

Alan Parsons'

LATEST PROJECT

Alan Parsons would be a recording legend if his only accomplishments had been to engineer such classic rock albums as the Beatles' *Abbey Road* and Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*. But after proving himself as an engineer and producer, Parsons dared the unprecedented: creating a pop act based not on star power or conventional songwriting, but on the epic visions of a brilliant producer/engineer.

A quarter of a century after debuting with *Tales of Mystery and the Imagination*, the Alan Parsons Project continues to craft ambitious rock soundscapes. The recent *The Time Machine* album harkens back to some of Parsons' most admired work and the Project's name is on everyone's tongue thanks to the villain in Austin Powers: *The Spy Who Shagged Me*. (Dr. Evil, who spent the '70s in suspended animation, wonders why everyone chuckles when he names his death ray "the Alan Parsons Project.")

While many mythologize the analog gear Parsons used during his Abbey Road Studios days, Parsons himself swears by digital recording, which he embraced as early as 1982's *Eye in the Sky*. He tracked *The Time Machine* on a pair of synched Yamaha O2R Digital Recording Consoles.

"I was skeptical about the O2R at first," he recalls. "I doubted whether something so small and low-priced could be any good. But it's definitely a professional machine. The automation is as good as any I've ever used. Updating is a piece of cake, and I love the auto-record function. I find the EQ very flexible and sweet. The O2R has onboard effects and dynamics processors - things that used to have to be painstakingly patched in."

Parsons admits that it took a while for him to adjust to some of the O2R's features, particularly the way the faders have different functions in different modes. "If you haven't got your wits about you, you can occasionally get confused," he notes. "But once I got used to it, I had no problems."

What does Parsons make of the way devices such as the O2R have delivered once unthinkable audio power even to musicians of limited means? "Yamaha is responsible for bringing the recording studio to the bedroom and garage," he replies. "That has changed the musician's job. There was a time when you just carried your guitar into the recording studio, and that was it. Now you must be a musician, producer, recording engineer and computer operator to get anywhere in the music world. On the positive side, there is an awful lot of talent out there that would not have reached the surface were it not for this level of affordability."

While many mythologize the analog gear Parsons used during his Abbey Road Studios days, Parsons himself swears by digital recording!



WHO'S USING O2R?

Mark Hammond
Hans Zimmer
Rob Arbitier
Phil Ramone
Mick Jones
KK Proffit
Babyface
Tim Myer
Al Macheria
Tom Jung
Marco Pulcini
Frank Filipetti
David Swartz
Umberto Gateeka
Bruce Sweeden
Danny Lux
Trevor Rabin
Matt Huesman
Steve Diamond
Matt Laug
Roger Nichols
Lee Ritenour
Michael Omartian
Alan Menkin
Brooks & Dunn
Brian Ahern
George Massenberg
Danny Elfman
Brian Stokes Mitchell
Chris Decroce
Dave Mason
David Waters
Byron Gallimore
Allen Cato
Mark Morgan
Tommy Sims
Steven Curtis Chapman
Chris Farren
Laney Stewart
Michael W. Smith
Steve Winwood
Clint Black
Carmen Rizzo
Patrick Leonard
Kenny Loggins

Savage Garden's Ben Carey

RUNS THE TRIATHLON OF TONE

Ben Carey says his leap from Australian pub gigs to the sold-out sheds and stadiums he now plays with Savage Garden has taught him at least one thing about guitar tone: "What sounds great in your bedroom or a guitar shop might not work at all in a rehearsal room or an arena. The tone you get with just you in front of your amp is one thing, but I have to find a way to make my sound work with a million tracks of keyboards, drums, percussion and bass, not to mention 20,000 screaming kids."

The challenge has grown as the band tours behind their second album, *Affirmation*, a densely produced disc on which many of the tracks feature four or five guitar parts. Since the group's other guitarist, Daniel Jones, must focus on sharing frontman duties with vocalist Darren Hayes, Carey shoulders most of the fretboard burden.

"It was a little daunting at first," he admits. "But once we found a formula that worked, it wasn't too bad." The usual strategy is for Jones to take the simpler lines and chords while Carey covers everything else—which means lots of lightning-fast tone changes for Ben. Part of his solution was to abandon his beloved tube amps for programmable digital amp simulators and effects. Another part of the equation is his Yamaha AES1500.

"I've used others for years," says Carey. "But when we went out to play the first album live, I found that a lot of the songs required single-coil pickups, that were just too quiet, and I got sick of not being heard in the mix. On the AES1500, I can split the coils on each pickup for a great single-coil sound and since the guitar is hollow, it has an airy character solid body guitars lack. At the same time, the Yamaha has a bright sparkle I've never gotten from standard solid bodies. It hits that sweet spot in-between."

One of Carey's favorite pickup recipes: bridge pickup in single-coil mode, neck pickup in humbucker. "That's especially useful for a strong, single-note line that has to be fat yet well defined," he says.

"On the other hand, if you want pure gnarly bite, the back pickup alone in single-coil mode is great. It sounds a little bigger and more breathy than the same setting on a three pickup solid body."

Yamaha's AES1500 provides a wide range of tonal options. \$1,999 MSRP.



Carey also uses the guitar with his other band, Supanatural, who are currently shopping their first album. "I don't want to be the same as every other guitar player and I like the idea of not playing the same thing as everyone else," he says. "The AES1500 has helped give me a signature sound."

