



Long & McQuade  
**MAGAZINE**  
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**Songwriting:**  
TIPS AND TRICKS  
TO GET YOU STARTED

By **EVAN FAIRBANK**

*How do you get started if you are interested in songwriting but you have never tried it, or if you are already writing but aren't getting any traction? Here are some tips and tricks I have picked up over the years.*

**Amelia Curran**  
THE DEMANDS OF A CRAFT

By **BOB ROSS**

*"It's often said that there is no such thing as a free lunch. That you can't just say 'Well, now I know everything there is to know about songwriting.'"*

**Songwriting and Basic Diatonic Theory**

By **BOB ROSS**

*There are a lot of things to think about when it comes to writing music. It's not just a matter of "I want to write a song." It's also a matter of "I want to write a song that is good." This is a guide to the theory of music that will help you understand the "why" behind the "what" of music. It's a guide to the theory of music that will help you understand the "why" behind the "what" of music.*

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**Whitehorse**  
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where the music begins.

# Letter from the Long Family

If you are reading this, then music is probably very important to you. It is for us as well. When Jack Long decided to “get a day gig” 57 years ago, he didn’t know a lot about running a business, but he did know a lot about music; in fact, it was his passion. Sharing that passion for music has always been the cornerstone of our business. Our “customers and their music first” approach has shaped our policies and kept us on course throughout all of the changes in retail over the years. Many of the services we offer, like rentals, in-store financing, trade-ins and repairs, grew from trying to service the needs of musicians and to help enable them to make music.

2013 marks the 14th anniversary of the Long & McQuade magazine, and we are very excited to unveil this season’s edition. Our largest issue to date, we have expanded the scope of the publication to make it better than ever. In addition to all of the great product info, we have included a number of Canadian artist features and several informative articles. Most of the articles have been written by our staff, many of whom are experts in their field. They cover many different aspects of the process of making music – from suggestions to getting the most out of practice time, to tips on overcoming writer’s block, to assistance with setting up your own home studio. We hope you find these articles interesting and educational and we look forward to the opportunity to help you make music!



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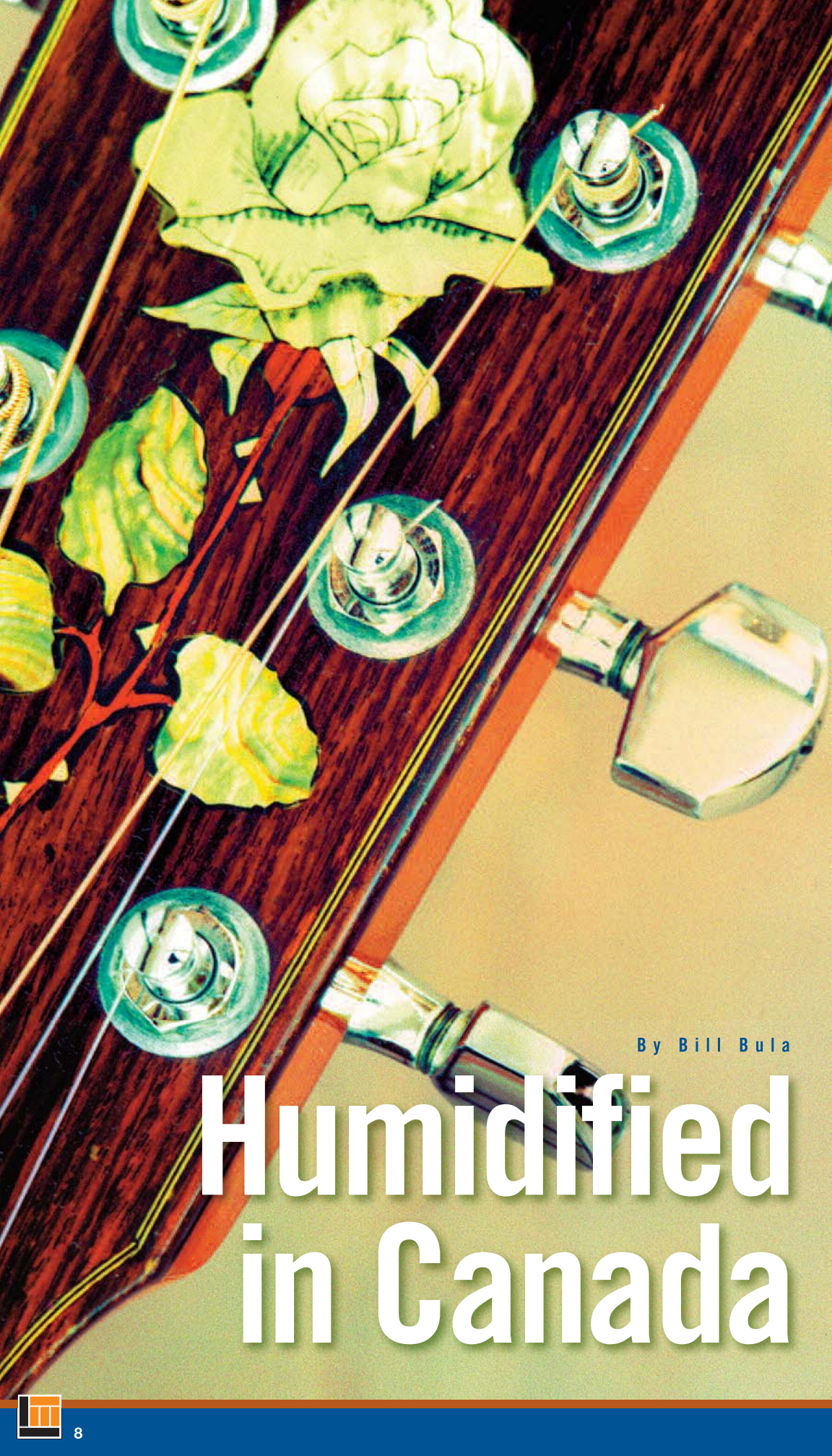
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By Bill Bula

# Humidified in Canada

Canada is known for all kinds of difficulties we must overcome as guitarists. More of a challenge than finding venues, touring Saskatchewan in the middle of winter and explaining to American bar owners that you don't live in an igloo is properly humidifying your guitar. Most Canadian households use forced-air furnaces. These suck the cold, moist air out your home, replacing it with warm dry air. This also has the effect of pulling moisture out of your skin, your hair and anything else - including your wooden instruments.

The opposite of this problem is over-humidification. Many people live or jam in a basement space. From basement apartments to rehearsal spaces, guitarists sometimes keep, or know someone who keeps, their instruments in a basement. The cold, damp air and walls lend themselves to a humidity level far beyond that which is desirable for your instrument.

## Dryness

When your guitar is not humidified properly it can dry out. As moisture is lost from your guitar, changes occur to its shape. You may notice that the action (distance of strings from neck) becomes too high. This impacts playability by making it too hard to fret notes. This is caused by the neck shrinking due to lost water.

You may also notice some notes buzzing on your dry guitar. Perhaps your shrinking neck has begun pushing the frets out of your fingerboard. If you own an acoustic guitar it is more likely you have a hump at your guitar's body joint, caused by the shrinking neck being forced out of shape by the hardwood body joint block.

You might see the glued joints coming loose. The bridge, neck and sides of your guitar are all glued together, usually using wood glue. This is a material that dries very hard and is inert, meaning it does not get affected by temperature and humidity changes. What this means, is that as your guitar changes shape due to environment, the glued joints aren't and that means separation!

## Over-Humidification

When storing and playing your guitar in an overly humid environment you may notice some changes in the way your guitar sounds and feels.

You may notice that your guitar lacks sustain and has a dull and "tubby" sound. This is caused by the moisture literally weighing down the tops of your instrument and preventing it from resonating properly. You may notice some buzzing as well, just like with dryness. With an over-humidified guitar, however, this buzzing is due to the neck expanding and causing contact with the neck in unintended places. You may also notice the glued joints of your guitar coming loose, just like with a dry guitar for the same reasons.

## What Do I Do?

The first thing you need to do to protect your instrument is to be sure you own a hard-shell (preferably wooden) case for storage. You should be aware of what the humidity in your case is at all times, so be sure to get a hygrometer for it as well.

There are a myriad of products you can use to humidify your guitar case. Products from Planet Waves, Kyser, Oasis and more can raise moisture quickly, safely and easily. If, however, you want to be prepared for either wet or dry conditions, check out the Humidipak Kit from Planet Waves. This kit sells for \$24<sup>50</sup> and can remove or add moisture to your guitar case based on what it needs nearly on its own. The value is huge, especially considering the damage that can be done by our cold Canadian winters!

*A guitar repair technician, singer/songwriter and guitarist, Bill Bula has been working at Long & McQuade Brampton since 2008.*

# Long & McQuade carries a wide variety of products to protect your stringed instruments.

Oasis makes a great humidifier (OH-1) that features dual hydration protection using water vapour with Humigel super absorbent polymer crystals. It's stabilized to never touch your instrument and has two levels of leak protection. Oasis also makes a version specifically suited for ukuleles (OH-18)! Both sell for \$18<sup>50</sup>.

Planet Waves is another prime choice for humidification products. The GH protects without scratching or damaging the guitar finish because the moisture reservoir is suspended inside the body without actually touching the instrument. A high absorption sponge maintains proper humidity levels and is quick and easy to refill. This one sells for \$14<sup>95</sup>.

The Planet Waves Humidipak Kit is the first two-way humidity control system that maintains a constant 45-50% relative humidity level in your case. No more guesswork when it comes to maintaining your instrument's proper humidity level! The Humidipak comes in at \$24<sup>50</sup>.

Another Planet Waves product, the Humidity and Temperature Control System (PW-HTS), is a precision-designed hygrometer that digitally indicates accurate relative humidity levels ranging from under 20% to 99%. Temperature is displayed in either Fahrenheit or Centigrade, ranging from -32°F to 122°F (-35C to 50C). It includes a programmable set point, as well as a memory feature that indicates date/time of the highest & lowest temperature/humidity levels the instrument has been exposed to. Well worth the investment at \$34<sup>99</sup>!





# Songwriting:

TIPS AND TRICKS  
TO GET YOU STARTED

By Sarah Farthing

*How do you get started if you are interested in songwriting but you have never tried it, or if you are dealing with writer's block?*

*Here are some tips and tricks I have picked up over the years.*



## Play around.

One of the biggest things you can do for your songwriting is spend more time messing around on an instrument. My best songs all begin when I am learning a new cover, playing an instrument I don't normally play, or killing time on the guitar. Creativity and play are closely related, and our inner creative geniuses are like little children. If you watch a child play at the piano, you can learn a lot about how songwriting begins. Most children will just fiddle around until they hear something they like.

Most recently, I had a flurry of creativity after renting a loop station for a couple weeks. I had seen someone use one at a live show and I was curious about it. I followed my sense of curiosity and it paid off. So mess around. Your inner creative genius is far more likely to cooperate if songwriting feels less like homework and more like jamming or goofing off. Who wouldn't?

