

TAPE OP MAGAZINE

Cerberus Shoal Diary - January 2003

by Scott Colburn

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1-3-03

Damn! Why did I book a 6:30am flight? Oh yeah - it's half the price of a sane-hour flight. So, it's up at 4am, down some cheerios, and head to the airport. My wife, Jaye, sees me off with sad anticipation of three weeks without me, the longest we've ever been apart.

The check-in line is long, but I have an e-ticket, so I can check myself in. The woman in front of me is waiting, too, for the terminal to open. When it does, she presses a button, turns to me to say 'I don't have a credit card,' and gets back in line. I ask her if she's going to use the terminal, and she says 'no'. As I begin the checking in process, the woman approaches an attendant (who is unnaturally cheery for this hour, if you ask me) and hands her ticket over. The cheery attendant says, 'This is a paper ticket. Normally you would have to get in the other line, but I will help you.' Cheery cheery cheery! And much too nice, I think. She's rewarding the woman for acting stupid, and I wish she would make the dingbat get back in line for manipulating her like that.

The airlines want us to leave our luggage unlocked these days, in case the Government wants to take a peak. Big Brother is gaining more and more ground, I think, and I don't like it one bit, terrorism be damned. I tell yet another attendant that I have about \$4,000 worth of mics in my bag - *surely* she doesn't expect me to leave it unlocked. Her reply is tart: if They want to look inside, They will break the lock if I don't comply with their demands. Welcome to America, dude. Luckily I see some Feds near-by, so I have them snoop through my carry-ons in my presence - Feds know what microphones are, given all Their spy training. It occurs to me that this would be a great time to smuggle drugs, if I did such things, since I have a small battalion of prescription pills (which aren't written under my name, mind you), and They don't question them at all. This is to say nothing of the oh-so-mysterious black vile of Green Tree Frog Poison in my side pocket.

They are looking for Weapons of Mass Destruction, I guess - explosives, chemical weapons, rap music. One agent tells me that the package I have in one of my suitcases will be 'highly suspect' (and he used that term). The smoking gun in question contains Sun City Girls CD's.

My first flight is 4-1/2 hours long. I've brought along a bagel, a granola bar, and some raisons, but am still so hungry! I pass the time reading Schrodingers Cat Trilogy, which was recommended by the band I'm on my way to record. What a strange and wonderful book. I will tell Jaye about it later, which will spawn an interesting conversation in

quantum mechanics between us.

When I land in Philly I look for food. Their airport fare is 'interesting', but not very plane-worthy. The Philly Cheese Steak sandwich is appealing in the same way Spam is (meaning that you really need to try it once). The problem is that we also call a mullet a Philly Cheese Steak, so I'll have to rely on the salami and cheese sandwich I packed at home to get me to Manchester.

Once there, I am greeted by snow - eight inches of beautiful, fluffy white ice! I hold my phone out in to its path for Jaye to hear its descent. We both miss snow, having grown up with Midwest winters.

Paul (North East Indie Records) and Chriss (Cerberus Shoal) are there to pick me up, and soon we are off with no troubles, but the drive to Portland is hectic. If you've ever driven down a turnpike at 45 mph in a near blizzard, not really knowing where the lanes are, you know how bloodless Paul's knuckles were that evening. After what seems like an awful long two-hour drive, we arrive in Portland and head straight to a sushi bar. Ahhh' edible food!

Afterward, we stop by the Shoal house, have a few beers with the rest of the band, and listen to the Singing Tard. Later I will call Jaye, who will say, 'One day down, 20 more to go.' And my day is complete.

1-4-03

I sleep 12 hours straight without waking, which is quite a feat for me - at home I'm up 'at the crack' (of dawn) with too much to do, no time to rest.

We're back in the car again to brave the ever-deepening snow (six more inches this morning - oh, glory!) for the drive to Boston, where we will pick up an O2R96 from Andy Hong (TapeOp review editor and Kimchee Record executive). Andy has just built a new studio, and we get The Grand Tour. He and his brother are architects, and it shows - the place is really sweet.

