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IT'S A SOUND SO BIG, IT REQUIRED A COMPLETELY NEW SHAPE JUST TO HOLD IT.
All In?

By Bill Evans

The problem with having to write a column like this is that sometimes you just run out of things to say. So this may seem a bit random but cut me some slack, in the past decade I have only done more than 100 of these.

So, I am on the phone earlier with my daughter’s best friend’s mom trying to set up some time for them around a gig we have booked in California later this month. As I was explaining the tortured (or maybe tortuous is a better word) schedule that includes my wife and daughter driving from Vegas to L.A. Saturday morning and getting to the gig while I fly out because I need to be in Las Vegas until noon for a trade show for my day gig and then playing the two-set show and driving home. This the week after we are back in L.A. for two days of rehearsals as we get ready for our first real Las Vegas gigs which is right after I get back from San Francisco for another freaking trade show which is right after we put this issue to bed which is right after we put the two magazines that are our day gigs to bed.

She said something about being maniacs. Yeah, well, when you get the gigs you have been chasing for a year, you do what it takes. And the funny thing is that I know that anyone reading Singer&Musician will understand this at a foundational level. And getting a non-musician to “get it” is probably just not going to happen. It’s kind of like how musicians and their families find the movie This is Spinal Tap hilarious while others look at it like a piece of cheese that has been left out on the counter a few hours too long.

As they put it in certain rooms in my new hometown, you gotta go “all in” if you are going to make the big score. Even if everyone around you thinks you are a maniac. SM

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he says "Music holds a magic over my mind, body and spirit unlike anything else in this world. To hold onto always is what got you started in the first place and that's the great love of music."

He is a prolific writer whose work has appeared in musician magazine, Gig, Performing Songwriter, International Musician and numerous other publications. Peter is also drummer for the improvisational collective, Friend Planet. “MUSIC MY FOOD.”

Lisa Lewis

Rockstar Supernova: What I Did on My Summer Vacation

For more 30 years, vocal and performance coach Lisa Lewis has been blessed with the ability to combine two of her greatest loves - music and teaching. She has worked with such notable artists as Britney Spears, Gwen Stefani, Jack Black and band members of Linkin Park, the E Street Band, Journey, Kiss and many others. She is the author of the Singer's First Aid Kit and The Pop Singer's Warm-Up (both books are published by Hal Leonard. She collaborates with managers, record labels, producers and songwriters to help optimize the performance skills of their artists. Born in Manhattan, and spending her childhood in New York City, Lewis found herself drawn to the performing arts. "My mother sent me to a school in New York called Dalcroze when I was a little girl. It was a very intense music school; they taught in an unusual way which left me with the idea that learning can be something that's proactive and based on what the student loves." The experience left a lasting impression on Lewis and her style of teaching.

In 1989, Lewis started The Singer’s Workshop in Los Angeles. "I wanted to try to give singers the sense that they have a unique gift inside of them. There’s a lot to learn, but the thing you have to hold onto always is what got you started in the first place and that’s the great love of music. There’s a burning fire inside of us that doesn’t stop."

Richard Gilewitz

Recording and Releasing a Live CD

As a youngster, Richard Gilewitz embraced artists such as The Beatles, Andres Segovia, Leo Kottke, Arlo Guthrie, John Fahey and Fatt & Scruggs. Soaking up the wealth of inspiration supplied by the diverse acts featured on “The Dr. Demento Radio Show” and “The Midnight Special,” Richard welcomed the challenge of mastering and adapting many styles of music for the acoustic guitar – a trait that continually sets him apart from the mainstream.

Gilewitz began honing his skills during the late 1970’s at the University of Alabama, while pursuing a degree in Computer Science and Mathematics, eventually working in the field of flight simulation design, telemetry and satellite systems. Soon the pull of his passion for music and band members of Linkin Park, the E Street Band, Journey, Kiss 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.

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 his 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.

Bruce Bartlett

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.)

A gigging musician, Bruce runs a 24-track commercial recording studio using Cakewalk Sonar Producer. His current books are “Practical Recording Techniques 4th Ed.” and “Recording Music On Location” (due October 2006).

Breck Alan

Breck Alan has taught and sung for over 20 years. He studied at the New England Conservatory, the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and Naropa Institute. He is the author of the vocal instruction series The Art of Body Singing. Visit www.bodysinging.com. Send questions to breck@breckalan.com.

Mark Baxter


Lisa Popeil

Lisa Popeil, MFA in Voice, singing expert, one of the top voice coaches in Los Angeles, a vocal researcher, the creator of The Total Singer available on both VHS and DVD, and the Voiceworks Method. Visit www.popeil.com.

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“Standby, Camera, Action!”

By Mike Aiken

For at least two years promoters and agents have been pressuring me for a music video. I just released my third CD, Just Add Salt, and heard, “This is great, where’s the video?”

I knew nothing about the process and feared both the cost and time commitment of making a video. I wasn’t sure the payoff of having a video would be worth the cost. Sound familiar?

I’m sure many of you are considering filming a video. If you are like I was you have a lot of questions. Let’s see if I can answer some of those through my experiences. The process starts by asking yourself two things:

1. What do you hope to gain by making a video and how will it help your career?
2. What will be the expense in both time and money?

The first question you have to answer based on your own situation, your goals and focus. For me I hoped to gain a promotional and marketing tool while at the same time giving my fans a 2:47 of entertainment. If it’s done well it will only help your career. As for the second question let me share both my experience and that of my producer, Mike Breault of Embryo Media Inc. I was lucky enough to be introduced to Mike last year only to discover he had produced videos for the likes of Blues Traveler, the Wailers and Stone Temple Pilots. For the last 10 years Mike has also produced Raceline and Full Throttle, syndicated cable and TV shows reporting on NASCAR. He is easy to work with, conscientious, creative and everything I needed.

The making of a video is a large topic, so I have written this article simply as a place to start. Since we all have a budget to consider, let’s look at four production methods based on cost. From most expensive to least expensive they are:

1. Full Blown Hollywood Style Video
   This will be shot on film, not video, with multiple cameras. You will need a storyline and storyboards. You will also need a production company, custom sets and actors and actresses (at possibly union wages). There will be location and transportation costs. This would not be a live show shoot although you could incorporate live footage. Unless you are the new biggest act out there or have an unlimited budget, this is probably not the avenue for you. A video like this is likely to run you $70,000 to $100,000.

2. High End Video
   This will be at least a two-camera shoot with progressive scan pro video cameras. As with the “full blown video” this will involve a production company, sets, location and casting costs etc. Where you save money going this route is in post-production costs. Shooting in video is much less expensive than in film. With high end pro cameras and equipment and with a professional post-production studio you can achieve results so close to film that most viewers won’t see the difference. Depending on how elaborate you choose to be, a ‘high end video’ can run you $15,000 to $40,000. This is the method I chose to produce my video of “Hillbilly Beach Bum.”

3. The “Prosumer” Video
   This method uses high end consumer cameras and can be a single or multiple camera shoot. You can employ an experienced camera person or go the DIY route. Many people will try a friend, manager or someone ‘free’ to cut costs. But there is an art to filming. You don’t expect a cameraman to know how to play your instrument...the same rules apply to filming. This may not be the best place to save. After filming you can go to a post-production studio and work with a professional at editing or you can buy editing software and try the editing process yourself. You can get great results with the “prosumer” method and for some styles of music this might be the look you’re after. Expect to spend from $5,000 to $15,000 depending on if you buy or rent equipment and how elaborate you are with the set and concept.

4. The Picture-Slide Video
   This is a method of showing your look and concept using still photography at a very reduced cost. You can take the stills yourself or use stills others have taken of your live shows. You can also mix photos and video. Again you can go to a professional post-production studio to put it together or you can purchase software and try it yourself. This is the method I chose for my song “90 Miles To Hemingway.” I mixed stills with video and had it professionally produced. This made a very effective presentation at budget cost. Expect to spend $1,000 to $5,000 depending on how much you do yourself.

I started the whole video process early this year by asking questions, trying to get a better handle on what would be required and how I could realistically pull off the project. I met with Mike Breault three times before shooting, shot six different days (some of those days for just an hour or two), six different setups, spent six sessions editing, two sessions finalizing and we were done. Of course there were many hours preparing to shoot, creating sets, reviewing etc.

As with most Indie artists, we have to be resourceful and a ‘jack of all trades.’ Evaluate carefully where your time is better spent, be it learning new software to edit your video or booking more gigs to pay to have it done professionally.

To wrap up I asked Mike Breault to give a few extra tips for how to approach making a music video. His valuable advice is below:

1. Create a realistic budget and stick to it. It’s very easy to over spend.
2. Spend the time to storyboard your script. Layout your timeline. Every second of shooting...
Billy Mitchell has had an exciting career both on and off the stage. A full-time working musician, leader of the Billy Mitchell Group, composer, recording artist, producer, advocate for music education in the public schools and all-around musical activist, Mitchell has a three-decade-plus résumé of high-profile gigs the world over, movie appearances and public service behind him.

His book, The Gigging Musician, is considered by many to be the Bible of the music biz. His “Road Warrior” column in Gig Magazine, covering what it takes to succeed in the music business, was consistently one of the magazine’s most popular features.

When he speaks, he does so with the authority that comes from real-world experience, making his one of the most respected voices in the industry.

In his writing, he’s regularly taken musicians to task for behaving in an unprofessional manner. I asked him recently about why he’s become such an outspoken advocate for musicians doing the right thing.

“I’d gotten very tired of hearing musicians moan and groan about the conditions that many musicians themselves are responsible for setting up,” he said. “They would complain about how cheap club owners are, and then don’t do anything to change the situation. Those same musicians would still go down and play for $30. I don’t complain about what club owners pay, because I don’t play for any less than what I think I should be making. If a club owner doesn’t pay for what I think is fair, I don’t work.”

Enlightened self-interest is another motivating factor. “When one musician is behaving unprofessionally, it’s a reflection on all musicians. A lot of musicians behave in such a way, talking loud and boisterous, being thoughtless, being rude, being careless. I talk to my musicians all the time, because I expect them to be as professional as in any other job.”

This month, I’d like to pass along some of Mitchell’s top rules for working musicians. They’re valuable words of wisdom, whether you’re a musical novice or a seasoned pro.

Mitchell’s Four Ps: The Four Ps make it possible to be a relevant and successful musician.

1) Purpose. Honestly determine your ultimate goal. Is it to become rich and famous? Are you motivated by a passion for the “exciting” life of a performer? Are you trying to make a statement or a difference? Are you trying to confirm your talent or simply to avoid “real” work? Are you doing this as a hobby?

