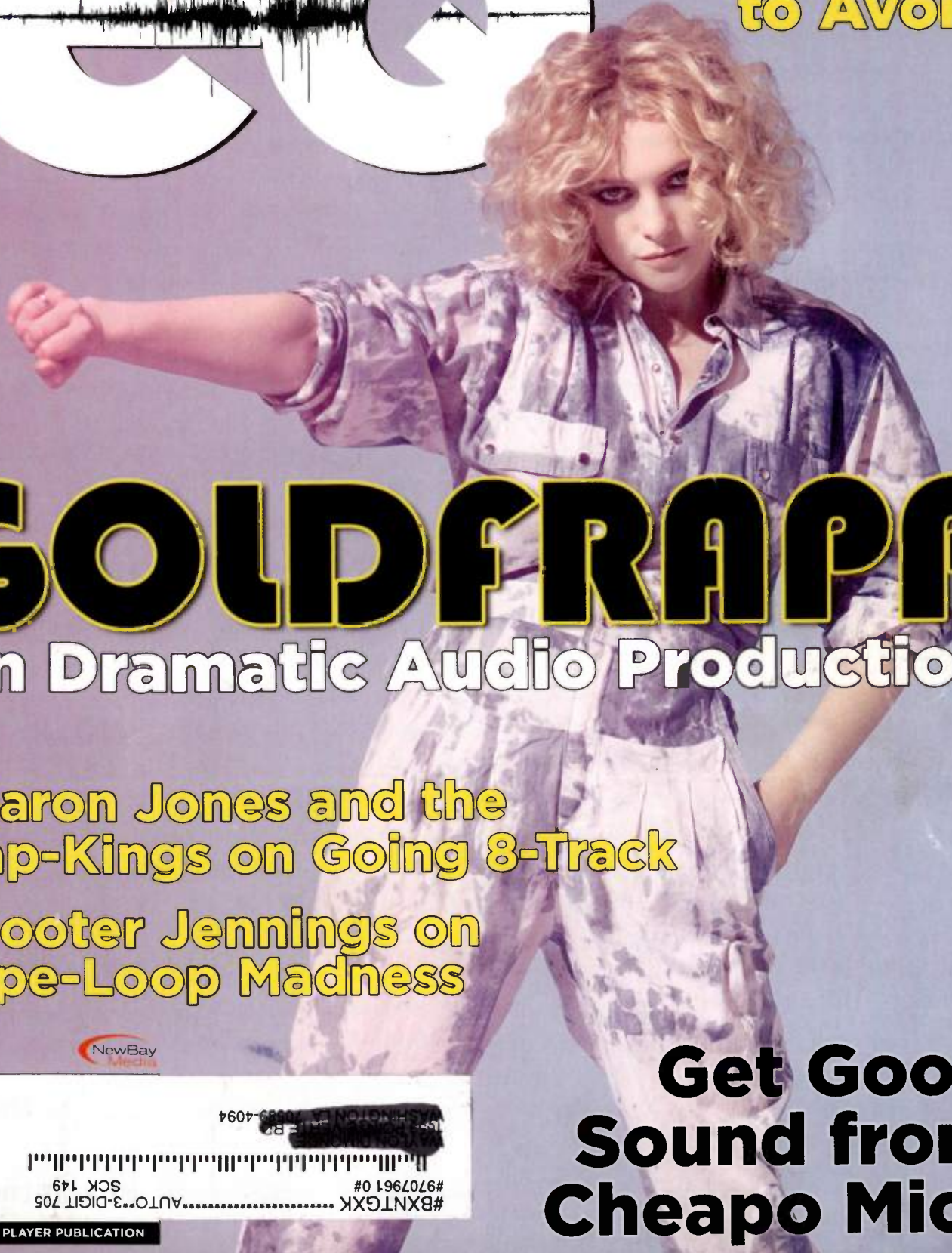


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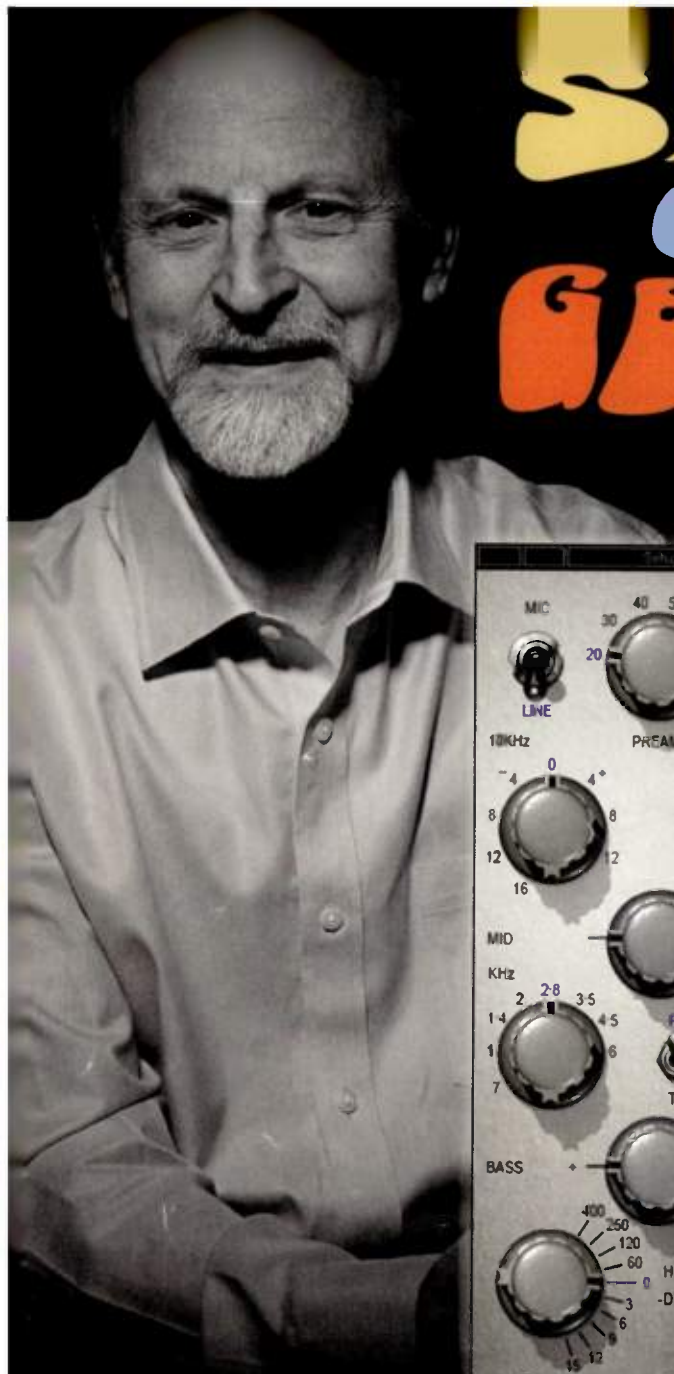
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# Talk Box



www.eqmag.com Vol. 21 No. 5, May 2010



## SO YOU WANNA BE A STAR . . .

A lot of newcomers ask me for advice about "making it" in the recording business. While this might sound crass, I recommend coming up with an album title, a unique identity, and a marketing/promotion plan before recording a single note. The title sets the tone, and the identity differentiates you from the rest of the world.

But the marketing plan is key. Are you hoping for a major label release? Then you must "follow the rules" for pop singles, and generate something an A&R person thinks is a hit. This can involve serious compromises, like finding some babe/hunk to front the band, and laying on the pitch correction.

Or maybe you want a track record of independent sales, so you can leverage a better deal with a major. Then live performance is crucial: You need a great live act with a following that buys your music at gigs. Also, get video-savvy ASAP so you can post material on YouTube and generate video for your "virtual press kit." Video is a powerful promotional medium; not taking advantage of it is like playing a guitar with two strings. Case in point: There's a one-minute video floating around the net of a festival gig I did with Public Enemy's Brian Hardgroove about two years ago—but it still gets links and comments in forums.

If you're not teen idol material but talented, consider "behind the scenes" music like soundtracks and jingles. Some "real" musicians consider that selling out, but I find the process both satisfying and profitable. Larry Fast (Synergy, ex-Peter Gabriel) does lots of sonic logos—he did the seven-note XM radio tag. He likens it to "painting in miniature," and has made decent money but also enjoys the challenge. If it's true that your best work comes when working within limits, soundtracks, jingles, and logos have highly defined limits.

Bottom line: Work backward from the intended goal. Once you have a goal in mind, everything you do will be informed by that goal, and contribute to realizing that goal. Finally, I advise everyone to do live performance. Nothing gives you more honest and immediate feedback than whether the audience stays or leaves, and gives polite applause or a thundering ovation.

Good luck!

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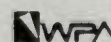
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## TIME MACHINE

**She & Him** Stay True to the Girl Group Recordings of Yesteryear, with a Twist

BY KYLEE SWENSON

Singer/songwriter and film starlet duos go way back. Case in point: Serge Gainsbourg and Brigitte Bardot. Last year, Pete Yorn and Scarlett Johansson stepped up to the plate, but beating them to the punch were Matt Ward (a.k.a. M. Ward) and Zoëy Deschanel, who dropped their debut as She & Him, *Volume One*, in 2008.

Between acting in movies such as *(500) Days of Summer* and *Yes Man*, Deschanel wrote songs for *Volume Two* [Merge], She & Him's follow-up album inspired by artists such as Cole Porter, Carole King, and Roy Orbison. She then brought her piano-and-vocal-based GarageBand demos to Ward, who developed each song by honing in on Deschanel's initial creative spark.

"I listen closely and find out where the demo wants to go," he says. "You try your best to fill in the blanks using your imagination to where the song is coming from, and then you try to stay out of its way as it matures."

Deschanel's vocal harmonies maintain an old-school girl-group feel, but Ward likes to add modern touches to the songs. "We intentionally leave spaces where there could be a call-and-response," Ward says, "But as a producer, I always love playing with some of those girl-group archetypes and then adding an element that you would not expect, like a distorted guitar. I love combining different sounds from different eras into the same production and seeing if they fit. Sometimes you feel like a mad scientist combining a guitar sound from an

Elmore James record with a vocal sound that you've just discovered, while doing a cover song that was written in the '80s."

Engineer Mike Coykendall recorded the album at his own Blue Rooms studio, as well as at Jackpot! (both in Portland, where Ward lives) and The Village in L.A. (where Deschanel lives). They aimed for a live-recording approach, in keeping the old ensemble-performance vibe of the older records they love. They sometimes used isolation booths and sometimes didn't. "We tried to perform as many instruments together at the same time as was feasible while encouraging some bleed between the mics in hopes for a more three-dimensional sound," Coykendall says.

*Volume Two* was mostly recorded to a Studer 2-inch tape machine (and a 1-inch machine at Blue Rooms), and tracks were later transferred to Pro Tools. For tracking, Ward and Coykendall depended on Hamptone, API, Neve, Daking, and Great River pre-amps, and Chandler and Urei compressors. Deschanel sang through Neumann U 47, Soundelux ELUX 251, and Neumann Gefell CMV 563 mics, and Ward played his Gibson J-45 guitar through Fender Twin and Vibrolux amps.

To keep the process rolling, Coykendall kept an array of mics plugged in and ready to go: "usually a large diaphragm condenser, a pencil condenser or two, a ribbon, a dynamic, and a lo-fi," he says. "Then I grab the one that seems most promising for the job. If that one doesn't excite me, I try one of the others, but I try not to

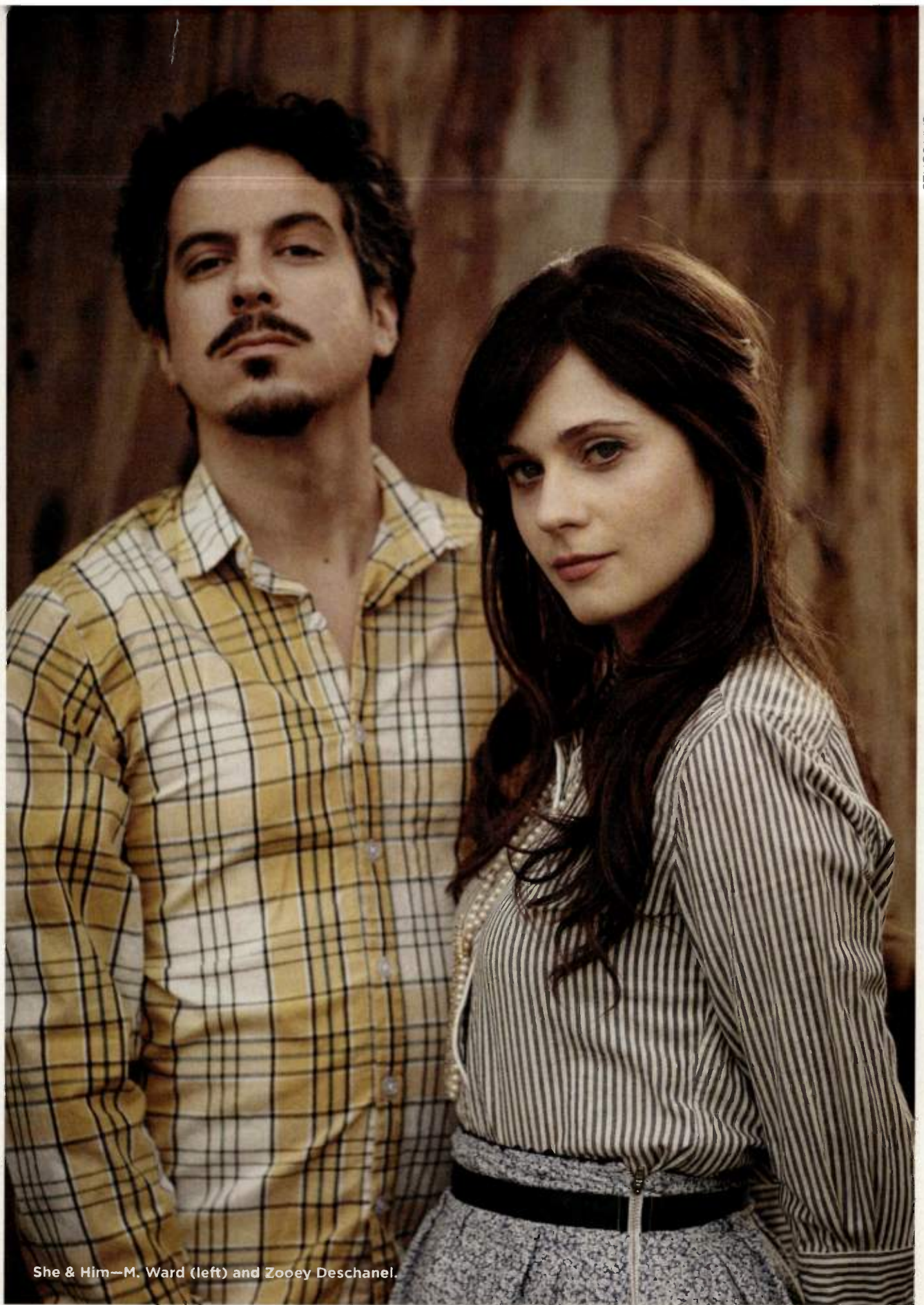
spend more than 10 minutes getting a sound."

On the cheerful, bouncy "Home," they used an old Johnny Cash acoustic-guitar trick on the mandolin, cutting out a small strip of paper and intertwining it through the strings near the bridge. "It gives the instrument more of a muted yet buzzy percussive sound that really cuts," Coykendall says.

The shuffling "Gonna Get Along Without You Now" was recorded in one night at Blue Rooms. Drummer Scott McPherson, Ward, and Deschanel recorded together in one room, with upright bass and backing vocals overdubbed later. And instead of a kick drum, they used a suitcase.

"I go around to thrift stores thumping suitcases and have yet to find one that sounds as good as this one," Coykendall says. "It's an old Samsonite made out of pressed cardboard, so it's very dead but thud-y. I have a wooden contraption that anchors it in place with Velcro strips, and then I hook up a kick-drum pedal to it. I have a piece of leather taped to the suitcase where the beater hits, so it doesn't break through the cardboard. I put a [Sennheiser] MD 421 pointing at the beater about two inches away. I then have to really pump up the lows with an API EQ."

For Ward, the suitcase is just right for their vintage vibe. "It's the happy medium between having a kick drum and having no kick at all," he says. "The intent is not to get your booty on the dancefloor; I wanted a kick drum that propounds the rhythm, and the suitcase is pretty much perfect for that." **EQ**



She & Him—M. Ward (left) and Zooey Deschanel.

# TRIAL BY FIRE

Country outlaw **Shooter Jennings** pursues weird and wild sampling/effects experiments

BY KEN MICALLEF

Country legend Waylon Jennings' son, Shooter Jennings, drove cross-country in late 2008, accompanied by his fiancée, actress Drea de Matteo (*Adriana La Cerva* in *The Sopranos*), their baby, and the family dog. The eventful journey inspired Jennings' fifth album, *Black Ribbons* [Black Country Rock/Rocket Science Ventures]. Joining rebel country rock with the sonic experimentation of NIN and narration provided by famed novelist Stephen King, *Black Ribbons* takes an audio vérité approach to end-time scenarios.

"We were driving across the U.S., listening to Blue Oyster Cult and David Icke on the Art Bell program talking about 'reptilian leaders,'" Jennings recalls. "Around Arkansas, the radio announces that the economy has basically collapsed. I got this moment of clarity: I knew when I got to L.A., I would make a record about a possible police state, the New World Order, and the importance of family."

Recorded at producer Dave Cobb's 1974 Studio ([theofficialdavecobb.com](http://theofficialdavecobb.com)) in Silverlake, CA, *Black Ribbons* was created on equipment both classic (Neve 8068 console with 32 Neve 31102 pre-amp/EQ, AKG D 19C microphone, and Urei 1176LN compressors) and contemporary (Pro Tools|HD 2, Avedis Audio MA5 preamp, Native Instruments Kontakt). The pair began by sampling drums and layering sounds, and eventually brought in musicians (Jennings' band, Heiropphant) to double the samples and flesh out the arrangements. With the luxury of Cobb's 24/7 studio, he and Jennings experimented beyond the box.

"Using Kontakt as our sampler, we created these large libraries," Jennings says. "Everything from drums and television static to Nintendo chip sets, iPhone recordings, and an Alex Jones video about Bohemian Grove. We worked from there."

*Black Ribbons'* opener "Wake Up!" is a spot-on Pink Floyd homage,

complete with mind-bending David Gilmour-modeled guitar solos. Beneath the hard work, Cobb and Jennings kept it fun. The title track, for example, was a study in tape-loop madness.

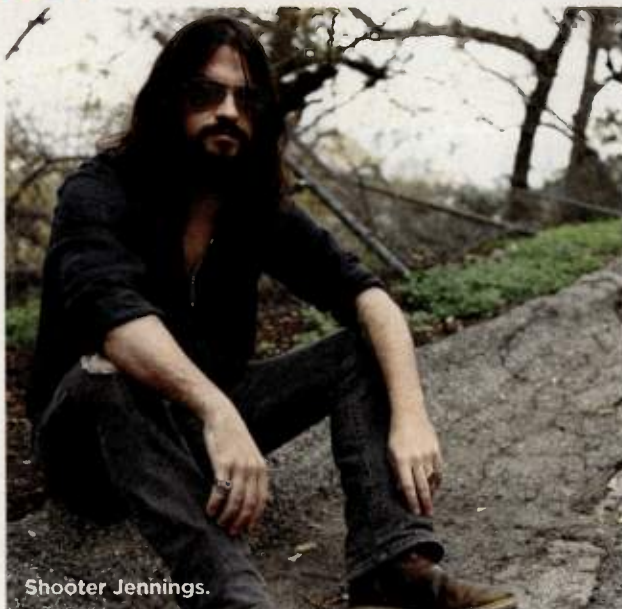
"Dave took all 11 tracks of audio and ran them into an Ampex MM1200 tape machine," Jennings says, "then ran the loop back into Pro Tools and put sends from the Pro Tools tracks going back out to the Ampex. So there was this constant stereo loop cycling; it sounds like angels fluttering. There's just enough of a delay between the tracks in the loop that it doesn't create crazy feedback."

"We were constantly playing with tape effects, tape slap, feedback delay, and hitting it hot to see what came back," Cobb adds.

Cobb and Jennings also worked lo-fi effects, tricking out a Radio Shack PZM Microphone for ultimate physical pain and audio pleasure on "Triskaidekaphobia."

"The Radio Shack PZM mic adds a lot of sizzle to vocals," Cobb explains. "And they're omni-directional, so you don't have to be so close on them. We ran it through a Dunlop MXR Dyna Comp pedal as well."

"We put the PZM mic on top of a baffle," Jennings elaborates, "and another mic near the bottom of the baffle. I placed myself in this weird, L-shaped position and sang down towards the bottom mic, and the PZM on top picked up a reflection, which produced this underwater effect. We had tremolo and phaser effects going, too. With my body in that L shape, it contorted my muscles and brought out a certain range from my voice."



Shooter Jennings.

NATT SAYLES

The experimentation extended to King's monologue, which begins as creepy and turns surreal. "We put it in Pro Tools, removed all the delay, and ran two different signals through two different patches in SoundToys Echoboy," Jennings says. "One had a shortwave setting, another had a saturated tape setting, and then we mixed them together. The slight latency between settings thickened his voice a lot. That amplified it and made it stand out. I wanted to keep his voice sonically clear and high quality but just add this effect that was like a future-level MP3."

