



By John McGlasson - GJD

For over two years I've been writing bi-weekly columns for GuitarJamDaily, and I can't describe what a pleasure it's been. Owning a record label has put me in a unique position to pass on info to guitarists they may not normally get, and I've loved doing it, but now that I've got the label in a holding pattern to allow the industry suits to figure out what to do and enjoy some much-needed profit taking, I've stopped signing bands, and have gone back to what I love most; writing, recording, and performing my own music, so my mission for GJD is changing as well.

Over the next few months, I'll be documenting, in words, pics, video, and audio, the entire production and promotion of my album, the debut for my band, Sons of Science. I've assembled an amazing band, I've refined the material over several years, and with producer Tony sanFilippo, we expect to make a very unique, high-quality album that'll appeal to the progressive-rock fans I've been able to reach through the release of several vonFrickle albums.

The genre is Progressive-Rock/Fusion, along the lines of King Crimson, Rush, Gentle Giant, Jean-Luc Ponty, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Return To Forever, etc., without sounding like any of them, and without the jazz influence usually found in the Fusion genre. The songs are highly melodic, and lean toward the heavy side, while avoiding cliches as much as possible. And like a lot of Prog-Rock bands, much of our battle is to avoid sounding like Rush! We're all huge Rush fans, the influence is undeniable, so we make a conscious effort to pinpoint parts where the Rush influence is shining through a little too brightly and correct it. And while you may be expecting a very guitar album from my description and influences, I'm making a huge effort not to do that. I don't think there'll be many, if any, long guitar solos, I'm working hard to make them part of the song structure and not just "wanking" as they say. We'll be using many instruments to bring to reality parts I write on guitar, instruments like cello, bowed bass, vibes, organ, Micro Korg, Moog, and every tune but one will have vocals, since we're lucky enough to have one of the most talented, unique, diverse vocalists and lyricists I've ever known in singer/songwriter/guitarist Jaik Willis, who's never done Progressive-Rock before, and has taken to it in a big way because of the "anything goes" nature of the genre and of this project.

This production will be highly unconventional in the modern recording biz, in that we're recording entirely in analog, using 2-inch tape with no Pro-Tools, no plug-ins, or any other digital enhancement of any kind in the recording process, and pressing to vinyl. While I'll be using digital effects for various guitar tracks, they'll always be placed within the signal chain in between the guitar and tube amp/cabinet and mic'd, and never recorded using direct outputs, cabinet simulators, or microphone simulators. There'll be no onboard electronics used for acoustic instruments, all will be mic'd. There'll be some use of high-end reverb and delay processors near the end of the production as needed, but within the analog signal chain, never as a plug-in, which wouldn't be possible at Oxide Lounge Recording anyway, the only digital recording gear in the studio is the Radar system used to convert the tracks to 1's and 0's after mastering so the music can enter the digital realm. While it's unfortunate that music ever has to become binary code, Radar is the best way to do it.

After Ken Volpe's glittering review of the Line6 Pod X3 Live, I called him to verify that it would be what I need. I've never liked digital guitar simulation devices, I'd always found them to sound completely artificial, and when used to record sounded sterile, flat, and cheap. I can honestly say that the technology has caught up, I bought one, and I love this thing, as long as I'm using it through a good tube amp and speaker. Direct, it still sounds too fake for me. You'll be hearing a lot of this unit on my album, and if you come hear me live, it'll be the entire foundation of my sound. I've been using the Pod with a 1-12" Peavey ValveKing amp, an amazing, versatile little tube amp with built-in attenuator that allows you to dial from 5 to 50 watts, which I'm using on the clean channel only, though it can reproduce about any tube tone you could want. I've used it many times on the 5-watt setting, even for rehearsal with a loud drummer and bassist on a soundstage, the power and warmth are amazing. I've owned many, many tube amps, and I'd put this in the top 3 for tone and useability, and at the very top for price, they go for around \$300.- on Ebay every day. I'm using two of them to fully utilize the Pod's ability to make two separate signal chains for left and right, making the possibilities endless for amp and effect combinations.

It's critical for the reader to note that any products or brands I mention in this series are mentioned because it's important to document the gear used for any production, and because I or Tony have purchased them with our own money and use them because we like them, or they've been lent to me. No company or entity has provided us a single item, no endorsements are in place, nor are GuitarJamDaily, it's editors, contributors, or advertisers involved in any way in the production of this album. This is an independent production funded entirely by my label, o.i.e.Records,Ltd., and owned 100% by the label.

My gear:

1998 G&L custom Legacy Special w/swamp ash body, maple neck/rosewood fretboard, super-wide fretwire, Seymour Duncan JB Jr. in bridge position, Fender Gold Noiseless in middle, and stock G&L Blade humbucker (single-coil sized) in neck position. Sperzel tuners.

Custom Warmoth chambered Strat-style body, mahogany back/sides with pau ferro top, goncola alves neck with pau ferro fretboard. Superwide neck with Schaller truss rod adjuster in neck heel. Sperzel tuners, L.R. Baggs X-Bridge digital/analog acoustic system. G&L Blade humbucker in bridge position, Lace Silver in middle position, Lace Turquoise in neck position.

Line6 Pod X3 Live

Peavey ValveKing 1-12" combo
Genz-Benz G-Flex 2-12" cabinet
Hofner T-2 preamp

Friends' gear that I'll be using;

Music Man Petrucci model
Taylor Custom electric
Taylor 810c acoustic
McKee custom 6-string acoustic
1968 Martin 12-string

Seagull 12-string
Mesa Dual-Tremoverb ½ stack
Mesa Lonestar combo
Moog Voyager
Korg and Roland synths

Studio Gear;
60's Epiphone hollow-body
G&L ASAT
Fender Telecaster
60's Epiphone 12-string acoustic
Mesa Mark III head
Mesa Single-Rectoverb 2-12" combo
1969 Fender Bassman head
1968 Marshall Plexi head

My next article will detail the recording gear and the process of getting started. In the meantime, please visit Tony's site (link below) to get acquainted with his studio, gear, and philosophy. My next article will actually be written by Tony, and will feature his views on analog vs. digital recording. We look forward to bringing you a fully-detailed series, using every tool the modern web-based magazine affords us. Stay tuned, and as always, thanks for reading!

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