



By John McGlasson - GJD

This is the first installment of actual production details, [second](#) in the series. This first tune is likely the only instrumental on the album, it's a rock/fusion number called Thrust, with lots of changes in tempo and feel throughout.

Personnel/instruments follow;

John McGlasson-Electric Guitar/Acoustic Guitar/vibes

Eric Yarborough-Drums

Brian Thames-Electric Bass

Matt Murray-Bowed Upright Bass

Matt Gueldenhaar-Hammond Organ/Rhodes Piano/Hohner Clavinet

T.P. Stoner-Trumpet

The first session was on 10/16/08, and would include the trio only, with Eric, Brian and myself.

The song starts with a short intro with drums and bass that sets the mood. Tony (producer), being an incredible drummer himself, did a great job of capturing Eric's drum sound. One of the things I love about Tony is that he spends more time than a lot of producers on drum tone, something that's very important in this style of music. The drums can make or break an album like this, and Eric is a great player, who's very creative, but it has to be captured to tape, and Tony knows how to do that. Eric, Brian and I played live with no click in the first session, the goal being to get solid drum tracks, and bass tracks if they're keepers. Brian is very picky, so we really didn't expect to keep his bass tracks from the first night, just the drums. Tony has a 20'x20' main room with 2 smaller rooms to the side that make it easy to set up guitar gear in one (though we used the hallway for my tracks) and bass gear in the other, or the bathroom, which also sounds great for bass, then we all played in the big room with headphones.

Engineers I've worked with in the past have had problems understanding that I really don't like to hear myself too much in the headphones, certainly not with glaring detail. And while I'm working to change this, I'm just a nervous player when I record, I suffer from Red Light Fever. I

so want it to be perfect that it seldom is if I can hear every little detail in what I'm playing, so I prefer to have myself mixed back behind the drums and bass more and just play the way I would at home, and it works for me. I generally don't have a problem doing a part over and over, though I can start to lose the feel of more complicated or tedious parts after a few takes.

Eric (drummer) is Production Director at Peoria Civic Center, so we're lucky to be able to rehearse on the theater stage, which sounds incredible. We only had 3 rehearsals as a trio to nail this song, and we had no trouble laying it down in the studio, even with a last-minute change to a part, we still got the final drum tracks on the 3rd pass, with a good improvisational feel. This song has four hard tempo changes with empty space in between that's not counted off in the song, it has to be counted silently and felt, and Eric and Brian nailed it perfectly.

Most people are using click tracks these days, but we're not going to on this album. While I have good natural timing, I have a very hard time playing with a click track, as it forces me to count things I'm used to just feeling, and makes me conscious of things I'm not normally thinking about when playing, some of which aren't even music-related. But in the beginning, we were going to be bringing in a studio drummer and recording demos for him or her, so we had no choice. Since I found Eric locally, we can actually rehearse together and discuss feel and approach on each part, so the need for them was, thankfully, eliminated.

Tony and I spent a lot of time working on assembling click tracks for these tunes, but with all the tempo changes and empty spaces, along with parts that slow down to another tempo, it was just impossible to make them, these songs have to be played live to lay the foundation, and played correctly, with the right feel, the way it used to be done. Tony was skeptical that we'd be able to get these tunes straight through in one solid track without clicks, but I think we convinced him with this first tune that we'll have no problems nailing them. I also believe that overuse of click tracks contributes to the sterile, lifeless, robotic feel of most modern recordings. Working on your timing is essential to good recording.

The second session on 11/3 was Brian alone to re-do his bass tracks. He'd listened to what he'd played when we did the drum tracks, and predictably wanted to completely do them over. Brian and Tony spent awhile working with Brian's Warwick 5-string, Eden head and 2-10"/1-15" Eden cab to get the right tone, which was to be bright enough to be distinguishable, but to maintain an almost 70's disco "thump" to it, covering all the bottom, since we'd be using the bowed upright through the entire song later.

Tony pulled one of the oldest producer tricks in the book on Brian, and it worked; once things were set up perfectly, Tony had Brian run through the song once before recording so they could establish what'd be happening, and Tony hit the record button. When a player thinks he's getting his last run-through before recording, it's often his best take of the night, it was, we kept it, and with the exception of a couple small punch-ins, that's the track that'll be on the album. Tony close-mic'd the cab with a vintage Neumann/Geffell CMV 563 with an M7 capsule, which had been refurbished in Russia, there was no direct signal.

Session 3 was just Tony and I working on guitar tracks. I've worked hard at home with the Pod X3 Live programming tones for each tune through the clean channel on the Peavey ValveKing

1-12" combo, so that's what we used. I needed 4 distinct tones for this song, and was able to dial them in perfectly on the Pod. Since I wanted to use a different guitar on each part, I wouldn't be playing the song straight through and switching channels on the Pod, though I could record the Pod that way with the smooth, silent movement the unit has from tone to tone, so I was just recording each part separately.

Usually, no matter how much I prepare at home for recording, and no matter how hard I work to dial in tones before I go to the studio, it almost always sounds completely different once everything's set up in the studio, but the Pod/ValveKing combo maintained the same feel regardless of room. In the big main room with the amp in the center sitting flat on the floor, with flat EQ and on the 50w setting (attenuator dial maxed), we close mic'd with the same Neumann CMV-563 we'd used for the bass track (Tony detests Shure SM-57 mics for some reason, an industry standard for close-mic situations, especially for guitar, and while I've used them with good results, Tony's the producer, so we won't be using them!) We also mic'd about 10-feet straight out and to the left of the speaker with an AKG d1000e.

I ended up using my Warmoth Strat, the Epiphone hollowbody, and the G&L ASAT on various parts, all through the same Pod/ValveKing setup with four very different tones, and I love what we got. There's a short little guitar solo that sounds like a trumpet part, so we're doing kind of a call-and-response thing with trumpet and doubling the guitar part with vibes. We'll be saturating this song with organ sounds mixed way back to add size, and possibly a short organ solo. Once keys and trumpet are done, my friend and former bassist Matt Murray, who left my band to pursue a degree in orchestral music and cello, will be playing his upright bass with a bow rather than cello just to be different. We may use cello in some spots on the album, but not on this tune. I'm sure to lay down some acoustic guitar in some spots after everything's done, and there's a tiny spot that may allow for another guitar solo if I can't think of something else to put there, it's all a work in progress, regardless of how much planning I've done, so thanks for reading, and stay tuned, as there'll be lots of audio, pics, and video in the coming installments of this series!