Cobb and Jennings also incorporated reverse guitar effects, disguised Nintendo samples, DI guitars through '70s fuzz pedals, acoustic piano through wah and delay pedals, and iPhone field recordings from Cobb's Silverlake neighborhood. Their naiveté kept it real.

"I always thought that I didn't know enough about sound to make a good record," Jennings states. "But there is no right way to do anything. It's about what sounds good to you. Don't be afraid that your thing won't sound as good as everybody else's. At the end of the day, it might even sound better." 🎧

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# EASY BREEZY

## Black Rebel Motorcycle Club on Opting for Tracking and Mixing Simplicity

BY JOHN PAYNE

From their gritty psychedelia/classic-rock incarnation to their more recent forays into an acoustic-laced, alterna-Americana sound, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club has always been the kind of band that intuitively goes for a sound but refuses to get fussy about it. For their new, self-produced album, *Beat the Devil's Tattoo* (on their own Abstract Dragon label), BRMC rehearsed and recorded at Basement Studio in Philadelphia.

"At Basement," guitarist/singer Peter Hayes says, "it comes down to

the ability for all of us to live and eat together under the same roof, and you have the ability to walk downstairs and rehearse any time you want to."

The band—also featuring bassist/guitarist/singer Robert Levon Been and Raveonettes drummer Leah Shapiro—wrote and rehearsed 20 tracks at Basement. After recording drum and bass tracks in four days in Los Angeles, they returned to Philly to add guitars and vocals.

The sound they sought came about in the band's favored blend of analog and digital technologies. While the studio's Mackie board was used as a

central meeting point throughout the production process, BRMC recorded to tape, dumped tracks to Pro Tools for editing and mixing, and then went back to tape.

For tracking, the band relied primarily on its own TASCAM MS-16 1-inch machine, often using it as a tone-damaging box. "I like the way it distorts when you overdrive the channels, and I have it clipping in the red the whole time," Hayes says. "When you really work with it, it gets a *real* crunchy sound. Every once in a while I get lucky and get this kind of Beatles thing going on."

BRMC—(left to right:)—Peter Hayes,  
Robert Levon, and Leah Shapiro.



For bands seeking that gritty ring of real-rock authenticity, it's become common practice to capture the big-booming sound of the room. Not so for BRMC. "It's almost all direct-inject into the board," Hayes says. "For getting a nice close-miked sound, I've got a Coles 4038 pancake ribbon mic that works real well on the drums and guitar. But for the most part, it's always been kind of a challenge. It's easy to get ambient room sounds from miking the guitar, but it's a lot easier to skip all the wires and just run straight into the board because [otherwise] you find yourself EQ-ing the mic and tweaking knobs, dealing with the room, and dealing with the amp and microphone."

But what's ultimately important are the results he gets, right? "I'm still debating that!" He says with a laugh. "You know, I like more depth, and so you kind of fake that by putting on five or six guitars to hopefully give it that feel


of more depth than a room would have."

To create that sense of depth, Hayes employs a small but trusty array of digital plug-ins for compression, EQ, reverb/delay, and other enhancements. He likes Digidesign's various multi-tap delays and reverbs, including the D-Verb, favoring their ease of use for a quick slapback sound or whatever sounds good at the time. He also uses the Fairchild compressor/limiter plug-ins and Waves E-series EQ.

For vocal microphones, the band relies on an old standard, the Shure SM57, along with this little thing that looks like a peppershaker that Hayes got in a pawnshop, the Marshall MXL 603 condenser microphone.

"The vocals in our band are not secondary," Hayes says, "but we're not a band that puts them way up front. I like the way the Shure and MXL 603 compress on their own when you yell into 'em—they really hold their ground."

Meanwhile, the versatility of Hayes' Gibson ES-335 guitar has never let him down. "It's all 335, and for me it's a feel thing," he says. "The majority of our songs start out on acoustic guitar, then move over to the 335; it's always felt more meaty to me—you feel like you have a real guitar in your hands. And with all the different tunings that I use, it makes it a lot easier because it holds the tunings very accurately and precisely."

In the studio and onstage, Hayes' 335 undergoes extensive warping through a small selection of stompboxes, including Seymour Duncan distortion/overdrive pedals. "I like using the Duncans a lot; I use them on the bass as well and run that straight into the board, though it sounds great through an amp, too. I also use [Alesis] QuadraVerb for reverb stuff that involves these howling kinda sounds—it's like a freight train!" 

# TRIPLE PLAY

## The Living Sisters Meld Three Harmonies on One Mic

BY KYLEE SWENSON

Harmony is a beautiful thing, and The Living Sisters epitomize harmony beautifully. But while the trio's sound is well-crafted, it started as a flight of fancy borne from a love of old country and gospel harmony groups such as The Louvin Brothers, The Delmore Brothers, The Andrew Sisters, and the one-time collaboration of Emmylou Harris, Linda Ronstadt, and Dolly Parton (for the album *Trio*).

Separately, singer/songwriters Inara George (The Bird and the Bee), Becky Stark (Lavender Diamond), and Eleni Mandell have made music for years. The Living Sisters is a low-pressure project the ladies worked on when they weren't on tour with their other bands. "It was like us getting together having tea and maybe playing a show here and there," George says.

George (daughter of Little Feat's Lowell George) hopped onboard after Stark and Mandell had already put together most of the songs for The Living Sisters' debut, *Love to Live* [Vanguard]. Mandell took the low harmonies, and Stark and George would alternate between middle and high harmonies. But because George joined the group last, writing her parts was a bit like a game of Tetris. "My parts are a little more complex because I'm singing really high and then I have to go low because I'm finding where they had not harmonized," George says.

And not every song the ladies write works for the group. "Some songs sound better being harmonized than others," George explains. "[For example], if you ever tried to harmonize on a Joni Mitchell song, it's really difficult because the melody is so prominent. And some songs are so personal that it's odd to have more than one person sing it."

Producer Sheldon Gomberg started recording The Living Sisters on three mics, but scaled back. "I wanted it old-school like the old bluegrass records, where there's one mic and they just bob and weave and do the mixing themselves," he says. "It was really great



The Living Sisters (left to right)—Becky Stark, Eleni Mandell, and Inara George.

LAUREN DUKOFF

to watch and listen as they found their marks and figured out how much they had to come in and out and work the microphone. You get three microphones in the room, and you run into phase issues and imperfections. Here you've got one mic, and there's no issue. It just sounds clear and in your face."

The main mic was a Neumann U 47 through a Quad Eight Coronado console and a black face 1176 compressor. "Becky has a quieter voice than the other two, so she'd have to come in more, but Inara and Eleni would pretty much trigger their compression about the same, a 3:1 ratio," Gomberg says. For reverb, Gomberg mainly used an EMT 140 Plate and sometimes lightly mixed in a D-Verb plug-in.

On *Love to Live*, instrumentation had the job of accompanying the vocals without intruding on their space. One of the Sisters played acoustic guitar, Gomberg played bass, and there were a handful of session musicians playing drums, electric guitar, Hammond B3, piano, and saxophone.

For the weepy, Santo & Johnny-style guitar on "Ferris Wheel," guitarist Jeremy Drake played Mandell's Gibson ES-335 through an Ampeg Gemini II with a Coles 4038 mic and an 1176. Gomberg's bass rig was a '62 Fender P-Bass DI'd or through an Ampeg B15N through an RCA BA-6A limiting ampli-

fier, and a 200-year-old upright Czech bass miked with a Neumann KM 84.

Drum mics included Neumann U 67 overheads, AKG D 112 for the kick, a Shure SM57 and AKG C 451 for the snare, and Pearlman TM-1, 451, and U 47 fet mics for the room. Acoustic guitar was a KM 254. Hammond B3 featured SM57s on top and a Beta 52 on the bottom. Piano was a pair of AKG C 414 EB mics. And saxophone was a Sony C-37A through the BA-6A. Other compressors included the Neve 2254e and dbx 160x.

Gomberg is conservative with EQ. "I'll add a little bit in the highs for the vocal to cut through," he says. "I dip out instruments that are building up around 250 or 300, and I'll do high-pass filters on stuff that's rumbling down low, but other than that, I'm not a real drastic EQ guy."

With his less-is-more approach, mixing is all about solving problems and stopping when he runs out of them. "It's always odd when you're mixing: You don't know when you're one step away, but as soon as you hit that step, you're like, 'I don't know what else to do.' When it feels done, it's like, 'Well let me get out of the way then.'"

Gomberg doesn't go far beyond using reverb and compression when mixing. "You've got three girls with beautiful voices," he says. "How much do you want to put in the way of that?" **EQ**

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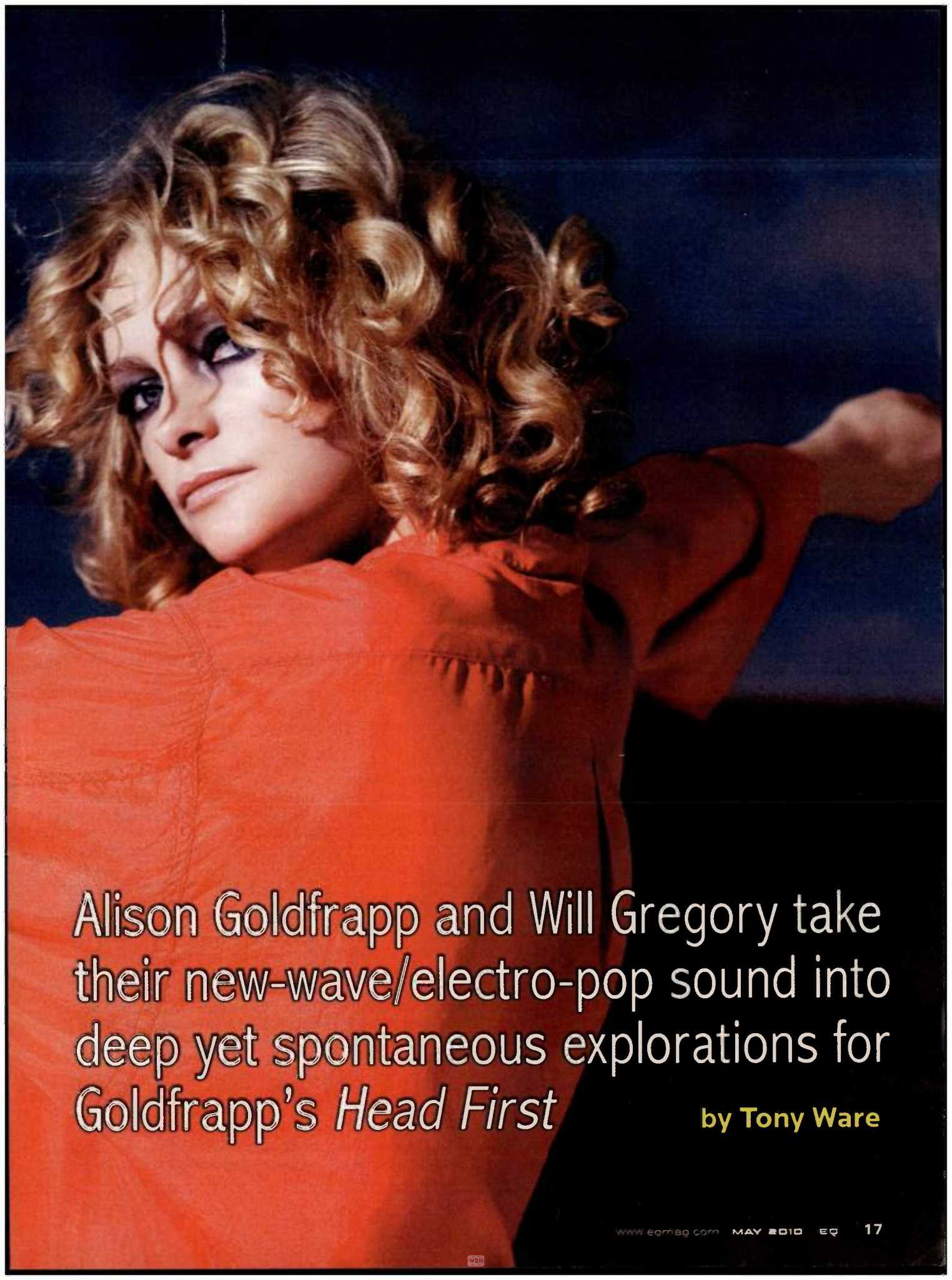
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# DIVING INTO SOUND



Alison Goldfrapp and Will Gregory take their new-wave/electro-pop sound into deep yet spontaneous explorations for Goldfrapp's *Head First*

by **Tony Ware**

## DIVING INTO SOUND

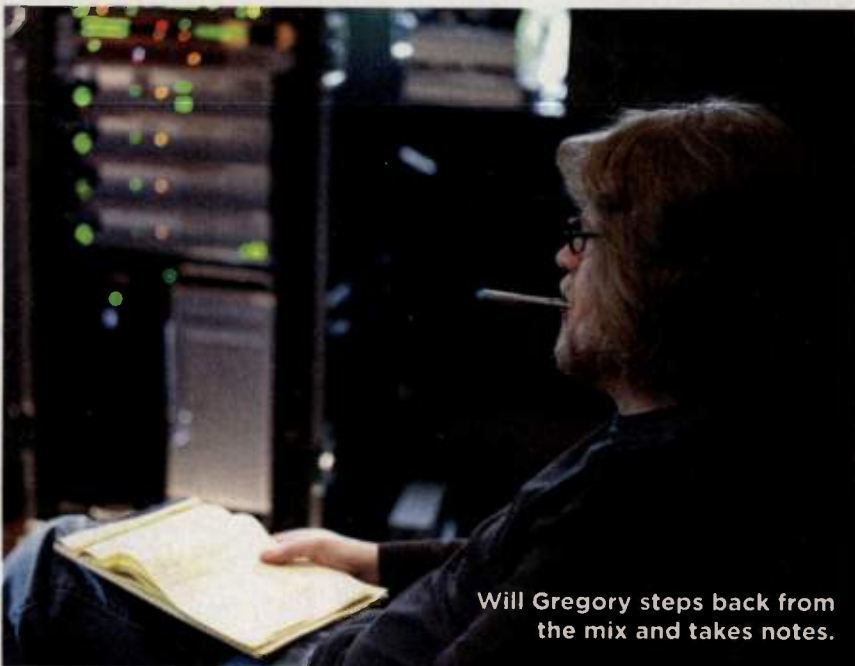
Depending on whom you ask, Goldfrapp is a person, place, or thing. And all answers are correct.

Goldfrapp is Alison Goldfrapp, a chanteuse-songwriter working dark allure into a Day-Glo pop medium. Goldfrapp is also the creative space in which the UK-based duo of Alison Goldfrapp and vintage-synth enthusiast Will Gregory collaborate. And Goldfrapp is a decade-long conglomeration of analog cabaret, throbbing synth-pop come-ons, squelching romantics, and icy "sado-pop" (as described by the band), which has coalesced into a fifth full-length album, the self-produced *Head First* [Mute].

Goldfrapp the diva has been perfecting her theatrical persona through varying periods and performance spaces, emerging from the glitter massacres of the art college circuit in the mid-'90s with cinematic appearances among the bleary noir of Tricky's *Maxinquaye* and Orbital's *Snivilization* and *Middle of Nowhere*, among other albums. Goldfrapp the musical partnership, meanwhile, has been around since 1999, when Goldfrapp and session musician/soundtrack composer Gregory were introduced, resulting in their modern classic 2000 debut, *Felt Mountain*, a collection of eerie resonance.

The results of that meeting have been an ongoing series of synth-borne vignettes, peppered with the influences of John Barry film scores to psychedelic pastoral folk to Italo disco, and praised by everyone from journalists to Madonna. In varying degrees on alternating albums, the duo has built up, then torn down dancefloor burners and comedown epics. It's this ability to balance freeform with a sound foundation that even attracted Christina Aguilera to commission a week of sessions with the duo in February of 2009.

Speaking of range, on 2008's *Seventh Tree*, Goldfrapp looked to the countryside to provide a new contrast, incorporating wafts of acoustic guitar, chirping found sounds, orchestral strings, and striking Celtic harps. But with the nine concisely edited tracks of *Head First*, Goldfrapp has settled into the opening cusp of the '80s for inspiration.



DANIEL MILLER

Will Gregory steps back from the mix and takes notes.

### SONG DRAMA

If there's any track that's crystallized the thrall in which Goldfrapp can hold a dancefloor, it's "Ooh La La." Released in 2005 on the album *Supernature*, this vamping track followed in a lineage directly traceable to the golden era of stomping glam and Giorgio Moroder.

Goldfrapp first codified this approach on 2003's *Black Cherry*, using it to best effect on the tracks "Strict Machine" and "Train." The group then bypassed that thick, robotic, radio-commandeering sound on *Seventh Tree*, before returning to the electro-pop realm with *Head First*. But this time around only recalls the repetitious minimalism in tone, as one of the main goals of *Head First* was to focus more on arrangements.

"A song like 'Ooh La La' hammers on one note and gets bigger and smaller, staying in one key as it drills its way at you, and we liked that and make a virtue of it," Gregory reflects. "But for *Head First* we wanted to try on a new set of clothes, change key into the chorus in some way that didn't sound like a cliché, make it direct, and not hide behind sounds."

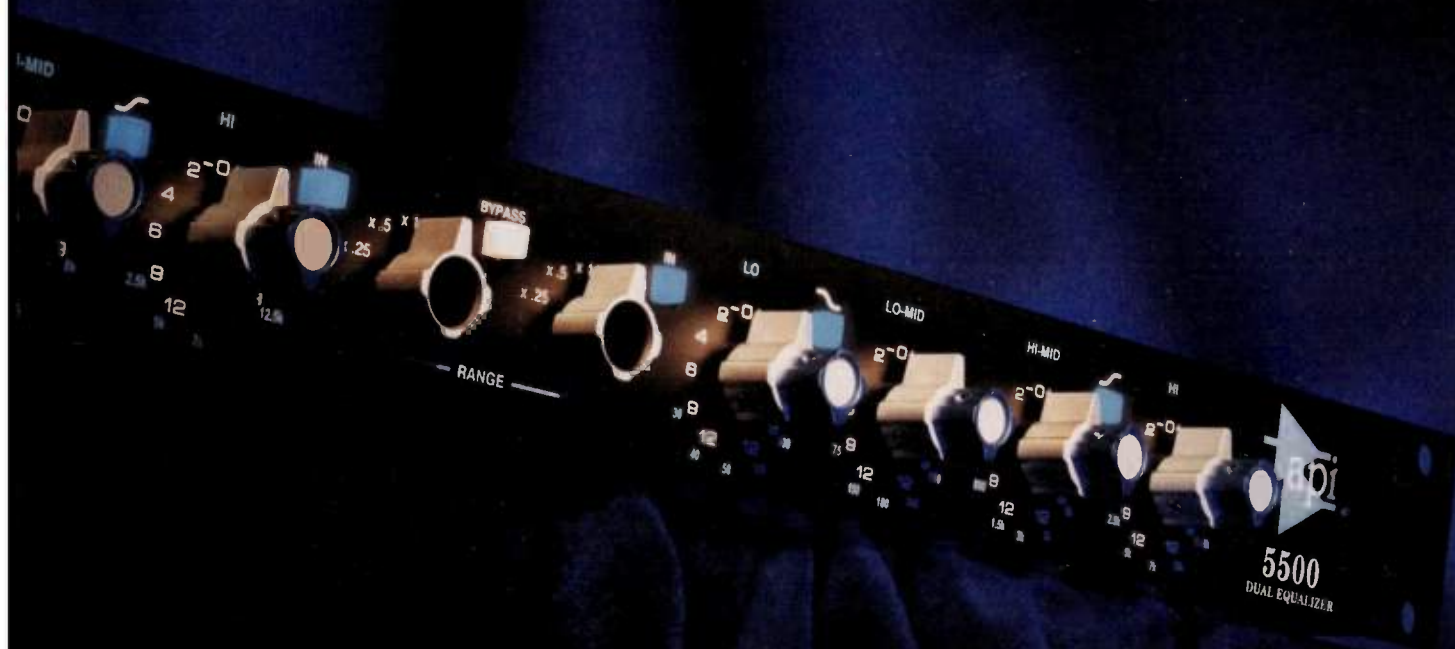
This time, they were more attentive to structure changes in their songs. "I think in the past we got off on the rawness of the electronics, how that set the atmosphere, but often we were content to let that run with the

voice. Of course, we still love Moroder and Vangelis. Moroder is very good at having a pulse at one tempo and then there's something going against it, underneath it, maybe a half-time thing with a different harmonic logic, but we realized there are so many different ways to go. So, listening to Hall & Oates, Billy Joel, and various people who we thought had a handle on getting drama out of a song structure, we saw how you can have twists and turns and arrive at a chorus that makes it feel good, not just catches attention because you have a huge drum fill and explosive white noise. We wanted to use space musically, not just sonically."

Alison sees *Head First* as less clinical than previous efforts. "It's warmer in sound, warmer in its sentiment, than *Supernature*," she says. "We worked to keep things both simple and far from boring, and to bring out the best performance without polishing it until it's too shiny."

