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"It's nice and quiet here," says guitarist David Catching of his home studio, located in the remote California desert town of Joshua Tree. "My place is funky. Technically, it doesn't compare to most great studios, but it's a fantastic place to write. Bands come out here, and I record them, cook food, play a little guitar here and there." He chuckles. "It works out for everyone."

Sounds nice and peaceful—except Catching is recording some of today's most raucous rock-and-roll. A former member of influential Southern California rockers Queens of the Stone Age, Catching now plays with the Eagles of Death Metal. Contrary to their name, the band plays neither country-rock nor metal, but a stripped-down, minimalist rock not far removed from Queens of the Stone Age—no surprise, since both groups also include Queens kingpin Josh Homme. The band debuted with the 2004 release *Peace, Love & Death Metal* and honed their sound with last year's *Death by Sexy*. A third disc is in the works.

Raised in Memphis, Tennessee, Catching moved to Los Angeles in the early '80s. There he met Chris Goss, who went on to produce Homme's first band, Kyuss, and every Queens of the Stone Age disc. Catching played full-time with the Queens until 2000 and continues to contribute to their records. Meanwhile, he's developed his own material with the band Earthlings and records with both up-and-coming bands and established acts such as UNKLE.

Ragged, aggressive guitars are a cornerstone—perhaps the cornerstone—of the Eagles of Death Metal sound. While many rock players labor to make every tone seem gigantic, Catching and his bandmates adhere to a "small is big" mentality. Rather than playing through beefy stacks and slathering on effects, the players are more likely to plug into a tiny vintage amp, crank it, and record the ensuing chaos.

"The demos start with Jesse playing through crummy little amps," explains David. "After that, we work hard to keep the sonics at the same level throughout. For example, we try to get drum sounds that don't take away from the character of those original guitar tones. We do tend to use smaller amps—they're more fun. Sometimes we use a few little stompboxes if they're 'squonky' enough to add to the tone we're looking for, but usually it's just a cool guitar through a cool little amp."

"Actually," continues Catching, "our method is very similar to how the Queens of the Stone Age work. After Jesse writes all the songs, he and Josh get together to refine them. They lay down basics, and then the rest of us come in and add our parts. We have free range in terms of what we play, but we don't usually stray far from the original vision, which is T-Rex meets Chuck Berry meets Rolling Stones. It's supposed to sound like old rock-and-roll. It's not like we A/B against old recordings, not that we'd have to—we all know that stuff by heart. We just get something going, and we know when it feels right. It's rock-and-roll, so we keep it simple and fun."

Catching's latest fun machine is a Yamaha SA503 TVL, a double-cutaway semi-acoustic model designed with Queens of the Stone Age/Perfect Circle guitarist Troy Van Leeuwen. The instrument features a trio of retro-flavored single-coil pickups and a Bigsby tremolo.

"I love it," raves David. "It's a super-great guitar. It has a lot of weight to it, so it has serious tone. The pickups scream. It stays in tune really well even with the tremolo. Josh has been playing one. Obviously, Troy plays one a lot. I got mine about six months ago. I was recording a band from England called the Duke Spirit, and they wound up using it on almost every song. It was perfect for them, because they have a sort of updated Velvet Underground vibe. I recorded the Giraffes, and they used it, too. I've been using it a ton with Earthlings. It definitely has an older-guitar tone. I have some old Silvertone amps that sound amazing with it."

David doesn't anticipate much rest in the near future. "I'm finishing up a country album, and then we're going to finish up the next Eagles of Death Metal album. Josh and Jesse have been working on eight or nine tracks that sound great, so now we have to add our parts. Then next year, we'll start touring again."

Not that David's complaining. "I'm the luckiest guy in the world," he declares. "I get to play with all the coolest bands. I get people to come out to my house and have parties while we record. You can't beat it!"

DAVID CATCHING'S DESERT MUSIC