*The first stages of songwriting are about getting ideas flowing, not about deciding which are good and which are bad.*

## Turn your "quality control" switch off. Go for quantity over quality.

We might not end up the next Bob Dylan or Carole King, although we can certainly try. In the beginning stages of songwriting, we should not hold ourselves up to some unrealistic standard. In order to begin any pursuit, we must allow ourselves to be beginners. Give yourself permission to write some mediocre, overly emotional and silly songs. If you write a lot of songs, then some of them are bound to be good. I know one talented artist who writes silly songs when he is stumped, because he knows that he will at least have something to show his nieces and nephews. He usually finds, though, that the "silly" song he set out to write is better than he thought.

The first stages of songwriting are about getting ideas flowing, not about deciding which are good and which are bad. Nothing prevents good writing flow more than judging your ideas too quickly.

## Record or document all of your ideas.

Every good songwriter I know carries a notebook and/or some kind of recording device. My cell phone is full of little recordings and lyrical notes. Some of these are melodies that came to me while I was cooking or cleaning. Others are sentences I overheard in the grocery store, or chord progressions I stumbled upon while soundchecking at a gig. I record everything because I never know which ideas I'll forget later.

If you keep a record of your ideas, then you will have a little treasury at your disposal when you are stuck. If you write a deadly line of lyrics that needs a good melody, then you can flip through your catalogue and find something that fits. Once your treasury gets big enough, it's like supermarket shopping for songwriters.

## Make decisions and edits later.

Songwriting is an emotional process. We can spend hours slaving away over something only to feel like it's completely horrible in the end. In the process of rummaging through my emotions, I can get really worked up. Many times, I have been tempted to burn all my notes and delete all my recordings of a particular song. Often I am very, very wrong. However, it does take a good night's sleep or a couple of days away from it before I realize this. When I return to the song, I often find that my work is good (sometimes it's really good) and I am shocked that I was ready to fuel a campfire with it. Sometimes I find it isn't very good but there are one or two excellent lines I would have lost if I had thrown it all away.

*Paul Simon once said that he writes to see what he can find out about himself, not to tell other people things he already knows.*

I've learned that I should never throw everything away completely or feel like I have to make all of the songwriting decisions in one sitting. Revisiting your work and editing it over a couple of sittings can produce a much better result. Leave room for that, and be patient with yourself.

## Get real.

The best and scariest thing you can do with your songwriting is to dig deep and be really honest. Sometimes we write the song we think we should write rather than the one that we need to write. Paul Simon once said that he writes to see what he can find out about himself, not to tell other people things he already knows. Songwriting is a process of gathering information about how we are thinking and feeling about things in our lives. We need to do this well if we are going to write good songs.

This can be really scary, especially if you think about the prospect of performing a song in front of others someday. Try not to let your brain go there while you are writing. You can always decide after the song is finished whether or not you want to show it to anyone. Besides, think of all of the amazing songs we would be missing out on if your favourite songwriters had been too afraid to be vulnerable or to say things out loud. That would be quite the list!

Your songs will always be better if you are willing to dig deep. The real songs are the ones that everyone relates to and loves. This willingness to be vulnerable is what sets the best songwriters apart.

I hope this little bit of advice is enough to get some creative juices flowing. Happy writing!

Having been called a "smoke and honey-voiced songstress" (Kelly Jo Burke, CBC), singer-songwriter Sarah Farthing is currently working on her first full-length album entitled *These Blues*, which will be released in early 2014. Sarah works in the Saskatoon Long & McQuade Lesson Centre. You can follow her on Facebook, Twitter (@sarahfarthing), or at [www.sarahfarthing.com](http://www.sarahfarthing.com).



*"It excites me that there is no ceiling on it. That you can't just say, 'Well now I know everything there is to know about songwriting.'"*

By Ken Kucharic

# Amelia Curran

THE DEMANDS OF A CRAFT



Her songwriting shows a wonderful progression, the true working of a craft. Her lyrics have matured into beautifully crafted poetic expression. Her guitar playing has tightened and defined itself into an articulate style that supports and punctuates her lyrics. Production values have kept pace and learned to wrap themselves around the warmth and strength of her work. She is very much an artist that has come into her own in a vibrant and compelling way. In the song *"All Hands on a Grain of Sand"* she portends, "I can only serenade. And wait my turn to burn or fade." With a Juno win for her third release, *Hunter, Hunter*, and a Juno nomination for her fourth, *Spectators*, it seems overwhelmingly clear that it is Amelia Curran's "turn to burn"...and brightly at that.

I recently had the opportunity to meet up with Amelia at The Pearl Company Arts Centre in Hamilton, Ontario. She and the other two members of her current trio, Catherine Allan (piano, accordion, vocals) and Darren Browne (mandolin) arrived at the venue for a late afternoon sound check. Laughing at the chance to play "diva" while the others set up, we settled at a small table to talk songwriting.

"It takes me longer and longer and longer to finish a song. It's no fun. It's not exciting. But it has to be done," she says with a laugh.

After a moment she explains, "I feel I'm just demanding more of it. I talk about songwriting as a craft a lot. So I'm still sort of exploring it myself. It excites me that there is no ceiling on it. That you can't just say, 'Well now I know everything there is to know about songwriting.' You have to work really hard at it."

Perhaps realising the seeming severity of her description, she adds with some reassurance, "But those songs where you wake up and the song is there...those can still happen...that's still the gem of it. But you can't count on it and", she added wearily, "they are not necessarily always the great ones."

"There is no excuse for a bad lyric; it's just lazy." I remind Amelia of this quote attributed to her. She laughs and says, "Definitely, but can you imagine how sometimes I regret having said that? 'Cause I want this song to be finished! I want this song to be finished so badly but you just can't leave that line the way it is. That could be six months of waiting for it to just change."

"Sometimes you have to really scramble for them and it can take months," she continues. "I haven't completed a song I don't think all year. I've got fractions and half-songs and all kinds of things happening. I'm working really hard at it but it's not quite...I don't know. Sometime soon I'm going to have a really great week where a whole bunch of them will get finished all at once. And then I'll say, 'You know, I wrote 10 songs this week,' but it's really been a year."

Looking back over her four releases to date, we see a clear and consistent evolution in songwriting and performance. Of her first disc, *Lullabies for Barflies*, Amelia openly admits, "I wasn't as discerning a writer or editor. The themes aren't necessarily linked together...and the songs are not as well thought out." To soften her criticism somewhat she adds with a smile, "We were all rookies."

*"It takes me longer and longer and longer to finish a song. It's no fun. It's not exciting. But it has to be done."*

On her second release, *War Brides*, songs like *"Scattered and Small"* and *"Times a Ticker"* provide clear indications of the emerging strength and depth of her songwriting.

"The little album that could, I always called it. I think that *War Brides* is without a doubt the 'finding your footing' album," she says, "finding your voice. It just came together."

If *War Brides* shows us an artist "finding her voice", then Amelia's third release, *Hunter, Hunter*, shows that same artist comfortably centred and in full command of that voice. Perhaps some of the peace and self awareness we hear on the record comes from the environment in which it was made.

*"There is no excuse for a bad lyric; it's just lazy."*

"It's the first album I ever made in Newfoundland," Amelia says. "I went home to make it with Don Ellis."

It is a rare group of songs from start to finish for which Amelia received a Juno award for Best Roots and Traditional Album: Solo. She described the experience as "...totally amazing. It does not wear off. It was at the (pre-televised show) dinner. It took a long time. It was one of the last awards, I think. Oh god it was just crazy. We went crazy. All the Newfoundlanders...the NL Music people were sitting right behind me, and the Six Shooter people. It was Six Shooter's first Juno win and we went crazy. I think we scared people in the room because we went so crazy. Things tipped over. It was one for the team, you know? "

As for most artists, winning a Juno was a transitional and confirmatory moment.

"I think I started to demand a lot more of my songs at that point," she says.

That increased demand is clearly evident on her latest record, *Spectators*. Once again Amelia was nominated for a Juno, though this time the award went to fellow east coast musician, Rose Cousins.

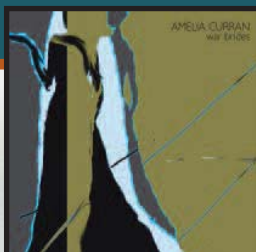
With *Spectators*, the songwriting demands to which Amelia was referring reach past the machinery of the song itself to introduce something else, something that has been brewing in the periphery but not come to the forefront on previous efforts - a growing social conscience.

"*Spectators* definitely has a theme," says Amelia. "I didn't mean it from the start, but I discovered it while it was happening. It's the idea of standing on the sidelines and watching the world fall apart and not jumping in and not doing anything...or perhaps paying too much attention to the world falling apart and then missing all of the good. I'm suffering greatly from wondering what the hell I can do. And I don't have any answers but there is a lot of exploration of that on this album."

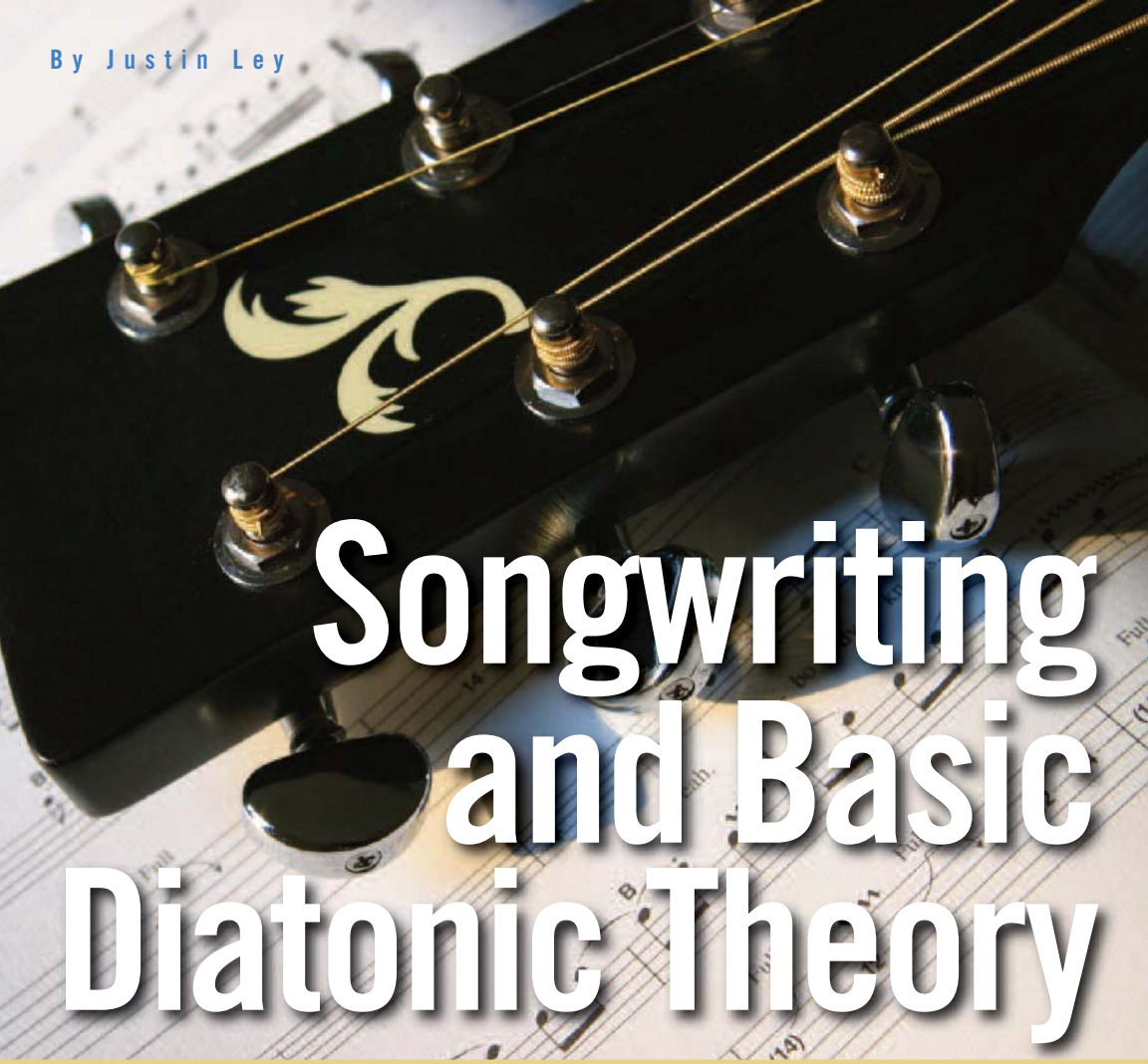
Unlike a lot of songwriters, Amelia is very candid about who it is doing the "exploration" in her music.

