will allow you to equalize the sound and also to be able to send different FX to each other. For example, I always like to add a bit of chorusing and reverb to quarter note delays, to give it a little more stereo spread in the mix.

For monitors, I recommend Yamaha NS-10s and Auratones; they seem to be a standard in any studio. If you can spend more, move up to Genelec or Tannoy's.

Other things to consider are the acoustics of your recording studio. Unfortunately, because of lack of space, most home studios have small recording spaces that might be able to handle two or three musicians at the most. Watch out for making your studio too live. Most small studios will add a colour to the sound of all acoustic instruments and vocals if the space is too live. In the end, your mixes will have a "boxy" sound to them that will be hard to eliminate, especially if you're adding a lot of processing to the sound. I would tend to have the studio a little deader than normal, and have the flexibility to liven things up in the

mixing stage or, even better, buy some thick moving blankets that you can easily hang on the walls. That way, you can record drums or guitars with a bit of liveness and then hang blankets for recording lead vocals.

If you buy some basic, good quality equipment and work on improving your skills, you should be able to come up with some pretty good-sounding tracks. I think it would be safe to say that almost half the top ten albums, these days, have had some form of home recording involved.

So keep on-tracking!



if they feel the need to control the level. Otherwise, if it's a bass, guitar or drums, you probably can go directly into the board and then go to the recorder. Most synths and samplers operate at line level, and don't require a preamp stage.

It seems most home recording is just a process of continual overdubbing. In that case, if you can utilize a good mic, mic preamp and equalizer, you should be able to get a really good quality recording.

After you have finished completing your recording, everything is ready to be mixed. Since you have EQ'd and compressed the signal already, all you need to do now is use some outboard gear, and mix to a good quality DAT machine or analog 2-track tape recorder (if you can find one). DAT machines are usually the case, because they are cost-effective and tape stock is much cheaper. If you're really serious about the quality of your mixes, invest in a good set of analog to digital converters. The Apogee 1000 is a good value, and also comes with excellent mic preamps.

The variety of good, cost-effective processing gear is enormous. I tend to see a lot of



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So you want to be a rock star. Well, before you begin to sharpen up on your autograph, before you start dreaming of your name in lights and Swiss bank accounts, and before you do something serious you may regret one day, like quitting school in the quest of stardom, you might want to step back and take a hard look at what it *really* requires to reach such lofty heights in today's music industry.

As we move out of the "Industrial Era" and into the "Information Era", the task of maintaining a band and doing it successfully can be as hectic and unpredictable as our ever-changing world itself. More and more musicians today find themselves having to become shrewd and imaginative businessmen, often ignoring their musical passions and responsibilities, performing on computers and fax machines as opposed to guitars and keyboards in the quest of legitimizing their musical careers.

Now, not many musicians or artists covet the task of becoming what is commonly known in the industry as a "suit" — you know, A&R guys, reps, lawyers, agents, managers, etc. However, the business of music is a responsibility that musicians *must* deal with, especially when an artist or a band is just starting out.

With the emergence of a formidable and thriving independent music scene in the first half of this decade came an inherited reluctance on behalf of the conventional system (major record labels, management companies and agencies) to throw themselves and their ever-shrinking budgets at bands frivolously, opting instead to take a "wait and see" approach to signing bands. Combine this with a recessed economy and the diminishing scene at the grass roots level here in Canada (especially if you still like your "rock 'n' roll") and what you have is a burgeoning pool of bands who must fend for themselves in an overwhelmingly competitive and financially motivated industry.

Furthermore, what once was a flourishing environment that nurtured and carried bands, at least to the point of "throwing them to the wall and seeing if they stick", has now inadvertently digressed into a more cautious environment that expects a band to prove itself independently before being "picked up" and ultimately signed.

From the smallest detail, such as booking and promoting gigs, to more involved duties like the production and manufacturing of an independently financed CD and its subsequent distribution, promotion and sale, more and more musicians are finding out that they have been, in fact, abandoned by the conventional system. We have been left alone to run our own show, until of course, the show becomes big enough to interest any prospective buyers. What this means is that bands must endure all the pressures and financial burdens that accompany the pursuit of our glorious dream. We must negotiate our own production deals

and contracts with the likes of producers, recording studios and CD manufacturers, often bypassing the sometimes unaffordable legal advice of lawyers — which in itself can be a perilous oversight.

