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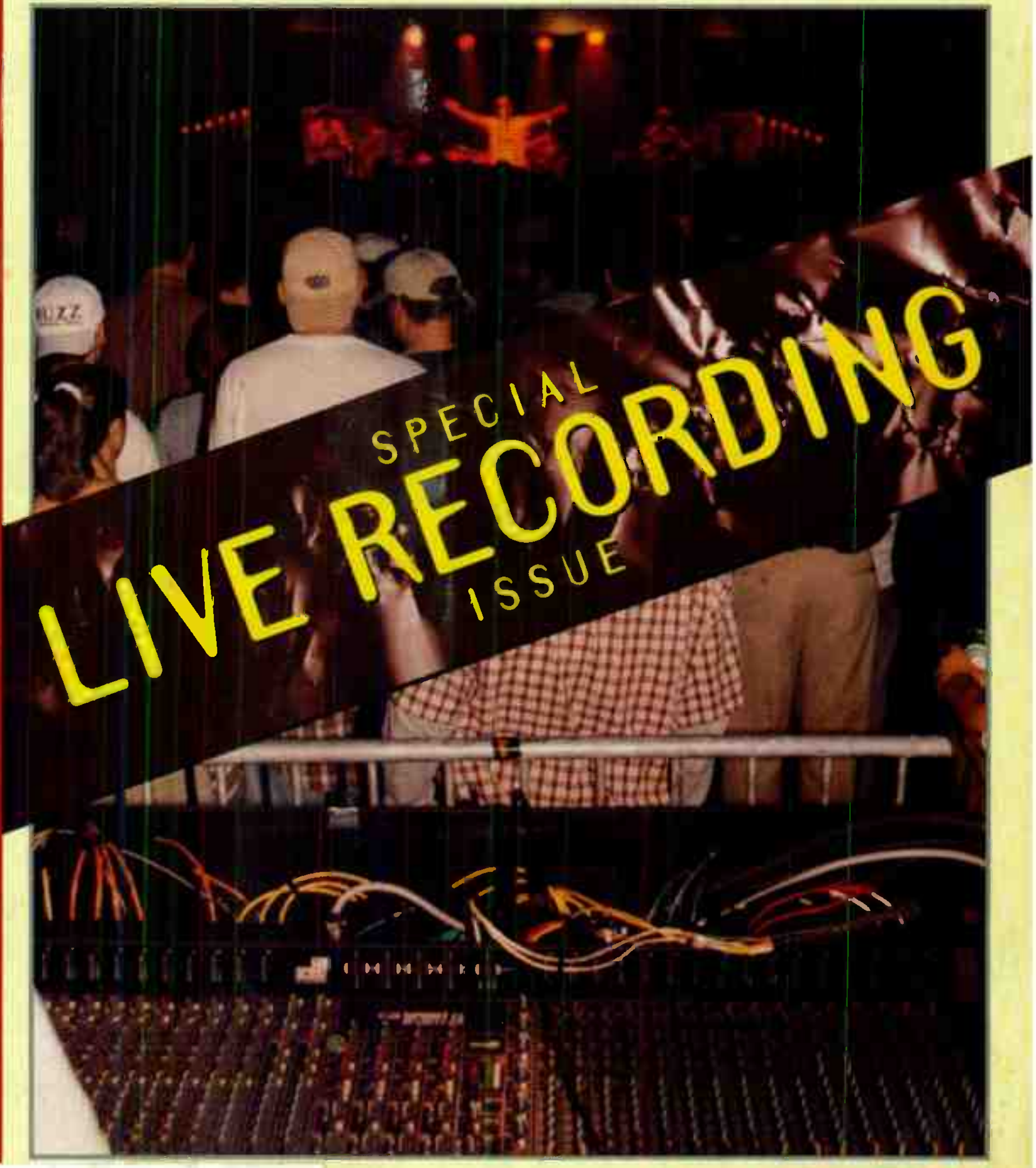

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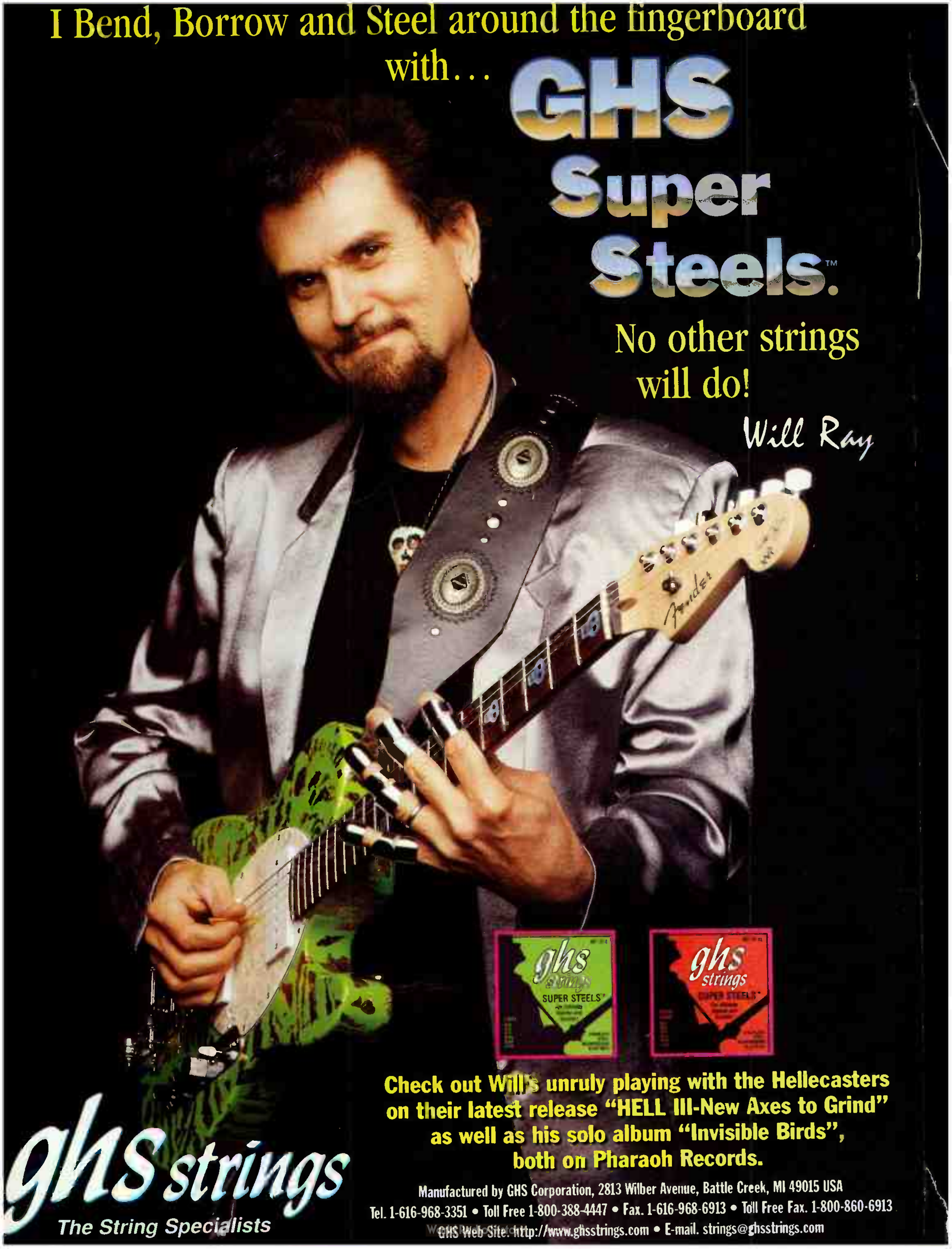

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letters

staying healthy

Jason Zasky's article "The Agony of the Beat" (Headlines, Jan. '99) was of extreme importance, but it omitted mention of the nonprofit International Foundation for Performing Arts Medicine as a place to turn for help before turning to a doctor. We have a medical advisory board and will be publishing a resource directory to make it easier for artists to find specialists. Also, the book *Performing Arts Medicine*, while an excellent resource, is written for other health professionals; some of the medical jargon may be hard for the lay reader to understand. Many of the fine physicians who contributed to this excellent text also write for IFPAM's health newsletter, *Performance Pulse*, which *is* written for artists: Any medical terms are either substituted or defined, and almost all of the information can be put to immediate use by musicians.

nina paris
founder/president, IFPAM
IFPAM@bigfoot.com

whigged out

Thanks for the Afghan Whigs article (Shop Talk, Jan. '99). They are by far one of the most classy, original, and consistent bands of the Nineties. But Greg Dulli is dead-up wrong in saying there is no supporting circuit of zines or a word-of-mouth network to support new bands. I read in *Punk Planet* there there are currently some forty thousand zines currently in circulation. Plus there's the W. E. (*i.e.*, Wilmington Exchange), a week-long festival in coastal North Carolina that's drawn together tons of indie bands, zines, brewers, and film producers every year for three years now. I believe Dulli is so used to the big-label money syndrome that he doesn't know where to look for anything indie anymore.

gregg yeti
the flashing astonishers
gcjohnso@mailbox.syr.edu

neil finn

I was pleasantly surprised—no, I was downright delighted—to see Neil Finn's name on the cover of your Dec. '98 issue (Songwriting). Since Crowded House's early success faded in the U.S. over the past ten years due to lack of label, radio, and/or fan support, I've been shocked at how few people know that Neil is still making great music. Thanks to writer Tom Lanham and to *Musician* for the insightful interview and for reminding everyone that Neil hasn't quit making music in favor of a less harrowing vocation, like raising sheep.

matt lucas
mlucas@deer-park.isd.tenet.edu

What a treat it was to see an interview with Neil Finn. It was a pleasure to read how he crafts some of his fine work. I was, however, disappointed with interviewer Tom Lanham. He misnames "Sinner," and though "Don't Dream It's Over" got plenty of U.S. airplay on pop stations, it is by no means a "stunner" compared to the multitude of other songs written by Finn. I wish that Lanham had shown a little more insight.

laurie j. bradburn
west greenwich, RI

good vibes

Jeff Jourard claimed to have never seen a Fender Vibrasonic amp that was more than 40 watts (Letters, Dec. '98). Jeff may be familiar only with the older 40-watt Vibrasonics, but the reader shouldn't confuse them with the later Custom Vibrasonics. I own a 1996 Fender Custom Vibrasonic, one of the last Vibrasonic models made. It isn't a reissue, but a new design with versatility, clean power, and that classic Fender tube tone. With 100 watts of tube power, two independent channels (one voiced for regular guitar with a "fat" switch, the other voiced for steel guitar with a "sweet" switch), tube reverb, tube vibrato, point-to-point hand wiring, and a 15" Eminence speaker, this is the most versatile amp, dollar for dollar, I've ever used. Whether I'm playing one of my Teles, Strats, or Gretsches, my Les Paul or my Sho-Bud, this amp does it all. It'll walk all over Twin Reverbs and take names.

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from the editor

Is it just me, or does it seem to you that there are more live albums than ever coming out these days? Just in the past few months we've seen concert releases by all kinds of major acts: the Rolling Stones, Aerosmith, Garth Brooks, Portishead, Rush, Pearl Jam, Hanson, 311, the Orb. What could this mean? Is everyone busy settling "contractual obligations" with their labels? Maybe. But whatever the reason, I'm happy with what I'm hearing.

At its most basic, music is about performance. The listener—or, preferably, a venue filled with listeners—is as much a part of the equation as the player and the material. Lots of great music has been made in empty rooms, from recording studios to Carnegie Hall, but most of it strives to create an illusion of the kind of energy you get when you put an artist in front of an audience. Much of it succeeds—and the measure of that success is the desire it builds among listeners to see the act work its magic in person.

We've reached the point where technology allows us to record ourselves at a gig with as much clarity and quality as we might achieve in studios, usually at a more than reasonable price. If your band has built a following on the basis of killer performances, this is terrific news. Rather than sink into the womb of a studio, you might consider making your first or next album where you're most comfortable: at your favorite club, in front of a roomful of fans.

We've dedicated this issue to helping you explore this option. From behind-the-scenes views on two of the great live albums of all time, *Frampton Comes Alive* and *Cheap Trick at Budokan*, to nuts-and-bolts examinations of what kind of equipment you'll need, how you should approach performing when the tape starts rolling, and other relevant topics, our special issue on live recording can get you started on the road toward cutting a CD that will show the world what you can do onstage. Good luck—and if you do end up with a disc that shows your band at its best onstage, please send a copy our way and tell us about it.

—Robert L. Doerschuk, editor

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Joe Perry

"I see bands like Oasis and think, 'What the fuck? Why bother?'"

When Aerosmith is recording for what you hope will be a live album, what's your approach to stretching out beyond the original versions of songs?

Well, it's really good to be able to stretch out when I forget what I played on the record [*laughs*]. But our approach is to think like members of the audience. We've gone to shows where bands do a lot of jamming. We've certainly heard virtuoso players, but I don't think that any of us is so good that we can sustain a fifteen-minute solo. I like to hear some of the phrases I've heard on the record. When I saw Page and Plant last summer, he [Jimmy Page] was playing stuff that was so close to the record; I hadn't heard him do that in years, and it was fuckin' great. The other extreme was when I saw them in 1976: They played, like, six songs in a three-hour set, because there was so much jamming and soloing. There's room for a bit of that stuff, and certainly there are a couple of solos in the course of a night where I'll depart [from the album]. But for the most part, the solos that I play are as much a trademark to a song as a vocal line.

Does the size of stadium stages work against you in generating the kind of intensity you get in smaller venues?

Yeah. It's all a compromise, like using a guitar cord or going wireless. You lose tone with a wireless, but using a wire means I'd have to stand in front of my amp all night. One of our basic things is, if you're not gonna put on a show, the audience might as well stay home and listen to the CD. It's exciting to see some action, whether it's Gene Simmons spitting fire or Peter Townshend swingin' his arms; it's like you can see the band getting off on what they're playing. That's why I see bands like Oasis and think, "What the fuck? Why bother going?"

What advice can you give bands that want to record a live gig?

It depends on how you're going to use your tape. If it's gonna be your demo, you don't want your finger slippin' off the fret halfway through your solo, so you've got to stand still. We've done shows that were broadcast live—two weeks ago, we did one over the Internet—where you lay back a bit with your jumpin' around, in hopes that you don't fuck up the tricky things. But if you're going for a balls-out live record, you've got to not think about the tape rolling and just give it to your audience.

The performance, not the production, is the point.

Some of the best live albums sound like they were recorded on a string through a fuckin' tin can. If your band is locked in and playing at its best, people aren't going to sit there and go, "Where's your 80 cycles? How come there isn't enough 5k?" An engineer might say it, but there's just one engineer for every fifty people who will be listening to it.

And it's not the engineers who buy all the records.

Exactly.—***Robert L. Doerschuk***

WEBSITE EXCLUSIVE!
To read more of Robert L. Doerschuk's interview with Joe Perry, visit Musician Online at www.musicianmag.com.

Photo: P. G. Brunelli

Chuck Leavell

Is there something unique about playing live when you know it's being recorded?

It does put me on my toes a little bit and cause me to listen a little more intently to the rest of the band, so that if Charlie Watts or Daryl Jones does a little something, I can pick up on it.

Obviously you want to listen in any musical situation, but you're saying that when tape isn't rolling, you may take a few more chances or stretch out a bit more.

It depends on the role I'm playing. In a band like the Stones, you don't do that, because it's a guitar band, so what I do is supplemental. I don't need to try and go crazy just to be heard on a live recording. My role would be to support the Rolling Stones by working within the rhythm section. On the other hand, when I recorded *Unplugged* with Eric Clapton, that was magical for me because it had been a while since I'd been with a band of that stature, where I had an opportunity to take some solos and step out in front a little bit. I had a lot of things bottled up and ready to be unleashed, and that's what happened on that show.

LIVE
RECORDING

What was there about that live date that encouraged you to stretch out?

It was the first gig I had ever done with Eric as his only keyboardist. Prior to that, Greg Phillinganes had been more or less first-chair keyboard, and I was the second keyboardist. When he resigned about six months before this event, Eric came to me and said, "Do you think you'd like to have another person onboard, or would you like to handle this by yourself?" After some thought, I said, "I think it would be interesting to simplify it a little, with just one keyboard."

Do you tend to take different kinds of keyboards to gigs, depending on how much solo freedom you've got?

Well, I'm a naturalist, so when at all possible I stick with piano and organ, although there are certainly times when you need to augment with some other sounds. In Eric's case, there was a bit more of that on his album *Journeyman*. A lot of the songs we were playing at that time required other sounds—but I still used my MIDIed [Hammond] B-3 to trigger them. It's incredibly convenient to have the horns down on your left hand and the B-3 on your right, or perhaps a little piano on the lower manual and organ on the upper manual.

What modules do you use to sweeten the B-3 sound?

You can't go wrong with the Korg O1W; those sounds work real well. And I have an old [Yamaha] TX81Z that I use from time to time.

résumé
Rolling Stones
Eric Clapton
Indigo Girls
Blues Traveler
Allman Brothers Band
Solo album: *What's in That Bag?* (Capricorn)

"I don't try and go crazy just to be heard on a live recording."

Are there any artists you'd like to work with?

Well, if Roy Bittan ever hurts his hands, I'd love for Bruce to give me a call [*laughs*].

As you listen to Bittan on Springsteen records, do you hear piano parts that you would play a little differently?

Oh, yeah, of course. That's the lovely thing about music: Everybody's gonna do it their own way. When I hear a wonderful Roy Bittan passage, what goes through my mind is, "Wow, what a great passage! I could take that and work it more the way I would do it." Although, let's face it, there are some parts that just couldn't be played any better.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

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Live a cappella groups are typically as exciting as harpists, but New York-based **Double Dong** isn't your typical gospel-tinged vocal group: This is a full-fledged punk-meets-hip-hop ensemble, and though it's quite a sight to behold their act from in front of the stage, Double Dong's Ghost Krabb is quick to point out that it's a physical wonder for them to pull off forty minutes a night. "It's pretty high energy and has a lot of dancing, screaming, and whatnot," he says. "It's a lot of fun and I think it's pretty entertaining."

See, the Dongers aren't just singing and making concussive beat-box noises with their breath; they're literally jumping around the stage in a never-ending hyperactive frenzy of dance. "It's kind of a marathon," says Krabb.

"It seems like the first song is always kind of rough and then we get oxygenated and we lose ourselves in it a little bit. It's a mind over matter kind of a thing."

So how do the members of Double Dong keep up? Krabb says he prefers "savage sports, like climbing trees, and then indoor activities like the tantric arts. We do a lot of yoga and stretching before shows, and a lot of Dancercize to stay fit, because it does require a lot of aerobic energy."

Double Dong

Fred LeBlanc, who handles both lead vocals and drum responsibilities for **Cowboy Mouth**, says that the key to keeping his breath during a show is

MERL SAUNDERS

IF I KNEW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW...

As a young musician in the service, I had the chance to travel around the world. On one of those tours I ran into a musician named Duke Ellington, who was playing at the officer's club. I was nineteen years old, but I'd seen Duke play many times since I was six or seven, so I kept inching forward through the crowd until I made it up to the bandstand. I got his attention, and he said to me, "You're a musician?" I said, "Yeah. My name's Merl Saunders—and, man, you're the greatest jazz musician!" And he said, "Hey, I'm not a jazz musician. I'm Duke Ellington. If you're Merl Saunders, you're not playing jazz; you're playing Merl Saunders music. You remember that."

Those words were what made me start writing my own music, and looking back now, I wish I'd begun doing it sooner. There's nothing wrong with playing great tunes by Hoagy Carmichael or George Gershwin, but doing

VE HES

what he does before he hits the stage. "Being nervous is probably the worst thing that can happen. Even if your show is very energetic you're going to get a lot more done the more relaxed and more flexible you are," he says from a tour stop in North Carolina. As far as being relaxed, he explains, "I make sure my drums are totally set up the way I want them. I make sure everything is completely to my satisfaction when I get onstage so I don't have to think, because the more you have to think the more nervous you get, and the more nervous you get the more you struggle to remember to breathe."

On a practical note LeBlanc also uses a saline nose mist spray in order to clear his sinuses. "It's very important to breathe through your nose and not as much through your mouth, because the deeper you breathe through your nose for some reason the more it goes through your bloodstream."

Flexibility comes through a combination of stretching his arms and legs and some basic workout things he does including sit-ups and light weightlifting. "I'm a pretty big guy, so most of the workout I do is centered around stretching and flexibility. As a drummer and an artist you can work yourself up to where you're a muscle man, but if you have no flexibility then the music can't flow through you. That's the most important part. Just because we're musicians doesn't mean that we're creating what we do; we hear it from some other place and all we're trying to do is re-interpret it. What you're doing by stretching, taking care of yourself, and staying in somewhat decent shape is allowing the music to flow through you freely."—***David John Farinella***

your own music is another thing. I'd tell any young musician to start writing today, even if it means humming into a tape recorder as you're sitting in your car at a stop sign.

Also, I don't want to be partial, but I'd tell any musician to be sure to spend time in New York City, the melting pot of the best musicians in the world. I'll never forget, I was about twenty-two, I had just gotten out of the service, and I was playing piano at an airman's club. This guy, the janitor at the club, kept circling me, and finally he stopped and said, "You're playing the wrong changes." I said, "Yeah? Well, *you* go ahead and play it!" He sat down, and when he was finished, I was crying. That's what you find on the East Coast, you know what I mean?

