

A New

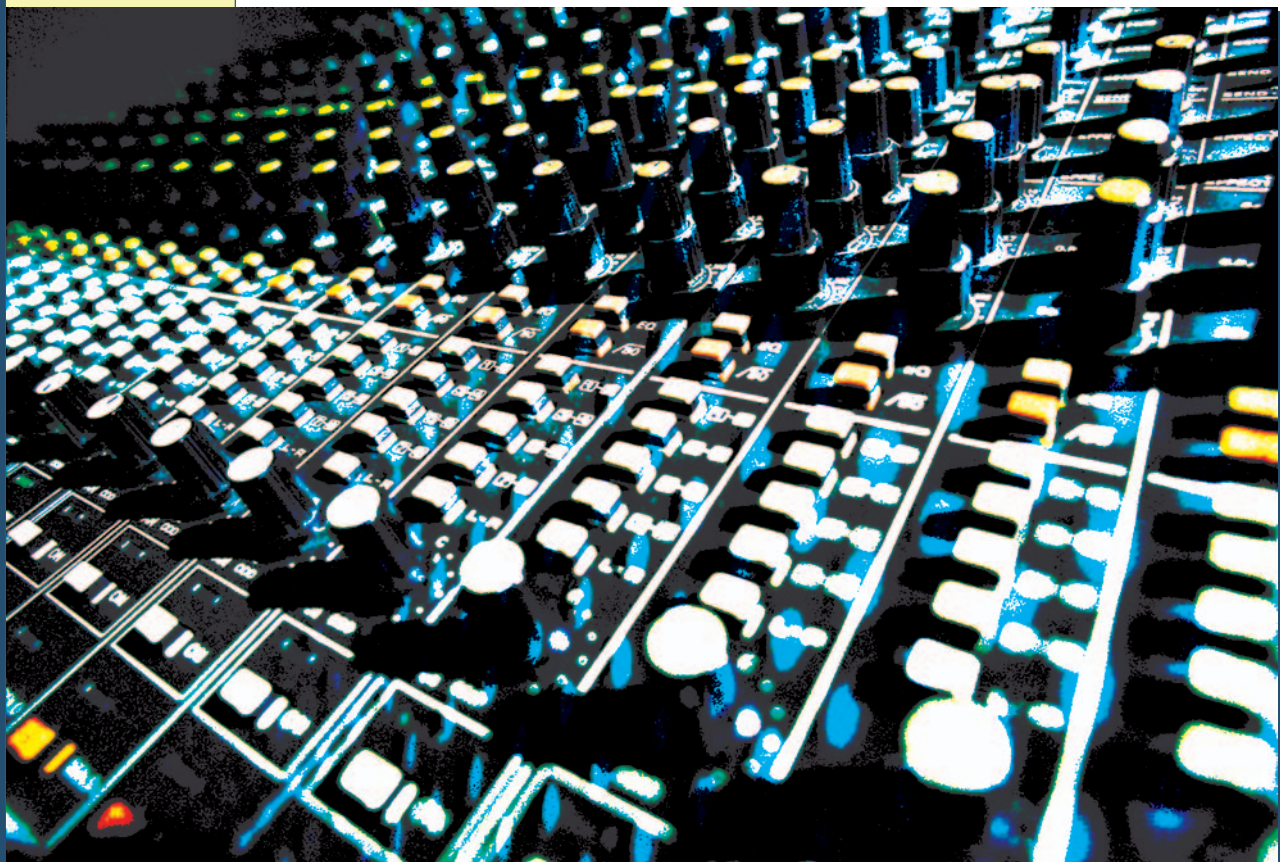
SOUND

By G.K.
Sharman

RAINTREE RECORDING STUDIOS IS LAYING DOWN TRACKS IN A HIGH-PROFILE ENTERTAINMENT WORLD.



If you were a top rock band or a hot jazz virtuoso and needed to do some studio work, would you go to a place called LHV Audio Services?



Probably not, because — admit it — the name lacks pizzazz.

"I'd tell musicians that the studio name was LHV Audio Services and they'd just give me this look," says company owner Laurence Vexler.

Which is why he named his new musician-friendly enterprise Raintree Recording Studios.

