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# STUDIO PARADISE

THE LEGENDARY MUSICIAN BUILDS A  
HAWAIIAN RECORDING HAVEN

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BRANCHING OUT INTO VIDEO GAME AUDIO

# PARTY IN PARADISE

WORDS & PHOTOS BY MR. BONZAI

## GRAHAM NASH AND NATHANIEL KUNKEL DESIGN AND BUILD A STUDIO IN PARADISE

Imagine visiting Hawaii and being the guest of Graham Nash. You find yourself in a tropical valley carved from ancient volcanic rock. The main house looks out over palm trees, manicured gardens, and down to the rolling Pacific surf. Down the hill is a rock-solid new building designed by Graham and Susan Nash with their friend Bill Long, who has designed and built several homes for them. The new recording spot is dubbed "Camp Nash."

We arrived just a few days after the equipment package was flown in from L.A., where engineer/producer Nathaniel Kunkel had supervised the acquisitions, the wiring, and the sturdy road cases. Everything was fired up and worked perfectly. Within a few days, Kunkel was already recording Nash.

While visiting, we ate fresh oranges and listened to rough mixes from his upcoming solo album, which was tracked last October at O'Henry Studios in Los Angeles. Russell Kunkel is co-producing with Nathaniel, and providing his special drummer's signature, with Dean Parks and Steve Ferris on guitars, Matt Rawlings on keyboards, Victor Krause on bass, Dan Dougmore on pedal steel, and Lenny Castro on percussion. Mixdown took place at L.A.'s Conway Recording.

We've been touched by Graham Nash's music for many, many years. He was a founding father of the English group The Hollies, who scored more than a dozen hits. Perhaps the most enduring soldier of

the British Invasion, he pulled up his roots and changed his life at the Woodstock debut of Crosby, Stills, and Nash.

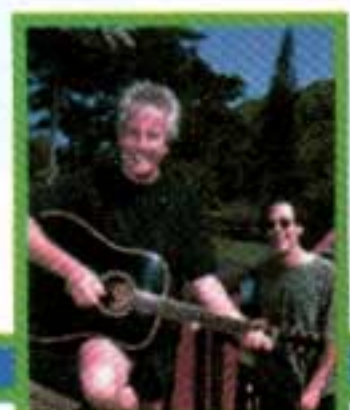
It's appropriate that CSN is three names; three distinct musical personalities. What's remarkable is the harmonious blend that became a three-headed chimera, and sometimes four-headed, as in last year's CSNY album and major tour. But this group has never been a "group" in the traditional musical sense.

"The individualism became a dominant part of what it was that we wanted to say," Nash explains. "We wanted to let people know that we were no longer going to be in a group; that we'd be individuals that came together to make music and could make music with whomever and in whatever form we wanted."

Nash has had great success as a solo artist, as a member of a group, and as a member of a non-group. He's living proof of strong individuality working in harmony with others — a man who knows how to make great records.

### **EQ: Aloha. Here we are at Camp Nash. How long has this project been on the drawing board?**

**Graham Nash:** I used to come to Hawaii to escape the world of recording. I had relative control over what I was doing on the Mainland, and for many years I didn't even bring my computer here because I wanted to spend time with Susan and the kids. I tried to keep everything else away



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from this place, but in the last couple of years I've been spending more time here, and my kids are now

grown and out in the world. They don't spend as much time here now because they have jobs and careers they're dealing with. I began to get a little antsy while in Hawaii — if I got an idea at three in the morning I wanted to walk over to the studio and put it down, which I can do in Los Angeles. I began toying with the idea of bringing the studio here — duplicating the scene I have in L.A.

When Nathaniel and Russell and I were working on this solo record, I mentioned to Nathaniel that it would be great to have a studio in Hawaii. He immediately jumped on the idea because he loves it here as much as I do. He designed a studio for me that an idiot could use. I'm not really technically-minded, even though I've

worked for many years in many, many studios.

**Is it easier now to record on your own?**

**Nash:** It's easier if you have someone like Nathaniel to put it together. I told him that if I came down here in the middle of the night, I didn't want to wonder where the kick drum was. I want to be able to plug my guitar or my piano in — and rock. If you can't find that kick drum, or the button to hear your voice, you get pissed off. By then the creative moment is gone. My studio at home, which was set up by Joe Vitale, is ultra-simple. A monkey could record. That is, if a monkey wanted to.

