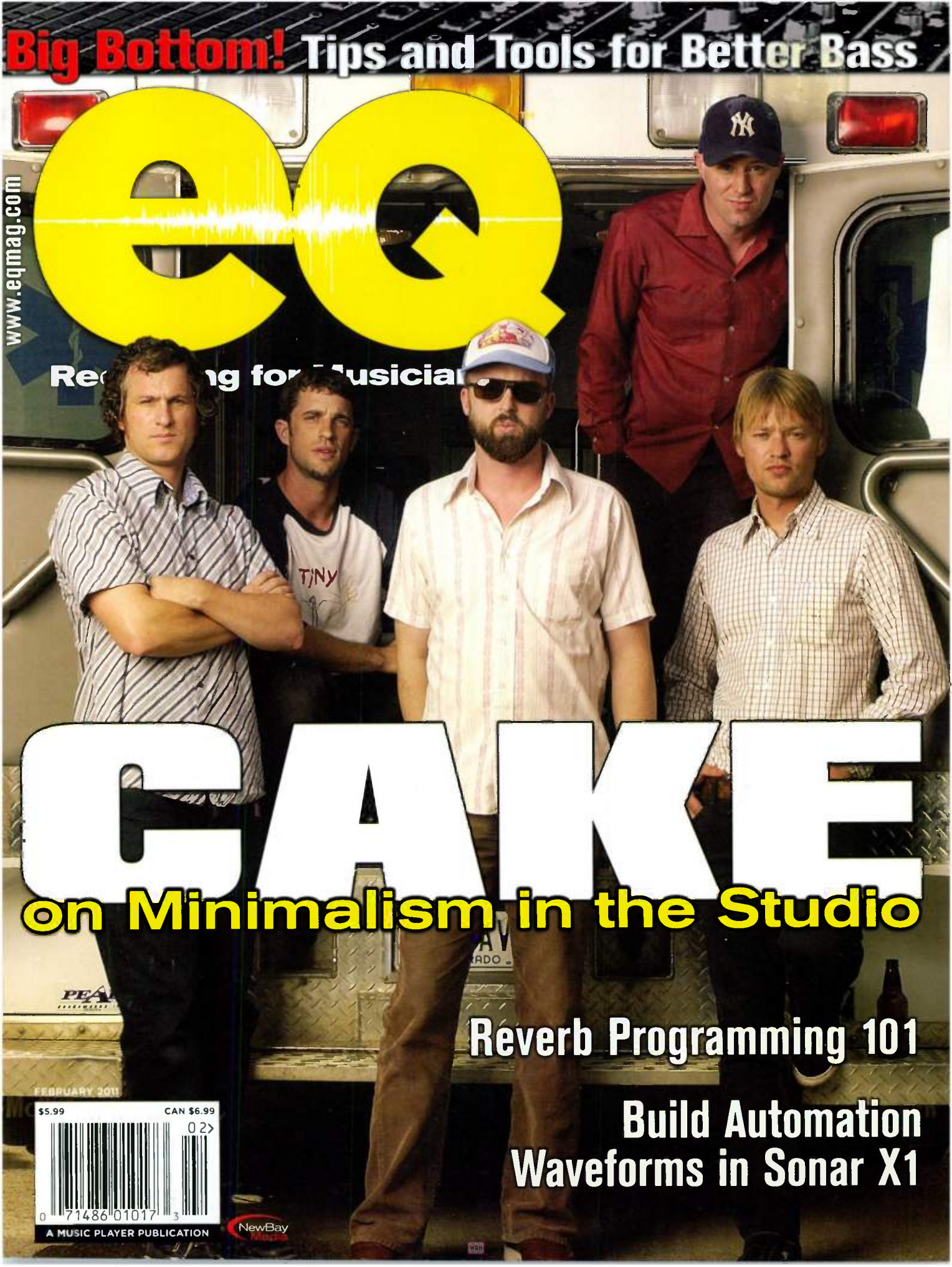
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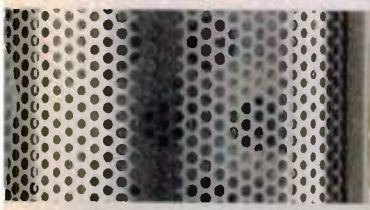

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Cover photo by TIM JACKSON

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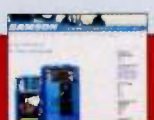
Cake interview outtakes.



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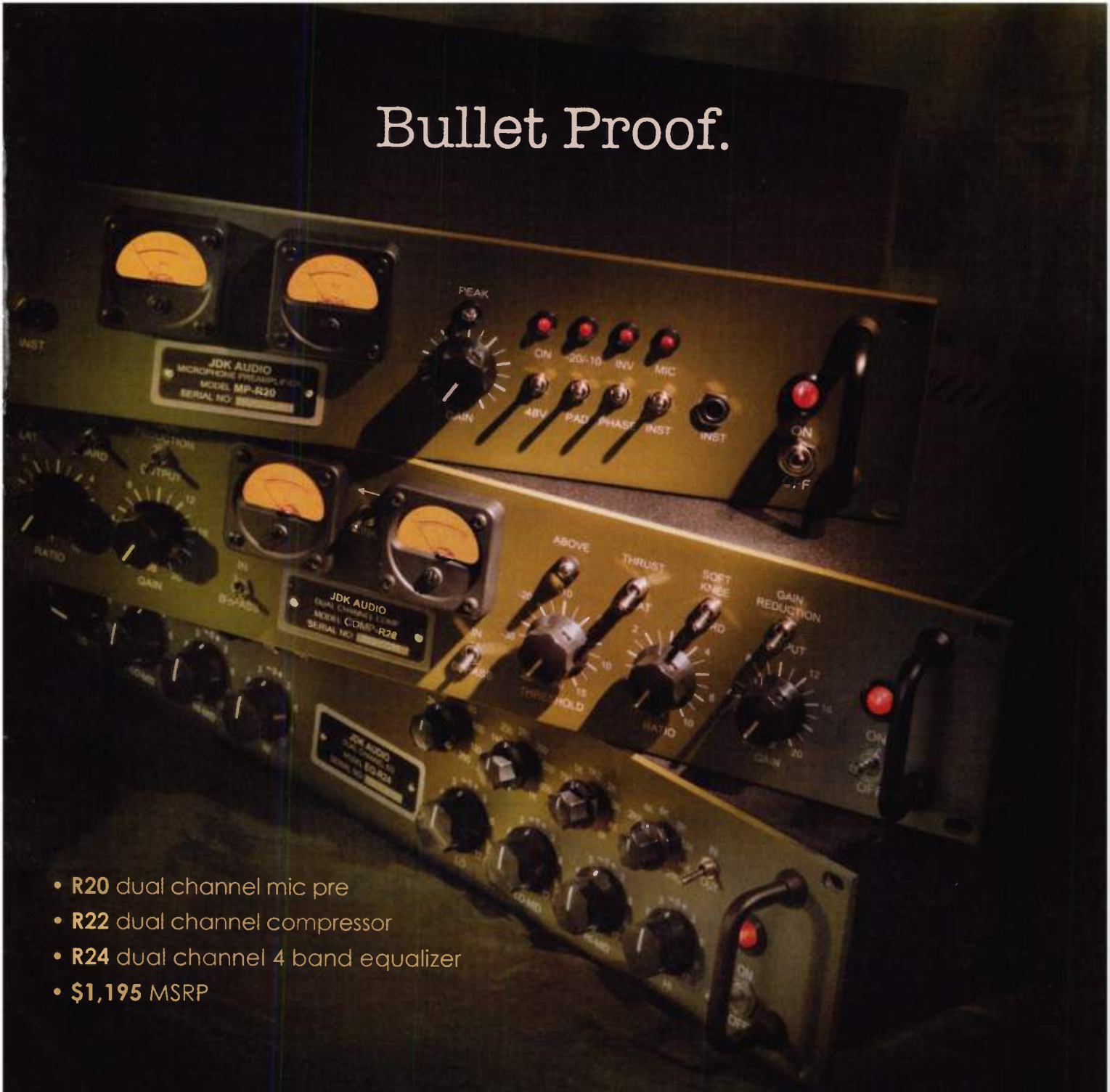

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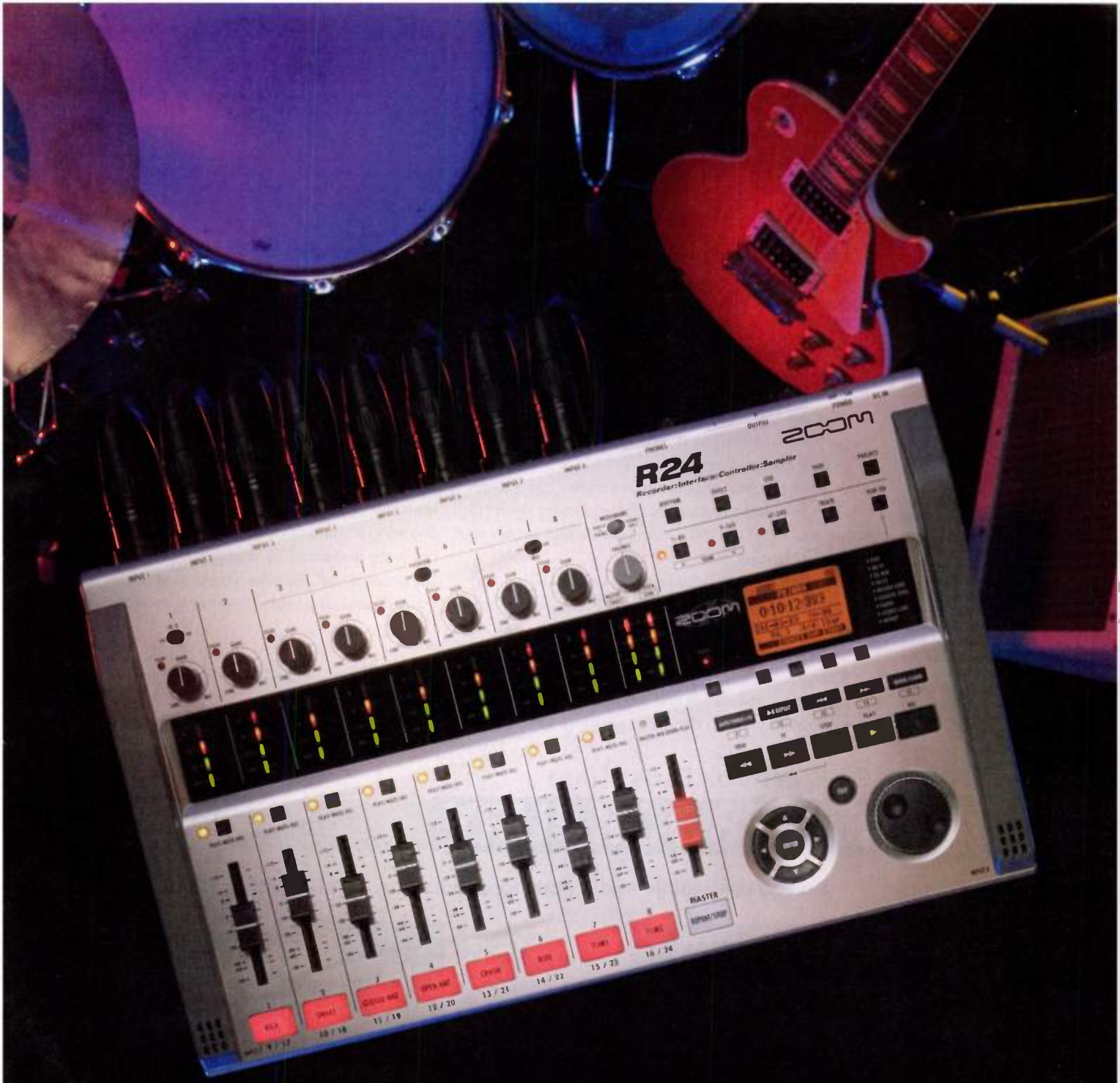

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TALKBOX

DOWN WITH DEFAULTS!

Defaults are handy with computer programs, as they give you a starting point–and often a very useful one. But *musical* defaults are a different matter altogether.

Guitarists: When was the last time you wrote a song in the key of C♯? It's easier to default to the old standbys–*E*, *A*, *D*, *G*, etc. But exploring different keys will lead to different fingerings, test a different part of your vocal range, and kick you out of that default chord-voicing rut.

Keyboardists: Your synth or sampler has a zillion ways to customize patches. Are you using them? Or are you just punching up the presets that served you well in the past?

Bassists: Sure, your job is to be stable–but that ol' tonic-fifth thing is getting old. Try a more melodic groove, or for that matter, a more staccato one.

Drummers: Are you listening to reggae, soca, bhangra, rai, and other types of world music to help you break out of that old boom-chick mold? Inspiration is just a couple of clicks away–go to www.shoutcast.com, for example, and check out the rich variety of options under the International tab.

Vocalists: You're supposed to have a style, but that doesn't mean you can't stretch it. Just listen to the mileage David Bowie gets out of his voice, from screams to whispers to crooning. If he can avoid the Default button, so can you.

Get the message? Your listeners don't want to hear what they've heard before. Besides, you'll have more fun if you strike out in different directions. Try a song without bass; it worked for Prince. Or have the drummer and keyboardist play only percussion on one song . . . and maybe even have them do it from out in the audience. Try dramatic twists and turns in the arrangement. Surprise your audience, surprise yourself, and stay fresh: Down with defaults!

Craig Anderton, EQ Executive Editor

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FACEBOOK JURY

Do you use mobile audio apps for production, just for fun, or not at all?

Steve Graybeal
Yes! At least to bang out an idea. There are a lot of great apps out there!

Matt Biggers
Nope, I put more money into gear than gadgets.

Sam Polizzi
I use my tuner and my SPL meter on my iPhone.

Shannon Newman
No . . . there's nothing out there worth using in a production environment. The only thing I would even be tempted to use would be a tuner, and that's if I were playing an acoustic by the campfire.

ASK EQ

Help, please! I've been reading your articles about the evils of squashing music, digital clipping, and so on, and have dialed back. But I have an older song that's so "flat-lined," it sounds like eggs frying in the background. A friend who is a mastering engineer tried various de-clipping options, and none of them worked. His only suggestion was to take off some of the high end so the frying-eggs sound isn't so annoying. Can't anything fix this?

Trevor Hodges
Atlanta, GA
via email

When you really need to repair a flat-lined recording with crackly distortion, Waves X-Crackle is a pricey–but effective–solution.

EQ: Well, Trevor, we're glad you've learned your lesson. However, de-clippers are usually not the answer for the type of problem you describe, which sounds like the worst of all possible worlds–digital clipping combined with excessive compression.

We asked our resident mastering guru, Craig Anderton, if any fix was possible, and he reports getting surprisingly good results from Waves' X-Crackle plug-in. While it's not really a de-clipper, it greatly reduces the audio artifacts that *result* from the clipping–which is what really matters anyway.