"*The Mistress*" is a character for sure, but that doesn't mean it's not me," she says with candour. "Narration is a very tricky tool and you can hide a lot with narration, but it's pretty much...I mean me." It's not literal. It's expressions of one's self to communicate 'everybody'.

"There is nothing that separates me from what I'm making...which is a bit dangerous, maybe, but there is nothing. That's it."







# Songwriting and Basic Diatonic Theory

Ever play something you thought sounded cool on an instrument but didn't know how to turn it into a song? This is a crash course on how to do just that!

The best part about being a musician and playing an instrument is, well... You get to make music! Sounds easy enough, but sometimes it's easier said than done. One of the most important tools to a musician to help with the songwriting process is music theory and understanding basic diatonic harmony.

Don't get intimidated - diatonic harmony is just an elaborate way of saying "Sounds good together." Having a basic understanding of diatonic harmony will get you very far in songwriting, improvising, and helping you get the most out of your instrument.

So how does music theory work?

## The Musical Alphabet

Music is a language and the way we translate it is to give music its own alphabet. It goes from A to G with sharps and flats – also known as *accidentals*. Accidentals can be *sharp* (higher in pitch by a semitone) or *flat* (lower in pitch by a semitone.) An accidental can be referred to as either a sharp or a flat (eg. A sharp and B flat are the same note). Here's what it looks like on paper:

A   A $\sharp$ /B $\flat$    B   C   C $\sharp$ /D $\flat$    D   D $\sharp$ /E $\flat$    E   F   F $\sharp$ /G $\flat$    G   G $\sharp$ /A $\flat$    A   A $\sharp$ /B $\flat$    B   C

As we navigate through our musical alphabet, the distance we travel is measured primarily in *tones* (one step) or *semitones* (two steps). The distance from A to A $\sharp$  is one semitone, but the distance from A to B is a whole tone. There is no accidental between "B" and "C" and "E" and "F", so the distance between those keys is only considered a semitone.

## Major Scale and Minor Scale

Now we can start figuring out what notes sound good together!

There is a definitive logic (although some jazz musicians would argue) to what will sound good together and what won't in music.

Notes that sound good together, played in an ascending or descending sequence, are referred to as *scales*. Scales are based on a *root note*, which is your first note or starting point in the scale. In short, you take your root note and apply a simple formula to derive the appropriate scale.

As you experiment with these scales, or groupings of notes, you'll learn that each scale has its own unique sound or *feel*. Major scales sound happy and resolved while minor scales can evoke feelings of sadness or melancholy. Music is about self-expression, and knowing how each scale *feels* is very important when you need to express that emotion through sound. The major scale is the holy grail of music theory. From it we will derive all aspects of a piece of music. From the melody to even the rhythm chords, the scale is the center of it all.

# You've got to learn the rules before you start breaking them.

In this article we are only going to go over major scales, but it's important to note that minor scales function in the exact same way but have a different formula and sound.

Here's the formula for the G Major scale:

Root	Tone	Tone	Semitone	Tone	Tone	Tone	Semitone
G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G

We know we've made a complete scale because we've ended up back at our root note. The cycle continues but only exclusively with this sequence of notes.

## Major Chords and Minor Chords

The most common misconception is that scales come from chords when in fact it's the total opposite. Chords are notes taken from a scale, but instead of playing them in a sequence (like a scale) notes in a chord are sounded together at once. That being said, if we already know a scale, all we have to do is take certain notes from that scale and they'll harmonize with each other.

Let's look at our scale for G major:

G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
1 (Root)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII

Our most common chords are called *triads*, meaning formed from 3 tones. Triads and chords in general are actually pretty simple and have formulas as well. Here are the most common triad types:

Major Chord	R	3	5
Minor Chord	R	b3	5
Diminished Chord	R	b3	b5
Augmented Chord	R	3	#5

R = Root

To form our chord, we're taking notes from our scale. So if we want to form a G major chord, look at the scale above. We want the root, the 3rd and the 5th. So the G major chord is G, B, D. It's that easy!

## Major Keys and Minor Keys

To summarize, we have our musical alphabet to which we apply a formula to derive our scale. We can then selectively take notes from our scale and form chords. Too easy! Since we know which notes will sound good together (our scale), now we must figure out what chords will sound good together; this is our *key*. The key is basically our scale, but with one major difference: instead of notes, now we are talking about chords.

Let's look at our G major scale again.

G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
---	---	---	---	---	---	----	---

In a major key, we take our scale of notes and turn them into chords by giving them major or minor properties. In a major key, our 1st or root chord is always a major. The 2nd and 3rd are minor, the 4th and 5th major again with the 6th being minor and the 7th being the only one that is diminished. Let's look at it now applied to our scale. Minor is symbolised by a lower case "m." Major is implied unless otherwise specified.

G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F#Dim	G
I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Diminished	Major

This is our key of G major! Here's an example of a chord progression in the key of G Major: C / Am / D / G

Let's do C Major as well.

Scale:	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
Key:	C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	Bdim	C
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Diminished	Major

Now we know that any melody (like a guitar solo or vocal line) in a song is derived from our scale and we know that any chords or chord progressions are derived from our key. We can also add to a piece by adding additional chord progressions to form things like a chorus or a bridge. We know we can create melodies and harmonies over top of these chord progressions by, again, using our scale. Our possibilities with these tools are endless when you consider the different instruments we can use to give different sounds to these scales! This is a big step for anyone who intends to create music or even improvise over existing music.

Outside of this tutorial there exists a giant world of exceptions and substitutions - but hey, you've got to learn the rules before you start breaking them!

*Justin is a musician and songwriter who has been teaching music professionally for over 5 years. He has toured Canada and played in a wide variety of groups from rock to rap to country and beyond. Justin's music education spans many aspects, including jazz and contemporary theory, music business and production. Justin works at Long & McQuade's Fredericton store.*

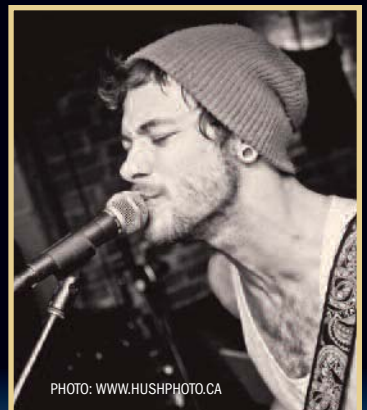


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OLD PHOTOGRAPHS  
AND  
PICTURE WINDOWS

# Justin Rutledge

By Ken Kucharic



*“At this point in my career I understand that my strength lies in songs that don’t exceed the speed limit.”*

While re-mastering his debut record, **No Never Alone**, last year for a deluxe re-release and short corresponding tour, Justin Rutledge was drawn to the simple beauty of his earliest work.

“I had a very naive approach to recording back then but it had a certain charm to it. It was me trying to do something that I had never done before.”

Some people would be unnerved or perhaps even a bit embarrassed by such a review of their younger selves, but Justin was inspired by it.

“I spent so long apart from it, which was great because I got to distance myself from the songs and I got to listen to them with an objective mind,” says Justin. “It was almost like going through an album of old photographs that you hadn’t unearthed in over a decade. It was definitely an interesting experience.”

So much so, that the older and more experienced songwriter crafted his latest work, **Valleyheart**, as “a response to that young kid who just wrote what he felt.”

“I’ve always thought that feeling was the most important thing,” he says. That being said, Justin admits a more worldly view has settled upon him.

Though far from cynical, he concedes, “Sadly, it’s become much more of a job - even though I love what I do.” He quickly adds, “Not that I am tainted in any way or jaded in any way, but it’s become a job and it’s been great.”

Perhaps it was the rigours of the practical demands of being a successful musician that made the more unencumbered methods of **No Never Alone** so appealing.

“I really wanted to go back and, not try to emulate what I did, but try to approach the songwriting and the production of the songs in a similar manner as in **No Never Alone**,” he explains.

Age brings new perspectives, skills and refinement to a craft, but that doesn’t necessarily make the process easier.

“Sometimes I might over-think things a little too much,” Justin admits. “On **Valleyheart**, I tried to make things sort of excessively simple...there is a lot of space. There is a lot of room for listeners to really digest what is being sung and what’s happening around them. You can really hear each instrument being played, which is what happened on the first record, I think.”

Another key aspect of **No Never Alone** that informs **Valleyheart** and, in fact, the vast majority of Justin’s work to date, is pace.

“At this point in my career,” Justin says, “I understand that my strength lies in songs that don’t exceed the speed limit.”

Both albums move at a pace that gently compels the listener to slow down and listen. These are not songs to take to spin class; they are deep, beautiful pools that catch your senses, slow your breath, and pull you in like still water.

“The way I write a song is more like a series of photographs,” he says. “I look at **Valleyheart** as a series. I’m a very image-based writer so I tend to write in a way that is more visual as opposed to more narrative...I’ve never been a good storyteller,” he explains somewhat ironically. “My stories just start in the middle somewhere and sort of end in the middle. You get a glimpse into a feeling or an emotion or a situation but you’re not invited in; you just look in the window.”

“The way I see it is that a song is like looking in the window of someone’s home briefly or flipping through an old photograph album. You only get a sense of the moment.”