See, I love the musicians I've known in San Francisco. I was very close friends with Vince Guaraldi; I followed him ever since the days when he was playing with Cal Tjader at the Blackhawk. But, really, the most intense music schools are on the East Coast. I did a lot of hanging out on the East Coast, with Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff—we were all brothers, learning together. To this day, because of that time I spent in New York, I can stay about twenty steps ahead of the musicians on the West Coast. In fact, I wish I'd stayed on the East Coast a little longer; maybe I'd be able to stay about a hundred steps ahead.

—***Robert L. Doerschuk***

Does Your Amp Need NewTubes?

Bad tubes in your amp can ruin a gig, yet many players don't know when or why to replace them. According to Paul Rivera, president of Rivera Research & Development, there is a wide variety of ailments associated with worn tubes. Symptoms of old preamp tubes are a loss of gain and/or brilliance, muddiness, microphonic feedback, and "tinkling" sounds.

Old power tubes are marked by loss of volume, muddiness, low-pitched microphonics, rattling, arcing or flashes in tubes, and frequent blown fuses (which pose a serious danger to amp and you).

Other factors that affect tube wear are the volume the amp is typically played at, how often the amp is moved, the roughness of handling, the proximity of the tubes to the speaker(s), and lastly, the bias setting (idle current), which determines the voltage an amp operates at and therefore dictates how hard the tubes work. (You can expect 1,000-2,000 hours of use from a typical set of tubes.)

To test for old tubes, set your amp to its stage volume and lightly tap the tubes with the eraser of a pencil. Hearing the tap through the speaker is normal, but excessive noise means that a tube needs to be replaced. A funny smell or browning of the silvery barium coating (inside the glass) are clues as well.—***Brett Ratner***

Baby Got Yak

If you think it's difficult to "make it" in the U.S., consider the plight of ***Full Circle***. This talented trio operates in the less-than-hospitable musical climate of Katmandu, Nepal, a city best-known as a base for Himalayan mountaineering expeditions. Despite the obstacles, Dimple Singh (guitar/vocals), Deependra Rai (guitar) and Elvis Cormuz (bass), manage to eke out a living as full-time musicians. "There are one or two other bands who perform popular music," says Singh, "but not professionally."

Full Circle has the city's choicest gig: five nights a week at the Hotel Yak & Yeti for $125/week, playing material by the likes of the Beatles, the Eagles, and Sting. Mostly restricted to playing covers, the band occasionally gets to showcase originals. Not surprisingly, Full Circle's songs are influenced by the foreign artists they cover, and their lyrics inspired by Nepalese sociopolitical issues. The result is socially-conscious soft rock, which according to Singh, is in keeping with the current musical trend in Asia.

The band records in a local studio that has a Korg MIDI workstation and a Soundcraft mixer. "There are one or two 'expensive' studios," notes Singh, "but there are no professional sound technicians or producers." Getting their music to the public is nearly impossible anyway, owing to the fact that there are no record distributors.

Full Circle

The group's gear consists of a Yamaha electric-acoustic guitar, a Korean-made Strat copy, a Yamaha bass, a 35-watt Fender amp, a Yamaha effects processor, two Shure mics, and "an Indian amplifier which everyone plugs into directly." Since there are no MI stores, the equipment is purchased second-hand from people who bring it in from abroad. For reference, a set of guitar strings costs about 1,000 rupees ($14).

For all the hardships, Full Circle has achieved one benchmark of success: "We don't do anything for a day job," says Singh. "We are just occupied with music."—***Jason Zasky***

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR COPYRIGHTS

When a songwriter writes a song it is considered "copywritten"—that is, the song is fully protected from infringement or unfair use under U.S. copyright law. However, most writers purchase additional copyright "insurance" by formally registering their works with the Office of Copyright at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

In the music business the Performing Arts (PA) form is used to register a song (only the musical composition and lyrics) and the Sound Recording (SR) form is used to register the "embodiment" of the song in a sound recording.

A person may register as many songs as they wish on a PA or SR, call it "The Collected Works of John Q. Public, Vol. 1," and be granted full copyright protection for each song listed on the form, which is great because each song gets protected for a single $20 fee. But what if someone hears one of these songs and wants to cover it? Assuming you're not a member of a performing rights organization like ASCAP or BMI—in which case you should register the song in their database—they'll have to check with the government. Will they be able to find it in the Copyright Office records? "They won't," says Page Miller, a senior copyright information specialist in D.C. "This is why we created the Corrections & Amplifications (CA) form."

The CA form allows you to "amplify" your PA or SR filing so that each of your songs is individually indexed at the Copyright Office. If a band or artist wants to cover a song you've written or recorded, they would be able to look up your name as the song's copyright owner. If the song in question is merely one of ten songs registered on a PA or SR form, it would be protected but it will not enable a person to find it in a copyright search.

A CA form registration has nothing to do with giving the song additional protection—it just provides a tracking path to the song's author. You file the CA after you receive your registration number back from the first filing. So for $40 ($20 for each registration) you can fully protect all your songs. But hurry, copyright fees are set to increase significantly in July, 1999.

—***Peter Spellman***

For general information, call the Copyright Office at (202) 707-3000. Forms can be ordered 24 hours a day by calling (202) 707-9100; information specialists can be reached during business hours by calling (202) 707-5959.

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Doin' It Live—ar

Guitar monster Mike Keneally comes clean on the art of live recording.

by matt resnicoff

There isn't a musician alive who hasn't sighed the familiar litany: "You should have been there." "Something was in the air that night." "If only there was tape rolling!" What could be worse, we all ask at some point, than a missed chance to capture the magic moment?

Perhaps it would be the mediocre moment, preserved in crystalline perfection during the one night your band finally got it together to record the gig properly. Few performers are as keenly aware of the pitfalls of live recording as multi-instrumental *wunderkind* Mike Keneally, whose shows are marked by heavy doses of hilarity, stunning musicianship, audience interplay, and major outpourings of energy. He's basked in the enervating red glow of the RECORD light more than a few times, and in recent years his priorities have shifted accordingly. "It's a self-fulfilling prophecy to think you're going to screw up because you're recording," he says. "In reality, nothing has changed in the world except for the fact that a button has been pushed.

"Any touring band should record their shows, especially if you encourage peculiar things to happen onstage," he laughs, sitting in an Oregon hotel room with the prodigiously gifted members of his band Beer For Dolphins. "Tapes provide amusement on the bus, or whatever the vehicle of choice is—you can have a lot of fun re-abusing somebody in the band who did something really dumb! So the mindset for live recording with us is virtually the same as doing a show: Be as interactive and creative as possible, because you have two opportunities to be grandly embarrassed!"

LIVE
RECORDING

There's scarcely a moment set aside for shame on Beer For Dolphins' go-for-broke tours—Keneally and company are too busy, and too good. And it would be hard to find another young artist with so many live recordings already to his credit. In the decade since working with his first serious employer, Frank Zappa—who nicknamed Mike "Evelyn Wood" for his quick absorption and flawless retention of difficult melodies onstage—he's appeared on everything from *Roseanne* to albums by Screamin' Jay Hawkins. His latest manifesto, *Sluggo!*, is so textured, compelling, and visceral that it's hard to believe its production was squeezed into breaks in tours by Steve Vai, with whom Keneally is heard on *G3 Live in Concert*. (*Sluggo!* and other Keneally discs, including the Dolphins' live CD *Half Alive in Hollywood*, are on Immune Records, 9725 Mission Gorge Rd., Ste. 211, San Diego, CA 92071; www.immunerecords.com)

Keneally made a crucial discovery about the deceptiveness of house mixes in a club, which often breed sterile, off-balance board recordings: "If you're doing MiniDisc or DAT recordings off the board, you need a separate line out, instead of just what the guy is pumping through the main P.A. system, because that guy is doing sound for the *room* as opposed to for the tape. With your bass or guitar amps razing onstage—which I tend to have so I can hear myself over the drums—that means

Photo: Scott Chatfield

that there's very little guitar going through the P.A., especially in a small room. That corresponds to very low guitar and bass levels on the board tape, which are usually vocal-heavy and weird-sounding."

But in these moments, he warns, don't forget your drummer's role in the submix, or your live tapes will sound particularly hollow: "Some sound guys don't seem to realize that tom-toms exist. It can be a frustrating experience to see a drummer playing amazingly cool, intricate-looking licks that you can't hear."

As a matter of band protocol, Keneally recommends coronating a keen-eared—or at least a reasonably dependable—band member to supervise the auxiliary "B" mix intended for your live tapes. During soundcheck, use headphones to get a quick level on all instruments. Do a bit of recording, and then have everybody stop playing so the mix specialist can make sure the results are listenable.

Keneally is always open to spicing his hi-fi live tapes with odd source material. "That's what Frank did," he explains. "On *Uncle Meat*, from 1969, there are cassette recordings from Copenhagen that have all the sonic resonance and quality of an office chair," he laughs, "but because of the performance being special, he put it on anyway. Just because a piece of tape doesn't sound too good, it doesn't mean it won't be useful at some point."

To that end, Beer For Dolphins has made certain sonic compromises for the reliable, non-linear convenience of the MiniDisc. "Portable DAT machines tend to be dicey," he reports. "I've had horrible experiences with them eating tape. There's an ease in finding a spot on a disc for cataloging, which requires an archivist's patience. A real hardcore critic of data compression will point out where it's somewhat inferior to DAT, but for us it's vibrant."

During his time with Zappa—which yielded the fine live discs *Broadway the Hard Way*, *Make a Jazz Noise Here*, and *The Best Band You Never Heard in Your Life*—the band struggled to balance the freedoms of performance with an overall concern for accuracy in reproducing material. While Zappa's audience could easily accept the abrupt shifts in ambience and tempo created by his liberal editing, less adventurous audiences or A&R men might not be as forgiving. If your drummer is not inclined to play along with a click in headphones, he or she might be persuaded by the likelihood that selected segments of your band's live recordings will be editable if the tempos are consistent from show to show. Keneally found with Zappa that one good take sometimes required lifting individual bars of music from as many as nine different concerts.

"By the time I was in his band, he'd graduated to 48-track digital," Keneally notes. "Much more than now, I was conscious that every single move I made was going to tape, and that he was listening with hopes of making albums. We made a lot of mistakes up there, but he ferreted them out and edited together enough segments to make it sound like we were a seamless steam engine, pumping out flaw-free music night after night. He was trying to rush release 'Ravel's *Bolero*' as a single, but none of our performances were good enough, and he didn't have time to do the editing of different shows, so we'd occasionally even record soundchecks. That was especially unnerving, because you didn't have the audience to play to; you just knew you were doing the song live and it was supposed to be good."

Zappa never got the take, but the process taught Keneally a valuable lesson about perfectionism and the value of the flaw. His advice for fledgling live recordists comes without hesitation: "Be unafraid. If you're trying to capture something wonderful, you have to get over 'red-light fever' the moment you're familiar with the concept. Don't allow yourself to be intimidated by being recorded—revel in it gratefully, because it just means that if you do something remarkable, you can share it with someone who doesn't happen to be in the room right then."

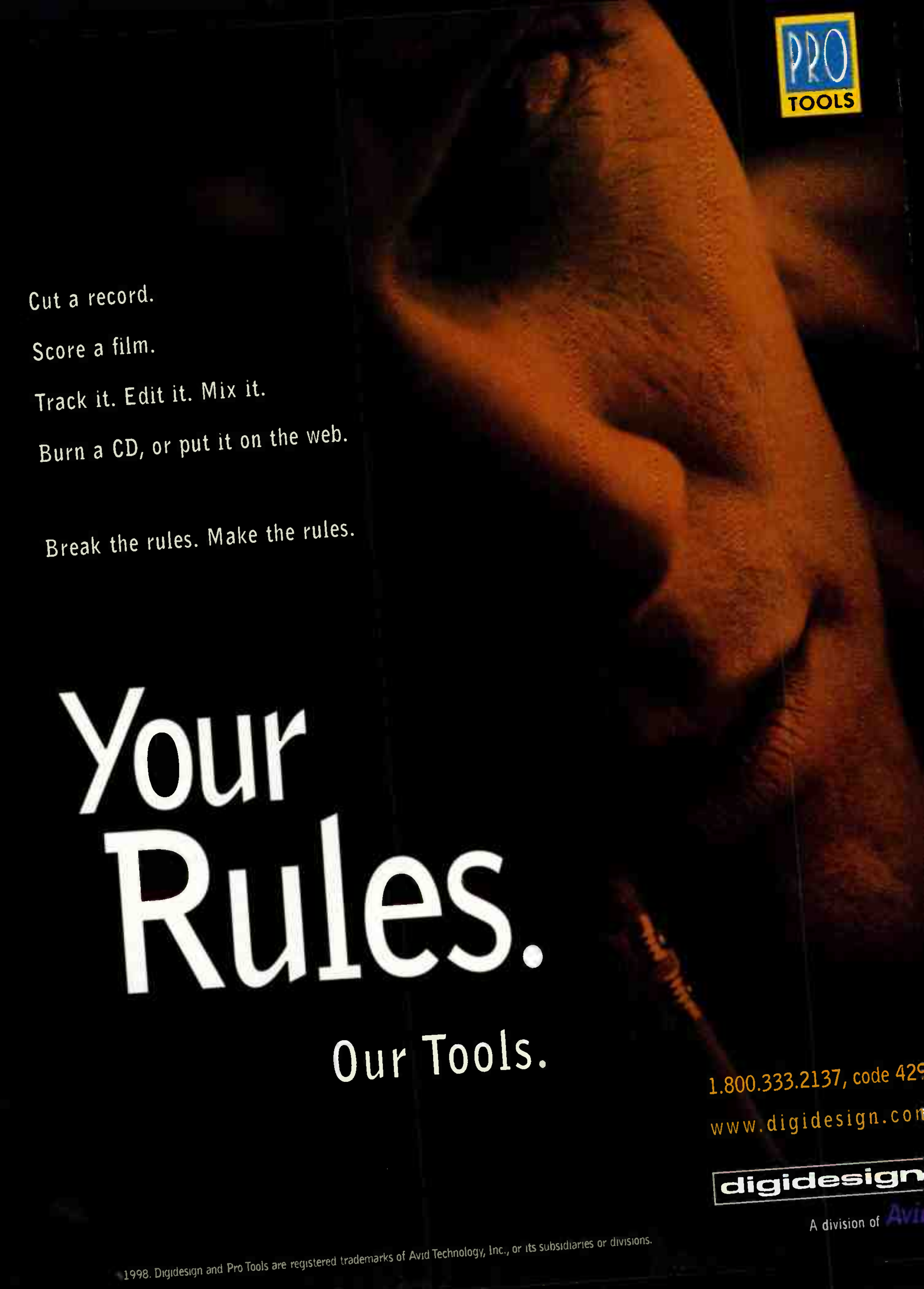
And if it sucks? "Record over it! We just had a situation where we ran out of discs and needed to record a show, so I looked over all the city names, remembered which were marginal, and nominated one to erase. So definitely keep notes as you go along about what's good and what can be disposed of without the world suffering, because stuff starts to blur as a tour goes on."

Onstage, Keneally gets very physically involved, and he stresses the impact that this sort of energy makes on his live recordings: "There have been times I thought I was playing the most inspired stuff, and when I listened back it didn't stand up. And on nights when I honestly thought it wasn't happening at all—this happens more frequently—the supposedly 'lackluster' performance absolutely sparkles on tape. The art of live recording is to capture whatever happened. You're not doing your job properly if you're worried only about getting correct notes on the tape. If my guitar falls off, I'm convinced it was supposed to; half the fun is trying to figure out a way to get it back up again while still playing! On tape, that event might sound interesting and peculiar because I'd come up with a different combination of notes as a result of the guitar being held in a strange position. I'm not militant about playing 'right for the tape'; if something happens that's odd but works emotionally or visually for the *audience*, then hooray for that.

"If you record a lot of your performances," he concludes, "the first thing to do is accept it as the bare minimum fact of life: 'There's air in the room, they're serving beer, we're recording the show.' At that point you don't have to worry about anything but getting in touch with the other members of the band, communicating with the audience, and living inside the songs—turn your mind off to *any* other peripheral concerns. At soundcheck, I hope, you've made sure there's level going to the tape and it's not too hot, and there's some decent instrument balance. Now, turn your mind off the fact that there's a tape running. The most noble and worthwhile thing you can do with music is to inhabit it, let it inhabit you."

***Contributors:** Matt Resnicoff is currently producing an album by guitarpist—that's right, a guitarpist—Phil deGrui, and a compilation tribute to Michael Hedges.*

d Gettin' It Right



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songwriting

by michael gelfand

Bryan Adams finds out the secret to writing hit songs:

Stop Being So Bloody Precious!

Hey, Mister Indie Cred! I hear you think pop music is disposable drivel for the masses. Well, you may be right, but that doesn't explain why millions upon millions of people take so much pleasure in listening to innocuous and egregiously overplayed songs. Tell me, can they all be so wrong?

Maybe the mainstream's infatuation with pop music does obscure and even prevent more sophisticated or challenging material from getting the attention it deserves. Even so, respect still must be given where it's deserved—namely, to artists like Bryan Adams, who can repeatedly combine simple words and obvious hooks with the suitable production to create sing-along tunes that can captivate the world.

Adams has been a chart-topping machine since the early days of MTV, when his song "Cuts Like a Knife" turned him from a little-known Canadian rocker into an icon in pop music. Since then, he has won numerous industry awards for songs like "Straight from the Heart," "(Everything I Do) I Do It for You," "Have You Ever Really Loved a Woman?," and "18 Til I Die," to name a few. So given his past successes and the release of his latest album, *On a Day Like Today* (A&M), it seemed appropriate to chat with Adams about what, if we're honest, captivates us all: how to write a hit song.

How do you start writing?

What happens is, I'll jot down a phrase or maybe a line on a piece of paper, and I'll have some sort of melody that goes along with it. I'll come back to it a few hours later, and if I can see the lyric and actually hear the melody, then nine times out of ten it's going to be a good song. If I go back to look at the words and can't remember what I was doing, then it's nothing.

Is that process different from how you wrote in your early days?

When I started it was just this quest for something, and I wasn't quite sure what it was going to be. That's why my first album sounds like all demos to me: There was no direction, and I was trying to find a slot. On the second album I found that slot. I put a band together and played the songs live on tour. I worked out the arrangements with the band and *then* went into the studio. Don't go in and write the songs in the studio and play them with session players; that's a waste of time. If you really want to make a rock record, you have to have a band. You've got to play your songs. From the beginning the germ of an idea would only go so far in a basement studio, but once I played it live it would take on a different arrangement, or you'd find out pretty quickly whether the chorus sucked or whether the tempos needed to be moved, which is crucial to a song. You can only really discover that by playing live.

How do you apply that knowledge? How do you figure out the tempo?

Generally speaking, I do everything to a click track and take it to the point where it loses the groove. We'll keep pushing up the beat until we lose it, and then we'll see where it feels best. It's got to feel right in the pocket, and sometimes that's just the difference between different musicians: Every musician plays in the pocket differently, which makes your songs feel differently. If you listen to

WEBSITE EXCLUSIVE!
To read more of Michael Gelfand's interview with Bryan Adams, visit Musician Online at **www.musicianmag.com**.

(continued on page 23)

Photo: Danny Clinch

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ALESIS

(continued from page 21)

bands like AC/DC, their music is not fast; it's just really groove-conscious. You'd be surprised at how slow songs like "Highway to Hell" and "Back in Black" are. They're not fast, but they're powerful and very accurate in tempo. That band plays like one brain. So it's not about speed, it's about finding that groove where your band is.

How much technology do you use in writing?

I wait until after the song is written. You have to be able to play the song on acoustic guitar; that's the test. If you can play it back on acoustic guitar, then it's probably going to be okay. If I can't play it back on acoustic guitar or I can't sing it back to you, then I probably won't play it on a record—even if it works as a demo in the studio. I've made too many errors that way, making songs in studios where I've used a drum machine but when you try to play it with a band, it doesn't work. So you've got to try all your songs with a band before you record them. It's really hard to learn how to play the song once you've got a record out, so play it from the beginning. Don't rely on technology, because you'll be stuck. Technology is deceiving because it sounds great: "Wow, that sounds like a John Bonham drum kit!" That might make your song sound really impressive, but it doesn't make it a better song. That's an illusion. It might sound cool and hip, but is there a song there?

How do you gauge if there is *a song there?*

I'd play [producer] Mutt Lange what I thought was one of my better songs, and he'd say, "I like the chorus; it would make a nice verse." And I'd go, "Uh, what about the chorus?" And he'd say, "We'll write a new one. Let's take your chorus, make it the verse, and write a new chorus." That's extraordinary, because it makes for some really interesting songs. That happened with "It Can Happen Only Once."

Did it feel strange to have to relearn something you thought was already good?

No, because I was interested in seeing how far it would go. I haven't done it that much, ripping a song apart.

Was it odd, though?

I was floored.

But you were able to accept it?

Definitely. The one thing I learned working with Mutt was to stop being so bloody precious about it. It's just a song, and we're going to make it great.

What does it take to make a song hit material?

I was sitting in a big New York City radio station just yesterday, and the program director was scanning through my record right in front of me. He would play the intro and the verse, and if the chorus didn't happen for him within five seconds of the verse, he'd go, "Ah, that's nice," and then *boom*, on to the next song. When he found one he liked, he'd go, "Ah, now I like *that* song." It was very interesting to watch that, because I suddenly realized how important sequencing and variety are.

Perhaps starting out a song with a vocal is a good idea, like the Beatles' "We Can Work It Out." Thinking about drawing people in immediately is very important. We can get hung up on the art-school song thing, with a spacy intro and a Mellotron, an ethereal vocal, and then the verse. But if you want a pop hit, you want to get right to the song because [otherwise] people are already tuned out. Get right to the song.

