

RETRO-RESPECT:
A MUSICAL TRIBUTE TO TEN OF THIS GENERATION'S
GREATEST ARTISTS

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

December 2009

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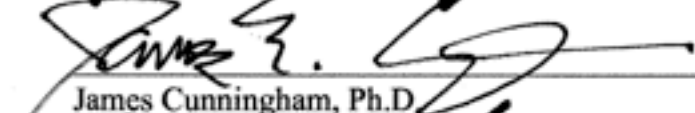
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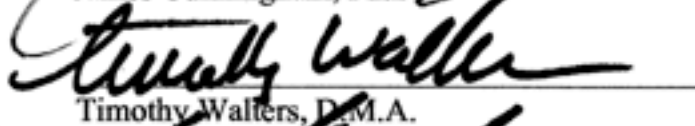
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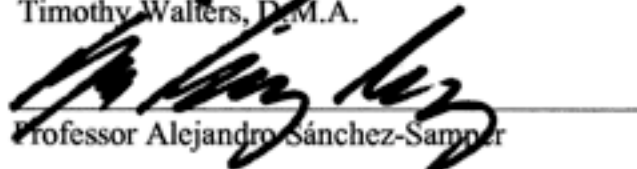
This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Michael Zager, Department of Music, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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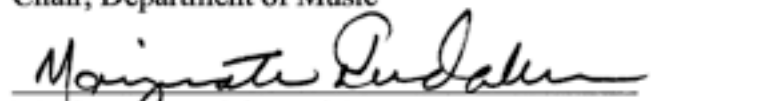

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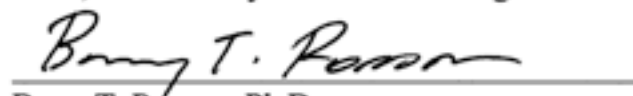

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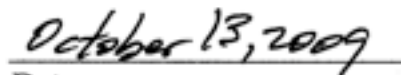

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Kam Falk has been a professor of audio engineering at the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, since 1997. He is a 1987 graduate of the University of Florida in Gainesville, and holds a Bachelor of Music degree in theory and composition. Since 1980, he has been a producer, composer/arranger, performer, educator and advertising specialist.

As a producer, composer/arranger and performer, Falk released his debut enhanced jazz fusion CD, *Native Tongue*, in 2002. He has since produced, published and distributed several other CD's and enhanced CD's through his independently owned and operated record label, Falkreations Music (BMI), and also through partnerships with other independent record labels, such as Midnight Lamp Cybermedia Arts. He also composed a war-themed symphony in three movements entitled, *The Belliger Symphony*, which was completed in 2007.

As an educator, Mr. Falk teaches the subjects of music theory and performance, audio engineering, surround sound engineering, multimedia systems design and website design.

Additionally, Falk has produced numerous television and radio spots for agencies such as Zimmerman Partners in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, McGee and Star Advertising in Boca Raton, Florida, and Dobson Media Works in Boca Raton, Florida.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express his sincere thanks and love to his wife, Katherine, and family for their support and encouragement throughout the production of this project. The author is grateful to the musical contributors, including Gary Bivona, Alex Dean, Jorge Garcia, Bob Hoose, K.D. MacKendrick, Keith MacKendrick, Ricardo Mazzi, Marcel Morejon, Jerry O'Malley and Dorian Vaz for their participation. The efforts of Professor Michael Zager for his creative guidance are also greatly appreciated.

ABSTRACT

Author: Kam Falk

Title: Retro-Respect:
A Musical Tribute to Ten of This Generation's Greatest Artists

Institution: Florida Atlantic University

Thesis Advisor: Professor Michael Zager

Degree: Master of Arts

Year: 2009

The popular culture of the past three decades owes a great deal to the creativity and musical impact of the artists featured in *Retro-Respect*. The project's objective was to carefully select ten of this generation's most influential recording artists and, as a musical tribute, produce and record unique arrangements of songs by each of them for an audio CD. Each featured artist has at least a 30 year history of influence and recognition as being among the industry's best, and all remain musically active today. Included are Aerosmith, Chaka Khan, Stevie Wonder, Steely Dan, Bonnie Raitt, Sting, The Eagles, Eric Clapton, Elton John and David Bowie. *Retro-Respect* was produced and arranged by Kam Falk. Each of the eight vocal and two instrumental songs features a different ensemble with Falk performing on six-string bass, fretless four-string bass, keyboards, vocals and drum/percussion programming.