These moments we glimpse, scripted with intricate beauty, are predominantly dramatic constructs.

“I’ve always gravitated toward writing fictional songs,” says Justin. “There are a handful of songs of mine that are ‘confessional’ but I don’t subscribe to that way of songwriting. I think that the songs that I write have not happened to me. There are two or three songs on **Valleyheart** that are sort of obviously specific but, for the most part, I take a sentiment and create a little story around it and work that way.”

“There is a lot of room to maneuver when it is character based,” he continues. “I think that it allows a lot more freedom. It’s a pretty sneaky way to go about doing things (but) I utilise it because it makes me feel a little safer. I don’t really like projecting me into the middle of something. I don’t like specifics. I’m pretty vague when I write my songs. I don’t like being too on the nose.”

Though he may avoid specifics in regards to the people or emotional situations being depicted in his songs, Justin often uses “place” as a songwriting tool to provide some notion of balance,

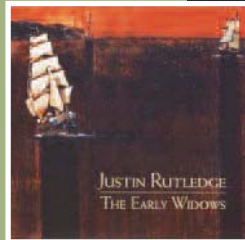
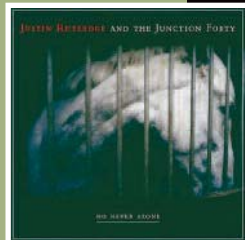
“I like to ground a song somewhere physical, somewhere tangible, whether it be Kapuskasing or Barcelona or Stanley Park,” he says. “I like the notion of the listener being able to latch on to something right away, something that’s familiar. I think geography allows me to do that. It’s a way to invite yourself in.”

“Everything else that I might write about is foreign to the listener but I like grounding the songs somewhere, whether it be a location...or a street name...or a certain type of tree or a certain type of flower. Something that’s familiar with the listener. I think it creates a relationship.”

The songs on **Valleyheart** evince the sophisticated depth of an artist maturing into his craft.

“I find that it takes me longer to write songs now, because over the years that I have been writing songs, I have kind of stepped up my bureau of standards on them so I’m a little more picky when it comes to what I release,” admits Justin. “Back then, I didn’t really have a bureau of standards.”

He certainly does now.



LONG & McQUADE IN THE



# MARCH OF DIMES' Rock for Dimes

# COMMUNITY

For close to a decade, amateur musicians have been trading in their suits and ties for ripped jeans and guitars in March of Dimes Canada's battle of the bands fundraiser - **Rock for Dimes**. Long & McQuade has been the Rock for Dimes national backline sponsor; they also assist with the recruitment of bands, and provide "swag" and auction items.

Rock for Dimes is a series of fundraising events held across Canada to support March of Dimes Canada's programs and services for children and adults with disabilities. Local musicians with varying levels of experience perform in front of industry professionals to claim the title of their city's best corporate or amateur band, or simply to be part of a musical showcase.

What began in 2005 as a single fundraising event in Toronto has grown into a national, multi-city event, sponsored across the country by Long & McQuade, AMG Medical Supplies and now by Pennzoil, that has raised over \$1 million for Canadians living with disabilities. Rock for Dimes events are currently held in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, London, Niagara, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Sherkston Shores, Sault Ste. Marie, Windsor, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver.

Rock for Dimes allows amateur and semi-professional musicians to blend their love of performing with philanthropy, living out their rock star dreams while supporting a great cause. Some of the judges who have volunteered their time include Dave Genn from **54/40**, Mike Reno from **Loverboy**, Jeremy Taggart from **Our Lady Peace**, Josh Trager from **Sam Roberts Band** and Tyler Stewart from the **Barenaked Ladies**.

"It is an honour and a blast to be involved in Rock for Dimes year after year," says Dave Genn of 54/40, who has been judging Rock for Dimes in Vancouver since its inception. "The cause is wonderful, of course, but what keeps me coming back is the fact that the corporate bands are so obviously having the times of their lives. And on the rare occasion that a note is flat or a wrong note is struck I simply remind myself how much better the guys and girls on stage are at my job than I am at theirs!"

Marc Belliveau has been the local volunteer organizer of Rock for Dimes Halifax for eight years. A partner at the law firm of Stewart McKelvey, he has been with the event since its inception, and has helped grow the event to become one of the most successful battle of the bands in the series.

"When we first started doing the battle of the bands, it was primarily an opportunity to get excellent musicians out of their safe white-collar working environments to perform live on stage for a great cause," says Marc. "However, over the years, we developed a better understanding of how living out our rock star fantasies directly impacted young people, from toddlers to teenagers, in terms of their quality of life and self-confidence. It's part of a long and successful tradition, namely the fusion of popular music with charitable giving.

"Ultimately, the goal (of March of Dimes) is to create a society more inclusive of people with physical disabilities by maximizing independence, personal empowerment and community participation.

"And with each power chord and cymbal crash we do on stage, we know in our hearts that it's not just live entertainment, it's another tangible step towards equal opportunity, self-sufficiency, dignity and quality of life for kids in need."

"Participating in Rock for Dimes is such a fun way for us to support the great programs and work that March of Dimes does for children and adults living with disabilities," says Ron Fox, a band member from Toronto. "As recreational amateur musicians, we had a fantastic time playing music for a full house of friends and family while raising money for a great cause! The sound was excellent both on-stage and off and we would like to thank all of the organizers and corporate sponsors for their generous support and for their efforts in making the event such a success."

By Dennis Ullman, Special Projects Consultant, March of Dimes

March of Dimes Canada is seeking new communities to host Rock for Dimes fundraisers. For more information, or to find a Rock for Dimes event in your city, please visit [www.rockfordimes.ca](http://www.rockfordimes.ca). For more information on the programs and services offered by March of Dimes Canada, please visit [www.marchofdimes.ca](http://www.marchofdimes.ca).



**ROCK FOR DIMES**  
FUNDS RAISED BENEFIT MARCH OF DIMES CANADA



*The world of DJing is an alluring one, filled with bright lights, big sounds and beautiful people - DJs are the new rock stars.*

By Ian Paron

# So You Want to Be a DJ?

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE



The world of DJing is an alluring one, filled with bright lights, big sounds and beautiful people - DJs are the new rock stars. The exciting lifestyles of DJs such as Tiesto and David Guetta are well popularised in the media, moving DJing into the forefront of entertainment.

To add to the excitement, DJing is more accessible to the masses than ever before, requiring less gear and less money to get started. Gone are the days of back breaking record crates and trailers full of speakers; a powerful DJ setup will now fit comfortably inside a compact car.

There are things to consider, however, before plunging into the world of beat bangers and turntablists.

When just starting out, you will most likely find yourself leaning towards the digital domain; this means your DJ experience will involve a laptop and audio files (mp3, wav, aiff etc.). Most record labels now release music for download far in advance of a physical copy (cd, vinyl). Also, there are tons of great online DJ record pools to join, where you can find songs in various forms (dirty, clean, instrumental, a capella) that make life that much easier.

After deciding to go the digital route, it is important to determine what kind of DJ you are going to be. This is very important because it will determine something that is dear to everyone's hearts and pockets - MONEY!

If you are going to be a bedroom DJ, then your budget can be significantly lower than someone who is planning to rock nightclubs and festivals. While you don't have to seal your fate with your first purchase, keep in mind that you can save money in the future by making the right choices now.

All previous things considered, the easiest and most cost effective way to jump into the DJ world is with the purchase of a DJ controller. A DJ controller is a hardware device designed to mimic a classic DJ setup (think two turntables and a mixer) in an all-in-one unit.

Controllers come in different shapes, sizes and prices, but the general layout remains the same. These units hook up to your laptop by USB and allow you to control DJ software and play music. Most DJ controllers have a built-in soundcard; this allows you to connect your controller directly to an amp or powered speaker. This plug and play ability, along with ease of portability, makes DJ controllers a must within the mobile DJ community (think wedding and corporate DJs). When taking the low entry level price point into consideration, controllers are normally the first stop for many first time DJs.

When starting out and not trying to break the bank, a controller such as the **Numark Mixtrack Pro II** (390416, \$299<sup>95</sup>) or the **Hercules DJ Console MK4** (324769, \$199) is a good choice and has everything you need, sans laptop and speakers, to get started.

If you want something a little more advanced, you can check out the **Native Instruments Kontrol S2/Kontrol S4** (352076, \$499<sup>99</sup> / 330509, \$599<sup>99</sup>) or the **Denon DN-MC3000** (370743, \$429.) Adding a few more features and coming with more powerful software, these controllers will allow you to be more creative and add more dynamics to your DJ set.

For the professional wedding DJ, or the DJ who wants a feature-packed piece of gear, **Pioneer's** flagship controller is the **DDJSX** (379779, \$1039) or there's the **Vestax VCI-400** (359178, \$799) - both well-engineered pieces of DJ gear designed with the necessary bells and whistles to make the most demanding DJ comfortable, no matter what the environment.

These are but a few examples of the many offerings out there.

Another thing to consider is that many of these controllers can only be used with preferred software - so if you are partial to a particular one (Serato DJ, Traktor, Virtual DJ, etc.), make sure that your controller of choice is compatible.

If your mind is set on becoming the next festival rocking DJ, then your ambitions may lead you to some more high end gear. You may be interested in a more classic DJ setup such as two turntables/CD players and a mixer with or without a laptop. If using a laptop, you will likely be using a DVS (Digital Vinyl System) like **Serato** or **Traktor**. These systems are slightly more complex to set up than a DJ controller, but usually have more capabilities and a higher sound and build quality.

For this scenario, let's consider a DJ system consisting of a DJ mixer, two CD players and one interface (soundcard). The setup would be as follows:

Your laptop connects to the interface via USB; the interface has inputs and outputs for a right and left deck. The output of the CD player to the left of the mixer connects to the left input on the interface, and the right CD player output connects to the right input on the interface. The left output on the interface connects to Input One on the mixer and the right output connects to Input Two.

If you are already familiar with a traditional turntable and mixer setup, then all you need to remember is that the soundcard goes in between the turntables and the mixer in the signal chain.

If you're still yearning to go pro but want to ditch the laptop for a more in-touch-with-your-audience approach (or you just want to mimic your favourite EDM DJ), then consider the **Pioneer CDJ 2000 Nexus** media player (380353, \$2079.) Along with a **DJM900**, two **CDJ 2000s** make a potent combination. The setup would be the same as the above; just go directly from the CDJs to the **DJM**. For this set up, the music files are contained on either an SD card or USB thumb/hard drive that you plug into the **CDJ**.

While these are just some of the different options available on the market, regardless of model, the set up more or less remains the same.

There are a few staples in the DJ industry such as **Pioneer CDJs**, or **Technics 1200s** (and, since the 1200 is no longer manufactured, the popular alternative, **Stanton STR8-150** (204201, \$599.) There are also many new options popping up that are worth your attention. Most manufacturers have competitive offerings in every price category; this includes both hardware and software.