2) Preparation. Develop skills in each area of your professional life: organizational, social, managerial, representational and promotional.

3) Production. The musician produces music. Are you: performing; writing/arranging; producing CDs or events; teaching?

4) Patience. The business does not provide what you want when you want it. Learn to wait!

Billy Mitchell’s Theorem on Career Progression

A musician’s success in the 21st Century will be in direct proportion to how much that musician cares. An extension of the key word is “careful,” full of care, for every area of your musical career. You must care about your fellow musicians, your jobs, your commitments to the audience and everyone you come in contact with.

Axiom 1: Every gig is important. No job should be taken for granted. Every job is an opportunity to learn. Every job should lead to another job. Every audience deserves your best.

Axiom 2: Your presentation must always be positive. Dress appropriately for every gig. Speak with enthusiasm and always project a positive attitude. Present a clean, complete and professional package.

Axiom 3: You ain’t that important! No musician is more important than the music, the gig or the musicians they are playing with. Your first obligation is to the music. Your second obligation is to the job. Build your reputation on dependability, not on hot air.

Axiom 4: Rejection is part of the program. Getting turned down is not always an indication of your talent or of your product. Keep your ego intact.

Words to live by. SM

“I don’t complain about what club owners pay, because I don’t play for any less than what I think I should be making. If a club owner doesn’t pay for what I think is fair, I don’t work.”

—Billy Mitchell
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* YTD through 10/06. Source: MT Sales Trak, October 2006
I n my day gig editing a pro audio magazine, we sell T-shirts with the answers to the questions most often asked of sound engineers by audience members. The first answer on the list is, “Yes, I know what all the knobs and buttons do and, yes, it took a long time to learn.” (Thanks to James Geddes for that one…)

So if you have been following this series you know we have been through the entire system from the mic up to the console which has been covered in several parts. This month we look at auxiliary sends or, as sound guys call ‘em “auxes.” (If you have missed any of the previous installments, you can find them archived in the Knowledge Base in the subscriber area of iLivetoPlay.net.)

**Made to Order**

You know how when you are at a bar and order a drink (be it with or without an adult component) and the barback pulls out a little gun-type dealie from which he can dispense all kinds of liquid refreshment? Aux sends are kind of like that but backwards. To continue the plumbing analogy we started some installments back, if sound is like water then the console is like a series of pipes and valves that determine what goes where and how much of it.

An aux is like a valve that sends some amount of the “water” off to another system. In some cases the “water” is returned to the main system after something has been added and in other cases some of it is sent off to do work elsewhere. Whether that “water” returns to the main system is based on what happens to it while flowing through the other system and that is largely dependent on where in the flow the valve to the aux sits. You will hear auxes described as pre, post and switchable. Let’s take a look at each.

Pre and post are short for pre-fader and post-fader. Switchable just means that you can determine where the “valve” is in the flow. (Take a look at the diagram for a basic visual of how it all flows.) You will notice that there are several things that happen before the channel fader which most of us think of as the channel’s most important control. How you set up the flow at different parts of the system is know as “gain structure” and is the source of lots of arguments in lots of bars between lots of audio folks. But there is a reason for the passion behind something that may seem minor. Good gain structure can be the single biggest difference between a good-sounding show and a crappy one. (Which brings to mind the whole idea of...
stage volume, but that is a can of worms for another fishing trip…)

Before and After
So why does it matter if sound is sent off to another system before or after the main fader? It depends on the kind of system it is sent to. Pre-aux sends are usually used for crafting monitor mixes (EQ generally comes before the pre fader sends but some consoles will allow you to switch the EQ in so that it affects those monitor mixes as well as the main output. Monitor sends are before the fader because if a change is made to the house mix you don’t necessarily want the same change to happen in the monitors (a real issue with digital consoles that share a mic pre, but, again, a subject for another time). Therefore, the sound goes off to the monitor system BEFORE the main fader so that the monitor mix can be crafted apart from the main mix.

A post-fader aux send is generally used to drive some kind of effect or sound processing. This allows you to determine how much signal gets sent and a separate aux return determines how much comes back. Most good mixers have aux return controls in the main output section but most pro sound engineers will return the effect through an unused channel so they can easily determine how much of the effected sound gets back to the system and to the ears of the audience. This is, for example, a great way to easily kill the reverb on a singer when he or she is talking to the audience. Reverb sounds cool in judicious amounts while singing but almost always makes spoken communication very hard to understand.

Inserted Here
One other kind of send and return is the channel insert. This is like an aux send but you don’t get a knob to determine how much sound gets sent. It all goes and it all comes back. This is usually used for dynamics processing—compressors, limiters and gates—but can also be used with an outboard EQ or automatic feedback killer. For example, I own a couple of Antares Vocal Producer units that combine EQ, compression, mic modeling and pitch correction in a single unit. These get “inserted” into the channels where they are needed and are not on an aux.

Your better consoles will have insert send and receive jacks for each channel but almost all MI grade mixers have a single TRS 1/4” jack (Remember, TRS jacks have three parts. Again, go back to the archives to the piece on cables for more info.) To use the inserts, you will need a TRS send and receive cable. This is a “Y” cable with a single TRS on one end and a pair of mono 1/4” jacks on the other end. The tip of the TRS sends the signal to one of the mono 1/4” jacks while the ring portion gets the signal back from the other mono connector. To further complicate things, most pro consoles have direct outs that send the raw signal from the input to other places, usually a recording unit of some kind. But some MI consoles combine the inserts and direct outs. If you insert a TRS all the way into the jack, it is an insert. If you stick a mono jack into the halfway point of first click, it acts as a direct out.

Next up, the output section including fab stuff like sub-groups, mute groups and VCAs. What fun we’ll have…
Even if it was a guilty pleasure, we are willing to bet that you watched at least some of the two seasons of Rock Star on NBC. In case you didn’t, the show is a weeks-long audition to find a lead singer for a name band.

Last season it was INXS. This year it was a new band called SuperNova made up of former members of Mötley Crüe, Metallica and Guns N’ Roses. Being reality TV it is full of drama—some real and some manufactured. But while the general public was dishing about who dissed who or who wore the best outfit, musicians were struck by a comment made by one of the rockers as she was being “voted off the island.”

“When I was 19,” she said “I made a pact with my guitar player that we would never have a day gig. And I haven’t.” The woman who spoke those words was Patrice Pike, an Austin TX-based singer/writer/player/performer who had half a dozen records under her belt and more than a dozen years as a working musician before she even heard about the star-making TV show.

Brothers and Sisters

Pike left home at age 15, got married at 17 and divorced partly because her spouse (who was the bass player in her first band) would not make the same commitment to playing music that she did. She was writing songs with bandmate Wayne Sutton who issued the challenge and the pact was made. “I dropped out of college, quit my job and we went for it. Every door opened for us after we made that pact.” Those doors included a major label deal and a jammy, funky LIVE debut called Free Love and Nickel Beer. (you read that right, a major label live debut recorded at Club DaDa in Dallas). The band, called Little Sister which was Pike’s nickname growing up, was getting some real traction on the college circuit and scoring support slots for some of the region’s biggest acts including Edie Brickell and New Bohemians and Sarah Hickman. Despite that traction, when their label SKB became part of EMI they were left with a deal. They released their second record as part of an indie co-op based in Austin only to hit a roadblock in the form of a cover band from Boston who was also playing under the name Little Sister.

“When I found out that they were a cover band who didn’t ever travel I was kind
of surprised that they were so hard-core about it, but they were sending cease and desist letters. We could have fought it but it would have meant not being able to play in Massachusetts.” The group had been picked up by Arista and when it was discovered that there were six other bands all playing under that name, the label suggested it might be time to consider a change. “We were the seventh band vying for the name,” Pike recalls. “So we became Sister Seven.” Two albums later, Sister Seven once again found itself on the wrong end of a label reorganization and disbanded. Pike found herself without the project that had been the focus of her life for the past 10 years.

Her writing has always been soulful, merging funky soul with rock and a literary sensibility. “The soul part is bringing in the Stevie Wonder, songwriter material but after a couple of years

Hollywood Calls

Meanwhile, Rock Star was gearing up for a second season and looking for singers with star quality. Part of that meant scouting out some high-profile indie artists who were real “band people. (Several of the participants in the first season had theatrical backgrounds and some came from the now-defunct Vegas run of the Queen musical We Will Rock You.)” I got phone call on tour. I was getting ready to come home and looking forward to putting out the new record I had been working on for two years. They scouted me out but the Austin audition was so far off the map that I told them “no” because I didn’t want to cancel tour dates. So then they called back and asked if I would consider flying to Austin City Limits Festival and from there we

15 Singers, 1 House

So she moved into a house with 14 other singers and the drama began. But, most important were the performances and Pike gave some great ones. “I’m proud of my performances. The really hard part was taking on a song I never would have picked.” The singers were presented with a group of songs each week and had to come to agreement on who got to sing what. Squabbles and compromises were inevitable. I wanted ‘We Are the Champions’ when I got ‘Instant Karma’ which ended up being a great performance for me. The week I got ‘Remedy,’ I wanted ‘Call Me.’ She calls “Remedy”—a soulful rocker by the Black Crowes that seems a perfect match for her—a “fatal mistake.”

“When I did that song, I just didn’t feel comfortable in my own skin. Instead of thinking about singing I felt like I was navigating the show situation. I’d had a bad day. If I had dug into it I would have taken my shoes off and just ripped into it. But after that I got into my head to bring the true ‘me’ into every performance.” It would be the first time that she would face possible elimination and have to outdo two other performers in the eyes of the band to stay in the competition. But the die seems to have been cast. Despite some killer performances—including a take on Stevie Wonder’s “Higher Ground” that was a virtual clinic for melding rock and funk—she began appearing in the “bottom three” as voted by viewers regularly.

But Pike is a survivor and she became one by consistently looking for “win-win moves.” That move came when two of the songs in the pool from which to choose appeared as blank sheets of staff paper with the words “Original Song” where the title should have been. It was the opportunity she had been waiting for. “I felt like in the next two weeks I would be out. Part of it was viewer responses but they had made a decision that I was better off as a solo artist.”

She played an original tune called “Beautiful Thing.”—the pivotal song referred to above. “I auditioned with that song and they loved it. That is the one that got me there.” Her performance was excellent and the song has “hit” written all over it. Pike has had “total strangers” approach her on the street and tell her that they can’t get it out of their heads. Ironically, it was her last shot and she was eliminated.

Back to Business

Pike has returned to Austin to do some last-minute remixing on her new record, Unraveling which will feature the original song she got to perform on network TV for an audience of millions. Are you getting the win/win concept?