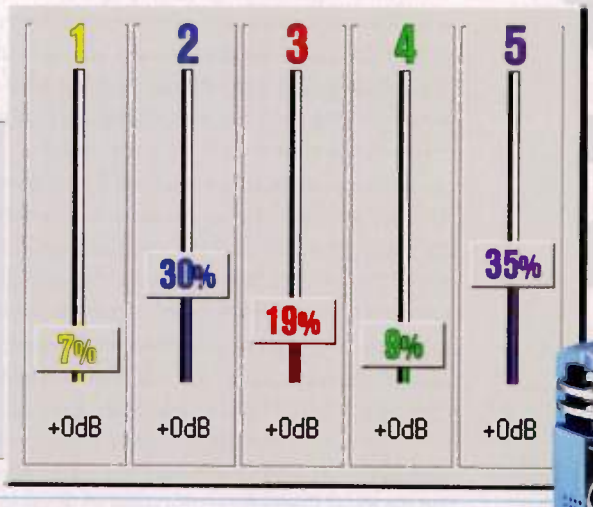
X-Crackle has a terrific feature where if you click on the "difference" button, you can hear only what's being removed–and it can be pretty horrifying. Also, don't be shy about running the Threshold and Reduction sliders up high; desperate waveforms call for desperate measures. Unfortunately, though, desperate measures have a price tag to match–X-Crackle is not available on its own, so the least expensive way to get it is as part of Waves' Restoration bundle, which currently streets for around $900. But all of the Restoration plug-ins work remarkably well, so you may find yourself being able to solve other problems as well–for example, some restoration tools can give spiky amp sim sounds a smoother tone.

Ask EQ a technical audio-related question, and EQ will answer it. Send it to EQeditor@musicplayer.com.

EQ POLL

How many microphones are in your cabinet?

1. one do-it-all mic
2. 2 to 3 mics
3. 4 to 7 mics
4. 8 to 10 mics
5. more than 10 mics



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Question: What's your favorite way to record piano?

Send your answers to EQeditor@musicplayer.com.

DANNY CLINCH

JAKE SHIMABUKURO

Capturing the Eclectic Sounds of a Ukulele Master

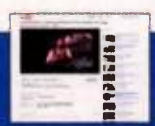
It's fair to say that no one has taken the humble little Hawaiian ukulele as far as Jake Shimabukuro. Though the Oahu-born, fifth-generation Japanese-American is well versed in traditional Hawaiian music, his albums have been highly eclectic affairs, incorporating classical pieces by composers like Bach, Paganini, and Rodrigo; his own tunes, which cross over many styles, from fusion to flamenco; pop ballads spanning the '30s to the '80s; and rock chestnuts by the likes of Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, and Michael Jackson. Shimabukuro is a true virtuoso, fleet-fingered as the best rock guitarists, but also capable of bringing out the beautiful subtleties of his tenor ukulele.

Shimabukuro's latest is called *Peace Love Ukulele*, and like most of his albums, it is dominated by his original instrumental compositions, with a couple of beautifully achieved covers thrown in the mix: Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" and a jaw-dropping solo version of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody." The album was recorded at the beautiful, *moderne* Avex Honolulu Studios by engineer Milan Bertosa. A Chicago native, Bertosa moved to Hawaii in 1988 and since has worked with many top artists there, including the Ka'au Crater Boys, "Bruddah Iz" (Israel Kamakawiwo'ole), the Brothers Cazimero, and many more.

Asked about his technique for capturing Shimabukuro's ukulele in the studio, Bertosa notes, "I'll usually use four mics. The basic layout is a Lawson 251–which is sort of a [Telefunken] 251 clone–in front of the uke, slightly above; directly below that is a Coles 4038. It's kind of a vertical array–those two mics have different characteristics and the two capsules are hopefully as aligned as possible and pointing down at the uke. Then we have these outrigger mics, left and right–AKG 480Bs with omni caps, and those will sometimes be on a plane with those other mics, and sometimes Jake will grab them and stick them right up against the sound board; it depends on what he wants to hear. That combination of four mics in different blends gets us to where we need to go, in terms of capturing what he may be doing at any point in time. 'Bohemian Rhapsody' was recorded in Japan [at Sony Studios] and is actually a Telefunken 251 instead of the Lawson, and they're DPA 4003 omnis instead of the AKGs." Bertsoa has his own collection of tube mic pres, including the Kauai-made GitIronics 356, and others from the defunct Curtis Technology.

Any advice for folks recording ukulele–suddenly quite a trendy instrument in indie circles–with just one mic? "Use the best mic you can find and place it about a foot off the instrument, offset up the neck *away* from the sound hole and pointing down, because all ukuleles have a 'bark,'" says Bertosa. "Never point the mic directly at the sound hole because it exaggerates that 'woofy' note they all have." **Jack Britton**

Interview extras with Milan Bertosa.



Jake Shimabukuro performs "Bohemian Rhapsody" live.

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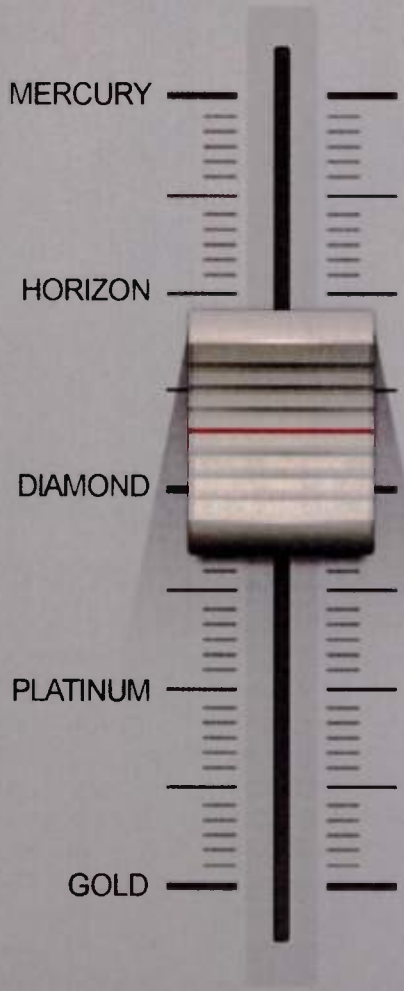

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THE GO! TEAM

Getting Posh with Production

Brighton, U.K. electro-meets-indie rock ensemble The Go! Team generated instant attention with 2004's debut *Thunder, Lighting, Strike*, an expertly choreographed collage of sample bombs and live recordings. Led by cut-n-paste maestro Ian Parton, The Go! Team's poly-cultural troupe furthered its mark with 2007's buoyant *Proof of Youth*. Now Parton has constructed *Rolling Blackouts*, a 13-track halfway house between hi- and lo-fi, using panning and processing to contrast light and shade and allow for a compelling, more consumable listening session.

"We proved we're anti-production, so we can try and get a bit more posh on this record," Parton says, laughing. "Overload, excessiveness...that was always an aesthetic choice. But on this record, we eased back on the harshness, and got a wider spectrum with a more solid, chunky bottom end, while rounded on the top as well."

The Go! Team hasn't forsaken handmade for £1,000-a-day studio clarity. Within Pro Tools, Parton collected breakbeats nicked from records, acoustic guitar licks, and harmonies sung into phones, as well as SampleTank SampleTron mellotron and Vienna Symphonic Library brass arrangements, which he then assembled into guide tracks that he took to the band.

The sextet gathered in Brighton Electric studios to track live bass, drums, guitar, and brass, using creative miking, re-amping, and detuning to establish a cavernous, crunchy sound. Mics placed down corridors and set against boundaries were blended, as was a stereo pair of low-level Grundig Bakelite 1950s station announcer microphones, for a solid drums foundation. Next, tracks went to Parton's home studio, where additional guitars, vocals, and instrumentation (including glockenspiel, banjo, harmonica, autoharp, and handclaps) were captured and masked to layer with up to 30 samples per song.

Key effects–according to Parton's brother Gareth, who shared album mixing duties with Sam Williams at the Fortress, London, and Temple Sound, Oxford–included Alan Smart compressors, GML EQ, UA 1176 limiter, Valley People Dyna-mite limiter/expanders, Culture Vulture valve distortion units, and a Tascam 4-track Portastudio's intentionally overloaded mic pres for furry distortion, and wow and flutter on certain stems. As a final thickening agent, certain songs were dumped to Studer A710 cassette tape recorder, adding a tangibly tighter bottom end and a shaved high extension. The overriding focus was on tonal excitement, just with a less unrelenting dynamic slam.

"I like the idea of movement with a bit of menace to it. People think of us as a party band, but it's always been action music to me...mining for forgotten sounds, salvaging them, and re-contextualizing them by placing different eras and genres against one another," says Parton. **Tony Ware**

Interview extras with Ian Parton.

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AMOS LEE

The Song as the Instrument

Ask Amos Lee a simple question and he'll give you a poetic answer. What prompted his new songs, heard to rich relief on his fourth album, *Mission Bell*?

"Through the hardship," Lee muses, "through the travel, through the commitment, and through the compromise, there are relics that survive. Like the mission bell, that's what rings out to ensure people to be present in the moment and to understand what they are. These songs are what remained after some of the hardships that created these songs."

Amos Lee speaks often of being "in the moment," but *Mission Bell* evokes feelings of reflection, travel, and epic circumstances. Produced by Calexico's Joey Burns, engineered by Craig Schultz, and mixed by Craig Schumacher at his WaveLab Studios in Tucson, *Mission Bell* recalls '70s folk stylists Eric Anderson, Jesse Winchester, and seminal country rock icon Tracy Nelson. As always, Lee's high tenor is key to his rangy songs.

"Always, I am just trying to be present," Lee says. "Not thinking too much. In the studio, you can get real ahead of yourself. Or behind yourself. What you're supposed to be doing, all that stuff. I've learned that the less focused I am on what the end part is supposed to be, the better off I am. We record a lot live; I don't do a lot of overdubbing. I don't like to comp too much; it's tedious. I'm fine with imperfection some of the time. Especially if it's for the performance."

Recording vocal and guitar tracks live with Calexico, treating different takes as versions to be improved upon or dismissed, Lee didn't really bother with preparation; he has prepared all his life. "I never warm up," Lee says. "I probably should; I just don't do it. Warming up to record vocals is just part of what you do every day. If we start at noon, I am not going to sit in a room and make all those funny sounds. Not going to do it. If we have to sing through a song a couple times and then take a break, maybe that's what it is. It's more of getting into the moment of the music.

"Half of the record we recorded, I was pretty sick with a virus," Lee adds. "I was sneezing and coughing all over everybody. But I just sang through it. I hate to sound simplistic, but I didn't care. I knew the songs would come through. I don't shout in the studio, I just want to serve the songs. We wanted to capture performances so that everything had its place in the music, and the vocal was just part of that. The *song* is the instrument." **Ken Micallef**

Craig Schumacher shares mix details

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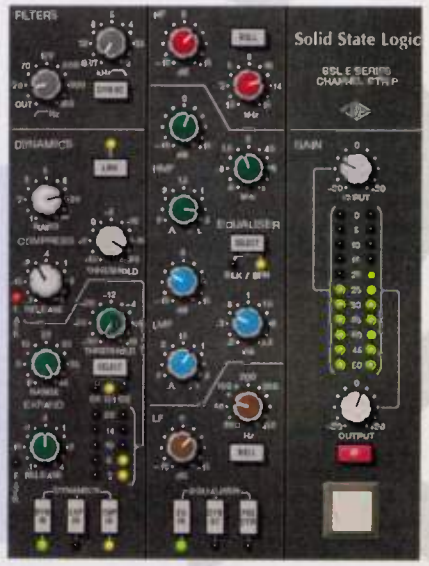

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Less Is More

Technology minimalists Cake return to the world of Pro Tools and plug-ins–but not without a fight

by Ken Micallef

Cake (left to right)–Paulo Baldi, Gabriel Nelson, Vince DiFiore, Xan McCurdy, and John McCrea.

Cake's John McCrea lives in 2011, but his stance is pure 1948. Cake is the last anti-establishment band, and McCrea is its prickly circus barker, a deceptively mellow fellow veiling lyrics rich in social criticism and harangues at a bloated America within the band's primitive-sounding, almost folk productions. His mindset extends to Cake's recording aesthetic: *Showroom of Compassion*, the Sacramento quintet's first album since 2004's *Pressure Chief*, was entirely recorded, mixed, and mastered using solar power. Self-produced and self-engineered, *Showroom of Compassion* revels in McCrea-speak, the articulate singer, lyricist, and Oakland, California resident dropping phrases like "tools of production," "cognitive dissonance," and "the magic of technology" in conversation as he skewers his targets. Of course, like any true believer bent on exposing fraud and avoiding waste, McCrea is suspicious of certain technology. Ask him why $5,000 microphones and expensive plate reverbs make him ill, and you'll get an earful.

"There's certainly an 'Emperor's New Clothes' thing going on in all kinds of hi-fi systems going back to the '60s," McCrea says. "We have to avoid the idea that a microphone can be categorically better. And also that the cost or the status of a microphone is necessarily going to make it appropriate for a song."

Cake–McCrea, Vincent DiFiore (trumpet, euphonium, keyboards), Xan McCurdy (guitar, synthesizer), Gabriel Nelson (bass, guitar, Rheem combo organ, bandalero) and Paulo Baldi (drums)–chose recording microphones based on what they used on tour. Cost-conscious, they didn't bother with overheads or room mics when recording drums, nor did they treat the live room at their Sacramento house/studio, the Cake Shack. One UA 6176 was used as the constant mic pre/EQ/compressor; McCrea recorded vocals into a Shure KSM 27, which he regularly dropped on the floor when the *sprechgesang* mood grabbed him, according to Cake's mixing and mastering engineer, Pat Olguin. Budgetary concerns definitely play a role in McCrea's recording views, but it's the fetishism of gear that bothers him most.

"I am not saying a Shure SM 57 is better than a vintage Telefunken or RCA mic; you just have to careful assuming that it's appropriate for the song," he says. "Don't come in with preconceived ideas that an expensive mic is necessarily going to be better. You have to let your ears guide you, not your sense of economics or studio propriety. That is a very big mistake that a lot of engineers and producers make. Assuming an expensive mic is better is wasteful, and it doesn't seem to be pragmatic. I've seen engineers come in with an expensive mic and they get all these subtle tonalities and when it comes down to the mix, they carve out all the extra stuff that mic gave them because there wasn't room for it in the mix. A hi-hat or some other instrument was using those frequencies, and that was more important. So the whole purpose for having that mic was removed. They could have used an SM57, or an old tape recorder mic from 1973."

Do Luddites Dream of Electric Plug-ins?

Cake eschews vintage technology, but when it comes to Pro Tools (version 8LE with a 003R interface), they're all in. If anything, while Cake appears to be a simple band of straightforward musicians

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performing rather pedestrian parts within their catchy songs ("Sick of You" recently topped the Billboard chart at #14), *Showroom of Compassion* is as much a product of Pro Tools technology as anything on the Hot 100. Almost every Cake song is pored over on the grid, decisions being made based solely on how each part fits into the mix. And those parts are often stacked and stacked, and stacked again. Cake's music may sound like it fell off the back of a delivery driver's truck, but it's a finely crafted, seriously engineered product.

"It might surprise people to know that we don't just jam these songs out and we don't record straightforwardly," Gabe Nelson explains. "A lot of that might be because we're not very good engineers. And we do like to edit. It's us being able to take five thousand parts for all these different instruments, then matching them to each other. And keeping the dynamics interesting; that's what we're good at.

"We'll take a trumpet part or guitar line," he continues. "We'll try it on the chorus, or on the verse, we'll try a long version of the guitar part, then we'll trim it way back to where it's just a couple notes from the original solo. We just experiment and turn everything over a million times. It can be grueling. But in the end it works for us to really go through all this experimentation. Sometimes we end up right back where we started, but we try it every different way."