So make sure you do your own research and try out as many options as possible before making your choice. Your local DJ or PA specialist at **Long & McQuade** can offer great advice too.

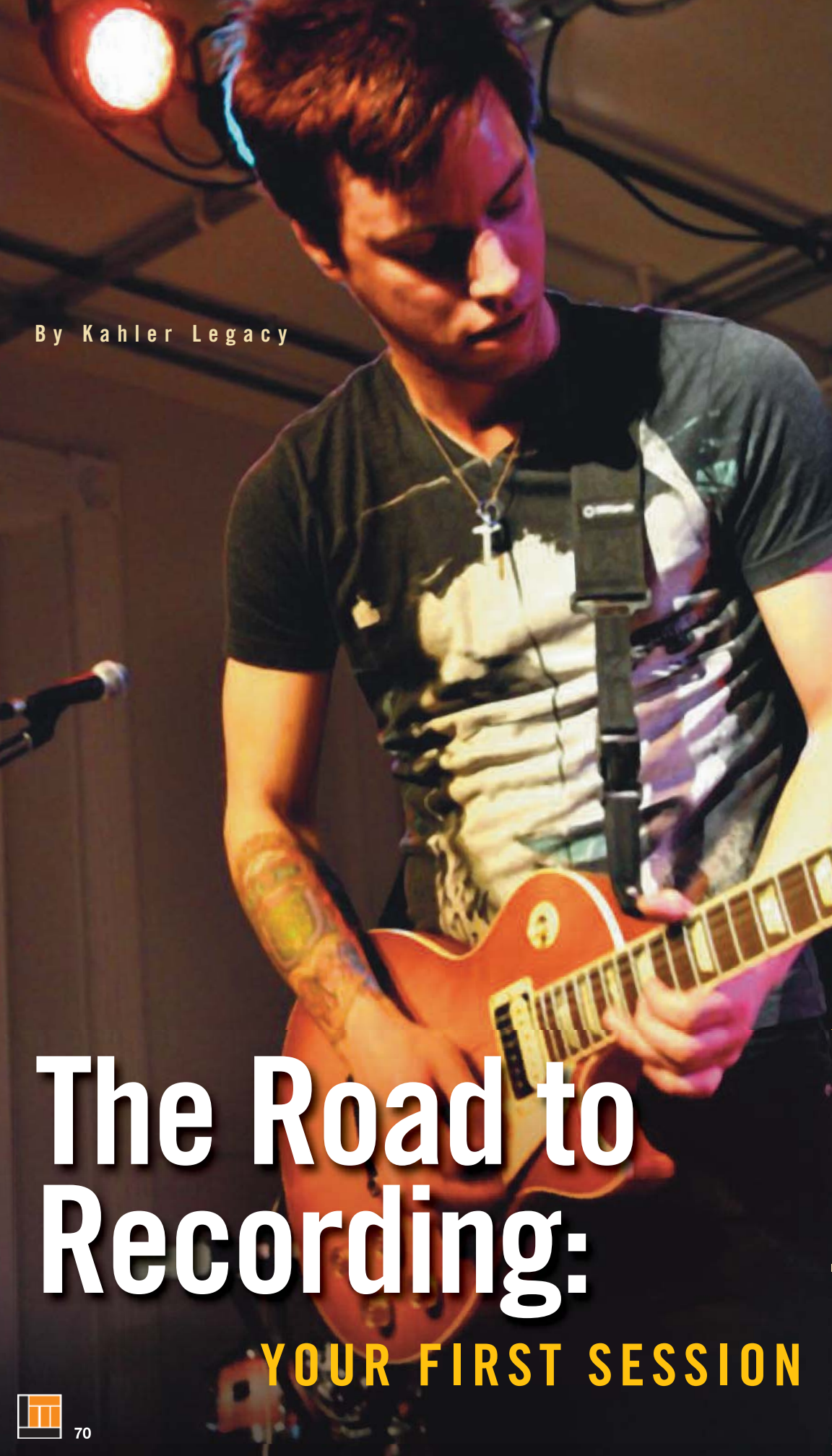


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*Ian Paron is a professional gear head and has been playing for seven years both as a club and corporate/wedding DJ. He also does studio production, recording and live sound. He works at Long & McQuade in North York.*





A young man with dark hair and a beard is playing a red electric guitar in a recording studio. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a graphic design and a necklace with a cross. He has tattoos on his left arm. The background is a dimly lit studio with a microphone stand and a light fixture visible.

By Kahler Legacy

# The Road to Recording:

**YOUR FIRST SESSION**



## Why Do You Want to Record? Who is the Product For?

These are the first questions you should ask yourself.

Are you aiming to sell your music; present it as a jingle to a commercial company; simply to have for your own enjoyment? The possibilities are endless, and narrowing it down can give you a better idea of how to begin.

For the sake of this article, let's focus on being a band that is looking to create a press kit, EP or album for the intention of reaching audiences and record labels.

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*If you're seeking the attention of labels and radio stations, keep in mind that your song should be captivating in a short period of time.*

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## Getting Started: Tips on Being Prepared.

Even for the most accomplished artist or established band, entering the studio can be a stressful time if you are not prepared. On the flip side, being in the studio and completing your project can also be an exciting, rewarding experience! There are a few things to consider before beginning the studio journey.

1. Do you know your material? Nothing makes your recording experience less stressful than knowing your parts in and out. There shouldn't be a passage in your song(s) that makes you nervous as the record button is pressed; you should be confident in your ability and your knowledge of the piece of music you crafted from your own two hands (or feet, mouth, etc). So practice, practice, practice – there can never be enough. When you're paying a studio by the hour to record your material and don't know your parts, you could waste valuable time and money.

In a band setting, it is always great to practice in various configurations: as a group without vocals, or with only the bass player and drummer, or as an acoustic rehearsal with focus only on vocals and harmonies. These are great ways to better learn your material and see how everyone is playing together, for the song. This will also help you if you decide to record your parts separately when in the studio.

**Side Note:** There can always be the opportunity for some "studio magic" – a guitar solo that just felt right (and came out of nowhere!), or a drum fill that was played just a bit differently than the original.

2. Is your group functioning as a band? - A group of musicians generally falls under two categories when working towards being a band: the "individual" band or the "together" band.

The "individual" band is made up of musicians who only play for themselves rather than for the song; they might be focused on personal accomplishment only.

The "together" band is tight; each player is a cog, and his or her parts complement the other parts and other band members in order to perform the song.

A great way to find out in which category your band currently lies, is to record your rehearsals. Listening to these recordings as a band can help you determine if each player knows his or her parts, and is complementing each part of the song.

You may want to compare your rehearsal recordings to recordings

by your favourite artists. At this point you should only focus on song construction, not sound quality, for your comparison.

## Quick Tips!

**Vocalists** – Consider finding a shorter way to say what you're trying to say. If you've got a single verse with 18 sentences, for example, try to cut it down. Sometimes too many words can turn a melody into a jangle of spoken words.

**Guitarists** – Try playing some parts in different places to see if they fit better. A great way to get a big sound is by doubling tracks. The more you double the tracks the bigger they can get - although too many might muddy everything up. You can also thicken a part slightly by doubling it and keeping the volume of the second take lower than the original take.

**Bassists/Drummers** – Are you the meat and potatoes of the song? The more locked-in your grooves are to each other, the tighter the band will sound as a whole. Your time to shine may be when there are no vocals. Try placing drum and bass riffs in open spaces in the song.

3. Will you be recording to a metronome? There is no right or wrong answer to this question; it all depends on the music. During rehearsals, practice with and without a metronome. This will help you determine if it is right for the band and the song. It will also help your band decide if a song is being played too fast or too slow.

4. Will you be tracking individually or together? It's become increasingly more common over the past 25 years for bands to track individually, rather than all at once. However, depending on the group, it may be more fitting to capture the sound of a live, one-take performance. Be prepared to do either, as a song could call for a live performance sound, while another could call for individual tracking. Discuss this with the studio engineer in advance of your first session so you are prepared.

**Side Note:** If you're seeking the attention of labels and radio stations, keep in mind that your song should be captivating in a short period of time. Also keep in mind that in order for a song to be air-able both on radio and television, it must be kept within 3-4 minutes in length. Any longer and they may want to edit it down.

## Second, Third and Fifth Opinions?

When you've reached the point where you believe you are ready to begin the recording process, it would be valuable for your music to be heard by other ears. An unbiased audience can give you a perspective of your music that you weren't able to attain yourself. Just as it is not always easy to know what shirt looks best on you, it is also not always easy to know if your music is at its best (or near best) point.

You could also bring one of your rehearsal recordings to the studio engineer so he or she can offer some advice and have an understanding of the upcoming recording session. You may want to bring some albums from your favourite artists in order to discuss the type of sound that you are looking for.

## Location, Location, Location

So, you're almost ready to record. Your material is tight, you know your parts. The next thing to do is decide where you want to record.

If you don't have a budget to take your project to a professional studio, don't fear. With today's technology and resources, setting up a home-based studio might be better suited to your needs – but that's a topic for another article!

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*An active producer & musician in the local community, Kahler has been working for Long & McQuade Fredericton for 3 years, and was a teacher at Ostanek's Music (the new Long & McQuade location in St. Catharines, Ontario.)*



**Handheld recorders, for quick and easy capture of your rehearsals, are available for purchase in-store and online starting at \$79<sup>99</sup>, and can be rented for as little as \$11/day!**



# Setting Up a Home Studio

*Home recording has never been more accessible. There's a wide range of gear and software available for even a modest budget that can get you up and running quickly. There's a lot to learn about recording, though, and many people are intimidated by the learning curve to get started. In this article, I'll introduce you to the basic concepts and equipment necessary to set up your own home studio.*

By Mark Garrison

## The Traditional Setup

The best way to understand how a modern studio works is to look at how studios used to be set up - because digital workstations are all based on the same fundamental architecture. I call this the “traditional setup” because it’s how studios looked during the heyday of analog recording.

The traditional setup consisted of a mixing board, a multitrack reel-to-reel tape deck, an amplifier and monitors (speakers). The mixing board was split into two sections: an input section (for controlling the signal that is going into the recorder) and an output section (for monitoring the recording and creating the final mix).

Figure 1 shows the input section of this setup. Audio sources (microphones, etc.) are run into individual channels on the mixer, giving access to mic preamps, equalizer, and volume control. Adjustments made in this section of the mixer will be recorded to tape and, therefore, are permanent. Direct outputs from each of these channels are then connected to the individual inputs of the reel-to-reel deck where the signal is recorded.

So that the recording can be monitored and mixed, the outputs from each track of the tape deck are routed to their own individual channels on the mixing board, as seen in Figure 2. These channels are used to create a mix of the recorded sounds. Adjustments and effects applied here can be changed until final mixdown.

The main outputs of the mixer are fed into an amplifier that powers a pair of studio monitors. Self-powered monitors (also called active monitors), which have the amplifier built into the speaker box, are now very common, eliminating the need for a separate amplifier.

