



By Phil Keaggy - GJD Contributor  
Hi Friends.

In this column, I'd like to write about the process of recording/producing in my little studio, especially on the most recent projects I've released this past year. This is not for the purpose of personal promotion, but rather a way to show how I go through the process. Actually, there is really no one way I do things. Each project—an instrumental one as opposed to a vocal project, for example—calls for different methods.

One of the projects that I worked on recently was the re-release of my 1978 album, *The Master and The Musician*. I have a few of the tracks from the album on two-inch tape. However, a vital reel went a-missing—someone has it somewhere!

But there was another reel of outtakes, and that was a sweet discovery! Using Pro Tools LE 002, I edited these outtakes to make them flow nicely and took out the repetitive bits. I also used Pro Tools to add commentary on all the original songs—very much like a Podcast. Gary Hedden, my original engineer, remastered both the original and bonus disk.

Another release this year is a CD called *Phantasmagorical*. It was actually recorded in 2005, but kept on the shelf until this year. It's a collection of 12 songs that hang together well, simply because they were all recorded around the same time.

The main thing was getting a good sound on the McPherson guitar, which naturally has great tone. I borrowed a two-channel Great River Mic Pre-amp that was just right for the acoustic. I both miked the guitar and went direct depending on what the song called for.

There is also a little electric guitar work on this project, added mainly for sweetening and color. My friends, multi-instrumentalist Tom Shinness, John Catchings (cello), Jonathon Willis (strings, piano and horns), Mike Radovsky (drums), Sam Levine (woodwinds), and my son Ian Keaggy (acoustic guitar) all lent their wonderful talents to the recording.

All parts except for the symphonic library strings and horns, and Jonathon Willis' piano were recorded in my room. Tom Shinness also recorded many of his parts in his studio room. Home recording and importing files are great ways for musicians to work together when travel is inconvenient or impossible.

This album, incidentally, was originally made for the McPherson folks, but I decided to keep it and created another one for them called *The Song Within*. They were happy with the second project and were more involved in the overdubs and mixing. On the other hand, *Phantasmagorical* was completely recorded and mixed at home on my LE 002 system. From there, mastering genius Richard Dodd brought out the best possible sound.

The whole album is a tapestry of homespun melodies and textures woven together to paint musical pictures and images. I don't know if I accomplished this, but I learned a great deal in the process, especially about digital editing. The song "Oh Boy" was one amazing lesson in achieving flying parts all around, and I learned some really cool things on that one.

I played both fretless and fretted bass and also added some of the percussion. Tom and Mike also brought a lot to the table. I had occasionally wondered whether this project would be

another Master and The Musician, but having lived with both, and having played the M&M music live during the spring, I came to conclusion that they are quite different. What mainly links them is the fact that they came from the same musician and were released 30 years apart almost to the month.

What also inspires me in general is the freedom to go to my music room and get away from the noise of the world and create my own “noise”. Also, when you create on the fly, as I sometimes do, you get into the development of the song—seeing it take shape and finding out how the various instruments speak together. I find it’s good to not fatigue the ears for a long period of time, but take proper breaks and clear the head. This is where walks or bike rides prove beneficial. These are other times when making contact with God is also very good for the musical soul.

After the music was mastered, we put together the artwork for Phantasmagorical, which was created by Jasmine Shinness. She is Tom’s daughter and a very talented artist. Jasmine also designed my Roundabout CD cover.

I do have a distribution deal at the present time and hope the CD does well. In addition, I also have a website and really appreciate my helping hands there. The Podcast has been a little bit of a boost as well. Playing the music out, of course, is also very beneficial. On the Master and The Musician tour last spring, we played “Forever To Joy”—the last track, and that created additional interest.

In my next article, I will talk more about the vocal side of recording. In the meantime, I hope this gives you a little closer look into what and how I do what I do-do!!

Phil