RETRO-RESPECT:
A MUSICAL TRIBUTE TO TEN OF THIS GENERATION'S GREATEST ARTISTS

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INTRODUCTION

The premise of this project involved choosing ten artists who have become iconic in the commercial music industry and selecting one song by each of these artists to reproduce, applying creative twists to each arrangement. The artists were carefully considered and the criteria was based upon longevity, cultural impact and current relevance. With regard to longevity, each of the selected artists has been internationally recognized and acclaimed as a top artist through charts such as Billboard and RPM, as well as awards such as Grammys, MTV/VH1/CMT awards and BMI/ASCAP awards for at least 30 years. Culturally, the influence of these artists is not only musical, but also in many cases social and political, each having a global reach. Stevie Wonder's successful 1985 effort to persuade congress to pass a bill designating Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday is just one example of this type of influence (*Stevie Wonder Tells Why He Takes Risks in Fight to Destroy South Africa's Racism* 1985). All of the chosen artists are still actively producing and touring in the support of new music today. Although the range of choices was wide, the final selection of artists represented was limited to those whose work has not already been re-interpreted to a great extent. Song selections were also researched carefully in order to ensure that each song would be instantly recognizable to the public at large and easily attributed to it's original author; however, various aspects of the form, instrumentation, key

and tempo of the selections would be altered while keeping the essence of each piece intact.

Among the many lessons learned were those of efficiency in both production coordination and time management. The project was completed between May and August of 2009, during which ten scores were prepared, all recording and post-production took place, CD cover art was created and this manuscript was written. This project substantiated the fact that a producer should never stand in the way of a good creative idea, as the artistic input of the session musicians was integral to the outcome. Finally, in any project of this nature, there will inevitably be some material that must be reduced or even removed in order to keep each individual arrangement, and the project as a whole, concise.

FEATURED ARTISTS

Kam Falk produced and arranged this project. He also performed in several capacities, playing bass and keyboards on all tracks and contributing background vocals on *Sweet Emotion*, *I Can't Help It* and *Rebel Rebel*. Additionally, he provided auxiliary percussion tracks in *Sweet Emotion*, *Aint Nobody* and *Rebel Rebel*. Mr. Falk programmed drum tracks for *Sweet Emotion*, *Aja*, and *Shape of My Heart*. Gary Bivona performed on keyboards and vocals. The songs that feature his tracks are *Sweet Emotion* (lead vocal), *One of These Nights* (keyboards), the *Badge/Mainline Florida* medley (keyboards), *Saturday Night's Alright (for Fighting)* (keyboards and all vocals) and *Rebel Rebel* (keyboards). Alex Dean played alto saxophone in *Aint Nobody* and *Nick of Time*. He also played tenor saxophone in *Aja* (melody only) and provided all vocals for the song, *Nick of Time*. Jorge Garcia played

guitar in *Aja*. Bob Hoose performed on both guitar and vocals. His guitar tracks include the songs, *Sweet Emotion*, *One of These Nights*, the *Badge/Mainline Florida* medley, *Saturday Night's Alright (for Fighting)* and *Rebel Rebel*. Mr. Hoose's vocal tracks include the *Badge/Mainline Florida* medley (all vocals) and *Rebel Rebel* (lead vocal). Colin James played the tenor sax solo in *Aja*. Keith MacKendrick contributed the guitar solo in the first rendition of *Sweet Emotion*, which was ultimately dropped due to the need to shorten the ending of the song (Bob Hoose played the guitar solo in the final version). K.D. MacKendrick played tenor saxophone in *Sweet Emotion*. Ricardo Mazzi played drums for *Aint Nobody, I Can't Help It* and *Nick of Time*. He also contributed some vocal "beatboxing" in *I Can't Help It*. Marcel Morejon sang lead and background vocals in *I Can't Help It, Shape of My Heart* and *One of These Nights*. Jerry O'Malley played drums in *One of These Nights, the Badge/Mainline Florida* medley, *Saturday Night's Alright (for Fighting)* and *Rebel Rebel*. Dorian Vaz played lead and rhythm guitar for *Aint Nobody, I Can't Help It, and Nick of Time*.

SWEET EMOTION

Here, the creative concept was to update this classic rock song with a funk beat, provided by the bass and drums, without eliminating the rock guitar sound. During the verses, the funk beat is accentuated with auxiliary percussion and a few sound effects, with the addition of some turntable "scratching" to give the arrangement a "hip-hop" feel. The sonic image for this piece includes a wide stereo field, a tight rhythmic backdrop and a large venue sound, produced by bussing several of the tracks to a long delay. A few of the features from the original version of the song were preserved, such as the vibra-slap and

tambura sounds in the introduction and the recapitulation of the introduction. These were considered to be cues for listeners which would help them to recognize the song almost instantly, despite the fact that the signature bass line from the original version was substituted with a new funk bass line. This arrangement was one of the few that were completely pre-produced, or "demoed," by Kam Falk prior to bringing additional performers into the studio. In each of the cases where a demo was sent to session players prior to the recording date, the session players prior to the recording date, the session yielded better than average results in both efficiency and the fulfillment of the producer's vision, as compared to simply bringing in performers with no preparation and presenting a chart at the beginning of the session. Although the pre-production was time consuming, the payoff was immeasurable. Initially, the arrangement of the song was almost six minutes in length, which was too long for a commercial recording of this nature; therefore, subsequent editing sessions were focused on shortening the arrangement to its final length of 4:05. This was accomplished by eliminating over a minute of solo space at the end of the song. The solo space was then divided between the guitar and keyboard, which further assisted in eliminating the feeling that the arrangement was too long. Another key feature in this arrangement, which distinguishes it from the original version, is the expansion of the vocal harmonies that occurs in both the introduction and the recapitulation of the introduction. In the original version, there are three vocal parts with the lead part doubled. In this arrangement, there are five vocal parts with the lead part tripled.