In this setup, the final mix is recorded on to a separate stereo device. The resulting tape is called a “mixed master” and can be sent to a mastering suite to be prepared for reproduction.

While modern studios look quite different, the same process and routing is still happening, though usually more subtly in the digital realm. Now, let’s look at modern studio setups.

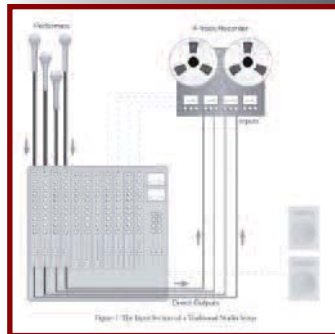


FIG. 1

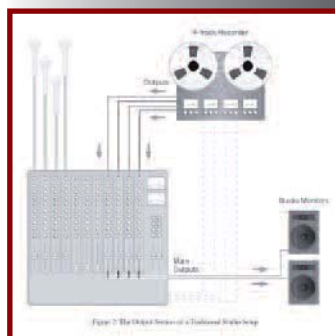


FIG. 2

## Standalone Audio Workstations

Standalone workstations take every element of the traditional setup and place it in a single piece of equipment. They can be small enough to fit in your pocket, or large enough to cover a small desk, and their features and price points cover an equally wide range.

Standalone workstations are portable and convenient. Most contain everything you need to take your recording from start to finish – just plug in a microphone, instruments, and a pair of speakers or headphones, and you have a studio. Another advantage of standalone DAWs (Digital Audio Workstations) is that, because their processors are dedicated to a specific set of functions, they tend to be very stable and require less maintenance.

The main limitation of a standalone workstation is that, because all the hardware is contained in the same unit, there are usually few-to-no options for upgrading (eg. number of inputs, quality of effects, etc.). If a unit no longer serves your purposes, you can always trade it in for a model with more features.

## Computer-Based Audio Workstations

Computer-based DAWs are also extremely popular. With a piece of software, and possibly a little hardware, you can turn almost any computer or tablet into a recording studio. This can be very appealing because, assuming you already have a suitable computer, the cost to get started can be lower. Like the standalone workstation, almost all of the elements of the traditional setup are handled by software.

The quickest and easiest way to start recording on your computer is to use the microphone input on your existing soundcard. This will work, but is extremely limiting in terms of quality and control, and usually won’t record more than one track at once. An easy and affordable upgrade can be made by purchasing a microphone that connects directly to your computer via USB. These mics can offer very good sound quality at a reasonable price, though you will still be limited to one mic at a time. To record multiple audio sources at a time, you will need to use an audio interface, which is a device that connects to your computer (often via USB or Firewire), providing multiple inputs and outputs.

Unlike standalone workstations, it can be very easy to upgrade your computer-based workstation by adding RAM, getting a new (or an additional) interface to add more inputs, or purchasing software plugins to add new effects and functionality to your DAW.

Computer-based systems can be more prone to issues than standalone units. Due to the wide range of activities and other software we use our computers for, as well as the large number of possible combinations of hardware, operating systems and software versions, care must be taken when upgrading any part of the system to ensure optimal performance.



## What to Consider Before Buying a Recording Workstation

I've given you a brief overview of the main options for starting a home studio. In this last section, I'd like to give you a list of factors to consider when choosing a home studio setup.

**Number of tracks:** This is the total number of individual signals over which you can record and maintain individual control. The more complex the recordings you plan to make, the more tracks you'll need.

**Number of inputs:** This will control how many tracks can be recorded at once. If you only plan to record yourself and your guitar, two inputs will likely be enough, but you'll want more if you plan to record a drum kit or a whole group at once.

**Number of mic preamps:** This will affect how many microphones can be plugged directly into the unit. It is not uncommon to see devices with four or eight inputs, but with mic preamps on only half of them. Line-level devices, such as synthesizers or mixers, do not require preamps, and separate preamps can be used with inputs that don't have them built in.

**Media/storage:** On standalone DAWs you'll want to be aware of what type of media the recording is being stored on, how much storage there is, and what your options are to archive old projects.

**Quality:** If you're just planning to record for fun, make a demo, or capture rehearsals, then entry-level equipment will serve you just fine, but if you plan to make recordings for sale or other distribution, higher-quality gear will likely be worth the investment.

**Growth:** All workstations have a learning curve to them, so once you get to know a system, it's nice to be able to stick with it. Think about your future needs and try to choose a system that can grow with you – that is to say, if you think you might be taking on more ambitious projects in the future, pick software that has a professional version you can eventually upgrade to, or a standalone workstation that has fuller-featured versions in the same family to which you can graduate.

*Mark Garrison is the author of The Encyclopedia of Home Recording. In his classes, workshops and writing he focuses on teaching how to create better recordings through a greater understanding of the tools and techniques of the studio. Visit his website at [www.homerecordingbook.com](http://www.homerecordingbook.com).*



# A Suggested L&M Shopping List for Setting Up Your First Home Studio:



## STANDALONE RECORDERS:

The **BOSS BR-80** (345383) \$299 is a micro digital recorder that is small enough to fit in your pocket, and the **BOSS BR-800** (321957) \$449 is an 8-track portable recording studio that runs on batteries!

## COMPUTER BASED DAWS:

**Cubase 7** (382684) \$499<sup>99</sup>, the most recent version of the popular software, lets you record, edit and mix your songs, while providing you with professional, studio-grade audio quality at all stages of the creative process.

**Ableton Live 9** (390941) \$499 introduces new dimensions of creative possibilities with Session View automation, inspiring Audio to MIDI tools, curved automation envelopes, new and improved studio effects, an enhanced browser, and more.



## SPEAKERS:

Try **Yorkville Sound's YSM-5** (333738) \$180 each, the most compact studio monitor in the YSM series – perfect for small listening spaces and desktop studios.

If you're looking for something bigger, the **KRK RP8 G2** (290005) \$279<sup>99</sup> each, is a great choice, with its 8-inch woofers that combine efficiency and flat response for a difference you can hear and feel.

## HEADPHONES:

**Apex HP96** closed ear monitor headphones (332027) \$74<sup>99</sup> are a great option.

**Sennheiser's HD280** closed ear headphones (175524) \$110<sup>99</sup> are another popular choice.

Both of these models boast extremely robust construction combined with extensive features that meet the requirements of today's most demanding applications. Their collapsible design and swiveling ear cups offer maximum flexibility in any application.



## STORAGE DEVICES:

Store your tunes on an external hard drive like the **500GB Glyph GPT50-500-1102** (379255) \$195, whose triple interface consists of USB 2.0, eSATA and FireWire 800.



## NOISE CONTROL:

**Primacoustic's VoxGuard** (317505) \$99<sup>99</sup> controls ambient space around the mic, creates an intimate sound field and delivers a cleaner, more articulated, voice track.

**Auralex's ProPAD** professional monitor isolation pads (377123) \$115/pair are extremely useful for decoupling monitors and reducing structural vibrations.



The equipment options and personal needs are plentiful, so be sure to consult with your local Long & McQuade store's recording specialists. They're happy to help!



# 101 Reasons to Rent

A long time ago, in a storefront far far away, Long & McQuade's rental program was born.

Actually, the year was 1958, and the storefront was at 803 Yonge Street in Toronto. And it wasn't Luke Skywalker but Jack Long, the company's founder, who gave birth to the concept, in response to his musician friends constantly coming in to the fledgling store to borrow an instrument for a night or a weekend.

The notion of borrowing for a nominal fee quickly took off, and so began the ability to rent from Long & McQuade.

Over the past fifty years, the program has been enhanced and expanded, but the mission behind it has remained the same: to make musical instruments and equipment available to people in an easy and affordable way.

There are many reasons why people choose to rent, even when the option of Long & McQuade's easy in-store financing is available.



## **I've always wanted to try playing the drums / piano / flute / trumpet, etc....**

You're a guitarist by trade but a drummer at heart, and would like to see if you've got the skill and patience to ace a new instrument. With our rental program, there are no long-term commitments. You choose the length of your rental, be it for a day, a week or a month. We even offer special school year rental rates for students. If you're lovin' the drums / piano / flute / trumpet, etc., we'll apply a portion of the rent you've paid toward its purchase. Or, if you're not feeling the love and the rental period is not yet over, we'll give you a refund for the time remaining.

## **I read about this new keyboard and would love to try it out.**

Want to try before you buy? By all means! We're constantly replenishing and adding to our rental fleet, so we often have the latest and greatest gear available to take for a spin.

## **I hate lugging my drumkit from home to my rehearsal space every week.**

Save the back-breaking schlep. Consider renting a second helping of your heavy gear so that you've got the best in both places. You can rent a full drumkit for as little as \$35/month. Chances are your chiropractor charges more than that each week.

## **I'm playing a show this weekend and need a mandolin.**

Or a djembe. Or a piccolo. Or a full PA system. Whether you're playing a show, recording a song or DJing your cousin's wedding, sometimes you need that something extra for the occasion. Chances are we've got just what you need.

## **Ugh. My synth just died and my band's playing tomorrow.**

Never fear. Not only can you rent a replacement in a pinch...but we also have expert guitar and electronic technicians on staff who can take a look at your sick (and not "sick" in the cool way) gear, and diagnose and hopefully cure whatever it is that ails it.

## **I'm from Halifax and am flying out to Vancouver Island for a gig.**

One of the true benefits of dealing with Long & McQuade - we have 61 locations across Canada and 1 database! So if you're a customer at our Dartmouth store and want to rent something from our Nanaimo location, the process is seamless.

The reasons for renting from Long & McQuade are endless, but they all benefit from our same creed, and that's to help you make music when you want, with the gear you want, easily and affordably.

## **A Word About Protection**

If you're looking for peace of mind for your piece of gear, you might want to consider purchasing Long & McQuade's rental protection.

For a \$4 fee, your rented equipment is covered against theft to a maximum of \$1,500. Talk to your friendly neighbourhood L&M salesperson for all of the details.

### ***Rent the strings, own the campfire.***

Rent an acoustic guitar from \$7/week.

Rent a banjo from \$12/week.

### ***Rent the keys, own the inspiration.***

Rent an 88-note electric piano from \$49/month.

### ***Rent the system, own the party.***

Rent a small PA system from \$26/weekend.

### ***Rent the drums, own the beat.***

Rent an acoustic kit with cymbals from \$35/month.

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### ***Rent the lights, own the night.***

Rent lighting from \$5/day.

### ***Rent the mic, own the song.***

Rent a microphone from \$8/month.