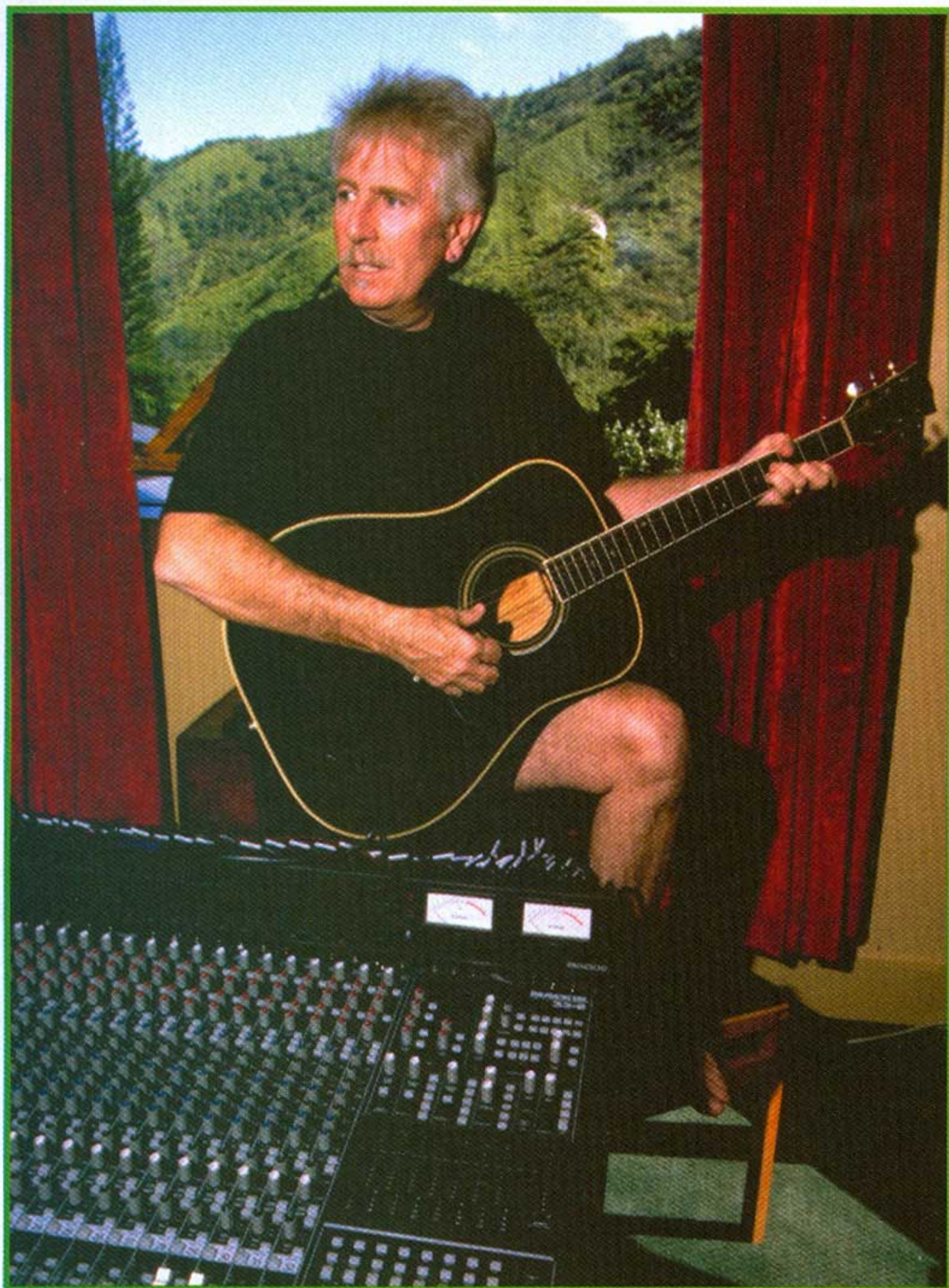
For this new room here in Hawaii, Nathaniel said that I could do it the old-fashioned way, and hence we have three TASCAM DA-78's for 24-tracks, and a Mackie board. But Nathaniel seems to think that, with a little concentration and training, I would do away

