

# Steve Goldberger's The Shed

## Life-Altering Events Bring Music Into Focus

“From bad things, sometimes good things come,” says Steve Goldberger, a longtime home studio owner/songwriter/musician/engineer from Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. And it can't be denied that Goldberger's recent experiences substantiate such a statement. After surviving open-heart surgery in 1998 at 44 years old, he reassessed his life and decided to renovate the studio behind his home. Dubbed The Shed, by 2000, it became a place for him and his community of local and Toronto-based artists to gather and record their many projects using a Soundcraft Ghost 32, outboard gear and four ADATs. Then, two years later, while more than an hour away from home, he received a phone call that The Shed was burning down.

The studio was ruined, but Goldberger's instruments and a project he had been working on at the time were spared, but soaked in water. Rebuilding his studio again in 2003, he made sure that his choices—both in gear and in design—would bring him and his band, the Fringe Locals, a greater focus on sound quality and, most importantly, a sense of artistic satisfaction.

“[In 1998,] I was lying in the hospital bed thinking, ‘Why am I doing all of these cover tunes and why don't I start writing again and recording?’ I bought a couple of ADATs and did a live recording and mixed behind the house in The Shed. After the fire, I had a chance to take another look at things. The whole building was gutted and we added an extra room. I was able to bury cables in the wall, build a room-within-a-room for the control room and think about sound.” The Shed's 12x14-foot control room features a floating floor and is bridged by two iso rooms and the 17x13-foot studio.

Goldberger's philosophy on gear was also altered. His newest iteration of The Shed favors the high-end vintage gear that he feels makes all the difference. “I found a couple of guys who have been outfitting the big studios for years and dealing in used gear. Talking to them convinced me that fewer pieces of really good stuff is better than a whole pile of mediocre gear that just sits there and doesn't really add anything to the big picture,” he says. “Being a musician and artist, [it's great] to have the opportunity to put up a mic in the right place, run it through a UREI or an Avalon compressor and not have to EQ much. I can set up really fast and not have to worry so much about the technical aspects as much and just play the music and get it down.”

Goldberger runs The Shed from a Sony MXP-3036 console customized with API pre's and EQs, which was set up by local engineer/tech whiz Frank Ditillio who occasionally assists sessions and provides maintenance. Also in The Shed are a Universal Audio LA-2A, six vintage Neve pre's, a couple of UREI 1178 limiters and a Studer



Steve Goldberger: In The Shed, where Clueless was created.

A80 2-track all running alongside Pro Tools MIXPlus. He mixes in analog, using Pro Tools only to automate levels. Goldberger says, “It seems that just passing through those electronics makes such a difference.” From a Hammond A100 organ to a variety of well-loved Fender, Martin, Sadowsky, Danelectro and Rob Allen guitars and basses, the studio is always ready for a session.

Microphones include Neumanns (U87, U89s), a range of AKGs (C452 EB, D-112, 535 EB and more), an MXL 300 condenser, Shure (SM57, SM58, PZM) and an Electro-Voice 531A. Monitoring is through Blue Sky System One and Tannoy PBM-8s.

Indie acts that don't want to drive to Toronto are welcome to visit Goldberger for mixing and mastering services, as The Shed features an Alesis Masterlink MI9600, but he says, “I don't consider myself a mastering studio. I'll run the stuff through the Neves, tweak the EQ and maybe give it some compression, limit it and make it sound a lot better than when it started out. For recording, I like the small projects: a guy and his guitar, overdubs or voice-over work.”

Starting out after high school with a stint on the road as a bassist with the new-grass band Black Creek in the '70s, Goldberger learned the art of engineering by hanging out in Toronto studios from jingle producer/Sounds Interchange (Toronto) owner Syd Kessler, among others. Currently, he's focused on writing and producing his own releases while also lending a hand in engineering for local bands. Recent credits include the Marantz Project and Diesel Dog, classified by Goldberger as “funky fusion” and “a cross between the Grateful Dead and The Band,” respectively. Goldberger's own roots, rock and folk-style music can be found on his latest effort, *Clueless*, which is available on his Website, [www.stevegoldberger.com](http://www.stevegoldberger.com), and CD Baby. ■

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