

Harlequin

"A sound hotel" in Albert Street. With deep red carpet, and potted palms it exudes a feeling of luxury, but Doug Rogers still plans a sauna, and games room upstairs, along with a new, small studio for commercial production to complete the "state of art" concept.

Harlequin started off with a 4 track TEAC recorder underneath a shop in Mt Eden. The new studio opened last year after 3 years research, and much deliberating by Rogers on design and equipment purchase. He settled on an American formula, and commissioned two US designers to see it was executed properly.

"It has to be good for our clients, but it's also for our own benefit so we can work in pleasant surroundings. The most important ingredient of all is the acoustics, and that's why we decided to spend so much money, (\$500,000) because it's futile recording in an inaccurate environment."

The studio offers instruments for hire, and includes a computerised 24-track mixing desk, and recorder, not to mention a host of other devices. The whole area is wired, ready and waiting for video.

It costs \$60 p/h to record at Harlequin in what is known as Zone 1 for mainly commercial work. \$50 p/h is the rate for the second zone which stretches from 5 pm to midnight, and is used mostly for album work. It's \$35 p/h for the midnight to dawn special.

"This helps us maintain contact with local bands, and ensures those people have a chance to do an album. It breaks even for us, and most come back and do more substantial projects."

Harlequin has 5 engineers: Steve Kennedy, Lee Connelly, Paul Streekstra, Simon Alexander and Doug Rogers.

The studio has been recording the sound track for the Scarecrow movie; singles with Techtones, Newmatics, Regulators, Warning, Valentinos, Screaming Meemees and Flying Doctors and Blams and Furys EPs

"The biggest problem we have here is developing artists, and in New Zealand, if you're a musician it's not a lucrative business to be in. So the stability factor works against most bands. They stay together three to six months, when you may need two years to develop a good musical relationship."

In May, Harlequin is running a recording school in conjunction with the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. 45 young musicians will take

The 24 Track Studios

part in seminars over a 10 week period, and finally sit an exam recognised in both Australia and the United States.

Mandrill

Using egg cartons for insulation, Glyn Tucker and Dave Hurley began a part-time demo studio in Customs Street in 1974. They were an alternative for people wanting cheap recording. Street Talk and Split Enz were among those who used the studio in its early days. After 6 months they were kicked out, and moved to the present Mandrill One site in 1975. Tucker calls it a pioneering era for musicians' demos.

"We wanted to make records to an international standard, but we couldn't match what was coming from the States. I think we're there now, but it's been a struggle."

The Mandrill Two 24-track studio in York Street, Parnell, will soon have its second birthday. The design is clean, and extremely functional. Studio Two has a live (echo), and dead room, with separate isolation areas. There's the 24 track gear, with a digital reverb unit, a recreation room, and producers/conference room. Mandrill charges a flat rate of \$65 p/h.

16 track facilities at Mandrill One are \$50 p/h. There are 5 engineers — Graham Myre, Dave Hurley, Glyn Tucker, Bruce Lynch, and Peter MacInnes.

The studio has been host lately to Hammond Gamble, the Knobz, Dave McArtney and the Pink Flamingos, and Lip Service. Frank Gibson Junior has been laying down a few tracks with visiting jazz people. Roxy Music stopped off for rehearsal after their holiday, and before Sweetwaters. Aussie band the Reels recorded a "heavy metal" EP. Little River Band overdubbed the guitar and lead vocals for the *Honky Tonk Freeway* soundtrack.

"I'm supremely optimistic about the state of the industry at the moment. Radio air time, and the charts are far healthier with local music than they have been for a long time. We're fast getting into the situation where the next Split Enz will do it direct — from New Zealand."

New bands are welcome, but Tucker says he prefers them to have a little experience before they go in to record.

"Usually one of our engineers will help out in a production sense because there might be elementary details they don't understand, like getting a headphone balance. But the first rule in the studio is that there are no rules. Still, you only get out what you put in. It's not magic."

Marmalade

Rocky Doche is in charge here. The studio was burnt out of its original Ghuznee Street residence in 1977, and in early 1978, Marmalade opened in the World Trade Centre.

It has served as a recording base for Jon Stevens, and Sharon O'Neill. The Tigers, Knobz, and Cathy and the Cucumbers have also been working there, but commercial work provides the company's bread and butter.

The facilities include a 3M 24-track recorder, and Quad 8 desk. Instruments can be hired, and there's a recreation room for replenishing concentration.

\$69.50 for 24-track recording is the going rate at Marmalade, although Doche says he's always open for negotiation, and there's a discount for block bookings. There are two staff engineers and two on contract.