We must also be prepared to do our own bidding while shopping our completed products to retail stores, distributors and record companies here and abroad; a tedious and often costly venture. All the while, maintaining your sanity while preparing for shows (if they can be found) and dealing with bar owners and managers, some of who have been known to take (and I mean take) musicians and their bands for longer rides than any space shuttle has to offer. You are constantly compromising yourself in order to satisfy and maintain your passion for music and "keeping the dream alive".

Now, I would never dissuade anyone from pursuing a musical career; my love for my craft and the satisfaction it has brought me would never allow me to do so. However, one who endeavours must realize, much sooner than I did, that a serious attempt at a career in music in this day and age is a vast undertaking that must never be dealt with lightly if one's ultimate goal is to "make it". The tempestuous nature of today's music industry can be very exciting and sometimes surprisingly rewarding. However, one must combine musical talent and good business savvy with dedication and commitment in order to meet the challenges one will face.

The requirements are plentiful, the demands can be gruelling and the lifestyle rarely includes any guarantees or security. It must be understood from the outset and unequivocally that a career in music is a way of life and that reality does not often permit for musicians' dreams to come to fruition. Accordingly, one can never be serious about succeeding if he or she simply relies on others to do their bidding. Complacency will only take a would-be career so far before it slowly dwindles it into a hobby. Subsequently, if one is truly serious, one must always be cognizant of the notorious nature of the music industry. It can be like an unpredictable, inanimate organism revolving around a constant cycle of habitual renaissance, feeding on fads and folly to the point of regurgitation. It can "eat you up alive and spit you out". But then, you and I both know that the price of fame is usually measured by the accumulation of time, dedication and discipline it takes to succeed. Quite an expense. Meanwhile, it must always be understood that passion is rarely "worth it's weight in gold", that fame always has a price and that stardom itself, if you are not careful, can often be the ultimate cost.

CM

HOT GEAR

Products Featured In This Issue of Hot Gear

**Soundtracs Solitaire
24-Bus Automated
Production Console**

**New Additions to
Besson Sovereign Line**

**Summit Audio
MPC-100A Mic
Pre-Amp/
Comp-Limiter**

**BGW Millennium
Amplifiers**

Levy's Keyboard Bag

**Löof ÖN-U FireAxe
Electric**

**New Hand Percussion
from LP**

**SWR California Blonde
Acoustic Amplifier**

**AKG
CK 69-ULS
Microphone and
Companion
Pre-Amp**

SOUNDTRACS SOLITAIRE 24-BUS AUTOMATED PRODUCTION CONSOLE



Responding to the growing trend towards smaller, high-performance studio environments, Soundtracs has introduced the Soundtracs Solitaire 24-Bus Automated Production Console. This introduction brings to the mid-level console market a degree of performance found in recording consoles costing far more.

The Solitaire offers users comprehensive capabilities: Each module has a highly sophisticated design, fitted with dual inputs, each with mute automation and EQ, as well as optional moving fader or VCA automation. In addition, the main Input offers dynamics processing, with optional VCA automation on the secondary input. The Solitaire offers Soundtracs's highly acclaimed FdB parametric EQ on all channels, as well as a two-band EQ on monitor inputs. A high degree of onboard dynamics processing includes gating, compression, expansion, limiting, modulation and auto-panning functions on every channel.

The Solitaire offers extensive routing options to the 24 group busses via a superior signal path, the same as that found on the more expensive and highly successful Soundtracs Jade console.

Automation options include up to 80 automated faders using (touch-sensitive) moving faders and VCA control; synchronization with MIDI timecode; up to eight VCA groups; and an interface with an optional external PC which allows for extensive off-line editing of automation writes.

The Soundtracs Solitaire is a combination of sophisticated technology and cost effectiveness. Utilizing many of the technical achievements implemented in the famous Soundtracs Jade console, the Soundtracs Solitaire offers studios and professional audio users an opportunity to enhance their production capabilities at an affordable price.

