

For Steve Mazur, things are pretty good right now. The new guitarist for Canadian post-grunge band Our Lady Peace spoke to us from Maui, where the band is recording with legendary producer Bob Rock (Metallica, the Cult, Mötley Crüe). “I don’t know how it could be any better,” Mazur reports. “With Bob, and his studio, and Maui—it’s like a fantasy.”

Guitarist in Paradise:

Steve Mazur of Our Lady Peace

MAZUR WAS ALREADY A FAN OF OUR LADY PEACE when he was asked to join the band last year, and he clearly enjoys his new gig. “I have a lot of liberty in coming up with parts—they wanted to go in a new direction, and they encouraged me from the start to do my own thing,” he says. “The band wanted to return to a simpler, more direct feeling, so a lot of what I’m doing isn’t constrained by their previous guitar direction. We just want to be a rock band, with good guitar-driven songs. It’s that simple guitar-bass-drums feeling, with guitar riffs that are characteristic to each song.”

According to Mazur, working with Bob Rock is the perfect way to cement this new direction. “It’s so cool getting to learn things from Bob. His gear is just sick, and he knows how to get great sounds out of it all. He said, ‘I want you guys to play live in the room, with pretty much no overdubs, just doing live takes. I want this record to capture as much of the live energy from your shows as possible.’ He had just finished the new Metallica record using a similar approach, and he thought it would also work really well for us. Which is great, because that’s the kind of approach we wanted as well—even capturing little mistakes and so forth, to give that human sort of life to it.”

But it does require a certain self-discipline not to fix things, says Mazur. “At first that was really hard. I’d listen back and go, ‘I just want to redo that one little thing.’ But then I saw for myself that when I went back and tried to improve things, they didn’t have the same vibe as they did when we all cut the song together. It kind of spoke for itself, and it made me a believer in this process.”

Mazur studied at Berklee School of Music, but he was still able to pick up new playing tech-

niques in the studio. “I have a way I’ve played for years, but Bob showed me this other way of playing, kind of flicking my picking-hand wrist on the downstrokes, and instantly there was this tonal change for the part we were working on. It’s this constant eighth-note downstroke thing, near the pick-up—like Pete Townshend or James Hetfield would play, or like The Edge in U2. And that sound is essential for these parts we’re putting down,” he says.

Steve’s guitar of choice is the Yamaha AES820. “Everything I use is Yamaha, actually,” he says. “I have a couple of black AES820s—they look pretty cool onstage. That guitar has the smack and the power of a Les Paul, but with more of the defined, stringy sound you get from a Strat or Telecaster. It’s great for me—I’m used to that stringiness, but I needed more power, so it’s like the perfect marriage of the two. The guitar feels very natural when I put it on. The neck feel and the way the guitar rests against your body—it’s solid without being bulky. It’s just a great combination of all these things.”

Mazur also uses a Yamaha Mike Stern Signature Model Pacifica guitar on several songs. “That’s a great live guitar,” he says. “Anybody who’s a Telecaster fan needs to check out one of those models. It’s got a lot of ring to it, almost like it has a hollow, chambered-out body. You can feel the vibrations in the neck, and it really cuts through live—it’s very clear and sparkly. I was really impressed with that one.”

For Mazur and Our Lady Peace, the recording session in paradise ends all too soon, but the rest of the year holds its own rewards. In addition to releasing a live album and a concert DVD, the band goes on tour again this summer, then returns to the studio to finish their new record. “Yeah, we have to come back here in the fall,” laughs Mazur. “Life is really hard!”

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