**Check out more gear and rates  
at [long-mcquade.com/rentals](http://long-mcquade.com/rentals).**





# Sit Up Straight and Pay Attention (to Your Technique!)

THE RELATIONSHIP OF  
TECHNIQUE AND TONE  
ON THE DRUMSET

By Mike Murza



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## *The first thing to understand when playing this demanding musical instrument is that you must learn to use the laws of physics to your advantage – that means making friends with gravity!*

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A guitar player once told me that good tone was in the fingers, not the equipment. He claimed that a player like Jimi Hendrix could pick up absolutely any guitar and make it sing. Legend also has it that saxophone great Charlie Parker was playing on a borrowed plastic alto sax when he was recorded at the famous Massey Hall concert in 1953 alongside Miles Davis, Max Roach and Charles Mingus. The result was one of the most famous and beloved jazz recordings of all time. These inspiring anecdotes make some drummers think – does the same apply to ME? How much of my own technique goes into the sound quality of what I'm playing? It's all the drum's fault if it sounds bad, right?

Wrong!

The truth is that your playing technique can have a huge impact on the sound quality of your instrument as well as your ability to control dynamics (volume), and tempo (speed). It can also greatly aid or hinder your ease of movement around the drumset.

Since everyone has different lengths of arms and legs in addition to varying shapes and sizes of hands, it would be impossible to expect every drummer in the world to play with the exact same technique. There are, however, some universal truths about how your playing is affected by the way you hold your stick and the way you strike your drums and cymbals.

The first thing to understand when playing this demanding musical instrument is that you must learn to use the laws of physics to your advantage – that means making friends with gravity! It takes far less effort to dribble a basketball against the floor than against a wall. A drumstick behaves the same way – if you are not picking your stick up and bringing it more or less straight down, then you are fighting against nature! When struck dead centre straight down, the drum head will vibrate evenly from centre to edge (think of dropping a pebble in a pool of water) and “activate” the sound of the wood shell. Like a basketball, the stick will also more readily bounce straight back up, ready for the next downward stroke.

Having your drums set up at too much of an angle will really work against this concept. A drum angled too sharply will often cause a drummer to alter his or her playing technique so that the stick is no longer being brought down, but somewhat forward. The stick will not bounce back up so easily and additional energy will be spent (especially in your forearms) to keep bringing the stick back off the drum, aiming for the centre, and “throwing” it forward again.

This unnecessary use of energy will fatigue your arms, wrists and fingers faster and make controlling speed and volume much more difficult.

The other side effect of this battle against gravity is usually a damaged, pitted drumhead!

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## *Sit with your hands in front of you as if you are eating dinner at a table, elbows loosely by your side (but not up in the air!)*

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In order to become comfortable with this essential technique, one must first be comfortable when playing. Sit straight up, do not slouch forward or hunch your back – that will only encourage you to keep your hands and forearms down low and in between your knees. Sit with your hands in front of you as if you are eating dinner at a table, elbows loosely by your side (but not up in the air!). Some people find that keeping the backs of your hands facing upward (or at least the knuckles of your index fingers) also helps ensure better sticking technique and posture.

Striking a drum (evenly tensioned to your liking) squarely and properly should produce a solid and well defined sound. Poor posture, bad stick gripping habits and sharply angled drums are all factors to watch out for when practising to correct or perfect your technique and sound. If you are not sure about how you are doing, ask an experienced teacher for advice!

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*Mike Murza studied at Berklee and the University Of Saskatchewan where he finished his Bachelor of Music Performance degree in 1999. He has been a private instructor for over 15 years and has conducted workshops for beginner band students in Saskatoon and Southern Saskatchewan communities. In addition to being a busy teacher, tech and performer, Mike maintains a keen interest in notational history, percussion organology (history of instruments) and medieval music. Mike is a drum specialist at Long & McQuade Saskatoon.*



*Learning from your mistakes is part of life.  
Learning from other people's mistakes is even better.*

# Don't Leave Home Without It:

## SAVE YOUR GIG WITH AN EMERGENCY REPAIR KIT

By Pierre Bazin

Any drummer who's had a decent amount of experience gigging has, at some point, come across an emergency situation with his or her gear. Sometimes it's a quick and easy fix, like a key screw coming loose on your double pedal. One quick turn with your drum key and you're back on track. If you forgot your drum key, however, it's not so simple anymore. Now you're stuck scouring the area for a spare key, wasting valuable time and energy that you'll need to prepare for and play the gig.

Other situations can be more disastrous, like breaking the batter side of your bass drum head in the middle of a set. Without a spare head, you'll go the rest of the set without a kick drum.

Learning from your mistakes is part of life. Learning from other people's mistakes is even better. Being prepared to quickly and efficiently deal with the problem before it even comes up is the best way to handle what life throws at you. That is why every gigging drummer should have an emergency repair kit. An emergency repair kit is a collection of repair and replacement parts that often go missing or break before or during a gig. This kit should be portable, easy to access, and consist of anything that will help you get back on your feet should anything on your gear go wrong.



Keep in mind that this notion, of always being prepared with “spare parts,” applies to *any* musician – be it a guitarist, bassist, sax player and more.

I keep my repair kit in the trunk of my car if I'm transporting my own gear, or the vehicle my drums are loaded into. It's a good idea to keep it near you while you play. Never leave it at home, or anywhere you might forget it. Having an emergency kit prepared won't do you any good if you don't have it with you!

Some things to consider putting in your emergency repair kit:

## Spare Bass and Snare Heads

These two drums are the heart and soul of your kit. You can usually survive the rest of the gig without a tom if it breaks (depending on the music you're playing) but if a kick or snare head goes out, you're out of luck. You might even want to consider having a spare snare drum ready to go beside your kit as you play.

## Drum Keys

I can't stress this one enough. Odds are, you have a sizable stack of drum keys somewhere at home or at your rehearsal space. Odds are, they are the last thing that you'll think to bring with you when you're scrambling to get all your gear loaded in a hurry, and the first thing you'll find yourself needing. Keep at least one in your kit at all times. Even better, always have one on your person while handling drums. Many drum keys have holes on them for placing them onto keychains!

## Spare Sticks

If you gig often, you probably have a stick bag with at least a tree's worth of sticks in it. Should you forget your stick bag, having a few spare sets can make a huge difference, especially when you're on the road.

## Small Replacement Parts

This can include anything from cymbal felts, wing nuts, tension rods, key screws, beaters, beater patches, pedal springs, dampeners and tone control rings, cleaners/polish, duct tape, Allen keys (I keep a whole set for any size), and anything else on your kit that could get worn down, broken or lost. Get to know what small parts are on your equipment and where you can get replacements. Pick up a small tool box or tackle box to keep all these small parts in.

## A Pencil and a Sharpie

Sooner or later, you're going to have to write something down. If you're handed a chart that belongs to someone else, you'll want a pencil so you can erase any notes when you're done with it. A black Sharpie is good for writing out last-minute set lists. Black will show up more clearly than any other colour under stage lighting.

Having this equipment ready to go at any time will save you from stressful and embarrassing situations. Proper maintenance of your gear will also help you keep your gear functioning and reliable. The better you keep your gear, the less you'll need to use your emergency kit. Keep your drums, hardware and cymbals in bags or cases. Clean and inspect your equipment regularly. Trust your instincts. If you get a feeling that something could go wrong during a gig, take appropriate measures to prevent it from happening.

Being able to anticipate things going wrong and dealing with them beforehand will give you peace of mind and allow you to focus on the real reason you're at the gig: to have fun and play music.

*Pierre Bazin is a multi-instrumentalist and clinician from Saskatoon, SK. He is the sales associate in the drum department at Long & McQuade Saskatoon North. He is currently the drummer for the melodic death metal band Singularity, and the piper, whistler, bassist and vocalist for the Celtic rock band Wenches & Rogues. Check out his material on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/SingularityCanada](http://www.facebook.com/SingularityCanada) or [www.facebook.com/WenchesAndRogues](http://www.facebook.com/WenchesAndRogues).*



# Some Key Things For Your Kit:

**Mapex  
Drum Key**

(351821)

**\$3<sup>50</sup>**

**Evans Clear  
Beater Patch**

(67588)

**\$6<sup>50</sup>** pkg

**Gibraltar  
Cymbal Felts**

(52783/52076)

From **\$4<sup>10</sup>** /4-pack

**Sabian 250ml  
Cymbal Cleaner**

(3259)

**\$9<sup>10</sup>**

**RTom Moongel  
Damper Pads**

(41800)

**\$6<sup>70</sup>** /4-pack

And of course drum heads, sticks, beaters and more – all available at your local Long & McQuade store or online at [www.long-mcquade.com](http://www.long-mcquade.com).





# Perfect Practice Makes Perfect

By Nigel "Maynstreet" Maynard



Practice makes perfect.

Perhaps this is something that you have heard from the days of your youth.

"Do you want to become good at something? Well, practice makes perfect!"

True – there is something to be said about practicing or preparing to become competent in something. I recall playing video games at an early age – I would loop a video game over and over again in order to learn how to do the right move or combination to pass a particular level.

Likewise it can be said when learning to play piano, or drums, or any instrument skillfully.

I remember times when just doing the simplest "double stroke roll" seemed to take me eons to get. Finally, at long last – I seemed to have mastered it...

...so I thought.

Going back and listening to how I "practiced" my double stroke rolls, I remember that sense of achievement - only to hear how it sounded against someone who actually did it and practiced it "correctly." My snare drum double stroke roll sounded like a "snare drum speech impediment."

What did I do wrong? I practiced so hard in order to make this thing right – and all that time was wasted as I failed to get the correct results.

So how do we practice?

Let's look at it in 3 ways.

Think of practicing as a meal (a lot of my metaphorical references revolve around food – go figure!)

Break that meal into 3 parts.

The stuff you love to eat.

The stuff you are ok with eating.

The stuff that is good for you, but you'd rather not eat at all.

Let's start with the things that you would rather not eat – but again are indeed good for you.

These are the things that may come off as boring, difficult to digest, or perceived as not important. For those of you who love meat – and meat alone – these are your brussel sprouts, carrots, broccoli and spinach.

---

*We will see all of our time pass doing the things that we love, rather than getting to the things that we need to work on...*

---

**Tackle these things first.**

Why?

Well – let's face it. If you do the other stuff first – for many of us we will not want to go back and do the tedious or difficult things. We will see all of our time pass doing the things that we love, rather than getting to the things that we need to work on...

Once we have done that, we can move to the next section of things that we are ok with doing. Consider this to be the potatoes and gravy. It is at this stage that you see things that could indeed benefit your playing expression. Might even be a little bit cool.

Now you go to the last section. Depending on what you like to eat, this is either your steak and seafood, or your dessert! Regardless – this is the part of the meal that you have been waiting to get to, and you are so stoked to get to it. It is almost like a "reward" for getting through all the other stuff...

...and it is.

Maybe this part of your practicing is the time where you get to play along with some of your favourite tracks (and hear how some of the things you practiced before now sound a lot more solid and smooth.)

And don't forget to budget your time. Don't gorge yourself on potatoes, or even on brussel sprouts. You won't end up with a well-rounded meal.

You have at least 3 areas to cover – and you have to break it down into the time slot that you have.

---

*Start off with things more slowly so that you can hear them correctly and clearly.*

---

So....

If you have 3 hours – you have 1 hour for each section.

If you have 30 minutes – you have 10 minutes for each section.