And that occurred in practically every song. "Long Time," which begins with a sequenced keyboard and includes drum machine, still sounds pretty simple–a Cake trademark. But that was just a starting point.

"Vince cracked it open," Nelson explains. "He had this chord pattern for the keyboard [a Korg MicroKorg]; he recorded a bass line with it using a certain pattern. We tried reversing the bass line. We had to cut and paste all of these changes, then we reversed the phrasing. We were using a drum machine [Pro Tools Boom] at first, and we wanted to get real drums in there, too. We did ten drum takes; in the end, we made a mishmash of all the drum parts, and there were different drummers, too.

"'Long Time' has the most going on of all the songs," he adds. "We sifted through that for days. That started out with an African beat; once the parts were stacked it, became more streamlined. 'Bound Away,' that was obviously simple. We didn't do a techno beat on that one."

"Easy to Crash" was another dense production workout. "The first thing we recorded was pretty bare-bones," Xan explains. "Drums, bass, and guitar. And we had an arpeggiated keyboard line. It doesn't even change keys; all the chords are surrounding one figure. We recorded guitar, bass, and drums around that. The Theremin line is the Motif 6. You get a keyboard station like that, you wonder how you will ever finish. It's like Pro Tools, there are so many options, you can get stuck because you do want to try everything. But by the end of six months you have it down, you know what's there, and you're thinking, 'wow, this only has 7,000 sounds?'"

A Mic is a Mic is a Mic

"I do all the miking," Nelson says. "On the tour, before recording, I looked at the drums. They had a Shure Beta 52 on the kick and some expensive overheads, which we really didn't use. So at the Cake Shack, we just put SM 57s on the toms, and an Audix mic from touring on the snare– mostly because it said 'snare' on it and it had a clip for attaching it to the rim. We bought a couple of mics because of what we saw onstage; I just wrote down the names. But we kept it on the cheap; we only got the Beta 52 and used SM 57s on the rest of the drum kit. We put the snare mic through the UA compressor and everything else directly through Pro Tools into the Digi 003 unit."

As with many bands, cost is a defining element. Sure, Cake had some hit singles in the mid-'90s. But after getting out of their Sony contract, the band wanted to regroup. *Showroom of Compassion* was recorded over five years, and McCrea wasn't sure if the record would even see the light of day. His views on technology kept costs low while the band decided on their next move.

Cake adopted many live miking setups in their recording sessions.

"There is a distrust going on between technology and the band," Nelson says. "John thinks that these companies make microphones and charge a lot of money and the mics are really not much better. He is starting to change that opinion, but at the time, he was only willing to spend so much on mics. So I had to find the mics that were reasonably priced.

"Placement was pretty random for drums," he continues. "We would put the mics on the drums, and say, 'That sounds okay.' Then a while later, somebody might move them. At first, we put SM57s way up in the air. But we only had five inputs in total, so we close-miked the drums. Keyboards

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[Moog Prodigy, Yamaha S-30, Rheem combo organ, Nord Lead, Alesis Micron] went direct. For guitars, we used a tiny Jordan amp, which weighs two pounds; Xan was too lazy to haul his amp down from Portland. We used a Beta 52 on the bass amp. We used the 57 on the Jordan, or sometimes a Shure KSM 27, which we also used on the voice a lot. John liked that mic; he's got a baritone voice and it was able to capture all his lows but it still had a little edge. So we got his voice to cut, but without making it tiny or thin. That was a big deal; that is when John started to realize that mics do make a difference.

"Our idea was to buck the system, do it on the cheap, and make it work, no matter what. We figured The Beatles did *Sgt. Pepper's* on a 4-track. I mean, *Abbey Road* is gorgeous. Beat that! It's very pure. And warm."

Engineer Patrick Olguin.

An Engineer's Take

Engineer Patrick Olguin (VT Productions) has worked with the Black Eyed Peas, E-40, and Papa Roach, and knows what matters most: the band's good vibrations. Except for some frustrating mixing/mastering concerns, Olguin embraced Cake's DIY approach.

"I am firm believer in working at somebody's comfort level," he says. "My studio has very large assortment of high-end vintage outboard gear, and I like working like that. But I also like working at the comfort level Cake works at it. They're working in the box. They feel confident that they can make changes when they need to. I don't look at it as a limitation as much as I do a little bit more of a challenge. Overall, Cake sound like they sound because of what I refer to as 'bone tone.' When Xan plays a guitar, he achieves a certain tone with his fingers. Gabe is the same way. Run him through any mic pre and you can't get away from his sound. Same with John. A Telefunken might be wasted on him; his voice cuts through in a very distinct way."

Olguin brought in his very vintage, very expensive gear to master *Showroom of Compassion.* He couldn't master elsewhere, as Cake insisted that every element of the recording be solar-powered.

"I brought in a Pultec EQP-1A, from the '60s," Olquin says. "We used that to make the low-end bigger sounding, and for some high-end tweaking. And we used a Sontec EQ on some songs, an old MEP 250. And a Millenia EQ is everywhere. A Tube-Tech LCA 2B tube compressor is my main mastering compressor; it pumps in just the right way. It tends to make the bottom end a little bit bigger without sounding overdone. It's a great leveling compressor overall, and made it sound like a record. The Tube-Tech was used for the mid elements, and the side elements were processed through a custom compressor that I built.

"I master the mid elements separately from the left or right side," he continues. "You have more control that way; your kick, snare, and vocals and bass will all show up in the middle of the mix. They're mostly panned center. Overheads, keyboards, backup vocals, horns, guitars, will show up in the sides. I like to treat those separately, so if I am EQing the general mix with the mid elements, it doesn't affect the cymbal and guitars. It lets you widen the mix more if you want to. It's more difficult doing it all in the box. But I would rather the band be comfortable than me."

Embracing the Beast

Though McCrea maintains a pure aesthetic, for the first time ever on a Cake record, he embraced reverb for vocals. But it took a while. "On all our previous albums, I had a moratorium against reverb," McCrea says. "And I had a moratorium against acoustic piano. I didn't want us to sound classy. I didn't want us to sound grandiose, so no reverb.

When the band started, it was a reactionary response to what I saw as the grandiosity and false low self-esteem of grunge," he continues. "We wanted to be small and in-your-face. We thought, in a country as bloated in a culture as prosperous and excessive as this, that the only truly subversive thing you could do was to be small. All those effects like reverb reminded me of *The Wizard of Oz*—the guy behind all the machinery, the manufactured importance and classiness. We found perverse satisfaction in that. But now I can deal with a little bit of reverb."

"We used the TL Space plug-in and the stock impulse libraries in Pro Tools," Olguin says. "I also like to use [Pro Tools'] D-Verb for some of the delay-sounding reverbs. It adds a certain character, and it sticks out a little bit more than the TL Space reverb seems to. And there is a little editing going on, as far as automating the reverb returns, so that it disappears and makes it a little bit less obvious in the gaps of songs. I like to have that bounce going on while John's singing, but they don't like to hear the after-effects of it."

The megaphone effect on McCrea's voice in "Sick of Me" is Olguin's judicious use of Pro Tools Lo-Fi compression, as well as other basic plug-ins. But when it comes to vocals, nothing gets in the way of McCrea's one ritual: "Sometime I burn a candle, but I wonder why I am doing it," McCrea says, laughing. "I guess it gives me something to look at. It's simple, and it distracts me a little bit. I really do that! Honestly. When I am feeling daunted by a vocal, I will do something to distract myself from the challenge. I do get nervous sometimes. I am not cool when it comes to vocals. I don't have a great voice, but I am a perfectionist. That is

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the cognitive dissonance that creates a little nervousness."

McCrea is not against comping when necessary, pure-fectionist that he is. "I prefer getting a live take all the way through if I can," he says, "but I can't always to that. More often, I will like the first verse from one take, and the second verse from another take. What I don't like is when I have to punch in a word. I can always hear that for the rest of my life. The goal is to get something live, all the way through the first take or second take. It's dangerous to go back and forth from word to word. Because there are very subtle rhythm variances in a vocal take, and you lose consistency doing that, I think. If you're really getting a vocal and it really feels good, the reason it feels good is because there is some repetition of emphasis. That is very subtle and hard to repeat. And if you're just cutting one word or line and cutting to another one and returning to the first one, then you're losing that repetition that is so satisfying. I've made mistakes in the past with that, where there's been too much cutting back and forth."

At the end of the day, when the recording is completed, McCrea ultimately doesn't want Cake to sound *too* good. This isn't a T Bone Burnett record, after all. It's not even a Phil Collins record. "We don't want to sound classy," he says. "We don't want to sound expensive; that goes against what we are. I hated it when blues records started using really good microphones, when the drums sounded more like prog rock and less like music from the street. Blues is supposed to be about being on the street and not having excess; it's about scarcity. Cake has a little bit of that esthetic. Less is more. And more for us is not more.

"If you need an expensive grand piano to make classy music, then you need that. Get back to the paper route and earn money for the next few years. But if your music is more of a down to earth, economical esthetic, the means of production are at middle-class level now. That is such a great thing, and people don't talk enough about it. The tools of production are now accessible to everyone."

Showroom of Compassion proves a DIY project can hit the charts, that you can buck the system and win, and that you can make your own music, your way, on your own terms. It also proves that the major label stranglehold is anything but all-encompassing.

"I was expecting the system would be so corrupt that we would disappear, like Prince," McCrea says. Maybe I was wrong about the music business. Maybe you can get stuff through now without being connected to the huge machine. I told everyone we are going to release the record on our own label, but we'll never be on a late-night talk show again. I was wrong. I was sure it was over for us, but I wanted to release the album anyway. I am sure there are opportunities that will not be available to us, but it's not as bleak as I thought it would be. Maybe that's why I was subconsciously dragging my feet for so many years with this album. But I was pleasantly surprised."

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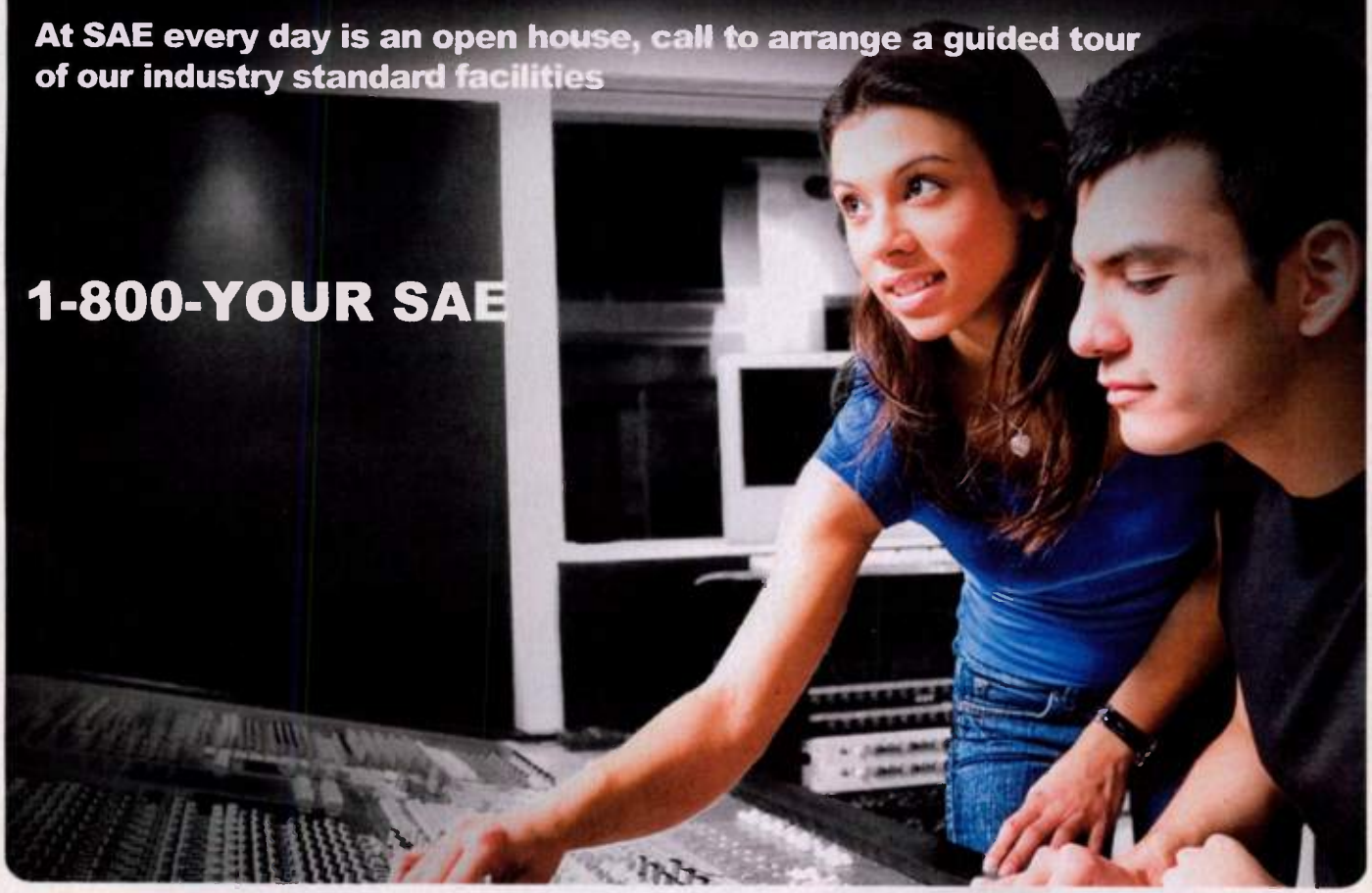

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The Decemberists (left to right)–Nate Query, Chris Funk, Jenny Conlee, Colin Meloy, and John Moen.

Getting Off Their High Horse

The Decemberists Aim for the Ultimate Barn Record on *The King Is Dead*

by Bud Scoppa

The Decemberists' *The King Is Dead* was recorded in a barn on Pendarvis Farm, outside the band's Portland, Oregon, home base—representing a radical departure from 2009's *The Hazards of Love*. Whereas the previous undertaking was a wildly ambitious reimagining of British traditional music and myth, the new album's touchstones are Neil Young's *Harvest*, which band leader Colin Meloy refers to as "the quintessential barn record," SoCal country rock in general, and R.E.M.'s pastoral jangle-fest *Reckoning*. Gillian Welch appears on seven tracks, updating the roles of Nicolette Larson on Young's *Comes a Time* and Emmylou Harris on Gram Parsons' solo albums, while the R.E.M. homage is made literal by the presence of Peter Buck, who plays electric guitar on two tracks and mandolin on another.

"Our records had become increasingly complex, reaching a kind of apotheosis with *Hazards*," Meloy explains, "and after having been embroiled in months of meticulous overdubbing and multitracking, we came out of there saying, 'Next record, we're gonna do like two weeks in a barn.' In some ways, it was a euphemism that we made happen. After the crazy puzzle of *Hazards*, everybody was excited to try to make a *regular* record this time around."

Returning for the band's third straight project was producer/engineer Tucker Martine, whom Meloy has come to consider a close collaborator. "Colin and I have a lot of overlap in the music that impacted us the most in our formidable years," says Martine, "and it was pretty apparent from the songwriting that he was revisiting these roots. Early R.E.M. is among my favorite music ever, so I was excited to revel in our version of those sensibilities. I'm just there to try to bring the songs to life in the best way possible, and

Continued

AUTUMN DE WILDE

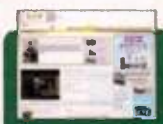
Colin Meloy in a converted barn on Pendarvis Farm, just outside of Portland, Oregon, where The Decemberists recorded the album.

to me, a big part of that is trying to understand where the writer is coming from in the *deepest* way possible. So our collaboration largely comes out of me having a lot of respect for his artistic sensibilities, and hopefully vice versa. From there, it's all just an ongoing dialog to get to a place we're all happy with."