For more information, contact: Omnimedia Corp. Ltd., 9653 Cote de Liesse, Dorval, PQ H9P 1A3 (514) 636-9971, FAX (514) 636-5347.

NEW ADDITIONS TO BESSON SOVEREIGN LINE

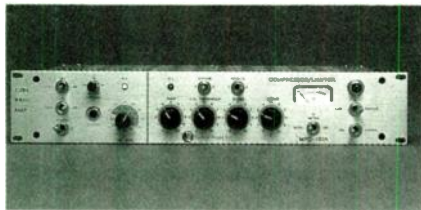
Boosey & Hawkes recently introduced two new tubas to their Besson Sovereign line, the BE983 EEb and the BE993 BBb.



Designed for improved playing comfort, these new tubas sport front valve action, unlike traditional top valve action tubas. Featuring lightweight valve springs, a remodelled mouthpipe and an adjustable thumb ring, this product allows the musician to concentrate on their performance, rather than the constant adjustment of their instrument. Both the BE983 and the BE993 boast a spring damper set for the purpose of quieter valve action.

For more information, contact: Boosey & Hawkes Musical Instruments Inc., 1925 Enterprise Ct., Libertyville, IL 60048 (847) 816-2500, FAX (847) 816-2514, E-Mail: BooseyH@aol.com, Web Address: <http://www.boosey.com>

SUMMIT AUDIO MPC-100A MIC PRE-AMP/COMP-LIMITER



Summit Audio's new MPC-100A Mic Pre-Amp/Comp-Limiter is a single channel unit that features a tube preamplifier section followed by a separate tube compressor limiter section.

The MPC-100A offers microphone, Hi-Z (for musical instruments) or line inputs preamplified by the first vacuum tube stage. This signal, in turn, drives a new compressor/limiter section that offers extremely fast attack times, insuring clipping confidence before entering a digital audio system. A switchable, high quality, front panel VU meter reads input, output and gain reduction accurately.

The standard 19 inch by 3.5 inch rack mount unit features "clean to effect" valve sounds, accommodating a range of needs from live performances to premastering. The MPC-100A offers an input pad, a unique stepped attenuator and clip indicator with support for both XLR and quarter-inch jacks.

The input is electronically balanced or unbalanced with an input impedance of 20K ohms. The maximum input level is +25 dbu. The microphone input incorporates a premium Jensen input transformer as well as a Hi-Z input with a "loading control" for impedance optimizing. This adds a whole additional dimension of tonal range that is selectable by the user.

The compressor/limiter section features variable threshold and release controls, attack and release pre-set switches with a dedicated clip indicator. The output is electronically balanced or unbalanced using series 990 Summit discrete operational amplifiers with an output impedance of 75 ohms. The MPC-100A provides a maximum output level of +25 dbu with both +4 balanced and an additional -10dB unbalanced 1/4" phone jack output. Both outputs can be used simultaneously. The overall output gain control allows one to set an input sound and

optimize that sound for recording without having to reset the entire gain structure. For example, this is important because once a user has set the sound between the two stages, the output attenuator makes it possible to change the gain without changing the tonality of the

overdriven tubes. The MPC-100A is stereo linkable to all Summit Audio dynamics units.

For more information, contact: Summit Audio Inc., PO Box 1678, Los Gatos, CA 95031 (408) 464-2448, FAX (408) 464-7659.

dbx Blue SERIES

The Blue Series stunning craftsmanship is a reflection of its innovative engineering. Striking blue front panels machined from 1/4 inch aircraft aluminium, hand-crafted solid aluminium knobs, LEDs mounted individually in machined stainless steel housings, custom VU meters with peak indicators, top quality components, Jensen transformers, gold plated Neutrik® XLRs and heavy gauge chassis solidify the Blue Series for decades.

160S Stereo Compressor



The dbx 160S is a 2U stereo Compressor/Limiter. It features the world's widest dynamic range voltage controlled amplifier - the dbx V8 VCA, small signal square wave compensation assures precise phase alignment of all frequencies, hard knee and classic Overeasy® compression threshold functions, attack and release controls and program dependent time constants selectable with an auto switch.

