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**Singer&Musician University**

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   “Soul Meets Body” by Death Cab for Cutie

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on the cover

Angie Aparo—indie artist with hit writing credit and first-tier producer. Photo provided by 360 Media. See this issue’s cover story on page 14.

on the cover

Angie Aparo—indie artist with hit writing credit and first-tier producer. Photo provided by 360 Media. See this issue’s cover story on page 14.

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One of my greatest discoveries of the summer has been a Website that features airchecks from the golden days of Top 40 radio (approximately 1956-1984).

As a one-time Top 40 jock and radio programmer myself, being able to listen actual recordings of my childhood heroes on “Big 10-WCFL,” “77-WABC,” “1050 CHUM,” “WLS-Music Radio” and (pardon me while I clear this lump in my throat) “The BIG EIGHT / C-K-L-W,” is by far the greatest use of the Internet I’ve found to date.

Aside from being a mind-numbing dose of nostalgia, listening to these one-time giants of the AM dial reminded me that there was time when radio stations simply played good music. During any given hour, you might hear country, gospel, pop, bubblegum, rock, schlock, folk, jazz and a few Golden Oldies and never give it a thought.

Contrast this to what has happened over the last three decades. Broadcasting has become replaced by Narrowcasting, with programmers using ever more precise tools to define their audiences. But wouldn’t you know it—right when they thought their focus-groups had pinpointed precisely what songs their audience wanted to hear and when they wanted to hear them, along comes the iPod, freeing the masses to again experience the joys of musical variety.

With the advent of Satellite and Internet based radio, some say there are just too many listening options. To that I say, “Nah!” A case in point: Over the last 3 years, over 60,000 listeners have popped by our own SingerRadio.com to check out the fare. As a result, we’ve helped expose and establish dozens of new artists which has led to increased bookings, CD sales and airplay on conventional radio stations.

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Oh, by the way, the Website I spoke of up top is www.Reelradio.com. It’ll cost you $12 a year to subscribe, but if you remember what great radio was all about, it’ll be the best 12 bux you ever spent. Enjoy!
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BRUCE BARTLETT
24/7STUDIO
A long-time Singer&Musician contributor, Bruce Bartlett is a technical writer and microphone engineer for Crown, an audio journalist, and a recording engineer. A member of the Audio Engineering Society and Syn Aud Con, Bruce has presented several AES papers on microphones and mic techniques. He holds several patents on microphone designs. (In other words, he knows what he is talking about. You should listen closely.—Ed.)

DAVID JOHN FARINELLA
BEFORE THE MUSIC DIES
This is his first piece for Singer&Musician, but David John Farinella has been writing about the inside of the music business, plus an assorted “celebrity” feature here and there, for the past 16 years. His work has appeared in magazines ranging from Mix and Front of House to Playboy and Rolling Stone. His book Producing Hit records: Secrets from the Studio features interviews with dozens of producers, artists and industry insiders who offer up their experiences and advice to up and comers.

PHIL PARLAPIANO
DECONSTRUCTING A HIT
Phil Parlapiano is a multi-instrumentalist composer who has worked with Grammy award winners John Prine, Rod Stewart, Tracy Chapman, Lucinda Williams and many others. While this is his first appearance in Singer&Musician, it is not his first time writing for other musicians. He was one of the keyboard specialists in GIG Magazine (another publication that was aimed at working musicians) as well as writing features and columns over a period of several years.

The idea of Deconstructing a Hit (now a regular feature of Singer&Musician University) is not just to show you how to play someone else’s song. The hope is that, by “deconstructing” the work of other writers, you will find ways to advance and vary your own writing. Phil’s current CD is entitled “PianoForte” and is available at CD Baby or his website, www.parlapiano.com.

Jake Kelly
MY BACK PAGE
Another new feature in Singer&Musician, My Back Page will be Jake Kelly’s literary playground (until he ticks us off which, if you know Jake, you know is inevitable). I have known Jake since the early ’80s and he put together the first version of my current band with me in ’84. In fact, he is responsible for my stage persona and nickname—Rev. Bill (long story, hunt me down sometime and I’ll give you the gory details). He, like Phil, also wrote for the late, lamented GIG magazine.

Jake has been working, recording and writing in Nashville for more than a dozen years. As a member of Gary Allan’s band, he has been on four platinum albums and his tunes have appeared on several of Gary’s records including the title cut of his debut Used Heart For Sale. Jake has also released three of his own CD’s (I Shouldn’t Talk When I Drink, Bitter…Party of one…Your Table’s Ready and I Run with Scissors) as well as working with other Nashville indie artists.

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In mid-July, I was booked to play a festival in my old hometown of Buffalo, NY. What an event it was—three stages of music and 400,000 people in two days. It was a good time and very hectic.

If you are not familiar with how festivals run backstage (compared to concerts) let me explain. In most festivals, the promoters want the acts to change over in a very short amount of time to maximize the entertainment value for the audience. While this is great for the show if you’re a fan, it often means the performers have very limited sound checks, if any.

The festival in Buffalo allowed 20 minutes between acts. That’s not much time for one band to clear the stage and another to set up. (At the recent OzzFest metal show, changeover was scheduled for 10 minutes. Headliners got 15 and the crew ran an average of two minutes ahead of schedule all day.) Anticipating this, I contacted the sound company two weeks prior to the show to give them my band stage plot and back-line requirements. You’ll find that if this is done well in advance it will help make a stage change fast, efficient and easier on everyone.

What’s a Stage Plot?

Show a layout of how you and your band will be positioned on stage. You don’t need exact distances as all stages vary, just a basic relationship of who’s behind whom will do.

Give a sound crew an idea of how many microphones you will need, how will they be used and where you would like them. If you use a special or specific mic, you’ll want to bring it as it’s likely the sound crew won’t have it. (My harmonica player brings his own Shure Green Bullet mic for solos).

Show any special needs or requirements you may have (I need two DI/channels for my guitars and a send for my personal monitor).

Describe what you need for your monitor mix and sends. Let the sound crew know what you want to hear ahead of time.

I’ve included my full band stage plot as an example. When you create your stage plot you should make it as simple, clear and concise as you can. Save it as a .PDF file and attach it to your contract. Then send it to the sound company along with any backline requirements at least 2 weeks before the gig. Also carry a few hard copies with you. Read on and you’ll see why.

Back to Buffalo

I was backstage waiting to go on—we were the featured act on the main stage Saturday night—and obviously wanted to put on a good show. Now bear in mind that I’m mostly an acoustic performer. When I got on stage I found they had Marshall double stack and an Ampeg SVT bass rig! Not your typical acoustic set-up. While my bass player was happily threatening to turn it up to “11,” I went over to the sound folks and said, “Something doesn’t seem quite right here. Didn’t you get my stage plot and requirements?” What followed was the story of my stage plot blowing out the truck window on the freeway, then being chewed by a dog…and could I draw up another quickly? This is when I learned you should always have a hard copy with you.

Situations like this are all a part of being on the road. Remember sound crews at this type of event have their hands full and are under a lot of pressure. So being relaxed and working with them will get you farther ahead than by having an attitude. They are the ones who not only control your monitors but also your front of house sound. You want them working with you.

At the end of it all we had a good laugh, the sound crew busted their tails for us and we had a great show.

By the way, my band and I have been on the go a lot this summer and I always appreciate hearing from those of you who come up after the shows to tell me you follow the articles in Singer&Musician. Thanks!

Until next time,
Mike
MikeAiken@iLivetoPlay.net
In other words, I've been in the trenches and eaten my share of dirt.

I've also worked as a journalist and member of the music industry press for more than a decade. As such, I'm in a somewhat unique position as someone who's not only “been there, done that” musically, but also someone who's worked the other side of the stage.

In the course of writing stories from and for a musician’s perspective, I’ve spoken to heavyweights in the music business who themselves have offered advice about what works, what doesn’t and things you absolutely should never do as a musician if you intend to keep working.

Whenever I think of things I wish I’d known at the time, I’m always drawn back to my very first professional gig, when I was 17 years old. It was an after-game dance at my high school, a place where I wasn’t particularly popular with the kids or the staff. I’ll never forget the rush, the thrill of getting up there and watching the surprised looks on the faces of my classmates, as I was doing something that, as it turned out, was something not very many people could do at that time.

I learned a few things from that gig. The first thing I ever learned as a pro player: You can’t set your bass drum up on a gymnasium floor without a rug and anchor.

The second thing: Always, ALWAYS carry an extra pair of sticks in your back pocket in case you launch one.

Sure, these are things that every newbie player knows these days. But I’m constantly surprised at the things that a lot of seasoned players apparently don’t know to this day.

For example, the idea and art of self-promotion still seems to be a stumbling block, even among players who’ve spent years in the trenches. Some may find it distasteful or immodest, but you have to throw that notion out the window. This is a business, and just like any other enterprise, it pays to advertise.

Oh yeah, the third thing I learned from that first gig was that if you’re not popular at your high school before the gig, you probably still won’t be afterwards, no matter how good you are. But you don’t do this thing for the love of your friends; you do it for the love of the craft.

In upcoming issues of Singer&Musician, I intend to offer words of wisdom from pros in the music business, as well as my own voice of experience. In this column I’ll try to provide information and, hopefully, insights into what you, as a working musician can do to help your cause along, no matter what your axe. Here’s hoping I can help. SM
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A Study in Equalization

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THE GUITAR PLAYER SAYS HIS TONE IS NOT “BROWN” ENOUGH?

By Bill Evans

I’m pretty lucky as band leaders go because—get this—after almost every gig and rehearsal people stick around and help pack up and they really try (to the best of their knowledge and abilities) to help with setup as well.

(This does not include horn players who almost always are the last to get there and the first to leave and they carry the least amount of stuff except the sax player because I have a three-sax book—alto, tenor and baritone—he gets a pass.)

For the past year we have been rehearsing in a studio (Sound Arena rocks!) in California. Getting back and forth with gear and using an “already there” P.A. has made our normal personal monitor approach tough. We have had to deal with all of the “I can’t hear myself” and feedback crap that I once hoped to have left behind forever. The good news is that the two people not tied to an instrument—my two backup singers—have jumped in to make needed adjustments which allows me to concentrate on running the rehearsal.