"Tucker and I had a lot of discussions before we even started the record," Meloy confirms. "I turned over the demos to him and we talked about concept: What does 'barn record' really mean, and how far are we willing to take it?"

The wooden barn they chose as the recording site was about 30 x 30 feet, with a high, slanted ceiling and lots of odd angles. "Acoustically, it had a pleasing character to begin with," says Martine. "And that became the theme of the album: Pick a space that felt good and embrace all the limitations it was gonna present. You really have no choice once you commit to making a record that way. Whether or not you can hear the space, at the very least, you're hearing a band relaxed and away from it all—without the Internet or coffee shops next door or the bustle of the world right outside."

Martine recorded to Radar 24, which he was using for the first time, finding it to be "the most analog-sounding of the digital



Bonus interviews with Colin Meloy and Tucker Martine.

See pictures of Peter Buck recording with The Decemberists.

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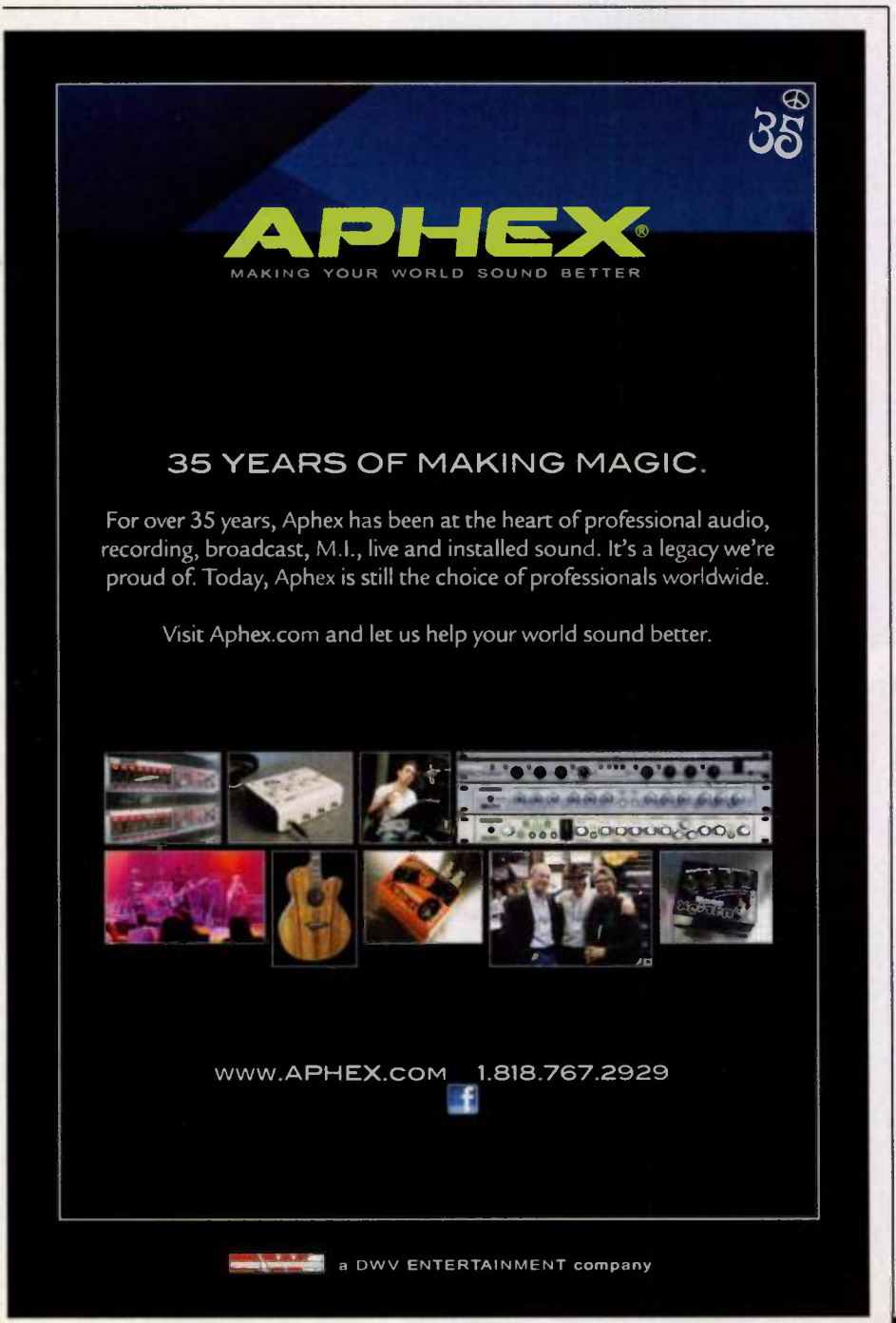
mediums" in his experience. For monitoring, he went with a used Mackie, which he'd bought on Craigslist specifically for the project, listening, as always, on his Proac Studio 100 speakers. He made extensive use of his collection of mics and mic preamps, including pairs of API 512Cs, Electrodyne 710s, Neve 1081s, Dakings, Millennias ("They sound great on ribbon mics, with tons of clean gain"), Brent Averill 312s on the kick and snare, Neve 1073s (into a Telefunken re-issue U47) for the vocals and a mono drum overhead. "Going for the mono drum overhead was a new thing for me, and it's great," he says. "It leaves more room to move other things around in the spectrum." For the vocals, Martine opted for a Wunder CM7 into a Neve 1073 hitting a silver-face UA 1176. He mixed it on an API Legacy console he'd just bought from Avast Studios in Seattle—the same board on which he'd mixed numerous albums.

They were about a third of the way into making the album when Martine accidentally discovered the sweet spot in the space. He'd been moving his Royer SF-12 room mic around the barn from song to song and take to take when he noticed it—right by the mixing board, as it turned out. "The spot seemed arbitrary," Martine recalls, "but I was standing there at one point while everyone was playing, and the drums suddenly felt so open and alive but still had some punch to them. Whatever bleed I was gonna get from everyone else was gonna be minimal but pleasing and balanced. It was just a great drum sound, and it sounded so much like the barn that we were all in. Once I discovered that spot, I leaned on it pretty heavily in most of the mixes—wherever it was appropriate. That was crucial, because what a shame it would be to go to all the effort to make a record out there in the barn and get to mixing and not be able to *hear* the barn."

The character of the space is dramatically apparent on the opening track, the strikingly *Harvest*-like "Don't Carry It All." "On that one," says Martine, "I was really pushing the room mic on the drums. I love the way it sounds. I look for that, anyway—unusual accidents to highlight that add some kind of curiosity to the music. It's good to be open to that stuff."

One sound you *won't* hear on *The King Is Dead* nonetheless exemplifies the vibe of this comfortable-as-corduroy album, as well as Martine's willingness to go with the flow. "This horse named Lucky was in a stable right by the barn," he says, "and sometimes, right at the end of a take, we'd hear this great big *neeeiiigghh* as things were ringing out. It was almost too perfect. I was secretly hoping Lucky would do that at the end of a keeper take. But he never did, and it would've felt too contrived to record one and paste it in—we were trying to keep it as dogmatic as possible."

Martine is making further use of the insights he gained making *The King Is Dead* as he produces My Morning Jacket—in a Louisville church. "The Decemberists being in a barn and My Morning Jacket being in a church shows they want something that's not necessarily just another state-of-the-art modern rock record," the producer points out. "They like to throw a wrench in things to see if it will help yield a more unique result, one that surprises both the band and the listener." EQ



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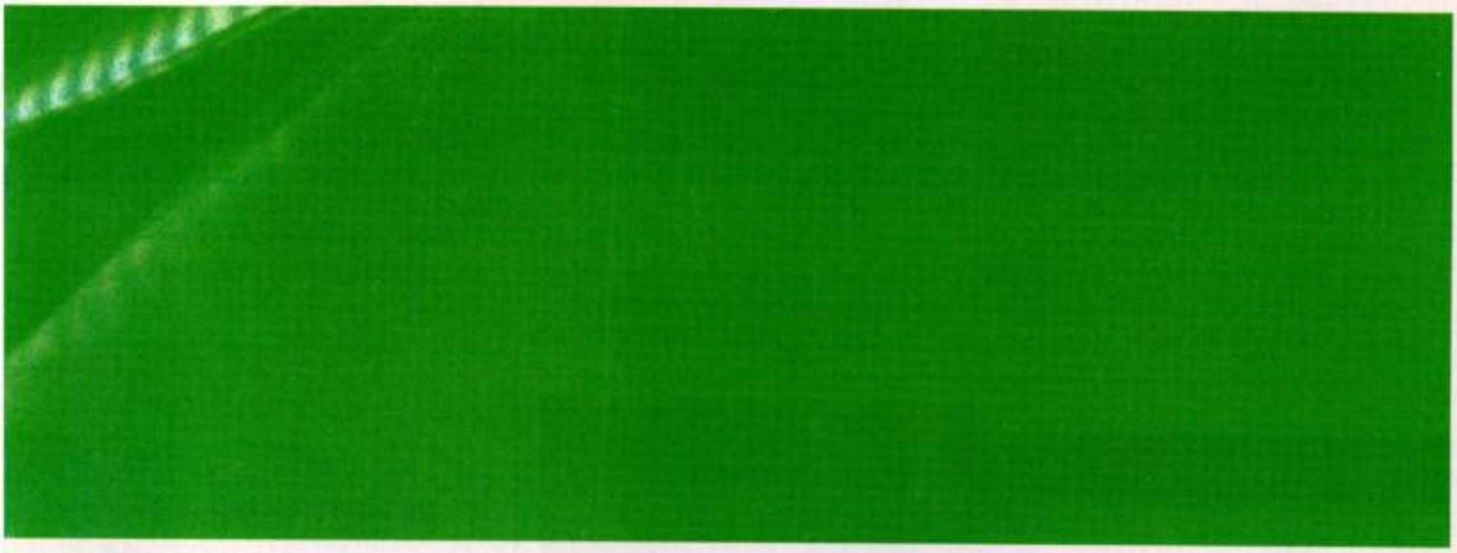


An Unpredictable Journey

The Fearless Musical Adventures of Iron & Wine's Sam Beam and Producer Brian Deck

by Jack Britton

Since emerging on the music scene in the early 2000s, Iron & Wine–the *nom de musique* of idiosyncratic singer-songwriter Sam Beam–has produced an impressive body of work that touches on many styles, is laced together with simple and complex lyrics rich in imagery and metaphor, and become more technologically sophisticated with each album. Beam has moved from the sparse, DIY, home-4-track feeling of his much-loved debut, *The Creek Drank the Cradle*, to albums featuring all sorts of interesting musicians from the indie rock world playing everything from marimbas to kalimbas, synths to bass clarinet, and some of the most unusual sonic touches this side of a Tom Waits disc. The strong melodies and ethereal lead vocals that have always been a trademark of Iron & Wine are still very much intact, but this year's model, as captured on the just-released Warner Bros. album, *Kiss Each Other Clean*, is intent on taking listeners on a fascinating and unpredictable musical journey.

Continued

Since they first paired up on the 2004 Iron & Wine album, *Our Endless Numbered Days*, Beam and Chicago-based producer Brian Deck (a former member of Red Red Meat, Califone, and producer of discs by Modest Mouse, Gomez, etc.) have been creating ever more adventurous albums together. *Kiss Each Other Clean* took about a year to make, and involved considerable commuting between Beam's home studio outside of Austin and Deck's Chicago base–Engine Studios, which he co-owns–and then telecommuting at the mixing stage. From beginning to end, there was a free-flow of ideas and copious experimentation.

Beam's recent projects have started with fairly developed demos he makes at home "on an outdated Pro Tools system I have," he says, "but using pretty good mics and instruments, and I have Focusrite and these great Shea Ako mic pre's. I'll play Brian the version I want to pursue first, then play him some of the other versions I've tried, and we'll pick out things we like–he's a great idea board. I'll throw stuff at him and he'll say, 'What about *this*? What about *that*?' We both like lots of different types of music, so it's a lot of fun to get together.

"We did the whole [2007] *Shepherd's Dog* record at my studio, but this one was about half-and-half. We would go to Chicago and do rhythm section stuff tracking live with the band, and then I would take it home and sort of flesh it out in my studio, then go back and do horn overdubs and stuff like that, back and forth.

"I end up treating the record process a bit more like making a painting than going in and recording a moment in time," he continues. "It starts out live, but then I would take *out* stuff and overdub over the top. Once you establish the melody and a certain tempo, you can kind of do whatever you like, and if you remove the foundation, then you're sometimes left with this great floating thing that still has a groove to it. It still has a live feel to it–it doesn't feel like a click-track thing–but it's not a conventional approach."

> "I end up treating the record process a bit more like making a painting than going in and recording a moment in time"
>
> –Sam Beam

Adds Deck, "Everything evolves over time. It's a big canvas and we're throwing everything at it and finding out what works and getting rid of stuff along the way, and then when it comes time to mix, there's quite a bit of paring down making sure what's in there is as effective as it can be." Trap drum lines were eliminated, hand percussion added; bass lines gave way to a synths and electronic pulses (lots of Moog Voyager); guitar parts (and reverbs) appear suddenly and disappear as quickly; vocal parts, some electronically altered, move through the sound

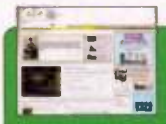
field in strange but effective ways. "For the last two records, Sam's been interested in taking the vocals as far as our imaginations can go," Deck explains.

Beam and Deck both bring their multiplicity of shared and individual influences into the studio—Beam borrowing from African music, the Beach Boys, Eddie Grant, putting what he calls a "Zappa-Beefheart horn section" on one song, and in places going for the clean sound of late '60s, early '70s L.A. recordings of artists like Joni Mitchell and Steely Dan; while Deck takes off from great experimenters like Tom Waits, Brian Eno, and other more modern, cutting edge artists, engineers and producers, as well as the sound of classic late '60s British recordings. It all comes together on *Kiss Each Other Clean* in a wonderful profusion of brilliant and fresh musical and sonic juxtapositions.

Deck notes, "I had an epiphany when the *Recording the Beatles* book came out and it had detailed descriptions of how they were working with the equipment and gizmos they had at the time. In 1966 and '67, they would often play a song all day long and try a large range of tempos and styles, and sometimes completely different styles of playing a song would get edited together into one take they would then overdub on. Well, Sam and I wanted to have that attitude—where nothing about the songwriting process would be held as *precious* during the basic tracking. We were going to try to experiment as much as we could while maintaining an honesty all the way through—admitting whether or not we got something we could move forward with, and if we didn't, no matter how much work had gone into it—we'd trash it and start again."

> "Everything evolves over time. It's a big canvas and we're throwing everything at it"
>
> —Brian Deck

Because Beam's wife was having a baby this past spring, Deck mixed the record alone in his home studio for the most part, mixing in the box with summing through a Dangerous Audio 2-Bus. He'd then send the mixes to Beam over the Internet and they'd make changes over the phone. "We did a lot of premixing along the way," Beam says, "but for the final mixes, he definitely had a good time and took a lot of liberties. That's okay—I trust him," he laughs.



Producer Brian Deck's advice for home recording.

