

Limerick Music Express

EDITORIAL

Hi Folks,*

Since the Rock Music Seminar in January, I have been conscious of the need for more communication between musicians throughout the city. In an effort to achieve this I will be publishing on a bi-monthly basis this information sheet. It will be called LME (Limerick Music Express) and will be available in most music shops. If you feel you can add to the content for the next edition, please send details before October 10th to: Sheila Deegan City Arts Organiser Limerick Corporation City Hall Limerick. Tel: 061-45799

BUILDING A HOME RECORDING STUDIO (H.R.S.)

PART (i) THE PORTLAND (P.S.)

The P.S. is a cassette tape (C90) based system with the recording and mixer sections combined in one unit. 4, 6, and 8 track systems are available. The most common brand names are Fostex, Tascam, Toa and Sanusi. Any one brand can have a choice of models ranging from simple inexpensive noise prone models to the more complex expensive less noisy. Somewhere in between is where most P.S. owners start.

ex. FOSTEX X26 @ £300, FOSTEX 160 @ £500, FOSTEX 260 @ £800 and the FOSTEX 450 @ £1,000. (all STG prices approx)

If you multiply the choice above by two or three other brands, confusion in choice becomes inevitable to the inexperienced. You will also need a system to hear the playback from your P.S. i.e. Domestic Stereo amplifier, a pair of speakers, and a stereo tape deck for mastering. You may already own a stereo system so you are ok but if you are not about £350 Irish will see you right.

The most important factor in buying the P.S. is how much money you can spend. Next is the noise level of the machine and lastly the aftersale service. You are better off buying from a Company that specialises in recording equipment as they have keener prices on new equipment and very good ex-demonstration and second hand models, and even among these companies you should shop around. On purchasing some would say "start small and grow". This is good advice but don't buy something you know you will want to change when you realise the machine is too noisy. The amount lost (wasted) on trade ins can mount up. So wait and save a few extra months for a reasonable machine. No matter what machine you buy, it will take

some months until you get used to the operating system and your awareness of how to make a good recording. (More on this in the next article.)

A mid range machine such as the Tascam Porta 2 or the Fostex 260 (£500 - £600) second hand or ex-demo is a good place to start. This is a lot of money but compared to a guitar and amp it is reasonable. The most talked about aspect of P.S. is the noise reduction system and speed of play and record. The faster the tape runs across to record head the better the quality of sound. Noise reduction systems currently in use are Dolby C, Dolby B and dBx. Dolby C is the best coping with drum machines and synthesiser time code. dBx on the other hand does not work well on drum machines or time code. With dBx the noise fluctuates with the signal which makes it stand out, where as with Dolby C the noise level is constant and is soon forgotten about as the music comes to the fore.

Having said that, the most important aspect of your recordings are good timing and musicianship and a balanced sound. Quality always shines through noise and after all it is basically a demo tape. So compromise on the noise but never on the music.

In the next article "How to make a good recording" and "where can you buy".

SOUNDPROOFING A ROOM

The best thing to do first of all, is to have a floating floor. The way that this works is that you put rock-wool on the floor (i.e. RW7) and on top of it you put two layers of tongued and grooved flooring grade chipboard, as a "raft", and leave 1/8 to 1/4 of an inch gap at the junction of all walls.

For the walls the best thing to do is to build another wall, using wooden battens and plasterboard, leaving a 2 to 3 inch gap between the plasterboard and the existing wall.

Single doors are impossible to soundproof and openings should therefore either have a double door, or open into a corridor.

For ceilings, where walls join joists, block holes with stock bricks and sand and cement, and if there are any little holes left, fill them with mastic. Where a wall joins a floor or a ceiling or another wall put a bead of mastic along the joining edge; £100 spent on mastic is possibly the best investment one can make for soundproofing. Finally, if you find that the floors and corridor are too expensive to do, making double walls with wooden battens and plasterboard as above will get rid of most of the top end spill of noise, although it won't have much effect on the rumble noise of such things as bass drum and bass guitar.

THE HITCHERS

Formed on the swings in a playground near the N17 on the 6th of January, 1989, The Hitchers are a notoriously witty band, that write sparkling, fruity skiffle pop-songs. With songs like "Which leg of a chicken is more tender", "Always look on the bright side of a knife", "The inadequate continuity announcer", and "There's a bomb in that basket of fruit", they've given you four reasons why you couldn't ever refuse them anything.

In May '89 The Hitchers won a Battle of the Bands contest in the Belltable, Limerick with recording time in Limerick's Xeric Studios as their prize. They recorded a four track demo which received extensive airplay on Dave Fanning's 2FM show.

The Hitchers spent the following summer supporting many top Irish bands (including The Fat Lady Sings, The Word, The Stunning and Cactus World News) and built up a sizeable following such that they are playing their own gigs by October '89. The rest of '89 was spent writing new material and they recorded a track for "The Reindeer Age" - Xeric Studios' compilation album which was

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released in February '90. Their track "Alice is Here" also got extensive airplay on 2FM. ~ March 23rd '90 saw The Hitchers winning the S'kool Band 90 Contest in Cork. Their prize included the recording and releasing of their debut single and an appearance on Jo-Maxi as well as £500 cash.

I asked Eoin (vocals) a few questions about "what it's like to be in a band in Limerick".

Q HOW EASY IS IT TO GET A GIG?