Raintree caters to musicians and independent record labels looking for professional recording facilities. The two-year-old enterprise is in the same location as LHV — on Lake Breeze Road, near John Young Parkway just north of Orlando — and shares the space that LHV uses to provide sound design and audio post-production for television, film, video, radio and multimedia.

Besides the creative new name, the main difference is the upgraded equipment. Vexler has the studio stocked with the latest (and some vintage) top-of-the-line, professional audio gear, including a Genelec surround sound monitoring system; a ProTools HD system with 192I/O interfaces and a variety of plug-ins; over 30 microphones made by Neumann, AKG, Sony, Shure, Oktava, and Sennheiser; microphone pre-amps by Millennia, API, Neve and TL Audio; outboard processing by Lexicon, Eventide, Drawmer and Urei; and an ISDN line with a Telos Zephyr interface for long-distance sessions anywhere in the world.

Musicians, producers and audio enthusiasts recognize the quality of the studio gear and they're impressed. But equipment alone doesn't get the job done.

All of this equipment is backed by the technical knowledge and musicianship of Raintree Recording Studios' engineers.

"Recording engineers need to be both creative and technically savvy," says Vexler. "Great recordings are made from great performances by both the musicians and the engineers."

The studio has already attracted attention from local, national and international musicians, including the rock



Raintree's Vexler (center) is shown here with clients Tito Puente, Jr. (left) and Bunny Rugs (right).

band The Ataris, Slave To The Square Wave from Toronto and local singer-songwriter Gabriela. Raintree also hosted multi-Grammy-nominated reggae icon Bunny Rugs for a tracking session. Rugs was joined by Tito Puente Jr., son of Mambo King Tito Puente and a rising Latin jazz star in his own right, to lay down some percussion and Spanish vocal tracks for a forthcoming album.

Vexler is used to jobs and high-profile clients. The studio's client list reads like a *Who's Who* of the film, television and the corporate worlds.

LHV has posted numerous Florida-produced independent films such as *Cat's Bad Hair Day*, *Alligator Alley*, *Caribbean Kill* and *Last Perfect Wave*. TV, radio, multi-media and corporate post-production work includes *The Haunted Desert* for the Discovery Channel, Fox Sports' *Best Damn Sports Show* featuring TNA Wrestling, a documentary on the Mamas and The Papas, planetary shows for the Orlando Science CineDome Theater, and projects for Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown & Russell, Florida Hospital, Convergys Corporation, Lockheed Martin and Tupperware.

TV networks and producers also come to Vexler for mixing live entertainment and sports programs. He's worked on shows as diverse as *Noki Presents ... Live From The Hard Rock* on MTV, *Beat The Clock* on PAX and currently *TNA Wrestling* on Spike.

For Vexler, a jazz saxophonist and percussionist who started playing music at age 7, LHV Audio Services was a way to make a living doing what he enjoyed.

As a jazz major at Wayne State University in Detroit, he said he learned quickly that "the ability to make a living

solely as a professional musician was a hard way to go."

His professors — good musicians all — worked other 9-to-5 jobs to pay bills and support their families. But music remained their career, their passion.

Vexler made a different choice, leaving Wayne after one year and transferring to the Music Engineering program at the University of

Miami. The curriculum — a bachelor of music degree with an emphasis on physics and engineering — may seem daunting to many artistic types, but Vexler was fascinated.

"I was always pretty good in math and science," he says, "and the courses didn't scare me."

He graduated in 1988 with a bachelor's degree in music with minors in electrical engineering and telecommunications.

Two years later he moved to Orlando and started his own company and by 1995 had his own studio space.

The mix of music and technology may be "an odd combination," he acknowledges. "But you need a good background in both to succeed."

LHV is corporate-oriented. Most of its clients want to get their projects done during normal business hours, though there are always a few exceptions. On the other hand, Raintree is more musician-friendly with more flexible hours — a lot more flexible. Nights. Weekends. Whatever it takes to help them create their music.

"Most musicians like to work after normal hours," he says.

Like his professors, most musicians have a "real" job and need to book studio time that doesn't interfere with the regular paycheck.

Once a producer called on Saturday afternoon and desperately needed some time that night. Vexler changed his personal plans and opened the studio for him and his group. After all, he understands how it is for musicians — he still plays sax and percussion after hours, too.

"The doors may be closed, but the business is always open," says Vexler. ✘