Along the way I call a friend, a former-Bostonian, and once again hold the phone to the sky. 'Say hello to Boston, you rat bastard!' From arm's length I hear a distant 'Well helloooooo!'

Back in Portland we arrive at the old church we'll be recording in. Built of massive grey stones in 1897, it has stone walls and wood ceilings, but was rehabbed inside with drywall, bleachers, and a nice-sized stage. The acoustics are good. The rest of the band and their equipment arrived before us, so we set up most of the instruments and the console, and look through all the mics and other gear we have on-hand for this project. The only (*only!*) Coles 4040 in the whole of the United States is in my hands, and this makes me drool a bit. After a meal of Pahd Kee Mao we call it a night.

1-5-03

Another 12 luscious hours of blissful sleep later, we set-up, set-up, set-up. It's not just a matter of selecting mics for the sounds we want, we're also getting to know one another while wiring a studio anew. We've got the O2R96 - a 24 bit, 96k digital console with 56 inputs - and I'm looking forward to working with it. I am intimately familiar with the original O2R, but this version is phenomenal in its plethora of new and updated features. I discover that it's extremely versatile in patching and routing, which is always important. We are recording to three DA-38's and, while we only have one T-DIF cable, Mark has discovered that we can rewire a Radio Shack printer cable to act as a T-DIF. He does it on the spot! What a brilliant lad.

Meanwhile, I select mics for the drum kit. A Beta 52 sounds too papery on the kick, so we opt for the ol' reliable D-112. Mark suggests a Sennheiser MD504 for snare, and we give it a shot (trying to be open-minded, you know). I'm pleasantly surprised - it sounds great! Mark has also brought along a couple of Audix D-2 mics (which I've always been curious about) for the toms, and they work well, too. To finish out the kit, I use my trusty NT1's for overhead/room mics. I try an Alesis AM62 on Tom's marimba, first, but it isn't hot enough, so I opt for the AT 4033. On his timpani we try an EV N/D 308B, first, and then a Beyer M380 TG, but we finish with another AT 4033a. I use a KSM32 and a DI on bass. For guitar (an SG through a twin reverb), a SM57 does the trick. On Karl's Roland sampler, we take a DI out.

Colleen's harmonium is typical of most in that it's difficult to minimize key clicks. At Marks' suggestion we try an AT873R, the result of which is a lot of clicks but otherwise amazing instrument sound. A MiLab VIP-50 still reveals some clicks, but a 57 doesn't sound very good at all, so we return to the AT, opting for a few key clicks in return for superior overall sound. Unfortunately, we find the bleed to be horrendous during sound check, so we build a fort around the instrument to minimize leakage and maximize the possibility of keeping some of the track.

I'm not too picky on vocal mics because I know the bleed will be bad, but I want to get *some* sort of decent sound in case these vocal takes outshine future overdubs. I try the other Aleisi AM62 on Chriss's voice, feel that Colleen will benefit from my C3000b, and find that Karl will sound great on the LD-2ube. Erin got to deflower the Coles 4040, the lucky lass!

Erin plays trumpet with a delay and sometimes sings with a delay, as well. We start by splitting the Coles signal out of the console to the delay pedal and then sending that to a track. This turns out to be a big pain in the ass, so we set up an Audix OM2 that is near the Coles when she sings - this way she can move the Coles out of the way when she plays trumpet. I place the Beyer M380TG at this alternate location, but it doesn't have the pick-up pattern I want, so I opt for the KSM32, instead. Good choice!

Our final mic for the evening is the Coles 4038, which we place half-way back in the theater and let it ride.

On the first piece (Drag), Chriss also plays bass. We toy around for a while with alternate inputs on Erins amp, but end up just using a DI on a separate track. We can always reamp it later.