As it turns out, directness is far from a completely new concept to Goldfrapp. *Head First* was recorded between March and December 2009, primarily in Gregory's home-based studio in a town near Bath, England, where Gregory surrounds himself with a collection of analog synths he surveys from a Yamaha O2R mixing board with 16-channel bussing. While he also has a restored Audix desk, he

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## DIVING INTO SOUND

says he's yet to integrate it; he finds using his O2R may be primitive, but it is instinctive and "when writing you can sacrifice a bit of sound to tease an idea out."

This put-the-song-first approach prevails over equipment upgrades (including a move from Logic Pro 7 to Logic Pro 8 that was postponed in favor of immediacy). Gregory professes to recording every take as it's happening, as he'd rather work to snip up and stitch things back together later than "end up down an extended technical alleyway while Alison is left to look out the window," Gregory says.

And recording impulsively yields better musical results than if they were to over-think every move. "The English language doesn't contain too many words to describe music past 'faster,' 'slower,' 'louder,' 'softer,' 'higher,' 'lower,' so we prefer to indulge the spontaneous and speak in example."

"I can't read music," Goldfrapp admits. "So instead of saying, 'Just go to *B* flat,' it's more likely we'd say something like, 'Take what you just played and make it *fizzy*, make it feel like it's squeezing out of your chest and off the edge of a cliff.'"

### VOCAL ESCAPADES

For several albums now, Goldfrapp has recorded vocals through a large diaphragm Percy Bear mic (with an AKG 12 C capsule) into a 1976-era Audix preamp, which Gregory says is equivalent in character to a Neve strip. He feels the combination picks up the dimensionality of Goldfrapp's higher register, although sometimes Goldfrapp just sings through a Shure SM58 direct into the board when the duo needs to work through a vibe together in the control room.

Gregory often splits the vocal signal from a DI to record in stereo—one channel dry and the other a combination of Bel Digital Delay, Roland SE-301 Space Echo, Boss CE-1 Chorus Ensemble and/or Electro-Harmonix Small Stone Phase Shifter. The idea is to capture the most musical response and create long, subtly degenerating lines without losing an entire take because one note might need pitch correcting (which is difficult once draped in effects).



SERGE LEBLON

For pitch correction, Gregory takes the dry vocal into Celemony Melodyne for minor tweaks, or quite often to create a separate harmony as a suggestion for Goldfrapp to follow. "Maybe in one or two songs [such as 'Believer'], we retained some of the

parts I created, but I really only use Melodyne to get a sound I can't get myself; mostly it just moves the process along and explores possibilities when Alison's not there. Normally I'd prefer to have her to cycle around and build tracks up."

There are times, however, when a little unnatural layering is a good thing. For example, the Bel delay was particularly favored on tracks such as "Voicething," as it can deliver three-second-plus long repeats, or you can halve the bit-rate and double it, switch things in and out to suddenly go half or double speed, and control the regeneration to get a much longer deterioration than a tape echo. "You can use it for a lovely Terry Riley-style fast slapback or to build up great long loops of yourself, almost like a [DigiTech] JamMan," Gregory says.

Other vocal experiments include Gregory using some of Goldfrapp's melodies as the basis for synth lines. Or he'll patch them through pedals and filters to create hybrid instrumentals. Or he reverses tracks, has Goldfrapp sing another take, and transposes that, creating a psychedelic whoosh. And certain vocal inflections are used as musical punctuation, such as the use of a repeated "Ha" cut-and-pasted throughout "Hunt" and "Voicething."

"Since Laurie Anderson [and her syllable-enriched single 'O Superman'], it's been in the vocab, and it's a powerful thing to play a sampled vocal to get a bit of robotic-ness," Gregory reflects. "You have to remember, however, that a 'Ha' is a bit like a guitar strum; if you put the front of the audio on the downbeat, it sounds late, and if you put the loudest part there it doesn't work either, so you end up having to play with it a bit by ear."

## MONSTER SYNTHS

Gregory often likes to capture synths analog-style as opposed to acquiescing to the convenience of plug-ins. "I like the idea of Max/MSP, how to create your own bespoke effects; it's power to the people, isn't it? But I prefer when you really move air in a room to programming the comb-filter-frequency-range-response-degeneration-multiple-delay thing," Gregory says. "The day I first put a [Roland] SH-101 through a Space Echo was much more powerful for me in terms of realizing how far I could take sounds if I just plugged in and go."

A noticeable shift has happened over the years, as the Goldfrapp synth collection has transitioned from mono to polyphonic. And it shows in the chords that swell across *Head First*

with a jubilation that sounds genuine. "Writing songs is a process of Gregory and I in a room doing a lot of jamming," Goldfrapp says. "Writing, producing, and recording are all parts of the same world, and for this album we kept pushing [the synths/buttons] until we found the appropriately 'up' flavor that we felt helped define the identity of the song."

More than one track began with a simple pulse rather than complex MIDI sequencing. For example, "Shiny and Warm" evolved as a single-finger bass line jumping off from the template of "Cheree" by Suicide. "I think some of their stuff is very beautiful and soft in the minimal-ness it has," Goldfrapp says. "And I love on 'Shiny and Warm' how the synths are quite stark, working the atmosphere on that tune, working in the hardness and space against the vocal—it's really quite lyrical."

Goldfrapp's weapon-of-choice, the one that also made "Ooh La La" such a signature, is often the Oberheim Four-Voice, which offers a warm Synthesizer Expander Module (SEM) quartet, mixer, and 49-note keyboard for blending. Undeniably suited for monster riffs (only two years removed from the Oberheim OB-X that provided Van Halen with the arena-worthy "Jump"), the

Four-Voice is found on "Rocket," which opens *Head First*. Gregory finds this synth versatile enough to be set in mono for bass lines and just as quickly switched into formants for harmony. A similar voice can be found in multi-oscillator synths through a detuned sawtooth wave and adjusted envelopes, but Gregory really loves the Oberheim's filters, which he finds so "sizzly and lovely once you shove the resonance up and use it at the top to drive quite hot," he says.

An equally inspirational, frothy DX7 soft synth was added to "Rocket" and became the backbone of "Alive." Some of Gregory's favorite synth work, however, is when he intentionally warps "slightly dead-end synths" to apply distinctive detailing. For instance, a pulse at the bottom of "Voicething" is an Elka Synthex played into the Audix preamp until it overloaded but before it became "clicky."

There are also instances on the album of a Siel Orchestra 2 internally EQ'd to add creatively muted, while still animated strings. Equally, units such as the Moog 15 were placed in the tree to be used as filters, finding peaks in the resonance of another synth and using it creatively to add drama to the swooshing high pads in "Believer."

However, unlike on previous albums,

## SECURING A SOLID BASS

Producing a modern electronic album built up from varying synths can feel like a game of limbo, like trying to answer the question, "How low can you go?" When it comes to bass, sometimes the result is not low enough, as Will Gregory found out during the finishing stages of Goldfrapp's *Head First* sessions. Luckily, Gregory called some auxiliary reinforcement in the form of sound engineer Pascal Gabriel, who worked diligently on a handful of cuts to take the original Logic Pro 7 sessions up to Logic Pro 8 for structural and arrangement suggestions, while being especially attentive that the bottom end on synths and kick drums was "locked and tight, without any unnecessary wobble," he says.

On "Rocket," for example, Gabriel suggested a "two-bar edit of the pre-chorus section to tidy up the arrangement, after helping them complete a new middle-8 break," he says. Then he used his "first port-of-call" sub-bass generator GForce Minimosta (a "Minimoog emulation on steroids") to unify synths into something "lovely and warm, and very distinct," he says.

Universal Audio 1176LN and LA-2A plug-ins were applied to help dial in this composite tonality, as some rhythm lines were from original tracking, some were soft-synth replacements, and then an additional smattering were Korg MiniKorg 700 and Moog Voyager overdubs. However, overriding compression/EQ was left to engineer Bruno Ellingham and mixing engineer Mark "Spike" Stent, who were given a band-approved pre-mix monitor featuring Gabriel's contributions that was then imported into Pro Tools.

## DIVING INTO SOUND

which have seen a copious use of pedals such as the Univox Super-Fuzz, the synths on *Head First* were not excessively overdriven. "I did put a little [Line 6] Amp Farm on some things, added a little spring reverb, or fuzzed them up a little," Gregory says. "But it wasn't like my use of the Univox [on *Supernature*], because listening to how revved up everything was can tire me out now."

### DRUMS AND THE FINAL LAP

Helping Gregory navigate the forest of patch leads is sonicstate.com, offering an online archive full of historical specs plus user tips and tricks on discontinued electronics. But the association doesn't end there, as the editor of Sonic State, Nick Batt, has been a long-term collaborator with Goldfrapp. For *Head First*, he contributed by coordinating a first for Goldfrapp: the recording of live drums that were integrated into "Rocket," "Alive," and "I Wanna Life."

"We had some grooves tracked at

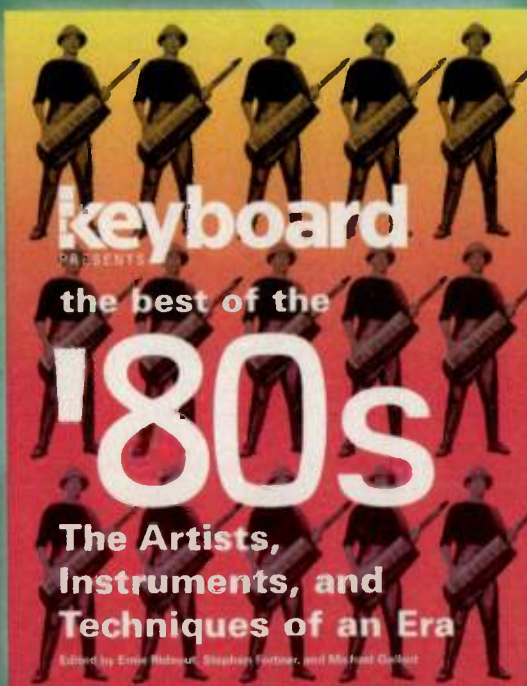
Real World Studios," Gregory says, "where [engineer Greg Freeman] set up some [Neumann] U 47s as medium range, then a couple back in the room to get a slooshy sound. And he added a Cole 4038, as well as some close mics, and I think there was an NS10 speaker in front of the bass drum for some sub. Nick would break out the kicks and snares and overheads to allow some flexibility, but then he mixed it all down to stereo and put some delay and reverb and EQ on them to get different character—like stadium or dry and disco—and then turned them into Apple Loops for me to drop in. From there I'd add my own kicks and snares and do things like take all the bottom out to make them just a top-kit sound."

And Batt was not the only contributor on *Head First*. "We've become more catholic about letting [acoustic] sounds in that weren't 'traditional' for us in the beginning," Gregory admits. Two guitarists (Alex Lee and Chris Goulston), a bassist (Charlie Jones), a

violinist (Davide Rossi) and drummer (Jed Lynch) all contributed sessions.

Additionally, Tim Goldsworthy (DFA/UNKLE) assisted percussion and arrangements for four tracks and provided Gregory with a new toy. Goldsworthy had commissioned a device about the size of a matchbox that offered MIDI in/pulse clock out, with a single knob where you could subdivide the clock to 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and 64. This allowed Gregory to lock a vintage synth's arpeggiator to the computer session, creating instant "spiky fireworks" off of a few chord shapes. Previously, Gregory had tried holding his SH-101's arpeggiator at a fast setting while toggling the octave switch to shoot it up and down very fast, but Goldsworthy's box offered an easier realtime option, which made its way to a lead synth on "Dreaming" and "Alive" without the need for a clunky CV-to-MIDI converter.

Then, engineer Bruno Ellingham came onboard to assist Gregory in the studio. "He tidied up takes, ordered



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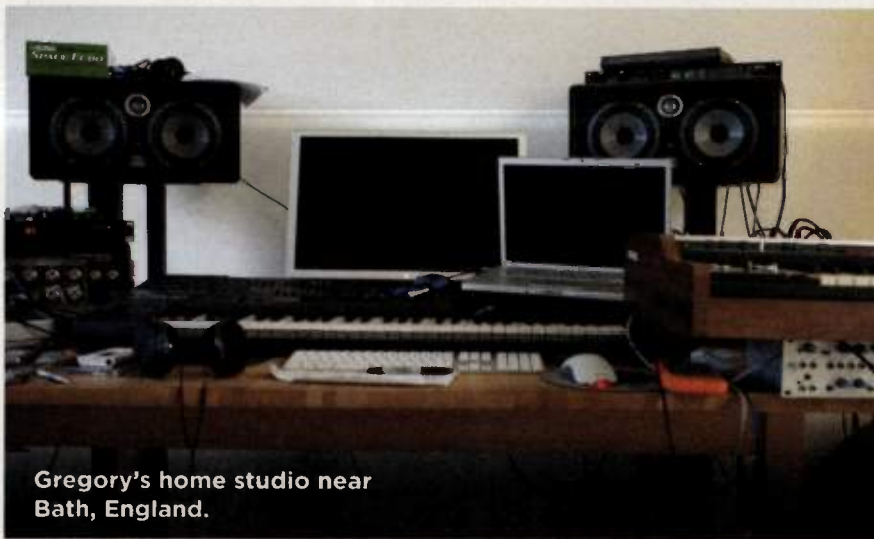
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Gregory's home studio near Bath, England.

things, did comping and editing, and contributed some arrangements," Gregory says. Also, while finalizing *Head First* with mixing engineer Mark "Spike" Stent, Gregory brought in engineer Pascal Gabriel (see sidebar) to help out. Gregory says Gabriel, who he met during remix work done on Goldfrapp's 2006 single "Ride a White Horse," pro-

vided in-the-box "polish, sparkle, and shine," plus some arrangement advice for several tracks. "He was great for the last 100-meter dash, came in quickly and efficiently when it was hands-to-the-pump time."

The tracks went through Logic in the final preparations before mixing. "I sometimes put a compressor over the

mix when making guides," Gregory says. "But I don't rely on compression or EQ to glue it all together before the mixing stage. I think you're sonically limiting yourself and creatively cheating yourself if you start early on compression like it's on the radio just to make yourself feel excited about it. I think it's better to work on the balance, keep things open, focus on counter-melodies, all the octave doubling, all the rhythm emphasis, and put all the energy into that. That's my puritanical streak, I suppose. Maybe I'm going MOR," he says with a laugh.

"It all comes down to the arrangements, keeping the song on a journey that ebbs and flows but ends up feeling good," Goldfrapp says. "We've always been good at getting things as they are happening, knowing when to step back, and working together to avoid eluding the plot."

With a positive outlook that echoes *Head First's* euphoric sonic attitude, the Goldfrapp partnership sounds like it's in a good place and is a good place to be. **EQ**

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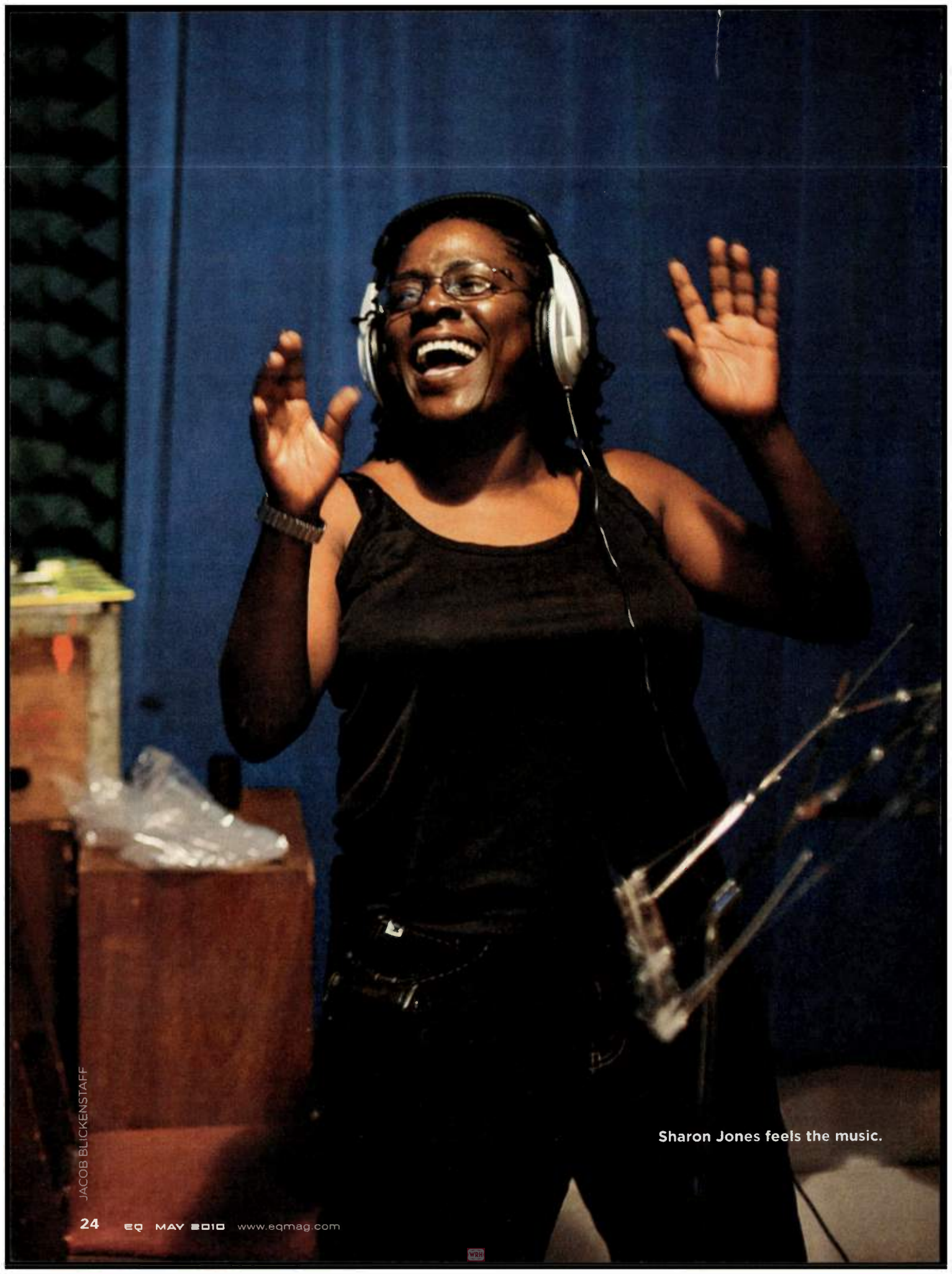
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JACOB BLICKENSTAFF

Sharon Jones feels the music.

# MM MADE IN IN THE MM MOMENT

## Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings showcase the instinctual way Daptone does soul with *I Learned the Hard Way*

by Patrick Sisson

The Daptone story already has its share of legendary characters: There's bassist/producer/co-owner Gabriel Roth, who turned a two-story house into a recording studio for the Daptone Records label; then there are the Dap-Kings, who collectively played on Amy Winehouse's sophomore album, *Back to Black*; and of course there's the prison guard-turned-electric soul singer, Sharon Jones.

One lesser known—but no less important—of these characters is Chief Tape Operator Wayne Gordon, who's had a hand in all of Daptone's releases. A warm studio presence

decked out in a white lab coat, Gordon has spent hours threading up an Ampex AG-440B tape machine, marking reels of RMG SM911 tape with a silver Sharpie and splicing together tracks with an X-ACTO knife. His presence alongside Roth helps explain why the music being recorded in Daptone strikes a special chord.

"I'd done a lot of digital recording work, but nothing of this magnitude [in analog]," Gordon says. "It's suddenly like playing for the '72 Dolphins. I was in college before, and now I'm in the pros."



Sharon Jones and the Dap-kings (left to right)—Gabriel Roth, Fernando Velez, Homer Steinweiss, Thomas Brenneck, Sharon Jones, Neal Sugerman, Dave Guy, Ian Hendrickson Smith, and Binky Griptite.

LAURA HANIFIN

## MADE IN THE MOMENT

The gear, techniques, and even the sports metaphors are old school at Daptone. But that's just how co-owners Gabriel Roth and Neal Sugarman (the latter who plays a Selmer Mark VI saxophone as part of the Dap-Kings) like it. Their label's headquarters and studio in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn is a spiritual center for the recent funk and soul revival, where they practice a throwback style of recording that doesn't involve computers or Pro Tools. Gordon's tape machine doesn't even have a counter.

"We're having a good season," Gordon says, discussing the label's recent run of albums. "Gabe is like Don Shula, and Neal is like Joe Robbie."

Daptone's warm, handmade hallmark sound starts in the label's studio, built in 2003. The label's artists transformed the two-family home themselves, with Sharon Jones doing electrical wiring and Sugarman laying drywall. They built an isolation room partially out of discarded tires, installed a Trident 65 console in the control room, and ripped out the ceiling to expose the wood beams underneath. The do-it-yourself construction ethos parallels Roth's studio philosophy.

"Making a record has to be a craft," says Roth, who is often credited as Bosco Mann. "It's not pure art or a pure science. If you go for science, you lose out on feeling, and if you go for art, you aren't going to capture it. There's a balance. It's like fine carpentry. It's aesthetic, but you need to be confident and know how to use your tools."

### BALLSY LIMITATIONS

When Roth and the Dap-Kings started on *I Learned the Hard Way* late last year, the biggest change was switching



The Dap-Kings record live.