This was the only song on the CD which did not include a reverb in the master bus;

however, a modest amount of reverb was eventually added to the lead vocal and tenor saxophone tracks in order to achieve the proper sonic image, while still preserving clarity in the overall mix. In post-producing this mix, a great deal of attention was focused upon stereo imaging and equalization in order to bring clarity to each part, and also to ensure that each part occupies a specific and carefully limited range of frequencies. For instance, toward the end of the song, there is an eight bar solo which features a distorted lead guitar solo playing concurrently with a distorted rhythm guitar track. Both parts were essential, but their ultimate clarity owes a great deal to careful equalization, particularly to the lead guitar track, and the stereo imaging of both tracks.

Finally, in many cases, especially those in which a vocal or instrumental part had to be re-recorded, labeling and commenting on tracks, as well as in specific audio regions, was extremely helpful from an organizational standpoint. An example of this type of documentation would be that, whenever an outboard effect unit was used, a note was made to indicate which patch had been selected. Another example would be that, whenever a specific patch of a synthesizer was used, a note displaying the patch number was made, making that sound instantly accessible during post-production.

AIN'T NOBODY

Although a considerable amount of experimentation was devoted to adding vocals to this arrangement, it ultimately worked best instrumentally. This piece was begun in the earliest stages of the overall production and fell in line with the original creative concept put forth in the proposal, which was to create a primarily instrumental CD. The project as a

whole would ultimately feature only two completely instrumental arrangements, namely *Ain't Nobody* and *Aja*. This change resulted from finding alternative ways to vary the arrangements from the original recordings during the conceptual process, as well as experimenting during the actual tracking sessions. Together with *Sweet Emotion*, *Ain't Nobody* was completely pre-produced before tracking sessions began. The pre-production tracks provided a functional reference source for the drummer and also allowed for a change in tempo to a more upbeat rendition of the song than what is heard among the existing vocal versions (*YouTube - CHAKA KHAN - Ain't Nobody* 2008). Ricardo Mazzi was the drummer chosen for the session. A capable and versatile musician from Bolivia, Mr. Mazzi approaches every track with intensity and uninhibited playing. Therefore, from a creative perspective, Mazzi understood the direction and was able to adapt well to the reference source; however, from a sonic standpoint, his drum sounds required a substantial amount of work in post-production. This experience led to a much better understanding of how to expedite the next and final drum recording session with Jerry O'Malley. Mr. O'Malley changed the head on his snare drum on the day before the session which, for obvious reasons, provided a better sound source to capture. In addition, a drum recording template was built and stored in the recording software program prior to O'Malley's session. This template included equalization and compression settings for each drum, based on the results of the prior experience with Mr. Mazzi, while keeping in mind the general differences in the sound of the two drum sets. These settings were used as the performances were being captured instead of applying them during post-production. That

yielded not only much more uniform results from one song to the next, but also allowed for much less equalization and compression to be applied when mixing took place.

Alex Dean and Dorian Vaz are the two other key players in this piece. Mr. Dean is both an accomplished saxophonist and vocalist, and therefore has a distinctively lyrical playing style on sax. After experimenting with vocal tracks on this song, the idea was eventually dismissed. This was not because the vocal performance was inadequate, but because it cluttered what was already a complete lyrical interpretation on sax. Mr. Dean had already performed a solid lead track and all three background tracks on alto sax, which ultimately rendered vocals unnecessary. His vocals would later be featured in *Nick of Time* in a more carefully structured, less improvisational fashion.

Vaz's guitar tracks added interesting and unique textures to this arrangement. His inventive use of delay, whereby he set the delay time equal to that of a dotted eighth note, allowed him to play single-line rhythms in half-time while the delay unit filled in the gaps. This worked well because the tempo remained consistent throughout, due to the pre-produced reference tracks having been performed to a metronome click. Since his single line rhythm track was constant, instinct led Mr. Vaz to be sparse when playing his chordal accompaniment on a separate track. He chose a unique sound which had an abundance of both distortion and reverb. This was an instance in which recording the sound with effects intact was necessary for two specific reasons. Firstly, the effects that Mr. Vaz instinctively chose were only available from his source, so they would not be accessible during post-

production. Secondly, these effects were integral to the actual performance and blended well with the pre-developed sonic image of the arrangement. This approach also fell in line with the concept of mixing a piece as much as possible throughout the production process.