## CAMP NASH EQUIPMENT LIST

Mackie 32/8 mixer  
Dynaudio BM15A active monitoring  
TASCAM DA-78HR [3] (w/949 remote) recorders  
Otari UFC 24 format converter  
Z-Systems 16x16 digital router  
Panasonic SV-3800 DAT machine [2]  
TASCAM 122 MKIII cassette decks [2]  
TASCAM CD-2000RW CD recorder  
Neumann U 87 microphone  
Danish Pro Audio 4011 microphone [2]  
Audio Technica AT4050 microphone [2]  
Focusrite ISA 430 Producer Pack  
Line 6 Pod Pro  
TC Electronic Finalizer 96k  
TC Electronic M3000  
TC Electronic Gold Channel  
Bryston 4b ST power amplifier  
Simmons headphone box [5]  
Sony MDR-7506 headphones [5]  
MOTU MIDI Timepiece AV  
Mackie LM3204 mixer  
Emu E4xt Ultra sampler  
Roland XV-5080 synthesizer  
Emu Proteus 2000 [2] synthesizer  
StorCase Dual CD-ROM Bay for sample loading  
SWW custom nickel-plated patchbays [4]  
MOTU 1296 audio interface [2]  
MOTU 2408 mkII core system  
Marathon Power rack holding an Apple G4/500  
APC 2200 RMXL UPS with extra battery  
Lots of wire!



# PARTY IN PARADISE



with that system and go straight to hard drive. The record we just recorded went directly to [Digidesign] Pro Tools — there was no tape involved. It was the first time for me, and I found it very, very interesting.

**How would you compare the quality?**

**Nash:** I think it's better. I think the A/D converters that Nathaniel found and used in the system made it. With all due respect, I think you can detect the fingerprint of Pro Tools; it's a little bit brittle — you can hear it if you really know what you're listening for. But, every single person who has

come into the studio to listen has had no idea that it isn't two-inch analog tape. They don't have a clue.

**Nathaniel, how did you do that?**

**Nathaniel Kunkel:** I masterclock everything with an [Aardvark] Aardsync, and I use the new dB Technologies "blue" converters. We had both their A-to-D and D-to-A. Sixteen channels of A-to-D for recording, and 32 channels of D-to-A for the mixing.

**What other equipment is surrounding us here?**

**Kunkel:** There's one rack that has 24 tracks of DA-78 — the HR 24-bit model. Another rack is basically two-track: two DAT machines, a CD player, cassette decks, and a CD duplicator. Another rack has the synthesizer equipment: a sampler, a Roland XV-5080, two Emu Proteus synths, a Mackie mixer, and a MIDI interface. [See sidebar for complete gear list.] Pretty straight-ahead, and also emulating what Graham has at home in L.A.

**I see that everything is packed in boxes on wheels.**

**Kunkel:** Yes, it's all in road cases so it can move. All the power distribution and patching is modular and can be pulled out at anytime. The studio could leave here in five minutes.

**In this remote location, were there any unusual challenges you had to face?**

**Kunkel:** No, nothing really out of the ordinary. I just made sure I used the best stuff — the patchbays are all nickel-plated, all the Alpha pins are gold-coated. Mostly, it was just a



matter of using the best quality materials. I have a really good wiring crew, so when everything arrived here last week it worked perfectly the first time.

Our concerns here were obvious: humidity and sunlight. We have a dehumidifier here in the room, and we tried to use gear that would be the most tolerant of moisture. Everything has lots of air space, especially things that generate heat. This room also has air-conditioning, which removes moisture. The most important thing was to make an environment where Graham felt comfortable, coming in and working and having the equipment survive as best as possible.

**Nash:** And for years, we've known and worked with the people who designed and built the road cases.

**Yes, you have been on the road a bit, haven't you?**

**Nash:** Once or twice.

**How many days a year are you on tour these days?**

**Nash:** It depends. In 2000, CSNY did 41 shows between January and April. And we also did our usual fair share of benefits. Last year there was no touring because we were recording.

**Benefits — you're strongly associated with social activism — what's on your mind these days?**

**Nash:** It runs the gamut from personal stuff to things I believe in. For instance, we recently did the Fred Waleke benefit at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, to help out an old friend of many, many musicians. A few years ago we did the huge concert for Nicolette Larsen, to preserve her memory and have a good time that night. Last November, I did a benefit with David [Crosby] for the Grace Foundation, which deals with child abuse and domestic violence.