With or without the show, Pike will be making music because, well, that’s what she does and her advice to aspiring singers and musicians reflects that. “Most universal is, no matter what kind of music you do, no matter if you are aiming mainstream and a major label or to be part of the indie world, no matter what your background or financial situation is, you have got to be sure you are absolutely passionate about making music. It’s all about persistence, tenacity and being sooooo committed. This is not an easy glamorous job. You have to make it mean something.”

So what’s next? The record hits on Oct. 17. She will do some local CD release shows and the tour is being planned. “We get to start with the Austin City Limits Festival and from there we are on the road. Indefinitely.”

She Knows What the Knobs Do

Unlike too many singers who seem to adopt an attitude that the nuts and bolts, tech aspects of the show are somehow beneath them (at least that is the experience of this writer…), when asked if she could, in a pinch, set up the PA, Patrice gave a refreshing though unexpected response.

“I own my own PA. Three-way Mackie self-powered mains that are big enough for 350 or 400 people. I have the powered SRM450s for monitors and a Mackie Onyx board with the FireWire output. We used the FireWire to record live on the last tour. Just plugged it into a G4 laptop. It’s brilliant. And the mic pre’s on that Onyx are really nice.” A singer just said “mic pre.” I can die a happy man…
By Lis Lewis

I have had one of the most exhilarating and exhausting summers of my life. I haven’t seen the sun, my family or friends since June because I’m the vocal coach for the CBS TV show Rock Star: Supernova.

For those of you unfamiliar with it, (how can there be anyone who is unfamiliar with it?) it is a reality show with the job of finding a lead singer for the new rock band Supernova. Supernova is made up of three of the top musicians in rock today: the infamous and hilarious Tommy Lee of Motley Crüe, Jason Newsted of Metallica fame and Gilby Clarke from Guns ’N Roses. The show airs two nights a week – one where all the singers perform and one where only the bottom three sing. There is also a weekly reality segment that premieres every Monday on the Internet on msn.com. Here’s a little of what it’s been like for me to be working on this project.

My Summer Vacation

It’s 4 am when my alarm goes off on Wednesday. These are not musician’s hours. It’s so early even my dogs don’t notice I’m up. My call time at CBS TV is 5:15 and it takes a half hour to drive there. There’s no traffic. CBS is swarming with people – the camera crew, lighting crew, sound crew, directors, producers, musicians and all of the production assistants. I wait outside for the van with the rockers who tumble out looking sleepy and disheveled. They haul out their guitars and their suitcases full of the clothes they might wear for today’s show. Their handlers shuttle them up to the third floor to the ‘green room’. The mood is gloomy. Someone is going home today.

All summer these singers have been living together in a mansion in the hills of L.A. They have no phone, no radio, no TV, no Internet, not even CD players. Their whole world is the show and each other. The mansion is beautiful, the food is great, the crew is friendly and helpful but in the end it’s a very pretty pressure cooker that they are living in. Everything they do is watched and when they are upset or distressed, it’s filmed. Still they know that the prize is worth it. They all want to win. My job is to help each one of them do it. Every time someone goes home, those of us who are left feel the loss.

As I write this, I don’t know who will be the winner. No one does. I’ve heard rumors that these shows are fixed but I can tell you for certain, this one isn’t. The front runners change week to week and the show has no control over who the audience will vote into the bottom three. Today is the day we will find out. Those three will be performing for Supernova to try to save themselves and Supernova will send one home (in one shocking episode they actually sent two home!).

By about 5:30 (still in the AM, folks) the rockers go down to the stage (it looks exactly like the Mayan Theater in Hollywood but it’s on a CBS sound stage) and four of them are picked arbitrarily to stand in for the four performers who will sing today. Besides the bottom three there will be one rocker chosen by Supernova to do an encore. I try to give them a group warm-up amidst the din in the studio. It is minimal. The holy smokin’ house band barrels through a soundcheck and a dress rehearsal for all four of the singers. Then the rockers are herded back up to the third floor to cycle through hair, makeup and wardrobe. This is where they will spend the next few hours sequestered before they tape today’s elimination show. Breakfast is brought up and, after they eat, it’s time to warm-up their voices. Mind you, they’ve already had to sing backstage at
fast which makes my job a dream.

Then it’s showtime. We all take the elevator down together – it’s packed with the rockers, their handlers and me. Usually we sing some loud rock song on the way down and they hang on the sides of the elevator – it used to scare me but we haven’t gotten stuck in there yet. Once they all decided to just scream at the top of their lungs – the elevator door opened on the second floor and there was Tommy Lee screaming back at us!

The theater is packed with audience members. (Another rumor that is totally untrue is that they are hired audience members. But anyone who lives in Hollywood knows that there is a line around the block of people who want to get in and do.) There is a guy warming up the audience and an incredible DJ spinning loud, loud music. From here on, I’m in the audience watching the show unfold. The rockers come out onstage, then the house band, then Dave Navarro who co-hosts with Brooke Burke and finally Supernova. The room goes crazy and the show starts.

My job is done for the day except to go backstage and say goodbye to the one who is leaving. There are tears all around. The remaining rockers are shuttled back to the mansion for more reality TV taping, photo shoots and song selection. I’ll see them again on Saturday when I go up to the mansion to give them each a real voice lesson and work on the songs. Then on performance day at CBS and we go through a pretty similar routine except they all get to sing; they rehearse their songs twice, go through hair and make-up, rock out in the elevator and perform for the audience. Let the voting begin! SM

For pictures, a video clip and more visit my website http://www.TheSingersWorkshop.com

Once they all decided to just scream at the top of their lungs – the elevator door opened on the second floor and there was Tommy Lee screaming back at us!
Music is too big a world for a one-size-fits-all model of music career success. Musicians’ career paths are as unique as their individual fingerprints. Nevertheless, there are a few guidelines that apply to anyone trying to make a living career out of their love of music.

1. Hone your talent and realize there is a place for you. Not everyone is a Quincy Jones, one of the Beatles, or a Bruce Springsteen, but if an artist like Tom Waits can become a successful vocalist, then there is definitely room for you, too. Do the work necessary to excel in your niche, whether it’s writing a chart, engineering a session, providing backup vocals, or teaching kids the basics of music.

Your goal (to use marketing lingo) is to “position” yourself in your “market” as the go-to person for that particular skill or talent. Don’t worry too much about industry rejection. Every record label in Britain initially passed on The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. The key is to remain confident in your abilities and persevere.

2. Connect with as many people as you can because relationships drive music careers more than anything else, even talent. The quality and quantity of your relationships will be the primary engines of your progress. Try developing creative projects with fellow-musicians. Perhaps you can combine your live show with other acts and present the package to a local promoter. There is strength in numbers. Finding the right combinations takes experimentation.

3. Take responsibility for creating your own success. The last 10 years has given you the means to both produce and distribute your own music on a global scale. New models of business are emerging in the world of music. A “record deal” is not necessarily the goal any longer. The Internet has clearly become your “open mic” to the world, and desktop technologies provide you with ways to have the look, reach and efficiency of larger companies.

Global reach means a potentially far-flung audience. You need to be ready for this new market. Have you created the best business structures to hold and express your work? Are you setting up effective systems to communicate with your audience? It’s up to you to create your own success and not merely rely on a record company or agent to do the work of making you visible in the marketplace.

4. Understand that every business is becoming a “music business” and so musical opportunities are multiplying. It took a coffee company and a computer manufacturer to teach the music industry how to sell music in the digital age! Non-music businesses everywhere are seeking creative ways to add music-related services to their mix. This means that you needn’t be dependent on the traditional “music industrial complex” for music career success.

Think of companies you already resonate with and try brainstorming ways you can link up. Start on a local scale. It might be a gift shop, bookstore or arts organization. Finds ways to add value to what these businesses are doing with what you have to offer. Forging creative alliances is key to building a multi-dimensional music career.

5. Prepare to be versatile and to wear several hats until your “brand” is established. Most musicians I know have had to cobble together several revenue streams in the early stages of their careers in order to make enough money to support themselves. Many have also had to take on a non-music “lifeline careers” just to make ends meet, pay down debt, or supplement what they earn from music.

I tell musicians to not so much look for “a job,” but to seek out the work that needs to be done. It might be arranging a song, playing a wedding gig, helping organize a concert series, doing a jingle session, offering private music instruction, or writing a review of your favorite band’s new CD. Eventually, all the different experiences merge together into the roaring river that will be your music career. At that point you’ll be visible, in demand and able to name your price. And that’s career success.


Connect with as many people as you can because relationships drive music careers more than anything else, even talent.
19TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL
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For more info visit www.folk.org
Yamaha EMX 5014c Powered Mixer

For about 10 years now powered mixers have been on an upward swing in terms of both quality and feature sets.

You can still find simple box mixers with a few basic controls and not enough power to drive even a mediocre club speaker cab but it is just as easy to find a good, console-style unit with decent EQ, built-in effects and respectable power. A big part of the drive in this positive direction has been Yamaha’s EMX series.

This latest version has a great feature set, is easy to set up and use—added bonus—they even provide the audio newbie with some actual education on how this thing works and how to make it sound good.

THE GEAR

The EMX 5014c gives you eight mono mic/line inputs (with phantom power for using condenser mics) plus four stereo channels. Note that two of the sets of stereo channels are also mic channels so you can run as many as eight mics with two stereo devices like keyboards or up to six mics if you need all four of the stereo channels. All of the input channels have three-bands of EQ with sweepable mids on the mic channels. The mic channels also have a –26 dB pad, a high pass filter that rolls off everything under 80 Hz—which will do a lot to clean up any mud in the vocals—and a simple one-knob compressor pre-set for a good vocal sound. You also get a circuit that detects feedback in the mic channels (not the frequency

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Beyerdynamic Opus 89 Vocal Mic

The world is awash in good dynamic vocal mics. If you take your standards down a notch and include the knockoffs and almost knockoffs coming out of China and you have a veritable flood on your hands.

While most of the new wired dynamic mics coming out from the major mic players over the past few years have been “budget” versions or MI-priced versions of their “big boys.” Beyerdynamic has taken a different tack and actually put out a new pro-grade dynamic that is worth a peek.

THE GEAR

If you have seen the Beyerdynamic TG-X 80 just put a nickel-colored head on it and ditch the space-agey red rubber ring and you have a pretty good idea of what the Opus 89 looks like. And looks are not all that it shares with the TG-X 80 as the two—at least on paper—sport very similar performance specs and the same weight and size with a different color scheme. The big difference is that Beyerdynamics made this more of a vocal mic, rolling off the response below 35 Hz which helps clear the mud. Like any hypercardioid mic, the polar response shows a pretty big lobe at 180° from the front. If you use personal monitors this is not an issue but if you use a wedge, you need to be careful—as with any hypercardioid mic—to place the wedge at least 15° off center to avoid feedback.