If it is just a case of adjusting the main channel fader, we are golden and there is no explanation or instruction necessary. When the problem is EQ or aux send related I find myself closing my eyes, visualizing the board, and telling them which knob to turn and how much. There seems to be a fear—or at least a reluctance—on the part of many musicians to get their hands dirty on the middle part of a mixer. No need. It does take some knowledge but it is not rocket science.

RULE #1: LISTEN FIRST

Every system is different and you have to listen to get the most out of it. The most important skill you can develop when it comes to running sound (at any level from a small rehearsal room to a club to an arena) is to learn how to listen. With all of the new high-tech toys available I find far too many sound guys who spend more time looking at laptops and touch screens and processor menus than they do listening to the band. They are, in effect, trying to mix with their eyes. This doesn’t work very well.

When it comes to the kind of smaller systems typical of what most Singer&Musician readers will be using, it’s important to not get too tied up in where the knobs are pointing. Adjusting the EQ based on what you are hearing is far more beneficial than making sure a particular frequency band is knocked down by 6 dB like the guy in some (other) magazine says it should be.

EQ BANDS AND TYPES

A typical MI (Musical Instrument) quality mixer will have anywhere from two to four bands of EQ on each input channel. Two is easy—one is high and the other is low—just like the bass and treble controls on your home stereo. As we add bands, we get into the midrange and that is where things can start to get confusing.

Let’s start with EQ types. First, you need to know if you are looking at a true ‘cut and boost’ filter or a simple roll off. With a roll off, all of the frequency content of a particular frequency band is present when the control is dialed all the way on. Dialing it back “rolls off” the content of that band. A true cut and boost is at zero—or “flat”—when the knob is at

What’s That Sound?

Knowing the frequency ranges of various instruments can make the job of EQing a lot easier. Keep this chart handy until you have it burned into your brain. A printable PDF is available to Singer&Musician subscribers at iLivetoPlay.net

* Fundamental Notes (no harmonics or sub-harmonics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Frequency Range (Hertz)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kick Drum*</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor Toms*</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rack Toms*</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snare Drum*</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cymbals</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Guitar*</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guitar*</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano*</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3 Organ</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor Sax*</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin/Fiddle*</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blues Harps*</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baritone Voice</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor Voice</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alto Voice</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soprano Voice</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There seems to be a fear—or at least hesitation—on the part of many musicians to get their hands dirty on the middle part of a mixer. No need. It does take some knowledge but it is not rocket science.

HOW DO I USE 'EM?

The first thing I do with any board is to “zero it out” by setting all of the channel faders, auxes and EQ controls at their zero setting. Remember, on a true cut and boost EQ, the “zero” setting is usually at the 12 o’clock position. As you gain experience and get a feel for your system, your mics and the players, you will find yourself making the same cuts most of the time (like cutting at 120 Hz to take the mud out of a kick drum or cutting 1.25 kHz from a vocal mic). When you get to that point, it is tempting to just make those adjustments automatically before really listening to the system. In my world, that is just a bad idea. Start flat and listen before you start adjusting.

RULE #2: 'TIS BETTER TO CUT THAN TO BOOST

When it comes to EQ it is ALWAYS better to cut than it is to boost. Remember our plumbing analogy when we started this series? Well, assuming your main pipe is pretty full to start with (as it should be if your channel trim is set right) then adding EQ is like adding water to that pipe which could overload it. In the audio world, that means distortion and maybe feedback. When in doubt cut, don’t boost. So, how do you get more bass, for example? Try cutting everything except the lows and then boosting the overall signal a little bit to get the same effect as just boosting the bass.

There is a sidebar here that you will find invaluable as you continue in the sound world. It discusses the frequency bands of various instruments (which is a little like giving away the secret of the ages for sound guys. Keep this info close to the vest lest it fall into the wrong hands…)

With the release of “I Run With Scissors,” Jake Kelly once again finds himself running on the fertile grounds of artistic independence. Those who loved the attitude of his first two releases won’t be disappointed with the ax he chooses to grind this time.

“I might have been bitter when I was writing this record but I must have gotten over it, because I had a blast recording it.”

—Jake Kelly on his sophomore release Bitter…Party of One…Your Table’s Ready

In his debut venture, Jake Kelly reaches beyond his sideman role for country mainstream artist Gary Allan with his quirky CD “I Shouldn’t Talk When I Drink.” Future releases from Kelly will reveal whether this was a one-time shot, or if he has more to say, but there’s something in this CD to make you think the boy has more to get off his chest.

To order call (818) 623-6668 or order online at www.TheSingersWorkshop.com
There are millions of musicians who would kill for the good fortune of Angie Aparo, who hooked up with producer Matt Serletic and was signed to Clive Davis’ Arista Records in the late ’90s. His debut album, The American, broke through at modern rock radio in 2000 on the strength of his hit single, “Spaceship,” and his song “Cry” was later covered by Faith Hill, who ultimately won a Best Female Vocal Performance Grammy.

But while Aparo admits enjoying his brief climb to the music biz mountaintop, tectonic shifts in the industry’s structure soon left him without a label, major or otherwise. These days, Aparo is among the thousands of indie artists using the Internet to build his fan base. His new 5-song EP, El Primero Del Tres, is entirely self-released despite production by Dan Huff (Dixie Chicks, Faith Hill, Rascal Flatts). We recently caught up with Aparo to discuss his return to the Indie world, and how sites like MySpace are changing the way music is marketed and promoted.

How did your life change when you went from being an unknown singer-songwriter to a Top 40 artist on a major label?

It changed it dramatically. From an artistic standpoint, working with those kinds of people always produces huge growth if you’re willing to let it. In a weird way, I struggled with losing the independent spirit I’d grown up in. I had creative freedom, but it took me a while to adapt to having people around me when I was used to getting in a car with my guitar and playing up the coast. It becomes a whole machine, and it took me a while to realize that everyone was on my side. But the interaction with Clive Davis was especially amazing.

It was a fruitful collaboration; why did your relationship with Arista fall apart?

Clive was being pushed out of the company and we got caught up in it. We were about to release “Cry” as the next single, so we were postured to break out. We had an option to follow him, but we thought it would take him a year to start the new company, so we figured we’d get lost in the shuffle either way. We bet on staying with L.A. Reid, and it just didn’t pan out.

How do you view the monolithic changes in the music business since you began your career?

Yeah, it really is all about the Internet now. I love it, and we’re using every aspect of it. To be able to shoot me singing a song in my hotel room and have it as a podcast an hour later is just insane. It’s approaching the immediacy of live performing. I still think the right relationship with a strong indie or major label is valuable. But where before it was, “God, give us ANY record deal, please!” now it has to be really right. I think all the access to fans through the Internet has really strengthened indie labels, and that’s the most exciting thing for me. I think it’s good for business.

You may be releasing your music independently these days, but you’re working with Dan Huff. How did that relationship come about?

That was through the interaction with Faith. I was close to having three songs on her last record, two of which I sang on, but for various reasons they got dropped from the record. I met Dan during those sessions when I was singing backup for her, and he and I hit it off. We were sitting around one night and I said, “I don’t have a deal and I don’t have any money for
“To be able to shoot me singing a song in my hotel room and have it as a podcast an hour later is just insane. It’s approaching the immediacy of live performing.”
Before the Music Dies

INDIE FILM MAKERS LOOK AT THE MUSIC BIZ AND EVEN CREATE A POP STAR ALL IN THE NAME OF PROMOTING INDIE MUSIC

By David John Farinella

Andrew Shapter and Joel Rasmussen came together with an idea to take a hard look at the music business from the fan’s point of view. The two traveled the States, interviewing dozens of artists, industry bigwigs and music fans in search of where the industry stands and where it’s going.
Their award-winning documentary, Before the Music Dies is a stunning piece of work that should be required viewing for any musician, no matter the level of their experience or success. More information, and a handful of resources for artists, can be found at the website www.beforethemusicdies.com.

Singer/Songwriter Shapter caught up with Shapter and Rasmussen at their Austin, TX headquarters.

So, is this film hopeful or cynical about the music industry?

Joel Rasmussen: It’s ultimately very hopeful. In doing the research we knew there was a bad story in music, but we did go out with an open mind and we were surprised to learn about all the great news about how the changing landscape really is leveling the playing field and putting the power in the hands of musicians and music fans in a way that has never existed before.

Andrew Shapter: I started out pretty cynical about everything and then got more excited about the accessibility that we have now to artists. Lord knows, I never thought I could email Neil Finn to let him know that I thought his latest album was great or I could keep track of him through his MySpace account or iTune. On a smaller scale, local bands can reach out to fans one by one and that’s great. We might have to dig a bit deeper to find the best acts, they are not going to be on the front page of iTune or on VH-1, but they will be there. There are a lot more of them and they are easier to find. The goal of the film was to promote that way to find them.

In the past, record companies used to be the kindly gatekeeper, weeding out artists who weren’t quite ready for prime time and then cultivating others. That is gone now. Did you get an indication from the artists or industry people that you interviewed of when that happened?

Rasmussen: I think that happened in the run up of the economic development of the late 90s when the last remaining few labels went public. It was no longer necessary to cultivate talent, it was out there and they just had to make better packaging for it. For most people it coincided with the closing of a lot of those individual record stores, so we went from a situation where we had a Tower or a Warehouse store where there were 60,000 titles to a Wal-Mart where, for the most part, they carry 3,000 titles. So, to go from 60,000 to 3,000 you no longer need that process, you need what sells to the broadest mass of people.

What’s exciting to me, though, is that there are smaller labels that are thriving. That’s the landscape really is leveling the playing field and putting the power in the hands of musicians and music fans in a way that has never existed before.

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**Audix CX-112**
The CX-112 large diaphragm cardioid condenser microphone with an excellent design and outstanding performance characteristics. By incorporating the addition of a -10dB pad and bass roll-off filter, the CX-112 is ideally suited for a variety of applications including vocals, acoustic instruments, drum overheads, and guitar cabs. Shock mount optional.