How do you get to the point of doing that effectively?

I'm still learning. It's very easy to get caught up in the art-school way of making songs. But there is no formula. It's what works. So don't be afraid to find out what it is that makes a song work.

People often say that the good songs come very quickly . . .

Oh, yeah, that's very true.

Do those songs really come out better than the ones you have to beat on?

Anything I've ever had to beat on never was a hit. But in saying that, a song like "Summer of '69," which was recorded three times in its entirety, was a recording thing, not a songwriting thing. The difference between making that song or not making it a hit was the production: getting the right tempo, the right instrumentation, and the right space. It just took time, and I drove everybody absolutely insane. I'd say, "This version stinks. The drums sound slow, the tracks aren't vibrant. Let's go do it again." So I'd drag everybody back into the studio and we'd cut it again. You have to know where you want to go with a song and be dogmatic about it until you get it.

What's the most valuable lesson you've learned about writing songs?

To be really open, and if it ain't broke, don't fix it. There might be magic there even when you're making demos, but you need to be aware of it. If you're going to recut your songs, be aware of where you take them, so that you don't lose the initial charm that you had. Ⓜ

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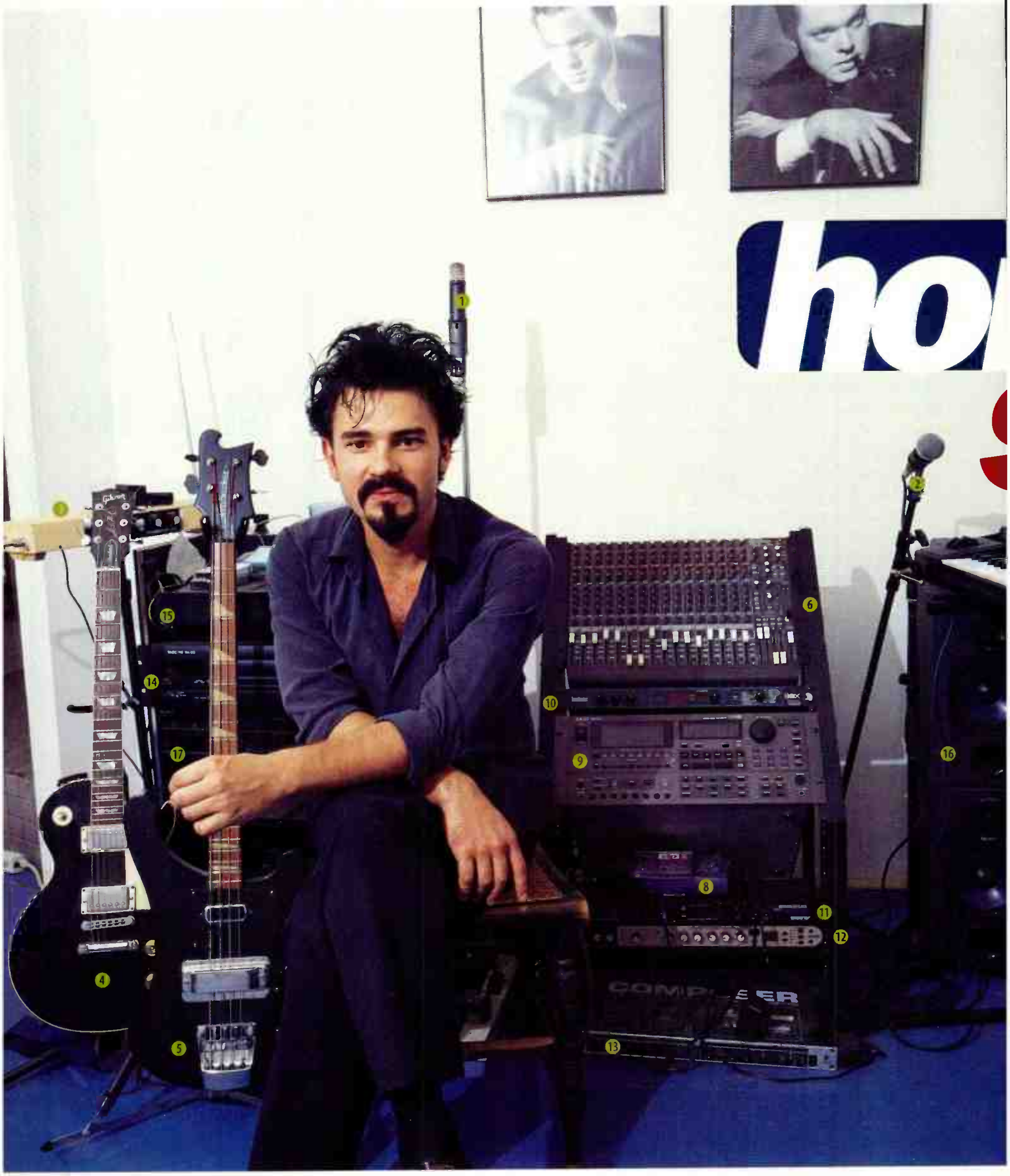

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Shudder to Think

me
studio

by ken micallef

photo by sonja pacho

Some musicians create sparsely-outfitted home studios out of necessity, others by design. While a space crammed with computer-controlled gear allows many to produce studio-quality masters at home, New York's Shudder to Think prefer the method of a different era, when a simple four-track machine, a microphone, and a guitar were all the goods you got. Their bare bones lower Manhattan studio, conspicuously devoid of a computer, is just what the working man ordered.

"It has nothing to do with ethics or ethos," says vocalist Craig Wedren. "It's because we are lazy."

"When we sit down to make music," explains guitarist Nathan Larson (left), "our philosophy is that we'd rather be writing songs than trying to understand how to make a computer work."

It was from here, in Larson's loft apartment, that the duo recorded the "fake oldies" soundtrack, *First Love, Last Rites* (Epic), which features nearly phoned-in performances by Liz Phair, The The's Matt Johnson, Cheap Trick's Robin Zander, and X's John Doe, among others. Another film score, *High Art* (Velvel), was recorded with barely more than a Behringer processor and Shudder's other favorite piece of gear, the Kurzweil K2vx keyboard. The Shudder twins followed suit for their entries on the *Velvet Goldmine* (London) soundtrack. Now what do they say about the mothers of invention?

"For *High Art*," explains Wedren, "the score was based on a crystal glass organ that I made from sampling a few crystal glasses. I just rubbed my finger around the edges of various glasses, then sampled them for the organ sounds of this ambient classical soundtrack score. You get the texture of the glasses with these nice little squeaks, a strange combination of ambient but also very acoustic sounds."

"For everything except the guitar and bass we use the Kurzweil," states Larson. "It has this wonderful array of orchestral sounds, great drum patches, and a relatively simple sequencer. We use it to augment everything we can't do live. How much can we say we love this thing? It's the most important piece of equipment either of us purchased since our first guitar."

What first catches the eye when entering Shudder studio central—after the framed photos of Orson Welles—is an equally ancient-looking Theremin, built from kit. "That is the Etherwave Theremin by a company called Big Briar," says Larson. "It looks old but it's not. We used it for an instrumental 6/8 piece on *High Art* called 'Mom's Mercedes.' "

Shudder's recording process is simple but effective. "Sometimes the guitars are first and the drums [which are usually recorded at a professional studio] last," notes Larson. "It depends where the ideas begin, whether it's with the vocals or guitar. After that the signal goes to the Mackie board, then to the Akai hard-disk recorder, with effects afterward."

For vocals, Shudder use an **AKG C1000S** ①, and a **Shure Beta 58A** ②. Along with the mics, the **Theremin** ③, a 1982 **Custom Les Paul** ④, **Rickenbacker 4001** bass ⑤, and a

Gibson acoustic (not pictured) run direct into a **Mackie CR1604-VLZ** 16-channel mic line mixer ⑥, as does the **Kurzweil K2vx** ⑦ with **Iomega** zip drive ⑧. The **Akai DR8** digital hard-disk recorder ⑨ carries the signal to numerous effects, which run the gamut from cost-effective workhorse to barely-working import anomaly. The **Lexicon Alex** digital effects processor ⑩ (for slapback echo), and **Alesis MicroVerb** four-preset programmer 16-bit signal processor ⑪ (for reverb) are hardly enough, but the **Zoom Studio N1204** ⑫ is, as they say in Manhattan parlance, "a good Canal street Japanese knockoff."

"This Japanese thing is so confusing," laughs Larson. "It has a vocoder, one of the few rack-mounted vocoders, and it's super cheap, only 120 bucks. The instructions are all in Japanese Pidgin English: 'Setting number four; makes singer sound like robot,' or 'Good for uptempo karaoke.' It doesn't say if it's a reverb or what. 'Space gun' is another setting that makes an excellent noise."

Shudder's fave effects unit, though, is the **Behringer MDX2100 dynamics processor** ⑬. "It's only 160 bucks," says Larson. "It's a peak limiter, compressor, a gate. . . . It's so cool, and sounds really good. We run everything through it."

"The Behringer makes it all sound crisp and fat and boss, and no one is the wiser," Wedren explains. "It's great for vocals and often we'll do an entire song and feed the complete mix through the Behringer, just to give it a little extra kick."

Far from the energetic operatic prog rock that Shudder parlayed in the early Nineties, *First Love, Last Rites* is like a genre-centric tribute album, covering the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties, from the blues to doo-wop.

"Some of the songs were supposed to sound like degraded Delta blues," says Wedren. "Others were like messed-up, Flamingoes blue-eyed soul. The whole idea of the project was us working in our apartment and fantasizing, 'What if we called up our favorite singers like John Doe, or Robin Zander?' We sent out demos to everyone and they responded if they were interested. They understood that it was all low-tech. Liz Phair did her vocal on a TASCAM DA-88, so we had to rent one of those. Matt Johnson did his in London on his [Digidesign] Pro Tools, and Robin Zander did his at his home in Florida on VHS tape. When he sent back the tapes one of the vocals was already corrupted. We mixed formats from digital to Hi-8 to VHS cassette."

Two of the tracks on the album are the original rough mixes simply because Shudder's DATs got eaten or were lost. How do they feel about that? "Great!" shouts Larson. "It's the spirit of the thing. Some of the songs cut off so you hear this *boing*!"

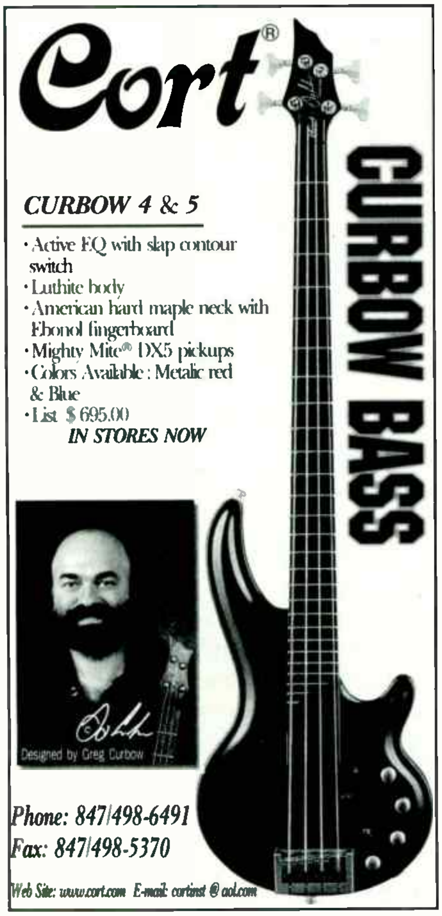
Final mixdown to the **TASCAM DA-20** DAT machine ⑭ came after more effects processing through a Boss Heavy Metal HM-2 foot pedal (for "pure white noise and crazy textures"), the Boss Super Phaser PH-2, *à la* Mick Ronson, and a Cry Baby wah-wah pedal model GCB-95. A Symetrix CL150 compressor is also on hand, but Wedren and Larson aren't sure what it does. They also like Marshall's JMP-1 stereo valve MIDI preamp. "It has a feature called 'Speaker Emulator.' When we did our last proper record at Electric Lady we ran the guitars straight into that, then direct to tape. We A-B'ed between an actual Marshall rig setup and the Speaker Emulator; the emulated sound was amazing."

Shudder power their low-cal consortium with the stormin' **ADS 50wpc stereo power amp** ⑮, purchased along Canal street's renowned hip-hop retail row. "I buy stuff from junk stores, or down here on Canal," says Larson. "Some of this stuff is right off the truck, if you know what I mean."

The ADS powers a pair of **Spirit Absolute 2** speakers ⑯. "They're decent enough," ponders Larson, "but they are broken." Other gear includes a **Sony TC-W320** dual cassette deck ⑰, an unseen Gemini XL-BD10 belt drive turntable, as well as some Sony headphones.

Some may dismiss Shudder to Think's casual approach toward music-making, but the duo would reply that music is in the ear of the beholder, not in the pointer finger of the red-eyed computer geek.

"Our process is all really simple," concludes Wedren. "It's just an extension of what we all grew up with, which is just four tracks and headphones. It's very mobile; we can use our gear anywhere or take it on tour. It's not about getting married to the gear, it's about writing music."



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***Artist interviewed:* John McCrea** *(far right)*

***Home base:* Sacramento**

***Style:* Dryly produced, laconic pop, with minimal instrumentation and strange lyrics seasoned by bits of trumpet**

Latest album:* Prolonging the Magic *(Capricorn), released October 7

What's the secret to successful touring?

When you're going to be on the road for extended periods of time, being able to be alone and think your own thoughts from time to time isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. For our first few years, we were in a small van, taking turns driving. It was pretty hardcore for quite a long time, playing sometimes nine shows in a row and driving all day, every day. It was really strange: Because we had songs on the radio, people thought we were rock stars, like we were floating on rock & roll clouds. But we were having sixteen-hour days of getting up, driving all day, then doing interviews or radio things, doing soundcheck, grabbing a bite to eat, getting on the stage, and sometimes having to drive after the show. When, I ask you, in that work day is there a chance to go and be by yourself? There really isn't one, so sometimes headphones and sunglasses have to provide space when it isn't really there.

Also, pacing yourself is very important. If you get a record onto the radio, you have to find the precarious balance between allegiance to yourself and allegiance to careerism; those are two different things. You'll be pulled in a thousand directions at once, and everyone who's pulling will be sorely disappointed if you refuse to go their way. During the tour for our first album there were a few gigs where we didn't play the hit single, and that pissed off a lot of people. It wasn't intentional; it was just, oops, we forgot. But I know that when we forgot to play it at one really huge gig, the people from our record company were really pissed.

How do you find the right management or booking agent?

We booked and managed ourselves for almost our first three years. You can go around for years, trying to get somebody else to validate you. But too many bands think about sending their tapes out to everybody, when in reality if they get it going themselves, those people will come around. The key is to play your music in front of an audience, figure out what works and what doesn't, and then put the songs that work onto an album. Put everything you have into making what you think is a really good album. If you make something that you think is really good, unless you're a deluded sociopath, somebody is going to hear it and agree with you. Management and booking agents will follow, so those aren't things you should spend your energy on finding; the real thing is to try to figure out your sound.

Once we got those people coming around, we tried to find somebody who didn't make our stomachs turn, who didn't make us feel queasy about the music industry. Maybe we chose people who are good at feigning sincerity, but I think we chose pretty well. It's not just that, of course: You need to find someone who has connections. Obviously it's important that they've been working in the music business for a while, but finding people you can at least sort of trust is worth a lot too.

What's your most indispensable piece of equipment?

For the past three albums, there have been two things. One is my three-quarter-sized Goya classical guitar, beat up as hell, plugged into one of those Sidekick amplifiers that Fender used to give away when you bought a Fender guitar in the Eighties. The cheapness of that has a lot to do with the cheapness of our sound. And the trumpet is a hallmark as well. We didn't intend it to be; we just wanted it to play melodies that we didn't want to play on a soaring lead guitar. You know, I read *Musician* a lot when I was a kid, and it used to frustrate me. All those ads for equipment used to freak me out, because I couldn't afford any of that stuff, and I felt like I needed that equipment to make a go of it. So here I am with this Goya guitar and a beat-up Fender amp. It's weird.

"You know you can quit your day job when . . ."

I'm still not sure that I should have quit my day job. I've done it, but I'm not sure it was a good idea.—***Robert L. Doerschuk***

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To read more of Robert L. Doerschuk's interview with John McCrea, visit Musician Online at www.musicianmag.com.

Photo: Libba Gillum

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editor's pick

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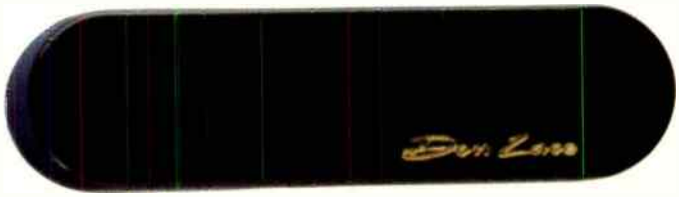

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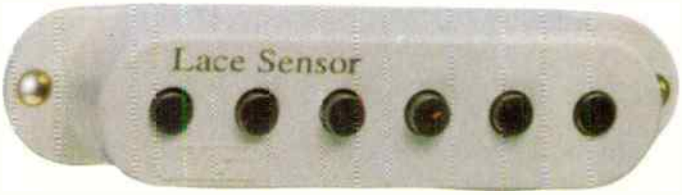

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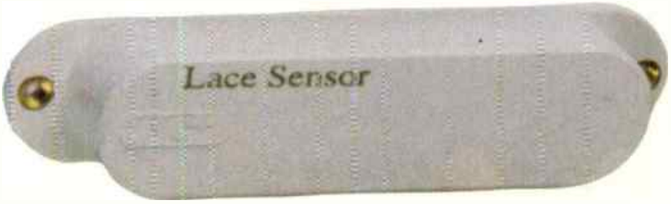

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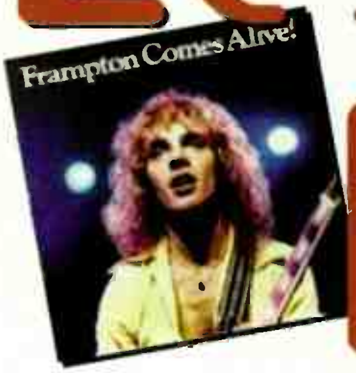

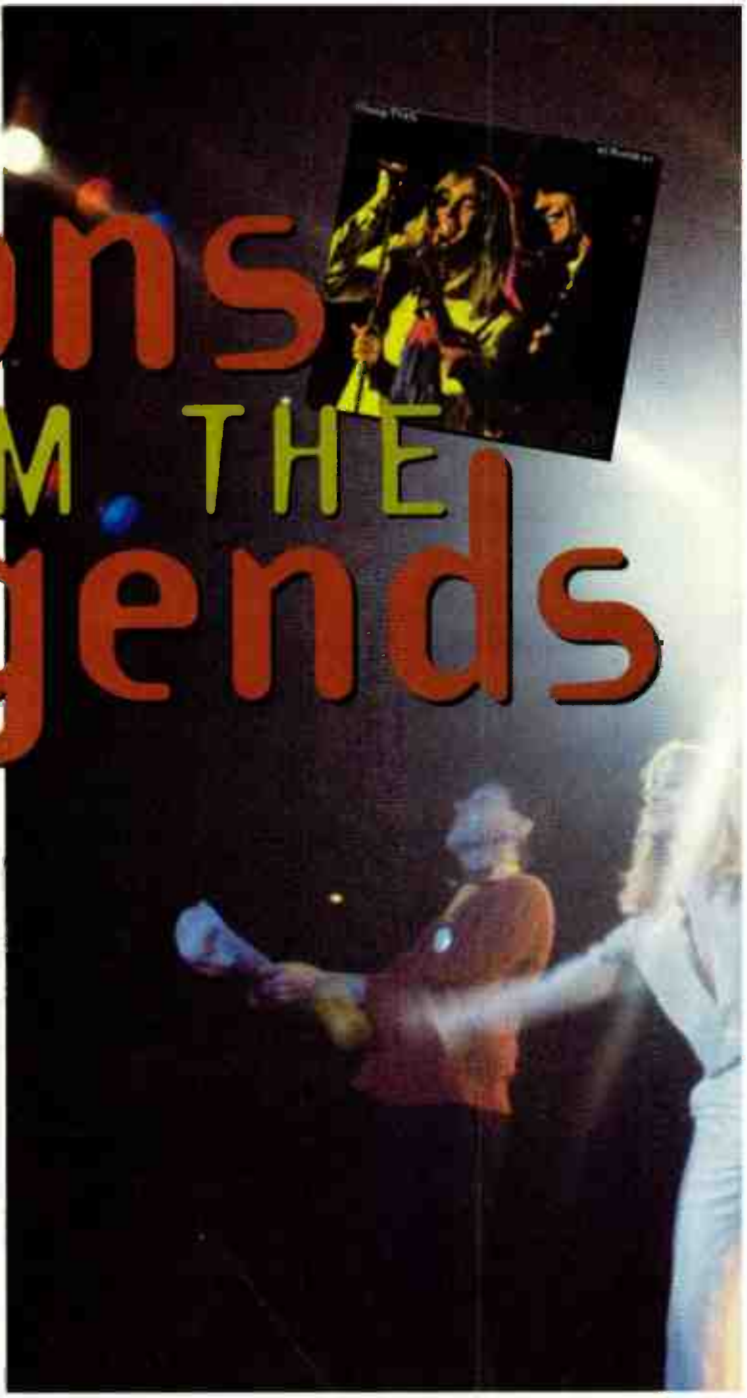

Peter Frampton and Bun E. Carlos share what they learned from making *Frampton Comes Alive!* and *Cheap Trick at Budokan.*

BY MARK ROWLAND

Though not often linked in the annals of rock, the careers of Peter Frampton and Cheap Trick share several common threads, not least that each act made its biggest and most lasting impression with the release of a classic live album. *Frampton Comes Alive!* and Cheap Trick's *At Budokan* were released more than twenty years ago, and both Frampton and Cheap Trick are still on the road today—which isn't such a coincidence.