With regard to the arrangement, *Aint Nobody* also features a keyboard solo in the bridge of the song, during which the chord progression is significantly altered from the original version performed by Chaka Khan. From a timbral perspective, the keyboard solo was a welcome departure from the alto sax, which dominates throughout the rest of the piece; however, only after creative guidance led to harmonizing almost the entire solo did the overall effect of the bridge become thoroughly convincing.

I CAN'T HELP IT

This song was suggested by the vocalist, Marcel Morejon. It later became a particularly appropriate choice, not only as a tribute to one of the all time greats, composer Stevie Wonder, but also as a memorial to its original performer, Michael Jackson, who ironically passed away during its production.

Stylistically, there are two distinctive approaches to the rhythm throughout the arrangement, one which emerges from Brazil and the other from Cuba. The fact that the drummer featured in this piece is from South America and has been influenced to a great extent by Brazilian rhythms, and the lead vocalist, Marcel Morejon, is Cuban, helped to integrate these two stylistic approaches very naturally. The Brazilian approach occurs during the verses and the Cuban patterns occur throughout each of the choruses. The use of shaker, congas and the cajon (performed by Kam Falk and Ricardo Mazzi) augment and

vary these patterns, giving this version of the piece an ethnic feel that is distinctive from the original, which was performed as a medium pop ballad. The fretless bass and nylon string guitar were also employed in order to complete this ethnic approach to the arrangement.

This song was also instrumentally pre-produced in order to provide a reference source for Mr. Mazzi, the drummer; however, once the drums were recorded, the drum performance became the reference source for the remaining session players. Unlike *Sweet Emotion* and *Aint Nobody*, the pre-produced MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) tracks in this arrangement are much more subordinate to the live tracks in the final mix.

The vocal structure in this arrangement developed throughout the production process, primarily as a result of creative guidance and the need to make each of the choruses rise to a higher level. The original approach was very faithful to Michael Jackson's rendition, produced by Quincy Jones. The verses were performed as single-line melodies and the choruses were simply higher single-line melodies (doubled) with the exception of the last chorus, for which a harmony part and a few solo lines were added. This simple approach did not give the arrangement the vocal support it needed. Harmonies both above and below the lead voice were then added to each of the choruses, which helped not only to heighten the choruses relative to the verses, but also to completely distinguish this arrangement from the original. Another feature unique to this arrangement was the addition of what has become known throughout the music industry as, "beatboxing." Both Mr. Mazzi and Mr. Morejon employed their own concepts of producing vocal rhythms in this arrangement. Morejon's approach can be heard during the introduction as well as the keyboard solo, and

Mazzi's interpretation, which also includes cuica sounds, is featured at the end of the piece. Further creative guidance led to additional vocal doubling as well as the addition of some single-line harmonies during the verses to compliment the lead vocal parts.

A slight restructuring of the form in this arrangement also became necessary while mixing was taking place. Initially, the keyboard solo extended throughout two verses and a pre-chorus, followed by the re-entrance of the vocals for the last chorus. This was an intentional departure from the original version (*YouTube - Stevie Wonder - I CAN'T HELP IT (Live) 2009*); however, having the vocals re-enter at the pre-chorus instead still allowed plenty of time for the keyboard solo to develop while rendering the overall form more concise and easier for listeners to follow.

During his vocal sessions, Mr. Morejon developed the idea of using the Spanish phrase, "E ya no puedo mas" during the last chorus. This phrase is a loose Spanish translation of the song's title, "*I Can't Help It*," and lends to the ethnic flavor of the arrangement while also contributing an element to the last chorus which is not previously heard in the piece.

AJA

This arrangement underwent much more substantial changes to the formal structure than did the arrangement of *I Can't Help It*. There are many potential caveats when selecting a vocal song and creating an instrumental interpretation of it. Among the most important is to refrain from letting the original form dictate the form of the instrumental version because the criteria for judging the effectiveness of the piece will drastically change

once vocals have been eliminated. This came as a difficult lesson. The adjustment to the form in *I Can't Help It*, mentioned earlier, eliminated nothing that would be missed or make the arrangement seem somehow incomplete. Here, however, the direction was to eliminate a recapitulation of the introduction that occurred immediately after the tenor sax solo as well as the extended guitar solo at the end of the piece. As many listeners who have become familiar with the original version of this piece are aware, one of the most compelling aspects of that version is the extended drum solo performance featuring percussionist, Steve Gadd, at the end of the song. In arranging the piece instrumentally, however, the extended ending became extraneous to the overall form. In this case, it proved to be better to eliminate that portion of the arrangement rather than to make an attempt at replacing such an iconic performance with material which, however different, is likely to draw comparisons and sound contrived when compared to the original version. Even after the aforementioned form changes, the piece turned out to be six and a half minutes in length - still a challenge for an arranger to keep any listener engaged with an instrumental interpretation of a vocal song.

