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STEVE TUSHAR
THE ALL-AROUND
ENGINEER

There are many audio engineers in Hollywood, but most specialize in either music or film work. But Steve Tushar is one of those rare birds that soar in both worlds. He's crafted remixes for Korn, Fear Factory, Megadeth, and Puddle of Mudd. Meanwhile, his film credits include *Inland Empire, Jimmy Neutron, Lion King 1½, Jungle Book 2, American Wedding, American Pie 3, Kicking and Screaming,* and *The Hunted.*

"Basically," says Steve, "I see my gig as everything audio-related. I do sound design and sound effects. I produce music for bands. I also do lots of music for video games."

The music side came first for Steve. "I went to engineering school and worked in studios," he says. "But the good music gigs were too few and far between, so I got into film work. Sometimes it's just busywork, just laying down crickets and car drive-bys. Sometimes it's something incredibly cool, like the new Nicholas Cage version of *The Wicker Man.*"

Tushar works chiefly in his home studio. "I used to work a lot onsite at Disney, Universal, Paramount, and Warner Brothers," he says. "But nowadays the sound supervisor usually just drops a drive off at my house and says, 'See you at the mix!'"

The amount of advance direction Tushar receives varies from project to project. "They usually give you a general idea of what they want," he explains. "They often mention other films. But sometimes the directors really don't know what they want. Sometimes you hear the temporary soundtrack, and it's like 'My God, what were they thinking?' Usually they're happy when they hear my stuff at playback, though they may have notes, so we change things around accordingly."

Tushar mixes on a 5.1 surround system that includes three Yamaha MSP10 monitors and a pair of smaller MSP5As. "I use the MSP5As as my rear surrounds for all my 5.1 mixes," he explains. "They are the perfect complement to my front speakers. They sound exactly the same with a little less bottom end, which is not needed for the program material put in the rears anyway." Tushar has also created 5.1 music mixes, but he finds the process more problematic. "Surround is great for film work, but the concept is still a little weird for music," he observes. "When you go hear a band, they're in front of you, so it feels weird to hear a shaker behind your head! When I work with music, I still put most things in front, especially since I do a lot of breakbeat dance stuff, where most of the drums are mono anyway. Once you start panning drums, you lose the whole feeling. But I do use surround for production effects, like a two-bar turnaround that whips around your head before the hook kicks back in."

Whether Tushar is working for bands or films, there's one constant: Steinberg's Nuendo 3 Music Production System. "I've used every type of recording software," says Steve, "but Nuendo destroys everything else out there. It's more flexible. It's more customizable. Editing is more liquid. For example, you can flip through fades and crossfades without having to delete the previous fade. You can assign plug-ins to key commands. Batch processing is easy. Say I want to create a zombie vocal effect, with some weird pitch-shifting and vocoding: I create a chain of plug-in effects, press one button, and boom! Nuendo processes all the effects across a piece of dialog. It's an amazingly powerful piece of gear."

Nuendo also shines in the mix stage, says Steve: "It has great networking features. When we're working over at Universal or Disney, we can have the main mix running on one rig, and then log into that session remotely from as many as three other rigs. We can do changes and fixes while the mixer is working on the main session. We upload the sound in the background, and the session updates right in front of him as he's working. After working with a feature like that, how can you go back to one of the other programs?"

Does Tushar have any tips about breaking into his hyper-competitive field? "Yeah," he laughs. "Lie a lot! If someone asks if you know how to do something, say yes, no matter what. And then make sure you figure out how to do it before they find out you don't know what you're doing!"