A benefit concert might be for a small group that wants to remove broken glass from the beach, which is pretty important if you're a parent. And, over the years, I've worked with groups like UNICEF and the No Nukes movement. Peace Sunday at the Rose Bowl. It's a wide spectrum, but they are all connected by the word "help." As an example, it enables other people to say, "I can do something, too." If you want to help, you can, whether it's answering phones, pouring coffee, or getting on stage.

**Are you an optimist?**

**Nash:** I have to be. If I wasn't an

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# PARTY IN PARADISE

optimist I wouldn't bother being here making a record. I'd just be watching TV with a beer. It's easy to do, because the problems that face us are overwhelming.

**Let's jump back to your early days. You're from Manchester, aren't you?**

**Nash:** Yes, in the north of England.

**Were you musically inclined as a child?**

Yes, I was. Allan Clarke and I met when I was five years old and we started singing together immediately. I don't know why, but we were singing school prayers, and harmonized in school choirs and minstrel shows. Then, in the late '50s, skiffle music came to England via Lonnie Donegan from America. Skiffle was a simple form of folk music, basically

three chords. It was fast and easy, and it was fun. We got into skiffle in a big way.

Then with the coming into our lives of The Everly Brothers, Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, Fats Domino, The Platters, Gene Vincent, etc., we began to really realize that: A) we needed drums and bass; and B) the two-part singing we had been doing for many years was coming of age. So we found ourselves in the early '60s forming a band called The Hollies, with basically Allan and myself singing lead, occasionally three-part with Tony Hicks. We cut our first hit record in 1963 and I haven't looked back since.

I left the Hollies in 1968 because of musical differences and personality conflicts. We had been coming to

America since 1965 and this was an entirely different environment for me. It was one in which I thrived, one which I loved. I got turned on to smoking marijuana, hashish, doing LSD, and expanding my consciousness. I gradually grew apart from the rest of The Hollies, who were basically more interested in the drug of their choice — beer.

At that time I had been hanging out with David [Crosby] and Stephen [Stills], so I knew that we had something tremendously vital. I was writing songs that The Hollies were not interested in recording, songs that I felt were deeper, more meaningful than what we had done earlier. All those factors came together in late 1968 and I decided to live in America.

**So, 1968 — Hollies behind you, CSN ahead of you.**



# PARTY IN PARADISE

## BUILDING CAMP NASH

*Nathaniel Kunkel began apprenticing with George Massenburg before entering high school. Years of hard work as an assistant led to gigs with James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt, Little Feat, and his first solo recording and mix: Lyle Lovett's I Love Everybody in 1994, followed by Lovett's Grammy-winning Country Album of the Year, The Road To Ensenada.*

*Among numerous other projects, Kunkel has recorded Kenny Loggins's last three albums, recorded and mixed the 5.1 soundtrack for Robert Altman's Dr. T. and the Women, and was nominated for a Grammy for engineering Trio 2 with Linda Ronstadt, Dolly Parton, and Emmylou Harris, produced and mixed by George Massenburg.*

### What I Do

The process always starts by asking my client what their dream studio would consist of. We'll design that together and then scale it down, usually to meet a predetermined price point. That way I won't do anything building the smaller system that couldn't, for the most part, be used in an expansion on the way to the larger dream studio later.

I use the best materials possible, as the major studios do, when I build a system. You see, even though my clients request a small number of tracks, they're still in need of total reliability. That only comes with exceptional build quality. In truth, one of the things that makes that possible is my wiring crew. Kurt and Tess Stein have been doing all of my wiring for a while, and they're artists — they consistently give me the best wiring I've ever seen. Providing the level of quality I provide is only possible because my delivered wiring has a zero percent failure rate. In contrast, most of the hookup cables out there are garbage. Yet most people won't go through the trouble of placing a custom cable

order if it's only for a single eight-pair snake — it's expensive and requires an overview of the complete system to not be a waste of money. I understand, but it still makes for less than perfect interfacing. So I'll try to develop the proper grounding, power, and wiring scheme for each install and then implement them in such a way that the studio expands easily without modification to the existing installation. For instance, Nash's studio is already pre-wired for the Sony DMX-R100 mixer and surround monitoring.

I also do everything I can to eliminate the possibility of mechanical failure — which also means making repairs easy — so I work very hard on documentation and cable management. Then, when there is a problem, you know where to look, and when you do, it's clean enough to see what's going on. I'm not doing anything that's groundbreaking, really — just not making any compromises and being super tidy.