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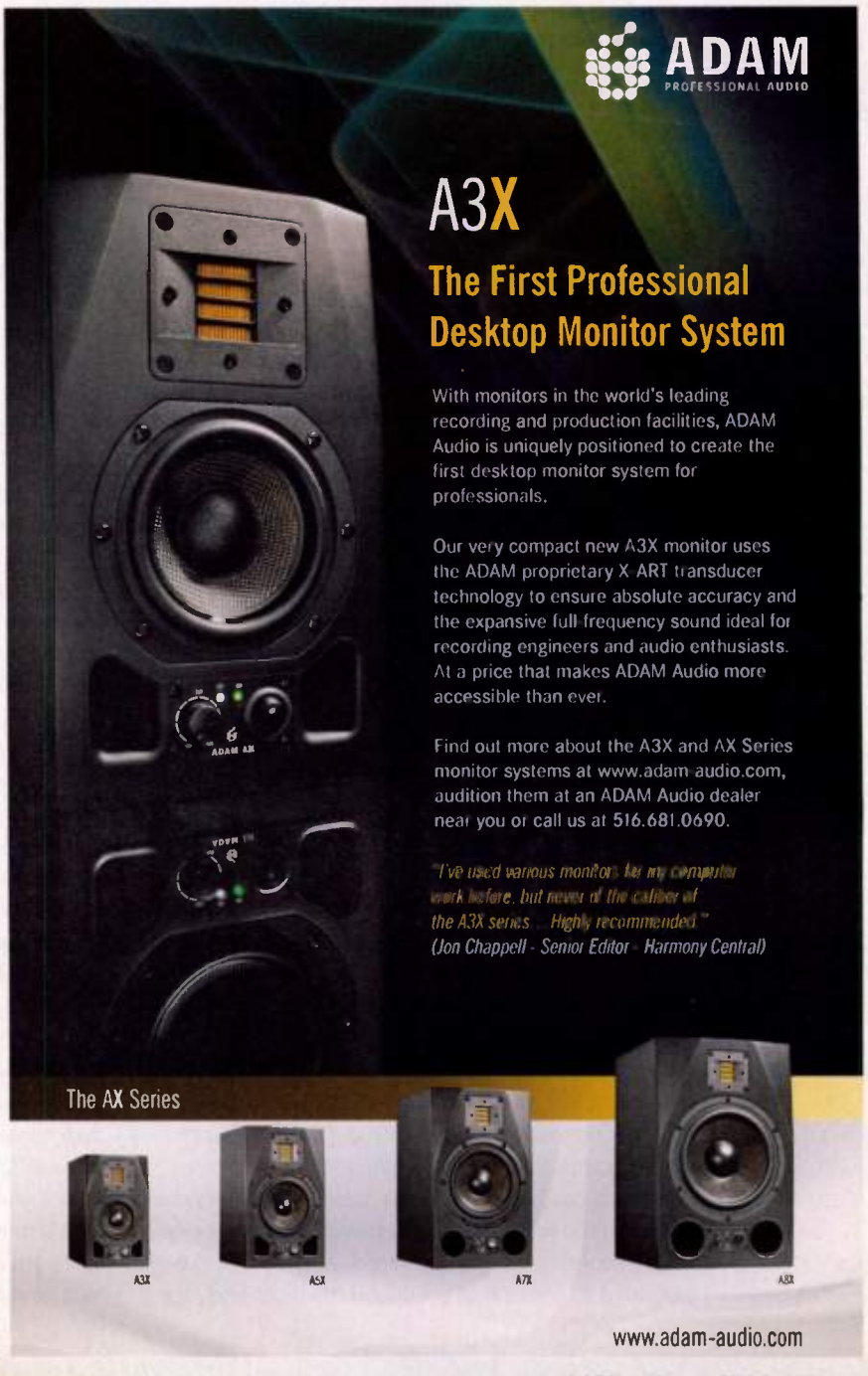

GUITAR

BY KENT CARMICAL

Tips for Tracking Lap Steel

It's now somewhat common for all manner of "Americana" instruments to show up at your studio, as more and more people wash out in the traditional rock-and-roll milieu, often turning to less-conventional instruments in an attempt to remain relevant. This month, we'll to consider lap steel recording strategies.

Electric Laps

You can't get much simpler than the electric lap steel. Basically a 2x4 with six to ten strings and a pickup, it's a manufacturer's dream. Before you record, check out the instrument. Vintage lap steels are often rife with hideous pops, crackles, buzzes and hums—usually a shot or two of good contact cleaner in the right spots can exorcise these sonic demons. Contemporary lap steels have more predictable electronics and shouldn't cause much problem.

When miking an amp, you'll almost always get great results by combining a small-diameter condenser with a Shure SM57. Put the mics as close as possible to each other without touching. (The farther apart they are, the greater the chance of phase cancellation.) Place the mic combo seven to nine inches from the speaker cone, with the capsules at an approximately 15-degree angle. Keep in mind that more directly you place the mic capsules over the speaker center, the more high-end there will be in the tone. You can downplay this unpleasantness by angling the mic capsule toward the edge of the speaker. If you have access to a ribbon mic like a Royer R-121, its natural tendency to roll off high-end is a good alternative to turning the guitar and amp's tone controls all the way down.

If you are using amp-modeling software, choose a Blackface Fender Twin model for that real down-home, country sound, and if your modeler has it, choose a 15-inch speaker with an open-back cabinet. While the SM 57/small-diameter condenser combo can prove to be the best miking setup in the analog universe, a large-diameter condenser model often provides the most slide-a-licious sound in the realm of ones and zeros.

In both hardware and virtual scenarios, a limiter set to a 4:1 ratio smooths out the track's dynamics nicely. In my recording, setting the attack of a UREI 1176 plug-in at 5, or halfway, produced the most body for me. (Settings on your particular limiter may vary.) When it came to setting my release time, I set it to complement the tempo of the track so that the limiting effect on each note is finished as the attack of the next note is starting. It took some time for me to tweak it properly, but the results were well worth it, as it pumped out a huge sound.

There really isn't a great tradition of using effects on lap steel, so experiment. After tracking with a Fulltone OCD for some crispy overdrive, I used a tape echo plug-in with a delay time of around 450 ms, as well as liberal amounts of digital plate reverb to dial in an "Instant David Gilmour, just add talent"–type sound.

Weiss-Guys

Back in the olden days before amplification, Hermann Weissenborn conceived and built the first guitars specifically designed for lap playing. Made of koa wood and featuring square, hollow necks, the Weissenborns had a sweet tone, long sustain, and were louder than a regular acoustic guitar when played on one's lap.

After much trial and error, I found that the best mic setup for these instruments is a toss-up between a large-diaphragm condenser with a cardioid pattern, and a Shure SM57. The condenser was great, because it produced a more clarity from top to bottom, and was easier to position over the Weissenborn's teeny soundhole since it could be placed up to ten inches away. The SM57 gave a grittier sound that I preferred, but it had to be positioned three to four inches from the soundhole for the best tone, which caused many a ruined take because the player's hand kept hitting it.

For my recording, I used a Universal Audio LA-2 plug-in with a 4:1 ratio and a release timed to the tempo to even out the harsher dynamics. However, this made my track too "squished" or over-compressed sounding. A ratio of 2:1 was too small, and made for some distorted transients. For me, using two compressors with a ratio of 2:1 in series seems to have all the benefits of a single compressor/limiter set to 4:1, without the nasty, over-compressed feel. When I tried this in the hardware realm, this technique sounded even better, delivering a super-smooth and rich sound with tons of body.

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BY GINO ROBAIR

Shape Your Tone with Creative EQ Tweaks

There are two primary ways to use EQ when mixing. Creative equalization is perfect for those times when you want to add a little attitude to a track or make it more stylistically appropriate than when it was recorded. Corrective EQ, on the other hand, comes into play when you need to adjust the timbre of an instrument so it sits well in a mix.

Of course, these two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Often, you end up doing a little of both when you mix.

All Your Bass are Belong to Us

Because the bass has a major influence on the feel of a song, you'll sometimes want to modify the character of a recorded performance once the song has developed. EQ, whether as a plug-in or on a hardware mixer's channel strip, can help you sculpt a bass tone that better fits the style and mood of your tune. (If you're mixing with an analog mixer, it's helpful to have high and low shelving, as well as a sweepable midrange band or two.)

It's a given that no amount of equalization will alter a bassist's technique, style, and musicality. Nor can you make a fretted bass sound fretless. But if you know the sound you're looking for, you can move your track closer to it once you understand which frequencies to boost or cut. From there, you use your ears and fine-tune the levels.

Here are a few tips for achieving some classic bass sounds.

Up-Front and Rockin'

Looking for that in-your-face sound of John Entwistle and Chris Squire? When you want a note-y bass line to cut through a mix, it's all about boosting the mids and cutting the lows. Start by adding 6 to 9dB in the upper midrange, and then sweep the frequency control between 1 and 2kHz to heighten the attack. Then, cut the low end by 6dB at 200Hz. You can further enhance the piano-like sound of the bass by cutting an additional 2 or 3dB at 80Hz.

A Little Bit Country

Accentuating the twang in a bass track starts by reducing the mud with a 6dB cut around 200 to 250Hz, then adding 6dB at 1kHz. Next, boost 80Hz by 1 or 2dB to inject some heft into the tone.

R&B Stylings

You don't need to use decades-old bass strings to get the classic sound of Motown's James Jamerson. The following EQ curve will help you keep the bass well out of the way of the midrange instruments, such as horns, piano, and guitar: Begin by cutting the upper frequencies–1 to 2dB at 1kHz, and 6 or more decibels at 12 or 18kHz. Next, add 3dB at 200Hz and a decibel or two at 80 to 100Hz. (If you boost the lowest frequencies a little more, you'll get a sound that works well in a reggae context.)

Looking for that Stax/Volt sound? Instead of cutting at 1kHz, remove 6 or more dB at 5kHz to retain a bit of punchiness in the bass.

Beatle Tone

Although Paul McCartney's sound evolved over the years, his tone on both the Hofner and Rickenbacker was always round and fat, with a strong attack and solid low-mids. To re-create this sound, add 2 or 3dB at 80 or 100Hz (whichever makes sense with the instrument in your track). If the bass part wasn't played with a pick, you can add some punch and string clarity by boosting 3kHz by 3 to 6dB. Then, cut 6dB in the 12 to 18kHz range using a high-shelving EQ to smooth out the sound. (If you're working with an analog mixer that has only a 10kHz shelving EQ, make a less-dramatic cut so you don't dull the sound too much.)

For a slightly warmer sound, start with a small boost around 80Hz, and then add about 6dB at 500Hz. If you have a 4-band EQ with two sweepable mids, try lowering 300Hz by 3dB to remove any hollowness in the sound, and then cutting 6dB at 12kHz. The combined boosts and cuts in both scenarios give you an authoritative tone that'll drive rock and blues tracks while being smooth enough to support a ballad.

Fretless Jazz

If you're looking to recreate the hornlike tone that made Jaco Pastorius famous, you'll want to reduce the low mids while boosting the midrange. To really nail that sound, you'll need to record a fretless bass played with the fingers (though the following EQ suggestions will give even a fretted instrument the right attitude). Begin with a 6dB or more boost at 1kHz to add some honk to the sound. Then, cut as much as 9dB at 200Hz. Finally, reduce the high frequencies a decibel or two and boost the low end to taste. To approximate the tone that bassist Marcus Miller gets, make your cut at 800Hz rather than 200Hz.

Compress to Impress

Once you've dialed in the EQ you want, you can give your new bass sound a smooth, legato feel with your favorite compressor. Depending on the bass part, set the compression ratio from 3:1 to 6:1, with a threshold level 2 to 9dB below the peak. Start with a fast attack and a moderate to slow release. After a note's initial attack, you'll get an increase in gain with a syrupy sustain. To modify the length and behavior of the sustain, adjust the threshold and attack-time controls.

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BY MICHAEL COOPER

Learn How to Space Out

Hard-panning tracks makes a mix sound wider, but not deeper. If you want your mix to sound three-dimensional, you've got to add reverb (or its kissing cousin, delay). Here are six tips for creating a sense of space.

Tailor the Tail

Generally speaking, fast song tempos require short reverb tails. A long decay might work great on, say, one guitar track, but lots of tracks ringing forever will ruin a fast-paced groove. Conversely, the more spaces you have between the notes of a slow ballad, the more time you have for long reverbs to decay without mucking things up.

Diffuse the Situation

Percussive tracks such as trap drums usually sound the tightest when run through a plate reverb; that's because plates are very dense and not inherently echoey. If your plate reverb has a diffusion control, cranking it higher will make your traps sound even tighter. Low diffusion results in discrete echoes being voiced within the reverb; the additional *pitter-patter* will rarely, if ever, be in time with your song's tempo subdivisions and will be no friend to a tight groove.

You can get away with using reverbs that sport low diffusion, such as hall and cathedral algorithms, on drums playing at slower tempos. But step up to the plate (reverb) when you're pushing the accelerator pedal.

Don't Be Late

Sometimes the best strategy is to completely mute the reverb tail. What remains of the reverb are so-called early reflections. In a real hall, these are the relatively few discrete echoes that bounce off the walls, floor, and ceiling to arrive back at the listener's position before and just as the reverb tail commences. The reverb tail, or late reflections, is composed of hundreds or thousands of late-arriving echoes spaced so closely together that none of them can be discerned separately.

If your production sounds overly dry but reverb just makes it sound too ghosty, try killing the reverb tail and using only the early reflections. Several reverb plug-ins–2CAudio Aether, Waves TrueVerb and Renaissance Reverb, and Lexicon PCM and LXP Native Reverb bundles–allow you to completely bypass late reflections. The remaining early reflections produce a fat automatic-double-tracking (ADT) effect that sounds awesome on melody tracks, such as vocals and guitar solos.

Enjoy the Ride

Keeping the reverb at the same level throughout your song isn't always a great idea. You might need to ride the level lower during sparsely arranged intros and mid-song breakdowns, where the reverb is competing with fewer instruments and could become overbearing. Once all the other instruments and vocals pile on, however, they'll mask the effect of any reverb in the mix; you may need to ride the reverb level higher in those busier sections to make sure it's still heard as much as you'd like.

Become a Panhandler

Who says a reverb's stereo outputs always need to be panned hard-left and hard-right? Boring! Try this instead: Pan your guitar, for example, hard left, and bus it to a reverb panned toward the right. Specifically, pan the reverb's right-channel output all the way to the right and its left-channel output closer to center. That'll give the reverb a nice stereo spread but keep its image skewed mostly to the right and opposite the guitar's dry signal.

The effect is striking and suggests to the listener's brain that the guitarist is playing in a vacuum on the left side and projecting his sound into a reverberant space on the right. A side benefit is that the dry left side of the mix can now better accommodate additional effects for vocals or other instruments without swimming in soup.

Hit the Wall

Increasing the reverb decay time doesn't necessarily make the virtual space sound farther away. It just makes it sound bigger. Let's make your guitar track bounce off a far-away canyon wall!

Bus a feed of your guitar track to an aux channel (that is, a mixer channel with no recorded audio). On the aux channel, program a delay timed to a quarter- or eighth-note for your song's tempo. Route the aux track's bus send pre-fader to a second aux channel, and raise the send's level until you see a healthy level register on the second aux channel's meters. Now lower the *first* aux channel's fader all the way. (The levels should remain the same on the second aux channel's meters because it's getting its signal *pre*-fader.) Slap a long reverb on the second aux track, and roll off all high frequencies above roughly 10kHz. Bingo, you're in the Grand Canyon!