With a presence bump between about 5K and 12K, the Opus 89 boasts some of the high-end clarity found in good live condenser mics. The mic ships with a clip that fits and a nylon carrying bag. While it shares some specs with the TG-X 80, to my mind at least, the Opus 89 is just a whole lot nicer looking.

THE GIGS

Four piece rock band. Small, loud club. Used a pair of the Opus 89s on two male singers—one a principle vocalist and the other doing mostly backups and just a few leads. Despite the volume onstage, the tight pattern kept feedback from being a problem (nary a squeal all night long). One of the mics was plugged in to a channel that had been used for a condenser vocal mic the night before and it sounded good out of the gate with the previous EQ settings still dialed in. Second outing used with two female vocalists in a large R&B band. These dynamics absolutely smoked the condensers we usually use on the girls. More clarity and output and plenty of “air.”

The mic was intro’d in Europe at PLASA more than a year ago and in the U.S. at Winter NAMM in January. Still, we did a Web search and could not find a retailer currently stocking the Opus 89 in the U.S., but a UK search turned up a unit at 162 pounds sterling or about $259 in Uncle Sam’s dough.

Finally, gig over and band packed up, it was time for the drop test. Five feet straight down to concrete. The grill dented pretty significantly leaving the mic looking lopsided at the impact point, but everything still worked fine.

WHAT IT IS: Performance hypercardioid dynamic mic

WHO IT’S FOR: Those who want some of the air of a condenser in a dynamic package

PROS: Good sound and good looks
CONS: Grill dented when dropped, Still hard to find in the U.S.

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Roger Burnley’s EZ Vocal Method

By Linda Evans

In the first installment of this revue (#41-September/October 2006) we told you how we were going to give the Roger Burnley’s EZ Vocal Method DVD/CD package to be given to a “developing” singer for a real world test and review.

So here I am. Using the word “developing” is an understatement to describe my endeavor to become a better singer. Currently I am a backup singer—and sometimes soloist—in an eclectic, 9-piece 60’s-70’s R&B/Soul/Classic Rock band, including a 3-piece horn section. When I joined the band six or so years ago, there was one lead singer (who happened to be my husband) and I became the only backup singer. Now there are five of us that sing, all of us taking turns as a soloist and the rest of the time harmonizing our butts off as backup singers.

Sure we have fun (and isn’t that the greatest part of playing out) but the pressure to improve my voice has never been greater as I would say I am the weakest link in the vocal category…but I play a mean tambourine!

It was pretty obvious when I joined the band that I really shouldn’t be holding a live mic in public. Most of the time I was flat, had a hard time with maintaining harmonies and the quality of my tone left much to be desired. However, I had great stage presence (isn’t that part of the battle?) and a pitch corrector in the rack so most of my bandmates didn’t seem to mind too much.

Over the years the revolving door of bandmates has brought us to the current group of musicians and, as I mentioned before, five of us sing. While I have improved over the years, I am still the weakest link. I still have a tendency to go flat at the end of phrases and I’m still not too happy with my tone. In my head I sound like Aretha Franklin but what I hear on playback is a much lower tone. I’m still not too happy with my range. I have improved over the years, I am still the weakest link. I still have a tendency to go flat at the end of phrases and I’m still not too happy with my tone. In my head I sound like Aretha Franklin but what I hear on playback is a much lower tone. I’m still not too happy with my range.

Let me say that my “formal” training consists of singing in my junior high school choir back in the 70’s and a couple of years ago I took an Extended Learning class at Pasadena City College called “Singers - Your Body is Your Instrument” (a special thank you to instructor Judith Townsend) where I mostly learned about diaphragm technique.

OK, enough about me. Let’s recap last issue’s initial installment. Roger Burnley is a noted vocal instructor who medical doctors refer their singing clients to when they are recovering from damage mostly caused by bad technique. The EZ Vocal Method he created consists of two pieces: an instructional DVD where Burnley explains and presents his method as well as a CD that contains the techniques to follow and practice with.

So I first watched the DVD three times through. That is probably two times too many for most of you but for me, having no real training, I wanted to make sure I completely understood the proper execution of these techniques. I really appreciated the fact that I could watch Burnley work with other “developing” singers on the DVD going through the techniques and improving their vocal sound instead of trying to follow written instructions and then trying to follow the lessons on a CD.

Next I started playing the CD. I had a difficult time with one of the exercises as it’s not exactly a “natural” position to be holding while singing—try singing scales through puckered and vibrating lips while your hands are placed on the sides of our face…not an easy thing to do at all…at least not for me. Since these exercises recommend that you put your hands on your face until you get used to the techniques I would not recommend practicing while driving in your car (as mentioned in the previous installment and for obvious reasons).

I have to admit I was a bit skeptical at first and had a bit of a hard time doing the techniques but after a while I did start hearing an improvement in my pitch and tone and I do believe my range has improved as well. Without giving away too much I feel that the techniques are just easy enough for me to do without getting too discouraged.

So, has anyone noticed an improvement? Well, you will just have to wait until our next installment. Over the next few weeks I have a couple of band rehearsals where I will debut the results of my new exercises to my unknowing bandmates as well as two upcoming gigs: one is a small (but very appreciative) parish festival and a much larger, outdoor concert in sparkly Las Vegas. Stay tuned! SM

Now Playing on iRadio…

By R.A. Lindquist

If you’re among the many folks who’ve been tuning in our revamped, reformatted and relaunched Internet radio station — “Thanks for listening.”

Actually, it started over two years ago with the launch of SingerRadio through Live365. Using the tools provided by Live 365, we immediately discovered just how much of a need there was for a place where artists could hear and appreciate the music of other artists. Where SingerRadio was mostly American based, iRadio features a broader mix of pop, rock, jazz, blues and acoustic music. Such an eclectic blend is not for everybody, but if you’re musically open-minded and seldom satisfied with the typical fare of commercial radio, we can pretty much guarantee that iRadio will tickle your audio taste buds.

What Will You Hear?

With iRadio, our goal is to create a musical environment that can be either background or foreground. While the iRadio mission is to expose new music and new artists, there’s a fine line between what people will listen to, and what they will simply tune out. There must be a measure of familiarity to keep listeners returning. With this in mind, we’re using as the foundation for the new format many of the more popular artists from SingerRadio, including Cindy Kalmenson, Amilia K Spicer, The Grandsons, Diane Ward, Buckwheat Zydeco, Young Dubliners, Richard Ferreira, Rachael Sage, Roomful of Blues and many others. To this, we’ve added a carefully selected and varied group of cover tunes and past hits reissued independently. Each month our programming panel searches though the latest independent releases looking for new tunes to freshen the mix. Less than 5% of the tracks reviewed get selected for “iPlay,” so having a track added to the iRadio rotation is tantamount to a five star review.

Among this month’s discoveries was a CD entitled One Meat Ball produced by Christine Lavin. For the culinary minded, I should add that all the music on the CD has something...
MZ-M200 Hi-MD Recorder

Sony takes Hi-MD to a higher level with the introduction of more intuitive recording features, easier navigation, and a more ergonomic design – while delivering the same high-quality CD sound and the convenience of recording on the MD format.

The MZ-M200 is the ideal field recorder for radio journalists, musicians, songwriters, and all types of pro-audio applications. This next generation recorder is now Macintosh® compatible and comes equipped for the field with a stereo microphone, earbud headphones, 1-line backlight remote control unit, USB uploading software, a rechargeable battery, an AC power adaptor and 1GB Hi-MD disc. For more information go to www.sony.com/proaudio.

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.

YPG-625

The YPG-625 is the top of the line of the Yamaha Portable Grand series and features an 88-key GHS (Graded Hammer Standard) action. Other piano-centric features include large wave ROM with high resolution Live! Grand and Live! Warm grand stereo piano samples, Portable Grand button and a decorative stand that places the instrument at the correct beautiful cabinet with wood accents on the modern enhancements include USB MIDI, storage devices, and a backlit LCD that display lyric and notation. Power adaptor, sustain pedal included. www.yamaha.com.

TASCAM’S  DP-01FX/CD

How do you improve on the most complete, easy-to-use 8-track recording system on the planet? Add a CD burner to our already feature-packed DP-01FX! Introducing the new DP-01FX/CD. Now you can burn your mixed hits directly to CD or back up your work in progress at any time without having to transfer it to your computer first. Like the DP-01, it combines the hands-on simplicity of our classic cassette Portastudios with the superb flexibility of CD-quality digital. A great tool for songwriters who want better quality than cassettes but don’t like the expense, complex menus and windows of other recorders and software packages. www.tascam.com.

Sennheiser e835

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, allowing clear, smooth vocals to reach the audience while the performer moves freely. 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. MSRP: $159.00 Visit www.sennheiserusa.com.

Singing Coach

Whether a singing novice or professional performer, SingingCoach is for you. The unique, SingingCoach pitch tracking system will measure vocal range, pitch quality and pacing in your computer screen as you sing in real-time. Use the 20 lessons, vocal exercises, breathing exercises and more to become the singer you have always wanted to be. Sing along with the 24 included songs, automatically adjusted to fit your vocal range. Download your favorite music from a selection of over 10,000 songs or write your own song melodies with SingingCoach compose mode.