After a bit of pizza we try to record a take of Drag, but spend most of our time figuring out what everyone needs in the Qmix system. Then we call it a night.

1-6-03

I've gotten yet another unheard-of 12 hours of sleep, but instead of feeling rested I wake up feeling hazy. Jaye and I have been thinking it's the fresh, oxygen-enriched Maine air lulling me in to a baby-like slumber, but now I think I'm just fighting a virus I caught on the plane. Bah! At the store I pick up an ear syringe and a bunch of sea salt to snort. That and some homeopathic cold meds will keep me going for most of the day.

Today is our first day of tracking. We accomplish two takes of Drag with yesterday's setup, the first of which is our best. We move on to MMB2 - Chriss plays acoustic guitar, but Erin does not play trumpet so I move the KSM32 to Chriss' guitar. After three takes, we keep only the guitar intro of the first take. Colleen feels she needs another day in order to do her part right, so we do three takes of the song sections. Take 'two' is the keeper.

The Chinese food we order for dinner isn't brilliant, but it hits the spot. Then we move on to two takes of Story. Caleb plays melodica on this piece, so I give him a CAD Equitek E-100, which works nicely. The first take is pretty good, but we feel it could be better, so we try a few more times. Everyone is getting tired, though, so we decide to pick up here tomorrow.

1-7-03

We've had a late start this morning but will kick ass the rest of the day. We crank through another take of Story, but decide to keep only the first section. The take after that is a keeper, too, so we switch tapes and begin working on Ouch. Our second take of that song is much better, so we go back to MMB2 to redo the intro, try two takes, and decide keep the first one.

We pick through Chinese leftovers for lunch, then begin to tackle The Beast. Erin plays toy piano on this one and needs a delay on it - the Radio Shack 33-3032 works well. I place the KSM32 in the same position for a clean sound.

Just as the day before ended, so this day closes with one take that's pretty good and a

few which failed to thrill. We may keep take two, may not - we'll see.

I dreamt that I was in a motorcycle race. I was a few riders behind the lead and knew we were near the end, so as we banked on a turn I squeezed between the two ahead of me to come out in front and cross the finish line first. Victorious, I continued on the track to the next turn, stopped my bike, and walked back to the finish line, expecting to be received as the winner. To my astonishment, everyone was celebrating some other rider; because I didn't complete the 'finish lap', I had been disqualified. I new this was wrong, and my crew didn't understand it, either. My dad just shrugged. After complaining loudly, I was told that I would need to take the issue up with the Head Honcho, so I walked through a little outdoor restaurant (which appeared suddenly at the edge of the race track) and in to a back room. Something told me that the guy I approached was mafia and that I should turn and walk out, but I didn't. Instead, I told the guy that I'd won the race, that I deserved the cup. He smiled and gestured as if playing a violin ('cry me a river, whydoncha.'). I was outraged, and began to yell at the s.o.b. when a couple of guys tried to grab my arms from behind. I punched them, yelling and kicking all the while, and began to scream, 'I won this race! I won this race!' I was still angry about it when I woke up. Just more proof that sports are bad for you.

1-8-03

Today begins a little slower than usual. I buy donuts from Collucci's and a bagel at the Hilltop café. The patrons in the café are admiring Colleen's sweater, and she is embarrassed to say that it's from LL Bean. 'Why is that embarrassing?' one asks, and I reply, 'Shop locally.' They get my meaning, but I tell them a little story, anyway, about my old engineering teacher, who told us to do as much business locally so that if they fuck up you can take a bat to their heads. I see that I've not won any friends with my quippy tale, so we exit without further banter.

We decide not to keep that take of The Beast, after all. Instead, we record a whole new keeper, and it's a good thing. On to Archie Arctaurus - they're all happy with the first take, but I feel it lacks a bit of energy and so ask for another take. The second one is lamer. Since we had a late start and everyone is sort of floundering, we decide to take a dinner break.