786 Precision Mic Pre



The 786 is a precision mic pre companion product to the 160S. It features +48V phantom power, 20dB pad, phase invert functions, switchable "super low Z" setting which optimizes performance for low source impedance mics, 11-position coarse gain of +10 to +60dB with the fine gain of between -3 and +3dB and peak-program VU meters with adjustable reference levels.

704 TYPE IV (tm) Conversion System



The 704 combines the best A/D converter and features an innovative menu driven software control surface, Type IV Conversion System, dither options SNR2 and programmed and user programmable patches, bit-rate output ranges from 8 to 24 bits and sample rates from 22.05 to 48kHz. Both the software and hardware are updatable.



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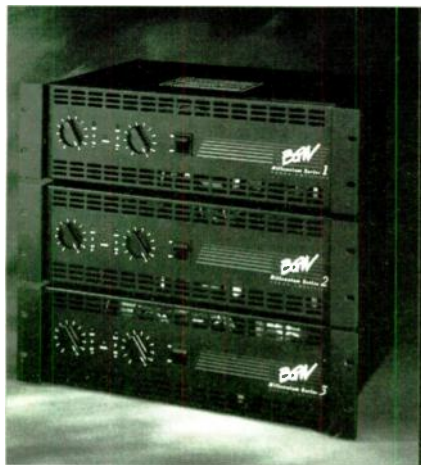
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For more information, contact: Levy's Leathers, PO Box 3044, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4E5 (204) 957-5139/(800) 565-0203, FAX (204) 943-6655/(888) 329-5389, E-Mail: levys@levysleathers.com, Web Address: <http://www.levysleathers.com>



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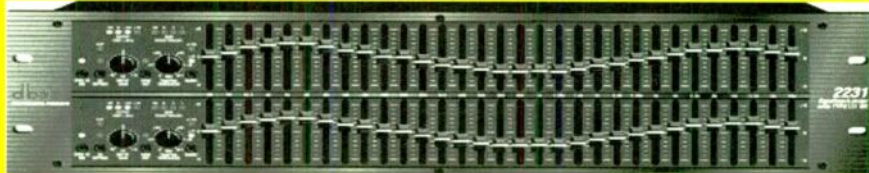
For more information, contact: BGW Systems, 13130 Yukon Ave., Hawthorne, CA 90250 (310) 973-8090, FAX (310) 676-6713.

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of the Month

LÖÖF ÖN-U FIREAXE ELECTRIC

photo courtesy of House of Guitars Inc., Rochester, NY



Guitarist Harry Craig of Alloa, Scotland "burned" the competition and easily walked away with 1st Place playing an early prototype of the ÖN-U FireAxe in the House of Guitars' 1991 "Worst Guitar Player" contest, a prestigious annual guitar event.

Being hailed as "the ultimate in live performance instruments", renowned Scandinavian luthier/pyrotechnician/electronics designer Löf Lirpa has developed a new breed of performance guitar — the Löf ÖN-U FireAxe Electric.

Featuring Löf's proprietary 12-way neck adjustment, this finely-crafted electric guitar offers a new degree of playing comfort, and incorporates fine details and appointments like rare, exotic hardwoods from the rainforest, and ebony and ivory neck and headstock inlays. Its sleek body design, which pays homage to the classic Gibson Les Paul shape, was designed in collaboration with award-winning former IKEA designer Fiörd Bögus.

The guitar's internal electronics are state-of-the-art, incorporating fiber optic wiring of the 21 integral pickups and controls.

If carrying an amp to your next gig presents a problem, not to worry — the guitar's internal mechanical micro-speaker provides 15 watts, more than enough to be heard in small, intimate venues, and can plug right into any standard AC outlet with the integrated 220-volt 'wall-wart' type AC adaptor. If you require additional volume, the optional RCA connector allows you to snake right in to the aux input of any DJ sound system.