"A live album sells the live act, and the act has to sell the live album," Cheap Trick's drummer Bun E. Carlos points out. "For us and Frampton, our albums were hits as the result of playing a lot of shows—two to four hundred shows for us in the previous couple of years—and people who liked you went, 'I'm gonna get that album.' A lot of the bands in the Seventies that went and toured and did good that way before MTV are still around, because that's the way they did it."

LIVE RECORDING

It's also no coincidence that both Cheap Trick and Frampton draw stamina from a hunger to perform. "When I was growing up, I saw Eddie Cochran and Buddy Holly on English TV, and I said, 'I want to do that'," Frampton recalls. "My brother said, 'Do what, play guitar?' And I said, 'No, play guitar *live*.' I always wanted to play onstage."

But live albums are "strange birds," as Carlos puts it, and their success is sometimes paved with odd twists and accidents of fate. As the following conversation makes clear, Frampton and Carlos have something else in common: They've experienced plenty of both.

What is the purpose of making a live album?

Carlos: If you're a young band, it's the ultimate demo: "Here's our band, we have these songs, here's our card." If you think your band doesn't play great in the studio but they play great live, well, here's a live tape.

Frampton: For me, the purpose is to give a different version

of your songs. If the material has already been on studio records, then there's no point in doing something exactly the same, and the band probably knows it a hell of a lot better than when they were recording it. When you play with great musicians, and I'm lucky that I always have, you don't play songs that many times in the studio, because you get it pretty quick. So when you go on the road to promote, then you mess with it and you play around with it, and it changes. And for me, obviously, the changes made a big difference.

How did your classic live albums come about?

Frampton: When we came to do that record, the *Frampton* record right before it had been reasonably successful; we'd sold about 250,000 copies. But we didn't want to push our luck with a double live album, so we mixed a single live album, which was only five tracks. It did not include "Show Me the Way" or "Baby I Love Your Way." And we played that to Jerry Moss, Mr. M of A&M. He just looked at us from over the console and said, "Where's the rest?"

Why hadn't you included those two songs?

Frampton: Because we had only just started doing them—remember, this was the tour that was supposedly promoting *Frampton*. And we hadn't quite gotten them down at Winterland, where the show was recorded. So we recorded more nights: "Show Me the Way" came from Long Island, and "Baby" came from Plattsburgh, New York, the college there. We re-recorded "Doobie Wah" at the Marin Civic Center. Then Chris Kimsey and I mixed the whole thing in two sessions, a couple of weeks to start and then probably another two weeks to mix the other stuff.

Carlos: The original idea for our album was that it would

come out only in Japan. The Sony people were like, we'll tape three shows and you guys make a mix and send us a tape and we'll put it out. They thought it would make a nice souvenir for our Japanese fans, and CBS/Japan was splitting into Epic and Columbia Sony, two separate companies, so *Budokan* was going to be Epic/Sony's debut and Dylan's *At Budokan* was going to be Columbia/Sony's debut. It wasn't really in the plans to make a live album for the U.S. We'd cut *Heaven Tonight* in January and done the Japan tour in the middle of April, and then in the fall we mixed *Budokan* and *Dream Police*, which was gonna be our fourth album.

Were there problems with the recording process itself?

Carlos: Oh, yeah. The Japanese guys came in after sound check—in Japan you do the sound check, you take a dinner break, and you do the show at about six or six-thirty—and while we were at the dinner break they came in and miked everything. We never even saw these guys, the engineers and stuff. They put one mic between my two rack toms instead of recording each one—goofy things like that happened. The bass low end was aiming the wrong way and they set it up that way for three nights, so there was a lot of sonic difficulties we had on the album.

So what happened when you heard the results?

Carlos: We listened to the tapes in L.A. with Tom Werman and he just said, "This is terrible—go rent a theater like Kiss did and just redo your live album." See, for *Alive II*, Kiss didn't like the tapes they'd made at the Forum in L.A.—we were on tour with them at that time, in '77—so they went into the Capitol Theater in Passaic, New Jersey, the next week and recut the tracks in front of nobody. Anyway, after Werman turned it down, we called Jack Douglas and he helped us find bass where no bass existed. The bass sounded like a tin can and he'd compress and flange it, whatever, do his Jack Douglas magic—and it really is magic. We did a few minor patches; they really jump out of the mix. There are two bars of "Come On Come On," a couple of solos at the end of "Ain't That a Shame," a couple of guitar licks there, and a couple of vocal lines on "Clock Strikes Ten."

Frampton: For us, the microphone had been knocked to the side of the bass drum, so the bass drum was very muffled-sounding; instead of the mic facing the skin, it was facing the side of the stage. There were two other occasions where we didn't have enough mic or tracks. On "Show Me The Way" I moved from my Les Paul to a clean sound going through a [Fender] Twin Reverb with a Strat. They didn't move the '57 over to the Twin Reverb, so it didn't make it to the track. And on "I Wanna Go to the Sun," Bob Morrow's piano didn't make it to the track either, so we had to replace that.

There's one thing I have to say here. There was some engineer from Los Angeles who supposedly popped in the studio when we were mixing at Electric Lady. And when you are taking numbers from different nights, you have to take some applause from each night and put it together so when you do the crossfade between the tracks it [sounds smooth.] And this one guy was possibly there when either the piano or the rhythm guitar from "Show Me The Way" was being replaced, and he went away saying that the whole album was done in the studio and the audience was added and all this. A lot of people have asked me about it since and they've even said it on the radio. And it's so unfounded! Because if you listen to the level of the audience, there's no way that we could have replaced that. Our rule was, if it made it to the tape, you keep it, if it didn't,

Photo: Andrew Kent

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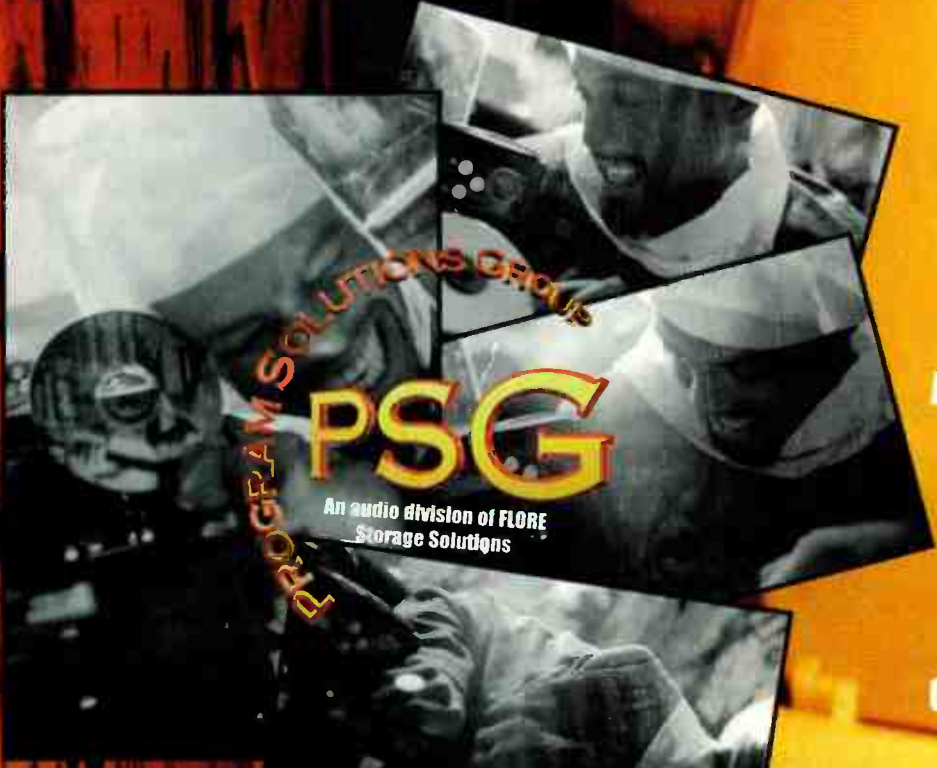
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A young artist documents the challenges and rewards of doing her first live recording.

BY SAM SHABER

If Eric Clapton makes a live CD, people listen to see how their favorite songs change in concert. If Ani DiFranco makes a live CD, people put it on the stereo and re-live the energy they feel at her shows. If the Spice Girls made a live CD, people might buy it to see if they can actually sing.

But what happens if Sam Shaber makes a live CD? If I were famous and already had a long studio discography, that would be one thing. However, last time I checked, I wasn't famous, and thirteen of the fourteen songs I'd want to play in my live set would be recorded for the first time. I have been touring pretty extensively since the release of my debut effort, *In the Bunker*, though, and somehow the live format feels like the way to go for the follow-up album. Plus, it's cheaper to record live than in the studio.

A live recording is a strange animal. To me, one of the most attractive aspects of playing live is the element of spontaneity—the act of taking songs that have been carved out in a certain way and doing something new or experimental with them. Music is mutable—that's one of the wonders of it—but to take that quality and capture it in a recording creates an absolute version, a new standard.

LIVE
RECORDING

Over the past four months I've recorded four shows in New York for an upcoming album. Originally I had set up only two gigs, at CB's Gallery and the Bitter End—clubs where I play often and whose names I thought would look good on an album cover. My idea was to have the album document one show, from beginning to end. "I play these songs all the time," I thought. "How hard can this be?" When I decided which of the two shows to keep, I would stand out in front of the chosen club, get my picture taken, slap it on the cover, call it *Live at* . . ., and be done with it.

Ah, the naiveté. . . .

THE Basics

The idea of doing a live album was intimidating, and I thought I would never be able to do it alone. So I decided that I needed a producer. I found one who had a wonderful résumé, filled with artists I would love to get to know and possibly open for. He had great confidence in what he could do for me. He gave me very good advice about what to say to the engineer I would use for the live recording. And when I had finished all my tracking, I would hand the tapes over to him and he would mix them and get them back to me.

The problem lay in the idea that I would hand the tapes over. I timidly asked if I could be part of the mixdown process, but he assured me that I would only be wasting time by asking for more guitar here or less audience there, and that his twenty years of experience gave him a solid knowledge of how to do a live album. He also explained that I could fix almost any moment from the live recording with digital editing and overdubbing or adding instruments once in the studio. And, he added, until he knew exactly what needed to be done, it would be impossible to estimate the cost.

All of this made me uneasy. Though impressed with his credentials, I realized how important it was that I be completely involved in my work and not feel as though I was in the way. It was, after all, my record, my label, my project.

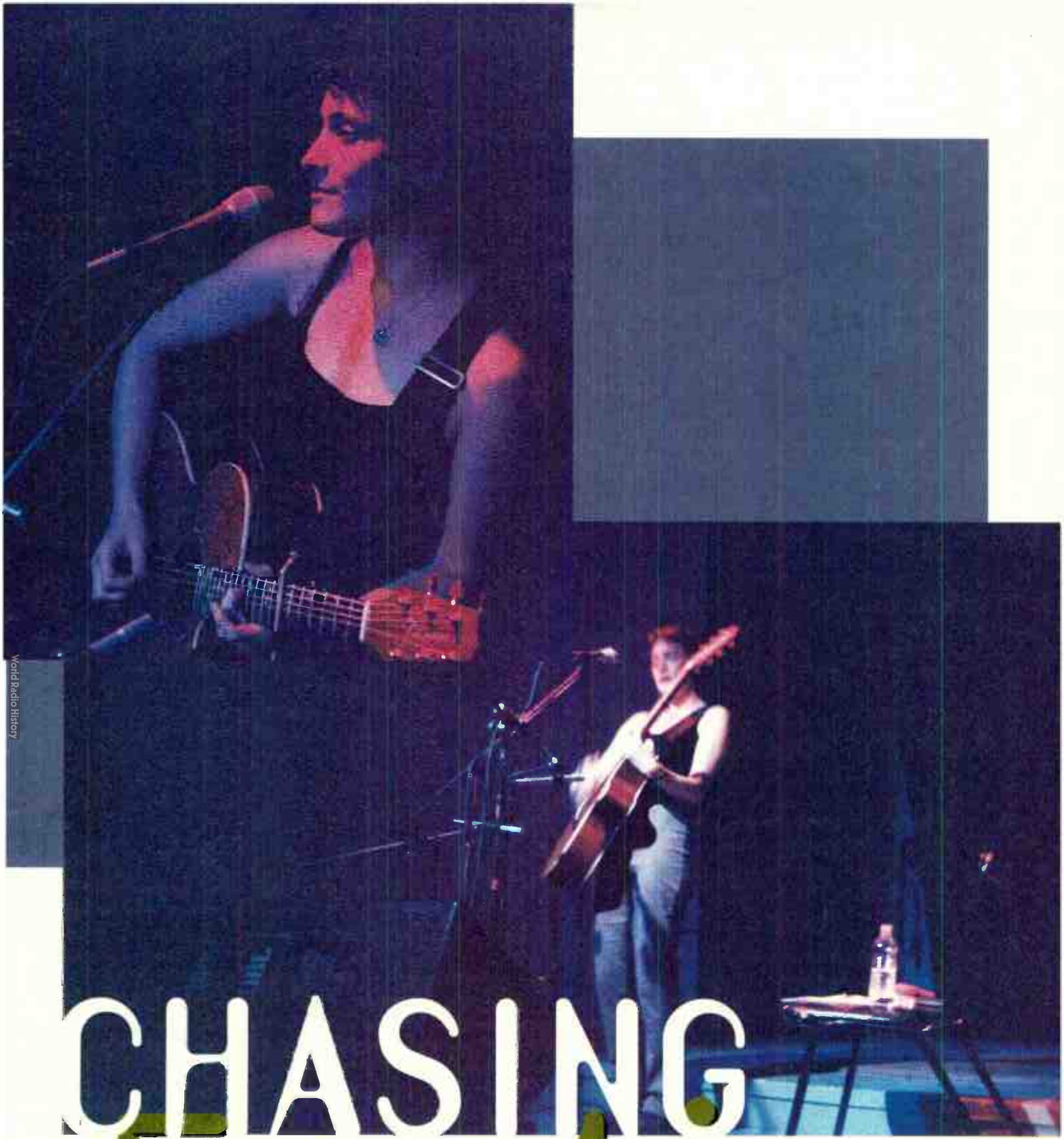
So after taking a deep breath and consulting with friends who suggested I read my own article in *Musician* ("How to Produce Your Own CD," Business, Jan. '99), which explained how important it is to be comfortable with the people you work with, I decided not to use him. He had, however, given me some valuable information about how to set up for live recording, which helped me realize that it's not rocket science. The best single lesson was to get as dry a recording as possible, avoiding any effects or compression while tracking—this ensures the most flexibility later on when mixing.

For microphones, I decided to go with the same setup I had used for my first album: an AKG C414 for my vocal, which worked well to combat certain midrange idiosyncrasies in my voice and provided a nice warm tone; for the guitar, a Shure SM81 and a Neumann KM 84 on the neck and the soundhole, respectively; and for the audience, two Shure SM58s. I had to rent everything but the 58s from a place in Hell's Kitchen called Audioforce.

The first show would be at CB's Gallery on August 25. I learned that they have a studio in the basement; during live recordings, all the lines are split to the live engineer at the board upstairs and the recording engineer (both of whom would be CB's employees) down in the studio. I knew that CB's has some of the best live engineers in the city, so I was confident in their ability, and their combined rate of $135 per show seemed more than reasonable. Plus I now understood the importance of getting the recording as dry as possible, so I could tell them how I wanted it done.

I spent hours making a set list that I hoped would work for both the audience at the show and the album. It was during this process that I realized I would not be able to get an entire album out of a single show: The typical club set in New York runs from 45 to 50 minutes, which wasn't enough time for fourteen songs. So I picked ten and set to work on the order. Only one of these

Photos: Sonja Pacho



CHASING rfection

tunes, "Invisible Woman," was a repeat from the first album, since I felt I hadn't done justice to it the first time around.

I worried about intonation. I didn't want to waste tons of time tuning up between songs, but I was bound to be more careful with it than I am at most gigs, since this would be forever. To save time, I decided to play the first tune in standard tuning on a friend's borrowed Martin and have my Takamine ready to go in the altered tuning of the second song. It was all going to be perfect.

TAKE One

In fact, a ballad called "Perfect" was the title of that first song, however ironic that might seem for a live recording. The performance was fine, although when I went to start the second song, I picked up the Takamine and didn't think to check the tuning. At the first dramatic downstroke, I learned that it had gone slightly off in the few minutes it spent getting acclimated to the air conditioning from the hot August evening outside. That take, an anthem called "All of This," would be unusable for the album.

> "I TIMIDLY asked if I could be part of the mixdown process, but [the producer] assured me that I would only be wasting time."

After this moment, it was hard to care how the rest of the song went, but I tried to keep paramount the fact that this was a show, not just a recording session. I had made the decision not to stop or do any songs over—better to be imperfect than contrived. I've been to live recordings where the performers stop and start, and use pop filters and huge microphones; it's a unique experience in its own right, but it feels like sitting in a recording studio instead of watching a show. I wanted to be as concerned with the quality of the audience's experience as with the quality of the recording, and I didn't want anyone paying money to watch a tense recording session. Besides, I had another gig to fill in the gaps.

After the show, I felt very good. I thought I must have at least five songs that were keepers for the album. I paid the engineers and took my soundboard cassette home to check it all out in primitive form.

LIKE, Something in the Air

I've never been good about listening to tapes of my shows. Or really, I should say that I've never been interested. Some performers listen to everything they do and pinpoint what worked and what didn't. I've always kept a written journal instead. The first thing I realized in listening to the CB's cassette was how many times I said "like" in my banter. I wanted some of this banter to go onto the album, and I thought I had come out with some good stories, but on tape I thought I sounded at times like a hyperactive Valley Girl, and that would never do. I even wondered how the audience could stand it.

There was another problem. Will Quinnell, a friend from my day-job days at Sony Music Studios, was transferring the information from my gig from the Alesis ADAT tapes to DA-88 so we could play it back in his home studio. I was excited when he called, but then the bomb dropped.

"Air conditioning," he said.

"Air conditioning?" I asked.

"You can hear the air conditioning in the room," Will continued. "I think it was picked up in every mic. You won't be able to use any of the quiet parts."

So no Valley Girl speeches after all.

Still, an energetic ditty titled "Bomb Threat in New Rochelle" seemed to be loud enough to drum out the hum of the air system. So out of ten songs, I had one. This was going to be a lot harder than I thought.

Still another problem arose in that the standard length for ADAT tapes is 42 minutes—not long enough to contain a whole show, even in New York, and the last two tunes hadn't been recorded. I would have to stop at the next show so the engineer could switch tapes. Just to be safe, I booked another show at CB's for November 12.

I continued my search for a producer and tracked down Kenny White, a producer/musician who works with Dee Carstensen, Holly Palmer, Cheryl Wheeler, and others. He was very positive about my material, but he confused me when he asked, "Why do you need a producer?" He explained that a producer was integral mainly in arranging tunes for a recording, and since this was a solo project, there was no need.

"I just wanted to get someone in who really knows how to do this," I said.

He prompted me for a few ideas about how I wanted it to sound. I cited some recordings, most prominently Patty Larkin's *Live in the Square*, which was recorded at Boston's Sanders Theater in 1990. I've spent the last seven years with this album; it has inspired me both musically and technically. In fact, it was my first musical image when I decided to record a live album.

"Well, I don't want you to think I'm not interested, but it doesn't sound like you need a producer," he said.

"But I don't trust myself," I admitted.

"Obviously," White replied. "But I think what you need is a great engineer who can bring the sound you're envisioning to life."

The name he gave me was Michael Golub. I called him and asked if I was dreaming to think I could get the type of sound produced in a large theater like the Sanders from my recordings in small rooms like CB's Gallery.

"Of course not," Golub replied. "It's all about creating illusions. Which recording are you talking about?" I told him about Larkin's album. "Oh, Patty's great," he said. "I've known her for about twenty years."

My jaw dropped. Golub continued in his cheerful tone: "I've got that live album somewhere. Let me dig it out and give it a listen."

TAKE Two

I didn't think about the recording much over the next few weeks. I was going on tour out west and in New England, and I was very busy confirming and promoting those shows. I did have a gig scheduled at the Fast Folk Café in New York on September 17, but I wasn't planning to record it. The Fast Folk is a far cry from the comparatively cavernous feeling of CB's

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helping my odds. I tried to warm up my voice by humming scales at a volume below that of the subway racket. Gazing out into the tunnels, I could see my bleary eyes staring back in the window.

It turned out to be the best warm-up I could have done. I included in my set list some of the tunes I would record that night at CB's Gallery. And seeing five hundred faces having a good time was inspirational.

Once again I had to pick up the microphones. Audioforce didn't carry that Røde NT1, which Chris had brought to the Bitter End, but after learning that the NT1 is a condenser mic like the 81, I rented two 81s and, again, the Beta 87 for my vocals.