At the West End Grocery I have an amazing prociuto sandwich with mozzarella and tomato, a spinach salad, and a tomato soup that floored me, all washed down with a Guinness and Newcastle.

We listen back to all the takes we like, make notes about what we want to replace, and call it good.

That night I dream about a world similar to Orwell's 1984, only modern-day. Big Brother is still watching us. I had a business partner whom I can't now identify, and we knew that the police would be searching for things in a matter of days (things? what things?).

I had a couple of floppy discs (which I really do own) containing back-ups of my Money and Quickbooks data that I use for my business and personal finances, and another disc with old databases of records and tapes on it. I knew that these were legal to possess, but feared the police would take them away if they were found. I didn't want to be without them. My friend John Semen (the true-life archivist at EMP) had a tiny office, only a six foot square landing atop a spiral staircase which climbed several stories.

There, I found I could place the floppies in the dropped ceiling above his desk and felt everything would be OK, but once I placed my treasures there the tiles wouldn't fit back in to place. An alarm went off, and someone pulled a plastic sheet down from the ceiling in an attempt to shield what I was doing. That was when I noticed crystal ball-type objects attached to the wall, all evenly spaced from the floor to the ceiling - the Watchful Eyes! Looking over the expanse of office cubicles and scurrying people below (much like the view from the office in Gilliam's 1984 spinoff), I saw a security guard dart behind a corner. He had seen me! John told me to get out as quickly as possible, and suddenly, my dream went Jackie Chan - I slid down the four-story spiral staircase on my hands and feet. At the bottom, my partner mouthed to me that we would 'do the masterpiece'. I nodded and started to run. Security guards were running toward me, but there were lines of desks between me them and me. They darted around the desks, but I slid across the desks (the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, after all). Half way across the room was my partner, also sliding across the desks but coming toward me instead of away from the guards. I think this was meant to be 'the masterpiece' move.

He reached his hand out toward me, but I didn't have the floppies to pass him. Where had they gone? I reached the end of the desks and flew into the air. That's when I woke up.

1-9-03

I had to get up early today to tour Gateway Mastering. What a great place! I meet Bob Ludwig and tell him what a great job he did with Ellen Fullman's track on Immersion. He plays us an SACD of Miles' Kind of Blue, which is amazing - we can actually hear the spit in the horns. He also plays us a German flamenco pop metal group, but I won't be able to remember their name. The surround stuff is cool, too, but I don't quite agree with the levels or placement of some of the instruments. A Bob Clearmountain mix of the new Bryan Ferry record sounds really good, except the vocals were recorded too close to the mic. Soon after Bob plays us this record, his assistant shuffles us out because 'Bob has plenty of work to do,' but Bob breaks away yet again to show us his 1' 2-track and 2' 8-track machines. He mentions that Gaucho was coming in on 2' 8-track next week. I didn't really know what to say, so I stared and blinked. Yet another reason why sports are bad for you.

Today is all about overdubs that have to be done in the church space. We do a marimba overdub, which is easy, and Erin does two real piano overdubs. Colleen does a double track of Tap Dance, in which we run the mics and headphones down to the basement for acoustical quality, and then we work on vocal and percussion overdubs using the miLab VIP in different positions. We haul out a massive step ladder to place the mic overheads as far away as we can and are pleased with the result. On one song we run the MiLab

behind the bleachers for a different far-away sound, and then we break for dinner.

We go to some bar where the food is rather awful. Even the martini is bad. I'm glad enough to get back to the space to improv for the next two hours.

Our first hour is great, and there are moments in the second hour which are cool, too, but I'm worn out. Thankfully, there is Bordeaux and the yummy cheese awaiting us.

