

Really. If one studio is booked and can't take on a new client, that engineer will frequently refer the band to another studio that will meet the client's needs. Maintaining friendly relations among the small but growing profession of sound engineers makes good sense – and cents – in a world where profit lines are drawn in the ever-shifting sands of active bands.

Everyone I spoke with was reluctant to discuss competition, preferring instead to focus on the cooperative spirit. Justin King, musician and owner of **Blackberry Hill Studios**, flatly states that he courts a lot of out-of-town bands so as not to dilute the pool of local bands seeking recording time. With two available fully-furnished apartments upstairs from his studio, he has a unique opportunity to do that. However, most others are fighting over Eugene-based bands, whether they admit it or not.

The home recording industry also ups the competitive ante. Some, like Thaddeus Moore of Sprout City, Don Ross of Don Ross Productions, and King welcome it.

But Barnett is more guarded. While he won't say home studios are a threat, he does call them "a factor at play." He says, "Home studios are a great tool for musicians to sketch ideas and cut some costs, but it's not the same thing at all as working in a well-set up studio and working with an experienced engineer." While the occasional home project turns out well, most of the time they flop, and bands realize they need professional help.

Moore has operated **Sprout City** for seven years and says as a kid he used to play with tape decks and pretend he was on the radio. Though he frequently works with lesser-known bands in the area, he's been busy polishing up some new songs for Thomas Mapfumo and The Blacks Unlimited, a Zimbabwean band based in Eugene. "Just because you can record at home and have digital quality doesn't mean you know what you're doing with it," Moore says.

Don Ross Productions has been in operation for 16 years and, like Gung Ho, offers high-end full-service recording work. The home-recording industry poses no threat to Don Ross. In fact, he encourages it. "More power to 'em," declares Ross. "Eventually [bands] make their way to studios like mine to polish things up."

Home recording has made the art form available to more people, and to King, that's a good thing. "It's actually made it so that recording your own record isn't an elite thing, because there's a lot of music out there that if some [record industry] guy doesn't get it, it doesn't make it to anyone's ears," he says. "Now people can at least get their ideas down."

Dogwood Studios is a long-running Eugene studio going on 11 years. Only two of the studios that were open when Jeff Olsen started Dogwood are still in business: Barnett's and Ross'. "There's a brutal attrition rate," Olsen says, and the home recording industry is partly responsible. "There's a dovetailing of factors,

including that musicians will need a studio less than they used to to record a quick and dirty demo because it's almost certain they or someone they know has some kind of functional home-based recording set up," he says.

Michael Wilson opened **Harmony Studio**, formerly Studio Apocalypse, in 1996. Though he left Eugene for San Francisco "to work with grizzled veterans in the city" and be in a bigger market, he keeps the studio open with the help of manager Lang Schwartzwald. The two are slowly expanding their offerings to remain competitive and provide a greater number of services to the bands that book time.

As a graphic artist, Schwartzwald involves the band through the whole process of album-making, including creating album covers and graphics. "We want to be able to not only help them track, which is record; we can then set up the design part," Schwartzwald says. "Make their album look good, then come up with marketing materials like posters and things like that." Harmony can also duplicate CDs, turning a mastered and completed CD into thousands of shiny, packaged jewels ready to hit the street.

Equus in Veneta is another low-profile recording studio on its way to becoming a major force in the music industry locally as well as internationally. Owner Neil Henderson has logged many years on the road with artists, including Richard Marx, and is now recording nationally recognized finger-picking guitarist Buster B.

Jones for a release in February 2005.

In addition, Nokie Edwards, Art Creshaw, The Jordanaires, and The Light Crust Doughboys have been nominated for a Grammy for their album titled *20th Century Gospel: From Hymns to Blackwood Brothers Tribute to Christian Country*, part of which was recorded at Equus last summer.

Henderson markets music for film, video games and many local and regional artists, including Marilyn Keller, Paul Allen, Paul Biondi, Bill Willie Bluz, and Norwegian rocker Jan Bjorsland.

Local musician Bill Shreve says Henderson and his sidekick and sound engineer Jim Cornelius are "just some of the nicest guys in the world to work with." In its country setting, the Equus studio is also "well equipped and very relaxed," Shreve says. Cornelius also has his own up-and-coming sound company catering to live performance, called World Stage & Lighting.

Wanting More

While every studio I spoke with is getting by, it's fair to say they all wish they had more business. Still, no one's planning to throw in the towel. As Cole says, "[Recording music] is something I've always done and it's something I probably will always do. Eventually I want to make money, but I'm never going to stop. It'd be like laying down the guitar because you only made 20 bucks at the gig last night." **ew**

STUDIO TIME

at Sprout City



Thaddeus Moore

The ceiling is painted to look like the night sky, the control panel spread out beneath. Thaddeus Moore, Sprout City Studio's owner and sound engineer, sits on his flex ball, calmly adjusting the levels and dials. He says he was expecting Thomas Mapfumo and The Blacks Unlimited to simply lay down vocal tracks today, but plans have changed. Mapfumo wants to redo two entire songs. The set-up that normally takes two hours gets pushed through in half that time.

"This is such a treat for me because Zimbabwean music is my favorite!" Moore says.

The band sits calmly plucking guitars and fingering mbiras. Mapfumo paces. Despite the look of utter calm on everyone's faces, it's

clear they're ready to play. Moore makes a few last-second adjustments and signals the go-ahead to Mapfumo and his band.

Immediately, the cramped control room is alive with the sunny sounds of a new song they're working on, "Ndogura Masango," or "I am going away." The band plays the song a couple of times, takes a break, listens to it a couple of times more; then listens to just the first few bars, then the whole song five more times.

Mbira players Basil Makombe and Chaka Mhembe are the first to join Moore in the sound room to check out the result. They seem pleased, but in general their demeanor is contemplative and placid, difficult to read except when broad smiles break out across their smooth faces.

More of the nine members of Blacks Unlimited (not including the five back in Zimbabwe) trickle into the already-crowded control room, and Makombe and Mhembe ease out, moving into a small room outfitted with a microwave, tea bags and honey. It's break time for the band members. The lilting tones of their language spoken in quiet conversation filter through the room.

Moore has blocked out eight hours for the band today and nine hours tomorrow. Their work has just begun. — Vanessa Salvia

POTALA GATE

Amulets Crystals Tibetan Beads

POTALA GATE - TIBETAN GIFTS
 1041 Willamette, Downtown Eugene
 (541) 338-4611 www.potalagate.com

Large **INCENSE**

WORLD PEACE - PRAYER FLAGS

Relaxation & Yoga Books
 HH Dala Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and more

10% OFF all Jewelry

Tibetan Tea Cups
Music CDs & Singing Bowls

Silver Jewelry, Holiday Clothing
 Hand-Made Journals & Albums

Buddha Statues & Thangka Paintings
 Meditation Items, Prayer Beads

Happy Holidays & New Year
May all beings benefit.
 Store owners, a local Tibetan family, carefully hand-pick items and offer them in support of other Tibetan artisans and refugee families.