

HARRY BAGGS

Resident: West Milford, NJ.

Musician: Guitarist / songwriter.

Studio: Saxon Sound Services – Home Studio

Ever since I can remember, I've been obsessed with making music and getting in trouble. I bought my first guitar at the age of 12, and little did I know, that I also bought into a rebel culture that would shape the rest of my life. How lucky for me! I formed my first real band in Jr. High School, playing Beach Boys and Ventures hits. Later, in High School I started to rave-up with several psychedelic Garage bands that got us in trouble wherever we played. I eventually dropped out to form a few loud Hippy and Progressive bands as well. It was around this time, that I hung my first mic and recorded my first band.

As I tried to survive the 70's, I played in several oddball R&R bar bands and started experimenting with my first home studio setup. My first Reel-to-Reel recorder was a Viking. Later, I latched onto a Revox A77 and started bouncing tracks between machines. In the 80's, I published Earwax Fanzine, and embraced experimental and Punk music with a fully functional 4-track studio in my basement. It was a TEAC 3340 – which I still own and use from time to time. By the 90's, I had entered the digital age, bought a DAW, and started offering my services to other bands and artist'. That's when I started Saxon Sound Services.

What made you choose the two songs you recorded for this comp?

My favorite guitar has always been the Rickenbacker 12-string, and of course, one of my biggest influences was the BYRDS. So I wanted to do a “jangly” 12-string song with lots of harmonies. The LEFT BANKE were not a 12-string band (in fact, they were not a “guitar” band), but the song “She May

Call You Up Tonight” fit the mold, and I've always thought it would make a great jangly piece.

The IRON BUTTERFLY's first LP was a psychedelic masterpiece that just never got the attention it was due. I followed this band – and its members – for years, and always enjoyed their unique way of blending Heavy guitars with “cultured” keys. The song “Unconscious Power” always reminded me of an incumbent CAPTAIN BEYOND (another of my favorites), so I chose this song because it had many of the elements that I liked about music from that period.

Can you describe the instrumentation used on your recordings:

Well, obviously the Rickenbacker 12-string is a big part of “She may...”, and I also used a Yamaha acoustic for the rhythm track.

On “Unconscious Power”, I used a Tele ASAT.

The bass guitar on both tracks was done with a Gretch Electromatic. And the keyboard tracks were done with a simple Casio.

Drums were programmed on a Boss DR-660.

For amplification, I used a Vox Pathfinder (12-string), and a Line 6 DuoVerb set on a Matchless simulator.

The bass was recorded direct through a Behringer V-Amp Bass Pro.

How about the recording network used?

The entire project was recorded on a Roland VS-880. I have a unique “hybrid” setup, where the 880 is pretty much being used as a recording medium only. To facilitate additional tracks, I have a VSR-880 in my racks that I slave to the 880. All my processing is done with outboard gear. For these tracks, I used the following:

- Preamps: Behringer Tube Ultragain, Joe Meek VSQ1, ART TPSII
- Mics: Rode NT1A (acoustic), CAD E-100 (12-string), CS-1000S (Tele), Studio Projects C1 (vocals).

- Compression: Behringer Tube Composer Pro, ART VLA, Presonus BlueMax.
- Effects: Behringer Virtualizer Pro DSP2024P, Lexicon MPX 110, Behringer UltraFex Pro, BBE 4821, Roland onboard reverbs.

How did you go about recording the songs?

I usually start any project I'm working on – either original or cover – by doing a scratch demo, using a simple beat on the 660. So for these two songs, I recorded a rough demo using a beat, a bass, an acoustic guitar, and a few rough vocal tracks. This helps, because it gives me an idea of what to expect when I start tracking the real tracks.

The next thing I did, was begin programming the DR-660. I have a favorite “kit” that I use on most of my demos, so I did little or no tweaking. The hardest part was trying to develop the 15-20 patterns that I would need for each song – best I could. I have no drumming skills, so it was really guess & go all along.

Once a decent “shell” was created on the DR-660, I hooked it up via MIDI with the VS-880 and started to fool around with BPM. As it turned out, I probably slowed the songs down quite a bit – but I did what I felt was comfortable to play along with.

Next: I would put down a scratch bass and guitar track – getting as close as I could to the sound I wanted, but not getting overly anal about the performance. My main objective, was to make sure that I could develop a working relationship with the drum tracks that I built, and that the vocals would fit correctly.

The keys took the longest – because I'm clueless. Thank God for endless multi-tracking capabilities, because I swear, I built these tracks nearly note by note. I used the direct output from the Casio, and went right into the 880. I just kept layering pieces until it started to sound “somewhat” like a consistent keyboard player.

Finally, I started laying down vocals. As with the keys, some parts took multiple punch-ins, and others seemed to move along

nicely. I'm not a vocalist...and I tend to get “conscious” of my limitations. So it becomes a tedious process.

After the vocals were in place – and I was somewhat happy with them, I went back and re-recorded the guitars. I always like doing it this way because it really tells me what I should be looking for by working off the vocals. The vocals are what they are – so it makes more sense to me to play to the vocals, rather than sing to the guitars – even if it means having to change a couple things about the song's arrangement in order to make them sound best.

Any unique recording techniques used?

Probably not – if anything, it was the way that the vocals were recorded. Instead of doing all my vocals in the vocal booth, I did most of them right from the console with all the studio buzzes, hums, etc. hammering away in the background.

The other unique thing was the addition of **Farrell Jackson's** harmonies in “She May Call You Up Tonight”. Farrell lives in California, so we did this via the internet using MP3s.

How do you approach the mix?

The mix was probably the most time consuming part of the project – but for me, it's always the most fun part. Being that the VS-880 only has eight tracks – and each song has probably 12-20 tracks – the first thing I had to do was assemble the various subgroups. The keys on both songs were 4-6 tracks each, and that had to be edited and bounced to a single mono track. Other than that, the vocals took up most of the work. On “She May Call You Up.”, there are 10 tracks of vocals. Eight of those were backing tracks, and two being the lead vocals. This came down to one lead track, and a stereo pair for the backing vocals.

The first thing I do is look at all my tracks, edit where necessary, and use my outboard processors to get them where I want them. Usually this means some degree of compression and whatever ambiance/reverb

I'd like to use. At each stage, I try to have as many of the other tracks up as possible, so that I can make my processing decisions with all tracks in mind.

Aside from the drums (MIDI), this leaves me with my eight tracks to mix. From there, I spend quite a bit of time listening with all tracks up, making decisions on how I'd like the mix to move, and what areas are important and interesting to the song. Also, which sound combinations will be highlighted in each section of the song – whether it's going to be the acoustic and the keys in this verse, and maybe the lead and the bass in the next, etc. I make notes on a Production Grid, and then the mix is automated using Snapshot Automation.

How were the songs mastered?

I'm not a Mastering Engineer, and my studio is certainly not fit for critical mastering. I try to do as much as I can in the mix, and avoid any EQ'ing during mastering. The only processor I use is the TC Electronics Finalizer. So it's really just a matter of simple multiband compression and leveling. If anything needs tweaking, I do it in the 880 as the song passes through the Finalizer.

Any “tips” for other home recordist' ?

Just don't paint yourself into a comfortable corner. The future of music and home recording depends on creativity – not conformity. Don't be limited by what you have to work with. Find ways to get out of the box, and go for it.