That night's dream was about going to see my friend Fray in Vancouver, Canada (truly, he lives in Toronto). He didn't live in the apartment I knew to be his anymore, but resided in a strange line of apartments with glass window fronts inscribed with the names of the businesses within. I couldn't find Fray, though, so went searching for him. In the foyer of the building were desks (*again* with the desks), and I thought I recognized a woman sitting at one of them. She recognized me, regardless, so I asked about Fray. She said he didn't live there anymore, then pointed to a blinking light on the side of her computer monitor that indicated she had a few more calls to make. She said we could hang out once she was done, but I was uncomfortable with her innuendos, and so I told her that I really wanted to go back to Seattle. She offered to let me stay the night at her place, but I insisted that I really needed to get back home.

1-10-03

Jaye has sent me my mail via AirBorne, and placed inside the envelope is her pentagram. She wants me to wear it while I'm here, to keep me safe. She loves me!

We move out of the church and into Paul's house today. We're severely delayed because Paul wants to get a bulk mailing of promo's out and didn't foresee the horror of the postal system - now he's getting a mega-dose of what it means to 'go postal'. I keep busy around the house doing miscellaneous whatnot, and it's just as well; getting to the church late means we have more people to help load out. Everything goes smoothly, and we get all the equipment to Paul's house without incident.

Chriss brings me to an Indian joint for dinner which has amazing food. The Mango Chutney is delectable on their garlic naan.

Back at the house I pop a pharmaceutical (one the Feds didn't find on my flight out) to relax. It works - I go to bed at 1am and wake the next day at 1pm.

I had a dream about a house Jaye and I bought, which was similar to the one we really have but the house in my dream had a garage with a circular-saw shaped hole in it. Realtors were showing our house to prospective buyers and, while it wasn't for sale, it seemed alright to have them do what they were doing. A hole in the floor revealed people touring the basement. I found my way down to where they were and realized for the first time that our basement used to be a wood shop. Through a double door I saw a huge, previously undiscovered room with a predominately dirt floor. The ceiling must

have been 50 feet high, and it was probably 200 feet wide and deep. I thought, 'This will make the most awesome studio'. Then I woke up. I will discover the next day that Jaye has also dreamt about a mammoth, hidden room in our house. Hers had a large sound stage, a water reservoir lined with fire pots, and a ceiling so high it appeared to be the sky. All manner of lighting techs, sound engineers and extras milled about the hallways. She had coupled with Joey from Friends. Ow you doin'?

1-11-03

I could lay in bed all day, but it's time to build another studio setup. I spend most of the day doing just that until around 5pm, when most of the group comes by to map out the overdub situation and work schedules.

We go out for Thai food, which is OK, and then go back to continue wiring the equipment. I went to bed around 1am, and did not dream.

1-12-03

Overdub day. Chriss gets the Coles 4040, Coleen gets the AKG C3000B, and we work on vocals on MMB2. Chriss has to go to a work party of some sort, so I use an SM81 on Colleen's harmonium, which sounds wonderful. We dub a massive amount of harmonium, and Caleb plays melodica on Story using the Coles 4040. We do some group vocals using the LD-2ube. Erin is here to do some vocals, too, but the night before she got impaired, fell into a potted plant, and cut her hand wide open on the clay pot. She didn't nick the tendon, but the sheath is cut. She will be out of commission for a few days. Luckily, all her parts are perfect.

We take a break for dinner and go to West End Grocery again. I get a curry squash soup and some smoked salmon with Irish cheese, as well as another prociutto sandwich and some spinach lasagna for later. Yummy!

We do vocals for Ouch and call it a night.

I dreamt that Jaye and I were throwing a party at a pristine-clean rental house in LA. The food theme was chocolate-covered things, which suited us well. Our guests were eager for the food to be served, and once the silver covers came off they went in to a feeding frenzy, grabbing at the delicacies and strewing it about the floor, table and chairs. Disgusted by the scene, I huffed off into another room, where I met Madonna. She was about to get into a hot tub but still wore a bathrobe. I asked her if she ever thought about doing a record of straight classic pop material, and she said, 'Talk to my manager,' pointing at a woman who stood next to me. She asked me if I wanted to get into the hot tub with her, but I declined. She then discarded the bathrobe, got in to the tub, and turned around to say, 'Of course I want to do that - I'm *Madonna*.'