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**Sennheiser e835 microphone**

The Sennheiser e835 lead vocal stage microphone is designed to perform flawlessly under pressure. The hard working mic is constructed of rugged metal with a shock-mounted capsule that reduces sensitivity to handling noise. The cardioid pick-up pattern isolates sound interference from other on-stage signals, which allows clear, smooth vocals to reach and audience while the performer moves freely about the stage. Minimal proximity effect provides consistently clear bass and performance when singing closer or further from the capsule. And no matter the climate, the neodymium magnet technology helps deliver great, stable sound. The e835 mic is also available with a switch. URL: www.sennheiserusa.com/evolutionwired

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**The Epiphone Blues Custom**

When developing Epiphone’s new “Blues Custom 30” guitar amp, the Gibson Labs USA Design Team recognized the importance of selecting the perfect speaker. That’s why they chose the experts at Eminence to help create a new, custom speaker specifically designed to enhance its’ unique tonal characteristics and features. The result was a completely new speaker called “Lady Luck.” And while it’s certainly lucky for guitarists everywhere that they did, luck had little to do with it. When you combine legendary brands like Epiphone, Gibson and Eminence - that’s a sure thing. Visit us at www.epiphone.com

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**The Quadra Pyramid™**

Acoustics First® has created a new, patent pending, variation of the traditional offset pyramidal diffuser. The QuadraPyramid™ presents a low profile with four pyramids creating sixteen angles of reflection on the surface of a single 2’ X 2’ panel. When wall mounted, it becomes a mid-bass absorber in the range of 250 Hz (0.60 Sac). NRC= 0.20 Mounting is designed for wall or ceiling grid. Fire rating is Class 1 [A]. Test results are now available. The product (Number AFP22Q) is currently in stock for immediate shipment. The QuadraPyramid ships “nested” to reduce both freight cost and storage space. For more information contact: Nick Colleran, Marketing, Acoustics First Corporation TEL 804 342 2900 • FAX 804 342 1107 2247 Tomlyn Street Richmond, VA 23230-3334 USA e-mail: nick@acousticsfirst.com web: http://www.acousticsfirst.com

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**Rock Your Vox**

Designed for singers at every level, Rock Your Vox is a comprehensive instructional DVD and CD set that will benefit even the most advanced singers. Hosted by nationally acclaimed vocal performance instructor Rose Coppola, this DVD covers proper posture and breathing, and includes beginner, intermediate and advanced vocal exercises. As an additional bonus, Rock Your Vox comes with two audio CDs that contain all the vocal exercises from the DVD, one for the male voice and one for the female voice [perfect for practicing in your car, in the studio or at home]. The exercises are challenging and effective and, with regular practice, singers will greatly increase their range and gain vocal strength. Rock Your Vox works!
more interested in what they (and the girls at the bar) hear than what you do.

OK, How Do We Fix This?

Over the last few years, we've seen several companies come up with viable answers to the questions posed by the need for better ways to hear ourselves on mic. The latest is the VoiceSolo personal vocal monitor from TC-Helicon and it's quite a departure from preceding designs (along with being a monitor, it's also a handy dandy practice amp and/or small PA, as well as an overkill amp for an iPod). In other words, put any experiences with other seemingly similar models aside. This is not your daddy's mic stand-mounted monitor.

The VoiceSolo comes in three delicious flavors. You can get the VSM-200 in both active and passive versions. This model is great if you have someone running your monitor mix, which is not what we're talking about here. We're looking for something that your typical, hardworking, hard driving, hard gibbing Singer&Musician can carry with them. Something that sets up quick and, most importantly, provides an accurate sonic image of what's coming out of their throats. Yessir, we're talking about the TC-Helicon VoiceSolo VSM-300.

By combining a BASH 150 Watt amplifier and an ICT point source driver (to reproduce the human voice in the most intelligible and natural way) the VSM-300 is about as close as your gonna get to a mirror image of your own glorious voice. The enclosure has both mounting points to mate with a mic stand as well as rubberized pads so you can set it on the floor.

Church Chat

To test the unit in a real world, "ah, why doesn't this work!" situation, I brought the VSM-300 along to our weekly practice for a little church'n up. For this test, I choose an Audix OM-6 with a broad hypercardioid pattern, an Audix OM2 with a true hypercardioid pattern, a Sennheiser e835 with a cardioid pattern and an EV RE510 condenser with super cardioid pattern.

Why do I even bother to mention this? The VSM-300 mounts to a mic stand and—thanks to a pretty ingenious mounting mechanism, you can mount it to a mic stand and then use a boom mounted to the top of the monitor for your mic. In other words it can be an all in one deal. But what a lot of singers don’t know is that most of the tight pattern mics out there that do so well at rejecting off-axis sound actually pick up significantly more sound at 180° from the front than they do at, say, 90°. Which is why you see a lot of floor wedges set up at an angle and not directly behind the mic. But TC has apparently taken this into account and all of the mics performed fairly equal as far as the VSM-300 was concerned. In other words, they all went into the feedback zone at approximately the same level.

Because of space considerations on the stage, typical floor monitors would do little more than cause people of all ages to fall to their knees in a most unreligious experience. The idea of a stand-mounted monitor has a lot of merit. It's up, out of the way, and most importantly, close to the ears of the singer. It may be a small church, but we make a lot of noise. Earphones of any type are out of the question on this gig—the VSM-300 is a great option.

Initially, we set up the VSM-300 with the vocal mic connected to the XLR jack in back, and the mix from the board running into the line in. “Hmmm,” we thought, “How come the vocals aren’t in the mix?” Duh. That’s what the I/O box is for as it includes a mic pre to bring the signal up to something the amp inside the VSM-300 can work with. Indeed, the I/O box is a most handy tool that includes a split that continued on page 30
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EV Blue Mics

By Bill Evans

W here have I seen stuff that looks like these mics before? Wasn’t there a Latvian company that made funky looking mics like these? Yes, and these are really the same thing. Electro-Voice has taken over the worldwide distribution of Blue Mics and these are basically re-branded Blues—in other words, they are Blue mics with an EV label. Besides the interesting look, there is a lot to like about these mics.

THE GEAR

We got two models. The Raven is a dynamic whose response gently rises between 50 Hz and about 15 kHz with bumps at about 800 and 5 kHz while the Cardinal is a condenser that is virtually flat between 100 and 2 kHz with a bump between 2k and 5k and another between 6k and 20k. For the non-tech among us it means that both mics have enhanced “presence” in certain ranges. The Raven bumps up in the 800 range which often gives definition to instruments like bass and kick drum as well as a lift in the high and that gives added “air” and clarity in the high end. Both are “bullet” style with an adjustable stand mount and, while both are listed as cardioid, the dynamic Raven actually has a looser pattern than the condenser Cardinal.

Both mics look very cool. The Raven is—natch—black, while the Cardinal sports a finish of real cherrywood. Both mics have a dual-swivel mount that makes positioning easy. 

THE GIG

I used the pair of mics on a club gig with a four-piece, keyboard-heavy, fairly loud rock band. I would have liked to have tried the Raven on a guitar cab, but as off once and a quick cut at about 3k got things back under control and there was nary another squeal all night long.

The final part of the review was still pending, the dreaded drop test. Back at the shop, both mics were dropped from a height of about five feet to a concrete floor. The verdict? The wood shell of the Cardinal sustained a small ding but that was it. No bent screen, no broken mounts—we even dropped them both twice to make sure they could take it. Plugged in, they sounded just like they had before being dropped.

The look of both mics is different. Vintage in an almost sci-fi way, I dig ’em but they may not work for everyone, especially in a front vocal situation. The other things we found to bitch about is that for a mic that looks this cool and is touted as stage-ready, it does not ship with much in the way of protection, Sure, the Crowne Royal-style velvet bag continues the whole cool-look vibe but not real practical for keeping the mic safe from the inevitable bumps and drops of the road. Also, the dual-swivel mount works well but only one of the swivels tightens by hand with a thumb screw.

Regardless, with the combination of excellent sound, good pattern control and what I find to be a very cool look, I would love to have a trio of the Cardinals for the horn section in my own band. Or maybe a couple for the two female singers. Whatever, I like ’em and they are fairly affordable to boot—much more so than most Blues.

Raven $199, Cardinal $269 MSRPs

EV Blue Mics

By Bill Evans

where have I seen stuff

that looks like these mics before? Wasn’t there a Latvian company that made funky looking mics like these? Yes, and these are really the same thing. Electro-Voice has taken over the worldwide distribution of Blue Mics and these are basically re-branded Blues—in other words, they are Blue mics with an EV label. Besides the interesting look, there is a lot to like about these mics.

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everything except the drums were direct, we opted for the kick-drum torture test. It was plug and play. Really. We ran it flat and it sounded good and just worked. No positioning issues. No problems. Gotta love that.

The Cardinal got tagged with vocal duty and was like wise easy to use and make sound good. Open and airy, like a good vocal condenser should be, we were also pleasantly surprised with the lack of feedback. This is a real small stage and while being used with a male vocalist, the mic was placed less than 18” to the side of and just behind a two-way JBL mid/high box. Other condenser vocal mics that I use and like have had pretty sever feedback problems with the same band in the same position. But the Cardinal started to take
For a drummer, finding that perfect drumstick is as elusive as finding the perfect set of strings is for a guitarist or the appropriate microphone for a singer.

The reality is that the exhaustive search often ends in the frustrating position of settling on something that seems to work instead of something that is just right. We learn, adjust and grow accustomed to whatever is close enough—having recently discovered the well designed, funky looking and great feeling Hornets brand drumsticks, I no longer have to worry about that.

The result of a father and son business from Robert and Aaron Wilhelm, Hornets Drumsticks have more to offer than just brightly colored stick designs on the grip sections with a little “stinger” of O-rings at the base. Most models measure 16.5-inches of hickory and are available in sizes 7A, 5A, 5B, 2B (at the time of this writing) with their bundle-style sticks, Swarm Sticks, coming in at 17-inch in maple. Their round “ball tip” design allows for increased definition at any angle and, unlike “bullet” or smaller ball sizes, Hornets focus the impact in a way that reveals the true timbre of the drum shell, tuning and head type.

I visited Hornets’ booth at the recent NAMM tradeshow and asked for a very simple, yet difficult to find, stick of my preference. The representative replied by asking to see my hand. Once my palm was out, a deep red-based 5B stick with a full wood ball tip was slapped across my hand. I was amazed by the comfortable design and overall feel of the Hornets, although it does come with a slightly higher price of $24.99 for most models. While that might seem to be a bit pricey, I found that the Hornets splinter less and last much longer than other brands so they are a good value and look good, too.

