

BEHIND THE LINES THE JASON BLUME SEMINARS

American songwriter **Jason Blume**, whose songs have been recorded by artists as diverse as Britney Spears and The Gipsy Kings, Backstreet Boys and Tomohisa Yamashita, Escape From Earth and country artist John Berry, is coming to Australia to present a series of two-day hands-on songwriting workshops, titled *Taking Your Songs To The Next Level*, covering the lyric and melodic tools and techniques used in successful songwriting in a variety of popular styles from contemporary pop to country, R&B to folk. The workshops will provide multiple opportunities to practice crafting melodies and lyrics incorporating easy to learn techniques and participants will leave with several new songs begun and the tools to finish them. The seminars, which run 9am through 5pm both days, cost \$250/\$200 discount and run as follows: Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 May at Brisbane JMC Academy; Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 at Sydney JMC Academy, in their new Ultimo campus; and Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 at Melbourne JMC Academy. Contact the respective academies or APRA for details and bookings.

SONG SUMMIT PRESENTS "THREE WISE MONKEYS"

The good Song Summit people have invited three great international music industry experts to pop over to our place to present workshops designed to help songwriters, professional and aspiring, with insights into how to develop three important facets of any career under the collective soubriquet, **Three Wise Monkeys**. **Ralph Murphy**, whose career spans five decades, not only as a songwriter but also a producer and publisher, will present *Hear No Evil: The Art of Songwriting*. A producer whose CV includes making records for Taylor Swift, The Band Perry and Jars Of Clay among many others, **Tom Jackson** will present *See No Evil: The Art of Performance*, designed to help set up a foundation and direction to define your unique voice and style to showcase your talent. Founder of the successful Cyber PR firm and author of three books on social media and marketing for artists, **Ariel Hyatt** will present the self-explanatory *Speak No Evil: The Art of Promotion*. Over three days each speaker will take you through the afternoon from 1 to 6pm, and you can book for all three days or the session which you feel will be most beneficial for your career, the fee being \$120 for the three days or \$50 for individual days.

Three Wise Monkeys come to the State Library of Western Australia Theatre, Perth, Friday 24 through Sunday 26 May; Brisbane Powerhouse, Rooftop Terrace and Turbine Hall Sunday 26 through Tuesday 28; the JMC Academy Auditorium, Ultimo, Tuesday 28 through Thursday 30; and Kindred Studios, Front Space in Melbourne, Thursday 30 May through Saturday 1 June. For more information and to book a place for this national event, head to the Song Summit website. Meanwhile, Sydneysiders get a bonus courtesy the Vivid festival. Tuesday 28, the Museum of Contemporary Art down at Circular Quay hosts **Song Summit Presents in Conversation**, with five songwriter producers – **Arnthor Birgisson**, **Gary Clark**, **Chris DeStefano**, **Louis Schoorl** and **Stuart Crichton**. The topic: the making of a hit song. From 9pm, tickets \$15.

SOUND BYTES

Former frontman of Brisbane's Inland Sea, **Jeremy Hunter**, spent three days in **Airlock Studios**, nestled in mountainous bushland in Samford in the northwest part of his home town with producer **Konstantin Kersting** (The Belligerents), cutting the five tracks that make up his eponymous debut solo EP, which was mastered at **Modern Mastering**. Kersting has also just finished the **Art Of Sleeping's** latest EP.

Brendan Gallagher mixed his new double album, *Wine Island*, at Gigpiglet's **GPHQ Studio** in Redfern, but has also produced the new **Bernie Hayes** album, as he did his own, at **Albert's** in Neutral Bay and mixed **Jeremy Oxley's** EP, which will feature in a documentary on The Sunnyboys, at **Airlock Studio**.

LA-based expat Australian singer, songwriter, film score composer and guitarist **Mitch Grainger** has called in **Ron McMaster** at **Capitol** to master the album he's cut with musical partner Rosa Pullman as **The Lovers**.

IN THE STUDIO: VIOLENT SOHO

Bass player Luke Henery takes Michael Smith through the process of Violent Soho's recording of their forthcoming album.

"It's coming along great," Violent Soho bass player Luke Henery explains, on the line from recording studio, The Shed, in Brisbane suburb, Windsor, where the band are finally getting around to recording their third album. "We're just moving on to guitars now."