Now receive $20 off the Regular $99.95 retail price by logging onto www.singingcoach.com. Select the SingingCoach Unlimited icon, Click “Buy Now” and enter SMAG001 into the coupon box. Offer expires 12/31/06.
Nady’s UHF-4

Nady’s UHF-4 represents a breakthrough in affordable UHF wireless microphone systems, providing unprecedented value and a full selection of state-of-the-art features for the demanding professional on a limited budget. The UHF-4 operates on single frequencies in the wide-open, uncluttered UHF 794 - 865 MHz band. It features a half rack design with locking tabs for single mounting. Also features DigiTRU Diversity for unbalanced and balanced front panel dual antennas and unique snap-out receiver or dual receiver (side-by side) optional rack Tone Squelch for locking out potential interference, maximum range and dropout protection, 1/4” XLR balanced outputs, and industry-best 120dB dynamic range. Available with choice of handheld mic transmitter or bodypack. Ideal for virtually all singing and instrument applications. MSRP: $139.95  www.nady.com

Sennheiser HD 280 Pro

The HD 280 Pro is Sennheiser’s most popular closed, circumaural headphone. Designed to exceed the demands of the professional environment, the HD 280 Pro boasts extremely robust construction combined with extensive features that allow users to meet the requirements of today’s most challenging applications. The HD 280 Pro offers accurate, linear sound reproduction for critical monitoring applications while reducing up to 32 dB of ambient noise. The headphones also feature optimum impedance for universal compatibility. The unique collapsible design, swiveling ear cups, and very comfortable construction all offer maximum flexibility for the user in any situation. MSRP: $199.95  Visit www.sennheiserusa.com


By Quint Randle and Singer&Musician’s Bill Evans. Written in straight-forward language by professional gigging musicians, Making Money Making Music guides artists through every aspect of achieving financial success through cover gigs. This easy-to-use reference shows readers how to start or join a cover band, choose the right cover songs, land the first gigs or get better ones, handle marketing and promotion, use proper sound and lighting systems, and much more. Available at: www.amazon.com and www.backbeatbooks.com

Now Playing on iRadio… continued from page 21

either directly or indirectly, to do with food. It comes with a 100 page cookbook—CD marketing at its best! Meat Ball artists include Annie Bauerlein & Chip Mergott, Pete Seeger, Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer and many more. We picked three tracks from the CD for iRadio: “Mocha Java” an instrumental by Alan Miceli, a lovely ballad entitled “Blackberry Winter” by Maryjo Mundy and “Pio,” a fun little ditty by Debi Smith and Doc Watson. Other recent ads include tracks from new CDs by David LaMotte, Lantana, Jennie Arnau, Fred Martin and Levite Camp, the late Hamilton Camp, Sierra Swan, and The Robin Horlock Band. For a complete list of the current artists in rotation, go to www.iliveToPlay.net and click iRadio.

Special Programs

iRadio is more than just the best of the best new music by Independents. Over the coming months we’ll be adding features to help you develop your own singing style and musicianship. As you listen now, throughout the day, you’ll hear one-minute instructional featurettes by noted vocal coaches Lis Lewis and Lisa Popeil to help you develop your voice. So stay tuned – there’s plenty more great stuff coming your way on iRadio and throughout the iLiveToPlay network.

Improving the Experience

One of the most annoying problems with Internet radio can be dropouts. As iRadio broadcasts at the highest bandwidth that’s practical (64k-CD quality), you may experience an occasional dropout, depending on the type of Internet service you have. At our end, we’ve installed the best line available for uploading the streaming audio. In addition, we use a WorldVibrations broadcast automation device to originate our broadcasts. Still, you really need a 112 Kbps ISDN/DSL or better to listen to CD quality streaming audio and even then your device may occasionally rebuffer. If you’re trying to listen via dial-up, chances are you’re in for a frustrating experience.

The International Indie Artist Community

While the vast majority of iRadio listeners are in the US and Canada, our international audience is growing. iRadio presently has regular listeners in Poland, Taiwan, Argentina, Brazil, France, Austria, Sweden, UK, Germany, The Dominican Republic and Greece (there’s even one in Gabon). The interesting parallel here is: whereas your local AM or FM station serves the need of the local geographic community, in terms of news, weather and sports, Internet radio serves a lifestyle community—a community of people with common interests. Using iRadio as the case in point, our primary audience is people who make music and people who like to challenge their musical tastes. Trying to broadcast to such a finite group using conventional transmitters and receivers would probably be an economic disaster, but thanks to the digital technology of the 3rd millennia we can bring together groups of people based on their musical interests and tastes regardless of where they call home. I don’t know about you, but when I read the listener reports, it just blows my mind.

On the A-List: Calvin B. Streets

Tune into iRadio and hear Calvin B. Streets’ latest CD entitled He Ain’t Done With Me Yet featuring some of the most genuine performances to come along in quite awhile. It’s a mix of acoustic and electric music that runs the gamut from flat out rock and roll to cool ‘60s style blues and pop. In between, you’ll enjoy a plateful of very listenable and cool ‘60s style blues and pop. In between, you’ll enjoy a plateful of very listenable and memorable compositions. Streets’ penchant for experimentation is best illustrated on songs like “Chez’s Theme,” and “Ragtime Fantasy.” Other notable cuts are “Just You And Me,” “Quick Change,” and a soon-to-be holiday classic, “I Wanna Have A Christmas.” Available through CD Baby.

NEWPRODUCTSPOTLIGHT

www.iliveToPlay.net 23
Gear Guide For Your Home Studio

by Bruce Bartlett

What is the bare-bones equipment you need to crank out a decent demo CD or album? How much does it cost? Thanks to the new breed of affordable gear, you can put together a complete home recording studio for as little as $800-$1200. That includes a mic, mic stand, powered speakers, cables, computer recording software, and an audio interface.

How It Works

First, plug the mic into the interface, which digitizes the signal and sends it to your computer by USB, FireWire, or PCI slot. Then, using the recording software, record several tracks of audio or MIDI data. Listen to what you’re recording with headphones. Then mix the tracks to stereo while listening over monitor speakers (or with good headphones if your room acoustics are poor). Finally, save the mix as a wave or AIFF file, and burn a CD of the song.

Why not use your computer’s sound card, which does the same thing as the interface? An interface sounds much cleaner and provides mic connectors that mate directly with standard mic cables. Many interfaces also include other connectors for MIDI and digital audio signals.

Instead of using a computer to record and mix your music, you might prefer to use a recorder-mixer. This standalone device is easier to set up and use than a computer-based system, but is less flexible and powerful.

Let’s look more closely at each piece of gear mentioned above.

Microphone

This device converts the sound of your voice (or any instrument) into an electrical signal that can be recorded. Microphone sound quality varies widely, so be sure to get one or more good mics costing at least $100 each. Condenser mics require phantom power, which is provided either by a phantom power supply, most mixers, or an audio interface. Some condenser mics work on batteries. You’ll also need a mic cable and at least one mic stand and boom costing about $35.

Powered Monitor Speakers

Another important part of your studio is the monitor system -- a pair of quality headphones and loudspeakers. You can use powered speakers, or use non-powered speakers with a separate power amplifier. An essential tool, the monitor system tells you what you’re doing to the recorded sound. The sound you hear over the monitors is approximately what the final listener will hear. Very good headphones are available for $100 and up, and good speakers cost about $300 a pair and up.

Recorder-Mixer

Also called a portable studio, digital multitracker, or digital recorder, this unit combines a multitrack hard-disk recorder with a mixer—all in one portable chassis (Figure 1). It lets you record several instruments and vocals on separate tracks, add effects, and mix the tracks to stereo. Then, if the recorder-mixer has a built-in CD burner, you can burn a CD of the mixes. If not, copy the stereo mixes to your computer’s hard drive via USB, then burn a CD of the mixes using a CD burning program (such as Nero, Roxio Easy CD Creator, Toast and so on).

I recommend getting a recorder-mixer with at least 8 tracks so that you can record one instrument per track. Advanced recordists might prefer a unit with 16 to 32 tracks for elaborate productions with lots of microphones in use.

Some eight-track units without a CD burner are listed here with their street price: Boss BR-600: $399, Fostex MR-8 mkII: $249, Tascam DP-01FX $449. Some 8-track units with a built-in CD recorder include the Tascam DP-01FX/CD: $599, Tascam 788: $599, Fostex VF80EX: $499, Korg D88: $699, Boss BR-900CD: $699. (Remember that street prices can vary radically from place to place. Be sure to check online.)


Here are some features to look for in a recorder-mixer:

- Built-in effects (the more the better).
- Virtual tracks let you record multiple takes of a single performance, then select your favorite during mixdown.
- Guitar-amp modeling simulates various guitar amps; mic modeling simulates mic models.
- Type of analog inputs: XLR balanced or 1/4” (TRS) balanced, RCA or 1/4” unbalanced. XLR inputs usually include phantom power for powering condenser microphones.
- Number of mic inputs: the more the better.
- Number of simultaneous recording tracks: Two may be enough if you’re recording only one track or two at a time, but a band may need to record at least eight tracks at once.
- Automation (the mixer stores and resets your mixes).
- Phantom power for condenser mics.
- MIDI Time Code (MTC) and MIDI Machine Control (MMC), tempo map and tap tempo.
- Backlit LCD display (bigger is better) with a waveform display.
- Analog-to-digital conversion: 16-bit is CD quality; 20- or 24-bit is better.

Computer Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)

If you own a fast computer, you might prefer to skip the recorder-mixer. Instead, get an audio interface and recording software (Figure 2). Some recording software records MIDI sequences (from a synth or keyboard controller) as well as audio.

If you plan to record one instrument or vocal at a time, you can get by with a 2-channel audio interface. Some examples are the Tascam

Figure 1. A recorder-mixer.

Figure 2: Computer with recording software and an audio interface.
If you already have a mixer with insert jacks or direct-out jacks, you can connect them to a multichannel interface to record many tracks at once. Some examples: Echo AudioFire 8 (8 line inputs): $499, Echo AudioFire 12 (12 inputs): $699, M-Audio Delta 44 (4 inputs): $199, M-Audio Delta 1010 (8 inputs): $399. An interface with 8 mic preamps is the PreSonus Firepod: $599. It works without a mixer – just connect up to 8 microphones directly into the Firepod.

Another option is a mixer with a built-in USB or FireWire port, such as the Mackie Onyx Series, Alesis MultiMix Series, Phonic Helix Board 18 FireWire, and Yamaha MW USB Series Mixing Studios. Cost is about $250 to $600.

Two freeware recording programs are Audacity (for PC) (http://audacity.sourceforge.net) and GarageBand (bundled with recent Macs). Some popular low-cost recording software is Cakewalk Sonar Home Studio XL ($159) and Pro Tools M-Powered software ($249) which works with certain M-Audio interfaces. A computer studio costs about the same as a recorder-mixer and is more powerful. It’s a bargain. But since software requires computer skills, it’s harder to learn and use than a hardware multitracker.

A computer studio can record MIDI tracks as well as audio tracks. Using a piano-style keyboard or drum-machine pads, you play synthesized musical instruments – bass, drums, piano, etc. (Figure 3). Part of the recording software, called a MIDI sequencer, records the keystrokes that you play on the piano-style keyboard. When you play back the sequencer recording, it plays synthesized instruments from a sound card, sound module, synthesizer or software synth.

We’ve looked at several types of recording setups that can help you create quality demos or albums. As we’ve seen, putting together a home studio needn’t cost much. That dream of owning your own studio is within reach.

Bruce Bartlett is the author of Practical Recording Techniques 4th Ed. published by Focal Press.