### So You Build Studios?

The only odd thing here is that I'm a recording engineer. Why am I building studios? Like I've got time to build a recording studio! I guess this all really started with my own portable remote setup that my friend Stephen Jarvis dubbed "Studio Without Walls." In the course of several live records, we had really figured out how to make a studio move, remain flexible, and be reliable. Some of our friends saw the systems and wanted to implement our designs into their new builds. So then I was building studios.

But I'm an engineer. Well, so what — I love building studios. (Someone must be wincing at that one.) Not only are they fun to put together, it's also really great to engineer in a room you put together. You know where everything is and it's all your favorite stuff.

—Nathaniel Kunkel

### **Singles had been the style of the record business, and your forming CSN was around the time of album domination and FM radio.**

**Nash:** Well, *Sgt. Pepper* helped change that a lot. But it began to be obvious that the art form of albums was much more interesting than singles. The singles were like ads for albums. I knew when I sang with David and Stephen that that was what I wanted to do. We also knew we had tremendous song potential because we were three reasonably strong writers.

Our first record was brought out in

a time of pre-heavy metal, stacks of Marshalls. We came out with this acoustic-feeling album and it threaded right through everything and made its mark. We knew when we left the studio with that two-track master that we had a hit record.

**You've also had solo success, such as *Songs for Beginners*, which still sounds so fresh and alive.**

**Nash:** I was very pleased with that record. I think I'm most pleased with its longevity. I get kind comments from people all the time about it being one of their favorite albums. I've tried to

think what it was about that album that was so attractive and I can't really figure it out. I think it was very simple, very straightforward, and it had a very live feeling. There are some good songs, but I've never been really able to pin what it was about that album. I'm kinda glad, because I certainly don't want to repeat it. But I do wonder what it was that made it so attractive.

**So much of your solo music, and the music you make with your compadres, captures a period. It's been said that if you want to go back and feel the Woodstock time, you listen**



**to CSN and The Grateful Dead.**

**Nash:** Kind of an awful place to be stuck, isn't it? [Laughs.]

**But let's talk about your music as historic anthems in times of social upheaval.**

**Nash:** One of the things that was upsetting me during my association with The Hollies was that there were social things happening that were far more relevant than the kinds of singles we got into — the "moon, June, spoon" in the back of the car, "summer days" types of songs. I'm not against that, but there is certainly more to be concerned with.