Taking the sticks on a few real-life performances, I was convinced my first impression was correct—the Hornets are impressive. Sporting a slight flair/taper in the mid-section, the sticks are perfectly designed for added control and precision. The overall shape easily allows for approximately 15 percent more velocity in the attack of each stroke and using the same effort produces a more accurate stroke that enables the performer to be more dynamic while playing.

With about a 4 percent forward throw, very consistent wood weights and an increased level of control when the sticks are held at varying points (not unlike the control from “choking up” on a baseball bat in some ways), I found that I wanted to play more, play longer and was able to play with less effort. I also found that I had less soreness in my tendons and hands after several shows and less discomfort from vibration overall. Add to that the lack of my usual splintering of the wood from those old sticks I used to settle for and I could not be happier.

As one who usually goes for simple and traditional products that may either have too little girth in the throat under the tip or just feature a standard taper, I am very glad to have discovered these sticks that are the complete opposite. I am so impressed with the Hornets drumsticks that I will not go back to conventional commercial sticks again any time soon. It is definitely something you have to feel for yourself, but they really give you the ability to put some sting in your swing. These are funky looking, great feeling and excellent sounding drumsticks. They need to be tried to be believed. Find them.

Daniel East is an author and freelance writer for several media outlets and publications with more than 25 years of experience as a touring musician, live sound engineer, tour manager and consultant.

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Simple Acoustic Fixes For Your Home Studio

by Bruce Bartlett

IF YOUR RECORDINGS SOUND LIKE THEY WERE MADE IN A HOUSE RATHER THAN IN A STUDIO, HERE’S SOME HELP!

Do your recordings sound mushy or distant, even without any effects added? Do your monitor speakers sound boomy? The cause might be bad room acoustics. The first step to a good studio is optimizing the physical space so let’s look at some low-cost ways to control acoustic problems.

How do you know if the acoustics need to be improved?

• You clap your hands next to a wall and you hear flutter echoes (a flutting sound). These are caused by sounds bouncing back and forth between hard parallel walls.
• Your studio is a very live environment, such as a garage or concrete-block basement.
• You hear too much room reverberation.
• Your studio is very small.
• You hear outside noises in your recordings.
• Bass-guitar amps and monitor speakers sound boomy.
• You want the freedom to mike several feet away without picking up noise or excess room reverb.
• You hear a lot of leakage in the mic signals. Leakage (bleed or spill) happens when an instrument’s sound gets into another instrument’s mic. Sound from an instrument travels to the nearest microphone, and also “leaks” into the mics set up for other instruments.

There are two ways to reduce acoustic problems that cause things like echo and leakage: with recording techniques, and with acoustic treatment.

Recording Techniques

Sometimes you can make clean recordings in an ordinary untreated room (such as a living room, basement or club) if you follow these suggestions:

• Mike close. Place each mic 1 to 6 inches from each instrument or voice. The mics will hear more of the instruments and less of the room. You might want to use mini mics, which attach directly to instruments.
• Use directional mics—cardioid, supercardioid, or hypercardioid—which reject room acoustics.
• Record bass guitar and synth direct with a guitar cord or a direct box. Since you omit the microphone, you pick up no room acoustics. To get a good sound when recording electric guitar direct, record off the effects boxes, use a Line 6 Pod, or use a guitar amp plug-in.
• Overdub instruments one at a time rather than recording them all at once. You’ll pick up a much cleaner sound. However, this loses the emotional interaction that occurs when all the musicians play together. You might record all the load instruments at once: drums, bass, and electric guitar. Then overdub the quiet instruments: acoustic guitars, sax, piano, vocals.
• Record in a large room. This lets you spread the musicians farther apart, and weakens the sound reflections from the walls into the mics.

Acoustic Treatments

Reverb and echoes are caused by sound reflections off room surfaces. Any surface that is highly sound-absorbent helps to reduce those problems.

To absorb high frequencies, use porous materials such as convoluted (bumpy) foam mattresses. Nail or glue them to the walls, or mount them to the ceiling in each room corner.

There are other ways to absorb bass. Wood paneling works well. An open closet full of clothes can do wonders. It also helps to place couches and books a few inches from the walls. In a basement studio, nail acoustic tile to the ceiling joists, with fiberglass insulation in the air space between tiles and ceiling.

You may not need any bass traps if you don’t put any bass into the room. For example, don’t turn up the bass guitar amp -- just record the bass direct and have the musicians wear headphones to hear the bass.

Controlling Standing Waves

If you play an amplified bass guitar through a speaker in a room, and play scales on the bass, you may hear some notes that boom out in the room. The room is resonating at those frequencies. These resonance frequencies, which are strongest below 300 Hz, occur in patterns called “standing waves”. They can give a tubby or boomy coloration to musical instruments and monitor speakers.

Room resonances are worst in a cubical space such as a room with walls, ceiling and floor made of the same materials. If you play an amplified bass guitar through a speaker in a room, and play scales on the bass, you may hear some notes that boom out in the room. The room is resonating at those frequencies. These resonance frequencies, which are strongest below 300 Hz, occur in patterns called “standing waves”. They can give a tubby or boomy coloration to musical instruments and monitor speakers.

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You may not need any bass traps if you don’t put any bass into the room. For example, don’t turn up the bass guitar amp -- just record the bass direct and have the musicians wear headphones to hear the bass.
Try to record in a large room because the room resonance frequencies are likely to be below the musical range. Use bass traps to absorb room resonances. Contrary to popular opinion, non-parallel walls don’t prevent standing waves.

Making A Quieter Studio

The following tips will keep noises out of your recordings:

- Turn off air conditioning, appliances and telephones while recording.
- Pause for ambulances and airplanes to pass.
- Close windows. Consider covering them with thick plywood if fire codes allow it.
- Close doors and seal with towels.
- Remove small objects that can rattle or buzz.
- Weather-strip doors all around, including underneath. (Leave the doors open for ventilation when not recording).
- Replace hollow doors with solid doors.
- Block openings in the room with thick plywood and caulking.
- Put several layers of plywood and carpet on the floor above the studio, and put insulation in the air space between the studio ceiling and the floor above.
- Place microphones close to instruments and use directional microphones. This won’t reduce noise in the studio, but it will reduce noise picked up by the microphones.

When building a new studio, you might want to make the walls of plastered concrete block because massive walls reduce sound transmission. Or make the walls of gypsum board and staggered studs. Nail gypsum board to 2x4 staggered studs on 2x6 footers as shown in Figure 2. Staggering the studs prevents sound transmission through the studs. Fill the airspace between walls with insulation.

The ideal home-recording room for pop music is a large, well-sealed room with optimum dimensions. This room is in a quiet neighborhood. It should have some soft surfaces (acoustic foam, carpet, acoustic-tile ceiling, drapes, couches), and some hard vibrating surfaces (wood paneling or gypsum-board walls on studs).

Your home studio may not need acoustic treatment. Do some trial recordings to find out. But if your room could stand some improvement, the suggestions here should point you in the right direction. SM

Bruce Bartlett runs a commercial recording studio and uses the same acoustic treatments described here. Reach him at bbartlett@iLivetoPlay.net

Resources

For better results and a more professional appearance, consider buying some acoustic treatments from these companies (Web sites below).

- tubetraps.com
- realtraps.com
- acousticalsolutions.com
- primacoustic.com
- auralex.com
- acousticsfirst.com
- wallmate.net
- illbruck-sonex.com
- rpginc.com
- fstechnologies.com.

Flame retardant treatment for blankets and curtains is available at www.rosebrand.com.

I recommend this excellent source of information on room acoustic treatments: www.ethanwiner.com/acoustics.html.

Roger Burnley’s EZ Vocal Method

By Bill Evans

We are approaching this review a little differently. Instead of one of us watching the DVD and then telling all y’all what we think about it and being done with the process at that point, we are going to expand on things a bit.

In this installment, we will give you a basic idea of what the package consists of and then, over the coming month, a “developing” singer will work with the DVD and tell you whether or not it helped in her growth as a vocalist. Ready, begin...

Roger Burnley is a noted vocal instructor and, most importantly, one who medical doctors often turn to when their singing clients have to recover from damage caused by bad technique and re-learn the art of singing in a sustainable way.

The EZ Vocal Method consists of two pieces: a one-hour-plus instructional DVD where Burnley explains and presents his method as well as a CD that contains actual exercises for both men and women (30 mins each). This split into two pieces is one of the best parts of this product. The actual instruction being on DVD opens up visual possibilities that a CD or even a book just can’t match. And it plays well into Burnley’s approach which, instead of offering tricks and quick fixes, gets right down into the physical process of producing vocal sound.

Splitting it with a CD that contains the actual exercises means you can do things like practice in the car or somewhere else where there may not be a DVD player available. In other words you don’t have to fire up the entertainment center in order to practice. Oops, there goes another excuse out the ol’ virtual window.

So, how does it work? For that info you will just have to wait until out next installment. Or go to iLivetoPlay.net for regular updates from our intrepid test singer. SM
Road Cases: Do You

By Bill Evans

Back when I was in my first Top 40 band we had a tragic (or so it seemed at the time) accident regarding a case or, rather, the lack of one.

We were on our way to a gig and, as usual, the drums and P.A. were piled in the back of an open pickup. One pothole jarred the truck enough that a rack tom went flying out of the truck and shattered when it hit the road. I wish I could say that I learned my lesson from that experience but, the truth is, when my family moved from L.A. to Las Vegas a year ago, we loaded a rented trailer with things we didn’t trust the movers with. That included heavy P.A. gear along with fragile art works. There were also at least four guitars without cases wrapped in bubble wrap back there. They all made the trip without a problem but it could have easily been otherwise. About the same time, I was on a gig and had to spend precious set-up time fixing a digital piano that had gotten knocked around a bit and the gig bag it was in did not help much. I ended up having to replace a half dozen of the keys. Call me a slow learner...

Are You Serious?

It may seem like a bit of a stereotype, but as I work sound and production gigs, I can often tell the serious musicians from the wannabes solely by the way they transport their gear. Yes, there are exceptions but they are pretty rare. If you are serious, you need good gear and if you have good gear, you need to protect it.

