

ON GOD AND THE FBI

Janis Ian has been through many musical incarnations since her 1967 song "Society's Child" made her a star at age 15. She's been a soft-rock balladeer, a disco diva, a polished Nashville tunesmith and a prolific jingle writer. But even those who've come to expect the expected from Ian may be startled by her latest album, the raw, hard-hitting *God and the FBI*.

"My working title for this record was *Bite Me!*" states Ian. "I wanted it to be edgier and more dissonant than anything I'd done before."

With that goal in mind, Ian made a 180-degree turn from her previous disc, *Hunger*, which had been recorded live to analog with minimal overdubs. This time, she and her collaborators constructed their own digital home studio so they could have the luxury of experimenting as much as they liked. "Working



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that way changed everything," says Ian. "Collaborating with the same people in the same space every day made it feel like we were in a band, as opposed to being in a big studio with musicians who have done 30 other sessions that week and where everyone is cognizant that the clock is running."

One room of the house contained a hard disk-based Pro Tools digital recording system; a second workstation was a simple Yamaha MD8 8-Track Digital Recorder. "We ended up tracking a lot of guitars on the

MD8 and flying them into Pro Tools later," recalls songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Phillip Clark, one of Ian's key collaborators. Ian and Clark ini-

tially feared that the data compression of the MD8's mini disc format might compromise the guitar tones, but they were entirely satisfied by the results. "I love

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SHeDAISY at the Millennium Concert

You also have a couple of AES1500 and AES1500B electrics.

Yes. I really feel Yamaha hit the mark with the AES1500 series. It exceeds my expectations on all levels. If I could have my absolute dream guitar, there's only one thing I'd want to add: make it a chameleon guitar that changes color to match my wardrobe. [Laughs.] That's every girl's dream, trust me.

instrument seems to be pretty simple and user-friendly, though I admit that there are a lot of features I haven't had time to explore yet. The feel is what really sold me.

You worked with Dann Huff on The Whole SHEBANG. Besides being a great producer, he's one of the world's most respected studio guitarists. Did you pick up any tricks watching him work?

Honestly, I am usually in such awe when Dann plays that I lose all focus! But one thing I have taken away from long hours in the studio with him is the importance of a producer being able to communicate with the players in "musician speak." Dann understands the studio guys, and he really has a knack for bringing out the best in them.

Are you the sort of writer who hears tunes in your head first, or do you tend to find them under your fingers on the instrument?

For me, songwriting has absolutely no formula. It's unpredictable, and that's what's so compelling about it. I love the sheer nonsensical methodology that I have adopted. It keeps the process fresh and creative, though it probably drives my co-writers crazy! But in the end, the most important aspect of songwriting is not how you go about it, but how honestly you relay a message to the listener. It can be simple, it can be complicated, but it's got to be honest.

Can an instrument inspire a song?

The songs start in the soul, the mind, the heart, and are then translated by the instrument. We speak through instruments. We tell stories through melody. We emote through lyrics. All these things are created by and through a songwriter and, if we are lucky, a little divine inspiration.



Kristyn with the Yamaha AES-1500



Kassidy with the Yamaha CPX-15E

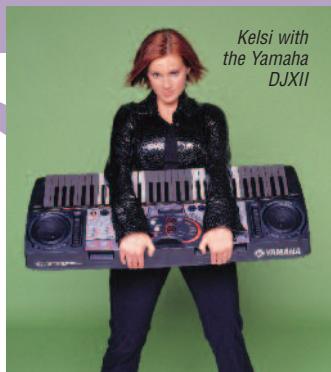
What about the songs that you do compose on keyboards?

I write those on a Yamaha S80. Kelsi has one, too. Before that, I'd been writing on a small keyboard without weighted keys. The S80 has weighted keys with a feel very close to a real piano, which is my preference. The S80 sounds are as realistic as any I've used and the

CPX

The Compass Series of handcrafted Yamaha acoustic guitars started as a guitar designer's dream in 1996 and saw their first NAMM show in 1998. The dream is to create instruments of unsurpassed aesthetic beauty, while offering the professional guitarist a perfect acoustic and acoustic/electric combination for the studio or stage. Each Compass guitar draws its design inspiration from a point on the Compass. The CPX15 was the first and represented the beginnings of the voyage with a nautical theme and position markers replicating the numbers of the frets in actual flag signals. The second in the series was the Western-inspired CPX15W, followed by a Caribbean motif CPX15S, a far Eastern-inspired CPX15E, and finally this year's highly coveted model, the Limited Production CPX15N. The CPX15N enjoys a beautiful white transparent burst over bleached sycamore, with whale's tails adorning the fingerboard.

Yamaha Handcrafted Compass guitars range in retail price from \$1,599 to \$2,799. However, several more affordably priced Compass Series have recently been added including the CPX5 at \$699 MSRP.



Kelsi with the Yamaha DJXII