Madonna's agent, Liz, then led me through the house party. Along the way, Julian and

Anne (friends in real life) appeared. 'Hey' Julian said, in true Julian fashion. I introduced Julian (also a trusted colleague) to Liz, and then Liz took me into an office to question me about my career. I told her I had been talking to kd lang, and she nodded her head in approval. I offered to send her some demo materials and searched my wallet for a business card, but I didn't have one. Neither did she, so she told me to send my materials to Liz Young, 1701 Greenwood, LA 98*** (I don't remember the zip code now). I started to write down my information for her, but my handwriting was horrible, so I woke up.

Jaye dreamt that night of yet another hidden room in our house - this time a rickety, moldy staircase with filthy single socks strewn about.

1-13-03

I'm fretting a bit about the O2R96 and time code - I can't get it to read at all. I'm following the directions, but' Since I'm a few days away from mixing, I decide I need to get in the Yamaha tech queue. When the tech calls back, he can't initially figure out what the problem is. It says it appears I'm doing everything right. He has a JL Cooper PPS-2, as I do, so he says he will try his out and see what happens. He calls back about an hour later to tell me it's simply a level thing - the PPS-2 doesn't spit out SMPTE at a loud enough level for the board to see it. I re-amp the signal and everything is fine. *Whew!* I just need to re-stripe the time code on four hours of tape.

Today is full of overdubs. We begin a little slowly, spending four hours on a replacement acoustic guitar for one song. I find it difficult to do since no click tracks were used, but the band sort of flows with the mood. I try the Coles 4040 on the acoustics, and it sounds pretty good but has a little too much low end. We finally decide to use the replacement acoustics only where vocals occur, but still use the original acoustics where there are no vocals. I do a rough mix with automation, and everyone is happy. I am, too! This automation is a vast improvement - super sweet. We then work a bit on Caleb's guitar overdubs with a Coles 4038, which produces a nice sound. Makes me want to own a few of those Coles mics, but I'd like to put them side-by-side with the Royers. Maybe I'll ask Tucker what he thinks about that.

We record some of Karl's vocals with Chriss, and then some solos. I use the LD-2ube on Karl's vocals, as I did in the tracking session - that mic is made for his voice. I think Karl is on a roll as he's coming up with crazy qualities. Caleb thinks it's getting too creepy, but I love whisper and character vocals. It's beginning to sound very Sun City Girls-influenced, and one section sounds like a black metal record. Everything is shaping up nicely.

1-14-03

More overdubs today. We start late, but it's OK because I'm trying to get everything wired and am catching up on some personal items. We begin with kamach overdubs, but

the entire band brain farts on what that part should be. Alas, it takes a long time. We then go on to Karl's vocal replacements.

I make Agli Olio for everyone, which is a fun treat - to wind down, cook good food, and hang out with everyone.

1-15-03

More overdubs today. These are our final dubs of guitar, kamach, and dialog for Two Holes. We eat at a bad Chinese restaurant to get through the day, but it's a great relief to leave the studio for a while and walk outside. Serendipitous to this moment, my fortune cookie says, 'A walk will clear your head - a talk will clear your mind.'

1-16-03

We spend most of today listening to the drums and bass and establishing sounds for the record. We're considering it a 'day off', really. I'm dubbing tapes and looking through e. bay for DA-38s and DA-88s, versus the MX 2424.

We have a great meal at the end of the day - mussels, spicy salad, breads and cheeses. Yum!

Today's AirBorne package includes Burt's Bees Lip Balm with my mail from home. I've been telling Jaye that my lips are chapped from this dry winter air.