JACOB BLICKENSTAFF

from 16- to 8-track recording. By limiting options, Roth believed he was freeing up the recording process.

"Using fewer tracks and not having as much isolation and options in the recording process forces your hand in a way as a musician, arranger, producer, and engineer," he says. "It puts everything on the line a little bit more."

Downsizing created a different mindset. Recording straight to tape with only eight tracks, Roth and Gordon needed to make quick decisions and do a lot of comping, especially as some of the more complex songs, including "Give It Back," involved extra string tracks, backup singers, and extra horns. Gordon would often run tracks from the main Ampex to another tape machine and compile or comp them to save space. Rhythm tracks would be recorded live, comped, and mixed down to make room for additional instruments—backup vocals, glockenspiel recorded in the isolation room, or the last-minute addition of a clavinet. They

had to keep everything in phase, and Roth had to mix on the fly.

"In the control room, we had a score in front of us, so we were rehearsing with them and going through the arrangements," Roth says. "We practiced moves on the mixer, like, 'When you get to

the vibes on this bridge, turn it up'"

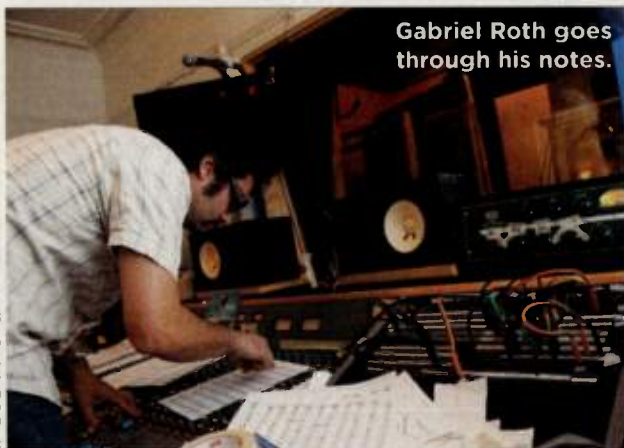
Mixing decisions—like sticking with a certain instrumental mix or taking out buffering to capture a harsher, more brittle sound—were made in the moment rather than days or weeks later in the final mixdown process.

"With the tape machine, you have to step up and think about what you're trying to do," Roth says. "It requires more balls. You have to be focused. If a sax player plays a solo and says he can do it better, I'm going to tell him, 'Either you do it better or leave it alone because I'm going to record over that one.'"

### PEOPLE (AND MIC) PLACEMENT

Trusting your ears is an old cliché, but when Roth and Gordon recorded Dap-Kings, they worked to remove preconceptions. They set up a variety of mics, from a Shure SM57 to random Radio Shack gear, and blindly labeled them in the control room so they weren't prejudiced when hearing the results. For the bulk of *I Learned the Hard Way*, a single Reslo (a tiny, square Russian ribbon mic) was set up about six feet high and five feet away from the horns and sent through a Tube-Tech EQ. Trumpet players stood on overturned speakers so they carried above the saxophones. Making the entire horn section, which ranged from a trio to a miniature big band, play into a single mic forced them to mix and balance themselves. Orchestral parts were recorded in the same manner.

"Leave it to the placement of the people, not the mics," Roth says. "Even before I place the mics, the



Gabriel Roth goes through his notes.

JACOB BLICKENSTAFF



Gabriel Roth directs the string section.

band is playing around the room, finding out where it sounds good, where it resonates. You're just using your ears. It's like, 'We're not getting enough of the second harmony. Why don't the two tenors switch places?'"

Getting the horns in a groove is just as important as the rhythm section, according to Sugarman, and that often boils down to tight arrangements, often with the baritone and trumpet playing in unison, and the tenor might be the third.

"We understand our roles and how we fit into the horn section, as well as which harmonies we need to pull out, tune by tune," Sugarman says. "And we always sound better on one mic. What we hear in the headphones relates to the blend we're making."

Jones' passionate and often spontaneous vocal performances—exemplified by "Money," which ramps up from a sly opening monologue to an explosive chorus—were recorded with an RCA-44 ribbon mic set far enough back so it's not overwhelmed by Jones' forceful singing. A Purple Audio Biz preamp provides extra gain, and the signal continues through another Tube-Tech Pre and compressor.

The rhythm section, which includes Roth on a Carvin bass (through a Juice Box direct box) and guitarists Binky

Griptite and Tommy "TNT" Brenneck on Gibson and Harmony Rocket guitars through Ampeg Gemini and Magnatone amps (miked with SM57s), anchors many tracks with more rich melodies and tones. Case in point is "I'll Still Be True," with its slinky cross currents of guitar.

## EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE

Despite careful arrangements, the midrange gets crowded, which requires some adjustments to maintain balance. Roth often used masking, so instruments only covered certain frequencies. It separated the bass and bass drum, but also proved useful when guitars, horns, and vocals threatened to overlap.

"If I want to push a guitar really trashy and trebly and I end up pushing it up 2K or something, I'll pull that completely out of the horn section, so they're not taking up the same place, or put the high-end up in the horns and take that out of the guitar section," he says. "Another thing I do when I'm mixing



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## MADE IN THE MOMENT

JACOB BLICKENSTAFF



Chief Tape Operator Wayne Gordon keeps track of the eight tracks.

is grouping things together and limiting them. If there's a guitar part riding through a whole song and there are some horns coming in, we allow that to knock the guitar out of the way for a minute. You don't want to squash things down, but you can do it right so certain things push other things out of the way. I also tend to be heavy-handed with EQs, if it sounds better. Lots of songs, I just grab a low-pass knob and push it all the way. I'm not under any illusion that there's anything sacred to protect."


Daptone's in-the-moment process makes mixing tracks easier for Roth, but he adds extra impact by hard-panning throughout the album. The triumphant summer porch boogie of "Better Things to Do," which opens with a crisp guitar lick and warm trumpet melody echoing the forthcoming main theme, gains added impact by slotting those two instruments to opposite ends of the spectrum.

"You listen to some Otis Redding records, and his vocals are all the way on the right, and the band is on the left," Roth says. "I think when you start letting go of what you're supposed to do and just let things sound good, you get good sounds in weird places. The mixes I don't like are the ones that sound perfectly balanced. The good ones are ones where you can barely hear something, or it really stands out."

Roth also created a bigger sound by using reverb. He used a Stocktronics plate reverb in the basement, and by mixing the pre-delay and direct reverb signals, he created a bigger-sounding room on songs such as "If You Call."

"I tried to create the illusion that I had a bigger room than I had," he says. "Using a tape machine as a pre-delay, you clean it up a bit. Bigger rooms have more delay before you hear the reflections."

The warmth of the recordings coming out of Daptone goes beyond the standard analog-versus-digital divide. The commitment of Roth and his crew to creating their own process has resulted in an aesthetic that's well beyond a pleasant anachronism.

"You plant that seed and you keep watering it," Sugarman says. "We never changed course. It evolves and every record is different, but it's our choice and we don't try to second guess." 



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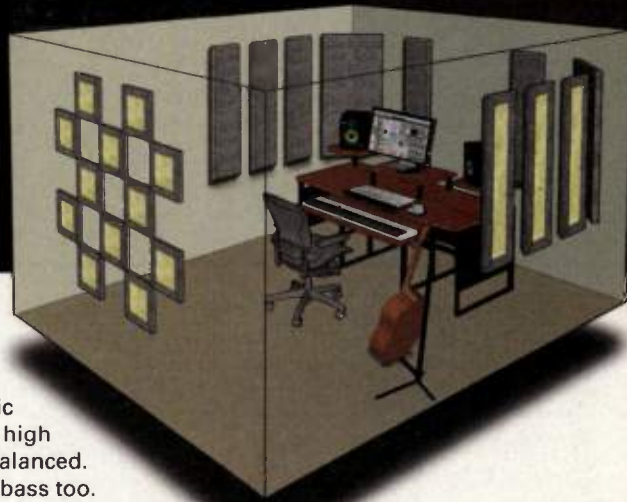
"When Brian Moncarz and I were setting up Rattlebox Studios, we had rooms that were basic rectangles. We wanted to keep the aesthetic of the room, such as the red brick and hardwood floors but tune the room to an international standard.

I turned to Primacoustic because I was familiar with their product from being in studios I had worked at. We purchased MaxTraps, FullTraps and Broadway acoustic panels and even though I am a bit of a novice when it comes to construction, I was able to easily install most of the units myself. They have dramatically changed the sound of the room for the better. I've just recently got the last bass trap in place and the panels have controlled the reflections in the room perfectly.

I love mixing in our room now. Mixes translate really well to my home listening room and especially the car. We also have Broadway panels in our vocal booth along with the Cumulus corner traps. They took the honk out of the room without adding that boxy sound you can often get with other room treatment. Listening in the room now is a pleasure and I can work for hours without over fatigue."

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3-time Grammy winning  
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Peter Dinklage, Kid Rock,  
Jonas Mitchell, Mudvayne,  
Dream Theater, Tool.



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# GEAR-GASM!

## *A Report on New Gear for 2010*

Trade shows are where products are introduced, connections are made, friendships are renewed, and partnerships are forged. And like clockwork, after every show there's a flurry of show reports that tell you what was shown—but let's probe a little deeper, take a look back, and sort out the significant products (with some background for context) and figure out why they matter.

### DAWS MARCH FORWARD

DAW updates aren't as fast and furious as they once were, but that's not just because of the economy; today's DAWs are pretty mature, so changes tend to be incremental, and about enhancing what already exists rather than breakthroughs.

**What:** Magix Samplitude Pro 11

**Why:** Samplitude has always emphasized its processors; now there's a new limiter, guitar/bass amp sim, and six-band phase linear EQ. But you'll also find new VST instruments, better take management, groove quantization, pre-recording for audio, and with MIDI, "retroactive" recording—if

you played something and wish you'd recorded it, Samplitude already did.

**Where:** [www.magix.com](http://www.magix.com)

**What:** Cakewalk Sonar 8.5

**Why:** Cakewalk threw a curve at AES, releasing a "point" upgrade at a reduced price rather than going for



**Akai APC20**



**Mackie Onyx-I Series**

Sonar 9. Why? We're not sure, but we won't question a significant upgrade that delivers extra processors, instruments, AudioSnap optimizations, Windows 7 compatibility (including 64-bit versions), and the Matrix View that puts Live-style improvisation into a Sonar context.

**Where:** [www.cakewalk.com](http://www.cakewalk.com)

**What:** Acoustica Mixcraft 5

**Why:** Acoustica raised a few eyebrows with Mixcraft 4's insanely high price/performance ratio. For Mixcraft 5, they've kept the low price but upped the ante: more virtual instruments, more effects (including an amp sim), a video track, grouping, and a lot more. Very impressive.

**Where:** [www.acoustica.com](http://www.acoustica.com)

**What:** Mackie Onyx-i Series Mixers/Interfaces

**Why:** The Onyx-i line provides a mixer-style audio interface for most DAWs, but goes one step further with Pro Tools M-Powered compatibility (requires a specialized Pro Tools driver and authorizer; \$50).

**Where:** [www.mackie.com](http://www.mackie.com)

**What:** Euphonix MC Transport

**Why:** Maybe you don't need a full-blown DAW controller for your Mac OS X application, but a handy transport control. Enter MC Transport, with a

high-resolution jog wheel and shuttle ring, ergonomic transport controls, and programmable soft keys.

**Where:** [www.euphonix.com](http://www.euphonix.com)

**What:** Akai APC20

**Why:** You use Ableton Live, but you're disappointed you can't quite swing the bucks for an APC40. No problem: The APC20 streets for a much lower price, but contains significant functionality for hands-on control.

**Where:** [www.akaipro.com](http://www.akaipro.com)

## WHEN I'M 64 (BITS)

Native 64-bit applications for Windows Vista/7 and Apple Snow Leopard have gone from a trickle to—well, a much bigger trickle. But 64 bits is the future, as the following companies attest.

**What:** Spectrasonics Virtual Instruments

**Why:** Spectrasonics makes great instruments, but they love to soak up RAM. With 64-bit systems able to access tons of RAM, it's a natural that Spectrasonics has made the leap to 64-bit operation.

**Where:** [www.spectrasonics.net](http://www.spectrasonics.net),  
[www.ilio.com](http://www.ilio.com)

**What:** Applied Acoustic Systems Virtual Instruments

**Why:** The AAS Professional and Session Series instruments will be natively compatible with 64-bit versions of Windows Vista/7, thanks to a free maintenance update.

**Where:** [www.applied-acoustics.com](http://www.applied-acoustics.com),  
[www.ilio.com](http://www.ilio.com)

**What:** Apple Logic 9 Pro

**Why:** Logic Pro 9.1 and MainStage 2.1 can now work in 64-bit mode on Mac

OS X v10.6.2 or later.

**Where:** [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)

**What:** PreSonus Studio One Pro

**Why:** Studio One has been compatible with 64-bit Windows from day 1, but the upcoming 1.5 update provides 64-bit Snow Leopard compatibility as well as other enhancements.

**Where:** [www.presonus.com](http://www.presonus.com)

## THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

The iPhone and iPod Touch app juggernaut is hitting the music world as well, and these aren't just toys.

**What:** Audiofile Engineering FiRe Field Recorder App

**Why:** FiRe does the job in style for stereo field recording and playback, with the latest version featuring tight SoundCloud integration. For about \$10, you can't go wrong.

**Where:** [www.audiofile-engineering.com](http://www.audiofile-engineering.com)

**What:** Akai SynthStation

**Why:** Don't you wish you could have a cool little virtual studio in your iPhone? Now you can, with MPC-style pads, effects, synthesis, and sequencing. Really.

**Where:** [www.akaipro.com](http://www.akaipro.com)

**What:** Wave Machine Labs Voice Band

**Why:** Hot on the heels of the iGog iPhone/iPod Touch drum workstation app, Voice Band brings new meaning to "if you hum a few bars, I can fake it"—sing into your iPhone, and translate your voice, a track at a time, into an entire band.

**Where:** [www.wavemachinelabs.com](http://www.wavemachinelabs.com)

**What:** Studio Six Digital Audio Tools

**Why:** If you think this suite of audio testing apps can't be any good given the iPhone's audio quality, then check out their associated hardware—iAudioInterface, and the iProMic.

**Where:** [www.studiosixdigital.com](http://www.studiosixdigital.com)

**What:** Peterson Tuners iStrobeSoft

**Why:** Load this app, and there's a Peterson Strobe Tuner in the palm of your hand. 'Nuff said!

**Where:** [www.petersontuners.com](http://www.petersontuners.com)

**What:** AKG iPhone Wireless Mic Control

**Why:** This free app streamlines the workflow for wireless microphone monitoring and configuration by linking Harman's HiQnet protocol to the iPhone and iPod Touch app via Wi-Fi network.

**Where:** [www.akg.com](http://www.akg.com)



Akai SynthStation

## GUITARISTS GET THE SPOTLIGHT

It seems everyone wants a piece of the guitar player's market. In addition to almost all DAWs including guitar amps and processors, plug-ins keep progressing too. And, now there's also a whole slew of small, low-power, "lunchbox" amps that are ideal for studio work when you don't want to disturb the neighbors.



Apogee GiO

Peavey  
ReValver  
MkIII.V



TC Electronic  
PolyTune

**What:** Peavey ReValver MkIII.V Amp Simulator

**Why:** MkIII.V adds new amps (including Budda models) and new effects. And don't you think a MuseBox (Peavey has an alliance with Muse Research, makers of the Receptor) with guitar amp sim software could, uh, maybe replace guitar amps? We'll see.

**Where:** [www.peavey.com](http://www.peavey.com)

**What:** IK Multimedia AmpliTube 3

**Why:** With AmpliTube 3, you can now drag-and-drop insert and rack effects, and of course, there are extra effects (including some synth-like step sequencers). The virtual miking has been stepped up as well, with dual miking and more flexible placement options.

**Where:** [www.ikmultimedia.com](http://www.ikmultimedia.com)

**What:** Apogee GiO

**Why:** GiO is an interface and foot

controller that fits Logic 9, Mainstage 2, and GarageBand '09 like a glove—call up presets, control recording functions without touching the keyboard, edit effects, and send your audio into the Mac via low-latency USB.

**Where:** [www.apogeedigital.com](http://www.apogeedigital.com)

**What:** TC Electronic PolyTune

**Why:** And how much time do *you* waste tuning your guitar in the studio? PolyTune lets you see the tuning of all six strings at once, and can even switch over to a conventional, high-accuracy tuning mode for individual strings. If you play guitar, you want this.

**Where:** [www.tcelectronic.com](http://www.tcelectronic.com)

**What:** Zoom G2.1Nu

**Why:** It's an effects box, but it's also a USB interface for your guitar that

includes editing software and an expression pedal. The LCD is really nice, too, with easier programming than previous multieffects—even if you don't use the computer.

**Where:** [www.samsontech.com](http://www.samsontech.com)

**What:** Scads of Low-Wattage Guitar Amps

**Why:** Now you can get loud, crunchy amp sounds without the high volume levels. Several cool little "lunchbox" amps joined this product category at NAMM, including the Vox Night Train, Traynor DH15H DarkHorse, Peavey Nano Vypyr, and Mesa Boogie TransAtlantic. They all sound remarkably full and loud when you stick a mic in front of 'em.

**Where:** [www.voxamps.com](http://www.voxamps.com),  
[www.traynoramps.com](http://www.traynoramps.com),  
[www.peavey.com](http://www.peavey.com),  
[www.mesaboogie.com](http://www.mesaboogie.com)

## PLUG-INS AND VIRTUAL INSTRUMENTS

Plug-ins continue to be hot news as algorithms become refined, prices drift downward, and companies push the envelope further.



### Waves Vocal Rider and Multitrack Live

**What:** Waves Vocal Rider and Multitrack Live

**Why:** Okay, Vocal Rider was introduced at AES . . . but it was the talk of NAMM, too. Who wouldn't want an "invisible engineer" who can ride vocals unobtrusively and accurately? And if you've always wanted to leave your live rack at home and use plug-ins, meet Multitrack Live (also note that Lynx Studio Technologies has partnered with Waves to develop for this platform).

**Where:** [www.waves.com](http://www.waves.com), [www.lynxstudio.com](http://www.lynxstudio.com)

**What:** McDSP 6030 Ultimate Compressor

**Why:** The 6030 Ultimate Compressor delivers ten compressors in a "virtual lunchbox" format—from transparent, to loaded with character. Even better: McDSP will soon make their plug-ins available in AU formats.

**Where:** [www.mcdsp.com](http://www.mcdsp.com)

**What:** Slate Digital Virtual Console Collection

**Why:** Add some character to your digital world—obtain the sound of the classic console channel strips and buses of yesteryear, brought to you in convenient plug-in form.

**Where:** [www.slatedigital.com](http://www.slatedigital.com)



McDSP 6030



### Sonnox Restore Suite

**What:** FXpansion BFD Nano

**Why:** BFD is great, but takes up a lot of drive space, and has a bit of a learning curve. So, enter BFD Nano—basically, BFD on a diet but with the same "magic" to the sounds that made BFD a hit.

**Where:** [www.fxpansion.com](http://www.fxpansion.com)

**What:** Sonnox Restore Suite

**Why:** Those clicks, pops, hisses, hums, and crackles are driving you crazy—so get rid of them with the Sonnox Restore, which distinguishes itself with an intuitive and revealing user interface.

**Where:** [www.sonnoxplugins.com](http://www.sonnoxplugins.com)

**What:** Universal Audio Partnerships

**Why:** Universal Audio has a history of reaching out to other companies, but check out who they're working with now for future plug-ins: Ampex for tape emulations, Dunlop for classic guitar effects, Harman (for gear from Lexicon, Studer, dbx, and AKG), and Manley labs. Look for the results later in the year.

**Where:** [www.uaudio.com](http://www.uaudio.com)

**What:** DrumCore Groove Creation Software

**Why:** DrumCore isn't news, but its acquisition by Sonoma Wire Works is—and you don't need to be psychic to see how DrumCore could integrate with existing SWW technologies, like RiffWorks and InstantDrummer.

**Where:** [www.drumcore.com](http://www.drumcore.com)

**What:** Lexicon PCM Native Reverb Plug-in Bundle

**Why:** Now you can have the Lexicon reverb hardware sound without the hardware box, courtesy of these VST/AU/RTAS plug-ins that deliver seven reverbs.

**Where:** [www.lexiconpro.com](http://www.lexiconpro.com)

**What:** Digidesign Pro Tools Instrument Expansion Pack

**Why:** This package bundles five Digi instruments—Structure, Transfuser, Velvet, Hybrid, and Strike—with additional content and updates, at a bundle-friendly price.

**Where:** [www.digidesign.com](http://www.digidesign.com)

**What:** BIAS PitchCraft EZ

**Why:** Pitch correction is big, whether it's applied subtly to fix a few bad notes or used like a sledgehammer to robotize voices. PitchCraft EZ can do both, as well as other tricks like formant preservation and automation.

**Where:** [www.bias-inc.com](http://www.bias-inc.com)

**What:** SoundToys Decapitator

**Why:** If you like distortion—whether restrained or brutal—Decapitator calls. As the web site says, "Decapitator is the sound of great analog gear and the ability to push it way too far." We particularly like the last part.