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BY CRAIG ANDERTON

Morph Those Sounds!

Compared to acoustic instruments, synths create relatively static sounds–so sonic variations can make the difference between *boring* and *beautiful*. Sure, you can switch presets, or add changes in the mix (like cross-fading between patches), but making changes in real time–while you record–gives the benefits of a live vibe *and* an evolving sound.

One way to do this is to *morph* continuously from one sound to another rather than simply switch presets. The key is assigning a single controller like mod wheel, footpedal, or data slider to change multiple parameters simultaneously. For example, to morph from a sweet background part to a growling lead, you could program the mod wheel to increase distortion, add echo feedback, increase filter resonance, and mix in a sub-octave oscillator. What's more, you have all the transitional sonic variations between the two end points as options.

For the best morphs, modify as many parameters as needed to make a smooth and dramatic transition. This requires knowing how to assign the mod wheel (or your other controller of choice) to control all those parameters. Most virtual synths use a *modulation matrix*, where you determine which controller affects which parameter, and by how much (e.g., as you turn up a controller like the mod wheel, positive values raise the assigned parameter value, while negative values lower the parameter value). Here's how three different virtual instruments handle this task; most instruments work similarly.

Fig. 1. Minimoog V modulation matrix.

Arturia Minimoog V

The modulation matrix (outlined in yellow in Figure 1) is located in the upper left when you "open up" the front panel by clicking on the Open button. In this example, turning the mod wheel 1) raises the cutoff when increased, 2) decreases resonance (emphasis) at higher frequencies, and 3) decreases portamento glide at higher frequencies.

Fig. 2. KikAXXE VCF parameters.

Way Out Ware KikAXXE

Shift-clicking on a parameter brings up a control assignment screen. The section outlined in yellow (Figure 2) shows the screen for VCF resonance, but the screen is identical for all parameters. Mod Wheel is checked as the modulation source, and the green slider sets minimum and maximum values. Invert is checked, so resonance *decreases* as you *increase* modulation.

Fig. 3 Rapture's modulation matrix.

Cakewalk Rapture

This patch (Figure 3) layers two elements; turning up the mod wheel adds a step-sequenced filter effect to only the second element by 1) increasing Step Generator depth so the filter responds to the generator, 2) reducing the filter cutoff so the step generator covers a wider range, 3) increasing resonance to emphasize the effect, and 4) increasing the step-sequenced element's level so its sound is more prominent in the mix. eq

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CAKEWALK SONAR X1

BY CRAIG ANDERTON

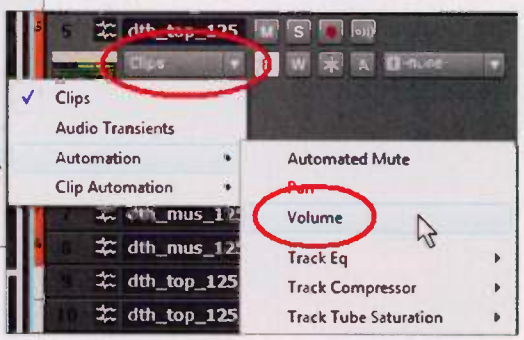
Create "LFO" automation waveforms

OBJECTIVE: For effects like flanging and tremolo, create low-frequency periodic automation waveforms.

BACKGROUND: Sonar has a tool for drawing envelopes, but you can also use it to draw LFO-type envelopes: triangle, sawtooth, square, sine, and random. In this example, we'll automate volume with a synchronized sine wave to create a tremolo effect.

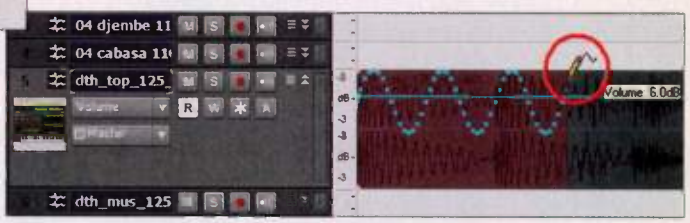
1 **Right-click on the Draw tool, and select the desired waveform.**

2 **Right-click on the Event Draw Duration button, and choose the desired waveform period.**



3 **Choose Volume with the Edit Filter so you can draw a volume envelope.**

4 **Click horizontally where you want the waveform to start, and vertically where you want the waveform's center ("zero-crossing" point). Then, drag up to set the waveform's peak range.**



5 **Drag left or right as far as you want the shape to extend.**

Tips

- Step 1: If the Tools HUD isn't visible, type T.
- Step 1: The F9 function key cycles through the available waveform types.
- Step 2: You can choose certain periods with keyboard shortcuts: Ctrl+Shift+1 = whole note, Ctrl+Shift+2 = half note, Ctrl+Shift+4 = quarter note, Ctrl+Shift+8 = eighth note, Ctrl+Shift+6 = 16th note, Ctrl+Shift+3 = 32nd note.

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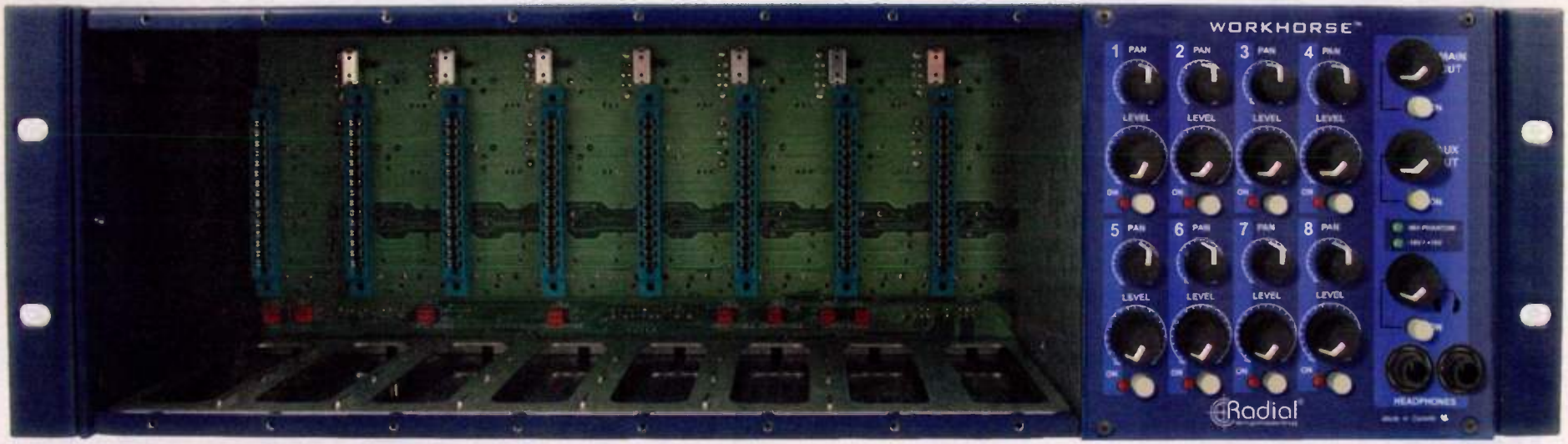
Like adjusting the focus on a pair of binoculars, the Phazer lets you combine any two tracks and bring them into sonic phase. Think of it as moving your mics around the room by simply turning a dial.

Lunch Well Served...



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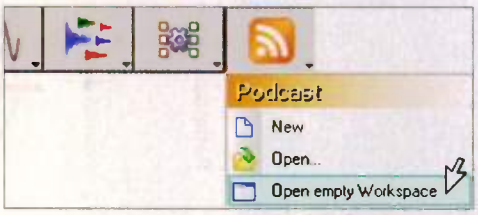
STEINBERG WAVELAB 7

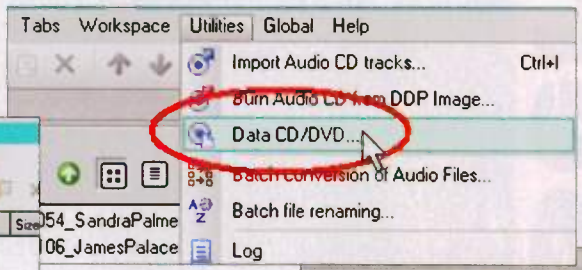
BY CRAIG ANDERTON

Back up all kinds of data, not just audio

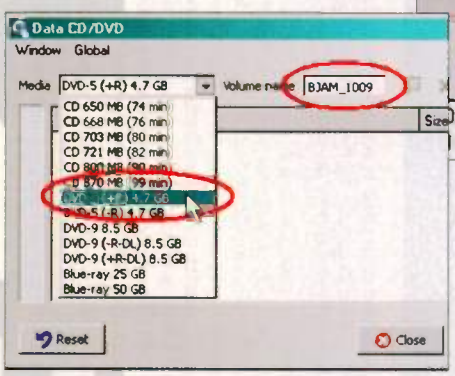
OBJECTIVE: You *know* you should back up your data–and you can do it easily with WaveLab 7.
BACKGROUND: WaveLab 7 can create audio CDs and surround DVDs, but can also back up any data type to CD, DVD, and even Blu-Ray recordable media.



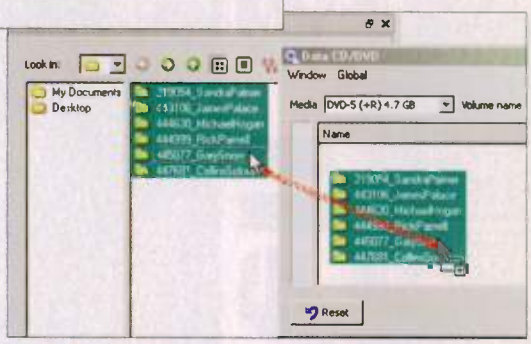
1 **From the main four-button toolbar, open any Podcast workspace.**



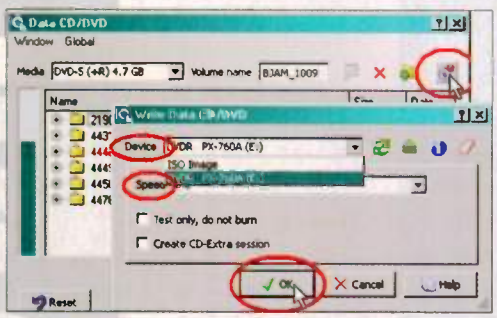
2 **From the Podcast workspace Utilities menu, choose "Data CD/DVD."**



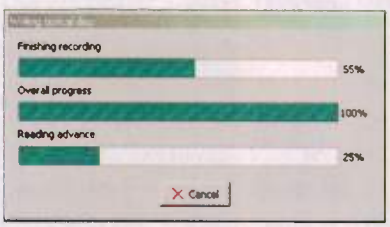
3 **In the Data CD/DVD window, select the type of media you want to use; you can also name the volume here.**



4 **Drag files from WaveLab 7's file browser, the desktop, or wherever into the Data CD/DVD window.**



5 **Click on the Burn button. A "Write Data CD/DVD" window appears; choose the desired Device and Write Speed from their respective drop-down menus, then click on "OK."**



6 **A window appears, displaying the burning progress. When the job is done, "Operation was successful" flashes in the window. Click on "OK" to dismiss the window, then click on the Data CD/DVD "Close" button to finish the process (or don't close, and create another backup).**

Tips

- Step 1: No matter which Podcast workspace you choose, you can access the burning function.
- Step 4: The vertical bar graph toward the window's left shows how much space the files will take up on the media.
- Step 5: If you want to test whether your system can burn at the desired speed without actually burning the media, check "Test only, do not burn."

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ROUNDUP

BIG BOTTOM WITH BASS AMP SIMS

BY CRAIG ANDERTON

There's been lots of talk about amp sims for guitar, but not so much about amp sims for bass . . . stay tuned, though, because amp sims are arguably even *more* applicable to bass than to guitar, and here's why:

- Basses are an octave lower than guitar, so the high-frequency harmonics generated by heavy guitar distortion—which can lead to unpleasant artifacts—are less of an issue, if they're an issue at all.
- Guitarists are really picky about distorted tone; when multiple notes play simultaneously, intermodulation distortion needs to be pleasing—and emulating tube/transformer intermodulation distortion with sims is not easy. Bass parts often consist of single-note lines, making intermodulation distortion characteristics far less important.
- Recording a bass amp with a mic can be a problem due to room acoustics, because the long bass waveforms tend to interact with non-treated rooms in undesirable ways, causing build-ups and suck-outs. That doesn't happen with sims.

While many amp sims designed for guitar include emulations specifically for bass, there are some bass-centric issues—are frequency-dependent effects tuned down for bass? Can you create parallel effects paths easily to preserve the low end? Are the virtual miking options suitable for bass?

With the following sims, my primary test was to create a parallel patch for each one (except for the Ampeg SVX, which doesn't allow for parallel paths), consisting of a Jazz Chorus-type guitar amp for high frequencies, layered with a big bass amp sound for lower frequencies. One surprise was that *all* of them make solid, pleasing bass sounds with an "amp" character that you can't get from going direct. Another surprise was the general accuracy of the emulations; for example, the various Ampeg B-15 emulations really sounded like a B-15. (I've logged a lot of hours with that sucker, so the sound is burned into my brain.) As a result, the sim you choose will likely have more to do with special features or options that may be important to you. Let's look at each sim, and the kinds of "special sauce" each offers.

Native Instruments Guitar Rig 4 Pro

A bass patch that takes advantage of Guitar Rig 4's crossover module to create separate paths for high and low frequencies.

Dedicated bass simulation: GR4 includes one bass amp, Bass Pro. The inspiration comes from Ampeg—separate hi/lo boost switches, midrange tone control (with sweepable mid), and 9-band graphic EQ. Loading the amp also loads a matched cabinet with two mics and a dry/air slider for ambience, but you can tweak further by loading the Cabinets & Mics component instead of the default cabinet. This includes a D.I. Option (great for bass), three SWR-based cabinets (8 x 10", 4 x 10", and 1 x 15"), and three Ampeg-based cabs (again 8 x 10", 4 x 10", and 1 x 15").

Miking options: For the bass cabs, GR4 offers a dynamic 421, dynamic 606, dynamic 20, condenser 47, and dynamic 7. (I'm sure you can decipher what they're emulating.) This is a somewhat different roster compared to the guitar cab mics, although the miking position options (on-axis, off-axis, far, and edge) remain the same, as does the ability to invert phase. For room sounds, GR4 includes a sophisticated control room option with multiple mics, stereo imaging, and choice of cabinets.

Parallel paths: Not only can you split the signal via a splitter module, but even "split the splits" for more than two parallel paths. A crossover can split different frequencies into different amp setups, so you can work with the low and high frequencies separately—very useful for bass.

Dedicated bass effects: GR4 doesn't include dedicated bass effects. This usually doesn't matter—for example, the compressor doesn't care about the input frequency, and effects like EQ cover the bass range—and being able to put effects in parallel with the straight bass signal lets you preserve the low end, even with an effect like wah. Simply adding a module or two can also do the job—for example, if using a distortion stomp box instead of the bass amp's natural distortion, try adding EQ afterward to roll off some highs.

Bottom line on the bottom end: The tone from the default Bass Pro setup is satisfying; it's tight, gives good growl, and sounds real. Still, those willing to venture into other cabinets and parallel setups will be richly rewarded—these are sounds that would be impractical to obtain in the real world (well, how many 8 x 10" cabs do *you* want to carry to the gig?), yet have a convincing air of realism. Guitar Rig 4 is the go-to sim for many guitar players, but don't overlook what it can do with bass.