So what is the best case? Depends on the gear and how you use it. When it comes to protection there are a few basic types—gig bags, fiber cases, wood cases, molded plastic cases and at the top of the heap true flight cases. Let’s take a look at each and their pros and cons.

Gig Bags

I never have been able to understand why these are called “gig” bags. My guess is that the term originated with NYC players who got to the gig on the subway and just needed a bag to carry their axe in. As it was being carried and not packed—even in a car trunk—the need was for something to transport the instrument without it getting scratched. Just a guess but it makes sense so that is what I am going with.

A gig bag is generally a durable nylon fabric bag molded in the general shape of the instrument. Whatever the material, if it is molded to the shape of a specific model of instrument, we are going to call it a case. The bags close with a zipper and usually includes a shoulder strap or backpack-style straps for easy lugging.

The pros of a gig bag include light weight, low cost and a degree of protection against scratches and bumps. On the con side is just the lack of real protection.

Remember that piano? It was in a good gig bag but that did not stop it from sustaining some real damage. Like many, I bought the gig bag because I did not have the dough for a real case. It ended up being a bad decision.

Fiber or “Soft” Cases

These are supposedly a step above a gig bag but they can actually be worse. At the low end of this type of case are the cheap cases that come with some inexpensive acoustic guitars. Fiber—at least in this case—is a nice word for “cardboard” usually covered with cheap vinyl. These kind of cases are usually mass-produced and not fit to the individual instrument.

At the higher end of this kind of case is what is best described as a gig-bag-on-steroids. An example is pictured here. This is the case that came with a Gibson Traveler guitar that we reviewed in Singer&Musician last year. While the outside is nylon and the top and back offer little more protection than a good gig bag, the sides are reinforced and the inside is fit to the instrument.

In an instrument case, look at hinges and latches and handles. Are they beefy or whiny?

The low-end models offer almost nothing on the pro side. They offer little protection and they look crappy and cheap. Truth is that if your instrument (usually a guitar) came with one of these then it is not a pro instrument. The soft cases are a different story. I would not use one if I had to pack the instrument in a truck, but it is great for a “throw it in the backseat” gig or to carry on an airplane. (More on the whole flying issue later.) Another thing to consider is that a bag or nylon case is a bad idea in a very dry climate. That Gibson I referred to has had some major neck-bend issues that are directly related to the dryness here in the desert and none of my other instruments in hard cases have had comparable problems.

Hard Cases

This category covers a lot of ground—from the good cases that ship with a good instrument up to P.A. racks and even flight cases. On the instrument end, they resemble that Traveler case except they have a wooden top and back surface and the entire thing is covered in vinyl or leather. They are molded inside—in the instance of instrument cases—to the specific instrument. On the rack side, plywood top, bottom and sides are either painted or covered with a thin plastic or metal panel.

These kind of cases generally offer good protection and the thing that separates one from another is usually the hardware. In an instrument case, look at hinges and latches and handles. Are they beefy or whiny? How are they attached to the case? I had a case for a Fender Strat that over the course of checking it for a dozen airline flights, the handle came off and all of the latches were broken. I still have and use the case, but have had to put new latches and a handle on it. Yes, you can chalk it up to rough treatment at the hands of some baggage handler but that happens when you check an instrument.

I have another wooden guitar case for a ’72 Gibson ES335 (original case) that I have had to retire because it was just falling apart. I keep it for sentimental reasons and the stickers on it but it is useless as a case.

In a rack case, look at latches, corners, and castors. These are the things that are going to fail, not the case itself. Castors, especially, take some real abuse and you want the best ones you can get with large wheels that will roll over rough ground easily and lock when you need to make sure the case is not going to roll away when you don’t want it to.

Molded Cases

As it is with all other kinds of cases there are different grades here. Even within a particular brand things can be different—heavier or lighter weight, quality of hardware and other features. While these cases offer a high degree
of protection and will do the job for most musicians, they are not quite what is considered pro or “flight” cases. That being said, I own a half dozen of them in different sizes and formats. All of mine are SKBs (a name once synonymous with molded cases) but since other companies have moved into that space the competition has resulted in more choices in terms of both styles and prices.

As always, hardware matters and with this type of case it is mostly about the latches. Here is something else to consider: I have a couple of molded rack cases with built-in wheels and a retractable handle much like a ‘roll-aboard’ suitcase. They work OK, but instead of fully removable front and back, there is a removable front and a small removable panel on the back. This makes it tough to get to connections, especially in the dark and in the heat of battle.

**Shock Protection**

No, not electrical, this refers to a hard physical shock—a real hard hit or even a drop. A shock protected rack case will have either a layer of foam between the sides of the case and the gear (good) or a suspension system that actually isolates the gear inside from the case allowing the case to take the hit while protecting the gear inside (better). This type of case is significantly more expensive than their non-isolated counterparts.

**Up Up and Away**

You will see some cases referred to as “ATA rated. “What does that mean? ATA stands for the Airline Transportation Association and that group publishes standards for shipping containers including cases. But just calling a case ATA rated does not necessarily mean much because there are many ATA ratings. For example, Specification 300 category 1 means that a container has been determined to be able to withstand at least 100 flights. Some ATA cases will include a warranty that covers the contents of the case up to a specified dollar amount. Look for this kind of deal if you are looking for a really good case and remember that most case warranties cover one thing and one thing only—the case itself. That expensive gear inside? Sorry, dude, you’re on your own.
Mixing, Mastering and Marketing a Live CD

By Richard Gilewitz

IN A PROJECT LIKE THIS, IT HELPS TO SURROUND YOURSELF WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE.

Whether it’s a brief segment on a television or radio show, performing in one of the many slots at a festival, as one act on a bill of many at a performing arts center, as a support act for a major attraction, or headlining as the main act with someone opening for me, I am still just one of the many parts of an event. Accepting and allowing myself to enjoy my role in these events offers up a much more relaxing experience and generally a better performance on my part.

Which brings us to the project at hand: my first live performance CD. In the last issue I talked about which microphones and pickups were used, what equipment was involved (both software and hardware), and the process of selecting tunes, stories, and their sequence in the mix. Today, in sharing my evolving outlook as a solo artist, I want to stress the importance of learning to be willing to relinquish control over a project. Turning over my material to the right people to complete the job was the right move for all the right reasons.

Masters of Mastering

The process of mixing this live CD involved constant sound level checks and adjustments, sequencing the tunes, and rough editing of sporadic glitches here and there. This was all to create a finished pre-product for the mastering engineer. These are the folks who do amazing things with trillion dollar equipment and even when dogs admirably say, “What was that?” they simply reply, “I’ll tell you later.” Presto Perfecto!

The other issues involved with completing the project are artwork, design, legalities, and the pressing plant. This is all about how your CD will look, whereas the aforementioned has to do with how it will sound. As I mentioned at the top, surround yourself with the right people. I have been very fortunate to have discovered some extremely talented people that I felt more than comfortable relying on to finish the CD. It has been for me the most enjoyable part of the entire process. Basically you just sit back and watch the show as they all literally work their magic!

After carefully selecting the following folks to address the above tasks at hand, I would like to end this second segment of three parts by offering their personal comments on what their titles and roles were in the process, along with what they would like to see from an artist so that they can do their jobs more effectively.

Chris Pariso, Mixing Engineer/Producer, Viral Audio, Titusville, Florida:

“Basically Richard came to me with a live recording he did by hanging two condenser mics in a left/right stereo pattern, which was printed to a single stereo track on his laptop. We then transferred these as data files to my D.A.W. I am currently running Logic 7.2 on a G5 with two MOTU 2408s. We then proceeded to arrange the tracks in order from start to finish to get an overall feel of the CD. Start and end points were adjusted and the applause at the end of each track was brought down in volume. Then we auditioned many different fade out curves for the end of each track, finally deciding on a fade with a little more “curve” to it so the applause gets thinner and fades out. There were a few little blips that Richard needed removed, which were no problem. The last step was to bounce out the individual tracks so the edits and fades were printed. I made a quick rough “mastered” version so we could listen and get an idea of the finished product. I then burned a data CD containing the tracks as files for the mastering engineer. Richard is a great guy to work with - light hearted and very professional. I enjoy working with clients who know what they want and Richard knows what his music should sound like.”

Mike Fuller, Mastering Engineer, Fullersound, Miami, Florida.
Mike Fuller, Mastering Engineer, Fullersound, Miami, Florida. www.fullersound.com:
“Mastering is all about details and precision. Every recording is different and there
is no one way that works for all. My goal always
is to create a master that sounds natural and is
extremely competitive in its genre. The challenge
of this project was that it was a live recording
that had considerable phase issues and a very
excited audience that sometimes over powered
the direct sound of the guitar. I found that
mastering this album with analog gear added a
great deal of warmth and added dimension to
the overall sound. Using the Sontec EQ in the
mid/side chain gave me the ability to enhance
the detail of the guitar as well as remove some
unwanted low mid frequency room reflections.
I also used automated digital EQ to help control
the crowd level and sound. Some light analog
compression and stereo enhancement rounded
out the final balance between Richard’s guitars,
his voice and the audience.”

(Mike Fuller has mastered recordings for Eric
Clapton, The Eagles, Dolly Parton, Rod Stewart
and the film soundtrack for Dirty Dancing to
name a few.)

Beverly Phillips, Project Coordinator, Zengator
com:
“The completion date of any project is
directly related to the number of components
within the project. Coordinating all of the parts
from concept, layout, design, content, licensing,
to production and distribution becomes much
like mapping out a trip. If the content doesn’t
fit the layout, the next step is delayed until the
size issue is resolved. If the design is working
for a poster but not the CD cover, then a new
“road” must be inserted into the journey. If the
mechanical licenses are not properly obtained,
then a particular tune may not make the list.
Every part of the project has the potential to
either speed up or delay the final output. One
of the most challenging elements in being a
part of the process is the absolute necessity of
respecting and honoring the artist’s creative
input, without compromising the commercial
side of the project.”