A revolutionary new composite plastic provides a bulletproof finish, forever protecting this fine instrument from pick marks, scratches and bottle nicks. What's more, this patented new flammable plastics technology provides the basis for one of this guitar's extraordinary features — the Fire-Toggle (patent pending). This three-way toggle switch trips a flint mechanism which ignites the vaporous top layer of the plastic finish, providing a spectacular visual climax to those blistering guitar solos. The flames self extinguish in seconds, as the vapours burn off, and the effect can be used again within minutes as the plastic returns to its original state.

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For more information, contact: Löf Lirpa Luthiery, 99 Ljusavagen, Riksgränsen, Sweden.

For more information on the contest, contact: House of Guitars, 645 Titus Ave., Rochester, NY 14617 (716) 544-3500.



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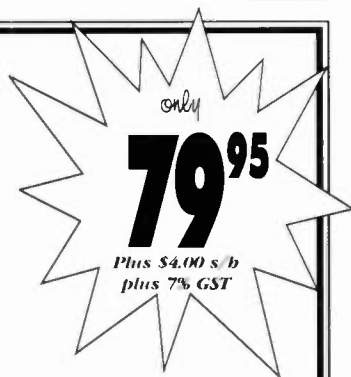
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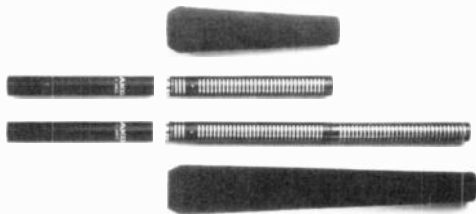
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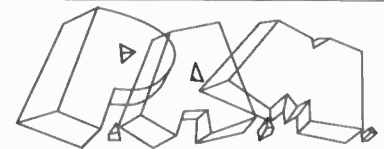
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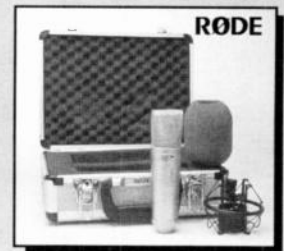
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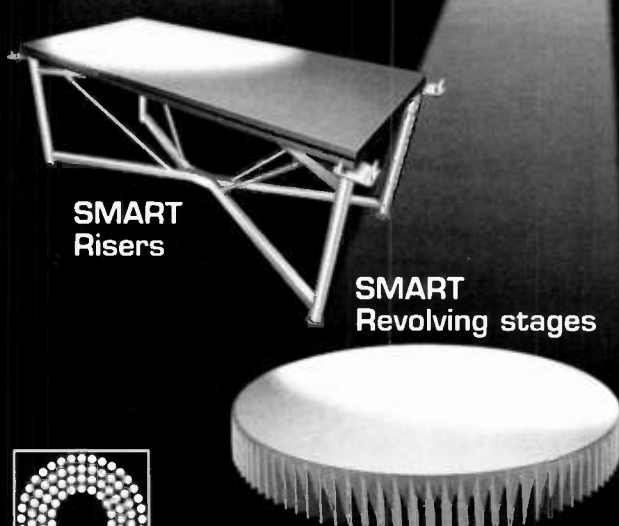
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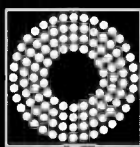
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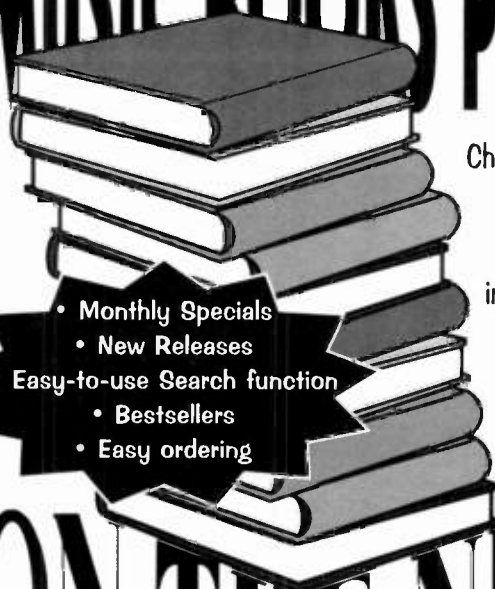
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Emm Gryner