Instead of practicing in the afternoon, I decided to take a nap. The morning excitement had caught up to me, and I was very sluggish. I lay back on the couch and tried to meditate on a set list, but never having been one for meditating, I soon fell asleep, awakening just in time to get to CB's for sound check.

CB's engineer Chris Lewis would run both the house sound and the recording gear, as he had just brought the deck upstairs from the studio in the basement. He decided to run everything into the ADAT first, then out to the board, thus avoiding any splitting of lines. He also took a different approach to miking my guitar, putting the first 81 out from the twelfth fret, with the second pointing to the very bottom of the guitar at my right elbow. This was great, because it gave me more freedom of movement. He recorded a bit, and I listened back, checking very carefully for air conditioning. I went home to write the set list and change my clothes, bringing my guitar along to do some last-minute practicing.

When I got back to the club and began to unpack for my set, I realized that my patch cords and tuner were missing; I must have left them at home. CB's could provide patch cords, but not a tuner—so the tuning for this last recorded show would have to be done by ear.

"THE PERFORMANCE is more important than the technicalities. If you mess something up, but the energy is there, it'll be a great recording."

The set I wrote was interesting, with songs which for one reason or another had not come out the way I wanted them to. I started with a song called "Sometimes It Hurts," which had been on the list for the Bitter End show but, frankly, I had forgotten to play it—which is why I made sure to put it first this time. In its angst-ridden way, it served to quiet the audience. ("Some words sound better in the rain/Sometimes it hurts to hear my name.")

The second song, "Quaalude III" (a T. S. Eliot poem, "Prelude III," set to music), has a difficult guitar part for me, but it went relatively smoothly. I managed to stay relaxed during the "Rooftop," the fastest song I've written, with a double-time strum throughout. Even "Perfect" went almost perfectly. I found that I was even able to discover things in some of the tunes as I played them, probably because I was able to keep my concentration together. In fact, my concentration may have been a little too intense; I barely said a word between each song, as though I was afraid to let go of the control.

The last two songs of the set were the trickiest. Maribel Garcia's brother Horacio had come to the show; this would be the first time he would hear "Rain and Sunshine," the song about his sister, performed live. As I made the introduction and explained some of the story, I felt his eyes on me, and it made me nervous. But in the end, I think it helped me to really feel the emotions of the song and relax into it, instead of tensing up about the chords and vocals.

Then it was time for "All of This," a song I had never managed to record to my satisfaction. Now it was my last chance to get it onto an album. But it had been a strong set so far, and my confidence was high. My voice was primed from all the singing I'd been doing since nine o'clock that morning, and I started in with a solid first verse and chorus.

"Somewhere in all of this," I sang, "I have found a . . ."

Twang!

The G string snapped.

I have never broken a string mid-song. It's happened between songs as I've changed tunings, but never during a song—and certainly never during a final recording of a song I really needed to get right. But this was where having an audience came in handy. It was suddenly so important to make the moment comfortable for everyone that I couldn't let myself get upset. I told a dumb joke as I threaded the string through the classical bridge of my guitar. (Thank God I don't have to deal with pegs!) In a moment so short that even I was impressed, we were off and running again. And then . . .

Twang!!

This time it was the high E string. I couldn't think of another joke, so I decided to just concentrate on replacing the string. I hope at least I looked relaxed.

Looking back, I think that in a strange way breaking two strings made me even more determined to enjoy the song. Sure enough, at the end of the evening, I felt amazed and satisfied that I had somehow stayed in tune and managed to nail all seven songs. I was *done!* And when Chris Lewis walked up to me with my tuner and two patch cords in his hand, which he'd just found near the mixer, I was able to laugh about it.

This may not be the end of the story. Now begins the task of listening to the tapes, including audience response and pre-song banter, and picking the best of everything. Michael Golub has explained to me that if I have a great take of a song from one gig but a lame audience response, we can "fly in" a better audience from one of the other tapes. I can even fix pitch problems in otherwise good vocal takes by doing some overdubs in the studio. I can make the whole thing sound like one continuous show, or I can fade in and out between tunes.

I don't know how much of this I want to get into, being a purist at heart. But I'm not holding myself to anything. The main point is to get as much life on tape as possible, while maintaining tight, well-performed versions of these new songs.

No big deal. Just perfection.

Contributors: Sam Shaber chronicled the recording of her debut CD in our January '99 issue. For information on her performances and sale of her albums, call (212) 330-7927.

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You've heard the music Now read the stories behind

4 CL LI Rec

We know, we know: Some of the greatest live albums ever made aren't even mentioned in this issue. It's not that we don't want to tip our hats to those artists, producers, engineers— and, yes, audiences—who worked together to create all the classic concert discs. Problem is, there are just so many of these records in the catalog—far more, once you start listing them, than you might think.

And so, on behalf of the *Musician* staff, here's a total of five (more or less) thumbs up to Dylan for the *Albert Hall* former bootleg, to Cream for *Wheels of Fire*, to Johnny Cash for *Folsom Prison*, the Orb for *Glastonbury*, Jimi for *Band of Gypsies*, James Brown for *Live at the Apollo*, the Chemical Brothers for *Heavenly Sunday Social Club*, Kiss for *Alive!*, Zappa for all kinds of stuff, Ellington for *Live at Newport*, "Charlie Chan" for *Live at Massey Hall*, the Talking Heads for *Stop Making Sense*, the Band for *Last Waltz*, Miles for *Live at the Fillmore*, Evgeny Kissin for *Carnegie Hall* . . .

LIVE RECORDING

You get the picture. To pick the best of this bountiful crop is a fruitless exercise. Instead, I asked the staff to come up with a list of their favorite live CDs and look into the stories behind them. Some of their choices proved surprising, and much of what they dug up casts these memorable albums in a light that can best be appreciated by readers who have been there themselves, up on the stage, squinting into the glare. Ready? The tape is rolling . . . —*Robert L. Doerschuk*

THE WHO LIVE AT LEEDS

Live at Leeds

The Who
(MCA)

Few, if any, live albums have done a better job of hitting the listener right between the eyes with the full force of a rock band performing at its peak than the Who's epochal *Live at Leeds*. The original *Leeds* album contained only six songs—"Young Man Blues," "Substitute," "Summertime Blues," "Shakin' All Over," "My Generation," and "Magic Bus"—but who cares? Those six

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ordinGs

songs delivered more than enough high-testosterone ferocity to fill the 1,500-capacity hall with a devastating sound that clearly defined the band's "maximum R&B" style.

After many attempts to record the band live to two-track during an extensive tour of the States in 1969 (all of which were deemed failures by Pete Townshend and, for the most part, quickly destroyed), sound engineer Bob Pridden recorded the Who's Feb. 14, 1970 show onto an eight-track, 1" tape machine that had been set up in the kitchen beneath the auditorium at Leeds University.

Unfortunately, as with any early live recording, glitches were common, and *Leeds* had its share. According to Pridden and Jon Astley (who remixed and remastered 1995's extended fourteen-song reissue of *Leeds* with Andy Macpherson), some of the split-fed "leads" running from the stage mics weren't properly connected, which resulted in intermittent pops that rendered four of the eight tracks (kick drum, snare, bass, and guitar) unusable for much of the event; the concert lasted more than ninety minutes longer than the length of the original record.

Thankfully, when the technology needed to declick the corrupted tracks became available, Astley and Macpherson jumped at the opportunity to fix many of the previously unlistenable performances. After baking the original analog tape to prevent it from shedding, Astley recorded the eight original tracks onto a Mitsubishi 32-track recorder, then recorded an additional eight tracks from there against time code onto a hard disk recorder. Using Cedar Audio's DDC-1 Declicker to fix the existing clicks, Astley was able to bring the damaged tracks back in time when necessary during the remix process.

"On the original recording, you'll hear the clicks, and this is in fact why Pete couldn't use 'Heaven and Hell' and any of the *Tommy* stuff [when Townshend mixed the original record]," recalls Astley. "'A Quick One . . .' was very bad, 'Tattoo' was very bad, 'Fortune Teller' was very bad. He couldn't use any of those on the original recording because of all the clicks. It was amazing. The bass drum track on 'Heaven and Hell' was actually clicking all the way through the song, and I guess people heard it in the audience—maybe that's why they're so quiet."

With all the tracks finally made usable, Astley and Macpherson set about remixing the entire concert; on isolating the individual tracks they were delighted, if not surprised and even amused, by much of what they heard. "There was only one track of ambience," says Astley, "and it's not a very nice-sounding ambience, but it's funny because the record *needs* it to make it the way the record is. You wouldn't choose that kind of ambience on a live recording. It's a very, very odd-sounding record, and that [ambient track] is part of the charm. That's probably why it doesn't sound like anything else."

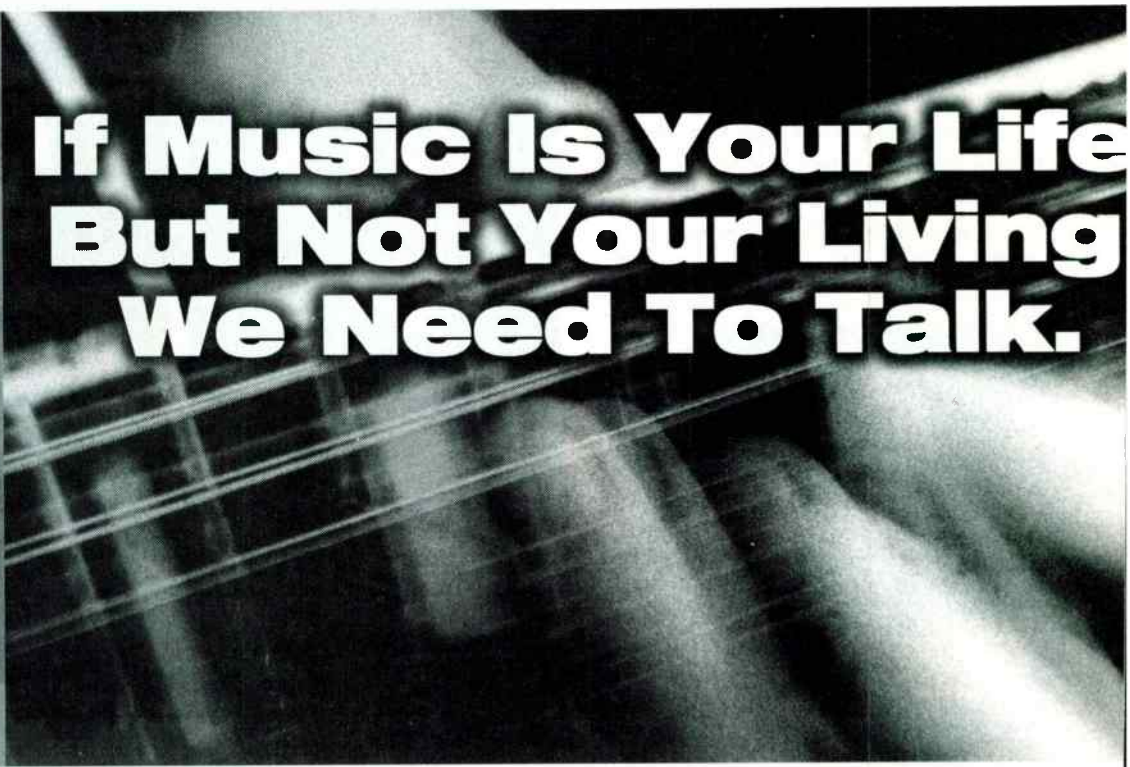
Pridden goes a step further, believing that this quirky ambience *and* mic bleeding are what make the record sound so fantastic. "The leakage is horrible," he says, "but when it all comes together, it's like the teeth of a comb. Bear in mind, they were *very* loud, and Cris Kirkwood of the Meat Puppets. Stretching the rules a bit, Cobain and Novaselic snuck a couple of small amps onstage, but they were hardly noticeable, sonically or visually. ("I think some of the flowers helped to cover them up," Litt laughs.) Grohl's last-minute decision to play the set with brushes and *Hot-Rod* bamboo sticks proved to be momentous. "It was not really thought out that much," Litt remembers. "But there was a lot of room for the bass signal when the drums aren't being played hard, so it gave a good sound to Krist's acoustic bass guitar [a Gibson hollowbody acoustic/electric model]; it also enabled a lot of space for the vocals and harmonies."

An hour later, the performance was over. No retakes were done, no overdubs made, and the audience filed out, by many accounts, stunned by what they had witnessed. "The last number was the Leadbelly tune, and it was just so gripping, one of the most absolutely amazing moments ever recorded," says Litt. The torture in Cobain's voice is utterly primal, evoking a pain as tangible and real as Lennon's bloodcurdling "Mama don't go/Daddy come home" two decades earlier.

"When they finished the show, they were really excited," Litt remembers. "They kind of huddled with me afterwards and said, 'Should we do more?' Because they were having a good time; they were having a better time than they thought they were going to have, in my opinion. And I remember Kurt saying, 'No, this is perfect. Let's stop here.'"

Five short months later, of course, it all stopped for good, and Litt and the remaining band members faced the difficult task of assembling the album posthumously. "I didn't work extensively with Kurt in the studio, but I knew he was somewhat of a perfectionist. He didn't belabor things, but he knew when something was right. It was very hard to make decisions on material after his passing, but the *Unplugged* performance was undeniable. Plus, the band members and the record company and I knew that he was so excited by how it had come out, so it was an easier decision to release it." According to Litt, the record embodies the entire incredible performance that evening—even down to the song order—with nothing added or subtracted later, except for the deletion of a little between-song banter.

It is rare when an artist has the courage to redefine himself; rarer still when it is done in full view of the entire world. *MTV Unplugged in New York* captures an astonishing moment in time. It stands alone, a stark memorial to Kurt Cobain's troubled life.—***Howard Massey***



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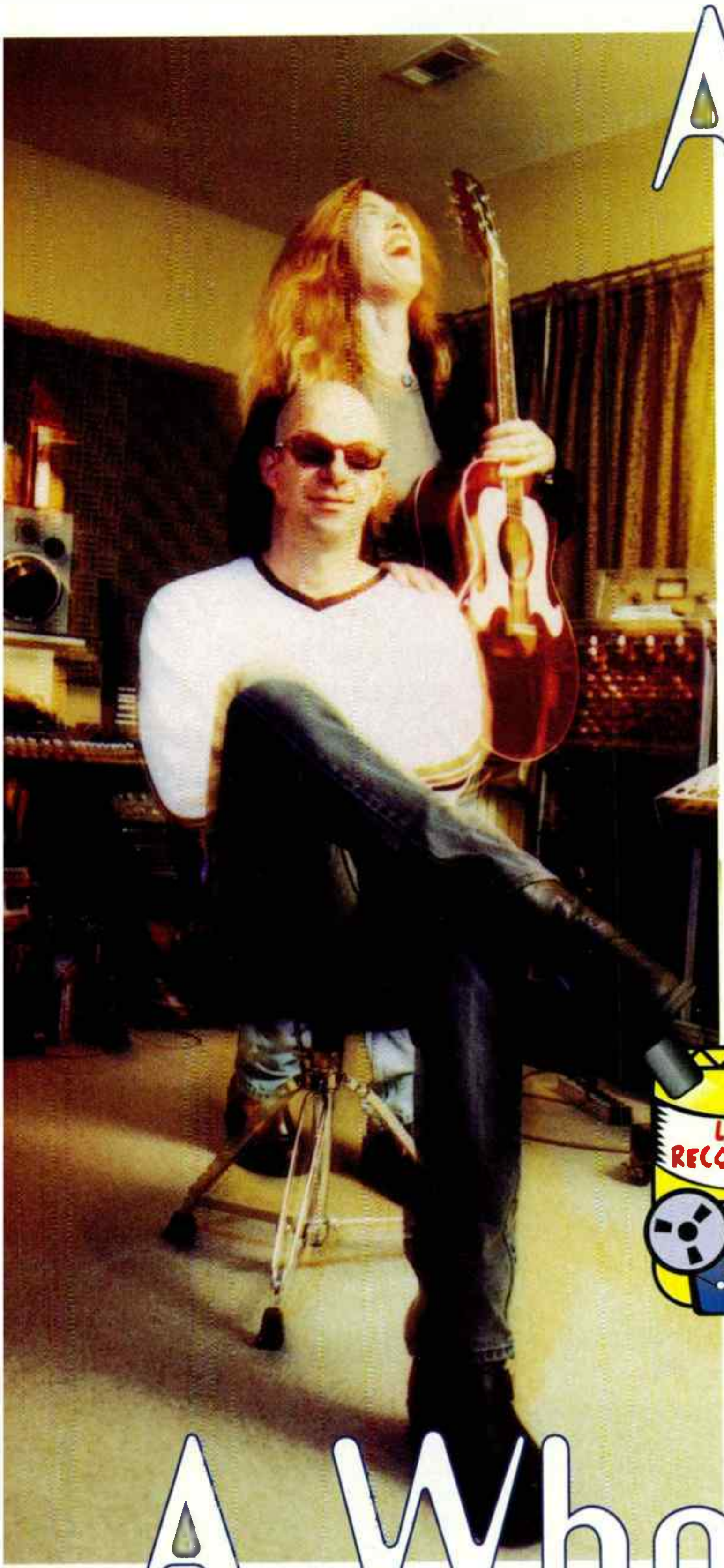


Photo: Allen Clark/Thunder Image Group

Kenny Greenberg and Scotch Ralston find similar challenges in making two very different live records.

BY JASON ZASKY

We've all heard the old adage, "It's not what you know, but who you know." It may be true in most areas of life, but in the case of live recording it's the inverse that's relevant. While knowing the right people may enable you to record for less money, *what* you know will prove even a more important role in whether your recording will be worth a damn.

To further your knowledge on the process of recording live, I sat down with Scotch Ralston (seated right, with 311 lead singer Nick Hexum)—who recorded, mixed, and produced *311 Live* (Capricorn)—and Kenny Greenberg (left), who produced and played guitar on his wife Ashley Cleveland's *You Are There* (Cadence/204). Despite the stylistic differences between the two artists—Cleveland describes herself as a "rock & roll gospel singer," while 311 plays a loud brand of hip-hop/funk/jazz-influenced hard rock—both producers had similar experiences recording their respective albums. And while both records were recorded primarily in mid-size or larger venues, their advice is relevant to rooms of any size. In fact, the success of a recording is in large part determined by what you do *before* and *after* you roll tape.

LIVE RECORDING

How did your live albums come together?

Greenberg: In our case, we were out on tour opening for a bigger act [Amy Grant], and halfway through the tour the soundman said, "Here are your DATs of the multitracks." It was like, "What multitracks?" They happened to be recording all the shows so we got all these multitrack recordings of us playing live, and that gave us the idea for a live record.

A Whole Lot t

Lot Different

Ralston: That's always the best way. When someone else is recording, just pick up on that. When we decided to try some live recording, we started out carrying around an ADAT and an eight-track digital recorder in our sound rack. Those recordings were fairly good, but the only problem is that the EQ you would use to record something and the EQ you would use to make something sound good in a live environment would be completely different. So the recordings turned out okay, but we knew when we actually decided to do a live album we would probably have to pay an outside company to come in with recording devices we didn't have with us.

What kind of a budget did you have to record 311 Live?

Ralston: Our budget was basically, "Hey, spend some money, but keep it as small as you can." We investigated our options and found that it was most cost-efficient for us to hire a local recording truck. It pulls up behind the stadium, records you, gives you the tapes, and leaves. Fortunately, by the time we did that, our concerts started to get a little bigger and we could afford that. But I don't think it's too outrageously expensive.

And for You Are There?

Greenberg: We didn't have a budget and so our deal was basically done on a favor basis. We happened to get these live recordings, and then we did a TV show, and the producer [of the TV show], Michael McNamara, let us use the tapes, and we had a couple of acoustic vocal performances that didn't cost anything to do. Then Richard Dodd, who's a mixer here in Nashville, as a favor to me assembled it all and dumped it to 24 track . . .

Ralston: Well, you lucked out.

Greenberg: . . . In the process he said, "I've just got one free day, and I'm not gonna really mix it, I'm just going to assemble it and dump it over to 24 track and push up the faders." But he's a great guy and started tweaking around a little bit. And I used three of the mixes he did; he just spent a half an hour on each tune. Then I did some sessions for this other guy, and he had a little mix room and a couple free days, and I said, "Well, what if we trade and I bring my tapes over?" So he mixed those and then for the remaining things we needed to mix we paid an engineer. I spent a total of about $3,200 for studio time, mixing, and multitrack tapes. In mastering I spent another $3,000, so I

he Same

Ralston: Nothing, really. It was, "Hey, we're recording tonight, so play good [*sic*]." They just did their thing and I did mine. I didn't really emphasize that we were recording, otherwise it might be, "Oh, gosh, we're recording and I'm going to suck."

For the most part, Kenny, you guys weren't even conscious of being recorded.

Greenberg: Yeah, and for us the best stuff was from when we didn't know we were recording, because we didn't care.

Let's talk a little more about budgets. Scotch was explaining what he would do if he had no budget. Well, what if you had a minimal budget? Let's put it at a couple different levels.

Ralston: With a minimal budget you could go with an ADAT or a Roland VS-1680, something that's portable that you can record quality on. I would interface that with the live recording console and just record directly from the microphones. That's pretty cost-effective. All you have is the cost of the unit itself, but you can get ADATs pretty darn cheap these days. Also, once you have it on ADAT you can go somewhere else and mix it. That's how we did it for a long time, and we got some pretty good performances that way.

And the next step up would be to go with the truck?

Ralston: Yeah, the next step up would probably be the truck. I don't know if there's anything in between I can think of right off the bat.

Let's say you're at the point where you're finished recording, you're finished mixing. Mastering a live recording is a big production, isn't it?