Perri Harper - CD Design and Layout, Zenguin
Productions, Houston, TX, www.zengator.com:
“Though under a tight deadline, the grant of
design freedom made this project great fun for
me. Still, as always, it came down to a puzzle:
ten days, five photos, a title, text - and very little
room. Conquering time and space in this case
meant creating a design that clearly said what
it is – in a flash. When designing for the tight
confines of a CD cover, it can help to imagine
seeing the whole idea as if looking through a
small window. I applied the run/walk/stop
tests* and flew through editing and proofs to
leave time for the inevitable changes which
often come right up to the very last minutes of
the deadline. Waiting for the final print is the
hardest part. Once my job is finished, the wait
for the completed CD is like staring at a gift with
a Do not open until tag, with no possibility of
peeking!”

If you take a glance as you run past this CD,
you’ll know that you can expect to hear guitar
music. Walk past it, even briskly, you’ll know
that it’s guitar music by Richard Gilewitz. Stop
to look at it for even a quick moment, you’ll
know it’s LIVE at 2nd Street Theater. ³³

Richard and his mixing engineer,
Chris Pariso, Viral Audio
Production, Titusville, FL.
Photo credit Terry L. Stafford.

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-Macy Gray, Grammy Award artist

“Roger’s Method enables my 12-year-
old daughter to produce sounds I was
pleasantly surprised she had inside her.”
-Robert Townsend, Actor/Director

“I (personally) have taken voice lessons,
and (in this DVD) found myself learning
new things about singing that can really
improve anyone’s voice.”
-Ben Black, 1340Mag.com/DVD review

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COMBINE PHYSICAL AND
MENTAL EXERCISES.

*run/walk/stop tests
allows you to flow the signal from the mic, to
the mixer AND give you separate control of the
vocal assigned to the VSM-300 and the rest of
the mix. To facilitate system expansion, the I/O
box also includes a sub-output and a stereo link
output creating a stereo system by employing
another VSM-300 or VSM-200. (Keyboard
players are gonna love this.)

A little quick rewiring and we had a smiling,
happy singer who could turn her vocals up, and/
or turn the instruments down, at will. To make
sure there wouldn’t be any unexpected squeals
of feedback, I started out with the -20 dB pad
engaged. I ended up leaving it on because
even with the dynamic mics, there was ample
volume with the output at the max. Typically,
you would use this higher position for other input
mics, like condensers (the unit actually has
phantom power, no skimping here). I’ve learned,
however, that—when working with talented,
well-meaning folks who’s desire to gain a greater
education of all things audio is rivaled only by
their interest in knowing just how many trout it
takes to fill a Winnebago—it’s best to take the
safe route.

We asked one of the singers, Liz Edwards
of Naples, NY, to testify as to what she thought
of the VSM-300. “It had awesome sound,” she
gushed, “I really liked the tone and, once I
understood the controls, it was easy to get the
mix I wanted. It looks sort of top heavy, but as
long as you move the stand and the monitor as
one unit, it’s fine.”

In addition to the volume controls, there’s
high and low EQ and a “Shape” control that lets
you tailor the sound of the mic to your liking.
Important is that what you do EQ-wise does not
affect the signal being sent to the house mixer.

Other notes

If you are even the tiniest bit prone to
misplacing things, as I know I am, make sure
you don’t misplace the little sleeve adapter that
marries the mic stand to the VoiceSolo unit.
It’s probably best to just leave it in the unit
and secure it with a piece of tape. The other
suggestion I offer is to not rush setting this unit
up. Make sure all the knobs on your mic stand
are as tight as you can get them. The VoiceSolo
unit is so amazingly well balanced, that even
with a 5 pound, small-base mic stand, it
remained very stable. In most cases, you’ll want
to have the mic stand in its lowest, un-extended
position and adjust height with upper arm. This
keeps the weight low and increases the stability.
Also, you’ll want to use a good quality stand,
with tight fitting adjustments.

With an MSRP of $560 cashmoneybucks,
the VSM-300 may appear to be on the “a bit
pricey” side. But if you keep in mind that a
good, powered wedge can cost double that and
an earphone-based system will cost you that just
for a pair of custom-fit earpieces and it will seem
like a bargain. Shop around. There are plenty
of bargains to be found. Then weigh the price
against that horrible, sinking feeling that comes
when you step out on stage and welcome the
crowd, only to find you can’t hear a single word
you’re saying. Can I have an “Amen?”

TC-HELICON

continued from page 20

TECH SPECS

- Cast aluminum enclosure with simple setup with most mic stands
- Point source driver with indestructible high frequency transducer
- 150 Watt (200 Watt Peak) BASH amplifier with limiting protection
- Pro connection options using floor based I/O Box: Mic In, Stereo Instrument
  and Aux in – with pass-thrus
- Personal mix control of voice, instrument, EQ, VoiceShape tone circuit and
  main level
- 116dB peak SPL at 0.5m
- Integrated tuned port doubles as carrying handle
- Dimensions (H x W x D): 9” x 7” x 9.75”

TC-HeliCon

continued from page 20

You should care who
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www.producinghitrecords.com
Seattle has always been well known for its great rock acts from Jimi Hendrix in the ‘60s through the ‘90s with Nirvana and countless grunge bands. Beginning in 1998, Death Cab for Cutie, went through the independent record ranks before signing with Atlantic in 2004, though still maintaining their fresh guitar based alternative roots.

Soul Meets Body simultaneously sounds classic and current while maintaining the originality of the band. The beat and melody remind one of several English bands of the ‘80s (The Police, The Church, even The Cure) while the acoustic guitar driven harmonies recall Tom Petty and other ‘roots’ rockers. The words are a good example of holistic pop poetry, speaking of a relationship as the ultimate spiritual pursuit.

The harmony drops to the C and the drums fill into a bass-less first verse. A lot of acoustic guitars, some with capos, strum out the Dm to F progression, reminding the listener of “I Won’t Back Down” by Tom Petty. The acoustic melody is low in pitch, in a dorian mode, resting on the suspension (G) note before being supplemented vocally an octave above at the lyrical hook.

Verse two rings in the bass entrance, playing 8th notes, fitting between the strummy guitars and drumbeat. The vocal is joined by the octave double this whole verse. The acoustic guitar lead joins back in as the vocalist sings about his head being ‘a greyhound station’ where he sends ‘his thoughts to far off destinations,’ so they can find a place where they are ‘far more suited that here.’ (A blatant metaphysical reference in a pop song!)

This verse juts right into a new section that we find out is broken down chorus. Instead of lyrics, the vocalist sings ‘Ba Da Ba Da, simply over an electric guitar and drum beat. This leads to the next verse, very much like the last one. The lyric imagery is evocative as the vocalist speaks of turning the dirt ‘with our palms cupped like shovels’ but knowing ‘our filthy hands can wash one another’s.”

A vocal chorus follows, the melody going up an octave to an ‘A’ note, sounding very Sting-like. While the band tightens up the arrangement, an electric guitar arpeggio sounds over one acoustic chugging out 8th notes with the bass. The chord progression is similar, Dm to F in half notes, then to C, but with the G in the bass. This runs twice then the progression is Dm, Bb to C. At the halfway point, the acoustic mixes it up by playing Dm, F/A, Bb, C, to C/E.

As the climax of the tune, the bridge, the hook lyric is sung 3 times. Everyone plays together-acoustics strumming the 8th notes, 1&2&3. 4&1&2 with the drums and bass accenting accordingly. There is a strange, echoed keyboard that peeks out in the empty spots of the rhythm. The hook lyric melody consists of long notes rising from a D pentatonically to the A, holding, with lots of echo added at the tail. This hook repeats 3 times, the last ending at a 4 bar buildup of a C and C suspended chord.

The last chorus continues with the inclusion of a doubled lead vocal. The last vocal line, ‘A melody softly soaring through my atmosphere’, repeats 4 times. At the second time the band drops out and leaves the arpeggiated minor 9th acoustic guitars that the song entered with. At the last word, ‘atmosphere’, they disappear at the syllable ‘phere’, leaving the voice alone with a lovely tail of reverb.

The marriage of the words, music and vibe of “Soul Meets Body”, remind one that rock is not dead and is still quite capable of evoking emotions and philosophic thought.

Phil Parlapiano is a multi-instrumentalist/composer who has worked with Grammy award winners John Prine, Rod Stewart, Tracy Chapman, Lucinda Williams and many others. His current CD is entitled PianoForte and is available at CD Baby or his Web site, www.parlapiano.com. Reach him at philp@ILiveToPlay.net.
In the days of the gold rush, California was a magnet for those looking to strike it rich. While the few who hit pay dirt became celebrities, the real financial winners were the ones selling picks and shovels.

When people say a singer has “it,” they’re usually talking about a mixture of elements. Personality traits such as presence and creativity, and physical factors like pitch, tone and phrasing combine to create an individual style. Realistically, a singer will be dominant in a few of these areas. Occasionally, people are born with them all. Ironically, what connects every popular singer has nothing to do with their sound, but rather their soul. Each has found a way to let their heart and soul, their essence, shine through every word they sing. The results are as varied as the population.

Each year, the music business touts the success of a handful of artists who make the rest of us feel left out. Take heart; the riches of a relative few are no gage of your talent or your chances for recognition. The coveted record contract is not the only game in town. Just as entertainers gladly sang for their supper in the saloons along Tin Pan Alley, there are many options available today for making a living with your voice.

A common mistake is to say you’re willing to do anything it takes to make it without defining what “it” is. Picture a musical career as many parallel journeys. Vocal development, musicianship, song writing, skills—band chemistry, wealth, fame all run on separate tracks. Excelling in one area does not necessarily lift the others. Luck and timing are factors that yield nothing without hard work.

Success in any niche of this business takes everything you’ve got. However, this becomes much less of a burden if your personality type matches the gig. To sustain yourself as a street musician, for example, would require you perform well without the confines of stage or schedule. If the street seems too hostile (yet you want to avoid the politics and smoke of the clubs) there are plenty of outlets to make a musical dime. Retirement homes, hospitals or corporate parties are always open to new ideas for shows. You don’t even need to play an instrument—sequencers and Karaoke tracks have become widely accepted by audiences—as long as the idea is okay with you.