The piano is prominently featured throughout the piece, with an original solo during the second verse and literal transcriptions of the original guitar and tenor sax solos later in the piece. Interestingly, the tenor sax solo in this arrangement (played by Colin James) was performed together with the piano transcription of Wayne Shorter's solo from the original Steely Dan version and they combined and integrated musically, without imposing upon

one another. Eventually, however, the timbre of the piano became monotonous, and further advice led to the addition of the tenor sax to the melody when it returns for the last time.

As discussed many times during classes, keeping the MIDI tracks intact throughout the editing process proved to be a necessity in making the required form changes to this piece. This song is also peppered with many 3/4 and 2/4 bars, and even a few bars in 3/8 meter, which made programming the drum part extremely challenging. Using markers to annotate these metric changes throughout the MIDI sequence helped to a great extent in both performing and scoring this song.

Jorge Garcia's organic approach to the guitar track helped to give the song a live feel in spite of the overdubbing process used to record this piece. His performance also provided some interesting counter melodies, adding spice to the arrangement and interacting with the piano so the two performances do not seem creatively isolated from one another, even though they occurred at separate times.

NICK OF TIME

Although this is one of the simplest songs on the CD in terms of its rhythmic and harmonic structure, the challenges involved in this interpretation made it the most difficult song to mix. The first of these challenges was the sound of Mr. Mazzi's drum set. As previously discussed, the sonic quality of his drums did not produce the same lively result as that of Mr. O'Malley's. Perhaps it was due to older drum heads or the way he tunes his drums. The problem could have been almost eliminated with a drum recording template such as that developed for Mr. O'Malley's session, so Mr. Mazzi is not entirely to blame

for the difficulty in mixing his drums.

With regard to his performance, Mr. Mazzi interpreted the pre-produced demo very effectively, adding a personal touch to his fills. While mixing this piece, however, his kick drum was not driving the piece as it should have been. The solution was first to apply normalization to the track in segments, thereby making the levels more consistent throughout the performance. Then, while soloing the bass and the kick drum tracks, ensure that the two were completely in synch throughout the piece. Once that was completed, duplicating the kick drum track and panning to opposite sides finally gave the arrangement the rhythmic drive it was previously lacking. Additionally, the process of normalizing a few erratic peaks in both the kick drum and bass tracks prior to their duplication allowed for the application of a few crucial decibels of output gain to be added to the compressors on those tracks, thereby significantly increasing the overall low end presence. This was a lesson in how to make the rhythm section "pump" on an average stereo system, as well as proof that normalization can be used effectively for both gain (an already familiar fact) and reduction.

The second major challenge involving this piece was the fact that the melody is shared among the alto sax, the six-string bass and the flute, as well as a scat-style vocal track sung by Alex Dean in the third verse. Balancing all of those disparate melody sources required a great deal of experimentation with equalization and panning, as well as varying the levels of the auxiliary sends on each of these tracks.

This arrangement features Alex Dean on both alto sax and vocals. After experimenting with vocal parts during his first session, it became readily apparent that, if

this arrangement would ultimately feature vocals, the parts must be carefully and thoughtfully arranged. When Mr. Dean returned for a second session, vocal parts had been prepared. Featured are three-part "Oohs" during the verses, along with some key phrases from the song which were suitable for a male vocalist (the original song was written from a female perspective) and a brief vocal solo passage during the final chorus. The phrases that were sung, including "...scared to run out of time" and "...love in the nick of time" were also harmonized with three parts. Because this song is approached so differently from the original version from an instrumental standpoint, these vocals are helpful in cueing listeners, who might not instantly recognize it. Additionally, because the melody is divided among various instrumental and vocal tracks, the harmonized "Oohs" and phrases helped to unify the arrangement.

SHAPE OF MY HEART

After becoming familiar with several performances of this song by its original artist and composer, Sting, it became clear that *Shape of My Heart* would be an excellent vehicle in which to spotlight the appealing timbre of the six-string bass when it is played similarly to a classical guitar. Thus began the process of transcribing the nylon string guitar part to the six-string bass and ensuring that the key would be appropriate for the featured vocalist, Marcel Morejon. The reference for the guitar transcription was a video which featured only Sting and a guitarist performing the song as a guitar/vocal duet (*YouTube - Sting - Shape Of My Heart 2007*). During the solo section, which modulates from F# minor to C# minor, the guitarist modulates downward. However, on the six-string bass, a modulation

downward by the same interval of a perfect 5th would have forced the part into a register of the bass that would be too low to be effective; however, by selecting an appropriate pivot chord and modulating upward to the new key, this problem was resolved.