Greenberg: Most of the money we spent was on mastering.

Ralston: Yeah, if you're going to release it, you usually have to master it. That's kind of a standard.

Greenberg: We found that with multiple shows, and also with multiple mixes, that to get a cohesive professional product we had to spend three days in mastering. And once you compress and EQ—especially with a live thing—all the crowd noise and white noise affects it. I was surprised by how much it affected it. So mastering was a real struggle.

Ralston: We had to master three separate times to get everything to match up.

If you record, say, six different shows and use all different equipment, was a problem getting the consistency between all the recordings? It sounds like you may have to spend more on the back end if you record a lot of shows.

> "If it's something you're going to release, spend the extra dime. If it's... a demo, save as much money as you can."
>
> —Scotch Ralston

Ralston: We concentrated on the mix on trying to match up the sound between shows, but we still had to master a lot to get it to match up.

Greenberg: And then we would try to compare them to studio albums we liked. It completely didn't work. Eventually we just stopped doing it.

Did you try to do that with other live albums too?

Greenberg: I eventually went to the Stones *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!*, also because we did a Stones song ["Gimme Shelter"] on the record.

What about you, Scotch?

Ralston: The whole time we were doing ours, the band kept saying, "Listen to the Bad Brains album!" I myself, didn't have any particular album in mind. We just went with what we thought was right. When we put our tapes up, we found it sounded a lot better than we thought it would, so we didn't have to search too far to find something to reference.

What kind of advice do you have for bands who've never recorded before?

Ralston: Rehearse before you record, and plan ahead which songs you want to get the best recording on. If there are any in particular you like the most, try to contour your set so those songs come when you're warmed up and have the energy flowing. Usually, [with] the songs at the beginning, there are problems getting everything together with levels and the vibe.

Greenberg: Also, try to go for as much separation as you can get. In retrospect, I would probably not have had the guitars quite as loud. Guitars often record better when there's smaller amps. Everybody has that same experience.

Ralston: Yeah, but tell that to the guitar player [*laughter*].

What would you do differently if you were doing your albums again?

Greenberg: There's a guy named Buddy Miller who plays with Emmylou Harris, and he recorded their live record, and he was saying that once he realized they were really going for it he got a bunch of really good mic pre's and carried them around. I would get some really good mic pre's to try and get better quality in the sound.

Ralston: That's a good one. In retrospect, my big change would be the placement and the attention we paid to the room mics. I'd say, between shows that was the biggest difference, and the only thing that may have been lacking on a few shows is the sound we got on our room mics.

Any suggestions about placing room mics?

Ralston: That's one good thing about going to a venue before you record, is to find a good place to put the mics. Somewhere where there's a good stereo image, but don't put them in the empty spots in the house or they'll sound really weird. Try to put them where people will be.

*Where they're hopefully going to be [*laughter*].*

Ralston: Yeah, "Imagine people here!"

Final thoughts?

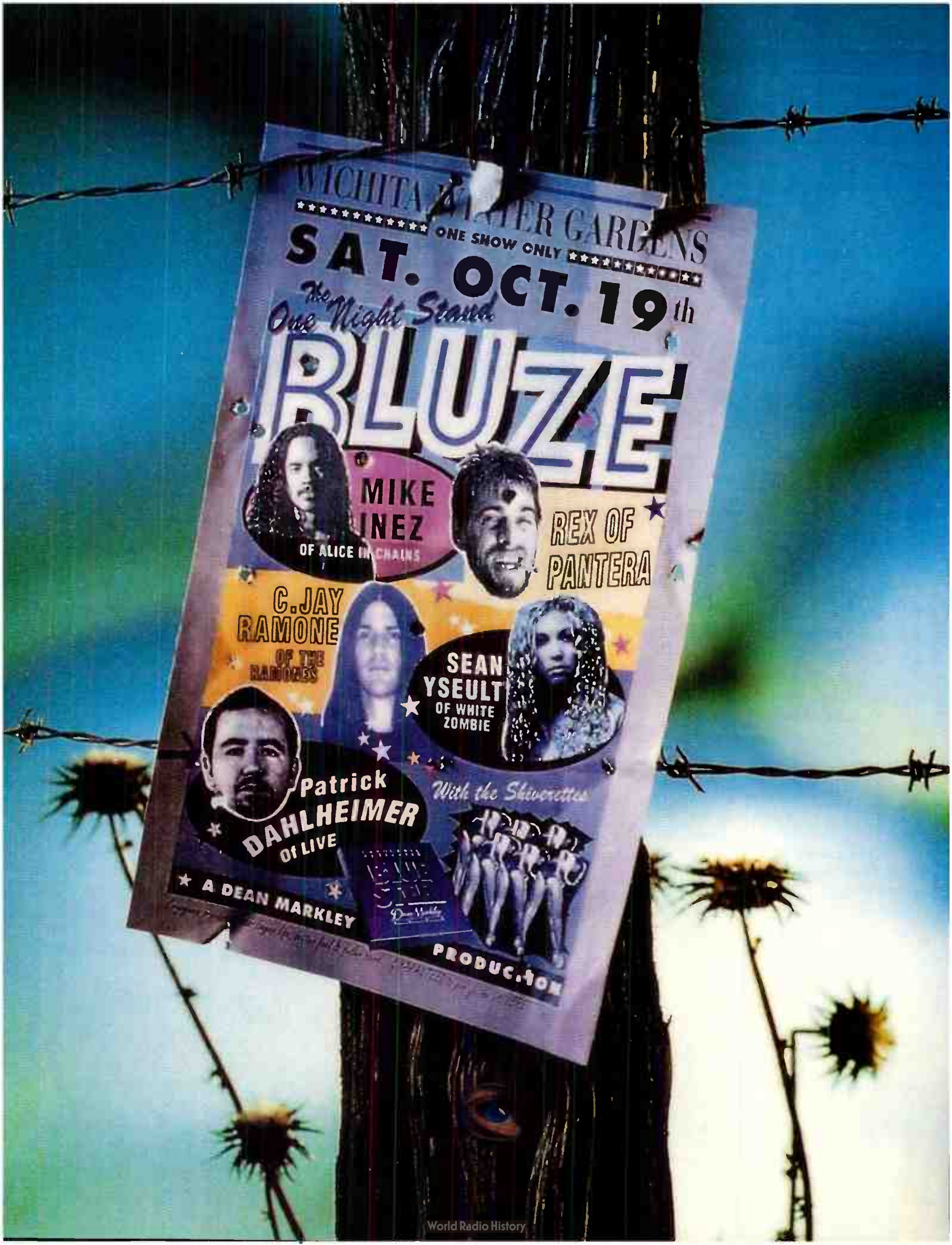
Ralston: If it's something you're going to release, spend the extra dime. If it's something that's going to be a limited release, like a demo, save your money as much as you can.

Would either of you like to record other bands live?

Ralston: If I'm going to do recording, I'd prefer to be in a studio, to be honest.

Greenberg: I don't think anyone wants to spend a lot of time making live recordings.

Ralston: Yeah, it's tough. You're fighting the elements. You have to have a big slab of glass between the recorder and the band [*laughter*].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Twelve Steps to Performance Success

How to get the most out of every gig

by peter spellman

There's more to playing a killer gig than plugging in, saying a prayer to the gods of groove, and wailin' away. In fact, the rule for performance is pretty much the same as the rule for success in just about any line of business: It's all about being able to maximize limited resources.

Live performances are one of the most potentially rewarding avenues for bands in terms of networking and exposure. Yet few take full advantage of the opportunities that gigs present. Each live job should be seen as an opportunity to expand your skills, your fan base, and your media contacts and industry relationships. Sound complicated? Don't worry: We've boiled it all down to twelve essential points. Follow them, and you'll not only rock the house—you'll kick your career into a higher gear, and improve your chances for long-term success.

things to do before the show

1. Find out about the room where you're going to play. Know the stage size. Find out what time bands are expected to soundcheck, and to begin and end playing. Learn whether there's a dressing room. Check out the sound and lighting system, if they're provided, and talk to the club's sound tech. If possible, ask other bands who've played the room for tips and pointers. Remember, you're there to perform a show, not worry about all these details once the show begins. Get the right information before the gig, and you'll have much less anxiety while you're onstage.

2. Rehearse your show straight through as if it were the real thing. Your show should be a visual feast as much as an aural banquet, so pay attention to your stage presence as well as your stage sound. Practice any movements or dance steps you're planning to use at the gig. You may also want to hold a full dress rehearsal and have someone snap some photos or shoot a low-budget video of the group, so that you can actually see what the audience will see. This is always educational—and often humbling! But swallow your pride and learn from what you see—remember, you're trying to make the most of this gig.

3. Publicize the show. Print up a bunch of flyers with all pertinent information, including contact number. You're competing with a lot of other events, so you want your flyer to stand out. Use colorful paper and eye-catching graphics. Seek the advice of a friend who's an artist, or go the extra distance and have a professional create a killer

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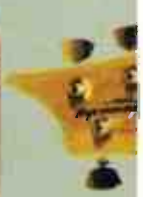


1
MD2
MICRO DIGITAL DELAY
Guyatone
WR2
WAH ROCKER
Guyatone

3
CD-RW5000
Professional

1 Guyatone micro effects series

Guyatone's ultra-compact effects pedals (2 3/4" x 3 7/8" x 1 1/2") are now available in the U.S. and Canada. The five models pictured are the WR-2 Wah Rocker ($89.95), an envelope filter that produces a variety of auto-wah effects; the MD-2 Micro Delay ($129.95), which offers 30-800 ms delay time; the MC-3 Micro Chorus ($99.95), which features chorus and rotary speaker effects; and the TZ-2 Fuzz ($89.95) and HD-2 Harmonic Distortion ($79.95), which provide retro-style fuzz and transistor distortion, respectively. All models are powered via AC adapter or nine-volt battery and feature a heavy-duty stamped aluminum chassis, electronic silent switching, and LED effect indicator. A three-year parts and labor warranty is included. ➤ ***Godlyke Distributing Inc., 328 Mason Ave., Haledon, NJ 07508; (973) 835-2100; www.guyatone.com***

2 HHB Circle 5 studio monitors

Looking for affordably-priced monitors for your studio? Available in both active ($1,399) and passive ($749) versions, the Circle 5 has fluid-cooled soft dome tweeters and an 8" bass driver, which employs a synthetic polymer cone. The cone is mated to an aluminum voice coil, which operates in a field-canceling magnet, enabling the monitors to be used in close proximity to computer and video monitors.

The active version is powered by a two-channel amplifier pack that delivers 120 watts RMS to the bass driver and 60 watts RMS to the tweeter. These monitors utilize a push-pull design, an extra-large toroidal transformer, and long-life capacitors, with low Q point Sallen and Key filters to eliminate ringing in the mid-band. Both versions feature a solid-state polyswitch to protect the tweeter from excessive input. ➤ ***HHB Communications, 626 Santa Monica Blvd., Ste. 110, Santa Monica, CA 90401; (310) 319-1111; www.hhbusa.com***

3 TASCAM CD-RW5000 compact disc recorder

Designed to meet the demand of the growing number of home recording enthusiasts and audio professionals who want to print their own CDs, the CD-RW5000 ($1,299) has the ability to read and/or write to all currently available media, including CD, CD-R, CD-RW, CD-R-DA, and CD-RW-DA. This two-rack-space unit features XLR balanced and RCA unbalanced analog I/O, an AES/EBU digital input, S/PDIF coaxial and optical digital I/O, a sync start function, auto or manual track increment capability, an erase function, and parallel control I/O capability. The CD-RW5000 also has the ability to automatically detect the sample rate of an incoming digital signal, and if necessary will convert that signal to the 44.1 kHz CD standard. ➤ ***TASCAM, 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA 90640; (213) 726-0303; www.tascam.com***

4

ward

6

4 W. Paul Guitars Timeless Timber Collectors model

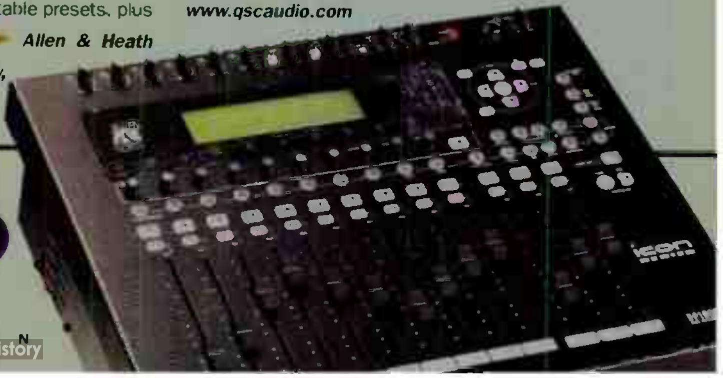
Does wood that has been preserved in ice cold water for a hundred years make for a superior instrument? The folks at W. Paul guitars think so. Recently, they began building limited edition models from Timeless Timber, old-growth virgin timber that was submerged in the frigid waters of Lake Superior for a century, and is now being recovered. William Paul's patented soundport system electrics feature a contoured hollow-body with neck-thru construction. The soundports—which lead into a hollow chamber—are hand-sculpted into the front of the body and designed to maximize sustain. The Collectors model pictured ($9,000) is yellow-phase, yellow-flamed birch, although instruments are also available in birdseye maple, black ash, and red-phase flamed-yellow birch. A maximum of fifty collectors models will be made per year, and production of Standard Timeless Timber models ($6,000) is limited to 150 per annum. Each guitar is hand-signed, dated, serial-numbered, and comes with a certificate of authenticity detailing the history of the wood. If you're experiencing sticker shock, keep in mind that non-Timeless Timber W. Paul guitars are priced in line with what you'd expect from a custom shop. ➤ ***W. Paul Guitars, 1018 Madison St., Waukesha, WI. 53188; (414) 896-7794***

5 Allen & Heath ICON series digital mixers

Designed primarily for live sound applications, the DL1000 ($1,395) and DP1000 ($1,595) are the first two models in A&H's new line of compact digital mixers. Both units feature six mic/line inputs, plus two dual stereo inputs which can double as mono mic inputs. In addition to the LR output, the units provide configurable AB amp outputs, plus monitor, aux, and LR recording outs. Users can program and recall settings in Song patches which can then be sequenced and triggered by footswitch, pushbutton, or MIDI control. A Pause patch sets levels and effects for between-song requirements. Key settings, such as gain, levels, and mutes, are on dedicated controls, including 100mm faders for all inputs and main outputs. Other settings are created and adjusted via rotary controls used in conjunction with a backlit LCD. Also included are two built-in effects processors, with over eighty adjustable presets, plus noise gates and compressors ➤ ***Allen & Heath U.S., 8760 S. Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT 84070; (801) 568-7660***

6 QSC Audio PLX series amplifiers

The introductory models in the new PLX line are the 1202 ($798), 1602 ($1,198), 2402 ($1,498), and 3002 ($1,798). All four are housed in a two-rack-space chassis and deliver 215, 350, 475, and 625 watts per channel (at 8 ohms) respectively, with virtually inaudible hum and noise (-110 dB 20 Hz-20 kHz) and ultra-low distortion performance (.03% THD at rated power into 8 ohms). Proportional-response clip limiters and user selectable low-frequency filters increase usable power and protect your speakers. Standard features include all-metal XLR and 1/4" balanced inputs, Neutrik Speakon and touch-proof binding post outputs, and comprehensive LED indicators, including a three-step signal ladder, clip, protect, bridge-mono, and parallel input mode status. ➤ ***QSC Audio Products, 1675 MacArthur Blvd., Costa Mesa, CA 92626; (714) 754-6175; www.qscaudio.com***



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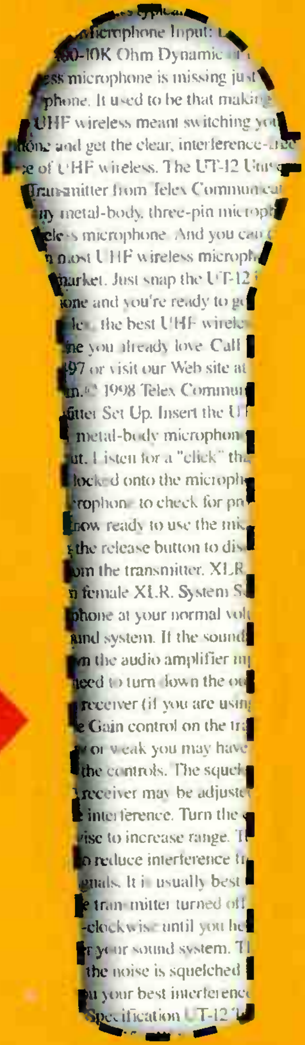

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World Radio History

Alive and Well

How to get a great live recording on budgets from $100 to $100,000.

by brent butterworth

There's a lot to be said for studio recording—hey, studios gave birth to *Electric Ladyland*, *Pet Sounds*, *Nevermind*, and thousands of other amazing albums. But for the band on a budget, hourly studio rates can lead to the poorhouse before you've even finished the first tune. There's a much, much easier way—a way that produced successful recordings that range from *Kiss Alive!* to *John Coltrane Live at the Village Vanguard*.

That method, of course, is live recording. Although it's almost impossible to achieve the same level of control as you can get in the studio, live recording offers two big plusses: the excitement of a real performance, and the ease of just slapping up a few mics, rolling tape, and letting the mistakes fall where they may—after all, no one expects you to sound perfect on a live gig. In this article, we'll take you through all the techniques that make a great live recording, starting with the simplest and cheapest methods, then moving all the way up to a full-blown multitrack live recording. We'll even tell you how to spruce up those recordings once you're ready to release them.

starting in stereo

By far the easiest way to make a live recording is to stick a stereo mic in front of your band, plug it into a recorder, and hit the red button. It might sound like a low-rent way to make your first CD, but many (if not most) classical recordings are made this way, as are some of the best folk and jazz albums.

There are guys who've devoted years to perfecting stereo recording techniques, but the basics are pretty simple. The easiest way to start is with a stereo mic. You can get a great one, the **Audio-Technica AT822**, for as little as $399; this mic, with unbalanced stereo outputs, is great for use with inexpensive DAT, MiniDisc, and cassette recorders. (The balanced output version, the AT825, will run you $525.) You can step up a notch to the **Shure VP88** ($1,194), which offers adjustable pickup width, or down to the **Sony ECM-MS907** ($99), probably the least expensive usable stereo mic on the market. (My jazz group made a demo CD from some live tapes recorded casually with an ECM-MS907 after we bombed in the studio.)

You'll get extra flexibility if you go with two separate mics. You can use two cardioid mics, with one capsule placed directly atop the other and the two mics pointed 90 to 100 degrees apart. Don't use vocal mics for this purpose: Mics like the Shure SM58 have a "presence peak" that makes vocals more clear, but that won't make

LIVE RECORDING

(continued on page 76)

Start Closer To The Top

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The Sky's the Limit

Avant guitarist David Torn launches the processing power of TC Electronic's FireworX

by dave olivier

Look somewhere beyond the far banks of the mainstream, and there you'll find David Torn. On scores for *The Big Lebowski*, *Kiss the Girls*, *Conspiracy*, and other films, and in numerous solo and group releases with Don Cherry, Patrick O'Hearn, Mark Isham, Bill Bruford, Andy Summers, Jack Bruce, and Vernon Reid, just to name a few of his collaborators, Torn lays down the kind of textural experiments that have established him as one of the most respected innovators in the crowded field of guitarists today.

Which makes him an ideal match for FireworX by TC Electronic, probably the most complete multi-effects processor to come along in a while. Here's a brief tour: FireworX explodes with more than 35 algorithms, including delay, ring modulator, digital cruncher, sweeping filters, chorus, vocoder, format filters, and chaos noise generation. It also offers two hundred factory presets, with names like Dub the Universe, Angry Robot, Hangover, and Mars Invaders. But its ease of use and depth of manipulation are likely its main attractions. The modulation matrix, for example, is almost overwhelming. And, joy of joys, it comes with a well-written manual.

Torn has used just about every delay device known to man, from the old days with his MXR two second delay as a looping device and the original Primetime for processing, to everything that Eventide, Lexicon, and TC have to offer. Even so, Torn insists that "FireworX [is] the first dedicated audio mangler—that's my primary and lasting take on the thing. When you really want to chew up an audio source, or distort, destroy, or just plain alter a sound, the FireworX really shines."

Torn is known for triggering his lush textural through extensive processing of the audio path, as opposed to triggering a synth from a guitar. "Being a player, someone who actually picks up and touches an instrument, it's always appealed to me more to be able to alter the personality of the instrument with real-time processing," he explains. "In the beginning, we [guitarists] were the guys who got the flangers and the little delay boxes and the distortion pedals—and FireworX is just a continuation of that. There's a lot that just can't get translated via MIDI triggering synth sounds—like whacking the body of the guitar while holding a chord, or hitting the bridge with your ring, or sliding your right hand down the strings. There are lots of those kinds of techniques for guitar that are really specific to electric stringed instruments but, if you were driving a synth, there's no way all that stuff can really come through. I want to be able to translate all that and manipulate it, and the FireworX helps me do that."

t.c. electronic

For example? "One of the tricks I've learned on the FireworX is that you can exceed the DSP resources by resetting the DSP limit to FREE, as opposed to SECURE. You'll get a warning as you process, and if you continue to add algorithms, even though you'll still get these little caveats, it can get very wacky. One of my favorite sounds is the sound of a tube amp totally about to blow up; this sound is analogous to a computer going into meltdown. You can't change any parameters when the warning sign is up, but after it goes away you can continue. I have five or six presets that use this technique; they all sound different, and they're all dependent on the input signal. I've found, so far, that with certain tonal guitar loops and cheesy drum machine loops, I can get unbelievable, absolutely killing industrial noise rhythmic effects. It's hard to describe this kind of digital distortion, but it's rude, it's really fun . . . and it's a real-time event!"