**On The iRadio A-List**

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.
Choosing a mic is an incredibly personal mission. What you like, I may hate and the one that I think is the best mic I have ever used may have you thinking it makes me sound like a dying cow. It’s subjective, that’s all there is to it. And yet...

Having some basic specs in a chart format at least gives you a starting point if you are looking for a new mic. But, again, check it out with care before committing. Here is what some of the stuff in the chart means and why it is important.

### Capsule Type

For our purposes, there are two types: dynamic and condenser. A dynamic mic uses a diaphragm mounted in front of a magnet. When acoustic energy (like your voice) hits the diaphragm, it moves and creates changes in the magnetic field between it and the magnet. Those changes are converted into an electrical signal that eventually moves speaker cones at the other end of the system to recreate the sound that went into the mic—just louder. A condenser mic uses either a charged plate (true condenser) or two plates (one stationary and the other attached to the diaphragm) that are attached to opposite sides of a DC power supply (electret condenser) instead of a magnet. Movement between the plates changes the capacitance which in turn affects the output of a resistor wired between the two plates and that becomes the output signal. Because the output is very high impedance, an impedance conversion amp is needed to create a usable signal. Sorry, that is as non-geeky as we can get!

### Vocal Mics Under $400

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPANY</th>
<th>WEB SITE</th>
<th>MODEL</th>
<th>MSRP</th>
<th>CAPSULE TYPE</th>
<th>MIC PATTERN</th>
<th>WEIGHT</th>
<th>BODY CONSTRUCTION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY RANGE</th>
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<tr>
<td>AKG</td>
<td><a href="http://www.akg.com">www.akg.com</a></td>
<td>D 880 M</td>
<td>$155</td>
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<td>90-16,000 Hz</td>
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<td>$149</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>Hypercardioid</td>
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<td>50 Hz-16 kHz</td>
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<td>$299</td>
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<td>Cardioid</td>
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<td>Evolution 935</td>
<td>$285</td>
<td>Condenser</td>
<td>Cardioid</td>
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from the sides. This becomes an issue when placing monitors onstage and is one reason why super and hyper cardioid mics are good choices if you are using a personal monitor system and not wedges.

Weight, Construction and Frequency

Weight and construction materials are totally linked. You want something light enough to use comfortably but hefty enough to take some abuse. Frequency range is also pretty simple. Generally wider is better but for vocal mics anything under about 60 Hz just makes the sound muddy and no human can make sounds in the high ranges of most mics. But that extra “headroom” usually makes for a clearer sounding mic. If you want to look up how harmonics work to understand this then go for it or just take the “headroom is good” statement and be done with it.

Mic Pattern

Any decent stage mic is uni-directional—sound flows in from one direction—except it’s not that simple. It would be great if a mic could be like a funnel but that is a problem that the physics guys have not solved yet. Most mics are some variation of cardioid in their pattern. Cardioid comes from cardio and basically means “heart shaped” and it refers to how a mike responds with the “notch” at the top of the heart being where it is most sensitive to incoming sound.

Super and hyper cardioid mics make that notch narrower but—here comes that ugly physics stuff again—when you make the notch narrower, you actually create a “lobe” of greater sensitivity at the back of the mic. So a super or hypercardioid actually picks up more sound at 180° from the “notch” than it does...
Making a Live CD - Part 3: Getting It Out There

By Beverly Phillips, ZenGator Productions

In the previous two issues of Singer&Musician I discussed my reasons for wanting to record and release a live CD and the process involved from the initial recording to track selections, mixing, mastering, and design. Once all of that was completed, I turned over the marketing, promotion, and advertising efforts to those who know, better than I, that folks who advertise during the Super Bowl really do have a handle on the return of their promotional dollars.

—Richard Gilewitz

With the availability of home studio software for laptop computers, jack-in-the-box design programs, duplication devices and the popularity of the Internet, almost anyone can record, produce, and sell CDs on a worldwide basis.

Richard Gilewitz is interviewed on BBC Scotland in Kirkwall Orkney Scotland
Gone are the days of driving from one radio station to another, vinyl record in hand, with the hope of getting the air play so necessary for selling that record. Signing on with a record label is no longer a sole requirement for the singer or musician who seeks recognition from Hong Kong to Arkansas. Today if an artist wants to show the world “their stuff”, there are many avenues open for promotion and all of these pathways can lead to a successful sales record and name recognition.

First and foremost, only the “star-making machinery behind the popular song” (to quote Joni Mitchell) of the major label world can make a success of someone just because they look good and have some charisma. In the indie world, if the “stuff” isn’t there, NO amount of promotion will carry the CD very long or far. The finished recording can be part of a massive pre-release campaign sent in either demo form or as a finished release to radio stations, trade magazines and Web sites for review, enclosed in a slick package with a six-page booklet inserted in a jewel case with shrink-wrap and spine label, AND distributed to a plethora of stores, but if the music can’t stand up by itself, ALL of the promotional efforts will not sustain sales.

So, if the music is great and the cuts are the best yet from the artist, then the CD has a chance of reaping the benefits of good promotion. Since each recording is an extension of the artist, the promotion should be done with the same attention to detail that was used while producing the music. A series of press releases are sent to a select list of promoters and editors of magazines, webzines, newspapers and trade journals - starting with the announcement of the upcoming release and ending with the physical CD and a one-page description about the CD, background on the artist’s performance record, and bio. Radio music directors and Web sites providing music reviews are sent the completed CD, minus the shrink-wrap, with a one-page release about the CD and a short bio of the artist.

The artist’s budget generally determines whether paid print or broadcast advertising is part of the promotion. Even a small 1/6 page ad in a magazine that reaches a targeted market is worth the investment in terms of name branding and promotion of that newest release. The inclusion of the artist’s Web site on every ad, press release, liner note, or poster is a gateway for additional interest and potential sales.

In the indie world, if the “stuff” isn’t there, NO amount of promotion will carry the CD very long or far.

Distribution is all about getting the music into the hands of the fans. The wider spread the distribution, the greater the sales, but that wider distribution means each step taking a bit of the profit. There are a number of excellent on-line options available including an artist’s own Web site, or CDBaby.com and Amazon.com. Online radio stations like Singer&Musician’s iRadio offer listeners the chance to buy entire CDs from Amazon or download a paid track with a simple button push. Brick and mortar stores, such as Target, Best Buy, or WalMart have a complex approval system and tend to stick with the sure sales potential of mainstream artists.

Tour date promotion is extremely important for propelling that new release into the market. This is done one month to two weeks prior to the concert, depending on the publication. Send in a release too early and the reader forgets the date. An announcement mid week on a Wednesday is a good method for pulling in the audience for a Friday or Saturday concert. Touring is a crucial ingredient for promoting the product. Fans attending concerts are likely to come away from the event with several of the artist’s product in hand. An attractive display that is positioned so that fans leaving the concert pass by it, a reasonably priced product, and a sales offering for concert goers, such as “Buy 3 and get the 4th at half price”, acceptance of credit cards on the spot, and a sign-up sheet for email addresses all lend to a successful promotion—and sales.

Successful sales come from balancing all of these promotional elements—from outstanding design and to well-written press releases and email announcements, to radio airplay and print advertising. Finally, it is the knowledge that with all the promotional efforts that are the wings that make the CD fly, it is still the artist’s creativity that gives it its soul.

ZenGator Productions, “Mindful Promotion with a Bite of Panache”, created Richard Gilewitz’s Web site (www.richardgilewitz.com), and continues to maintain the site, promote his touring schedule, GillaCamps, and products. Live at 2nd Street Theater features the design work of Perri Harper.

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“Absolutely so quick and precise I know I can rely on Intellitouch every time in any environment.”

Richard Gilewitz
richardgilewitz.com
narls Barkley, an act consisting of producer Danger Mouse and vocalist Cee-Lo Green, has an amazing hit song and album on their hands. “Crazy” harkens to the hey-day of classic R&B/Soul music, something that is hard to find these days.

Of course, good American music has to come by the way of England.

This track has the feel of a brilliant demo that has been leaked to the public (which I believe might be the case.) The parts are incredibly simple, leaving room to showcase the satisfying soulful vocal of Cee-Lo. After an intro of a ‘C’ chord hit four times, the song settles into a groove that sustains the whole track. The instrumentation is sparse: a simple drum pattern, with a bass and guitar in octaves playing dotted eighth and an eighth on the down beats. There is a keyboard blending with some expansive vocal pads fleshing out the chordal harmony: C, Ebmaj7, Abmaj7, Gsus, to G. This progression hooked me the first time I heard it as I am a sucker for the C (I) major to an Ebmaj7 (b III) move. Words in commercial music are usually about relationships or sex, so it is refreshing to hear a song where the artist is soul searching. The lyric about ‘emotions had an echo, in so much space” is appropriately drowned in delay without being cheesy. Especially nice is the line “I was out of touch...wasn’t because I didn’t know enough, I just knew too much.” This idea drives me crazy as well!

Going into the chorus, the song jumps a beat, jolting the listener. The song takes flight as the strings enter and the vocal pads turn to very Motown-like ahhs. Ambiance is supplied by the addition of a subtle noise pad. The harmonies take a turn for the minor: the C major turns minor while maintaining the rest of the original progression. In contrast to the verse, where the vocal line was rhythmic and busy, the chorus settles to one melody and lyric: “Does that make me crazy”? The string part has that classic Al Green tone and takes you back to earlier days in a flash. The chorus exits as abruptly that it entered blissfully back to major.

When the next verse starts, the harmonies change very slightly: C major, Abmaj, Ebmaj, Gsus, to G. This happens again for the next two verses and gives added release to the verse. The lyrics also change perspective as the singer gives us advice, but most likely is talking to himself. The rest of the verse, Cee-Lo riffs around the melody, tastefully, while maintaining restraint. The third verse lyrically ties up the subject, where the singer gives us advice, but most likely is talking to himself. The rest of the verse, Cee-Lo riffs around the melody, tastefully, while maintaining restraint.

The third verse lyrically ties up the subject, where the singer realizes that he is put in this world for a reason, as crazy as he may seem to others. Simple ideas, yes, but with a beat you can dance to! Gnarls Barkley resists the temptation for a double chorus as Cee-Lo oohs, classic ’70’s soul style, over the last verse. The song ends at the ninth measure with the lead and backing vocals trailing over a single bass note.

‘Crazy’ displays the genius of simplicity and directness in a great sounding track. Cee-Lo effortlessly makes the song completely compelling to the listener. Add to that a great chord progression and groove and there is nothing more that one could want in a hit.
If You Want a Better Voice . . .
Build a Better Instrument

By Mark Baxter

Imagine walking into your first guitar lesson and the teacher hands you a piece of wood and some strings. He shows you a picture of a guitar and says, “Before we can begin, you’ll need to make yourself one of these.” Anxiety would surely follow. What if you made a lousy guitar?