Another important production choice was to create a very sparse arrangement in order to highlight the bass and, of course, the featured vocal parts. This decision precluded the use of drums in the traditional sense and prompted a search for some quality eastern percussion samples, including tablas, talking drums and finger cymbals. These sounds were finally found in a popular software package called, "Garage Band." The samples came from a set entitled, "World Music" and were easily imported into the Pro Tools session. The difficult part was that of timing each percussive strike of every instrument to the bass part, which was, in this case, the reference source and was not recorded to a metronome click. The song has several sections which are phrased in rubato style, making a click track throughout impossible. The eastern percussion, once timed to the bass track, gave the recording a unique twist. The solo voice, a patch called, "Ney" which was selected from the ethnic voice bank of the Yamaha Motif, added to the eastern approach by offering some real-time pitch and modulation controls that allowed for expressive micro-tonal playing. Other synth sounds used throughout the course of this production were carefully selected in order to allow the piece to develop without imposing upon the six-string bass accompaniment. This required primarily strings and pads. With regard to the strings, it was not only necessary to stay out of the average register (or frequency range) of the bass, but also to find a voice which sounded like a natural emulation of a live string section. A

relatively fast attack was required in order to provide clean entrances in a piece that contains many instances of rubato. With that in consideration, a voice called, "Quick Bows" worked well when combined with another sound called, "Mourn Strings," which was considerably darker in tone. Since the bass track was the reference throughout this piece and audio samples were used for percussion, there were no MIDI tracks throughout the production process of this song. Recording the strings directly to audio rather than MIDI tracks helped to keep MIDI out of the equation, thus saving the time that would normally be required to make the necessary conversion from MIDI to audio.

Marcel Morejon's vocal performance was intentionally transparent and faithful to the original performance by Sting, with only a few personal touches added as the solo section begins and as the song comes to a close. The object was to integrate his vocal performance seamlessly with the eastern style creative concept and to accurately convey the substance and mystery of the lyrics without letting issues of technique stand in the way.

ONE OF THESE NIGHTS

This was the first of four songs that featured Jerry O'Malley on drums. The session went smoothly for two primary reasons. Firstly, Mr. O'Malley agreed to meet a few days before the actual recording session in order to set up the drums and run a careful sound check in order to create a multi-channel drum recording template, complete with equalization and compression settings. Secondly, there were several days during which Mr. O'Malley was able to listen to examples of the form, instrumentation and stylistic approach to each of the songs he was to record in order to prepare. Following his session, the drum

tracks were roughly mixed and bass tracks were immediately recorded. Due to scheduling constraints, the vocals for this song were recorded along with only the drum and bass tracks. This was a novel approach, but worked well on several levels. Because this song features intricate vocal harmonies and the featured vocalist, Marcel Morejon, had only one session in which to record all of the lead and harmony parts, the fact that the vocals were completely exposed in the mix throughout the session allowed all intonation and timing issues to be immediately detected and addressed. Also, the fact that the vocals were recorded and mixed prior to the keyboard and guitar tracks ensured that the other performers did not overplay. Overplaying is a common tendency among those recording parts for vocal songs which do not yet have vocal tracks recorded. These players (especially those who are inexperienced studio recording) strive to create a performance that makes the piece sound complete, thus filling in all the empty spaces and leaving little to no room for the vocal parts until space is re-created in the post-production process. This can be painstaking and time consuming, so the fact that the vocal parts do not necessarily have to be the last parts recorded was a welcome discovery for one who had previously done mostly instrumental recording. By this stage in the overall project, many aspects of the production process had been adjusted with the object of saving time and, fortunately, almost all of these adjustments were effective. In the case of recording vocals together with only bass and drums, the time-saving mechanism (although it was duly noted) was discovered accidentally while, in the case of creating the drum recording template, the time-saving effort was truly intentional. Since the vocal tracks are far and away the most integral

parts in any song by the Eagles, the efficiency of Mr. Morejon in the studio, along with his complete familiarity with the song, was indispensable. The same credit should be given to Bob Hoose, whose guitar tracks are featured in this arrangement. Mr. Hoose is an incredibly versatile guitarist and singer. A full-time working musician, Mr. Hoose has a 16 piece orchestra and performs every Frank Sinatra song with complete authenticity on vocals, which is to say nothing about his outstanding abilities on guitar. He is also the guitarist and back-up vocalist in an excellent Journey tribute band called, "Don't Stop Believin'." Additionally, Mr. Hoose performs on a regular basis with a classic rock cover band called, "Rubicon." Rubicon features Gary Bivona, Kam Falk, Bob Hoose and Jerry O'Malley, all of whom worked on this project. In Rubicon, Mr. Hoose performs on both guitar and vocals. His proven ability on the live stage ensured that he would be a good candidate for the guitar and vocal tracks on this as well as the three remaining songs in the project, namely the *Badge/Mainline Florida* medley, *Saturday Night's Alright (for Fighting)*, and *Rebel Rebel*. In *One of These Nights*, there were seven lead and rhythm guitar parts which Mr. Hoose completed in one recording session, even learning and perfecting some of the three-part harmonized phrases on the spot.