I had a dream that Greenlake (in Seattle) had become an Olympic pool. It was open aired with ancient walls, like the Roman baths Jaye and I saw in Bath, UK. Rob (a friend) and I were watching a swimming protest, wherein the swimmers would dive into the water and then swim the length with one limb (an arm, a leg) raised above the water.

Near the end of this charade, thousands of military troops swarmed the bleachers on both sides of the lake/pool and on to the deck above, like fire ants from a disturbed nest. My mouth was agape, and I said to Rob, 'That was truly bizarre!' We ran out a door into a New York alley, complete with snow and garbage. We walked for a bit, then caught a cab.

1-17-03

Jaye has stomach flu. She says she puked so hard at 3am she thought her spine would fly out. I laugh at the animated version of this my mind conjured up, ala Itchy & Scratchy, but she doesn't initially appreciate the humor. She had to crawl to the bathroom for water.

It's Mix Day #1 - DRAG. I binge eat to recover from my own illness, whatever it is, and will consume about four meals before the day's end, most of which is from the freezer or

leftovers. It's all good, but I just can't stop eating!

I spend four hours making a single pass at one piece, then we all listen to it and spend another four hours making corrections. It feels like we're taking way too much time for one mix, but Caleb points out that the song is 14 minutes long, so it's like mixing three songs. When we listen to it a final time, everyone is happy. I hope it holds!

1-18-03

Mix Day #2 - MY MIND BLUES. I drank three Ballantines last night, and I'm feeling it today.

Again, we spend five hours to make one pass (this song, too, is nearly 14 minutes long), so we don't start the second pass until around 6:30pm. I haven't eaten much today (in sharp contrast to yesterday), so I get a low blood sugar headache.

Finally, around 8pm we go to J's Oyster House for some raw Oysters and chowder. Mmmm, Maine chowder! It isn't anything like the chowder and oysters we get back home, but Maine and Seattle are on opposite coasts of a huge country, so I expect things to be different here.

Caleb and I then went back to the house and mixed. Again, we were happy with the results.

I'm having to face the fact that I can't afford to buy the O2R96 we've been working on (dammit!), so I'm going to ask Jaye to send me my Midi Data Filer from home via AirBorne so that we can back up the scene memory and automation we've created. This console is awesome, but we've just bought an old church, and I need to build a new studio in it; that's going to cost me some pretty pennies. Since the studio manager's software doesn't actually back up the scene memory and automation like I need it to, I'll have to default to the MDF - I know it will do what I need it to do.

1-19-03

Mix Day #3 - STORY. I start early today, thinking it will feel like I was mixing quicker, but in the end it will take five hours to get through the first pass and another three for the second pass. Drat! I don't know why, but we then decide to try to mix COL. LAMENT. The outcome is pretty good, but I'm exhausted and need to finish that mix in the morning.

Today's food experience was uneventful.

1-20-03

Mix Day #4 - OUCH. I revisit COL. LAMENT to make quite a few changes, and discover that whatever I was thinking last night, it certainly wasn't clearly. The band is showing up later and later in the day now, I hope because they trust that I know what I'm doing and am moving in the same direction they would like to go. Plus, listening to little snippets of each song to eke out subtle differences is boring for them, especially since they don't really know what I'm thinking when I made those tiny changes. I'm not very conversational, anyways.

OUCH is an extremely complicated piece. I thought it would be easier to work on than other songs, but it takes almost six hours to make the first pass. We all listen, and then I make the last pass changes. Erin and Paul are fooling around with the video camera, filming me while I mix with a hilarious video feedback. Once I'm done we sit and listened to everything we've completed so far. We are all still happy with the mixes, and they stand up to repeated listening.

Again, today's food is uneventful.

1-21-03

Mix Day #5 - SCALEY BEAST. This piece comes together quickly and quite nicely. It takes five hours for one pass, but I started early and finish the first pass at 3:30pm. Our second pass goes well, too, and I feel pretty good about everything.