Price: Download $199

Contact: www.native-instruments.com

Line 6 POD Farm 2

This dual patch combines a Jazz Chorus-style amp with a bass head, compressor, and 8 x 10" cabinet.

Dedicated bass simulation: The five dedicated bass amps are inspired by the usual suspects—Fender Bassman, Eden Traveler WT-300, Ampeg SVT and B-15A, and Gallien-Kruger 800RB. Matching cabinets include a 1 x 15" based on Ampeg's "flip top" B-15, a 2 x 15" Ashdown ABM 210T, two different 4 x 10" options (based on David Eden and Hartke amps), and a classic 8 x 10" Ampeg SVT-type cab. Springing the extra bucks for POD Farm 2 Platinum gives you a whopping 28 bass amps and 22 bass cabs.

Miking options: As with most sims, Line 6 offers a different roster of mics for bass than for guitar: tube 47 close, tube 47 far, 20 dynamic, and 112 dynamic. The miking positions aren't particularly flexible, but imparting a room sound is easy with the continuously-variable "air" parameter.

Parallel paths: POD Farm 2 allows for two parallel signal chains. There are limits on how many total modules you can load, but few limitations on type—you could parallel two amps, two amps each with effects, one amp chain and one effects chain, etc. Furthermore, each tone has a separate blend control for DI sound, which includes a delay knob so you can align direct

and processed sounds for proper phase coherence.

Dedicated bass effects: POD Farm 2 comes with emulations of the Maestro Bass BrassMaster and Sans Amp Bass Driver, but the sheer number of effects, and the ability to parallel them with dry bass, yield a huge number of useful bass sounds. As with the amps and cabs, the Platinum version is all about *more*: 97 effects instead of 29 (including a Mutron III model, which has traditionally been popular with bass), and many are guitar/bass agnostic–for example, the LA-2A compressor emulation works with anything.

Bottom line on the bottom end: Line 6's GearBox software was limiting for bass because you couldn't create parallel paths; POD Farm 2 solves that problem, and has evolved into a primo contender for bass. I also feel that the amps and cabs included with the standard version are intended to handle the needs of the greatest number of players; Line 6 doesn't save the "good stuff" for the Platinum version, which instead offers more tones for hardcore tweakers.

For me, POD Farm 2's distinguishing feature is the fact that it's so laden with options, there are many opportunities for sonic experimentation; and don't forget, there are excellent effects for vocals, too.

Price: $49, Platinum $249 if you own Line 6 hardware. For the iLok version, add $50; also comes included with various Line 6 interfaces.

Contact: www.line6.com

Waves GTR

Dedicated bass simulation: GTR has seven dedicated bass amps, with emulations of the Sadowsky bass preamp, Hartke 3500 solid-state amp, Ampeg B-15 and SVT, David Eden World Tour 800, Mesa/Boogie 400+, and a Countryman DI into a V72 preamp. The six cabinets include Ampeg's SVT810, SVT610, and B-15; other models include a Fender Bassman, David Eden 4 x 10" cabinet, and Mesa/Boogie 1516. It seems Waves has tried to come up with something where every bass player can find at least one sound they'll love–this would make a great toolkit for session musicians who are never quite sure what kind of tone they'll be asked to produce.

Miking options: Six different mics (dynamic 20, ribbon 122, dynamic 57, condenser 87, condenser GR, and coil 88) each offer two positions that sound like on-axis and off-axis. As expected, this is a different roster than mics used for the guitar amp models.

Parallel paths: Waves takes a unique approach by organizing effects and amps as separate plug-ins, and offering several variations on amp/cabinets–mono, stereo, mono in/stereo out, and two parallel mono cabs. While the software is flexible, creating viable parallel paths requires copying tracks: For example, one track might have a chain with particular effects and an amp/cab combination, with another track having only effects, or for that matter, another chain.

Dedicated bass effects: Waves adds a pitch shifter designed exclusively for bass, as pitch shifting is difficult enough to perform, even over a restricted frequency range.

GTR splits the amp and pedalboard into different plug-ins, making it easy to come up with complex setups and routings.

Otherwise, you use the same effects as for guitar.

Bottom line on the bottom end: GTR has a "detailed" sound quality–I particularly like the clean sounds, which are sweet and well-defined. I've always felt GTR hasn't gotten the attention it deserves, possibly because Waves has such a strong reputation in pro audio that people don't associate the company with guitarists. Yet GTR has the same attention to detail as Waves' other plug-ins; in fact, the effects are based on the same big-bucks algorithms found in the pro products. That level of clarity is extremely well-suited for bass–particularly when you want a tight, smooth low end.

Price: Native version $100 MSRP, $85 street; TDM $300 MSRP, $225 street

Contact: www.waves.com

Studio Devil VBA Pro

Dedicated bass simulation: This package is dedicated solely to bass, but rather than model various amps, VBA Pro has two relatively flexible preamp/power amp stages where you can vary each amp's compression, drive, EQ, and clipping. (Note that the original VBA is also available, with two cabs, preamp, power amp, and graphic EQ.)

Miking options: VBA Pro doesn't virtualize miking or mic placement; if desired, you'll need to emulate these effects with subsequent equalization, along with ambience to create room sound or "air."

Parallel paths: The dual-channel architecture is the

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big feature here. Two channels, A and B, each have a compressor, preamp, tone controls, power amp, and limiter. These are then mixed, and the mixed sound feeds various processors. You can treat the two channels as independent amps, or use a front-end crossover to split your signal between the two channels–for example, crunched low frequencies through one channel, and clean high frequencies through the other. This gives far more sonic options than you might expect from a "single" amp model.

Dedicated bass effects: VBA Pro includes a 12-band graphic EQ, Bright and Deep tone controls, cabinet (8 x 10", 4 x 10", 1 x 15", and DI), chorus, and reverb. By definition, these are all optimized for bass.

Bottom line on the bottom end: As a specialized bass amp, VBA Pro definitely delivers the goods, and

Optimized for bass, VBA Pro includes amps, cabs, and effects, as well as a parallel-path architecture.

it's particularly well-suited to deep, growling sounds.

Price (download only): VPA Pro $99, VBA $69

Contact: www.studiodevil.com

IK Multimedia AmpliTube 3

Dedicated bass simulation: There are four bass amps, 360 bass preamp, Combo 150MB, Green BA250, and a solid-state bass preamp. Six cabinets include two 4 x 10", two 1 x 12", one 1 x 15", and one 1 x 18".

Miking options: AmpliTube 3 has very evolved miking options, with two mics that you can place pretty much anywhere. These are drawn from six dynamic, six condenser, and three ribbon models. You can blend the two mics as desired and pan them; and two additional room mics offer variable width and five different room emulations. (You can also throw the mics out of phase.) Overall, some serious–and fun–miking mischief is possible.

Parallel paths: There are eight possible routings for two effects chains, including a true parallel option. It's also possible to mix in direct sounds from the stompbox section output, and this path includes a phase control so you can simulate the phase differences that result from combining direct and miked sounds.

Dedicated bass effects: There are no dedicated effects for bass, but the guitar ones work well, and with the ability to create parallel paths, even the wahs and envelope filter are applicable.

Bottom line on the bottom end: AmpliTube 3 is a great program with great tone, and that carries over into the bass models as well. You can also expand it with IK's Ampeg SVX sim; all of its amp, cabinet, effects, and mic options become available as if they were built into AmpliTube 3. The miking options are outstanding,

This is a composite picture of the amp and cab sections, which are normally separate views. There are additional views for the Stompbox and Rack effects sections.

and of all the Ampeg B-15 models, AmpliTube 3 really nailed the distinctive "speaker flap." Finally, an additional "rack effects" section is intended to provide a more "produced" sound. AmpliTube 3 has a huge fan base; listen, and you'll understand why.

Price: $349.99 MSRP, $299 street

Contact: www.ikmultimedia.com

IK Multimedia Ampeg SVX

Dedicated bass simulation: Ampeg bass amp fans, listen up–you get emulations of the BA-500, B-15R, SVT-CL, and SVT-4 Pro. Cabs include the BA-500, B-15R, BXT-410H, PB-212H, SV-410H, and SVT810E. These are all highly realistic models; Ampeg must have been impressed too, as they were willing to endorse the program.

Miking options: The six mic options are dynamic 20, dynamic 57, dynamic 421, vintage dynamic 20, condenser 87, and condenser 414. There are on-axis/off-axis and near/far switches, as well as a continuously-variable slider for ambience.

Parallel paths: While there's no parallel path for adding a separate cabinet, a separate stomp box "direct" path can bypass the amp and cabinet, and mix

into the final output with variable level and phase.

Dedicated bass effects: SVX shines here. Effects include overdrive, octave divider (yes!), chorus, delay, bass wah, compressor, envelope filter with the appropriate frequencies for bass, and volume pedal. These effects are far from an afterthought, and add major flexibility to an already flexible plug-in.

Tone: I'm a fan of IK's taste in guitar tone, and their taste in bass tone is also exemplary. It's funky without being sloppy, tight without being overly clean, and musical. Their cabinet emulation mojo seems particularly strong, and the effects are the icing on the cake.

As with AmpliTube 3, this is a composite picture . . . and you gotta love those graphics.

Bottom line on the bottom end: Ampeg SVX also put some thought into stand-alone mode, as there's a file player/phrase trainer with variable speed and pitch, as well as settable loop points—very cool for practicing. But the main attraction here is the sound, and there's a reason why so many studios back in the day had Ampeg amps sitting around for visiting bass players: They sound fabulous, and IK has done them justice.

Price: $229.99 MSRP, $200 street

Contact: www.ikmultimedia.com

Peavey ReValver Mk III

Dedicated bass simulation: ReValver offers two amps, Matchbox and Basic 100, designed to work with both guitar and bass. The Basic 100 has individual channels for guitar and bass; the bass channel has different gain and tone stacks, as well as a "deep" switch to alter the bass tone control's frequency range. The Basic 100 preamp and power amp are also available as separate modules, so you can "mix and match" various preamps and power amps.

ReValver offers two cabinet technologies—a convolution-based model that devours CPU but sounds fabulous, and a more conventional (but very flexible) Speaker Construction Set. The difference is like the difference between convolution reverb and synthesized reverb. The convolution version offers six speaker cabinet impulses specifically for bass, while the SCS lets you "build" your own cabinet with three sliders for dimensions (width, height, and depth), eight different speaker types, and a choice of one, two, or four speakers in the cabinet.

Miking options: The convolution speakers each have impulses taken with four mics—except for the jazz model, which has one. The mics differ from model to model. The Speaker Construction Set offers six different mics, but 20 different models, as some are available with different polar patterns or bass cuts. There are also separate sliders for distance from speaker (up to 25 inches), distance from cone (straight-on to edge), and when run in stereo—which adds a second virtual mic—you can also set the angle between the two mics.

Parallel paths: ReValver uses a rack paradigm and offers a splitter module, making it easy to create a parallel path. However, you can't split a split.

Dedicated bass effects: There are no effects designed specifically for bass, but the BassBox might as well have been—it produces a wonderful, smooth type of distortion that works extremely well with bass.

Bottom line on the bottom end: The ability to create all kinds of different

This shows a split patch, with the convolution-based speaker emulator and the Speaker Construction Set.

cabinets, and run them in parallel, gives ReValver a suitability for bass that it might not have otherwise. You can create anything from very clean, straightforward bass sounds to highly processed ones.

Not only is ReValver flexible on the surface, but you can tweak the amps to the point of changing output transformer characteristics, substituting tubes, changing the power supply voltage, setting the amount of amp feedback, and more. It's really pretty mind-boggling, but if you have the patience to experiment (you can't listen to tweaks in real time; you have to tweak, listen, tweak, listen, etc.), you can come up with almost any tone on the planet–including bass.

Price: $299.99 MSRP, $250 street
Contact: www.peavey.com

Parallel Lines

Being able to create parallel signal paths is important with bass, because many bassists use guitar effects that aren't "tuned" for bass. For example, most envelope-followed filters optimize the frequency range for guitar, so putting bass through it kills the lows. But put that filter in parallel with the bass, and you'll overlay the cool filtery effect on the bass's low end.

You can create parallel paths in any DAW by copying a bass track, then instantiating another set of plug-ins. However, I like sims with built-in parallel path options, because you can simply save one sim preset and have everything ready for recall at any time. DAWs offer a workaround if they can create and save track presets or effects chains (*i.e.*, particular configurations of effects and tracks as a single entity). While somewhat more difficult to set up in the first place, once you've saved your track preset you can recall it as desired.

CONCLUSIONS

Really, there isn't a loser among any of these products; as many of these programs are on their third or fourth generation, the companies have had time to nail down their emulations. However, there are some differences that may sway you one way or another. Note that most of these have demo versions available, so you can check them out before committing.

AmpliTube 3 can integrate other IK products, making it more of a "modular" setup that can be expanded with IK's Fender and Ampeg sims. The tone is outstanding, and if you also play guitar, being able to expand the system is a strong point. The miking options are intuitive and effective. If you want bass and only bass, Ampeg SVX delivers great bass sounds; but some might find that it's worth getting AmpliTube 3 and Ampeg SVX because of the greater range of tones.

POD Farm 2 also allows for expansion by purchasing the Platinum pack, which gives it an edge in the "sheer number of stuff" category. The vocal preamps are a plus if you work with voice. POD Farm 2 also breaks down various aspects of the program into "elements," and instantiating just these can save on CPU power; and of course, Line 6 has been at the modeling game a long time, so they have the tone thing down.

For sonic mad scientists, Guitar Rig 4 offers features like splits within splits, the crossover module, multiple modulation sources, etc. These may not be as applicable to bass as they are to guitar, but they open up opportunities for bassists that other programs don't offer. Couple that with attractive pricing, and GR4 is

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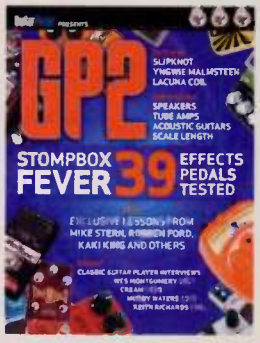

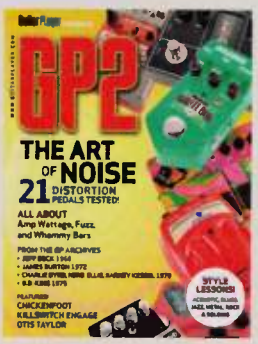

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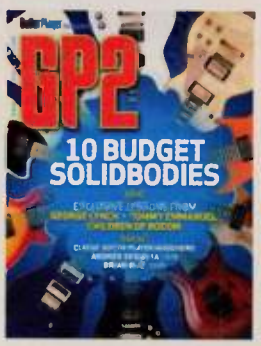
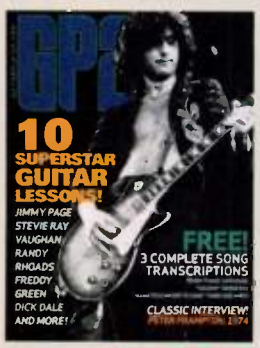
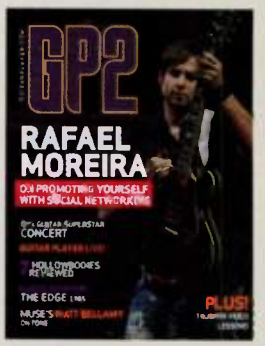
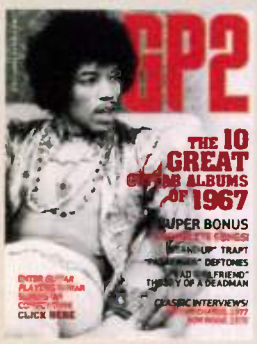
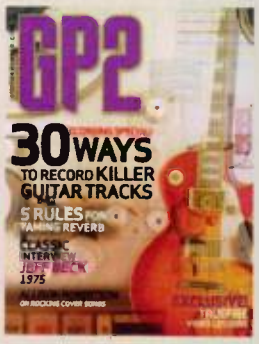
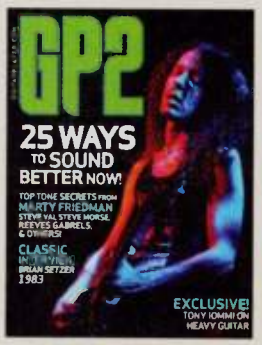












Visit the *Guitar Player* website for more: http://www.guitarplayer.com/gp2

WRH

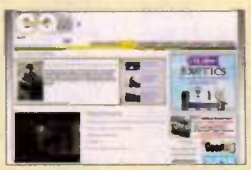
extremely cost-effective.