The Shed was set up by Screamefeeder touring member Darek Mudge in the industrial part of Windsor, with an old Crest Audio 40-channel console from the 1980s running into ProTools in the studio control room with two live rooms, one of them L-shaped in which Henery recorded his parts, the room next door the drum room, both with really high ceilings. "I had three amps set up – an Ampeg SVT4 running into a [Brisbane-made] Tym Guitars six by ten, and then the lows I sent to a Roland Studio 120, just using the 15" speaker on that, so just crossing over, using the Tym's for the highs, the lows through the 15, and then I ran out of the bi-amp from the SVT into an Acoustic B600 and Acoustic eight by ten, and I ran distortion on that channel. I had four channels – I had a clean DI sound, a clean on the Ampeg, clean on the 15 and then dirty on the Acoustic. So if you were coming into a chorus, you could pull the subs in the 15 up and pull the dirty up, so you could get whatever sound you want."

Forming at school in 2004, the four-piece – singers and guitarists Luke Boerdam and James Tidswell, drummer Michael Richards and bass player Henery – released their debut EP, *Pigs & TV*, in 2006, with producer Bryce Moorhead, who then produced half their 2008 debut album, *We Don't Belong Here*, recording at the now defunct Zero Interference Studios in Brisbane, the other half being produced by the late Dean Taylor at HeadGap Studios in Melbourne. Having signed to former Sonic Youth mainman Thurston Moore's Ecstatic Peace! Records in 2009, Violent Soho got to cut their eponymous 2010 album with Pixies producer

Gil Norton in Wales, mixing duties handled by Rich Costey, whose credits include albums by Mastodon, Frank Turner and Nine Inch Nails. For their third album, however, the boys have returned to Moorhead, putting in a week of preproduction in the rehearsal studio with him before they headed into the studio.

"We'd done a bunch of our early demos with him, and the first EP and half of our first album, and every time we recorded with him we were rushed but he was still able to always pull something awesome out of the songs, something that we always found hard to replicate. Even when we went to Wales, even Gil struggled on some of the songs that we re-did with him [the band revisited several songs from their debut for the international-release second album], couldn't replicate what Bryce had pulled out of the songs in such a short period of time. For this record, we had the option to go and record in other, more expensive studios with more expensive producers, but that meant we'd have to sacrifice time. So we decided we wanted to use Bryce because we wanted to give him the opportunity to have a good amount of time to work on the record and we'd be able to push him to really get the best out of the songs, which he hadn't had the opportunity before because of time restraints. It's definitely paying off, the work that he's doing now and the focus that he has has been awesome. It's been a great decision to spend five weeks with him instead of 15 days in another studio."

Since it had been a while between releases, before knuckling down to working on the album, having signed with local label I Oh You Records, Violent Soho recorded a couple of singles – *Tinderbox* and *Neighbour Neighbour* – with producer Lindsay Gravina (The Living End, Jet, Brothers Grim & The Blue Murders among many) down in Melbourne. "It was a really great opportunity, to work with Lindsay," Henery admits. "He did a great job, but in terms of doing the album, we've got such a good rapport with Bryce, knowing we'd be in the studio for a long time it was going to be better to work with him. Coming from Zero Interference, his approach as a producer is as little interference as possible. He'll sort of sit there and very timidly say,



"Awww, don't know if it's working," he laughs, "and then he'll really push you to think about it and try and get the best out of you, and that's what we love. He's not slamming ideas down your throat and he's trying to push you in any one direction – he gently nudges you to get the best out of you, which is great."

John Agnello, who's worked on records by Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr and Kurt Vile among others, will mix the album in the US. "I think that, with our sound, he's obviously mixed a hundred awesome bands, all the bands that we love! So when his name came through, it was a pretty clear choice for us. I mean, to work with someone you respect as much as John Agnello, what an opportunity. He's such a versatile mixer and masterer as well – if you look at his catalogue of bands, he's done it all. And with his mixes, he never seems to take anything away from the songs, which I think is most important. He just sort of brings out the best in them – he never seems to put his clear stamp on it, you know? Other mixers and masterers, you can hear them in the mix, where with John Agnello, you're listening to the *band* in the best fidelity you could."

STUDIO PROFILE



STAGE DOOR REHEARSAL AND RECORDING STUDIOS

Answered by: **Richard Smith**

What's the studio setup you have there equipment-wise?

