

# STUDIO SUPERSTAR

# DONNY OSMOND

Donny Osmond is a 43-year music business veteran. He's sold 80 million records, and 33 of his 54 albums have gone gold. In addition to his work as a solo pop artist and member of the Osmonds, he's starred in hit musicals like *Joseph* and the *Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

But Osmond is more than just a successful entertainer—he's a music technology ace. We spoke with Donny backstage at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre in New York, where he's playing the role of Gaston in the Broadway production of *Beauty and the Beast* while simultaneously recording vocals for a new album.

## **Playing the part of Gaston must be a blast.**

It's so much fun—I'm having the time of my life! There's a lot of concentration, though. This one number takes place in the tavern, where we clink these beer mugs—it's highly choreographed, and it's so complicated that I thought I'd never get it. I remember seeing this number 12 years ago when the show debuted and thinking, "Those poor dancers! How in the world did they learn that?" Little did I know someday I'd be learning it myself!

## **As a singer, what are the technical differences between performing in a Broadway role and doing a pop concert?**

Projection and articulation. Those are the two keys that I learned through the six years of doing *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. You don't sing the same way. Plus, with Gaston, it's all dramatic anyway—he's basically a cartoon character come to life. I actually change my projection and my voice halfway through the show, when I go from playing this egotistical maniac to a creep! We each have lavalier mics; mine goes through my wig, which is funny in itself. But the way you work that mic in a theatrical situation is totally different from what you do with a hand mic in a pop concert.

## **And you're also working on a new record—your 55th!**

It's going to be a '70s record. I've been trying to come up with a list of songs—it's hard, because there are so many cool songs that I want to redo my way. Mike Mangini is going to produce it for me; he did the last couple Joss Stone albums. I enjoy this process even more since I've become involved in the technical aspects of making records.

## **You've basically converted your dressing room at the theater into a vocal room.**

Yes, I've shipped all my gear out from my home studio, and I'm putting up extra baffling and isolation elements. This room wasn't designed to be a vocal room! I'm trying to treat it as much as I can, but you might hear a taxi honk in the background.

## **And you'll be using a Yamaha 02R96V2. What do you like about that board?**

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First of all, the size. I can take it anywhere. I do a lot of the processing in Nuendo, so I use the 02R96V2 primarily as an interface. I originally got the board so I could work on the sound for the DVDs of *The Donny and Marie Show*, because of all the elements I had to bring together for that project.

## **What aspects of the sound did you work on for these DVDs?**

Oh, it was more than just aspects, baby! [Laughs.] This is one of the most complicated projects I've ever done. Thank goodness I know enough about the ins and outs of Nuendo and the 02R96V2. I've always wanted to bring the old *Donny and Marie Shows* out on DVD. But I had lost track of all the tapes. It took about ten years to track them down, but I eventually found 80% to 90% of the audio tapes for all four seasons. I got three Yamaha AW2400s, so I could transfer the tracks without having FireWire throughput problems and recorded eight tracks at a time into Nuendo at 48 kHz/24-bit. And that's not even getting into the sync issues!

## **What does Nuendo bring to the process for you?**

Phil Ramone and Elliot Shiner got me into Nuendo when I recorded *This Is the Moment* with them. I love the ergonomics of Nuendo—

it's so easy to use. When I was doing some bit-rate conversions for *The Donny and Marie Show*, I had every single type of equipment at my disposal. And I wound up using Nuendo, because its algorithms are the best.

## **You've spent almost your entire life in the music business. What's changed the most?**

People who can't sing can record now. I love technology, but people are using the gadgetry to make anybody sound good. For this album, I've been listening to a lot of the '70s stuff, and there were some great singers, some great songs—some real music. Music you could trust. When I listen to some music today, I don't trust the artist. I don't know if I'm listening to the producer or the artist.

## **And what aspects of the business are still the same?**

A great song is still a great song! We used to say, "It's in the grooves." You can't replace a great melody or a great hook, something that just stays in your mind.