Torn has actually integrated the FireworX into his everyday creative routine. "It definitely covers new ground for me," he points out. "The

Photo: Randy Anglin (top)

(continued from page 79)

way I've got my rig set up now, one of my looping devices is solely dedicated to feeding my FireworX, and this makes for some wacky-ass shit. My first experiment was that I took one guitar and noise loop—which was kind of pretty, kind of musical with some rhythmic elements to it—and put it through the FireworX, no longer listening to the original signal. I created something completely new by first shifting the pitch in a couple of directions and modulating the center frequency of the ring modulator by using the input level from the loop as a control. Then I added all kinds of filtering. The beauty of all this is how relatively easy the FireworX makes the whole process."

Like an audio engineer's outboard rack of effects devices, the DSP and routing capabilities of the FireworX can be combined in creative and exciting ways. "I like coming up with new kinds of things," Torn says. "Like maybe something a little backwards—a very short reverb feeding the cruncher in series rather than the reverb coming last and making a beautiful sound. One of the things I liked was using the ring modulator and, instead of using the traditional vocal mic as a control signal, I used a voltage pedal for a slightly cleaner effect. I set this up for my friend Tony Levin to put his bass through the vocoder as the carrier—and, wow! It's a joy to have something that's been set up to manipulate—made to mangle, so to speak—in these ways."

By his own admission, Torn is the last guy you'd expect to set up a MIDI cable. Even so, he's enthusiastic over the fact that the FireworX's external control input lets the user access up to twenty modifiers, thus offering enormous control from a single pedal. "It's a very flexible, very powerful, kind of modulation patch bay. With a minimum of paging, you can actually get into the modulation matrix and alter things very quickly. For a screen this tiny, TC did an unbelievable job of keeping things visual."

When asked if any particular FireworX preset strikes his fancy, Torn doesn't hesitate. "Yeah! They have a distortion algorithm called Cruncher. What it does is to basically turn the input signal into that low-fi sound that kids love today. You can quantize the grain size, and this control allows you to change the resolution. What I think it does is to lower the bit and sample rate, and this gives you some hellish sounds. I sometimes do a similar thing with samples, where I change the bit rate from 16 to 7 and also skip addresses in the bit rate; as a result, I get these aliasing noises that you can tune. Fortunately with the FireworX, the sound is so good that these 'bad' sounds are actually quite good. For me, the Cruncher and the ring modulator are worth the price of admission . . . and there's so much more than that in there.

"I think I'm a Power User in that everything I've done with the FireworX has been unusual, and that's really what this thing was designed for. There are other boxes out there that do this or that, but what you can do inside this thing is unbelievable. Who knows what I'll come up with six months from now?"

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the risks of transition

Ani DiFranco
Up Up Up Up Up Up
(Righteous Babe)

The vital artist is one who doesn't fear change, and there's no one more fearless than Ani DiFranco. Yet even while evolving she stays connected with the strengths of her style. In fact, it's the unique energy of her concert work that powers *Up Up Up Up Up Up* on its exploration of new compositional frontiers.

Problem is, this energy can distract DiFranco as much as it guides her. There's an electric, sometimes explosive quality to her shows, manifested in thundering guitar rhythms and almost glossolalian contortions in her vocal delivery. The former is captured gloriously here, thanks in part to her band's ability to lock into and build on her beat. The vocal affectation, though, can get a little tiring, though it marks many of those places where DiFranco stretches herself most daringly.

"I'm getting away from the traditional song form," she admits. "My mind is drifting beyond the verse/chorus/verse scenario, and I think that translates on the record. This album was about focusing on the sound and the arrangements—everything before the music hit the tape. There isn't a lot of outboard effects in the mixing, but there are lots of strange sounds that we got by experimenting with what was around in the studio."

With the core instrumentation throughout *Up . . .* restricted to Ani's acoustic guitar, Jason Mercer's acoustic and electric bass, Julie Wolf's vintage keyboards, and Andy Stochansky's basic drum set, the tiniest tweaks make strong impressions. On "Trickle Down," for instance, an obscure burbling noise pours an ominous undercurrent

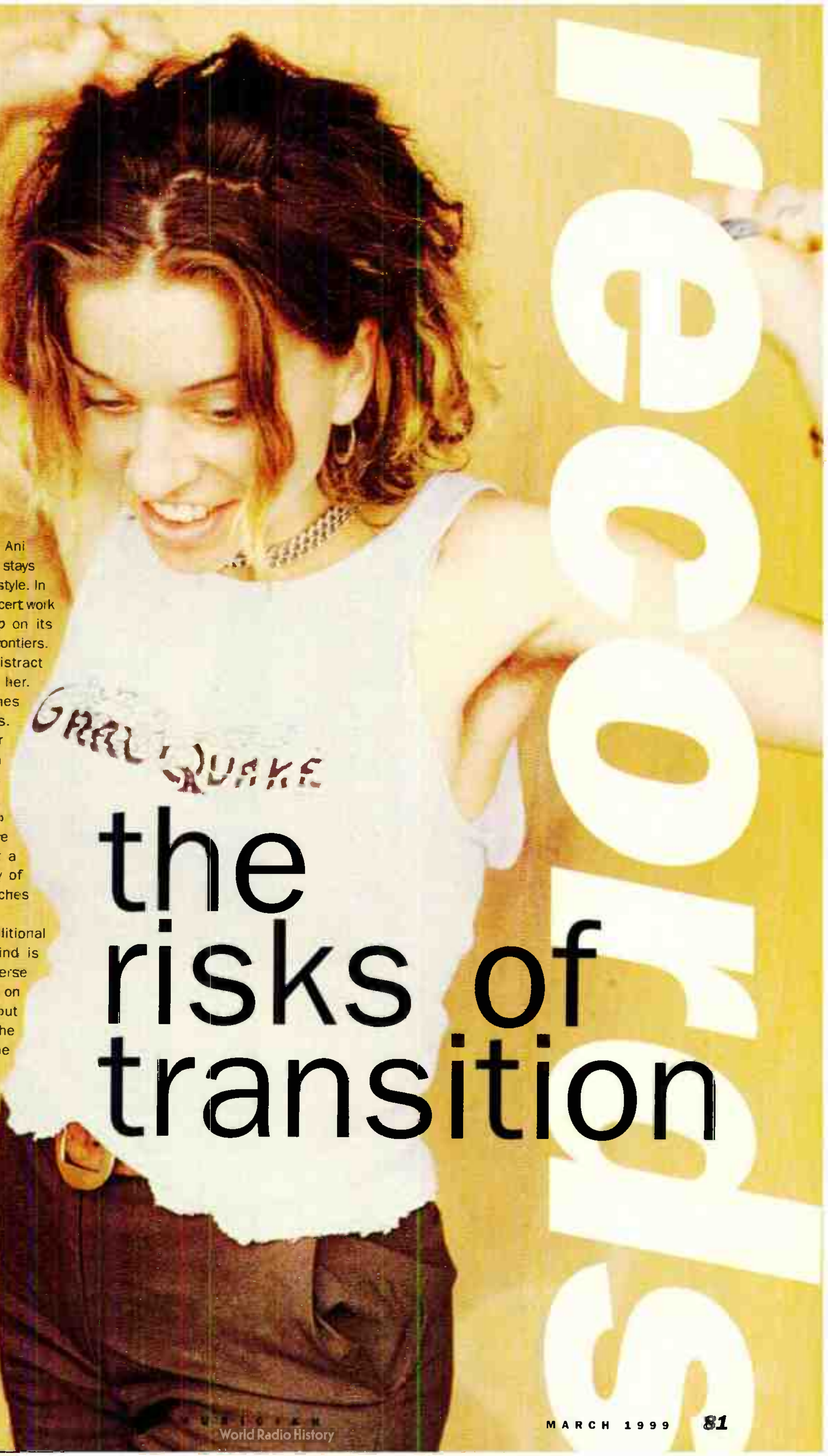


Photo: Albert Sanchez

beneath the solo guitar and dreary lyric about a dying blue-collar town. The impact is undeniable, yet DiFranco credits spontaneity rather than any forethought for the result.

"I had recorded the song, and I was listening to the playback and saying, 'Okay, I guess that take will, do,'" she recalls. "But the two engineers were sitting there, so I said, 'Well, I *do* hear this sound in my head.' I described it, and we all sat around and stared at the ceiling, and then one of them said, 'You know, the water cooler kind of makes that sound when I put the new jug on.' So I miked a water cooler and started moving the water slowly inside of it. We put that on analog tape, then we slowed it way down until it had that kind of breathing monster vibe. That's a lot of what the studio is about: You listen, you hear things, and then you try to manifest them."

Sometimes the muse delivers, sometimes not. The most ambitious cut, a thirteen-minute marathon called "Hat Shaped Hat," crackles with a gospel intensity, and "Angel Food" has a silken groove smoothed by soulful organ and wah-wah bass—yet each conveys a feeling of disorganization, of trusting the moment in a way that can work onstage but perhaps tax a listener's patience on disc. Compared with more economical and melodic material, such as "Come Away From It," with its hypnotic harmonized chorus, or with the seductive prayer-meeting imagery of "Everest," these performances arguably take longer to say less.

DiFranco acknowledges the difference: "I write songs, and I write poems. The songs are constructed as songs; the melodies are built into the lyrics as part of the process. But I've also written 'spoken word,' which sometimes I don't combine with music, and sometimes I do. On this record there are a couple of examples of that, and there are a couple of tracks where I brought lyrics alone into the studio and we took it from there. Prior to this album, I *always* brought completed songs to the session; here, I developed a few with my band in the studio, and that is new for me."

Artists these days assume a dual role, of creating quality work and documenting their own growth. These obligations can be contradictory—or they can connect, and something brilliant results. *Up . . .* has its moments of golden synchronicity; more important, it inspires us to take risks, create enough moments of beauty to make a project worthwhile, and then move on.
—Robert L. Doerschuk

John Lennon

The John Lennon Anthology
(Capitol)

It's okay, you can say it: This whole "anthology" trend is just a cynical marketing ploy, a way to weasel fans out of big bucks in exchange for third-rate material that was collecting dust in the vaults for good reason. The only catch is—and this is the part that sucks us in every time—sometimes the stuff that gets unearthed actually does what it's supposed to, which is to reveal or flesh out aspects of the artist that were previously obscure. For a fair amount of its lengthy duration, that's just what *The John Lennon Anthology* does.

Most of what's on this four-CD collection of studio outtakes, live recordings, and home demos recorded between 1969 and 1980 won't surprise those who've heard the *Los Lennon Tapes* radio series or the subsequent flurry of bootlegs—though the improvement in sound quality here is nothing to sneeze at. Still, the *Anthology* is a valuable item because of the unvarnished portrait it presents of Lennon the creative artist at work.

john lennon

Photo: Nishi F. Saimaru

And make no mistake about it, the man did work, hard. "He would really work a song in the studio," says producer Rob Stevens, who, with the considerable help of Yoko Ono, compiled the *Anthology* from approximately two thousand hours of tape and mixed the final package. "At least twenty takes of a song was normal. On *Plastic Ono Band* there are some in the forties. You can hear the ebb and flow of the band: They'd be on it, then they'd lose it, then they'd get it back." John also knew exactly what he wanted, as made clear by his orders to the session musicians between takes of "Going Down on Love," from *Walls and Bridges* in 1974. Annoyed at what he felt was excessive ornamentation, he tells them he doesn't want to hear any fills or trills—"nothing but four on the bar except for what's written."

Given Lennon's distaste for noodling, it's odd that the solo albums he produced himself—*Mind Games*, *Walls and Bridges*, and *Rock & Roll*—are the most overproduced of his career, too glossy *and* busy. Stevens says that's partly because "John didn't like the sound of his voice, so he would mix it low and try to cover it up with a wall of sound." One of the *Anthology*'s great virtues is that it strips that gloss from many of this somewhat underrated period's best songs, giving us alternate readings that are often more vital than the original releases. Case in point: "One Day at a Time," sung in a lower register without the female backing vocalists, comes across as a delicate McCartney/Brian Wilson pastiche. "Nobody Loves You When You're Down and Out" is far more powerful without the orchestral arrangement. And "Whatever Gets You Through the Night" improves immeasurably without Elton John singing along on it. (Sorry, Elton.)

Perhaps the most historically interesting recordings on the *Anthology* are the home demos made in 1976-80, a period during which John had always maintained he was musically inactive. Most appear on the fourth CD, entitled *Dakota*, including a couple of brilliant Dylan parodies; the propulsive, unclassifiable "Serve Yourself" (sung in a thick Liverpudlian accent); and a bunch of fascinating song-in-progress snapshots. "He recorded those demos using a technique called sound-on-sound," says Stevens, "except this was an even more Neanderthal version. He would start off playing and singing the song through one of those old Marantz cassette decks with a built-in speaker. Then using another identical deck, he'd play back the first deck, not even through the line but through the speaker, add another vocal and guitar part, and then bounce it back again." With only this rudimentary setup, Lennon got his song ideas across more than satisfactorily, as the original demo for "Woman," among others, demonstrates.

Besides the *Dakota* tapes, a lot of the source material for *The John Lennon Anthology* came from the tape library—if you want to call it that—of the old Record Plant studios on 46th Street in New York. "They had in their basement, among the mold and the mildew, about six hundred reels of Lennon tapes, mainly multitracks from *Mind Games* to *Rock & Roll*," Stevens recalls. "Those were excavated, and that's not the wrong word, in 1987, and in 1988 I was given the job of transferring all those reels to digital. Some of the tapes were in pretty bad shape, but nothing was irretrievable, I'm happy to say." With the exception of the new Sir George Martin string arrangement added to "Grow Old With Me" (a move that was justified as in keeping with John's wishes; he'd wanted strings on the song to begin with), there are no overdubs on any of the tracks. Also, Stevens reports that most of the slapback echo or reverb you hear was printed to the original tape: "I added some when there wasn't any, but I made sure to use less rather than more."

As thrilling as the process of compiling the *Anthology* was for Stevens, it was also depressing, for obvious reasons. During the four-year selection period, he says, "I kept a list of tracks under the heading 'What Might Have Been'." On that list were many of the more rocking moments on disc four, including John's explosive noise-guitar solo on an outtake of "I Don't Wanna Face It" (at the end, he jokes that he's worn his pick down to half its original size) and an absolutely savage rendition of "I'm Losing You" recorded with three members of Cheap Trick, which is far superior to the rather tame *Double Fantasy* version. What these tracks prove is that John Lennon at forty was still every inch a rock & roller, that he wasn't about to go soft in his old age, that there was much more to come. On *The John Lennon Anthology* you can hear preserved the evidence, not just of what might have been, but also the genius that was.

—Mac Randall

Son Volt

Wide Swing Tremolo

(Warner Bros.)

When Jay Farrar and Son Volt recruited David Barbe to record some sessions for them after-hours in a lingerie factory in Millstadt, Illinois—just a stone's throw from the Belleville garages where Farrar cut his teeth back in the days of Uncle Tupelo—Barbe thought their mission was a little vague. "Jay had designs on making an album out of all this," says the engineer and all-around studio *meister* from his home in Athens, Georgia, "but he had nothing specific in mind."

So Barbe loaded up his eight-track and his "esoteric" microphone collection and headed for Illinois, figuring he'd help the band lay down some B sides and demos, record some songs, and see what developed. But the two-week session went so well that Son Volt used the work as a jumping-off point for *Wide Swing Tremolo*, their third album and proof positive that the band can hold its own with Jeff Tweedy's more celebrated Wilco, that other country-flavored phoenix that rose from the ashes of Uncle Tupelo.

From that first session with Barbe, Son Volt saved two takes that appear here—the rustic "Hanging Blue Side" and the haunting, acoustic "Streets That Time Walks"—as well as initial versions of the Gram Parsons-inspired "Strands," the luminous "Medicine Hat," and the lyrical "Question." The material also reflects how Farrar

Luna's Dean Wareham seeks the perfect bend.

Luna exorcises the ghost in the machine

Recording an album can be a blissful experience, particularly when you're able to lock into a groove that makes the noisy outside world recede and ultimately disappear. That's exactly what's happened for the members of Luna, who have spent the past few weeks tucked away in the softly-lit spaciousness of New York's RPM Studio, recording the basic tracks for their newest record [untitled as we went to press] on Elektra. But everyone knows that pleasant dreams can be interrupted, and in Luna's case technology is making an untimely wakeup call; in the midst of recording overdubs, the Akai 3000 XL sampler they recently purchased is refusing to communicate with their new Zip drive.

Even with the technical glitch, the band remains calm. "It's not like the last [record], when we went mad," says guitarist/vocalist Dean Wareham. "We spent three and a half months making that one and we got on each other's nerves, but we can put it behind us," he laughs. "I think that anyone who's ever been in a band long enough knows that it's like a family: Problems arise and you work through them, or you give up. We all get along. We like each other. It wouldn't be very pleasant if we didn't."

While engineer Brian Zee wrestles with the various components in an attempt to make them work properly, producer Paul Kimble decides to work around the problem and suggests that bassist Justin Harwood ready himself for a trumpet overdub on the outro of "Hello Little One." "I'm actually just going to make noises on it," says Harwood as he walks out of the control room. "That's hard to do that with a machine. Machines don't like making random noise—nor do musicians, but of course, I'm a *bass* player."

Kimble's ability to manage the studio clock is just the type of conscientious initiative that Luna was looking for in a producer; this album differs from recent efforts in that the band gave the production reins to a producer who is also a musician. "He [Kimble] knows what it's like to be on the other side of the microphone singing, and he knows what it's like to be told to do something fifty times in a row," explains Wareham.

"It's hard to get four people to agree on any producer, but those Grant Lee Buffalo records [Kimble was the bassist and producer for Grant Lee Buffalo] sound great," says Wareham. "He's a nice guy with the right attitude and is into working quickly, and part of the reason for having a producer is that you have a lot of different opinions and you need someone to stand above the band a little bit and mediate or to say, 'That's a good enough take, let's move on.' Sometimes we produce ourselves, but on this record I don't feel like I have to be in the control room every second—I trust Paul."

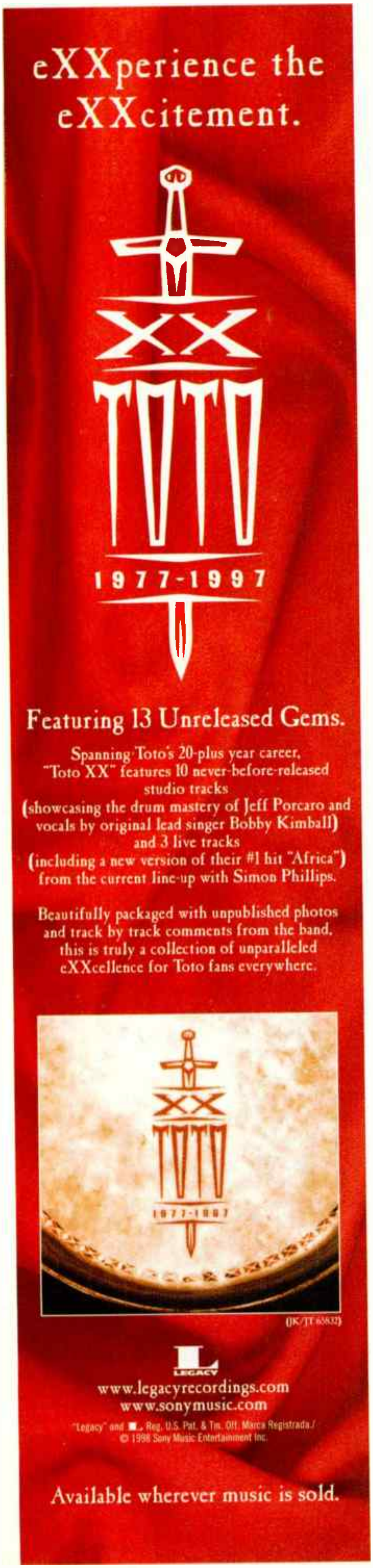
As Harwood warms up in the main room, Wareham clarifies the bassist's seemingly extemporaneous approach to his new instrument. "He doesn't actually *play* the trumpet, but it's in the right key for the song, and he'll do some atonal stuff that fits into one section," he says. "I think he knows the part, but he doesn't have many choices in terms of what he can play." Asked whether that worries him, Wareham laughs: "You have to do that to songs sometimes. You want things to sound a little bit fucked up... I think. We don't want to sound like we're a bunch of perfect professionals playing perfect little parts. We're not of that caliber. None of us is formally trained."

Once Zee has the song cued up, Kimble listens to Harwood's meanderings for a few minutes and instructs him on what specific notes will work best.

"Justin has a certain flare on the horn that you just can't duplicate," he mutters as Harwood steps closer to the mic. After a few passes through the section, Harwood manages a magical succession of blustery trills that has everyone in the control room delighted. "Those first six or seven passes were Monk-like," says Kimble into the talk-back mic. "That's Edvard Munch, not Thelonius," whispers Wareham with a playful nudge.