Style: stirring singer-songwriter

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Contact: Emm Gryner, PO Box 67680, 576 Dundas St. W., Toronto, ON M5T 3B8; GAT Productions (416) 598-1536, FAX (416) 598-1360, e-mail: gat@sympatico.ca

Emm Gryner... 21-year-old Emm Gryner's voice is a presence unto itself — commanding, arresting, gently powerful. It cries LISTEN, sinks in your soul and stops you dead in your tracks. Hailing from smalltown Forest, Ontario, the graduate of Fanshawe College's Music Industry Arts program has already won several songwriting awards — the Mix 99.9 Songwriting Contest (1996), Q107's Scott Liddle Memorial Award (1995) and a CMPA Songwriting Scholarship (1994). Uprooting to Toronto, she helped produce her second CD, *The Original Leap Year*, with Stu Brawley at Sonic Poutine and Kevin's Art Gallery, and produced four songs on her own in "Emm's Temporary Little Bedroom". Whether it's the vibrant, full arrangements of the brilliant wry send-off "Hello Aquarius" and self-doubting lyric "Your Sort of Human Being", or the stark piano and voice heart-wrenchers "This Mad" and "Fetching Decay", Gryner is always stirring and passionate. She's far too good to remain independent; she should make the major leap this year.



DSK

Style: terrorizing punk

Line-up: Blair Dobson (vocals); Rich Priske (bass); David Genn (guitars); Brad McGiveron (drums)

Contact: Divine Industries, PO Box 309, 1001 West Broadway, #101, Vancouver, BC V6H 4E4 (604) 685-0143, FAX (604) 682-8572; e-mail: jasong@gangland.com

In 1992, Vancouver's Dead Surf Kiss recorded *Narcotic Nevada* for Onslot/BMG which made zip of an impact. Fast forward several years, and some former band members totally abandon the DSK name as an acronym (now it means nothing), get a new vocalist (Blair Dobson), change their sound to no-nonsense dementia and emerge as an entirely new entity. An indie video for "Targets", directed by frontman/director Blair Dobson, rears its ugly head first and wins a 1994 MuchMusic Video Award. Finally, two years later, the CD appears, and *Exploder!* proves to be an appropriate title. Dobson's cigarette-charred vocals growl nastily (still often melodically) from beneath a noisy, pounding onslaught on "Landmine", "Cementhead", "Butt", "Whine" and a host of other deluge-ful offerings. Produced by DSK, the album was recorded and mixed by Tridon at Profile and Crosstown studios with assistant engineer Jeff Bond. It was mastered by "The Brothers Gunny" (Anthony Valcic, Mark Cohen, Judas Bullhorn) at Fropile Audio Kitchenette. As a footnote, "the most dysfunctional band in Canada" has disbanded yet again, emerging under a new monicker, Meeker, with a new singer, ex Another White Male's Nathan Dillon. Whether the *Exploder!* material will be laid to rest is still in question. The saga continues . . .