Under Cover
Performing cover songs seems to be the most under-appreciated, music-related, occupation and it’s a mistake to think of it as a “plan B.” It requires a lot more than just pulling together a bunch of musicians and learning the current Top 40. You will be in competition with bands that honestly love the songs they play and are focused and relentless with promotion and mailing list duties. These bands will get the gigs and you will be frustrated that your back-up plan requires so much effort. Also remember: weddings and similar functions require you to act as MC. If you can’t imagine yourself smiling while leading, “The Bride Cuts the Cake,” then don’t even ponder the potential of earning hundreds of dollars for a few hours’ work. It’s not for you.

There are even career options for singers who can’t envision themselves on stage. Studio sessions and voice lessons can provide a great living, but you’ve got to have chops- o-plenty. Session singers are vocal ninja’s. They are hired to check their egos at the door, lay down precision singing, and then leave in a flash. Voice teachers run the gambit from those who combine their studies in music, psychology, anatomy and physical therapy to singers who simply hand down exercises they’ve learned along the way. Regardless of level, sustaining a career as a voice teacher requires you possess the patience of a saint.

If any of these paths smell of artistic compromise then do yourself a favor and cross them off your list immediately. It’s tempting to think you can pull off any situation for the right price but the philosophy will backfire every time. Emotional reservations show in the voice. Not only will you be financially unsuccessful, you will doubt your talent. It’s a lose/lose situation. Finding the right fit between personality and career takes time. Often what clouds an artistic vision is the lack of physical skills. Basic vocal mechanics are routinely glossed over by beginners, which distracts them from discovering new professional opportunities.

“It” is you and You are “it”
If you feel your true vocal identity has yet to reveal itself, don’t despair. Every singing issue can be addressed by training. Pitch, tone and phrasing are dependent on your physical condition and muscle coordination. Just as working-out in a gym improves overall muscle performance, vocal exercises isolate and develop target areas bypassed during routine singing. Solid skills provide an avenue for creativity. What begins as a heart-felt vocal line often becomes detoured by physical inability or lack of security. That’s what happens if you try too hard or think too much. The goal of training is to develop your reflexes to create the shortest path from inspiration to microphone.

If you are brave enough, and work hard enough, you can strip away the physical and mental barriers and tap into your soul. When combined with the right performing situation, everything should flow naturally. If this seems too easy, you are probably one of the many who began compromising your talents right from the beginning. Many people rely on drugs and alcohol to break down their barriers. A better solution is to develop the physical act of singing to a point where your body performs without thinking—bypassing doubt.

When working on your voice, the “it” is physical form. When performing, the “it” is exploring what’s in your soul. The combination of the two will be the best damn singing you’ve ever done. You’ll have that coveted “it” factor that makes audiences expand, gets bands hired again or fills the bucket in front of you with coins. The bottom line here is this: No matter how, when or where, if you can pay your bills by singing alone then you, my friend, are a very successful singer.
Blend Your Highs And Lows

By Lisa Popiel

You go to a higher note and suddenly you’re unintentionally yodeling. You try to act like your voice break was done on purpose. But what’s actually breaking?—And are you hurting anything?

One of the thorniest technical issues facing singers is that of ‘registers’ and ‘register blending’. Though not every singer has breaks when singing up and down the scale, most singers have to work at getting an even sound they can rely on. To add to the confusion, it seems that every voice teacher has his or her own way of explaining what registers are and how to blend them. I’m no exception. Having wrestled with registers over a lifetime, it is with glee that I can share with you a really novel way of experiencing vocal registers and of fixing breaking problems.

Let’s start with my description of what a register is—muscle activities in your larynx (voice-box) that activate related to pitch. Humans have two registers, a lower register and an upper register. The lower register is the muscle activities that easily activate on your low notes. Conversely, your upper register muscle activities occur when you sing high. You can actually feel these muscle activities, though not with your fingers. When you sing loud and low on the word ‘hey’, see if you can feel some sensation in the front of your larynx. Then sing a really high note on the sound ‘oo’, sounding like a little bird. You should be able to feel some muscle action in the back of your larynx.

Imagine this: When you sing low (in what I call ‘pure front muscle’) your vocal cord length is short, the edge of the cord is thick and the sound is loud and coarse—you feel vibration in your neck and chest (that’s where the term ‘chest voice’ comes from!) and the concept is ‘heavy’. If you’re singing a really high note on the vowel ‘oo’, you’re singing in what I call ‘pure back muscle’. In this configuration, your vocal cord length is long, the edge of the cord is thin, the sound is soft and sweet, vibration can be felt in your head and the concept is ‘light’.

Imagine This

As you sing higher, your vocal cord stretches and thins, similar to what happens when you stretch rubber bands. Our vocal cords, however, are much more complex. In fact, they aren’t cords at all but rather folds of muscle covered by a mucous membrane. Human vocal cords are complex little guys and scientists are still trying to figure them out. The shape, length and tension of the vocal cords change depending on your pitch and volume—even which vowel you’re singing! They are amazingly flexible little biological machines considering, on average, they have the diameter of a dime.

Voices ‘break’ when the register muscle activities become unbalanced and your ‘front muscle’ shuts off suddenly. If you sing too loudly as you ascend the ‘front muscle’ overloaded, shuts off and you’re left with the ‘back muscle’ only. Voice-breaking is not harmful, in fact yodelers develop the sudden shift to a fine art.

What I love about this register model is that it goes where the action originates—in your voice-box. Simply by paying attention to the feelings over time, you’ll be able to develop a sensitivity and control that will amaze you.

When working on register blending the goal is to have an even sound up and down your range instead of two different sounds—your lower, heavy sound and your higher, lighter sound. Here’s another way to visualize this: Instead of black on the bottom and white on top, aim for grey on ALL of your notes, low, middle and high. Focus on each note having it’s own blend that changes as you go up and down.

This approach not only helps take the fear out of singing higher but keeps you in the driver’s seat by showing how to feel your registers rather than relying on feeling the effects of registers (meaning vibration in your head or chest). Now you can go to where the action really is—inside your voice-box. Let the exquisite muscular dance begin.

Lisa Popiel, MFA in Voice is creator of the Voceworks® Method and the Total Singer Instructional DVD. www.popiel.com 800-BEL-VOCE. popeil@iLivetoPlay.net.
"Diversify."

By Randall Williams

It’s not easy to be a full-time musician, and it’s a tough road to get there. There’s no pre-fab success roadmap that works for everyone, but there is one bit of advice that is just as applicable to musicians as it is to corporate moguls and corn farmers: Diversification is vital.

Diversification means not putting all your eggs in one basket, all your money in one company’s stock, or the same crop in the same field every year. It also means that musicians who do only one thing are going to have a hard time building a successful career.

There are lots of really talented musicians out there and you might be better than some or even all of them. But what makes you unique? Why are you going to get hired for a gig over two-dozen others? And how are you going to get enough work to leave the day job behind and do what you love full-time?

Let’s ask Kari

I put these questions to somebody who knows: Kari Estrin. Kari’s been in the business for more than 20 years, promoting and managing internationally, and offering customized career consulting for artists. Kari spelled out the need to diversify income streams as well as the need to diversify artistically.

“Diversity means not just relying on one facet of what you can do,” she said. “Typically, musicians experience this when they learn a new instrument because the band needs it, or when they become their own booking agent because nobody else is.”

“But as you get older, the stakes change. When you’re married with children, you can’t drive around the country, sleep on couches, and take poor-paying gigs. I work with artists to examine what other skills they have, and capitalize on those.”

Who would have thought...

Kari said something really interesting. She talked about creative diversity, but it seemed to go hand in hand with generating diverse sources of income.

“I had a client who won the John Lennon Songwriting Contest,” Kari said. “But while working on her second CD, the songs just weren’t gelling. I realized she was still too close to the subject matter, trying to put too much emotion into rhymes. I suggested that she write her songs as stories. The end result was a book, a play, a collection of one-act plays, and a CD. She developed her voice as a writer and became a playwright and an author in addition to being a musician.”

In this case, artistic diversity spawned financial diversity. “Three to seven hundred dollars may be standard for a concert,” Kari said, “but a play might bring in live to special, and also so they’re not forced to rely on one thing for income. Diversifying your income empowers you to turn down the shows that you probably shouldn’t be taking anyway. Plus, running around taking every gig you can is a great recipe for burn-out.”

Kari suggested other ways to diversify, too: “Capitalize on your particular skills,” she said. “Some people do publicity, accounting, or radio promotion for other artists. Or find a niche market such as a concert series for the elderly in your state and get a grant for it.”

She brought her point home with the example of how she came to produce a concert for Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie. “Although I was a successful Boston concert promoter in my own right, out-of-town promoters coming to Boston used to hire me to cater,” she began. “I made great connections that way. I catered a gig for Pete and Arlo once, and was asked to write Pete’s bio for that show. I had no idea how hard it would be, so I agreed.” Afterwards his wife Toshi remarked that it was the best bio they’d had in a while, and Howard Lenthal dropped her a note shortly afterwards asking Kari to produce their next concert at Symphony Hall!

Learn how to capitalize on your skills as you work toward your goal of making a decent living doing what you love to do.

But what if you think you can’t do anything else but play music?

“If you can’t do anything but music, then do it the best you can,” Kari says. “Maybe you’ll be able to play full-time and find somebody else to do all the other stuff, or maybe you’ll have to get a part-time job that allows you the flexibility to travel when you need to and take the shows you want to play.”

Personally, I’d say if you think you can’t do anything else, you should look harder. Or maybe you should call Kari. Kari Estrin Management: www.kariestrin.com

You can reach Randall Williams at randall@iLivetoPlay.net

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Most people aren’t in touch with how the diaphragm and the other breathing muscles actually operate and are still convinced that they’re singing from it because they were told to do so somewhere along the line.

When I’m quizzing a singer, I love to hear just how many clichés and misunderstood ideas they’ve picked up along the way about singing. When I ask them, “Where is it we’re supposed to sing from?” I get responses like “Sing from the heart. Or is it the gut? Or could it be the head? Can we really sing from our toes? How about our privates?” I love these responses and personally think they’re all correct in their own way, but the most common answer is, of course, “sing from the diaphragm.”