You get the idea.

Start off with things more slowly so that you can hear them correctly and clearly.

My double stroke rolls started off much too fast because I wanted to sound accomplished and cool quickly.

**This method doesn't work.**

On top of that – I had to go back – undo my bad habits that I developed in doing it wrong, and start again.

...very time consuming.

I had to slow down my double stroke roll to a very slow pace, and make sure that I accented the 2nd note of the double stroke roll cleanly and evenly. Only then, when I had gotten the hang of that – (and could do it for 2 minutes straight without stopping) – I would speed it up...slightly.

When you get to that point, you will start to hear how your practice, no matter what instrument you play or task that is before you, will pay off.

The truth is...

Practice doesn't make perfect.

**"Perfect" practice makes perfect.**

Just a little food for thought...

..and now I am hungry.



*Nigel has been playing drums since he was seven years old. He studied at Humber College, has performed both nationally and internationally, and is endorsed by Mapex, Evans, Puresound, and Los Cabos. He writes and records his own material, and plays everything from Gospel to Latin to Rock.*





**I Need a  
Band Instrument...  
Help!**

Acquiring a band instrument can seem a bit overwhelming in the midst of all the other items needed for back to school. Should I buy or rent? How about rent to own? Do I need a music stand? Method book? Cleaning supplies? What happens if it gets stolen at school? Am I going to need a second mortgage to pay for this?

Ok, that's a lot of questions, but rest assured it is not as confusing as it may seem.

The first decision to be made is how you are going to get your hands on an instrument. There are a few ways to go about this:

## Renting an Instrument

This is the most common method and usually most economical overall. An affordable yearly fee is paid up front to cover the school year from September to June (as low as \$129 for the school year). Compared with purchase, the rental fee is considerably more affordable, and repairs needed during the rental period are covered as part of the plan. Here's the best part - for only \$1 per month you can purchase rental protection that provides full coverage for loss, theft or irreparable damage - that is a big worry removed from the list of concerns.

## Rent to Own

This option is similar to renting, but with 100% of your monthly payments going directly toward the purchase of the instrument, new or used. The same peace-of-mind \$1 per month protection plan is offered with this as well. The low monthly payments make this an ideal way of purchasing a new or used instrument while retaining all the benefits of the rental program - including any repairs that may be needed during the payment period.

## Purchasing a New/Used Instrument from Long & McQuade

New instruments from reputable manufacturers can be purchased starting just under \$400 while used prices will vary with age and make. New instruments have both store warranty and manufacturer's warranties. Used instruments have store warranties and have been pre-serviced in our repair shop. While you don't have the same protection plan offered for rental instruments, you can buy a performance warranty package that will cover virtually all of the same points, including loss/theft protection.

Once you make your decision about how to get your instrument, you should consider a few key accessories to go along with it for optimal performance and practice - all of which can be purchased for under \$20 each:

- Music Stand for practicing with proper posture
- Reeds for clarinets and saxophones
- Care kit for cleaning
- Method book (teacher will advise which one he/she uses)
- Metronome/tuner for practicing rhythm and for tuning

You did it! Well done. You now have your son or daughter prepared to enjoy his or her school music program to the fullest. Did I mention we also sell earplugs? Just kidding; the early squeaks and squawks will not take long to turn into beautiful music with the careful selection of a good quality, well maintained instrument.

## RECOMMENDED ACCESSORIES:

Instrument  
Care Kits  
From **\$8<sup>99</sup>** to **\$12<sup>99</sup>**



Music Stands  
From **\$11<sup>99</sup>**



Manuscript  
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# Whitehorse

THROWING OUT  
THE RULEBOOK



By Ken Kucharic



You would be hard pressed to find a harder working musician than Luke Doucet. His schedule would make even the most road-hardened musician consider another career option.

"I think the traditional approach to touring was that you had to tour to promote a record. And I've always thought that you made a record so you had an excuse to tour," he says, sounding like he's taking a page from the Grateful Dead. "That was always my attitude. I want to play a lot."

Luckily his musical partner, collaborator and fellow intrepid traveler in the genre-defying band Whitehorse just happens to be his wife, Melissa McClelland.

"Melissa and I were in each other's band. I'd go out on tour and I'd be touring a record which is a pretty intense process of playing a lot," says Luke. "Then as soon as it would wind down, she would put out a record and we would go out and tour her record. So already those were two full time careers that we were touring.

"And then any time that we had any spare time," he continues, "we'd be out on the road touring with Sarah (McLachlan)'s band. Sometimes we'd be out with Sarah full time and we'd fill in the cracks with our solo stuff. It seemed that for a few years it was myself or Melissa or Sarah, and then there would be a Blue Rodeo tour that would be on (Luke was asked to fill in for Greg Keelor, a position which he alternates with Colin Cripps, on many of the last tour dates for the louder, electric Blue Rodeo songs as Keelor has been suffering from an extremely painful hearing issue.)

"If there is anything unusual about the way we approach our careers - and I'm not saying that this is deliberate, it's just the way it ended up," Luke explains, "is that we have both been very happy working for other people. I like being a side guy. Melissa likes being a side person. I have a lot of respect for the craft, so when somebody calls, my instinct is to say, 'Of course!'

"We aren't really doing as much of that now," he admits. "Our emphasis and the priority is definitely Whitehorse now. It's taken a long time to get to the point where I'm able to actually say, 'You know, I can't go out as a hired gun right now because I need to focus on Whitehorse.'"

---

*"If you can exercise the discipline to do less, ultimately I think at the end of the day you have something that will maybe have more of an immediate emotional impact on people's ears."*

---

The current subject of their combined focus is their first full length record entitled **The Fate of the World Depends on this Kiss**. From the opening slow burn and taut intensity of "Achilles' Desire" and "Devil's Got a Gun", with their Tchad Blake (The Black Keys) inspired production values, to the stunningly beautiful "Mismatched Eyes (Boat Song)", the McLachlan-esque "Cold July", and the proletariat homage to "Steeltown" and "No Glamour in the Hammer", it is a remarkably varied disc. As a point of evidence, **The Fate of the World Depends on this Kiss** has been shortlisted for the 2013 Polaris Prize.

The potential exposure and huge boost in street credibility, not to mention the \$30,000 paycheck that goes with the Polaris, is enough to preoccupy anyone.

Though thankful and quite flattered by the nomination for such a prestigious prize, Luke pragmatically explains, "You get up in the morning and you get in your car with your gear and you go to your gig or you get on a plane and you go somewhere and you play, and the mechanics of being a working musician are always so much bigger...you think about those big picture issues like, 'What if I win an award or what if this happens, or what if I have a hit record...?' You think about those things once every 6 or 8 months.

"I used to wake up in a cold sweat once a year and think, 'Oh my god, I'm not Neil Young! I thought for sure I was going to be Neil Young.' And that usually happens once every 6 months or so. Usually right around the time you're about to put out your record, but the other 364 days a year you're just trying to get to sound check on time."

Luke's days as a journeyman musician like Mike Campbell, Marc Ribot or Pete Anderson have given him a tremendously grounded and practical insight regarding life and what constitutes "success" as a professional musician.

"One thing that makes being a working, touring, aspiring musician strange from a lot of other aspirations in the world is that your heroes or the people that inspire you to play music are usually really famous, sort of freakishly cartoon-like people, whether it's Keith Richards or Jimmy Hendrix or whoever inspires you," Luke says. "They're legends. They're heroes. They're almost deities.

"If you decide, 'You know what? I think I'm going to be a lawyer,' you're probably inspired by an uncle or a neighbour who is a successful lawyer. You think, 'Well, I'm going to work hard and I'm going to go to school and I'm going to study and I'm going to have a law practice,' and there's a very good chance that you will achieve those goals. A very good chance that you might surpass the accomplishments of your uncle or your neighbour or whoever it is that inspired you. There's very little chance when you are a young musician inspired by Jimmy Hendrix that you're going to surpass Jimmy Hendrix. So you kind of live in this really weird world of mutated expectations.

He continues, "You send a record out there, but sometimes your expectations are so unrealistically inflated that you can't help but be disappointed anyway. Because you think you're a genius. You think you're Pete Townsend and you put out this record and then you realise very quickly, 'No, I'm just another guy or another girl living in my town that's making rock n' roll records that aren't going to change the world.'

"So, anytime that something comes back like this...the Polaris...it sort of makes you think, 'Oh. Well, maybe I'm having a small influence,' or, 'maybe I'm having a small impact on the community,' or, 'maybe people are



hearing this.' Ultimately that's really all you can ask for, that somebody hears this and goes, 'I like that. That makes me want to write a song,' or, 'that makes me want to play my guitar.'

If their live show is any indication, people may leave wanting to play a lot more than just the guitar.

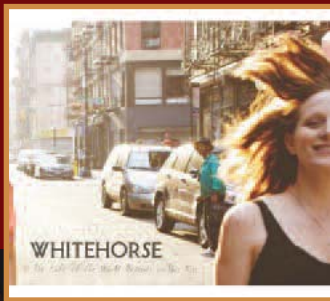
"People expect us to be just a folk duo because a lot of times when we play just the two of us that's kind of how it comes across," he says. "We got bored of that pretty fast. One thing led to another and I was like, 'Hey, what if I had a kick drum and I stomp on that? What if you have this little plywood box and you stomp on that? Then we can play percussion while we play.' And then my brain just got confused and the thought of adding loops, and the percussion, then we have pots and pans...it was really just like an ironically organic evolution of us thinking we were going to be a folk duo and realising after 6 months, 'We've created a monster.' It's fun! It's a fun monster...95% of the time we get it right," he says with a laugh. "Initially it was just practical, like, 'Let's try and make more sound for two people,' and then we sort of realised that maybe what we had built had some intrinsic value of its own."

Indeed it does. So much so that the live show, originally a practical attempt to recreate or add to the arrangements from *The Fate of the World Depends on This Kiss*, has been integrated into the writing of the next Whitehorse album.

"There's something about (it) that we want to try and encourage so we are in the midst of recording some new songs now, and for the first time ever we are actually using loops in the studio," Luke says. "We are trying to let the bed tracks be inspired by the loops as opposed to trying to build loops to try and duplicate the more traditional recording situation. I'm not sure where it's going to go, but that's what's happening right now."

One thing we can be sure of as listeners is that whatever comes of this next stage of development for Whitehorse, the resulting efforts will undoubtedly be deeply artistic, somewhat unconventional, and well worth waiting for.

"I'm sure that there are some people out there who think we have desecrated the expectations of roots music," he says. "I'm ok with that. I'm totally fine with throwing out the rulebook."



*"Sometime the amazing studio session drummer is not the perfect person. Sometimes the bass player is a better drummer for a particular song; it just depends. (There's) a quote that I ascribe to Neil Young, I think he was asked, 'Why are you so loyal to Crazy Horse?' His response was, 'They are not good enough to ruin my music.' Sometimes I understand exactly what he means and that's why sometimes your bass player is a better drummer."*

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