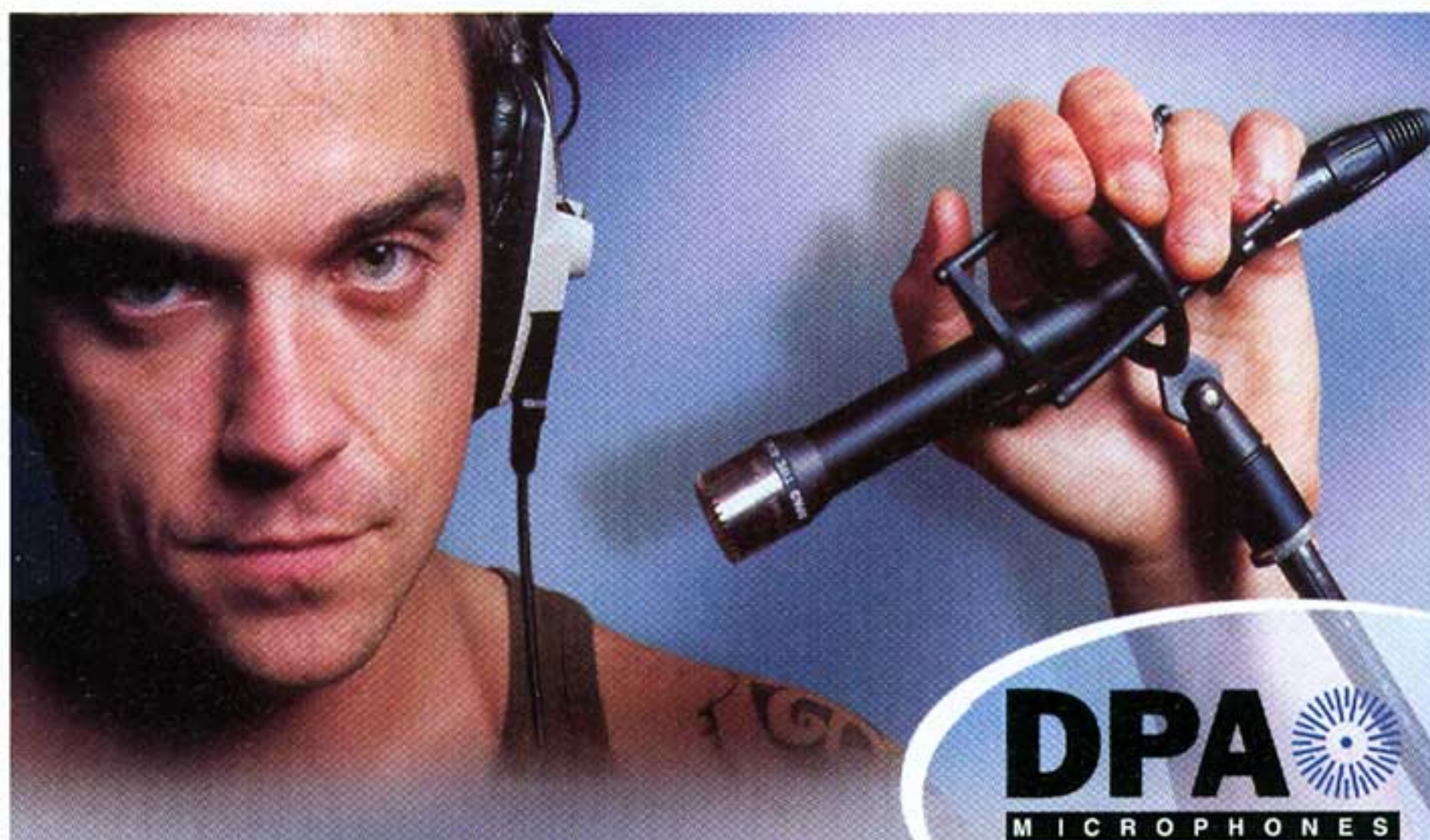
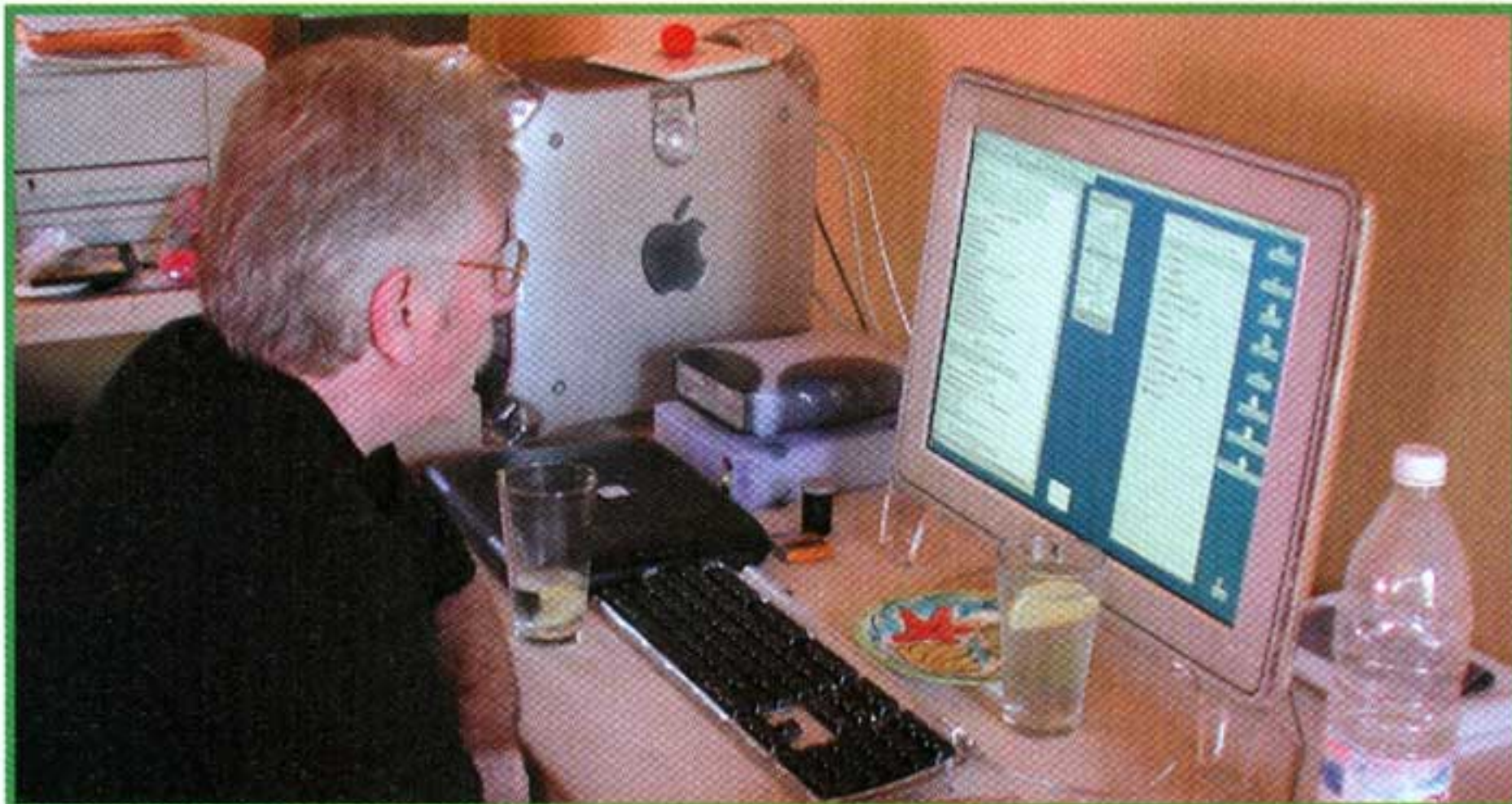
So when I joined David and Stephen, I knew that we had three writers that felt similar to the way I felt. Things were happening sociologically that were extremely important from our point of view, as artists, to make comments upon. I think it's been the role of the artist throughout history to bring news from one village to another, to spread tales of what's happening. In many ways, you're not getting the real truth from the mass media. You're only getting a part of the truth. What we have always tried to do as artists is to reflect what is going on around us, reveal what is going on inside of us, and express how we feel about certain subjects.

