

Title:

Songwriter Confessions #3

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459

Summary:

How do you fit a \$500,000 recording studio into a small box? Easy. You buy a decent PC and \$1000 worth of software. You can blame this as the start of the Golden Age of the songwriter, because before this evolutionary step-up, people like me used to write maybe four songs a year, badly recorded on the first Sony cassette recorders. I'd save my pennies, and once a year, I'd negotiate a deal with a local studio for a special Saturday morning demo rate.

Keywords:

Songwriting, music, sound studio, Rod Stewart

Article Body:

How do you fit a \$500,000 recording studio into a small box? Easy. You buy a decent PC and \$1000 worth of software. You can blame this as the start of the Golden Age of the songwriter, because before this evolutionary step-up, people like me used to write maybe four songs a year, badly recorded on the first Sony cassette recorders. I'd save my pennies, and once a year, I'd negotiate a deal with a local studio for a special Saturday morning demo rate. I'd pay four reasonable musicians a straight cash fee and try to get three songs done in a three hour session. It didn't help that I wrote the skankiest chord charts in the world. So I had to get across to the musos how the songs went, while the clock ticked away, and like the man said, it was like dancing about architecture.

Nowadays the best player on my songs in my own studio is a guy I've never actually met. He plays rhythm guitar, keeps perfect time, learns the song immediately, and doesn't bring his girlfriend to the session. He lives in a binary cloud of 1s and 0s, and is the best piece of software I ever bought. Because I live on a small farm, good guitarists are hard to come by, and this is a bad and a good thing. Good because it forces me into a minimal style of song construction. My software gives me 99+ tracks if I want them, but lacking the handy players, I make do with what I have, and it turns out that less is often more...and sounds better.

Looking back through the tequila haze, I always had a special liking for Leo

Sayer's records. They were minimal, but always had exactly enough to deliver the song and nothing more to get in the way. They were about the song, not the guitar solo. And in painting terms, they were a portrait of four friends rather than the main grandstand at Manchester United.

While we're taking about musicians, I was working in a studio in south London back in the day, and few miles away, Rod Stewart was recording his next chart-topping album at Olympic studios. Parked in the street outside the front door was Rod's ride home - a shocking pink Lamborghini. Inside, the session was running overtime and into the evening. The assembled musos - (19 with string section) were getting restless and checking their watches. The producer took Rod aside and said: Why don't we send out for tipple for the lads to keep them happy?... Great idea said Rod, putting his hand in his pocket: Send someone out for a bottle of Cinzano and 20 glasses..

And that's how fortunes are made...and a-one...two...three...

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