Obviously, that would have a negative effect on your ability to learn. Unless you were already a skilled woodworker, your hopes of becoming the next guitar hero would be dashed. This scenario is not so far fetched when you think about the voice. Before you can learn to sing, you have to build an instrument.

It is a luxury to wrap yourself around a well-made guitar. All you need is the desire to learn and you are on your way to becoming a player. Unlike voices, instruments are ready to play. All of the pianos, drums, woodwind, brass, and stringed instruments we use today are the result of centuries of refinement, but when it comes to singing, you are both the player and the instrument. Address these factors separately, and you’ll develop much faster.

Some people are born with beautiful sounding instruments; most of us are not. Some people want to sing, some do not. It’s a spin of a wheel which combination of mind and body you fall into. Just to make life interesting, it seems we always long for the abilities we do not have. Therefore, the most common situation is that you desire to sing but have a less than desirable voice. Take heart; you can improve. The problem is that we tend to skip over the fundamentals in favor of performance tips. Before long, we ask for things the instrument can’t deliver . . . yet.

What makes for a great sounding voice are the same principles which make for a great sounding guitar. Every instrument can be reduced to just two components. There must be something that makes a sound, called a vibrator, and an area around the vibrator which colors the sound, known as the resonator. The size, shape and texture of these components are what determine the characteristics of an instrument. There are universal properties governing sound, so consistent we call them laws, which every instrument-builder strives to embrace. Singers should have the same agenda. It’s actually very simple; you’ll sound better if you obey the laws of sound.

The strings on a guitar, the reed on a saxophone and the head on a drum are all examples of vibrators. Your vocal folds are the vibrators of the voice. They are thin membranes, right in the middle of your throat, which extend over the top of your windpipe. The best way to understand how the vocal folds work is to inflate a balloon and then stretch the neck to create a tiny slit at the opening. As air escapes, a high-pitched sound is produced. You can’t see it with the naked eye, but the walls inside the opening of the balloon are moving very rapidly.

The speed of a vibration is called the frequency. Vary the tension as you stretch the neck of the balloon, and you’ll change the frequency. We refer to different frequencies as pitches or notes. Notice how a small difference in tension produces a big change in pitch. Since the opening of a nine inch balloon is the same size as an adult’s vocal folds, the tiny movement required to change pitch is the same. Remember this the next time you’re beating yourself up to reach a high note.

A vibrator alone is worthless without a resonator, which is why bands and orchestras don’t include balloon players. Resonators give instruments their tone. You don’t have to be a scientist to imagine a piano, guitar, drum or horn stuffed with towels. A resonator adds color by providing an empty air space around the vibrator. It’s that simple, and what’s true for an acoustic instrument is true for the voice. Cavities, like the windpipe, throat, mouth and nose, are all potential resonators. The bigger the space, the richer the tone. That’s why good stereos have big speaker cabinets and why grand pianos are at least six feet long. The more you create inside you, the bigger your voice will sound.

The relationship between vibrator and resonator is also crucial. The less contact the two have the better. Guitar strings are suspended across the instrument, only touching at two very small points. The harp inside a piano floats on rubber bushings so it never touches the wood. There is a strip of cork which separates the mouth piece of a saxophone from the brass of the horn. Your larynx, too, should float inside your throat. Independence is what allows freedom of the vocal vibrator, increasing range, pitch accuracy and consistent tone (so your voice sounds big from top to bottom). The problem is that people have emotions which trigger muscles to shut down the resonators—guitars, pianos and saxophones do not. Here’s where training pays off.

We are creatures of habit. Culture, family, emotions and personality shape our behaviors until they become second nature. If singing is a part of your surroundings when you are young, chances are you will sing well. If not, your habits are most likely the problem. At first they seem necessary, but tendencies like tensing the jaw, tongue and throat, over-compensating air pressure or squeezing the eyes all compromise your instrument. Pitch change, for instance, should not show up anywhere on your face, neck, jaw or tongue. Your throat should remain relaxed, just as the wood on a guitar doesn’t care what note is being played. I’m not suggesting that releasing negative behaviors is easy, just necessary. If you’re willing to work, though, you can develop into an instrument that’s easy to play. Hey, if a balloon can change pitch without effort, so can you.

So, what does all this science have to do with entertaining an audience? It’s simple. Musicians trust their instruments, most singers don’t.

By Mark Baxter

So, what does all this science have to do with entertaining an audience? It’s simple. Musicians trust their instruments, most singers don’t. Any doubts you may have about your voice will show up in your singing. It’s too easy to become preoccupied on stage with the mechanics of pitch, breathing and projection; yet all an audience wants to hear is a song. Trusting the instrument allows a singer to be present, to dig into the emotion of the lyrics.

Just as every musician knows that a great instrument will allow them to soar, every singer should work toward becoming one. Be patient. Some vocal exercises seem silly or a waste of time. Remember that the process to make a guitar does not resemble playing one. The laws of sound apply to everyone, regardless of how old you are or how long you’ve been singing. This should be good news for all frustrated singers. Chances are you’ve been playing an interior instrument. It means you can finally have the voice of your dreams. But first, you’ll have to build yourself a better instrument.
How Vocal Cords Work

By Lisa Popeil

Of all the amazing body parts we possess, our vocal cords rank as two of the most intricate and multifunctional. They work to keep food out of our lungs, help us lift heavy weight and help us push down for important bodily functions. And specially for us humans, they vibrate to allow complex communication and at the highest level, the miracle of singing.

The term ‘vocal cords’ is actually a misnomer. These little body parts are more like flaps or lips, rather than cords like on a violin or harp. They sit horizontally in your voice-box at the top of your windpipe and open and close constantly for breathing and swallowing. We have a left and a right vocal cold, connected at the front and open at the back. To make sound, we close our cords and blow pressurized air up from our lungs. When this air hits the closed cords from underneath, the cords open and close really fast...they vibrate. That opening and closing hundreds of times a second makes a buzzy sound which is the beginning of your voice. If you take a finger and lightly touch the front of your neck, at your Adam’s Apple and simply hum or talk, you should feel the vibration of your vocal cords in action.

One of the most amazing things about the cords is their size. Singers often think of their vocal cords as being large, similar to the neck size. In fact, the diameter of the average human adult vocal cords is about the diameter of a dime. The higher the voice, the smaller the cord size. That means that women are closer in size to a nickel and basses are smaller than a dime. Baritones’ cords are closer in size to a nickel and basses are comparative to a quarter.

Let’s talk about the construction of these miniscule dynamos. Your vocal cords have basically three layers: on the top, pink, wet, spongey mucous membrane, like you’ll find in the inside of your cheek. (Go ahead, check it out with your finger, no one’s watching). The middle layer includes the vocal ligament, which is like a rubber band, and deep inside is the vocal muscle which is like stiff rubber bands. Together these layers are little bio-machines colliding together more than a million times each day allowing you to talk and sing.

Of particular interest is the vocal ligament, a strong band of tissue at the edges of the cords. It’s one of the many things we share with pigs and as you may have guessed, the ligament helps us squeal. Many other animals, like dogs, have no vocal ligament and therefore can’t make high sounds. How does the ligament, a yellow cord-like elastic string, help us sing higher? It stretches, stiffens and can support high tension. That helps us sing higher than we could if we didn’t have a ligament and were just stretching the vocal cord muscle.

When we raise our pitch, several things happen: we increase air pressure underneath the cords, then the muscle and ligament begin to stretch and lengthen similar to stretching rubber bands and the cords open and close faster. Voila, now you’re singing higher.

Fun-time: I want you to experience how fast your little vocal cords open and close: play the note A below middle C and sing it. How many times a second do you think your cords are opening and closing? Two? Eight? The answer is 220. That means every time you sing A 220, your cords are vibrating (opening and closing) 220 a second. Much faster than the eyes can see. A veritable blur of activity. What if you sing A 440, the A above middle C? Did you guess 440 times a second? You’re right. And now sing or play two A’s above middle C. That’s A 880. Going up a bit more to the famous female high C, your cords are now vibrating an exhilarating 1047 times each second. Whether you play piano, flute, tuba or didjeridoo, when you play a specific note, you’re creating sound waves at the same rate. For singers, the rule of pitch is: the lower the note, the shorter the cords; the higher the pitch, the longer the cords.

Now that you understand how pitch is created, let’s move on to loudness and softness. Stick your hands out in front of your body, palms facing each other but not touching. Now clap really lightly with only an inch of space between your palms. That’s similar to the action of the cords in soft singing. To simulate loud singing, increase the space between your hands so that now you’re clapping in a big way. Hopefully you can see for yourself how loud singing creates real collision between the vocal cords; they’re literally hitting each other. So if you’re singing loudly and the cords are colliding, 300, 400 times a second, no wonder you’re voice is getting tired.

So if you sing high and loud, for too long, your vocal cords will begin to swell.
Work Your Schtick

By Randall Williams

Schtick is a funny word. It’s your gig, your hook, the thing you do that makes you who you are. It’s also the thing that’s going to get your career as a musician off the ground.

Think of schtick as a shop door that’s already half open. It’s so much easier to see what’s inside and then decide if you’re going to walk in or not. If the store’s door is closed and it has no windows, it’s pretty hard to get excited about going in to browse.

Meet Mae Robertson, a charismatic singer/songwriter with great style and a sharp business mind to match. For years, she’s run a children’s clothing shop. One day, her musical partner suggested that she make a recording of lullabies to sell in the store. Mae had always sung lullabies to her children, but when the CD hit the counter, it became more than a fun project – it became a career springboard.

The CD started selling immediately, and was even noticed by the American Library Association, who designated it a “notable recording for children.” Lullabies became Mae’s marketing niche, her schtick. She’s sold tens of thousands of copies, and they’re still selling. The next step was logical: another lullaby CD. Then another one. Then she made a Christmas CD. All marketed specifically to an audience of mothers that don’t necessarily buy CDs for themselves, but they buy CDs for their children. Especially after Mae re-did her artwork to include cute sleeping babies on the covers.

After all that, Mae finally had the money to make the CD she really wanted to make. “A real CD - of original music,” she said. “And I finally got to have a Hammond organ,” she beamed. “But I couldn’t really sell that CD. There was no niche market for it”

Mae’s lullaby schtick became like an open shop door with inviting window dressing – very approachable. And a CD of lullabies is easy to buy as a gift. Now Mae’s hired an agent who’s taking the CD to gift fairs. One can easily guess what’s going to happen to her sales figures.