A It varies, sometimes we could play 6 times in 4 days and at another time we might not play for 3 weeks. The Youth Centre (The Oasis Club) is a good venue to start off in and they will always try to accommodate your expenses. If you play a support gig then it means you don't get paid but you also don't have the hassle or expense of bringing your own gear. The fact that 3 members of the band are still attending school also means that we are not totally dependent on money from gigs to survive. If you want to secure a gig or a venue outside of Limerick it requires a personal visit by the band to meet the venue manager. This can be costly and there is always the possibility of getting turned down but it is a lot better than just telephoning.

Q WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN IN LIMERICK FOR YOUNG BANDS?

A It is good to see two new venues being opened shortly, The Savoy Complex, and the Kiwi Bar. Maybe these won't prove as transient as some of the other venues. I would like to see some co-operation between National and Regional venues. We have a good following here in Limerick, but to get recognition outside of that we need to play in more established venues where A & R people hang out. So say if a band has reached a good standard in their region then venue managers in National venues should recognise this.

Media coverage for the regions is also pretty bad. I don't know how this can be overcome, maybe by providing more prestigious opportunities in the City for bands to play at and for big promotion companies to be invited.

It's also very difficult for a young band to come up with the necessary money to buy good equipment. There is only one band that I know of that actually owns all their own bass amps, guitar amps - everything but they have been around for a long time. Maybe if there was a resource centre or music co-op where equipment could be borrowed or rented from it would help bands a lot. Cork, Galway and Derry all have Music Co-ops or resource centres. If Limerick had one we could exchange gigs which would help generate a following in each town.

Q HAS YOUR BAND MADE ANY VIDEOS?

A Videos are extremely expensive to shoot. We have been lucky in that Purini, an RTE program have videod us and we can

use the video for any promotional opportunity that comes our way. So TV programs are a good and cheap way of getting a video made.

Q DO YOU FEEL THAT A BAND NEEDS A MANAGER?

A It is very difficult to try and to do everything. But we seem to do things in block, like a lot of songwriting, then a lot of recording, then maybe administration. If we had a manager he or she would really be concerned with all the legalities of having a record deal and negotiating terms. But we don't have a record contract yet so it's not really necessary to have a Manager.

Well it looks like **THE HITCHERS** have a pretty bright future ahead of them - here's wishing them the best of everything.

ROCK MUSIC SEMINAR

Many of you will have attended the one day Rock Music Seminar held last January in the Granary. Over 70 people attended the day mostly musicians, singers and songwriters. Four main topics were addressed, the most popular being songwriting by Mick Hanly. He discussed the discipline required to produce work and suggested that 3 hours a day be spent writing to obtain serious results. Royalty Collection was addressed by Eamon Shackleton of the IMRO. The Irish Musical Right Organisation (IMRO) also sponsored the event. He stressed the importance of becoming a member of the Performing Rights Society who in turn monitor air play and general use of songs. For an annual membership fee they will collect any royalties you may be entitled to. Band Management was discussed by Brendan O'Connell, manager of the band "THE WORD". A manager should not be just a friend but somebody committed to your music and ideology. He or she discusses all fixtures with venues and fees and at all times promotes the band as best they know.



Speakers at Rock Music Seminar held in January. (Back row) L. to R.: Mick Hanly, Brendan O'Connell, Keith Donald, Paddy Dunning. (Front row) L. to R.: Sheila Deegan, Deirdre Wilson, Eamon Shackleton.

Paddy Dunning from the Sound Training Centre in Dublin answered questions about sound equipment and training courses available for sound engineers. Training courses are available at the Sound Training Centre in Crow Street in Dublin. Keith Donald, Popular Music Officer with the Arts Council had some handy tips about demo tapes and publishing and is always available to talk with bands about the music

industry. 01-611840

THE FANNING SESSIONS

In a recent phone conversation with Ian Wilson, producer of the Fanning Sessions he explained the following to me:

"The Fanning Sessions have been around for 10 years now. Over the 10 years we have come in contact with thousands of bands trying to establish themselves. What we have tried to do is give as much exposure to as many as is physically and financially possible. We have access to a national audience through the Radio Show which helps to give a band a wider following".

I asked him what are the things that make his job easier when receiving tapes?

"Well, if you want to be considered for a session then a home demo is acceptable, but if you want to be considered for airplay then we prefer to receive recordings on DAT tapes of a professional standard. I never like to see more than 4 songs on a tape. In fact, if there are more than 4 it is very likely it will not get listened to. Along with the tape you should send:

- * The name of the band
- * A contact person
- * A telephone number
- * A brief history/resume of the band
- * A list of songwriters

it is VITAL before you send off the tape to copyright it. This can be done by posting a copy of the tape by registered mail to yourself. That way there is no confusion over rights to the songs at a later stage".

"When you send a tape, don't expect to hear from us, not even an acknowledgement. We do listen to every tape but we can't respond to everybody. But if you do get chosen for a Fanning Session you have a guarantee of the following:

- * Airplay a number of times (national)
- * A courtesy copy of the recording after transmission
- * A good quality recording

However, I must stress that the tape is the property of RTE and cannot be sold by the band, or be played on any other radio station or be used for any commercial undertaking. This is all agreed in a contract beforehand by the band and RTE."

Well that was the end of the conversation as I could not think of any more intelligent questions to ask!

I think though that it is a valuable insight into what to expect when you do get around to organising that demo tape.

Send tapes to:

Jim Lockhart
Producer, Dave Fanning Show
2FM
Dublin 4.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:
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