Marmalade is currently forming its own record label, tentatively called Toast. This may mean a swing to more local recordings. Doche feels young bands often expect too much from the studio, and have misconceptions about its purpose.

"Some bands charge into it too quickly. People tend to lose sight of the fact that a great group with an inferior song will still come out of the studio with an inferior song, and after all, it is the song the public buys, not the band."

Stebbing Recording Studios

Next time you're watching the teev, listen carefully to that commercial, because more than likely it was recorded at Stebbing Studios, Jervois Road, Herne Bay.

Managing director Eldred Stebbing has been at it since 1945, originally recording in the basement of his house. In those days artists cut straight onto disc. Stebbing moved to 4 track in 1965, graduating to 8, 16, and finally

24 track in '77.

Stebbing engraved his name on the industry with Ray Columbus, and 'She's a Mod', with the La De Das, and of course Hello Sailor, earning Album of the Year, Single of the Year, Producer of the Year, and Recording Engineer of the Year in 1978.

The 24 track studio can hold a 60 piece orchestra. The control room houses a Quad 8 computer desk, a visual display unit which screens technical data, and gives a sound reading of various mixes. Two new studios are being built next door, one for commercial work, and a 16 track for smaller jobs.

Stebbing charges \$60 p/h for 24 track, and \$45 for demos. The studio employs three full-time engineers — Vaughan Stebbing, Tim Field, and Tony Moane.

The bulk of the work is television commercials, but in the future Stebbing hopes to attract overseas recording artists, and expand into video and film. Stebbing claims the local artist isn't overlooked.

"I'm not picking on professional groups for recording, but I won't record rubbish, and unless you can put a lot of time into a band, and follow every lead you just can't do it. However we're getting into it more this year. Broken Dolls and the Teddy Boys have recently been working with us."

Ann Louise Martin

45\$

Split Enz, 'History Never Repeats' (Polydor)

From single from *Waiata*. Written and sung by Neil Finn, it's far meatier than 'One Step Ahead'. The sixties' feel is again predominant — obvious hit single material. The other side is 'Holy Smoke', again by Neil, but sung by Tim, it isn't on the album.

Herco Pilots, 'Wonder Book' (Rem)

From the resourceful Herco Pilots comes a four-song EP: 'Wonder Book', 'Extinguisher', 'Essential Services', and 'NZ Rec'. Frantic and fuzzy, all the songs have a certain charm that increases with additional playing. Selling at two bucks, it's a bargain.

Garage Crawlers, 'Only You Tonite' (Propeller)

Debut single from the much-hyped, but little exposed, Auckland combo. Tight, catchy pop, a must for radio playlists. The B side has two tunes, 'V8 Song' and 'Normal Dunediner'. They are parallel-tracked, so what you hear depends on how the needle falls.

Stray Cats, 'Rock This Town' (Artists)

Far more traditional than 'Runaway Boys', 'Rock This Town' is bopping rockabilly purism that deserves to be on jukeboxes all over the country. The flip is the old Supremes' number 'Can't Hurry Love'.

Zolo and the Bantams, 'Deep Crisp and Even' (MCP)

Put together 27 kids, 3 Blams and a manager. Get Don McGlashan to write a theme tune. Mix them together and this is the result. Harmless, and more fun than smashing up schools. 'The Harder They Come' gets tackled on the reverse.

The Associates, 'The Affectionate Punch' (Stunn)

This is the title cut from the album. A powerful song that is the Associates at their very best. The B side is a new song, 'You Were Young'. That and the superb picture sleeve alone make it worth buying.

Puppetz, 'Identity Crisis' (Bunk)

First time out for this Wellington band. 'Identity Crisis' is a song without an idea. The flip is 'Confused Again', which is better, but only slightly.

Shy Imposters, 'At The Barrier' (Phantom)

Shy Imposters hail from Sydney. They no longer exist, and bassist Peter Oxley is now guitarist in the Sunnyboys. Strong vocals from Penny Ward turn 'At The Barrier' into a worthwhile release. 'Seeing Double', on the flip is a reasonable Pretenders' impression.

Mark Phillips

To avoid further accusations of "regional bias", 'RIU' will send eligible singles to our man-on-the-spot in Dunedin, George Kay. (Roy Colbert lives there too!)

Puppetz, 'Identity Crisis' (Bunk)

Another plural 'z' on Bunk and another song that treads the uneasy road between credibility and commerciality and so ends up being a mite too twee and lightweight. Flip side 'Confused Again' is the usual concerned social comment, too preaching to be acceptable.

George Kay

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