Ballroom Zombies

Style: gender-bending glitter pop

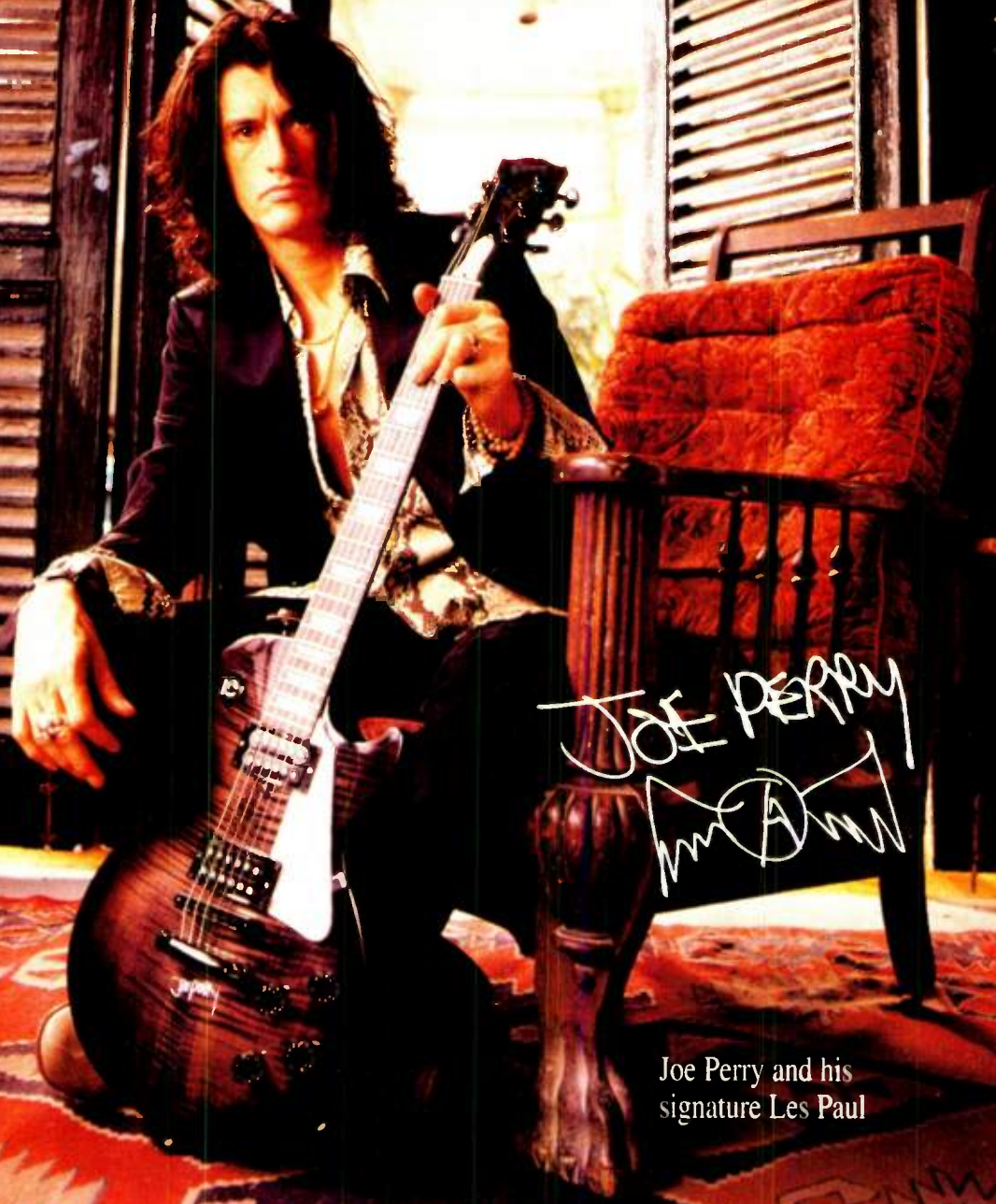
Line-up: Robin Black (vocals, harmonica); Brad Garinger (guitars, backing vocals); Charles Garinger (bass, backing vocals); Marky (drums)

Contact: Cult of the Ballroom Zombies, 112 Stockdale St., Winnipeg, MB R3R 2G6. Contact Shelley Breslaw @ (204) 453-0015, FAX (204) 284-1190, e-mail: breslaw@mb.sympatico.ca

It's strange just listening to the Ballroom Zombies, without taking in the whole artistic expression of the live show — the shiny latex, the feather boas, pancake make-up. No, on the CD EP *JoJo*, with no danger of getting lipstick on your collar, the Winnipeg glitter-pop band has only the songs. It's like waking up in the morning sans make-up and facing your new lover. Oooh, scarry. So what are these strutting look-at-me glam boys like in an Adam & Eve state, when they're not "cumbered up in hosery (sic)"? First off, *JoJo* sounds pretty fresh and raw considering the six songs were recorded on an eight-track. Produced and engineered by Marty Kinac and Damon Hill, the songs actually benefit from a live-off-the-floor, less than perfect recording. Because there's a highly melodic quotient to songs like "I Know", "Impotent Fantasies" and the single/video "Twiddle Bug", there's a danger that the pout and punk could have been wiped out in a bigger studio — turning the Ballroom Zombies into... yeeek, a pop band! Shudder at the thought.



Photo: Danny Clinch



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