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Subject: Random Thoughts

Posted by [Neil](#) on Tue, 23 Oct 2007 05:45:18 GMT

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1.) My finger surgery is tommorrow, and although this is - as I am continuing to try to remember - a VERY minor thing in the grand scheme of my body & overall health, it's still traumatic mentally, because I don't know how much flesh I'll have left. Doc says that he thinks the location & extent of it makes me a good candidate for that Mohs' surgery I mentioned before, but it's pretty deep - and he can't guarantee how it will heal/how much will regenerate. Really, this is probably nothing, and people have played better than I can play with much greater impediments - I think I am so nervous about it because honestly, so much of what I do is at the edge of my abilities anyway, I think if I lose any technical abilities at all, it's going to just throw me back into not even being able to execute anywhere near whatever level that I've managed to play at thus far. Which brings me to random thought #2...

2.) So in a slightly nostalgic (will I be able to play half-ass decent again?) mode due to #1 , I broke out some things that I had done in the past - stupid, right? lol Anyway, I hadn't heard this stuff in a LONG time - some years, actually, and a few things occurred to me, namely:

2a.) Analog tape absolutely has something different on the low end that I just don't believe you can get out of digital AT ALL. Now this is my own stuff, so I know it well; recorded to analog on two different formats (2" 24 track Dolby SR, and 1" 16-track DBX) and mixed through three different consoles (Trident 24 & SSL 4000 for the various 2" stuff, and a Tascam of some kind for the 1" stuff), and some of it was mixed down to tape & some of it was mixed down to DAT, and the ONE THING that's consistent among it, is a certain sort of smooth strength to the low end... it's not a distortion (Charles Dye), it's not just a "bump" somewhere (Because the tape speeds varied - Tascam 1" was 15IPS, Studer 2" was at 30IPS, so the "bumps" are at different frequencies), it's a certain something that's totally missing from digital, and as I said, the only way I can describe it is that it's very strong & present, yet smooth. To me, digital low end sounds "hollow" compared to this. Just pointing this out. It's what miss about tape, I think.

2b.) The dbx 902 is absolutely the best de-esser on the planet - I need to get one & just leave it inserted on lead vocal channnels - or someone needs to port this to a plugin.

Listening to it again, on stuff that I know that I used it on, really reveals this. No plugin comes close - again, it's a vibe thing ifyaknowwhatimsayin'.

2c.) I know it was an 80's trick; but DAMN, triggering some pink or white noise on the snare really makes it sound farking HUGE! lol I may start doing this again! lol

and finally on the nostalgia front...

2d.) Damn, I could sing a lot higher then.

2e.) Damn, I could play a lot faster then.

lol

4.) I'm in a creative slump/composers' block - brought on by a combination of external influences, no doubt... too much metal exposure recently, for one - it's hard for me to get out of one mode & into another - I find I have to kind of "purify" or go through "musical detox" from one genre to another, so I listen to something completely opposite of what I've been doing for a period. When I did this all the time it was easy to switch - I could be nimble in terms of working on & contributing to a jazz project one week & a C&W project the next, but it seems with greater distances between projects & more time spent on each particular one, it's harder to get out of a certain mode & get back into something else, like writing, for example (in this case). Ever experience that? Used to be I'd listen to "So" over & over for a day & I was "clear" - not 'so' anymore (pun intended LOL).

And the last random thought for the evening...

4.) As I was listening to Aja, again, for the dozenth or so time in my attempt to get "clear" (but NOT in the manner that Bill Lorentzen would interpret that! lol) , it occurred to me that the likelihood is that there will NEVER, ever, again, be another "Aja", which made me quite sad upon realizing said revelation. I've come to this determination based on the following theorems:

4a.) Becker & Fagen notwithstanding, there simply aren't any artists out there at this time that can conglomerate the level of talent in the kind of numbers necessary to promulgate this kind of endeavor... there USED to be more - sure, any A-list artist could & can hire top-level talent, but to what purpose? To achieve something like this? Nope.

Who did so, even back then? Steely Dan, Joni Mitchell, Peter Gabriel (in different genres, but still...)

4b.) There simply ARE no musicians of this caliber left! Well, I might be overstating it, but back in "the day", you could pretty much walk down any street in New York or LA & trip over half a dozen Larry Carltons or Bernard Purdies... where do you even find people like that anymore? Sure, they're out there, but where? Who can find them? Are enough of them concentrated around where someone wants to record so that they can be put to work on a project? I doubt it.

4c.) The economics of the biz has changed... who gets the kind of budget anymore where you can afford to have seven different A-list guitarists (if you can even find that many) hit the solo on "Peg" a few times each until someone nails a take you like? In this same line of questioning, who can expect to sell enough records anymore without even going on tour so they don't have to worry about recouping, so they can sit at home doing nothing but writing & perfecting this shit for two or three years until it's at this kind of level? Who gets the kind of budget where you can essentially have five different bands record a basic track on a song until you get the one you like? NOBODY! Some rich rockstar like Chad Kroeger of Nickelback would have to decide they wanted to do some kind of project like this & put their own money into it & hire the best people, the best musicians, the best recording engineers, etc, etc, etc, and then ultimately what would happen is that the label would get ahold of it, and then would just turn around & send it off to Chris Lord-Alge to mix, and it would come back sounding just like Nickelback. lol

So, the era of "Aja's" is gone, which I guess explains why we haven't heard anything like it since... there will be no more "Sgt. Peppers", no more "Pet Sounds" or "Rumours" or "Hejira's", there will be the occasional song that kicks ass just because chaos theory stipulates that even good things can happen in synchronization at times, but the album as a landmark, as a piece of literature, is dead. Perhaps we all realized it already, or perhaps we all were kind of waiting/hoping for the next earth-shaking/mind-blowing one. But I don't think it's ever going to happen again - not in the popular realm, anyway, and that's the sad part. The fringes are of no import in this regard - and I say this as a guy who's always been on the fringes, both in terms of success AND preferred genre; there's always been good stuff on the fringes.... but what kind of impact would the Mona Lisa have had if the only people who

ever saw it were DaVinci & the girl who's picture he painted?  
Think about that one...

OK, rant's off... i'll be back when I can type again - in the  
meanwhile, I'd love to read your thoughts on all this.

CARRY ON!

:)

Neil

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