**Where:** [www.soundtoys.com](http://www.soundtoys.com)

## ADVENTURES IN MIC-LAND

The main mic trend continues unabated: Better performance at lower cost. But also throw in ever-improving USB mics, the dawn of digital mic technology, and a proliferation of ribbon mics, and you have a pretty good idea of the mic state of the art.

**What:** Blue Microphone en•CORE Line  
**Why:** You want good mics for recording and for live, but money is tight, and you can't afford both. Fortunately, the en•CORE line puts Blue's studio technology in a rugged, live performance-oriented mic that works for stage or studio.  
**Where:** [www.bluemic.com](http://www.bluemic.com)

**What:** Mojave Audio MA-101fet Pencil Condenser Mic  
**Why:** The MA-101fet combines switchable cardioid and omni capsules from the MA-100 small-diaphragm mic with the FET-based electronics from the MA-201fet (and don't forget the Jensen audio transformer). Smooooth.  
**Where:** [www.mojaveaudio.com](http://www.mojaveaudio.com)

**What:** sE Electronics sE4 Stereo Mic Pair  
**Why:** The sE4 pair replaces the sE3 pair with a re-engineered chassis that comes with a standard cardioid capsule, but can also accept optional-at-extra-cost

hypercardioid and omni interchangeable capsules.  
**Where:** [www.seelectronics.com](http://www.seelectronics.com)

**What:** New MXL Mics  
**Why:** MXL has a bunch of new mics, including the USB-77 cardioid condenser studio mic (with the look and feel of a 1940s era ribbon mic); the Revelation Variable Pattern Tube Mic with a hand-selected EF86, and variable polar pattern from omni-directional to figure 8; and if you want to get a kick out of your mic (or actually, a mic on your kick), the A-55 Kicker is a heavy-duty dynamic mic optimized for kick drums.  
**Where:** [www.mxlms.com](http://www.mxlms.com)

**What:** Neumann Solution-D Digital Mic System  
**Why:** While not a new product, Solution-D is gaining traction because the degree of control over A/D conversion, synchronization technology, integrated signal processing functions, and



New MXL Mics

TC-Helicon

remote control over standard mic parameters, represent a significant breakthrough in mic technology.  
**Where:** [www.neumann.com](http://www.neumann.com)

**What:** DPA 4099 Instrument Mics  
**Why:** The 4099 supercardioid clip-on condenser mics are available in different versions for guitar/dobro, brass, violin/mandolin, and sax/bass clarinet. Need a bunch? The 4099 PA/Live Kit provides ten 4099 series mics of your choice in a single bundle.  
**Where:** [www.dpamicrophones.com](http://www.dpamicrophones.com)

**What:** TC-Helicon VoiceTone Synth  
**Why:** Okay, it's not a mic—but mic processing options include vocoder effects (including a voice-controlled synthesizer), the "hard" pitch correction effect that's a staple of today's pop records, and various "transducer" effects (megaphone, distortion, radio voices, etc.). Fun stuff.  
**Where:** [www.tc-helicon.com](http://www.tc-helicon.com)

## WELCOME TO WIRELESS WORLD

Sure, you use wireless for live performance. But wireless is getting good enough that with a low-level signal source like electric guitar, you might actually get better sound quality in the studio with wireless than a wired connection. Here are the latest developments.

**What:** Line 6 Relay Wireless Guitar System  
**Why:** It's digital—no companding, so you get natural sound quality without a "muffled" wireless guitar sound.  
**Where:** [www.line6.com](http://www.line6.com)

**What:** Shure PSM 900 Wireless Personal Monitor System  
**What:** The PSM 900 is the culmination of what Shure's learned so far—serious audio quality, ultra-thin/all-metal wireless bodypack receiver, and half-rack



Audio-Technica 4000/5000 Series Updates

Shure PSM 900

wireless transmitter. Also new: The SE425 Sound Isolating Earphones, which work with the PSM 900 and feature a detachable cable.  
**Where:** [www.shure.com](http://www.shure.com)

**What:** Audio-Technica 4000/5000 Series Updates  
**Why:** Updates include a new backlit LCD on transmitters and locking battery door on UniPak body-pack transmitters, 25kHz spacing to provide up to 996 selectable frequencies, and updated

AEW Control Interface Software.  
**Where:** [www.audio-technica.com](http://www.audio-technica.com)

**What:** Sennheiser Wireless Updates  
**Why:** The EM 3732-II twin receiver and SK 5212-II body pack transmitter feature switching bandwidths that are twice as wide and five times as wide respectively compared to previous versions, with a switching bandwidth of up to 184MHz. Bottom line: Get reliable reception even in difficult RF environments.  
**Where:** [www.sennheiser.com](http://www.sennheiser.com)

# Batteries not included.\*



## INTRODUCING THE STUDIO THAT GOES WHERE YOU GO.

The R16 is the first portable 16-track SD recorder that's also a USB audio interface and a control surface. And it accepts up to a 32GB SDHC card, so you get over 100 track hours of recording time. That means it's never been easier to create professional multi-track recordings anywhere.

## IT'S A 16-TRACK RECORDER...

With simultaneous recording on 8 tracks, the R16 is perfect for recording everything: from music production and rehearsals to field recording and live performances. Use the R16's on-board studio, mastering and guitar effects to sweeten your tracks.

## IT'S A USB INTERFACE.

Connect the R16 to your computer via USB, launch your favorite DAW and start recording tracks using its 8x2 audio interface. We've even included Cubase LE to get you started.

## IT'S A CONTROL SURFACE.

When you're ready to mix on your computer, the R16 is right there with you. With your DAW software and the R16's intuitive controls, mixing has never been easier.

## IT'S BATTERY POWERED!

Did we mention the R16 will operate on 6 AA batteries? You can also use the included power supply, or USB power when connected to your computer.

Now versatility, control and portability come together in one recorder, letting you produce professional results everywhere you go.

**R16 Recorder | Interface | Controller**  
The portable multi-tracking solution.

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\*Hey, we give you a 1GB SD card, AC adapter, USB cable and Cubase LE... Give us a break on the batteries.

# ZOOM

## PORTABLE RECORDERS

If any product category qualifies as "hot," it's portable recorders. They not only stole the spotlight at AES, but a proliferation of new products made it to NAMM as well.



**TASCAM  
DR-2d**

**Korg Sound on  
Sound Unlimited  
Track Recorder**



**Alesis PalmTrack and  
VideoTrack**

**What:** Alesis PalmTrack and VideoTrack

**Why:** The PalmTrack is a low-cost portable recorder with several musician-friendly features, while VideoTrack is a video recorder with extra effort paid to audio recording. Record your band and put it on YouTube? You bet.

**Where:** [www.alesis.com](http://www.alesis.com)

**What:** Olympus LS-11 Portable Recorder

**Why:** The LS-11 combines 24-bit/96kHz PCM WAV/MP3/WMA recording with 8GB of internal memory (expandable with an additional 32GB SD card) and stunning battery life—up to 23 hours. And, it's only 5 ounces.

**Where:** [www.olympusamerica.com](http://www.olympusamerica.com)

**What:** TASCAM Portable Recorders

**Why:** TASCAM has focused in on the portable recording market like a laser. The DR-2d Portable Digital Recorder provides up to 96kHz/24-bit WAV/MP3 recording to SD cards, with a dual recording feature that records a lower-level "safety" copy of your audio in case of distortion. The DR-08 is super-compact and records 96kHz/24-bit WAV or MP3 files to MicroSD cards (a 2GB card is included). It also includes looping and variable speed on playback, noise cancellation, and EQ. And when two tracks aren't enough, the DR-680 records up to eight 96kHz/24-bit WAV files to solid-state SD card media. Six mic inputs provide

phantom power and 60dB of gain; digital S/PDIF provides two additional inputs.

**Where:** [www.tascam.com](http://www.tascam.com)

**What:** Korg Sound on Sound Unlimited Track Recorder

**Why:** Play back what you've recorded while overdubbing a new track, then play that back and overdub another part, then play *that* back and overdub... hence "Unlimited" Track Recorder. Each overdub is saved as a separate WAV file if you want to transfer them to a DAW for additional fun. SOS also has on-board rhythms, a built-in monitoring speaker, time stretch, tuner, internal stereo mic, and 100 effects.

**Where:** [www.korg.com](http://www.korg.com)

## MONITORING

Speakers is where your music ends up; advances in materials and technology continue to result in incremental improvements.

**What:** ADAM Audio SX-Series Monitors

**Why:** Compared to the S-series, the SX-series is a major re-design. The X-ART tweeter responds to 50kHz, and the HexaCone woofers have larger and longer voice coils for greater linear excursions; digital input (XLR/SPDIF) and magnetic



**Focal Professional  
CMS Line**

shielding are optional. There's also a new control set, with six controls to tailor sensitivity and frequency response.

**Where:** [www.adam-audio.com](http://www.adam-audio.com)

**What:** Focal Professional CMS Line

**Why:** Focal isn't the only company to



**JBL MSC1**

introduce speakers specifically for smaller studios, but their CMS line is making major inroads in the USA. Leading the pack is the CMS 65 monitor, with the CMS 50 providing a more compact size and the CMS 11 sub offering serious low end.

**Where:** [www.focalprofessional.com](http://www.focalprofessional.com)

**What:** JBL MSC1 Monitor System Controller

**Why:** The MSC1 provides monitor functions but more importantly, includes JBL's Room Mode Correction Technology. What this means is that you get a

calibrated reference environment where your speakers work with your room, not against it, to take the guesswork out of mixing—regardless of which speakers you use.

**Where:** [www.jblpro.com](http://www.jblpro.com)

**What:** Ultimate Ears by LogiTech In-

Ear Earphones

**Why:** Why torture yourself with the klunker earbuds that came with your fave portable music player? Ultimate Ears models range in price from about \$50 to \$420, but you can even get custom-fitted earbuds at prices from \$400 to \$1,350.

**Where:** [www.ultimateears.com](http://www.ultimateears.com)

## HARDWARE PROCESSORS, INSTRUMENTS, AND ACCESSORIES

Despite the hoopla about software, hardware is most definitely not an endangered species—whether you're talking reproductions of vintage gear, to "plug-ins made physical," or useful little accessories that make studio life easier.



**API 527 "Lunchbox" Compressor**

**What:** Trident Audio Developments A-Range

**Why:** Trident has brought back the dual channel strip that was the heart of many legendary recordings at Trident Recording Studios. What's more, the project was overseen by Malcolm Toft, the original engineer.

**Where:** [www.trident-audio.com](http://www.trident-audio.com)

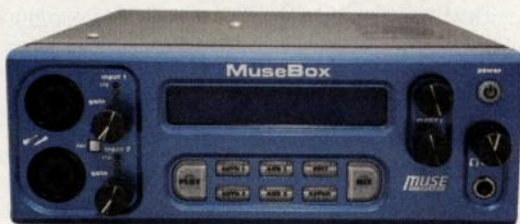
**What:** Eventide "Stompboxes"

**Why:** Given economic realities, more people are seeking gear that works in the studio or onstage. Eventide's PitchFactor, ModFactor, and TimeFactor squeeze rack performance into gig-friendly stompboxes—and now you have a use for that DAW feature where you can use external hardware boxes as plug-ins.

**Where:** [www.eventide.com](http://www.eventide.com)

**What:** API 527 "Lunchbox" Compressor

**Why:** You no longer need an API mixer



**Peavey/Muse Research MuseBox**



**Kurzweil PC3LE6**

to get API-style compression: Based on API's 225L discreet channel compressor, this single-channel module puts classic sound in a 500 Series format, and even includes API's patented Thrust circuit.

**Where:** [www.apiaudio.com](http://www.apiaudio.com)

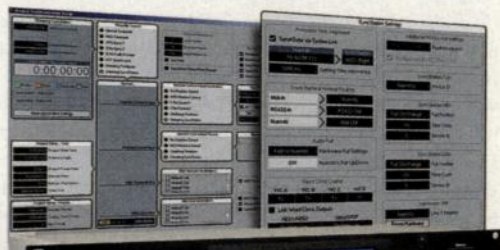
**What:** Steinberg Nuendo SyncStation

**Why:** This rack-mount synchronizer locks Nuendo to tri-level sync, distributes word clock signals up to 192kHz, and communicates with external machines via Sony 9-pin, MMC or time-code. Controllable from inside Nuendo, features include pull up/down, clock manipulation, GPIO interfacing and varispeed. Thank you, Yamaha, for buying Steinberg.

**Where:** [www.steinberg.net](http://www.steinberg.net)

**What:** Primacoustic "Acoustic/Miking Helpers"

**Why:** Your acoustics can never be



**Steinberg Nuendo SyncStation**



**Focusrite OctoPre Mark II**

good enough—isolated problems can crop up even in well-treated rooms, and Primacoustic has several solutions. VoxGuard clamps to a mic stand to isolate the mic from external noises. SplashGuard is a portable, acoustic treatment panel that mounts on a mic stand to isolate (for example) cymbals from other musicians, while TriPads mount on mic stand legs to provide isolation from the floor. CrashGuard isn't really about acoustical treatment, but protects drum mics from cymbal crashes. KickPad provides a stable mounting surface for mics placed within kick drums, while KickStand minimizes resonances from drum risers. These may be cheap & cheerful products, but they really do the job.

**Where:** [www.primacoustic.com](http://www.primacoustic.com)

**What:** Peavey/Muse Research MuseBox

**Why:** Bringing a desktop computer to your gig is a hassle, and laptops

# GEAR HEAD

make you nervous. MuseBox is a version of the Muse Receptor, developed in conjunction with Peavey, that combines the power of a computer (in particular, the ability to load plug-in effects and virtual instruments) with the ruggedness of a rack-mount signal processor or tone module.

**Where:** [www.peavey.com](http://www.peavey.com)

**What:** Kurzweil PC3LE6

**Why:** Either it's a great controller with a bunch of sounds, or a ROMpler that's also a great controller (we report, you decide). It has all the PC3 sounds as well as LE-specific sounds, a slick user interface, 700 onboard effects chains, 8 backlit/velocity-sensitive drum pads, 16 independent arpeggiators, and a lot more.

**Where:** [www.kurzweil.com](http://www.kurzweil.com)

**What:** Cakewalk A-PRO Series Controllers

**Why:** They're inexpensive, but the keybed has a wonderful feel, the per-

cussion pads are a welcome addition, there are plenty of faders and knobs for realtime control, and for Sonar fans, these controllers fit Cakewalk's Active Controller Technology like a glove. Choose from 32-, 49-, or 61-key models.

**Where:** [www.cakewalk.com](http://www.cakewalk.com)

**What:** Phonic PAA6

**Why:** Audio test equipment used to cost a fortune, but whether you want accurate metering, distortion analysis, spectrum displays, RT60 measurements, or other audio test necessities, this portable, hand-held device tells you what you need to know—at the right price.

**Where:** [www.phonic.com](http://www.phonic.com)

**What:** Focusrite OctoPre Mark II Dynamic

**Why:** Eight Focusrite preamps are nice, but eight Focusrite preamps with built-in compressors can save a session, particularly for live recording; and thanks to ADAT I/O, this unit is ideal for expanding an existing interface that

lacks quality analog I/O.

**Where:** [www.focusrite.com](http://www.focusrite.com)

**What:** Crown International XLS Power Amps

**Why:** Sometimes you need lots of clean, efficient power, whether driving monitors or PA columns. The XLS series consists of five models, ranging from hundreds of watts to thousands of watts, packaged in all-steel, rack-mount enclosures. Forced-air cooling means minimal thermal buildup.

**Where:** [www.crownaudio.com](http://www.crownaudio.com)

**What:** Neutrik OpticalCON Quad Cables

**Why:** The opticalCON system is based on LC-Duplex connectors but eliminates their weaknesses to implement a safe, dust-protected, and rugged connection. The opticalCON QUAD handles four fiber-optic channels for point-to-point interconnections and multi-channel routing applications.

**Where:** [www.neutrik.com](http://www.neutrik.com)

## DRUMS FOR YOUR BACKLINE

It's downsizing time. Your virtual tonewheel organ has replaced the ancient B3 sitting in the corner, and Synthogy's Ivory means you don't feel so bad that you can't fit a grand piano in your basement. But what's going to replace that acoustic drum kit whose main purpose seems to be getting the neighbors to complain about noise to the police? Glad you asked.

**What:** Yamaha DTX-Multi 12 Electronic Percussion Pad

**Why:** Choose from 1,277 drum, percussion and effects sounds, and play them from 12 trigger pads in a compact split-level configuration. Not enough sounds? Then load your own samples, as well as trigger rhythmic patterns—using sticks, hands, or fingers. Here's that collection of percussion instruments you always wanted—except that it takes up virtually no space.

**Where:** [www.yamaha.com](http://www.yamaha.com)



**Yamaha DTX-Multi 12**

**What:** Alesis USB Pro Drum Kit

**Why:** You have great drum software (e.g., Toontrack, BFD, Reason Drums, etc.)—but you're playing the notes from a keyboard. Hello!?!? The USB Pro Drum Kit is designed specifically for triggering computer-based drum, and features dual-zone drum pads, alloy cymbals, and a compact, studio-friendly drum rack.

**Where:** [www.alesis.com](http://www.alesis.com)



**Alesis USB Pro**

**What:** Roland Octapad SPD-30

**Why:** Roland's been at drum pads since the original Octapad debuted in the late Cambrian Epoch (well, maybe it was a little more recent than that). The latest version has responsive pads, phrase loop recording, a ton o' percussion sounds (50 customizable kits altogether), 30 types of multi-effects, and exceptional resistance to crosstalk.

**Where:** [www.roland.com](http://www.roland.com) 

The new LSR2300 Series Studio Monitors put JBL quality and performance within reach of any studio.

All three models were designed from the ground up, applying JBL's 60 years of expertise and Linear Spatial Reference Design Criteria to achieve an exceptional level of performance at affordable price points.

The perfect companion to the LSR2300 Series, or any studio monitors, the exciting MSC1 Monitor System Controller gives you essential monitor-strip features found in large mixing consoles.

Because room acoustics play a big part in what you hear, the MSC1 includes JBL's acclaimed RMC™ Room Mode Correction Technology that tunes your speakers for great mixes, even in problematic rooms.

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



**LSR2300**  
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**Studio Live 24.4.2**

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PreSonus is proud to announce the new StudioLive™ 24.4.2 digital mixer for studio recording and live sound. The mixer is very easy to use, and its surface will be familiar to anyone who uses analog mixers. Mixing is done with 32-bit floating-point processing, eliminating digital clipping, and the high-definition digital converters provide 118 dB dynamic range.

In addition to mic inputs with Class A XMAX™ preamps, each channel has line inputs and insert points. You get 4 subgroups, 10 aux buses, stereo tape sends and returns, a talkback-mic input, and S/PDIF digital output. Two additional aux buses serve a pair of programmable, 32-bit, stereo effects processors. Four stereo 31-band graphic EQs are available to the main, subgroup, and aux outputs.

The proprietary Fat Channel provides a 4-band fully parametric EQ, high-pass filter, compressor, limiter, and gate on every channel, subgroup, and aux bus; the main outs; and the effects returns. The full-featured gate includes Key Filter and Key Listen.

The mixer serves as a dual-port FireWire 32x26 audio interface that works with any ASIO- or Core Audio-compliant audio application for Windows and Mac OS X. It comes bundled with PreSonus Capture™ 1.1 recording software, Studio One™ Artist DAW software, and new VSL™ remote-control software for Mac and Windows. When 24 channels aren't enough, simply daisy-chain via FireWire with another StudioLive mixer or with any FireStudio-series interface.

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

We've combined our expertise in acoustic drums with our latest digital sound technology to create the new Yamaha DTX900 Series Electronic Drum System.

Yamaha designed its innovative new DTX-PAD featuring a Textured Cellular Silicone (TCS) head with input from the company's legendary stable of drum artists. Utilizing sound technology from the highly acclaimed Motif line and DSP effects from our hi-end digital mixers, the DTX900 Drum Trigger Module has professional sounds that bring your drumming to life.

The DTX900 includes a sequencer so you can record your own grooves any time you want or create complete backing tracks to jam along with.

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- Featuring the expandable HEXRACK System
- Matte Chrome finished hoops for strength and looks
- Shock-absorbing mounting system
- Updated Kick Pad with reinforced head
- 1,115 drum and percussion, 211 MOTIF GM melody voices
- Onboard sampler with dedicated effects (with optional DIMM)
- USB connectivity
- Realistic feeling hi-hat pad with HS740A stand

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

**Yamaha DTX900**

Yamaha  
 Now Available



# HOW TO MAKE THE BLUEGRASS GROW

by Buddy Saleman

We will cover in this article some ideas on recording string instruments in the bluegrass style. When I think of bluegrass, I think of the father of bluegrass himself, Bill Monroe, and the way he sounds and feels to me. It's a very open feel, full of the moment with all of its greatness and mistakes. The timbres of the instruments are in a wonderful bubbling blend waiting to jump out for their moment, and then come back into the mix. It's a live feel, and that's what we are shooting for.

## The Room

First off, I like to record a lot of room when doing bluegrass. For each instrument, I will put up a nice, warm room mic (such as an AKG C414) set to its cardioid pattern, and positioned about six-feet high and three-feet away from the sound source. You may have to move this mic around a bit to find the sweet spot in the room, but the ambience will change the sound of your instruments when mixed together for the better. Air is good! This mic will pick up a lot of the room artifacts, as well—such as foot stomping and string scrapes—but that stuff is part of what gives bluegrass its natural feel in the studio.