Our studio has a mix/control room based around our DDA console. Our main overdub/live room is large enough for a full band and is viewed from the control room through double-glass and surrounded by thick walls. In the next few months several of our other larger live spaces will be linked to our recording system.

Monitoring is through Tannoy BPM 6.5 or Yamaha NS10 for near and Tannoy 15" dual concentric for large/far.

We've expanded our electronics and also have several mobile recording systems in addition to the main studio. We now offer a service to multitrack your live shows or rehearsals along with simple stereo recording systems for the rehearsal rooms.

Gear – Pro Tools with Apogee converters – 32-channel recording system. DDA D series console. Guitar and speaker tie-lines along with mic tie-lines between studios. Valve mic pres – Siemens V72, Rola Mk2, Altec 438c. Transistor mic pres – Telefunken V776 (four-channel), Focusrite Producer Pack Mk1, Altec. Dynamics – Joe Meek, DBX, Drawmer, BSS. Mics – Neumann M147, AKG 414EB, Gefell UM57, Calrec, Sennheiser, Shure, Rode, etc....

Any tips for artists entering a studio for the first time?

If you're not planning to "lock out" a studio for a week or more to record and relax then you're probably looking to make the most of your money. Make a demo of your songs just to see what you sound like on a stereo. Perhaps a recorded rehearsal like the ones offered at SDP Studios is the first best step or a live recording of your show can be invaluable. When it's time to record the song for release, remember what sounds you want from what gear you already use. It's okay to take new and exciting equipment into the studio but don't leave the standard arsenal at home. Remember to eat and have a good time.

Which notable artists have worked at the studio?

A few people of interest have stopped by lately to record while rehearsing pre tour at SDP Studios. All of the artists that record with us are valuable. Arguably the more experienced ones often get in and out quicker. We record a broad cross-section of musical styles. Recently there's been Aussie rock, hip hop, psychedelic/experimental and spiritual, live material and voice-over work happening.

Who do you have on staff and what's their background in the industry?

The main engineer, Richard, has combined equipment, cabling and knowledge to recently update the recording facilities. His background in audio and music production covers 15 years: Music TV broadcast for Channel [V] live to air, voice editing for many corporate enterprises, live and location recording of voice and music, music mixing both live and studio, and many years of Pro Tools editing experience and Avid technical abilities.

Analogue vs digital?

It's nice to inject some analogue expression into the available slots in modern digital recording techniques. The modern sound is definitely accepting to new digital styles of production. We don't record to tape at SDP, however rely on our DDA console for sub mixing and tracking, along with many valve, early transistor and more modern microphone preamplifiers and outboard.

Can bands bring in their own engineer or do they have to solely use a house engineer?

Bands are welcome to bring their own engineer. We don't offer a Dry room hire rate, however the house engineer can easily be transferred to a great

assistant. If you want to book the studio for a few days we can negotiate a rate including assistant.

Is the studio capable of holding a full band at once for recording?

Our live room is fine as a small room that fits a full five-piece band comfortably and is also one of the favourite-sounding rehearsal rooms. Work is in progress to connect other studios including our largest.

We're an impoverished indie band – do you offer any deals for acts in our situation?

We sell noodles in our café along with salad etc... Or you could just drink from our cappuccino machine... We have some promotions like the one coming this May where you can get a "real deal". Check them out on Facebook/StageDoorStudiosSydney or *The Drum Media* (online if you're interstate). Alternately our live recordings are a real deal too... You can multitrack your band playing live in the rehearsal room and take the files and a stereo mix with you, or mix it here. Minimum is a three-hour session to get you on tape. That's an easy hour of recording time with a full mic up through our DDA and outboard Preamps and Apogee converters.

Do you have any in-house instruments at the studio acts can use, or is it totally BYO?

At SDP Studios we keep a few Randall amps and Peavey Bass rigs for hire, a few pedals, good cables etc. At this stage backline is not our specialty; however we can organise good hire amps and drum kits for recording if you want to book them in.

What's the access to the studio like with regards to parking, flat load, etc?

We have loads of parking at a central location, and it's a flat load with our trolleys.

Working in the studio can be arduous and we'll need a break – what are the amenities in the local area?

We have a public café, Internet, supplies shop etc on site 24/7 while your session is on. The studios are close to Newtown (five-minute drive)

What are your contact details?

Call Stage Door Productions on (02) 9565 1123 or email Music@StageDoor.com.au