Gary Bivona, who performed on keyboards for this track, is a Juilliard educated keyboardist and vocalist. He is thoroughly versed in music theory and is himself an excellent and experienced vocal and instrumental arranger. His formal education and unique stylistic approach, oriented more toward rock than jazz, made him an appropriate choice as a guest keyboardist and vocalist. His keyboard tracks were recorded via MIDI and,

although they required very little editing, the MIDI recording allowed for a later patch change to his main keyboard track. As mixing took place, the timbre of the acoustic grand piano sound he initially used in the recording was masking the vocal parts in several spots, so an electric piano sound was eventually used instead, keeping the performance intact without having to re-record the track.

Because Bob Hoose, Jerry O'Malley and Gary Bivona were all able to quickly learn and digest material that was not previously in their performance repertoire, their contributions to this project as a whole became one of the primary reasons that the time constraints were met.

BADGE/MAINLINE FLORIDA MEDLEY

Having decided to include Eric Clapton as one of the artists in this compilation, the abundance of material from which to choose immediately caused a dilemma in terms of song selection. After narrowing the field down to two songs, *Badge* and *Mainline Florida*, a cursory examination of these two pieces (*Eric Clapton - Badge - Crossroads Guitar Festival 2004* 2008) (*461 Ocean Boulevard* 1974) revealed that a medley would not only be a unique approach to the arrangement, but would also provide an opportunity to include both songs instead of having to choose one or the other. This would eventually require each song to be somewhat truncated; however, that did not present any problems. In fact, the keys and tempos of these two songs were very conducive to the task. With that in mind, the next step in the process was to pre-produce a track to be used as a reference for the drummer. This time, rather than creating a demo completely from scratch, the audio from

each original version (*Eric Clapton - Badge - Crossroads Guitar Festival 2004 2008*) (461 *Ocean Boulevard* 1974) was imported into the session and the two were synchronized in such a way that a volume graph applied to both tracks provided a smooth crossfade from one into the other. An additional track from the Yamaha Motif blended the two songs at the crossfade by supplying a closing phrase to Clapton's guitar solo in *Badge*. Finally, a few more tracks were created in order to provide a definite ending to *Mainline Florida*, rather than the original fade ending. After the drums were recorded, the medley still seemed a bit too long, so the introduction was cut by four bars and the solo space for the guitar in *Badge* was cut by eight bars prior to recording any other instrument. Although drum edits can be difficult, particularly due to the sustain of the cymbals, changing the form was far less difficult at this stage of production as opposed to attempting such changes after other instrumental and vocal tracks have already been recorded. Editing the form in both *Aja* and *I Can't Help It* after all of the tracks had already been recorded provided that time-saving insight. As production continued, the kick drum and bass tracks were again doubled in order to increase the low frequency presence in the mix. Again, as mentioned previously in the section about *Nick of Time*, the combination of normalization and output gain applied in the compressors for the kick drum, as well as the bass tracks, added substantial low end presence overall. Here, however, experimentation with the panning of these duplicated tracks revealed that the stereo imaging for this type of technique is not consistent from song to song and must be customized based upon the rest of the mix. In this case, it was most effective to leave both of the kick drum tracks panned almost to the center. With regard to

the bass tracks, the original track was recorded in stereo and panned wide, then a mono duplicate was created and placed just left of center. Having recorded the bass with consistent levels allowed for all of these bass tracks to be mixed without compression, creating a more open and dynamic overall bass sound, which was appropriate for this medley.

Another lesson that comes to mind while discussing this piece, one that is applicable across the entire spectrum of recording and mixing audio, is that of creating channel pressure. Although unity gain is the standard when gain staging along a typical signal path, it has been helpful to set individual channel volumes slightly higher than the master volume, usually by two to four decibels. When this technique is applied, less compression on the master channel is necessary, allowing the overall mix to have a wider dynamic range. Also, when an individual track is brought to a level higher than unity gain, it is far less likely to cause clipping on the stereo master track if the master track's volume is set a few decibels below unity gain. This is true even when several individual tracks are simultaneously peaking, but not clipping - a situation that often causes clipping on the master track. This mix in particular revealed that the volume graph on a stereo master track can also be slightly manipulated throughout the duration of a mix in order to maximize output while ensuring that clipping is still prevented. For instance, if none of the individual channels or auxiliary sends in the mix are peaking, but the master track is clipping due to moments when several tracks peak simultaneously (which happens often in music due to the orientation of the beat), the master track's volume graph can be used in order to resolve the peak, rather than

changing the compressor settings on the master track (which will effect the entire length of the song) or searching for peaks on individual tracks that can be brought down in order to resolve clipping that is only occurring on the master track. This not only preserves the overall balance, which is the primary object, but also allows for the compression used on the master track to be minimized, and thus more transparent. Most importantly, this technique saves time.