I'm not so sure that we're a political group. When you shoot four kids down at Kent State, is that political or is that just a tragedy? When you jail the Chicago Eight for allegedly trying to wipe Chicago off the map, is that political or is that a tragedy? And when we talk about the nuclear power industry, are those political issues or are they human condition issues? As artists we've always wanted to be our own psychiatrists in a way. We have the ability, because we are writers, to internalize situations and then bring them out as music. I'm not sure what enables us to do that, but I guess that's what an artist is.

**Could you tell me a little about this new solo project you're working on?**

**Nash:** I go into the studio to have fun, and I've been doing that since I cut my first hit record in 1963. This particular project has been better than most, except for maybe the first CSN record. I like to get work done and I like to remain open to everyone's ideas. When you're asking great musicians to contribute, you don't want to tell them what to play.

► continued on page 130



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## PARTY IN PARADISE

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All I did for this record was to play a tune and say, "How do we want to cut this?" We let it organically develop and then we recorded it. The smart thing we did this time was to rehearse for a week. We went to The Alley and rehearsed 18 tunes, two or three times each, and then had a couple of days to think about them. Then we went directly into the studio and when I said, "Let's do 'Penguin In A Palmtree,'" everybody knew what I was talking about, instead of working it out in the studio. It made a big difference, because I wanted to put a set together and go in and play it. We had a list of songs and we just went in order. We'll sequence the album later after we've had time to think about how the songs fit together.

**I was impressed at how briskly things moved along when typically, over the years, sessions have gotten slower.**

**Nash:** Well, people get lazy. When I was recording with The Hollies we cut our first album in an hour and a half. The entire record. We set up our instruments, then we did our two 45-minute sets. We played the set right through. We knew what we were doing, because we'd been doing it for a couple of years. We took the best of both sets and that was the first album.

**Do you remember the studio?**

**Nash:** Sure, Abbey Road.

**Is it true that The Hollies was the only group that had more hits in England than the Beatles?**

**Nash:** It's very possible, but you have to realize that The Beatles stopped in 1967. We kept rockin' right on through. We did have an enormous amount of hits — I think it was 18 Top Ten hits. We were very big, and we were a good, popular group. Not very profound, but who was then except for The Beatles and Dylan?