ReValver MkIII falls into a similar category as GR4, as you can dive really deep into the options. However, ReValver is the only modeler that lets you tweak down to the level of individual components. This can be pretty daunting, but the versatility is outstanding, and you can actually create your own tones rather than having to rely on the ones that come with the software.

VBA Pro is the least flexible of the bunch, but has the appeal of solid sound quality, ease of use, and transparency for the "I just want to play music" crowd. Despite the seeming simplicity, though, the options are well-thought-out, and provide a wide range of tonal variations given the number and scope of controls. If you don't need the bells and whistles of guitar and other processing, VBA Pro focuses in on bass players like a laser.

Finally, Waves GTR has a unique, detailed sound quality that's subjectively different from most other sims. It's a very subtle difference, but works very well for bass. GTR also allows for multiple routing choices due to the amp/pedalboard separation, although it takes a little more effort to copy tracks to take advantage of this. I've also found that while Waves doesn't really push this point, their effects are eminently applicable to vocals, drums, and the like; they don't sound that different from the effects in their pro apps.

I'd love to be able to say "One particular sim is definitely the best for bass," but after spending quality time with all these sims and my BecVar bass, I have to say that they're as different as . . . well, real amps. They have their own unique features and qualities, and judging those kinds of factors gets really subjective, really fast, depending on your particular needs. Your best option is to take advantage of the free trials and demos, and find out which sim works optimally for you. eq



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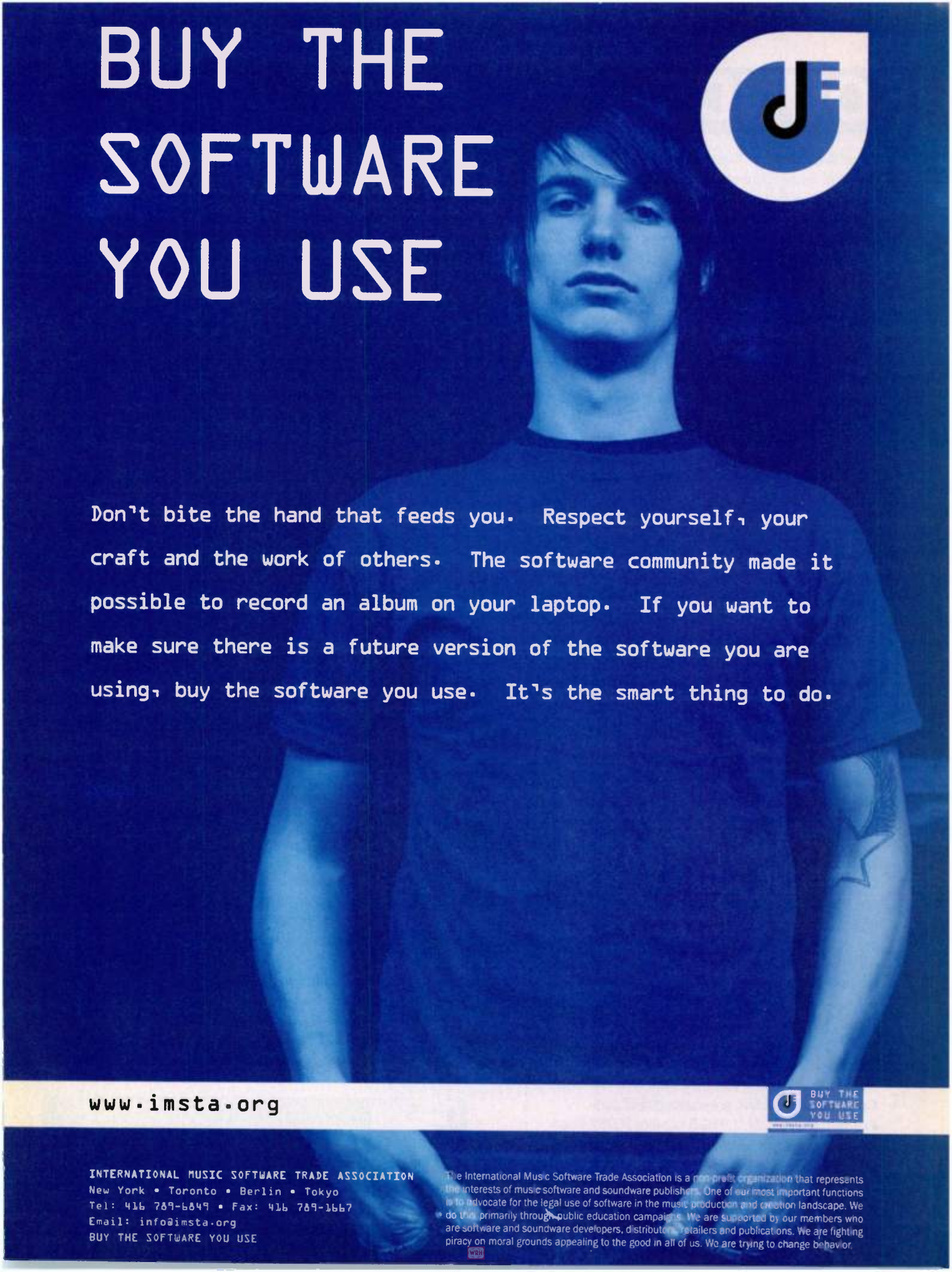

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SOUNDS

BY CRAIG ANDERTON

EastWest: The Dark Side

First, this virtual instrument isn't all all that dark; it's more about power and genre-breakage. Second, there are many ways to do an industrial/lo-fi collection wrong–substituting sludge for distortion, weirdness for musicality, or not realizing there's a thin line between "dirty" and "useless." The Dark Side skillfully avoids these traps, yielding a collection of drums, bass, guitar, ethnic, keys, instruments with FX, percussion, and other sounds that are darkly transcendent, yet muscular.

Based on the Play engine, The Dark Side requires a decent computer (32/64-bit, Mac/Windows, at least dual-core). The steam punk GUI incorporates several valuable processing options; many sounds that initially didn't grab me graduated to first-call with a little filtering and some delay. Overall, the complement of controls is Spartan, yet effective.

You could base entire songs around this library, but the sounds are equally applicable–if not more so–to adding specific sounds to an existing production. Lacking a NIN-type bass? Need drums that vaporize the air around them? Done.

I didn't know what to expect from this library, but this is more than the title implies: It's expertly crafted, and never strays from a core musicality.

Contact: EastWest, www.soundsonline.com
Format: Six DVD-ROMs, 37.4GB total content; VST/AU/RTAS/standalone; requires iLok
List price: $395

Sony: White Rabbit Asylum

The door to the vault opens. This is where, as legend has it, a portal bridges to another dimension–maybe good, maybe evil. An eerie, pulsating light shines in the corner . . . a ghost? An angel? Harriet falls to the ground, overcome by the presence of something neither she nor Nick fully understands–yet. The screen fades to black, as the image of a small, pale child appears in the darkness.

"Well, can you score that scene?" "Sure–I just got *White Rabbit Asylum*!"

And that's pretty much all you need to know. Whether scoring a special on alien abductions, providing the soundtrack to a theme park's Halloween ride, or adding truly strange atmospheric elements to scarier-than-average chill, with this set, you indeed go down the rabbit hole–and find there's an asylum at the other end.

In typical Sony fashion, this is about a collection of well-Acidized loops as opposed to construction kits. Files are loosely organized into folders of related sounds (*e.g.*, Dark String Scenes), but you need to spend time auditioning the files to fully explore this library.

White Rabbit Asylum fills a unique role–and yes, you *will* be able to take the movie-scoring gig presented at the beginning.

Contact: Sony Creative Software, www.sonycreativesoftware.com
Format: Two CD-ROMs with 1.2GB (470 loops) of Acidized WAV files and some one-shots; 24-bit, 44.1kHz
List price: $69.95

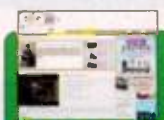
Ueberschall: Glam Rock

Glam Rock is a '70s time machine–think T.Rex, Gary Glitter, Bowie, etc.–arranged into four sections: 19 construction kits with three drums/bass/guitar variations per kit, 18 break parts, 16 intros, and 10 collections of additional rhythm guitar, solo guitar, bass, and organ licks. The loops are deconstructed into individual looped parts (including dry and room drums) that map across a keyboard; this gives the option within a DAW environment to program parts, or play them in real time.

The loops play back via Ueberschall's Elastik audio engine, which offers pitch/time stretching, per-loop filtering, reverse, stand-alone operation, and other features. While not the only possible workflow, the more I use Elastik, the more I like to combine improvised playing with bouncing loops to audio, which I can then drag around an arrangement.

The playing nails the glam musical genre, but the production quality is bigger and more in tune with today's musical aesthetics. As a result, individual loops can slide easily into various types of rock music. This is definitely a specialized library–but Glam Rock accomplishes what it sets out to do, and then some.

Contact: Ueberschall, www.ueberschall.com
Format: DVD-ROM, 1.95GB content (1,262 loops and samples); VST/AU/RTAS/standalone
List price: $109.99



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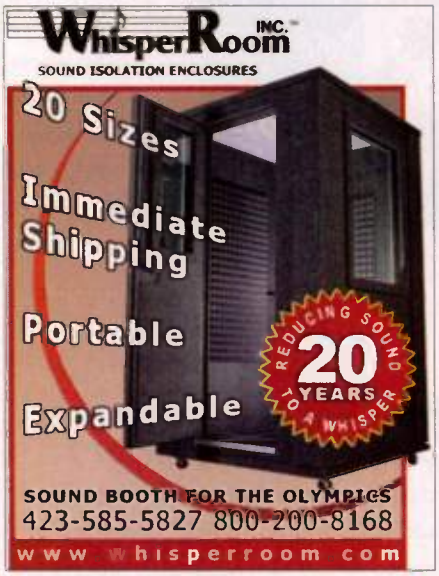

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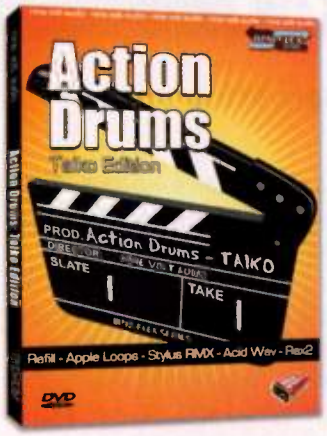

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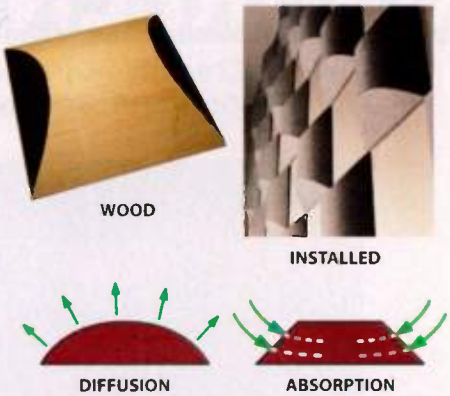

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MAUREEN DRONEY

BY SARAH JONES

Senior Executive Director, The Recording Academy Producers & Engineers Wing

The 53rd Annual GRAMMY Awards airs live on CBS from the Staples Center in Los Angeles on Sunday, February 13. Always a technically masterful show with more than a dozen live performances, its highly sophisticated, surround-on-the-fly audio is nothing short of mind-boggling—due in part because the sound production is overseen by veteran members of The Recording Academy's Producers & Engineers Wing. So with GRAMMY season upon us, we thought we'd get caught up on the P&E Wing's latest industry outreach efforts, and learn more about what it means to be a member.

Why was the P&E Wing created?

The Recording Academy, which is the membership organization that puts on the GRAMMY Awards, has about 20,000 members. A third of them—half the voting membership—are producers and/or engineers. Many of them are very active in the Academy. They're also extremely passionate about sound quality and technology—areas that are fundamentally important to the overall Academy. Since P&E Wing members have special expertise in those areas, it made sense to have a membership division that could provide support for issues and initiatives related to audio. It's worked out pretty well—the Wing is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year!

What kinds of benefits does the P&E Wing offer members?

As producer/engineer Ed Cherney, a founding member of the Wing, has said, "It's not about what the P&E Wing can do for you. It's about what you can do for your industry." There are benefits, of course, from being able to vote in the GRAMMY Awards to discounts on software, hardware, trade shows, and conferences. But the biggest benefit the Wing offers is that it's an advocate for the interests of people who work behind the scenes.

How does the Wing advocate for the recording community?

A good example is the way we worked with Shure, lobbying the FCC to protect spectrum space for wireless microphones. The Wing also supports the Performance Rights Act. We advocate for proper crediting of content creators, and to that end, we've supported the development of an open-standard recording-metadata schema and collection application called CCD (Content Creator Data) developed by BMS/Chace and the Library of Congress.

What are the Wing's plans for 2011?

We're working with audio educators and manufacturers regarding technical best practices, and to promote the use of the CCD app—again, related to open standards for metadata, which will facilitate proper crediting. We're looking into ways to work with other groups like IMSTA to combat audio software piracy, something that's having a devastating effect on companies that are important to our industry. And as always, we're working to educate people that sound matters!

Why is it important to be involved in The Recording Academy community?

Everyone in this profession who cares about our industry should be a member of The Recording Academy—not only to take part in the GRAMMY Awards process, but also to have a voice; to share ideas, express concerns, and work together to preserve the integrity of the music industry, so that it can evolve and grow. We are a powerful force in shaping the future of this industry.

Learn more about the Performance Rights Act.

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SYNTH STATION 25

Keyboard Controller for iPhone and iPod Touch

SynthStation25 turns your iPhone or iPod touch into a full-fledged musical instrument when combined with the SynthStation app or other music apps* (sold separately). The SynthStation app gives you three fully editable multi-oscillator virtual analog synthesizers and an onboard drum kit. Perform live using real synth-action keys or compose on the go with the onboard step sequencer and upload the files to your computer for further tweaking. You can even plug SynthStation 25 into your computer via USB and turn your iPhone or iPod touch into a MIDI-controllable sound module.

Produce music anywhere with SynthStation25.

*music apps other than SynthStation will need to be updated to support SynthStation25. Check with your favorite app vendor for details.

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SYNTH STATION

Music Production App for iPhone and iPod Touch

Now Available on iTunes