## Mandolins & Guitars

While these guys seem very different in shape and sound, they are actually played very similarly in the bluegrass style. The performers use

picks on both, and move back and forth from a strumming and rhythmic chordal approach to playing lead lines. In addition, their arms partially obscure the soundholes. As a result, I treat both instruments much the same way, excepting the choice of microphone.

For the guitar, I typically choose a large-diaphragm condenser for a fuller range of sound. In many cases, I'll position a Neumann U67 about eight inches in front of the soundhole, and about 20 degrees off axis from the top of the guitar. For the mandolin, I usually go with a small-diaphragm condenser—such as an AKG C451 again—to get a nice, tight sound that will pop out of the mix. And don't forget that you've already placed that room mic out there. Use it to the best advantage.

## Banjos


This is a very interesting instrument to record—a stringed piece of wood with a drumhead attached. It comes in a variety of flavors, such as four or five strings, different scales lengths, closed back with resonator, and open back. When a banjo is played quietly, it sounds very soft, but when it's picked hard, it produces a spiky sound that can overload mics if not handled properly. I usually position a large-diaphragm condenser approximately four to six inches in front of the banjo at an angle of around 30 degrees. The position will change a bit with the style of playing (picking, frailing, or claw hammer), so be

flexible and experiment a bit. The trick is getting a good solid sound on all quiet and loud parts without having to use compression.

## Fiddles

I will likely get a bit of grief about this from some fiddlers out there, but I think the fiddle (as opposed to the violin) has a bit more of a whiney, saw sound to it—which I love. Maybe it's because some people play it in a lower position (down by the waist), than in the standard classical position. Either way, I want to capture that whine instead of mitigating it (which I would do when recording a less than stellar violinist). So along with our room mic, I will position a small-diaphragm condenser about six inches away from the neck of the instrument, pointing towards the bridge. I try to get as close as I can without getting in the player's way. When I blend the room and the close mic together in the mix, I am able to get the bite I need while still remaining in the land of good taste.

## Outboard Gear

No. No. No. You're looking for the most natural sounds you can get. It's all about mic position, mic choice, and the performances. Signal processing isn't part of the deal. Let the instruments, the room, and the players do their job, and you will have done yours. Keep it clean and natural, and you will get a wonderful tone at the end. Yeehaw! 

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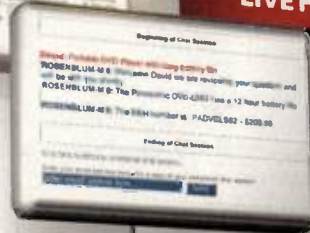
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# INSIDE THE HEAD OF PRODUCER/BASSIST BILL LASWELL

by Bryan Beller

If you visit the website of Method Of Defiance—a current concept of bassist/producer and master sound-manipulator Bill Laswell—what you'll see is not a bio, or a discography, or even any mention of who plays what. First, you get a block of stark white text on solid black background: "A musical, sonic, aesthetic, mind and body experience, at once structured, spontaneous, precise, random, brash, beautiful, and above all, unforgivable."

Then, at the bottom of the page, a CNN-style text crawl scrolls provocative phrases in all caps.

*I AM A REVOLUTIONARY, NOT BECAUSE I WANT TO DESTROY THE SYSTEM, BUT BECAUSE I WANT TO BUILD THE FUTURE . . . RESIST COMPLIANCE . . . AVOID RECOGNIZABLE ART-CATEGORIES. . .*

Born in Illinois but clearly bred in the pre-punk counter-revolutionary musical/political culture of late '60s Detroit (along with Iggy Pop and the Stooges, and the original MC5), Laswell made the natural leap to New York City in the late '70s and has been successfully avoiding recognizable art categories ever since, breaking ground as an astoundingly prolific bassist, producer, and sonic experimenter with everyone from Herbie Hancock to punk icon John Lydon, to Wayne Shorter, to *avant-garde* guitarist Buckethead. Laswell's specialty is taking disparate musical elements and literally smashing them together, capturing this moment, and presenting the document to the world.

**What do you see as your role as a bassist in Method of Defiance?**

My role is for pulse—to centralize the bottom-end thrust of the rhythm, and augment and interact with the

keyboard and the trumpet and whatever other sound exists on top of the low end. I'm not limited to just playing low-end lines, though. There are a lot of sounds that people might not relate to bass. They might think it's a guitar, or keyboard, or horn, some kind of malfunction, or a disturbance of some kind. There's noise and spontaneity to it. There's a lot of frequency range, from high to low, and when there's a lot of low there's an extreme amount of sub low. My bass covers a lot of sonic area without being limited to just playing a bass line.

**How about sounds? Do you have "go-to" pedals for certain vibes, or could it be anything at any time?**

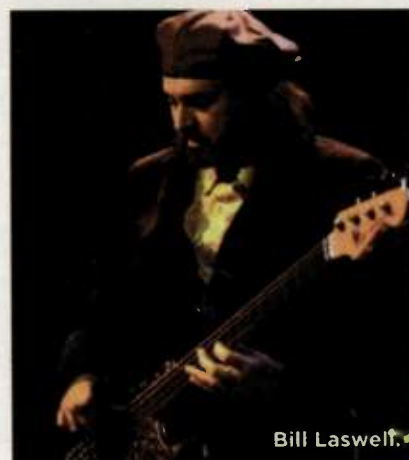
Even though I use the words "spontaneity" and "improvisation" and stuff, it's very clear that certain pedals are meant for certain things. Probably at this point, even with this band and the amount of freedom involved, there's a pretty close routine for my use of pedals—when to use something, when not to, when to lay out, when to dominate, and when to leave space.

**What do you listen to for inspiration?**

I've learned that you can take a lot of inspiration and ideas from instruments other than bass—like guitars, horns, and keyboards, as well as from composers. Then, there are sounds that aren't musical—tonal, non-musical sounds. I realized that noise is no different than what you hear in everyday life, so I listen to the sound of machines, industry, and nature—especially nature, which should be a big influence on all of what you do musically.

**How do you think someone's life philosophy affects their playing?**

On the bass, I think their life, their



philosophy, and all of that, *is* their playing. Without that, there'd probably be little playing going on. There would be motions and movement, and there would be notes, and things would be established, but I think without that personal background, there is no real foundation to your musical voice, or what you express through sound and music. It's all connected whether people want to admit that or not. And no matter how simple it is—it might be something incredibly minimal and simplistic—it's there at the root of every note that you play. There is no way around that.

**In your view, what's the ideal role of music in society?**

Everyone has different perceptions, different expectations, and a different upbringing. You can't generalize the purpose of music. But it has been used to enlighten. It has been a powerful force in the elevation of people, of humans. It can free people from things that normally would hold them back. It can enlighten people at a time when it seems to be dark. It can educate and point towards further education. Bass is the *Om*—the shadow, the bottom of the foundation—and it shouldn't be completely kept in the basement. It's the earth tone. ☞

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Grizzly Bear incorporates classic and cutting-edge techniques to craft compelling background vocal arrangements.

# EIGHT HELLACIOUS BACKGROUND VOCAL MISTAKES

by Scott Mathews

Stacked harmony vocals and extensive background voices are being heard and dug on again! Some of the best examples are on tracks by red-hot indie bands such as the Fleet Foxes and Grizzly Bear. These bold bands are not merely pulling the nostalgic card, but rather making cutting-edge music by blending tried-and-true techniques with elements unique to themselves.

So when it comes to vocals, be as creative and adventurous as the music will allow. However, you need to know upfront that recording background

vocals (and leads, as well) may not be as simple as tracking instrumental parts. After all, voices can be rather “moody”—much like their owners. Try not to become too frustrated in the process, because the results of your patience can be what launches your song into a whole other level of greatness. To that end, here are eight traps you should avoid if you want your backing-vocal arrangements to be stunning.

## Lack of Preparation

Don't just announce at one session that everyone in the band will be singing background vocals at the

next session. The musicians should be alerted ahead of time what will be required of them, and, even if they sing background vocals at gigs, they should be encouraged to do vocal rehearsals backed only by sparse acoustic instrumentation. This is an excellent method for sharpening everyone's skills. And you don't have to focus entirely on the songs you'll be recording at these rehearsals—working on familiar cover songs is a good technique for practicing voicings and parts. Finally, repetition is your friend. It's almost scary how much time great vocal bands spend rehearsing, arranging, and

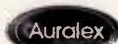


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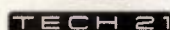
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experimenting with parts. Singing well-arranged background vocals may be the furthest thing from jamming on the planet!

## Choosing the Wrong Singers

Lead vocalists often have ideas for background vocals, and they usually want to sing them, but make sure your singer is versatile enough to chirp the background parts and fit in character. Like many personnel choices in the studio, it's all in the casting. Some singers sound fantastic doing their own background vocals, and some sound absolutely dreadful. It's like acting—you have your star (lead vocalist), and your support players (background vocals). You always want to be cautious not to water down the star power (or have it stolen), as you are looking to enhance it. In general, clean and clear voices are more prone to blend well with themselves than gruff, raspy vocalists. Look at it this way: For lead and backgrounds, Michael Jackson and Freddy Mercury each score a 10. Joe Cocker and Tom Waits get immediate zeros, which is why you've never heard them sing their own backgrounds.

## Dumping the Audition

Don't ever start tracking background vocals "deaf." Before you even work out the parts, audition all the voices in the band, and find the vocal ranges and textures that work well together to form an overall blend. Start with simple vocal parts—you should find out right away who is gifted, and who will require a bit of patience to bring along. If you stress the importance of concentration and focus, even the less-gifted singers should be able to contribute to a sensual vocal blend.

## Ignoring the Little Details

And speaking of "blend," make sure everyone knows the lengths of the notes they'll be singing, where to take breaths, and how much vibrato (if any) is desired. The object is to come off as one singular presence in the track, as

opposed to many different approaches at once. It's all about blend, baby, so practice and practice and practice some more until all the harmony voices seamlessly nail the same phrasing.

## Setting Singers Up to Fail

Recording group background parts live in the studio is an amazing thing. When stellar voices are ringing in the room, all you have to do is set up multiple mics to grab different ambient sounds, and you'll often capture pure magic. However, if the talent pool isn't up for singing as a group, you can die a slow and painful death. Be honest with yourself—and those you are working with—and be quick to notice if a group can handle singing background parts live, or the parts need to be paired down, or even overdubbed one-by-one. For many inexperienced studio singers, getting tight parts together as a group can be very challenging, but the same singers may sound fantastic doing "onesies." Never force a method on the artist that will fail—choose an option that's comfortable and that will bring success.

## Selecting the Wrong Mics

Sometimes, a vocal mic is set up, and all voices singing on the session that day will automatically use it. This could be a big mistake, as each vocalist may sound better on a different mic that's chosen to enhance the individual tonal characteristics of his or her unique voice. Always listen to each voice *before* committing to a mic, and, remember, the price of the mic should have no influence on your choice. If a singer sounds amazing through a \$39 Radio Shack mic, then that's the mic to use.

In addition, don't be shy about experimenting with mic positions, or recording in different parts of the recording space. Varied ambient sounds may help bring the background parts to their full potential. During the mix, you can enhance these differences further with EQ tweaks and/or signal processing to bring a range of textures to the parts.

## Stepping All Over the Track

Arranging background vocals is a high art, but it's one that can be done easily if you can hear effective parts and know how to voice them. Basically, you want to make sure the backgrounds have their own place in the soundscape, and don't randomly double the lead vocal, or compete too much with the featured instruments. For example, try highlighting key phrases with one or more background parts. This is an effective way to ensure the background parts are tight and focused, and spotlighting key words and phrases also makes literal sense by bringing important elements of the lyric to the forefront. Listen closely to the lead vocal throughout the song, and choose spots that can be accented. I'm also a sucker for well-placed "aaahhs" or "ooohhs."

## Leaving Well Enough Alone

There is often a tendency to capture a background vocal part, and be so thrilled (or relieved) that you simply move on to another task. But moving forward too quickly may cost you a great opportunity to expand on what you have just captured. While obviously a song-by-song option, doubling background vocals in unison is a time-tested technique. Usually, the best time to tackle this is right after the singer has sung the main part, because it is still fresh in his or her mind, and the phrasing and vocal tone will likely match. Of course, there are plug-ins that do a reasonable job of simulating vocal doubles, but I've never found one quite as cool as a great singer's ability to overdub naturally. If I am going for a big vocal harmony wall, I often triple each background part in unison, and then add two, three, or more of the same with different melodies in various ranges for that massive, "bigger is better" sound. In the mix, I may pan the various parts slightly left, right, and center, while also adding the same reverb and/or delay to all of them. **EQ**

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MRB

# WHO ARE YOU?

by Michael Molenda

Unless your name is Phil Spector—and it's the '60s—being a producer doesn't mean you get to command a bunch of lackeys to render the fruits of your genius. Most recording projects are collaborative endeavors among a producer, an artist, and an engineer. The producer is simply the one responsible for ensuring the project gets done. That's harder than it sounds. Bands disintegrate, money runs out, songs crash and burn, equipment self-destructs, engineers erase tracks, and so on. And, while you're steering a project towards that final mix, you also get to be the artist's therapist, cheerleader, and scapegoat. Lucky you!

So, as producers typically must deal with a mammoth load of creative baggage and "project management" activities, it's important to establish a studio personality and work ethic that can get things done without driving the artists to mental disintegration, or giving yourself an ulcer the size of Pluto. Here are a few helpful personal-traits you may wish to consider popping into your personal studio survival kit. Then, cross your fingers.

## Surrender Your Dictator's Hat

Guess who's the boss? It ain't you! You have been hired by the artist, and that often means giving the customer what he or she wants. If a client doesn't dig your suggestion to rearrange a rock ballad into electronica, don't take it personally. You can suggest, harangue, and plead, but if the *real* boss doesn't buy your idea, just get on with making the best record you can.

## Be Nurturing & Wise

It's usually a mistake to push artists

beyond their limitations. A frustrated, insecure, or utterly defeated musician seldom delivers impassioned performances. Instead, strive to assess the artist's strengths and weaknesses, and then help them get their best stuff on tape.

## Be Studious

Yes—do your homework! The client depends on you for cogent direction, so don't "wing" the sessions. Study the material until you know it as well as the artist. Also, schedule enough preproduction time to ensure that the material is well arranged and the musicians are well rehearsed.

## Be Calm

When the doo-doo hits the fan—and it will at some point—the producer needs to be the only one in the room who is a vessel of strength. The artists will be looking to you to make all the carnage disappear, forge a new direction, and deliver a fabulous work—even if the entire DAW session just crashed and burned. You may be freaking out yourself, but, trust me, joining the chorus of screaming, crying, and retching will only serve to push the emotional apple cart over the edge of the Grand Canyon. Stop. Breath. Access. Strategize. Fix. And do all of that while looking as if you always had the answer in hand. (Repeat as needed: "Serenity and strength. Serenity and strength. Serenity and strength.")

## Be Funny

Nothing helps break the stress of creative work like moments of hilarity. You're not defusing bombs, so every minute in the studio shouldn't be wrapped in extreme focus and uber-serious demeanors. If you're not a comedian, don't try to be (see the next paragraph), but you can at

least try to lighten the mood when things start getting too tense. Even subtle humor can help break the spell of angst that sometimes descends on creative projects. Of course, whatever you do to crack a few smiles, *do not* make fun of the artist. ("Hey, look at Steve making these kissy faces when he leans into the microphone. Let's all make the same faces back at him!") Unless you want a quick end to the session, the Don Rickles vibe should be left to Mr. Rickles.

## Be Real For Real

It's the music business, so insincerity is ubiquitous. If you're working with smart artists—and pray that you are—they will see right through any phoniness you splatter over the proceedings, and they will not respond the way you want them to. In fact, they may lose respect for you at warp speeds. You know when you're "putting it on," so don't. Don't pretend to be something you're not just because you think emulating this or that behavior will make you a hipper, cooler, more revered producer. You are who you are. Find an honest path to artistic interaction.

## Never Surrender

Do not release substandard work. Ever. If an artist has difficulty singing on pitch, for example, either help them get the melody, or pull out an auto-tuning plug-in and fix the bum notes. You can't send an apology with every CD: "Please excuse the crappy vocals. The artist is a horrible singer, and I was too bummed out to do my job." Your production work is judged on the tracks people hear—not feeble rationalizations about why you couldn't make a professional-sounding recording. **ea**

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# SONIC BLISS WITH CRAP MICS

by Kent Carmical

For your consideration, I present to you cheap microphones. I'm not talking about sale models being blown out "insanely low prices." No, I'm talking about those cheapo-mutant mics you can find at yard sales and swap meets. As a connoisseur of the crummy, I have found that cheap mics can often combat deficiencies in source sources or create interesting effects—although the mere presence of them in the studio might make George Massenberg recoil in horror.

Many of these oddities are no-name clones, so the object isn't so much to seek out specific models, but to find interesting mics with certain characteristics and exploit their perceived weaknesses as strengths. And, of course, there's a certain kinky satisfaction in using misfit mics and having someone ask, "Hey, how did you get that cool sound?" Here are a few of my favorite cheapos, and how they helped me craft some bitchin' sounds.

## Corpulent '80s Japanese All-Ball

This particular specimen looks like a Shure SM58, but at 150-percent scale. With low-end reproduction approximating a large-diaphragm dynamic in the Electro-Voice RE20 or Sennheiser MD421 arena, this \$15 wonder works great on kick drums, toms, bass amps, and hormonally-challenged male vocalists. Its high-end performance is pretty flaccid, which works great for taming brittle-sounding digital pianos. Besides, any mic named after Koko the gorilla's kitten just has to rock.

## Toxic Ribbon Avenger

It looked like an RCA broadcast ribbon mic from the '40s, but it sure didn't perform like one. I had to smash my mouth up against the mystery-metal grill, causing some sort of Impetigo to form on my lips. Before alerting the EPA, I tried it on a guitar amp cranked to ribbon-shredding volumes, and it just came alive with clarity and nuance. You can jam this sucker right up to the speaker grill and it just asks for more without a hint of overload. Placed mere inches from the inside of the beater head on a kick drum provides a great 60Hz-80Hz thump, but combined with weird internal resonance from the mic itself that imparts a ring modulated sound on the decay. Total Devo.

## Chinese Midrange Torture


Another SM58 infringement, this freak has a built-in switch that isn't on/off, but two different frequency response curves—neither being useable in any traditional recording scenario. Setting one has a frequency bump at around 400Hz so savage that placing it in front of a Fender amp gives a midrange bark that is positively British. Setting two reverses the curve, causing about 5dB of suck in the low-midrange, which makes a Marshall sound more like a Fender. This abomination can also make a ring-y snare or conga tow the line without having to tape stuff to the heads to dampen the resonance.

## Breaker, Breaker . . .

If you live in an area with a high rate of cousin-to-cousin marriage, yard sales and swap meets are chock full of CB radio mics. With

fidelity comparable to Tiger Woods, and an output level that will drive any preamp into distortion, these chunks of hand-held '70s Americana make fantastic harp mics. The Motorola brands have a natural boost around 800kHz that really brings out the honk, while steeply rolling off between 3kHz-4kHz to eliminate most of the undesirable wheezy-ness. Some desktop CB mics have a form of diode clipping built in for even more square-wave filth. This is excellent for the "distorto-vocal" vibe favored by the industrial crowd. The sound is unique, because it isn't created by a distortion pedal, and the paddle button used for keying up the mic lets the singer cut the vocal out rhythmically for even more audio ennuui.

## Lo-Fi Telephonic Terror

Looking for that "voice through a telephone" sound so in vogue with hipster bands and ELO reprobates? Sure, you could utterly crush the signal with heavy compression, and then filter out all frequencies below 240Hz and above 3.2kHz with a parametric EQ. But where is the fun in that when there are so many telephone headsets out there to cannibalize? It will take a bit of electrical know-how to wire the telephone's mouthpiece mic so that you can plug it into your mic preamp or DAW, but it ain't rocket science (and most everyone knows someone who loves rewiring stuff). I opted to mount a 1/4" jack to the actual phone handset, so I could use it as if I were talking to someone. Whatever you do, you'll get an authentic telephone tone that's great for weird voiceovers and lead-vocal effects. 