Jaye calls me from the scene of a car accident she's just been involved in. She is waiting for the cops to arrive, and is ok, but it takes my breath away a bit. I received the MDF she sent me just this morning ' inside was a box of fudge: 'Sweets for my sweet.'

1-22-03

Mix Day # 6 - Crunch Day! Most of today is spent flipping out. I knew I had a lot of dubbing and masters to make, so I begin the day early again but soon realize that the Tascam 428 interface doesn't work well with my laptop, perhaps because the hard drive is a 5400 rpm, but trying it on another computer results in the same problems. Maybe this USB transfer of digital information is just a bunch of hooey. I decide to run the mixes digitally to two tracks on the DA-38, and also to the DA-P1 DAT, but am bummed because I want to stay 24 bit for the mixes. Whatever! The 20 bit DA-38's will have to suffice. I'm happy with the results, but still lament that the 24 bit thing didn't work.

I run the mixes out for quite some time, while simultaneously running them to a Roland VS-880 via analog channels so we can burn CD's from that machine and rip them into my laptop to edit and sequence a demo order for the record. This works, but the Roland takes its sweet time. Meanwhile, I have plenty of space to panic! I've found about 10-15 minor things I want to change in every piece; Caleb asks why I don't just make the changes, so I told him that, with everything we have to accomplish today, I would be up until 2am, minimum, if I were to tackle it all. Besides, changing a few minor things won't

radically improve the record, and that's the bottom line. The emotion and feel we want is still there, and won't improve if a few kick drum hits are pulled back to suite us.

Caleb and Karl have some big changes in mind for one piece, and I'm feeling a little overwhelmed, so I show Caleb how to write the automation and let them deal with that while I edit the dialog for 2 HOLES. They finished in time for me to double check it and run the master just as the second CD of mixes pops out of the Roland. Back to editing as the rest of the group starts to show up for our recording of 2 HOLES.

We do the improv music recording of 2 HOLES and some minor automation for a mix. Everyone likes it, and it only takes two hours (!). After these past few full days of mixing, this feels like slacking.

While burning the third CD in the Roland, we saunter downstairs to enjoy Maine Lobster, spinach casserole, good wine and bread. We have a great time with our Last Supper, and the atmosphere is one of easy humor and personal warmth. We've gotten to know one another well over these past few weeks, and I'm happy with what we've built among us.

I exit quickly after dinner to run back to the edits to sequence the CD. Later, I walk downstairs with a demo CD and we all sit in the living room, get impaired, and listen to 'the fruits of our loins.' They'd conceived a golden child, and together we birthed a beauty. It's sweet! I run upstairs to burn another CD, and when I return everyone is in the kitchen, looking at the floor in silence. Oh, no, I think - don't they like the CD? I ask what the hell is going on, and Chriss replies that he's not very good at goodbyes, then gives me a big hug. Everyone else in the band does the same - a true love fest. I am moved, to say the least. I'm bummed because this wonderful experience is coming to an end, but I still have many hours of work ahead of me.

By the time I finish packing and running voiceless mixes, it's 4am. Good thing I have until 8am to sleep!

1-23-03

We pile in to the car this morning - Paul, Erin and me. I begin to decompress, and am melancholy. They take your luggage into a 'back room' at the Manchester Airport to check it, then lock it back up and give you the key. I hope they re-packed it right.

As I glide up the escalator, I turn to look back at Erin and Paul as they exit the airport. Just then, Erin turns to wave goodbye. I think I made some long time friends this month.

Security asks me what kind of footwear I have on. 'Birkenstocks,' I reply, 'do you like them?' 'Just put them on the conveyor belt, please', he says. Next time I'll FedEx my equipment and wear speed-os and flip flops to fly.

When I get home I see that Jaye has circled this date on our calendar with a red heart. Inside are three lovely words: Scott Comes Home!

Scott Colburn lives in Seattle, but materializes all over the world wherever interesting music is being made.

To find out more - scottcolburn.com