**Do you have any thoughts for young people thinking about a career in music?**

**Nash:** The only thing that kept me alive, that kept me moving forward, that kept me on the ball, is a love for what I do. I don't want to get heavy-handed, but there's a great responsibility as a musician to write true music, meaning that it comes from within your soul, something that you truly feel. I spent many years not doing that and I love those years, but regret them at the same time. I realize it was part of the growth process that brought me to the point where I am right now.

**Well, I can't think of anything else to ask.**

**Nash:** Good — let's go get some lunch. ■

## DARYL KELL

► continued from page 54

The best thing was the personnel involved. The director really understands music, so it was a pretty good collaboration between he and the composer [Edward Shearmur]. That makes it nice compared to projects where the director is unsure as to what he wants.

**What gear do you normally use?**

Most editors own their own gear since you can set it up so that it's the same every time, which you can't really do with rental gear. I basically use a Mac G4 with [Digidesign] Pro Tools and [Mark of the Unicorn] Digital Performer software. I use Digital Performer for scoring sessions for clicks and steamers and to play back any pre-recorded audio tracks. I'm sure other sequencers do exactly the same thing and would work as well, but most of the composers I work with use Digital Performer, so it's easiest to just stay with it. I also have a Mackie LM3204 and a couple of Genelecs for my personal monitoring purposes. For picture I use a MiroMotion card for video capture. At this point I still receive a tape and digitize it, but that's already changing in that you can now receive just a QuickTime file. The tape step will be gone pretty soon.

My system gets moved around and plugged into whatever console is being used on the dub that I'm on. We now have the technology to not lose any generations from the initial recording of the orchestra right through mixing and dubbing. For *Charlie's Angels*, the orchestra was recorded onto a Euphonix R-1, then we came out of a Euphonix System 5 digitally into Pro Tools when it was mixed. Although there wasn't a digital console on the dub stage, theoretically you can stay digital from when it gets recorded up until when it reaches peoples' ears in the theaters. That would be the first time there would actually be an analog conversion.

**What's the most difficult part of your job?**

The time period leading up to the scoring sessions is the most hectic and needs the most organization. Once things are recorded and the project is in transition to the dubbing stage, then the biggest problem is trying to keep up with the picture changes. You try to keep the files of the scoring session up to date with the most current picture, but sometimes it's already been orchestrated when the changes come in. On a whole, organization and preparation are the hardest parts.

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Bobby Owsinski is a surround mixer and DVD producer, and the author of *The Mixing Engineer's Handbook* and *The Mastering Engineer's Handbook*.

## FEZ GUYS

► continued from page 127

produce a Mac version. Get your friends who also want a Mac version to email them. Show Shoutcast there's a demand. That will help them prioritize your request. By the way, we assume you're talking about the server component, as there are several MP3 players out there for the Mac that play Shoutcast streams (Audion, Maccast, etc).

*What's the technology used to auto-start sound on homepages? Is it simply Java applets plopped in? Will Javascript do the same? Or am I so far behind that I should just go pickup my Sigma acoustic bass and pass the time away? —Peter*

Peter — There's lots of ways to start audio playing as soon as a fan brings up your Web site. Macromedia flash easily embeds MP3 audio in a page, and most browsers (certainly Netscape) can play WAV files with the EMBED tag, also. Javascript can be used to automatically pop up new windows with music in them, too. But wait...take a moment and ask yourself this question: Do people really want music to start playing when they arrive at a site? Here are the FezGuys's Top Five reasons to avoid embedding music on your home page:

1. Most people are already listening to their own music and when yours mixes in it's instant cacaphony.

2. It may require software that users don't have installed. This would result in a warning message — not a good first impression!

3. Many users are still connecting with dialup modems. Including music in your home page will take much longer to load — also not a good impression!

4. After clicking on one link, clicking "back" on the browser restarts that same audio clip over again from the *same place*, often delaying the time until your visitor can click on another link.

5. It's simply not expected and can be jarring.

Visiting your site should be easy, quick, and pleasant. We encourage you to incorporate all sorts of features into it, but try to place them where people know what to expect. Offer links to this information by using helpful messages along the lines of: "Click here to see a cool multimedia display of our music video!" or "Check out our music in our interactive jukebox!" It's an aesthetic choice only you can make. Choose wisely.

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