

SOUND ADVICE



EACH ISSUE JMC ACADEMY WEIGHS IN WITH SOME HELPFUL TIPS FOR PLAYERS AND MUSIC PROFESSIONALS LOOKING TO TAKE THEIR CRAFT TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

HANDY TIPS TO ASSIST VOCALISTS IN THE STUDIO

Here you will find some useful information that can make recording vocals for the first time a less stressful and more enjoyable experience for both the singer and the recording engineer.

HEADPHONE MIX

It is extremely important that a singer can hear themselves clearly when performing and especially when in the recording studio. In a usual recording situation, the vocalist is singing in isolation (away from the rest of the band or music) so it is important that a feed of the music is being sent by the way of headphones to the artist. A good balance of music volume, a balance of the singer's voice, and also some added spatial effects (reverb or delay) will give the singer a much better representation. Setting a good headphone mix will create comfort and confidence for the artist, who is then in charge of delivering the best possible performance with the right amount of intensity for that particular recording.

MICROPHONE CHOICE

Choosing the right microphone for a particular voice is an important factor to the overall sound and tonality of a finished vocal recording. The microphone is used to capture the vocal performance; therefore it is essential to understand what type of voice you are recording, and ultimately which microphone would be best suited. With experience, this task becomes easier to administer. If you are not confident in selecting the appropriate microphone first up, ask the singer to perform a section of the song while you record it each time using a different microphone. You then have the opportunity to listen back to the various sections and make a decision based on what your "ears" are telling you.

VOCAL TECHNIQUE

Singers that are new to the recording experience will need to be coached in the way of vocal technique. The voice is an extremely dynamic instrument, so it can go from extremely soft to extremely loud in an instant. Unfortunately the microphone being used to record does not have an automated volume control, so coaching will involve requesting the vocalist to sing much closer to the microphone during the softer or quietly spoken sections of the song, and then to pull away gradually as the intensity of the vocal delivery elevates. If this is done suddenly and not correct, the recording will sound very jumpy, and will then be hard to balance in the mix. Using a "Pop Filter" in front of the microphone creates a good distance between the vocalist and the microphone, and is used to eliminate the plosives when pronouncing the letters B, P and F (burst of air hitting the diaphragm of the microphone) which are very hard to remove if they have been recorded.

MULTIPLE TAKES

If a vocalist is halfway through recording the verse and starts thinking about the big note that needs to be reached at the beginning of the chorus, chances are you will hear the "thinking" in their recorded performance. It is a good idea to run through a trial recording of the song, and then sit with the singer and listen to the performance together. This can be used as a note taking session to identify strengths and weaknesses in the performance and is also a good time to identify where breathing or basic timing and pronunciation can be improved. From here, you can also offer to record the song in "sections". Run through each of the verses a couple of times, so you are only focussing on the delivery of these parts, and then move onto the chorus sections independently. The term "Dropping In" is also used and refers to the engineers' ability to re-record specific words or phrases without needing to sing the entire song over and over again. ▶

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GUITARIST TO WATCH

JOHN SHANNON

CURRENTLY PLAYING WITH:

Empire Circus and The Shift.

USUALLY FOUND PLAYING:

Touring Australia with Empire Circus and The Shift.

YEARS ON THE FRETBOARD:

27 years.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PLAYING STYLE?

Ethereal aggressive. I gravitate towards atmospheric sounds, delays and reverbs, but also choose to really go for the thunder and lightning when the music calls for it.

FIRST AXE:

My first real axe was a '93 Fender Strat Plus Deluxe. Had a bunch of imitation strats and Les Pauls from local shops before that.

CURRENT AXE:

Gibson Flying V (cherry). I found a decent one in Brisbane and just started taking it apart. Put in Mick Brierley pickups, a Stetsbar trem bar, changed the knobs, tuning pegs and am still messing with it.

RIG/PEDALS:

I use the Blackstar Stage 60 as my amp. In terms of pedals I am currently using the TC Electronics Flashback, Malekko Trem, and Rockbox Boiling Point for overdrive when not using the Blackstar's OD.

SECRET WEAPON:

The AXYS reversible slide...

FAVOURITE GUITARIST OF ALL TIME:

Jimmy Page. Besides a spirited style that covered electric and acoustic, he had a real vision for what he was doing with music in general. All my favourite guitarists have that "producer's mind" while they're playing.

FAVOURITE CURRENT LOCAL PLAYER:

I'm a fan of Raul Sanchez from Magic Dirt and The Ape.

NEW RANGE OF GODIN MONTREAL PREMIERES TO HIT OZ

Already a huge hit in Australia, Godin have just announced a new upgrade to their beloved range of Montreal Premiere guitars. These thinline, semi-hollow body guitars are all class (check out our review on page 90) and the modification only makes them more tailored to individual players. The new Montreal Premiere Sunburst P90 HG features a set of Godin Kingpin P90 pickups and custom tailpiece. A Bigsby tremolo-equipped model is also available, featuring a roller saddle bridge. Players will now also be able to compose, perform and record wirelessly with the Montreal Premiere Sunburst TriplePlay featuring a fully integrated Fishman TriplePlay system in the guitar. Also, with hexaphonic saddle pickups in the bridge, players will have access to the Montreal Premiere as a three-voice guitar (electric, acoustic and synth). Finally, the "crème de la crème" model in the series is the new Montreal Premiere Lightburst HG DLX featuring a highly figured flame top, back and sides, flame maple set-neck with bound headstock and bound Richlite fingerboard with trapezoid inlays. Goddamn!