Then Mae told me about Pete Huttlinger. Pete is a singer-songwriter who’s also a fly fisherman. He’d go to rivers to fish, then he’d sit on the bank and write songs. Where’d Pete sell his CDs? At fly fishing conventions. He put fishing lures on the cover of his first CD, titled “Catch and Release.” Pete entered a world where he was a proverbial big fish in a small pond – one of very few songwriters marketing directly to fisherman. It paid off. Suddenly, an audience that normally doesn’t buy music did. Pete had built himself a market.

“The closer you are to just a singer-songwriter,” Mae said, “the harder it’s going to be.”

She’s right. What makes you unique, and how can you capitalize on who you are in order to be noticed? If nothing makes you stand out from the crowd, odds are good that you’re going to remain part of the crowd for a long time. If you’d like to be a successful musician, working your schtick is inevitable.

Contact Randall at randall@iLivetoPlay.net
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I, however, do not subscribe to this theory. I refer to this throaty tone as throat resonance and seeing this tone as resonance is the key to safely learning how to add this color to your palette.

There are gazillions of examples of singers out there that have successfully navigated the “edgy tone” and had long and fruitful careers. The key is, as with all singing, that it must be accomplished without excess pressure on the vocal cords. It is not screaming!! In fact, if you pay attention to singers that use the edgier tones correctly, you’ll hear that most of them are not excessively loud. The throat tone projects very well as does nasal resonance—but that is not synonymous with screaming. It is the projection of this resonance (and the illusion of screaming) that makes it so appealing for more aggressive music. It carries well over other instruments.

Placement is the key to this as with all resonance. The first focus of placement, as with all healthy and good sounding singing, is to “anchor” your tone. This refers to the age old voice term “singing over the throat.” What this means is that the beginning of all resonance is at the top back of your mouth where your uvula hangs down. Once the vocal cords produce the initial pitch and tone, the sound must initially vibrate at this spot in your body before being magnified and colored by additional resonance from your nasal passage, mouth, chest and throat. When you’re good at anchoring your tone and can produce a non-airy clean tone without strain and harshness, you are in a position to re-direct your resonance back into your throat and attach the growly throat resonance to your tone. Direction of resonance is a multi-step learning process that cannot be covered in a single magazine article. There are many techniques I use to teach singers to direct their resonance from their brightest nasal resonance down to their deepest chest resonance and all points in between. Once a singer is good at going from one direction in resonance to the next, they must learn to work in both directions at the same time. This means attaching the bright resonance to the deep resonance so we can hear them both at the same time.

That is the same thing that must be done with attaching some throat resonance to a solid, well-anchored, clean tone. It’s a bit like walking and chewing gum—if you’re patient with the steps then you’ll be able to put them together in time. Practice in your middle lower range first, feeling what it feels like to direct the resonance up and down from your chest to your nasal passage. Doing this can best be described as going from a yawn low larynx sound “umb” for the chest sound up to a buzzy eeee sound for the bright nasal tone. Be as gentle and quiet as you can and really work on doing all of these placements with a non-airy tone. When you are good at this and have spent enough time to understand how to blend these resonance’s well and move them at will, then you are ready to begin gently trying to direct resonance into your soft palate and throat area.

The key is— as with all singing—that it must be accomplished without excess pressure on the vocal cords.
LET THE JUICES FLOW

Dear Lis

Should I write with my band? I was thinking I should just write with the guitarist because then I wouldn’t have to share publishing with all of them.

—Terry

Dear Terry,

That’s the wrong way to think about it. You should write with anyone who helps you write well. Sometimes that’s when the band is jamming on a groove and you start singing over the top of it. Or sometimes it’s when you and the guitarist get together outside of rehearsal. When you start making creative decisions based on business factors you squash potentially productive situations. So what if you share publishing. If it’s a good song, it’s worth it.

—Lis

Jeremy

IN USE

The EMX 5014c was taken on a rehearsal for a large R&B band with horns and five singers. Lots of inputs here with both the keys and guitar running through the board as well as five vocal mics and three horn mics. We used it to replace the fairly ravaged 16-channel mixer that is installed in the studio. The band uses this same room as a regular rehearsal location and knows the mixer well. The increase in overall headroom, clarity and sound quality were immediately noticable.

While we needed all of the wattage we could get, for smaller acts and quieter gigs (yes it was a rehearsal but you try getting vocal up over a three-piece horn section) there is a power selector switch that attenuates the outputs down to 200 or 75 watts a side. The only thing I did not like was the 9-channel graphic EQ. I understand that some folks use small EQs like this to adjust overall system tone but I find anything less than 15 channels pretty useless. But that is just me and at least there is a switch to take the EQ out of the circuit.

But the best feature of this mixer may not even be part of the hardware. It is, really, the manual. It looks huge and intimidating until you realize that the pretty thick magazine-sized tome is actually written in several languages and the English portion is fewer than 30 pages. But in that 30 pages you get a six-page, step-by-step guide to how to set it up guide, a four-page section on getting the most out of the EMX 5014 that includes explanations of connector types (including the difference between balanced and unbalanced inputs) as well as good info on signal levels. If that weren’t enough, you also get four pages on how to craft a good mix using the hardware. This section includes everything from how to approach a mix when (and when not) to EQ, how to use effects and what a compressor does and how to use the one onboard. This is the kind of support that is crucial for a判断 needs and we can’t give big enough props to Yamaha for including it here. All too often, the manual may tell you what knobs are where but does little to explain what will happen when you turn one of them. Good stuff. SM

www.yamaha.com/proaudio
mild compression (slight constriction in the throat that goes against everything we first teach a singer) involved in this maneuver but it must not create excess pressure in the throat. Finesse. This is the safest type of throat resonance but it is not to be used until there is an effortless quality to it. That comes with careful practice. You must also be well warmed up before you even begin playing with it.

The other type of throat resonance often heard is of the glottal fry nature. These are the edges of the vocal cords creating the buzzy resonance. This is often used by singers to get that smoky kind of rasp. This one is more associated with a slightly airy tone. You should allow this one come more or less on its own to you when experimenting with resonance. This can be successful for some but dangerous when a singer using this tone tries to amplify it too much. They end up pushing through the throat and invariably cause vocal health problems. The earlier mentioned non-airy type of throat resonance is far more desirable for high projection instances. In conclusion, growly/throaty/screamy tone is a learnable technique, but takes a lot of skill and patience. If it hurts, you are doing it wrong.
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KORG PORTABLE RECORDERS

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I've interesting what a
haircut can do to society.

I don't remember ever laughing so hard, not that it was really all that great of a joke. There was, however, a charm, a kind of naivete. It happened in the era of pandemonium in the world. Anything that happened that served up relief from that was a breath of fresh air. It could also be seen as the harbinger of a greater controversy or just a snapshot of what was going on in the world at the time.

The Flippant Beatles—simply known as the Beatles at the time—were giving a press conference. Someone from the press corp—superficial and superior like so many of the press—asked John Lennon and Paul McCartney "How do you sit down to write a song."

Now, musical historians forgive me, I don't remember who answered the question, but one of them said, "First we sit down...then we write a song."

Those lads. Those funny mop tops. Ever so clever. So on the mark, yet so threatening to so many. It's interesting what a haircut can do to society.

Side note: In Nashville, and apparently in the "real" world as well, there is now what is called a "Faux Hawk." In my 1960s world (read "naive"), I'm not sure if I have the definition correct. Is this just having hair and primping it to make it look like you have a Mohawk? If it is, then everyone in the world knows it is nothing different than what every man and boy does when they're shampooing their hair in the shower: pressing their hair into the mojo mongering, ultra hip and somewhat threatening shape that the Native Americans, from who the haircut derived its name, used for what is assumably the same purpose. Or is a Faux Hawk when you go to the barber (or perhaps your gay stylist) and ask him to give you a mohawk but use number 3 on the sides cause you're afraid to "go all the way" and have the sides shaved clean...

Right, the Beatles and songwriting: back to the point.

Since I am a songwriter, who loves (or has loved) learning the craft and longs to make what I do better, I derive great pleasure in hearing the question that most of the aspiring and those who long to know what it takes to be a songwriter ask in those moments after we first meet and they gather the nerve to ask the most pertinent of their questions:

“When you write a song, what do you write first, the lyrics or the music?”

This is my favorite opening line to everyone who I have met that I respect. And, more often then not, I am met with a face that looks just about the same way that a cow looks at an oncoming train. Their reaction is most often somewhere between “Could this dork with the glasses be anymore annoying” to “Security!”

But, sometimes they see the question for what it is, an amateur question, a joke, and we share a good laugh. But if they don't, I can usually rectify the moment by telling them I am a "Brother Shamus" ("Irish Monk"). Or I see that they have no sense of humor and move on.

Right! The point.

Do you need a great melody to write a song or are lyrics the focus of what makes a song great? These are the great intangibles and if I had the answer my name would be Lennon McCartney, Leibor Stollier, George Ira Gershwin, King Goffin, or Kurt Cobain. But, alas, It's not.

But, I also think that John or Paul were not being flippant when they answered the question. Well, yes, they where, but the mystery of why a song comes to you is probably as great a mystery to them as it was to any young reporter who was assigned the job of asking such a question.

Songs come, and you shouldn't deny the gift. And the gift of the muse it truly is. When the feeling strikes you at two in the morning, but you're lying in bed, how often is it that you get up the next morning and write the song that seemed as relevant and purposeful as when you thought of it in your comfy, warm bed?

When the gift comes, whether it's a melody or lyrics, it's your job to either remember it (highly unlikely) or record it (whether on paper or dictating it into a recorder).

The point...ah, again.

The point I truly want to make is this: It doesn't matter if the lyrics or the music comes first (or, for that matter, at the same time). What matters is that you capture the gift while it's happening. If a stream of lyrics are coming at you; write them down. In the same way, if you get a melody leave it on our voice mail. Don't reject the gift when it comes to you.

Meter, rhythm, verse, chorus structure? Who cares!! The muse is a beautiful creature, and when she presents herself to you are you going to say, "I wish she was taller!"

Yours it not to question why. Yours is to take and run.
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Sincerely,

Micah Solomon, President

P.S. May I send you our latest Oasis Disc Manufacturing catalog? Our catalog is filled with disc pressing and packaging ideas as well as the details of the industry-renowned OasisSampler radio program. Call (866) 262-0475 (toll-free) or visit oasisCD.com/singer. Bonus! I'll also include the special disc “How to Have a Successful CD Release Party—Without Breaking the Bank” by music industry consultant David Hooper, while supplies last.

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