Bob Hoose performed on both guitar and vocals in this medley. Since the same singer performed all of the lead and background vocals, creating a stereo image that would accurately depict the placement of a live group on a stage made the resulting mix more believable and also provided the necessary clarity for each vocal part. This was crucial, especially since there were some call and response vocals at the end of *Badge* that briefly overlapped with the guitar solo, which created the possibility of a masking problem.

SATURDAY NIGHT'S ALRIGHT (FOR FIGHTING)

The challenges this piece presented were primarily centered around the arrangement. Once all of the parts were recorded, it soon became obvious that there was not enough variety in the arrangement. All of the parts were present throughout the song, and although the intention was to create a version of the song that sounded as "live" as possible, it was apparent that something unique must happen in the arrangement that did not occur during the tracking sessions. After a few days of experimentation and advice, the problem was finally resolved by taking a few samples from the drummer's tracks and using them to create a rhythmic call and response during the keyboard solo (which is played to

the chord progression of the chorus in this song) as well as the last chorus. Since the resulting rhythms became noticeably syncopated, the use of hand claps on beats two and four of each measure throughout these sections provided some necessary grounding. A tambourine was also added to give the rhythm a double-time feel during the second eight bars of the solo, as it sounds on every sixteenth note with accents on beats two and four. This gives the solo section a feeling of development and the sense of variety throughout the arrangement.

One other issue with regard to the drums is that, due to the limitation of eight tracks with which to record, Mr. O'Malley was only allowed one overhead microphone instead of the two that would conventionally be used. The difference between his drum set and that of Ricardo Mazzi was an additional tom tom. Rather than use a single mono track panned to the center for his overhead microphone channel in the mix, a simulated stereo approach was used by duplicating the overhead track during post-production and then panning the two overhead tracks to opposite sides.

Gary Bivona performed on both keyboards and vocals for this song, providing both lead and background vocal tracks so, here again, the stereo imaging of the vocals was integral to the believability of the final mix.

REBEL REBEL

This tribute to David Bowie was selected for two primary reasons. Firstly, it is an upbeat song, which is consistent with the nature of this project. Secondly, the creative concept for the arrangement was to give the impression of an actual live performance and

close the CD with it. The sonic image is that of a medium to large venue, which is also consistent with the other material on this CD.

For a reference source, a live performance of the track by David Bowie's band was imported into the session (*YouTube - David Bowie - Rebel Rebel* 2009), which was similar to the approach used in the *Badge/Mainline Florida* medley. Once the drums were recorded, only the drum tracks were used for further reference by other session players. Since this was to sound like a live performance, the arrangement was kept simple with only bass, guitar, cowbell and tambourine tracks accompanying the vocals. Unlike the previous songs, in which the background vocals were also recorded by the lead vocalist, the premise of reproducing this song as a live performance meant that different backing singers would be required for the auxiliary vocal parts in order to ensure believability. Kam Falk and Marcel Morejon provided these tracks. As a departure from the original studio version, as well as the live reference source of this song, harmonies were sung in addition to the unison backing vocals during the choruses. Tracks containing both applause and general crowd ambience were imported into the session and mixed in a non-obtrusive fashion, giving the impression of the audience responding to the stage show throughout the song. In order to maintain the impression of all sound sources culminating in the same venue, only two auxiliary bus tracks were used - one for reverberation and one for delay. All tracks, with the exception of the kick drum and bass, were routed to these two auxiliary bus tracks. The kick drum and bass were left out of the auxiliary bus sends in order to preserve clarity in the overall mix.

CONCLUSION

In summarizing *Retro-Respect*, the primary lessons learned were those of eliminating time consuming processes using techniques that yielded similar results to the sometimes arduous methods used in previous production projects. Methods used to improve the efficiency of tracking sessions were also developed, based upon experiences that occurred throughout the project's duration. This, in turn, made editing and post-production in general much more productive and ensured the project's timely completion.

Ironically, this project became far more vocally oriented than had originally been intended; however, this was actually a welcome departure from past projects, which were primarily geared toward instrumental jazz and fusion with little emphasis on commercial sensibilities. Therefore, dealing with challenges such as leaving adequate room for all of the vocal parts in the arrangements, as well as learning to apply recording, mixing, panning and limiting techniques and strategies specifically geared toward commercial vocal music were essential and provided valuable lessons. For example, advice on making songs "pump" led to the realization that duplicating the kick drum and bass tracks, and then customizing the stereo image and compression settings for the mix will provide a much better low end presence than what might be achieved by applying compression with output gain to a single mono track. This technique never became necessary when mixing purely instrumental tracks in the past. Speed and efficiency were also achieved by using three computers simultaneously during the final stages of post-production. While one computer was being utilized for mixing, mastering and referencing, another was printing the graphics for the

jewel cases, while yet another was being used to create the scores. First and foremost: a serious producer must be comfortable with the notions of constantly seeking and finding new ways to multi-task and often working around the clock during the production process.

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