—Michael Gelfand

Photo: Sonja Pacho



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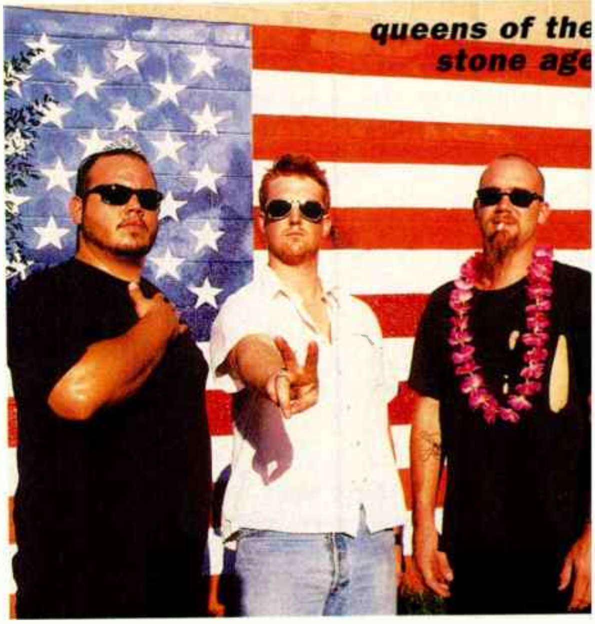
and Son Volt have grown together, both as writers and as studio technicians. "This isn't your standard Son Volt setup," Barbe points out. "There are more layers, more ideas, more sounds."

Much of that evolution has to do with Barbe's influence. While Son Volt already had a museum of amps and over forty instruments to work with (including a "truly great" pre-World War II Supro guitar amp they used "night and day" to supplement Farrar's Vox AC30), Barbe brought in a collection of tube mics and ribbon mics, Shure SM57s and Sennheiser MD421s.

"Between the two of us, the equipment pieces fit together nicely," he figures. So did their common work ethic: Over the course of those two weeks, they rolled some nine hundred hours worth of music onto a total of 22 digital tapes, using three Alesis ADAT machines. When the recording was over, they took the keepers to Mitch Easter's place to mix and transfer them to a single reel of two-inch tape. "Mixing to an analog tape made a tremendous difference in the way the record sounds," says Barbe.

Coupled with the band's unforced performances, Barbe's handiwork gives *Wide Swing Tremolo* a relaxed, easy feel. As Jay Farrar's writing gains in lyricism, his voice increases in character, and his band's versatility builds with every song, Son Volt is on its way to becoming the leading light of roots rock.

—Bob Gulla



Queens of the Stone Age

Garth

(Loosegroove)

In the mid Seventies, the rage was full on for flat recording—getting a sound so dead and airless that even a black hole couldn't escape the vacuum. Drummers from Al Jackson to Bill Ward covered their drum heads with tape for a dull tom-tom thwack, guitarists from Memphis to Jamaica let reverb-less *chinka-chinka* rule, while singers became one with their oh-so-close mics. But just as digital would devour analog, flat production has been banished from today's hard-drive world.

Funny, though, that no one told Queens of the Stone Age. Formerly known as Kyuss, a Black Sabbath-infused band that honed its chops at all-night generator parties in the Mojave Desert, QOTSA plays "robotic trance rock," a scalding brew as menacing as Vanilla Fudge yet as deliciously melodious at ZZ Top's "La Grange."

"Kyuss was always about a big room sound," says guitarist/vocalist Joshua Homme. "But QOTSA is the polar opposite: It's about tight, dry, and dead. The idea was, if we could get it as dry and focused as possible, even the slightest touch of reverb would sound like a rushing waterfall. When it is that dry, the separation between instruments and vocals is more apparent. No one is going for that sound now; it's like robotic stuff but played with old crummy analog gear. It really changes the production values and what comes out of the speakers."

Recorded *"Avril 3-21, 1998 en Estudio Monkey, Fontado de la Palma,"* as the album liner on *Garth* puts it, QOTSA (Homme, drummer Alfredo Hernandez, and bassist Carlo) used layers of orange shag carpet to deaden room echo, going so far as to pitch a canvas tent over their drummer and his 1973 chrome Ludwigs. "Arrested for driving while blind" is given new meaning here.

For his part, Homme uses just one guitar: a rare 1975 Ovation GP. The sound is fat and burly but also streamlined and biting, something like a deer's head attached to an armadillo's body. "I have never seen another one and I've been looking for fourteen years," gushes Homme. "It's kind of a bittersweet thing. I found the guitar when I was ten and bought it for $199, and I've searched for another one ever since. It's two-horned like an SG, with the weight of a Les Paul, and these big, inch-and-a-half-deep pickups. I don't really use pedals, but I have a revolving set of amps, from a Tubeworks head to an old Ampeg bass amp. I'm kind of scared to talk about it, actually."

Citing Iggy, Eno, Can, Devo, Hank Williams, Björk, and Tom Waits as influences, QOTSA simply rocks on *Garth*. No glammy pretense in the wobbily majestic "You Should Know," no squeamish silliness in the blazing "How to Handle a Rope," no kidding in the manic shuffle of "Hispanic Impressions." QOTSA is definitely into jamming, but the band's main motive lies in its woozy melodies, which are perpetually pared back, down-shifted, and kicked into buzzing overdrive.

"Queens is about focused parts," states

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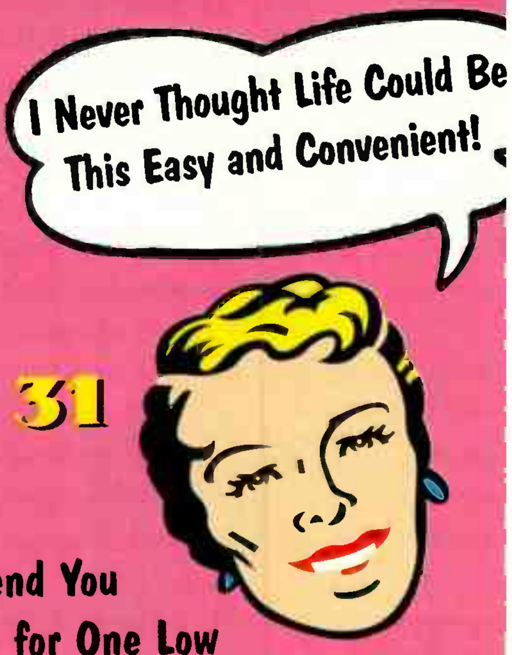
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Homme. "There only needs to be one of something unless there is an absolute need for an accent or a harmony. That way, live we can accomplish everything and more." On *Garth*, the proof is in your ears.

—Ken Micallef

Midnight Oil

Redneck Wonderland

(Sony)

Canny Aussies Midnight Oil have been masters at mixing political savvy with rock & roll savagery since their 1983 benchmark *10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1*. Fired by towering frontman Peter Garrett's nail-spitting charisma, the twined guitars of Jim Moginie and Martin Rotsey, and drummer Rob Hirst's relentless thwack, they've turned lyrics about cultural dissipation ("The Power and the Passion") and aboriginal land rights ("Beds are Burning") into radio-hit anthems.

But twentysomething years into their career, challenges to Midnight Oil's command of might and right are mounting, not only from progeny like Rage Against the Machine but by the beat-mad, blipping sonics of electronica and trip-hop, which are turning a young generation's ears away from guitar-based rock.

"As a five-piece rock band, which is a dinosaur idea, we stand apart from the Prodigys and the Chemical Brothers and their ilk, who are studio technicians who take a DAT on the road," observes Rob Hirst. "For *Redneck Wonderland* we were challenged to reinvent ourselves in a way that would still sound angry but also current, in the framework of a five-piece rock band."

To that end, the Oilers turned their latest into a sonic safari by finding new ways to record, enhance, and create their basic red-brick rock sound. For power blasts like "Blot" and "What Goes On," Hirst explains, their producer Magoo "set up a large monitoring system in the studio as though we were playing a concert, which creates an entirely different drum sound and edge. For a band like ourselves, where our reputation is firmly in the live domain, it's a battle to get the same sort of energy in the studio."

Although tracks like "White Skin Black Heart"—a biting indictment of conservative politicians, triggered by their resurrection of race-baiting in the latest Australian elections—suggest the sound of sampling and sequencers, "it's actually me playing live in a style that sounds like a typical loop,". Hirst reveals. "Then, using various miking techniques and signal processing [mostly a Sherman multi-effects unit] and even running the drums through various amplifiers, the electronic-sounding qualities of what I played are enhanced. But I can play the same parts live. I tried to take a lift out of the Kraftwerk book: A lot of their stuff was played by a drummer who prided himself, in a very Teutonic way, on playing just like a machine."

Magoo's mongrel pack of small transistor guitar amps from the Sixties also had their way with Garrett's voice—notably on "White Skin Black Heart," where his lead vocal is trailed by a wraith-like rasp of itself. The guitars also make bold sonic statements on the brutish "Concrete," which begins with a high, pitch-shifted tone that breaks up deliciously as the Sherman bleeds notes together while tracking Moginie's picking. The guitarist's extreme bending—he pushed strings nearly off the neck, Hirst relates—sounds like a robot's scream, a fine foil for a song about the death of the natural world.

Midnight Oil's new adventures in hi-fi have hit their mark Down Under: Hirst reports that a fresh generation of fans is swarming to their shows. But the most important sound on *Redneck Wonderland* is that of the band's very human heart, which drums its concern for man's future on each strident track.

—Ted Drozdowski

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Many musicians who exploit samples and turntable cut-ups fail miserably when asked to perform live. How many of us have waited until three in the morning for a U.K. drum 'n' bass dude to strut his wares, only to suffer a boring spin of some other DJ's records because said dude simply couldn't cut it?

Playing their first U.S. gig in more than two years at New York's Roseland Ballroom, Bristol angst-hop masters Portishead faced the dilemma of replicating their epic sampling tableau of their *Dummy* and *Portishead* albums. But rather than rely on samples, Portishead brought a full band, eight horn players, and a 32-piece string section to accompany Beth Gibbons' torch vocals and Geoff Barrow's savage turntable expressionism. The results are astounding: Guitars and keyboards resound, strings weep, turntable scratching and vocals are marvelously upfront. In sum, *Roseland* betters the band's studio albums with a visceral production that endows each song element with superior depth and clarity.

But for Portishead engineer/producer Dave McDonald, *Roseland* was a monstrous migraine. "There was so much overspill into the vocal microphone," he explains. "To get accurate definition on the instruments without having overspill from the drum kit on the strings, or the strings going down the vocal mic channel, it all added to a kind of sonic weirdness. It was hard to remove the live room sound but keep a slight air of it as well."

McDonald employed a Midas X13 mixer for the live sound, with a line running to an outside recording truck where a Neve board handled the orchestra mix, which was sent back to McDonald and then to the band's monitor mix. Mics included a Crown for Gibbons, AKG C414 and D12 mics on the drums, and 38 Fishman Transducer mics for the orchestra. "The P.A. was directly above the stage, so when the string players finally got used to their own sound, the P.A. kicked off with the bass and drums, and the strings couldn't hear. And that was spilling into 38 open mics as well. It was hard work."

Portishead's performance justifies McDonald's efforts. Gibbons' psychotic-by-way-of-Billie-Holiday singing is the stuff of future legend, and the added instrumentation gives the band's spooky, drenched-in-misery elegies all the majesty of an electrified Mahler symphony.

"We'd been touring for a year," says McDonald, "so we'd developed more energy, more aggression, more impact. We wanted to translate what was going on in our minds into the live recording. That is why there's a difference between the studio and live albums; now we have that intensity and fire. We'd gotten an attitude. We wanted to *kneecap* people."

To get at literal kneecap level, Portishead played not onstage but in a semi-pit surrounded by a clapping, howling audience. "We didn't want the audience to think we were special, like, 'Bow down to us onstage'," McDonald explains. "We are just ordinary people who like music."

Ordinary people who like music? Maybe. Ambitious artists who have raised the stakes for live recording and performance to a new level? Definitely.

—Ken Micallef

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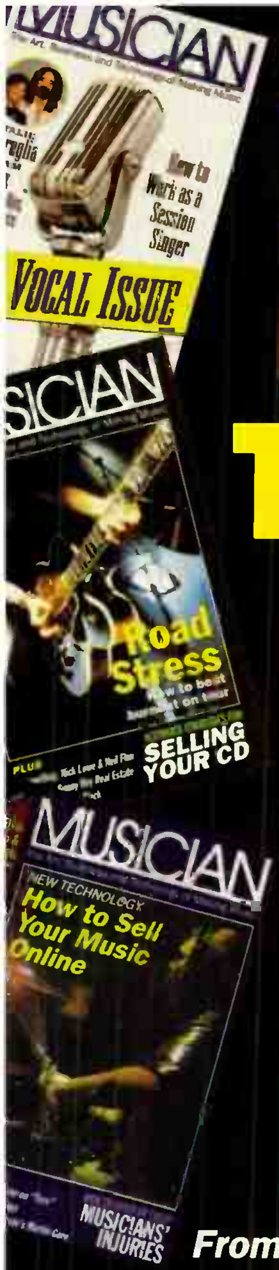
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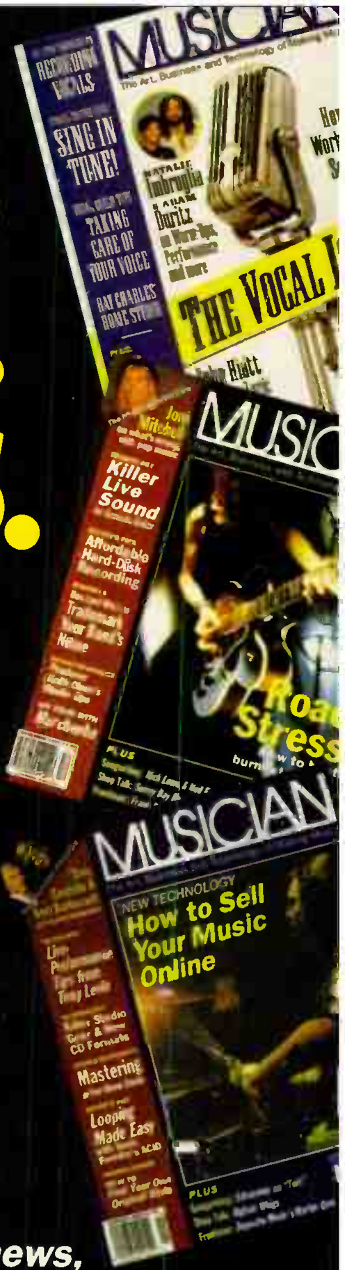
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AKG, 1449 Donelson Pike, Nashville, TN 37217 (615) 360-0446: 1000S, **25**; C414, **42**; C414, D12, **88**

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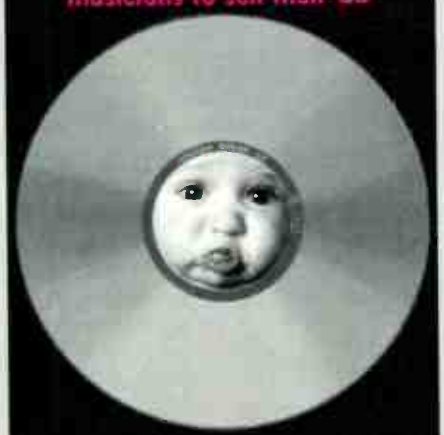

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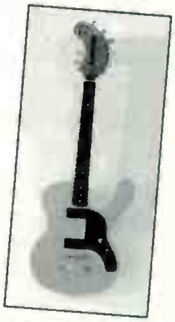

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LIVE
RECORDIN

The Awful Truth About Live Recording

You can make a great live CD. But . . . why would you want to?

I love listening to live albums. Such classics as *James Brown Live at the Apollo* or *Jerry Lee Lewis at the Star Club* are nothing less than defining moments in popular music. But as a performer, I'd rather have my teeth cleaned by a perky hygienist while listening to a Muzak rendition of "I Believe I Can Fly" than record a live album. Ice storms, P.A. meltdowns, throwaway tunes the producers insist on using, tape machines with mysterious hums, fights among audience members, air conditioners cutting on without warning: Anything can happen while it's costing you—or, worse yet, your record label—five hundred bucks an hour.

Which means, of course, that being on the edge of nervous hysteria, the sudden appearance of bizarre rashes, and gastrointestinal distress are all facts of life in any live recording situation. Fortunately, there are a few adjustments you can make to keep things from getting worse:

Plan on recording at least two shows. Don't even think of trying to get it all in one take, on one show, in one night. If you can afford it, try to record at least two complete shows, on two different nights.

Pick a good time of year. Check to see if any big events will conflict with your session—a football game, a state fair, a Jehovah's Witness convention. Try to record in the early spring: Rain is okay, but snow keeps people at home, and mid-summer heat makes for a restless, uncomfortable crowd.

Plan your songs. Practice your solos, and if possible, time them. Virtually every artist who has ever recorded a live album complains about a lost solo, or a great song that didn't get recorded because the engineer was changing tapes, or a bad mic cord, or a sudden outburst by an audience member. (More about this in a minute.)

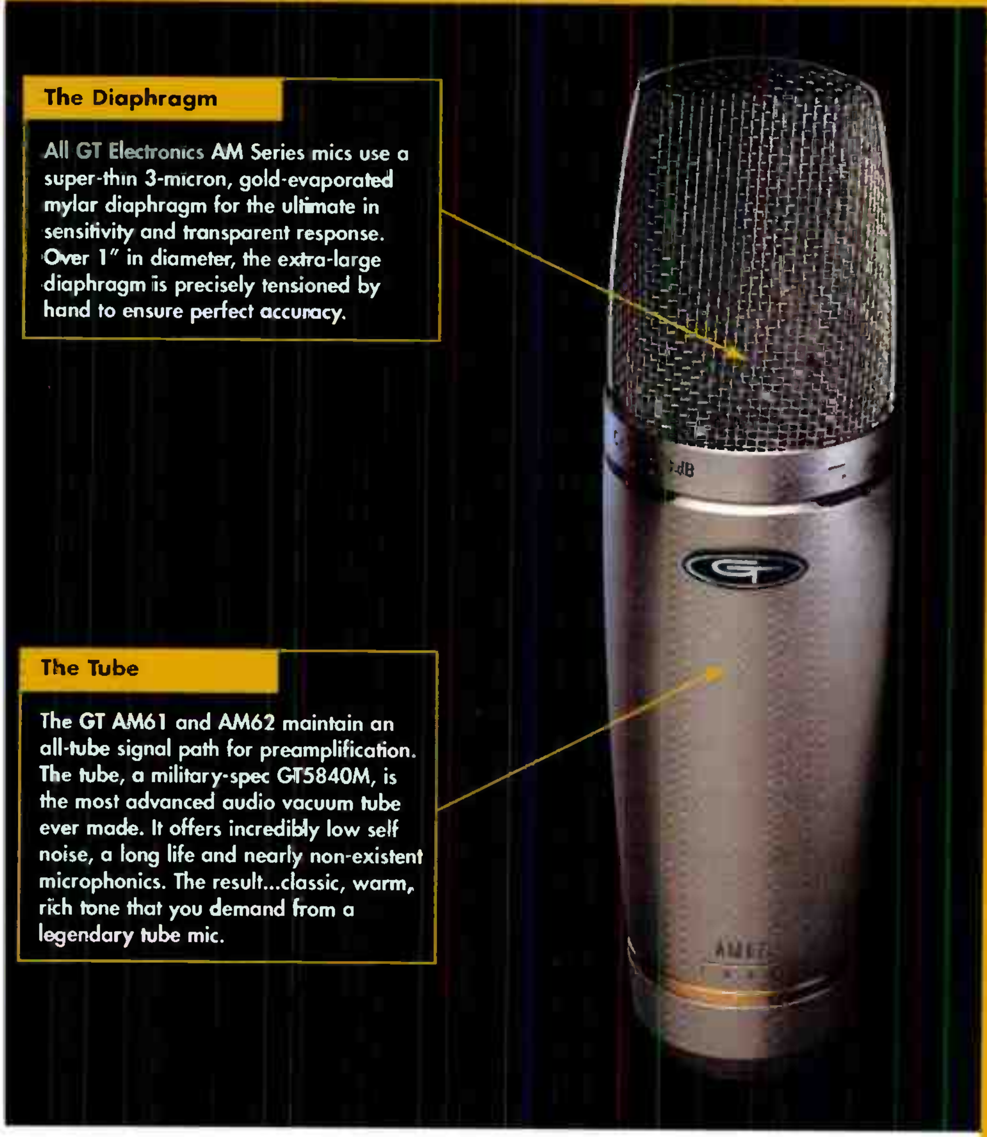
Control your crowd. A good performance + an enthusiastic crowd = a great recording that needs only minimal edits. A good performance + an enthusiastic crowd + one intoxicated friend of the club owner yelling "Let's Get Drunk And Screw!" between every song and standing next to the audience mic going "*Wooooo!*" during your best solos = lots of time-consuming, costly edits in post-production.

Make sure you have a designated peacekeeper; unless you know the club real well, bring your own. They don't have to look like Goldberg's little brother, as long as they can be polite and quietly assertive when needed. If you do have to use them, have a prearranged signal, such as "Hey, buy that man another one!," instead of the more crowd-provoking, mood-squelching "Would somebody please shut up this ignorant spawn of Satan before I shove my Kurzweil up his . . ."

Create an atmosphere. Make the room as dark as possible, and keep the temperature at no more than 72 degrees. This advice was given to me by an old club owner, and it never fails to help focus a crowd. And finally . . .

The Universal Rule of Live Shows. Never play any song or say anything that you don't want to end up somewhere, sometime, on an album. Just ask Chuck Berry, who thought the tape was off, decided to kill some time at a gig, and as a result became known to an entire generation as the man responsible for "My Ding-A-Ling."

The Birth Of A Legend



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