The diaphragm is a large horizontal muscle dividing the abdominal cavity from the upper respiratory cavity. It does not function on it’s own but is assisted by the abdominal muscles, back muscles and intercostal muscles that control the ribs. Singers who are capable of coordinating all of these muscles to work harmoniously in a reflex manner have the most flexibility, range, tonal color and control.

So how’s it done?
The biggest problem with breath control is the idea of separating it from the all-at-once activity of singing. Singing is coordination. It’s about connecting the dots of breath, resonance placement, pressure in the throat, musicality and acting abilities. Breath is just one of the dots, but it’s a big dot. We call breath control in singing “support.” That’s what the breath must do—support the tone. What’s important to understand is that the tone dictates the support. This means that each type of tone you sing has a slightly different air requirement from another. A high note requires more air than a low note, an airy note needs more air than a non-airy one, etc. You are not fast enough to be down in your support system dictating the amount of air needed for every note. If you try you will undoubtedly become a pushy singer.

What you want instead is to develop great reflexes in the muscles involved in breath control (all of them, not just the diaphragm). This is best achieved two ways:
1. By aligning the body properly to best free up the support system muscles from constraint and over control so that they may react reflexively. Posture is key.
2. By learning how to warm-up in a way that will activate and develop the support system muscles to re-act in connection to singing. This includes the diaphragm all the way down to the lower abdominal muscles just above the groin.

I like exercises that stimulate and develop coordination directly related to singing. Those include tongue-rolling, lip-rolling exercises (when taught correctly), and certain full-range tone exercises designed to give a singer a tour of the complete range of motion in their support system muscles. I’m not a fan of arbitrary breathing exercises like the “pant like a dog” exercise, or the “lie on the floor and put books on your abdomen or chest” exercise, or the “shouting” exercises seen in a lot of contemporary voice schools. They are, supposedly, designed to stimulate the diaphragm but in my opinion are good for little more than giving the singer a sore throat.

I believe in a general truth about the support system: “Where you are in your range is where you are in your support system.” This means that as you sing high you’ll be using the upper support muscles more naturally (to comfortably generate more air) and the lower muscles when singing lower (to produce a non-pushed lower air quantity). This general rule can be overturned, but if your body is aligned well, you’ll be amazed at how comfortably this falls into place. This alignment is achieved through an understanding of posture.

The idea of a performance is to go on an emotional ride and take along any brave soul open-hearted enough to follow. There is no other true singing goal. Let the emotion dictate the tone and the tone will dictate the breath. Then you are truly singing from the heart. And ultimately, that is the place to be singing from.

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For more on the importance of posture in developing breath control and support, as well as an explanation of the “Open Rib Cage” technique, access the “Online Exclusives” section in the Singer&Musician subscriber-only section at www.iLiveToPlay.net

Breck Alan has studied, taught and engaged in the act of singing for more than 20 years.
Featured Artist

During the '60s and '70s, Calvin B. Streets grew up amongst the angst, broken glass and sharp edges of the Brooklyn streets he was named after. He learned early on that life is filled with sharp edges and broken glass, and that, to survive, you have to find a soft spot every now and again. This was no place for the faint of heart. This is evident by his angry, and at the same time sensitive and emotional, no holds barred style of rockin' blues, as well as the artistry of the guitar that Mr. Streets embodies. The feelings of those sharp edges and broken glass, concrete and brick streets along with the hope and despair that is the mortar that binds is almost unparalleled in the blues genre. His city influenced style of blues, mixed with equal parts of his childhood guitar heroes, makes his unique style recognizable. His ability to write and perform original blues and ragtime tunes make him a truly unique American composer. This break out solo album covers the blues genre from rippin', rockin' blues to Delta Blues, where it all started. This is truly a blues guitar album. And watch out for the Christmas 2006 release of the blues classic (an advance copy of which is on this album) "I Wanna Have A Christmas" Go to CDBABY.com and pick up a copy today.

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ANGIE APARO
continued from page 15

someone of your stature, but would you wanna do something together?” He said yeah.

The success Faith had with “Cry” must have given you some financial freedom. Has your success as a songwriter made it easier for you to take a more independent road as a performer?

Yeah, I think so. I’m living in Atlanta, but I’ve been going to Nashville every couple of months. I’d never co-written a song before I started meeting all these unbelievably wonderful writers, and it’s good for me because I’ve found a community up there. If you’re a good songwriter, you can go up to Nashville and make a good living. But without really going after [a career as a songwriter], I don’t know how many “Cry”-type hits you’re gonna get. I think being a songwriter will allow me to take more risks as a performer, but I don’t know, because I’m not making a conscious effort to get cuts. But it definitely allows you to make decisions like, “Well, I don’t really want a label right now...”

You’ve just released the first of three planned EPs. What’s the concept behind them?

I was writing songs for the first EP, and there was a line in “Spider Song” that says, “We all need our enemies.” That just sat in the back of my head for a while, and the more I thought about it, the more these songs about conflict and war and peace came to me. Not just the war of nations, but internal conflicts, relationships... So the whole second record came from that one line, and the third record deals with love and unity, and the inspiration for that came from a song on the first EP called “Only.” So in a weird way the first EP gave birth to these other two records. The whole idea of conceptual works has sort of gotten lost in the age of digital music. So it all goes back to the idea of being free as an artist, and wanting to remind myself that the best art comes when you’re not worrying about the business side of things. SM

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I love a great fight.

For the most part I’m a pacifist so it’s not the heavy weight championship that I’m after. On the other hand, there’s nothing more engaging than engaging (is that one too many engagings?) in a heated debate, particularly over music and the pursuit of art. These are debates that I love to—dare I say it—engage in. Some might say I’m a passionate person, others would say I’m just a ...

But I’m getting off my point. There is certainly music that I like and other music that I do not. Generally, I would think that readers of this magazine are the kind independent artists that find the mainstream to be a somewhat polluted source of nutrition for the soul. Therefore, we choose not only to go up some tributary from which to draw our hydration, but occasionally even go as far as digging our own well. And when our buckets arise, we drink with gusto and let the excess spill about us. Then we expound upon (to those that are willing to listen) the virtues of the pureness and maybe even the natural minerals that permeate our water, and how holier we are than thou.

Then there’s John Lennon, who I love to quote. One of the lyrics I’m most often liable to quote is “love, love, love.”

But the other night, over many beers, while touting the clarity of the waters in which I not only drank, but swam in, I happened into a discourse on the music industry and several of the acts that lie within. I’m not sure but I might—might—have used profanity and perhaps—perhaps—questioned the intelligence of the radio listening public. I most certainly vilified those acts that I find to be the worst dispensers of heroin to the children. Oops, I mean dispensers of meaningless, nutritionless ear candy to the masses.

Suddenly, I was asked why did I tout “love, love, love” when my heart was so clearly filled with hatred.

Well, after I gave that witch her deserved tongue lashing, I started to think about it and I came to a surprising conclusion. The truth is that I don’t hate these so-called artists. I just hate their music. But, see, there I go getting off the point again. The point is that, contrary to the charts, the award shows, and the battle of the bands, this is not a competition. Though it sure feels like it at times. Like when you’re the opening act and not allowed to go above a certain db level in your show, one might have a strong argument that it is a competition after all. When the drummer has to set up his kit and the last floor tom is in an area that most would consider backstage, it might feel so.

Here are a few more examples:
• No sound check.
• No stage-hands for your gear.
• You pay full price at the bar.
• Worthless songs get airplay, but yours don’t.

Should I go on? The best doesn’t always win—the best singers don’t get contracts, the best songs don’t get cut, the best music doesn’t get heard—and I’m sure you’re asking yourself, “Why?”

Because it’s not a competition—artistically, anyway. But, ask yourself, “do you make art or do you make a product?” If you ever wondered why a great demo got passed on, while someone less worthy (in your eyes) got picked up, it’s because the label thought they could make money off that act. It’s not that their music was better, it’s that the label felt they could make money off that “product”.

I’ve seen several songwriters, singers and bands make calculated decisions to appeal to the people that can get them in front of the masses. Some of these people are friends of mine, and I’m not just talking about people I can use. While I may disagree with their approach to making a living making music, I still like them as people (or perhaps, friends I haven’t been able to use yet).

Love, love, love. Okay, I’m trying really hard not to hate those who have had commercial success with music that I don’t like. And it’s really a challenge. Maybe it’s because they know something I don’t know. Maybe it is a competition. SM
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Your prized CD project can’t be handled like a “drive through” operation. You need it crafted to your specifications, with unusual care, by real artists and real experts. That’s an important difference that Oasis has strived to offer musicians on every project. No matter how large or how small. For fifteen years running.

And when we’ve completed your project—when the pristine sound reproduction, printing, and other painstaking details are all in place—the benefits of being an Oasis client have really just begun. For example, it’s a tremendous advantage to place your music in the prestigious Oasis Sampler radio promotion program—an exclusive and automatic benefit of working with Oasis. Your favorite track from your CD will be delivered directly to around 500 of the most relevant radio stations in your pinpointed musical genre—and to our private list of highly connected industry insiders, people who can make a real difference in your career.

The feedback from these promotional endeavors has been remarkable. Our clients are repeatedly contacted by radio stations, booking agents, and industry insiders asking for more material, and some have landed extremely lucrative deals—like our client whose music was recently purchased for use and played under the credits on Deadwood, HBO’s runaway hit series.

But the Oasis Sampler is only one of a baker’s dozen of interrelated Tools of Promotion (TOP). All of our TOP services are designed to help independent musicians jumpstart their careers.

Ask your friends. Ask around. Or just pick up the phone and talk with one of our famously friendly Client Advisors. Call (888) 296-2747 or email advice@oasisCD.com and let us know how we can help.

Sincerely,
Micah Solomon, President and CEO

INCLUDED WITH YOUR CD or DVD PROJECT—THE OASIS TOP™ TOOLS OF PROMOTION:

- Your Music on an Oasis Sampler™ Distributed to Radio Nationwide
- Galap/Oasis CD-ROM with 14,000+ Music Industry Contacts
- Distribution for your CD/DVD: iTunes Music Store, Tower.com, Borders.com, Waldenbooks.com, Amazon.com
- A Full Year of Electronic Press Kit® Service and Exclusive Live Performance Opportunities
- SoundScan®, Music-Career Software, Retail Cases, Barcodes
- FREE Website with the features musicians need!