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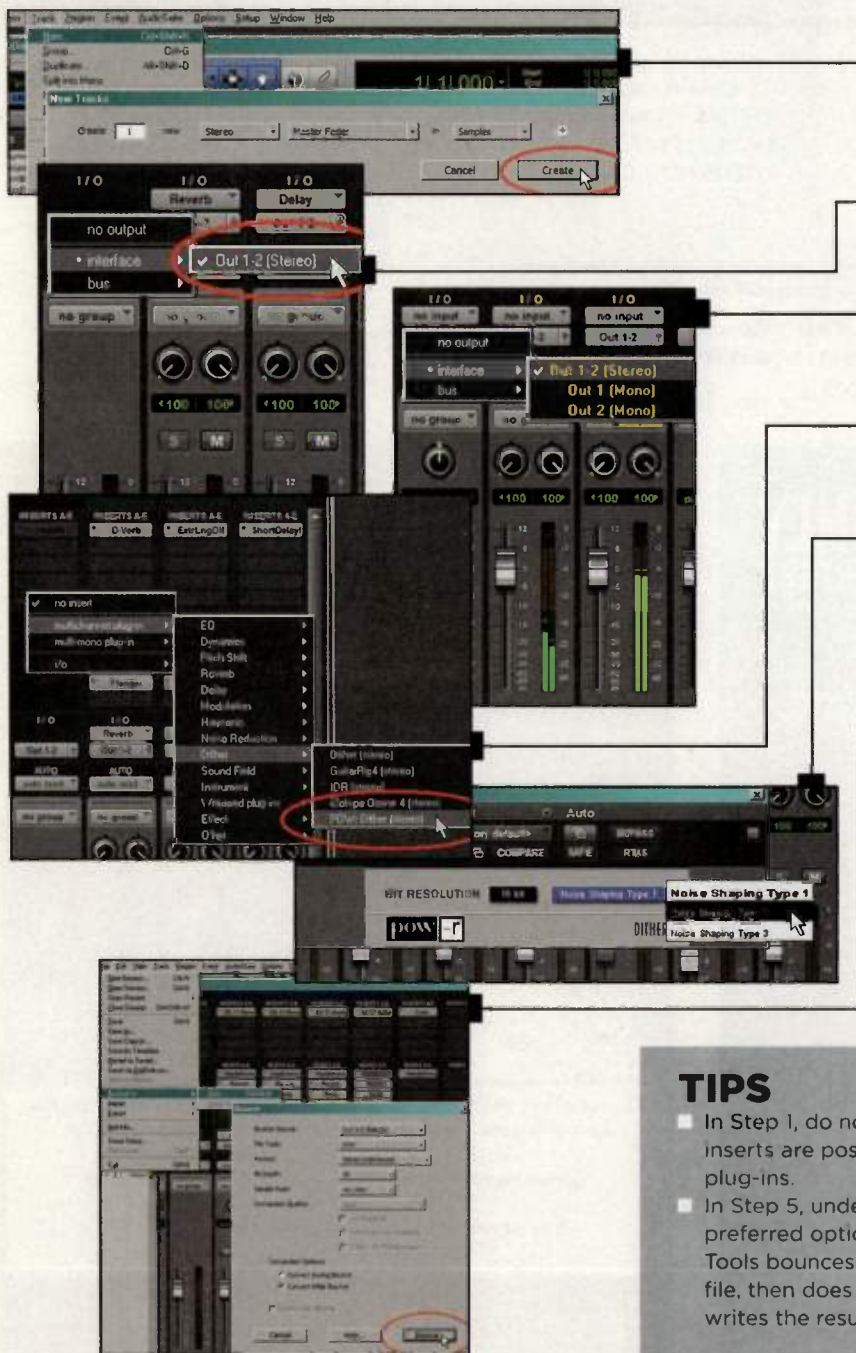
BY CRAIG ANDERTON

## DIGIDESIGN PRO TOOLS 8

Improve the sound of very low-level audio passages with dithering

**OBJECTIVE:** When converting a high bit resolution file to a low bit resolution file, use dithering to avoid unpleasant artifacts caused by truncating bits.

**BACKGROUND** Converting from a higher bit resolution to a lower one truncates (removes) the extra bits. However, this can create distortion at low levels, as there are fewer bits of resolution. Dithering adds noise to very low-level signals to minimize the audible effects of this distortion. Applying dithering is common when converting from 24-bit or higher resolution to the 16-bit resolution required by CDs, but is applicable any time you need to convert from a higher bit resolution to a lower one.



### STEPS

1. If your project doesn't already include a master fader track, create one by going **Track > New** and specifying a stereo Master Fader.

2. Select a destination for the Master Fader. Any audio arriving at this destination will be included in the dithered file.

3. Assign all outputs for tracks you want included in the dithered file to the same assignment as the Master Fader.

4. Click on the last Master Fader insert, and go **Multichannel plug-in > Dither > POWr Dither (stereo)**.

5. Choose the desired options for the POWr Dither plug-in. When the object is to create a CD-compatible file, choose 16-bit for Bit Resolution; for Noise Shaping, Type 2 or 3 works well for pop mixes.

6. To bounce the file to the lower resolution and dither it, go **File > Bounce To > Disk**. In the Bounce dialog box that appears, specify the Bounce Source, File Type, and assuming you want to create a CD-compatible file, select Stereo Interleaved for Format, 16 for Bit Depth, and 44.1kHz for Sample Rate. Click on Bounce to create your converted and dithered file.

### TIPS

- In Step 1, do not create an Aux Input track. The Master Fader inserts are post-fader, which is important when using dithering plug-ins.
- In Step 5, under Conversion Options, Convert After Bounce is the preferred option for producing the most accurate results. Pro Tools bounces at the highest possible resolution to a temporary file, then does bit depth conversion and dithering to this file, writes the result to disk, and finally, deletes the temporary file.

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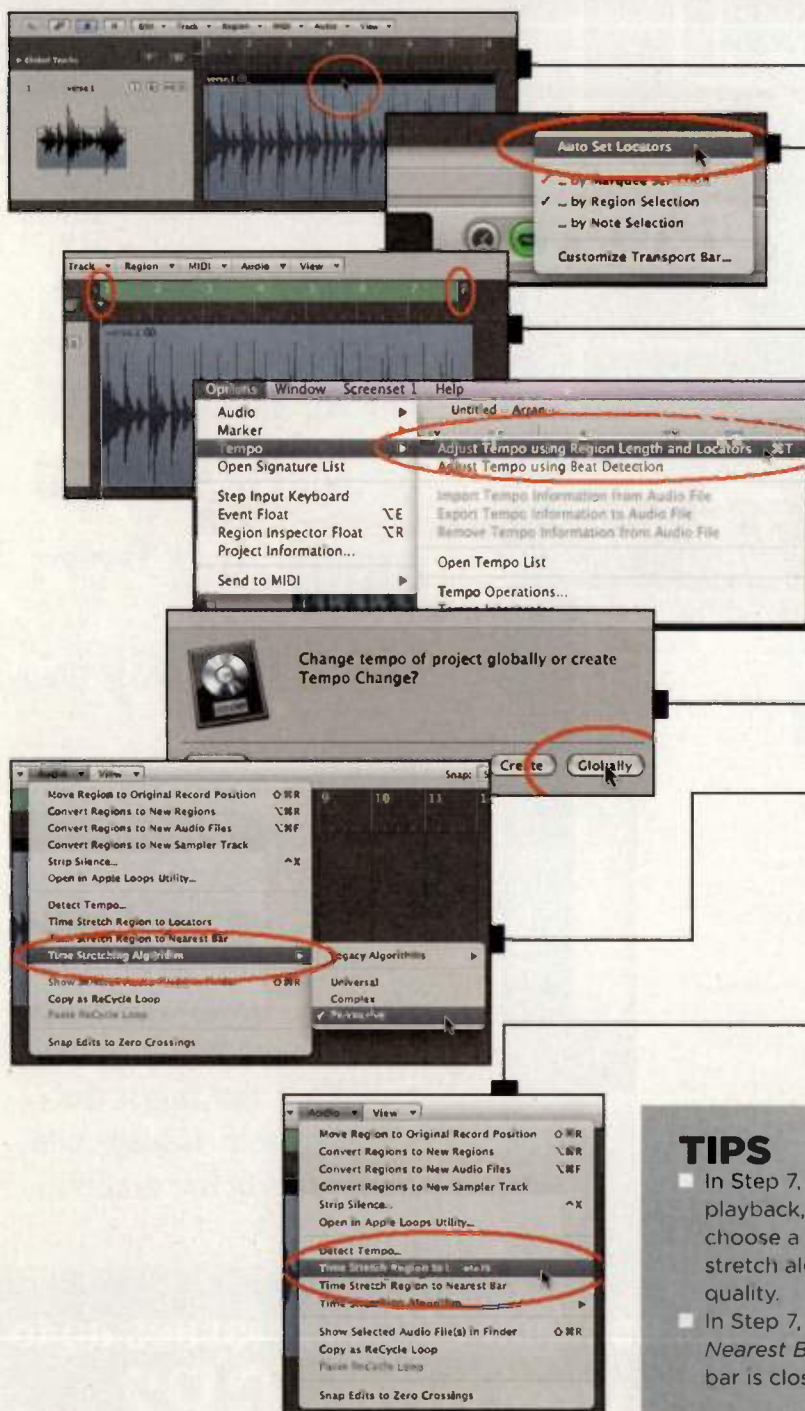
BY CRAIG ANDERTON

## APPLE LOGIC 9

Here's what to do if your project tempo doesn't match your loop's tempo

**OBJECTIVE:** Match a loop's tempo to the project tempo, either by changing the tempo to match that of the loop, or changing the loop tempo to match that of the project.

**BACKGROUND:** There are many ways to "stretch" loops so that they're compatible with project tempo, including the use of Apple Loops or REX files. But if a loop is a standard WAV or AIF file, you can still do stretching via Logic Pro 9's DSP.



## STEPS

1. Import the loop into the Arrange view, then click on it to select it.
2. Ctrl-click on the Cycle button in the Transport bar, then de-select Auto Set Locators.
3. Set the locators to the target length for the loop. In this screen shot, the eight-bar loop is slower than the project tempo; note how the locators mark eight bars.
4. Decide if you want to match the project tempo to the loop, or the loop to the project tempo. If the former, go Options > Tempo > Adjust Tempo Using Region Length and Locators. If the latter, proceed to Step 6.
5. A dialog box asks if you want to create a tempo change, or change the project tempo globally. In this case, we want a global change to match the loop. After clicking on Globally, the tempo will change to match the loop. Done!
6. Go Audio > Time Stretching Algorithm, and choose an algorithm appropriate to the material being stretched.
7. To match the loop to the project tempo, again with locators set to the target number of bars and the loop selected, go Audio > Time Stretch Region to Locators. The tempo will remain the same, but the loop length will change to the number of bars set by the locators.

## TIPS

- In Step 7, if the audio quality of the loop is degraded on playback, go *Edit > Undo Adjust Region Length*. Return to Step 6, choose a different algorithm, and try again. Keep trying different stretch algorithms until you obtain the best possible stretching quality.
- In Step 7, you can also choose *Audio > Time Stretch Region to Nearest Bar* if the locators aren't set as desired, and the nearest bar is close to the end of the region.

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# ROUNDUP: THREE “NOUVELLE CUISINE” DAWs

*When you're cooking up music, check out these low-fat alternatives*

by Craig Anderton

As a reaction against classic *haute cuisine*, “*nouvelle cuisine*” rejected excessive complication, favored shorter menus, avoided heavy sauces, and placed an emphasis on healthy, light—yet satisfying—dishes.

Microsoft and Apple took a similar tack with their latest operating systems; both Windows 7 and Snow Leopard touted efficient operation

over new features. Now we have the equivalent in DAW-world, with newer programs emphasizing smoother, faster operation—while existing programs re-examine their code with an eye toward more efficient workflow.

The three programs profiled here represent different ways of approaching a DAW, but share a common characteristic: Each emphasizes a light touch that keeps the software nimble and responsive, while still offering considerable

sophistication. They also illustrate that the “anti-bloatware” trend is pervasive, from overachieving budget programs like energyXT and Mixcraft to a world-class DAW contender like Studio One Pro. Efficiency is a trend that’s here to stay.

Trial version are available, so this roundup concentrates on the *gestalt* of each program, with an emphasis on a few unique features—so after reading this article, fire up your modem, and find out which one works best for you.

## PreSonus Studio One (MSRP \$499.95, street \$399.95; [www.presonus.com](http://www.presonus.com))

Studio One Pro (SOP for short; there’s also a lite, “Artist” version for about \$200 street) sometimes seems like a cross-platform *ménage à trois* involving Steinberg Cubase, Cakewalk Sonar, and Sony CD Architect. But it’s far from bloatware, and does its thing (including native Windows/Mac 64-bit operation, and 64-bit processing even on 32-bit platforms) with ruthless efficiency.

This extends to the look—clean and consistent, with subtle shading and a muted “euro” color scheme that relies on shades of grays and blues. You can work with this eyeball-friendly program for hours at a time.

### THE MASTERING GAME

PreSonus claims SOP integrates mastering and multitracking to an unprecedented degree, and they’re right. However, it’s a bit of a stretch to call SOP a comprehensive mastering program; there’s no pencil tool, noise

reduction, restoration plug-ins, and similar specialized mastering software tools. What you *do* get is an amazing program for assembling a CD (Figure 1), as well as Bob Katz’s K-Metering system, which is ideal for mastering.

SOP accomplishes this integration by offering two main workspaces, one for Songs (like a traditional DAW with track view, virtual console, browser, etc.) and one for Projects, where you assemble your songs into a CD (or image file, or for publishing to the web). The two are indeed tightly integrated; if you’re assembling a CD and feel that one cut’s drums are a little soft, you can jump into Song view, make the change, and zip back to the Project, where you’ll have the option to update the song file. You don’t even have to mix it: Studio One Pro will mix it based on the Song’s existing automation, levels, etc., then



**Fig. 1. Studio One Pro's Project view is where you assemble projects. Note the EQ's “micro-view” above the limiter plug-in, and the test equipment to the right: Spectrum Analyzer, Correlation, and K-Metering.**

use the updated file in the Project. This is seriously cool.

### MICRO VIEWS

SOP can also sidestep cluttering your screen with a zillion plug-in GUIs.

Although you can have a full GUI, inserting one of the bundled effects in a track creates a “micro view” that shows, and lets you edit, crucial parameters. You can always expand the view as needed.

Furthermore, opening up an effect (or instrument) GUI defaults to replacing whatever’s open. As most of the time you’ll tweak one plug-in at a time, this makes sense. But if you’re using multiple plug-ins, you can pin them to stay visible, and toggle between showing and hiding them all with a function key. Given the quality of the plug-ins, you’ll be using them a lot.

## CONFIGURATION & BROWSING

Hooking up and assigning hardware

control surfaces is simple. Plug-ins store maps so when you call up the plug-in, all the mappings are ready to go. SOP also stores I/O configurations per song, device driver, and computer; if you use different interfaces on different songs, calling up the song calls up the assignments. With PreSonus interfaces, pre-programmed templates automatically connect the software to the I/O.

The browser is pure drag-and-drop. It reminds me of Ableton Live, as you can drag in clips, effects, instruments, whatever—and stretchable clips import at the project tempo.

## CONCLUSIONS

SOP focuses on the user interface and whether you favor the single-window

approach or breaking these elements off into separate windows, you’re covered.

The target user is likely someone who appreciates conventional DAWs, but wants something more nimble. The project assembly/recording integration may or may not matter to you, but if it does, it’s killer—flipping between project and song saves time and potential confusion.

After working with SOP, I’ve come to appreciate its no-nonsense, no-fat approach to creating music. Sure, SOP will be adding features as it evolves (rumor has it V1.5 will include not only video support, but a *bi-directional* browser—how cool is that?). Yet I suspect the philosophy won’t change, and SOP will continue its “anti-bloatware” bent regardless of how many features it adds.

# energyXT2.5 Plus

(MSRP \$219.99, street \$149.99; [www.energy-xt.com](http://www.energy-xt.com))

This program definitely marches to the beat of a different drummer. energyXT2.5 Plus comes on a 2GB USB stick (1GB for the “non-plus” version) that you can transport among Windows, Mac, and Linux machines, with a level of efficiency that lets it run credibly on Netbooks. You can run the program directly from the USB stick, install it, or even copy it to the memory in a portable music player or cell phone so you’ll always have it on you.

In a way energyXT2.5 reminds me more of a program like Reason, as it’s compact and quite easy to figure out. After installing it, I was creating drum and synth loops without looking at the manual, or calling up other plug-ins. You can even ReWire Reason (or other clients) into energyXT2.5 for audio recording, VST instruments, and track processors if Record breaks your budget.

## SURPRISE . . .

You might think a program like this would be light on pro features, but the mixer section has 4-band multi-mode EQ per track, automation, and grouping, as well as unlimited sends and inserts. The time- and pitch-stretching/resampling use zPlane algorithms, and there are “hooks” for external controller hardware. For laptop jockeys, track folders save screen space, while track freezing lightens the CPU load.

The Sequencer section is treated as a separate module, so you can open up multiple sequencers—then open up separate mixers for the separate sequencers. The whole structure is held together by a “modular” view, which recalls Logic’s “environments” page. As this allows patching I/O and effects as well as instruments and sequencers, it’s easy to route the ins to effects and effects to the outs, turning energyXT2.5 into a software effects rack (and/or VST instrument host) for live performance.

## VST, BABY!

This part is Windows-only, but an included VST plug-in version of energyXT2.5 lets you use the *entire program* as a VST plug-in. This is wild; it’s like being able to plug in the ultimate step sequencer. For example, you could come with an energyXT2.5 program that’s a way-cool drum ‘n’ bass rhythm box with drum and bass lines, then plug that into a different program as a way to get started. You can even insert the VST plug-in into another instance of energyXT2.5 as a VST plug-in—which brings new meaning to the word “recursive.”

## INSTRUMENTS

The instruments included with energyXT2.5



Fig. 2. energyXT2.5 isn't just about MIDI and audio, but a useful software synth/sampler and drum module track.

are basic: a virtual phase modulation synthesizer/sampler and “drum track” (Figure 2). However, they’re also very functional. The synth has the expected features (multi-mode filter, portamento, on-board effects, and waveform split/layer via WAV file drag-and-drop), and the sound quality is fine. The “drum track” includes a drum playback module that comes with sounds, but you can create custom kits, save them as presets, and create parts using a matrix-style grid, with each drum part in its own lane.

energyXT2.5 also believes in drag-and-drop: Drop an instrument into a track, and poof—automatic MIDI track and mixer channel. The instruments also benefit from a built-in Arpeggiator, which is available with MIDI tracks and includes random and swing functions.

# GEAR HEAD

## CONCLUSIONS

energyXT2.5 is impressive; it's a laptop fan's dream, but it also plays well with others. It's easy to export and import WAV/AIF files (although to do MP3s,

you'll need to drop the freebie LAME encoder into the energyXT2.5 folder). Even better, there's a multitrack export mode if you want to bring an energyXT2.5 project into your "big" DAW.

This delightful little program (the executable file is a minuscule 1.4MB) has been flying under the radar for a while, but it deserves serious attention. Check it out, and you'll see what I mean.

## Acoustica Mixcraft 5

(download \$74.95, 60-day license \$14.95; [www.acoustica.com](http://www.acoustica.com))

Mixcraft fans are like cultists—check out their online reviews. The prevailing opinion is "I tried lots of DAWs, this one is real easy to use, and the value is outrageous." I reviewed Mixcraft 4 for *Keyboard* in 2008, and despite some missing features, was blown away by the value. (Note: In addition to this profile, I'm doing a full Mixcraft 5 review in the 5/10 *Keyboard*.)

### A REAL DAW? ACTUALLY, YES

At this price, you might think this Windows-only DAW (which includes WaveRT support for Windows 7) is

another lite program, but the feature set is true DAW: virtual console, video support (AVI and WMV, but if you have suitable decoders, you may be able to load other files) with basic editing—see Figure 3, notation editing/printing, and send tracks. Interestingly, version 4 had none of these features, so V5 is a pretty major upgrade.

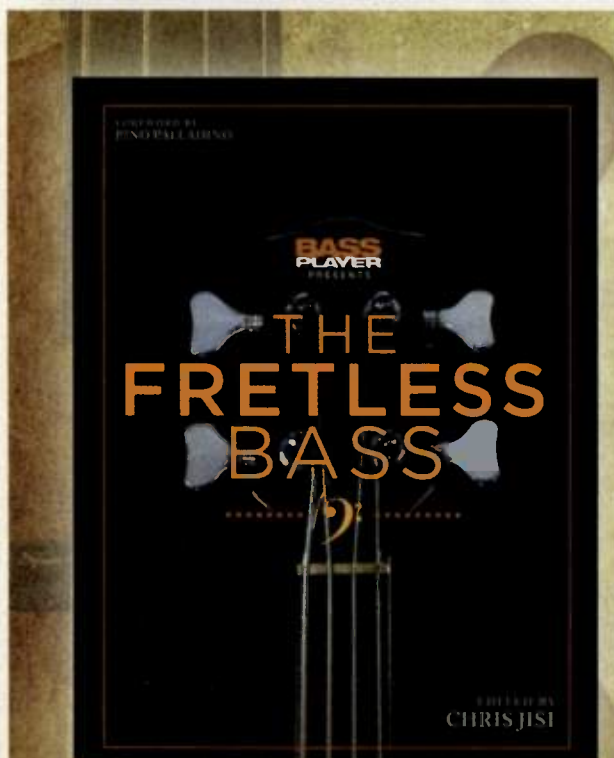
Features carried over from Mixcraft 4 include unlimited audio/MIDI/virtual instrument tracks, unlimited effects inserts, "piano roll" MIDI editing, a useful collection of instruments and sounds, clean and obvious interface (it recalls Steinberg

Sequel), and beat-matching/stretching that supports Acidized files and Apple Loops—although you can pretty much convert any audio or MIDI clip into a loop. It still doesn't support direct import of REX files (or ReWire), but if you have a VST plug-in instrument that supports REX import, you're covered.

Zooming remains basic—only + and - buttons—and while you now can drag-copy clips, you can't do that with individual MIDI notes.

### EFFECTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Like most DAWs, Mixcraft has added a



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guitar amp emulator (Shred). New instruments include the Messiah polysynth, Lounge Lizard electric piano (lite version), Alien 303 bass synth, and Acoustica Expanded Instruments (adds 66 more sounds to the existing set of Acoustica Instruments). These join the Impulse synth, Minimogue, and VB3 organ.

Bundled effects are chorus, compressor, delay, distortion, EQ, flanger, and reverb, as well as Kjaerhus's nine classic freeware effects, and Voxengo's guitar amp and spectrum analyzer. The Mixcraft effects are basic: No tempo sync on delay (except for the Kjaerhus delay) or chorus, no sidechaining, no parametric EQ (the Mixcraft and Kjaerhus are both graphics), and the mixer per-channel EQ simply has hi/mid/low boost/cut. But it's not like plug-ins are hard to find, and what's included works.

## THROWING SOME CURVES

Mixcraft also has unexpected features, like noise reduction for audio clips. This works if there's a section of noise you can isolate, whereby Mixcraft removes

that from the clip. I also like the utility that lets you play notes from a QWERTY keyboard—great for laptops. You can use a single-window interface, or undock the mixer, library, audio/MIDI editor, etc. Automation is now available for clips as well as tracks, and for MIDI tracks, the controller strip below the piano roll shows controllers, program change, channel pressure, and pitch bend. Mixcraft 5 also offers a ton of downloadable loops/sounds; you can download all of them at once to your hard drive so they're always available.

Want to burn an audio CD? You can do that too, and it even supports CD-Text.

## CONCLUSIONS

Mixcraft is an overachiever. Usually the first cut in budget programs is video support, but Mixcraft recognizes that even budget users want to upload videos to YouTube. Notation is also a rarity in programs at this price point. The plug-ins are basic at best,



**Fig. 3. Mixcraft 5 now supports a video track that even allows basic editing. The bottom pane, which in this shot shows MIDI editing, can be undocked if desired.**

yet low-cost and free plug-ins are plentiful, so it makes sense Acoustica decided not to develop more plugs and raise the price.

This is indeed a DAW "for the rest of us," offering a surprisingly complete feature set, at an even more surprising price, that works on desktops or laptops—and your CPU won't break a sweat. It's fast, fun, and friendly. **EQ**

An advertisement for "The Guitar Player Book" celebrating 40 years of the magazine. The background is a collage of magazine covers. The central focus is a large orange banner with the text "40 YEARS OF INTERVIEWS, GEAR, AND LESSONS FROM THE WORLD'S MOST CELEBRATED GUITAR MAGAZINE". To the left, there is a guitar-shaped graphic containing the text "THE Guitar Player BOOK 40 YEARS OF INTERVIEWS, GEAR, AND LESSONS FROM THE WORLD'S MOST CELEBRATED GUITAR MAGAZINE". Below this, there are several smaller images of magazine pages and a photo of a guitarist. At the bottom, logos for "Backbeat Books" and "HAL•LEONARD" are visible. The text "AVAILABLE AT MAJOR BOOKSTORES AND ONLINE AT: WWW.BACKBEATBOOKS.COM OR WWW.MUSICDISPATCH.COM (800-637-2852)" is printed at the bottom of the banner.

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## GADGETS & GOODIES by Craig Anderton WE CHECK OUT “LITTLE BROTHER” VERSIONS OF VARIOUS “BIG BROTHER” PRODUCTS

From controllers to effects to plug-ins, “little brother” products can provide significant value for those on a budget. Need proof? Keep reading. . . .



**Akal Professional APC20** (\$399 MSRP, \$199 street; [www.akaipro.com](http://www.akaipro.com))

The APC20 controller for Ableton Live 7/8 is the APC40's little brother. Compared to the APC40 there's no cross-fader, footswitch inputs, or the 16 dedicated rotary controls for sends and devices, but some clever workarounds give more than you might expect. A Shift option allows the nine faders (which default to volume) to control pan, three banks of sends, or three banks of user-defined options; you also get something the APC40 doesn't have—a Note mode for playing instruments from the clip buttons.

The button aspect is almost identical to the APC40. There's a 5 x 8 matrix for clip launching and project overview, clip stop row, scene launch buttons, navigation buttons that double for track selection, and rows of buttons for channel activation, solo/cue, and arm record. You can shift the focus up, down, and sideways to zero in on any 5 x 8 group of cells, and there's serious ease of use: Just plug the class-compliant APC20 into a USB port, and tell Live's preferences to recognize it. I could even figure out everything without the manual.

You can mix and match up to six APC40s and APC20s. So if you like the APC40 but wish it had 16 faders, just add an APC20; or use two APC20s and expand your setup as the bucks roll in.

If you play Ableton Live but don't think you need a physical controller, the APC20 will change your mind—without breaking your budget.



**BIAS PitchCraft EZ** (\$99 MSRP, \$79 street; [www.bias-inc.com](http://www.bias-inc.com))

This cross-platform plug-in does pitch correction, but BIAS also touts the special effects aspects—gender transformation, transposition, “hard” correction, etc. Compared to PitchCraft, the EZ version has four scale presets instead of 20, and no tuning presets; it also lacks global detune, a formant slider, and the cool tuning history graph. Aside from that, you're not giving up much.

A couple tips: PitchCraft EZ didn't respond to MIDI until I told the host to treat it like a soft synth—problem solved. Also, although the program is pretty non-critical, I was surprised at how much performance improves if you choose the correct pitch range for incoming signals.

For pitch correction, simply set the right key and scale; do the “robovoice” thing by setting the Pitch Correction slider to “More” (“Less” gives more natural correction). You can also set up custom scales, and ignore certain notes. But don't overlook unchecking correction, transposing 0 semitones, and editing the formant size—bigger deepens the voice, smaller thins it. This is a great feature, as is transposition in general.

Sure, PitchCraft EZ lacks features of more expensive programs, like vibrato or the pinpoint graphic editing of something like Roland's V-Vocal. But when you want the most common and popular pitch correction functions, you can't beat the price and ease of use.




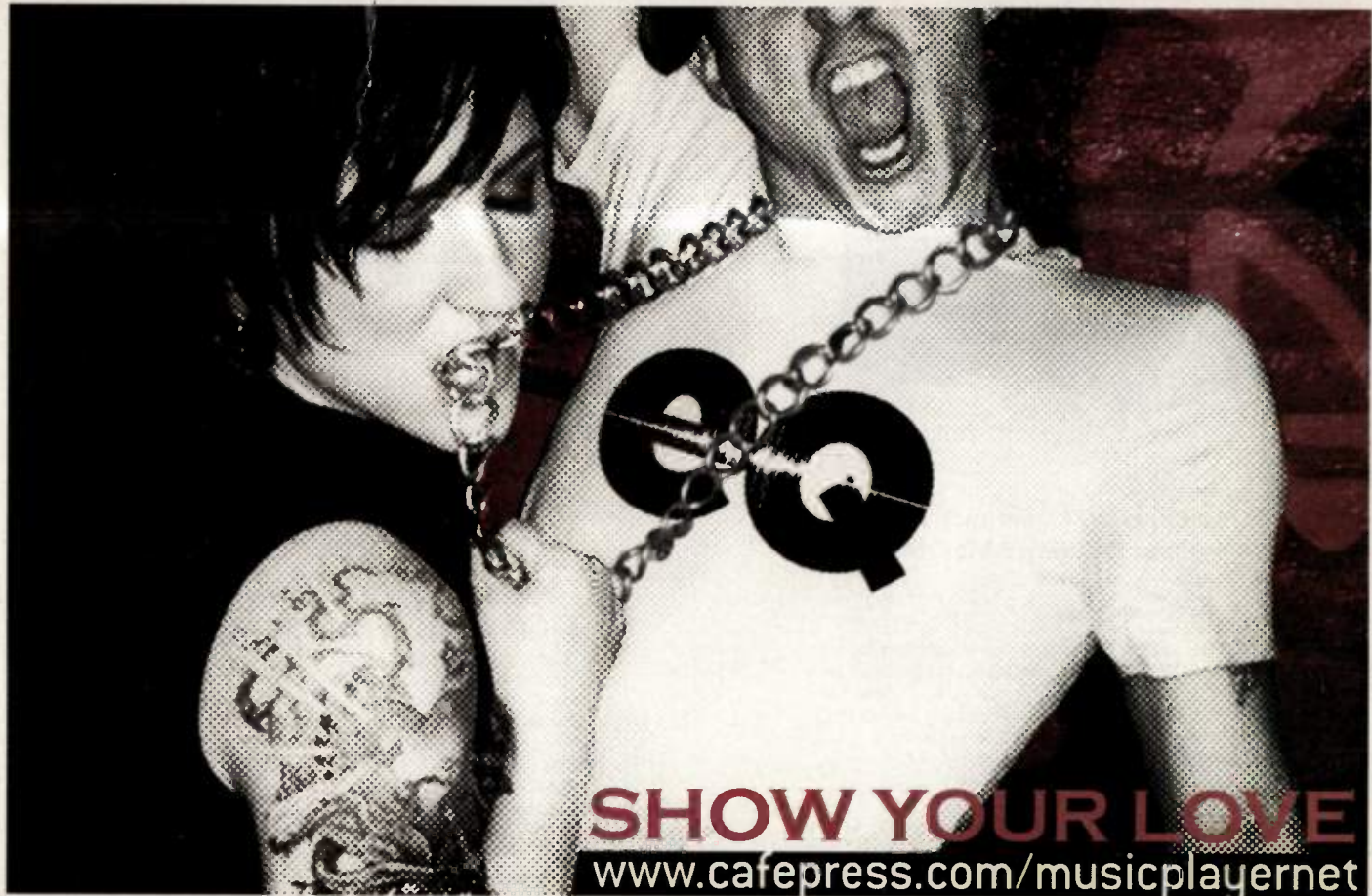
**Electro-Harmonix Memory Toy** (\$133 MSRP, \$99 street; [www.ehx.com](http://www.ehx.com))

Yes, this is a stomp box and no, you didn't open *Guitar Player* by mistake. But the cognoscenti will tell you no delay sounds like bucket brigade-based analog delay, and the delays in your studio are likely all digital. While classic analog delay chips such as the Panasonic MN3007 and Reticon SAD1024 are no longer made, E-H has resurrected the BBD chip in China for their lower-cost delay models.

Memory Toy is basic: Controls are Delay (I measured 33 - 588ms), Feedback, and Blend (dry/wet mix). Unlike the Deluxe Memory Man, there's no modulation control but instead, a modulation on/off switch. I considered this a major drawback, but took the unit apart and noticed trimpot TRIM8 is labeled Mod Depth. Yes! It's not as good as a dedicated control, but I found the right amount of modulation for my tastes.

While hardcore analog fans might quibble about any discrepancies between the new chips and the “vintage” ones, the difference between analog and digital units dwarfs any minor differences among analog devices. Memory Toy does indeed give the classic sound of yesterday, but with some improvements, like a 1M input impedance to avoid loading down passive guitar pickups and true bypass switching.

With more DAWs offering the ability to treat outboard gear like plug-ins, Memory Toy represents a very cost-effective way to get “that” warm, endearing sound. 



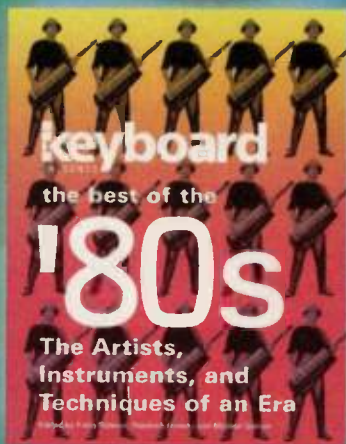
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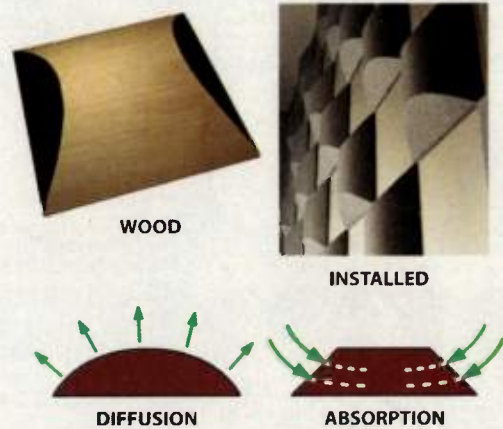
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# ROOM w/a VU



by Angelina Skowronski

**Studio Name:** BlingLand Studios

**Location:** Buffalo, NY

**Contact:** Mikebrylinski@mac.com, [www.theblingland.com](http://www.theblingland.com), [www.protoolsdavinci.com](http://www.protoolsdavinci.com)

**Key Crew:** Mike Brylinski (owner, producer, engineer), Dave Melillo (producer)

**Latest Projects:** Cute Is What We Aim For, Goo Goo Dolls, Spyro Gyra, The Mighty Mighty Bosstones

**Computers/DAW:** Apple Dual Quad-Core (8-Core) 3.0 GHz Mac Pro with 16GB RAM, Magma 6-slot Expansion Chasis

**DAW:** Apple Logic 9 Pro, Avid/Digidesign Pro Tools|HD4 Version 8.01

**Recording Hardware:** Digidesign 192 I/O (16 in/24 out) (2) and Sync I/O, Bryston 4B power amplifier, SPL MixDream XP Drive analog summing mixers (5)

**Storage:** G-Tech G-Drive 750GB External Firewire (5); Seagate 1.5TB Internal drive

**Sound Treatment:** Auralex Diffusors, RPG Systems ProFoam

**Mics:** Royer R-121 Ribbon; Sennheiser MD 421; Shure SM7, SM57 (2), SM58 (2); Telefunken AR-51

**Preamps/EQ:** AMS Neve 1073 Class A preamp/EQ (2), Bubba Ho Tech EQP1A Program Equalizer (2), dbx 120XP Subharmonic Synthesizer

**Dynamics/Compressors:** Alan Smart C2 Stereo Compressor, Empirical Labs EL8X Distressor, Funk Logic Custom Palindrometer, Universal Audio 1176AE "Bluestripe"

**Plug-Ins:** Antares Auto-Tune 5.0; Aphex Aural Exciter and Optical Big Bottom; Audio Ease Altiverb 6; Celemony Melodyne; Chandler Limited TG12413; Crane Song Phoenix; Digidesign Amp Farm, Echo Farm HD, Hybrid 2.0, Fairchild 660/670, Impact, Reverb One, SansAmp, Smack! TDM, Xpand! 2.0, and TL Space; FXpansion BFD 2.0; Focusrite d2/d3; IK Multimedia AmpliTube 3.0; iZotope Ozone 3; MOTU MachFive; Purple Audio MC77; Roger Nichols Signature Bundle TDM; Sony/Sonnox Oxford Dynamics 2.0, EQ 2.0; SoundToys Bundle TDM; Spectrasonics Stylus RMX; TC Electronic Harmony 4, Master X3; WaveMachine Labs Drumagog; Waves GTR, Mercury and Studio Classics TDM bundles

**Instruments:** Fender P Bass, American Standard Telecaster; Gibson Les Paul Standard, Memphis ES-335

**Guitar Amp:** Marshall 1959SLP

**Monitors:** JBL LSR4328 (2), Sony Boombox, Yamaha NS10m monitors

**Notes:** Mike Brylinski moved his office at Inner Machine Studios—Goo Goo Dolls' former private studio in Buffalo, New York—to his new commuter-friendly office at home. For BlingLand Studios, Mike has formed his new haven around one word: budget. "There's no need to buy all this crazy gear in order to make a great-sounding recording,"

he says. "In this day and age, there's just no reason to have a large format analog console, 48 channels of mic pre-amplification, and a crazy mic collection. This lack of overhead will trickle down, making budgets way smaller and may even help the industry in its current state."

But downsizing from the commercial studio to his home did not mean sacrificing his equipment. "I was really acclimated to working in a large facility, so I wanted to make sure I had the best of everything," Brylinski says. I've got a lot of powerful gear most home studios would kill for. I have a Pro Tools|HD4 rig packed with every plug-in imaginable. That's the most used piece of gear in any studio, and in my opinion the most powerful. A well-equipped Pro Tools rig has endless tools for creating a great recording."

All of Brylinski's prized gear is housed in the vibe of old-Victorian quarters. "All the studio treatments are done in tapestries that resemble an old French palace," he says. "For me, it's really inspiring to mix really modern recording technology in an old-world feel. I wanted it to be a comfortable space because as every studio cat knows, you don't ever get to leave!"

Aside from just recently working on a few EPs with singer/songwriter Leslie Mosier and rock boy-band Nocturnal Me, Brylinski has been using his extra time to launch his brainchild "Pro Tools DaVinci." "Pro Tools DaVinci came about as I was constantly getting calls from a 'friend of a friend' who had just gotten a Pro Tools setup and hit some brick wall setting it up," he says. "It's no secret that every musician wants into the recording world, so I wanted to set up a service where people could call and get live help by having an expert remote control their screen and resolve their issue quickly."

His DaVinci project makes Brylinski a pretty dedicated DAW fan, and for very just reasons, he claims. "In order to stay in the game you have to be able to do your job well and do it better than everyone else," he says. "For me, not only is tape expensive but you're missing out on the advantages that the digital domain has to offer. At the end of the day, no band wants to spend a big piece of their budget on tape that seems to get more expensive every day."

As for advice to other home studio owners and recorders, Brylinski says, "The only thing I would be wary of is to be careful while recording. It seems like a lot of people set up a mic and start recording without spending the time to get a good sound. Don't get too excited about hearing yourself coming out of the speakers." ☞

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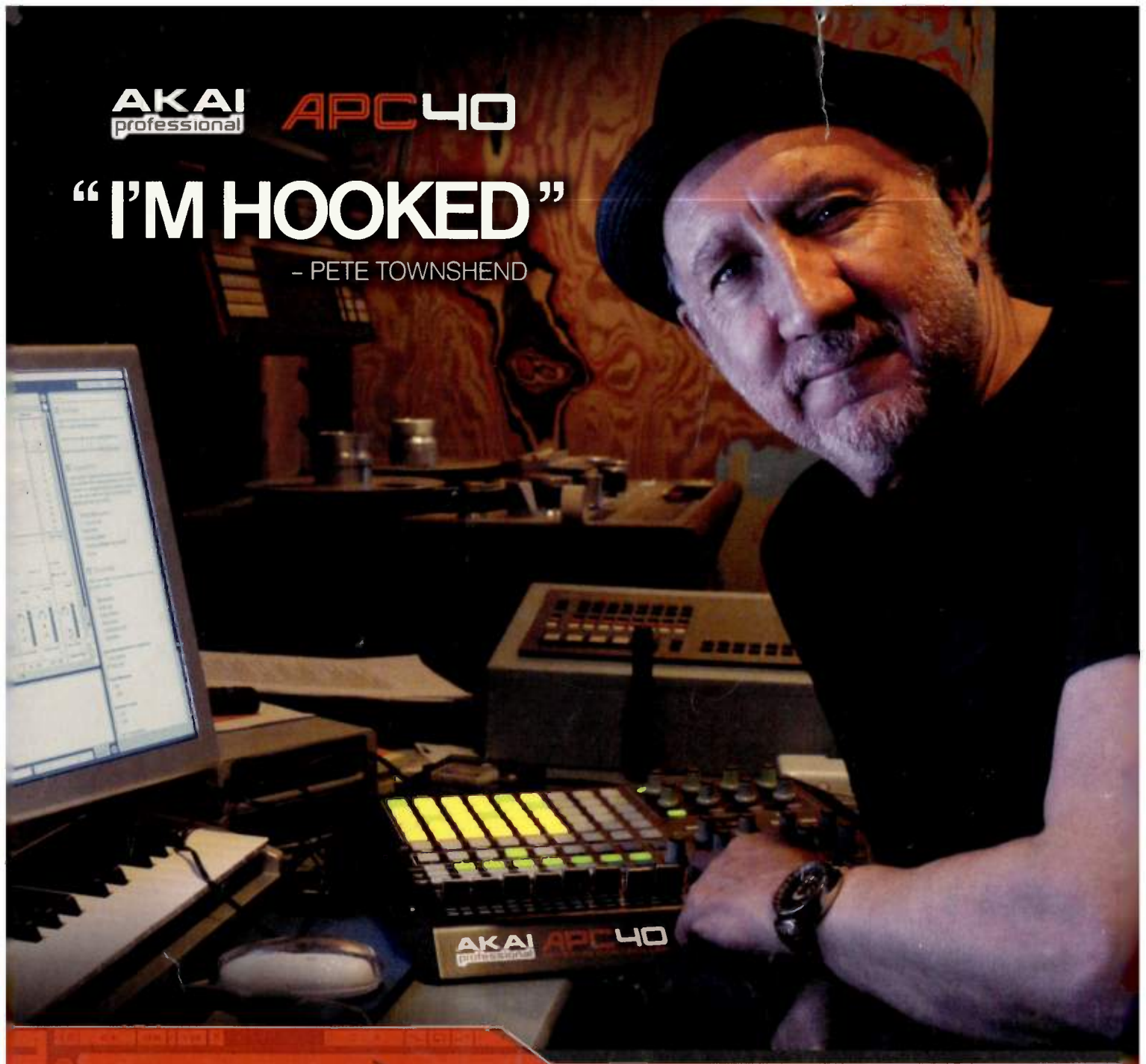
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