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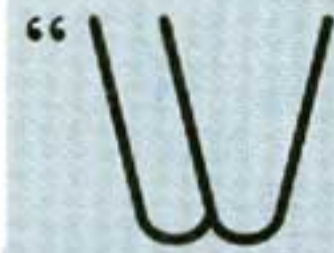
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## Sting: Bass



hen I met with Richard Frankel [video producer], he let me know what he was looking for," remembers engineer/surround mixer Nathaniel Kunkel. "Studio Without Walls was needed to record three days of rehearsals at Sting's house in Malibu, then two days of performances at the Mayan. This would involve not only my audio crew but video as well. There was of course a deadline, so mixing this surround project in Sting's guesthouse right away was discussed as well." It would be a huge undertaking for a home studio

(let alone a home without a studio), and would make Kunkel's portable state-of-the-art "Studio Without Walls" — Sting's main source of documenting all audio for the *Sacred Love* DVD — that much more important.

"On this project, SWW went from a small remote recording rig to a large remote recording system to a multi-channel mixing system with no down time. It was completely scalable for Sting from his home in Malibu to the Mayan," explains Kunkel. With little room for error, capturing Sting's bass, as well as the rest of the band, meant keeping things simple. "I think people are surprised when they find out how simple my setup for Sting's bass really was," Kunkel says. With Sting positioned in his high-ceiling Moroccan-style living

### PROCESSING

For processing Sting's bass, Kunkel used "the GML 2020, and I EQ'd it a little and compressed it with a straight ratio. I didn't use a soft-knee compression. I used the GML straight up at about a 2:1 or a 3:1 ratio. I basically moved the knobs until it sounded good. And to be honest, not that I read it first, but the manual for the GML limiter really gives you excellent advice on how to set the release constant so it tracks bass well. I set it for the standard type of timing you would imagine, and I varied the ratio until it was harnessed enough. It moved a lot from song to song.

"I mixed the whole thing digitally on my Sony DMX R-100," he continues, "so I used an analog insert in Pro Tools to get back out to the GML 2020. That's how I accessed an analog EQ and limiter in my then digital chain. You know, I don't really EQ and compress anything except vocals to 'tape' when I'm doing a live remote. I'm just trying to capture the line snake with the least amount of interference to the running of the show as possible. I found that once I start introducing things like equalizers and compressors to the signal, I end up creating a lot more problems than I solve. In the case of the vocals, I need to limit the dynamic range of them so I can have the highest resolution recording on my digital medium. But that's only because they're so much more dynamic than most of the instruments coming off of stage. If I have another instrument that's as dynamic as a vocal I'll address it on an individual basis."

### TRACK NOTES

"When you have a brilliant bass player like Sting, I'll usually put him through some type of wonderful tube direct box. My personal favorite is the Evil Twin Tube direct box by Eclair Engineering — built by this genius scientist Bruce Seifried, and I'll often use it straight to 'tape,'" says Kunkel. "I don't usually compress it or do anything to it during tracking, but for mixing all bets are off, though I find that a really great bass player's signal will usually just stand up by itself.

"The word I would use to describe this recording would be transparent, as in the transparency of the process of recording, where the artist never sees any problems. I think that the technology has improved in such leaps and bounds that reliably recording 40-plus live tracks of audio to hard disk isn't really that impressive of a feat anymore. It's recording that much audio and having none of the problems come to the attention of the artist, especially in a live environment. With video, when you can't go back, the whole band needs to get the performance. They're playing with Sting to get that magical performance. There really isn't a lot of margin for error for them, and even less for me.

"When Kipper first asked me if I was available to record and mix this, I was indescribably happy," Kunkel concludes. "Looking back, I think the surround mix came out better than we could have hoped. Especially when you consider that we rehearsed and recorded/filmed in Sting's home — that doesn't have a studio — did live recording at The Mayan, and mixed in surround in Sting's guesthouse." **EQ**

**DATE:** June 2002  
**STUDIO:** Studio Without Walls  
**LOCATION:** Malibu (Sting's House) & Los Angeles (Mayan Theater)  
**PROJECT:** Recording bass with Sting for *Sacred Love* DVD-V  
**PRODUCER:** Kipper  
**ENGINEER:** Nathaniel Kunkel  
**TECHNICAL ENGINEER:** John Hurst  
**ASSISTANT ENGINEERS:** Duane Seykora & Noah Lebenzon



For processing Sting's bass, Kunkel used a GML 2020 "EQ'd a little and compressed with a straight ratio."

room, Kunkel rolled in SWW just off the dining room, carefully placing his equipment amongst Sting's collection of antiques. At 9:00 AM the recording began.

### SIGNAL PATH

"Sting played his Fender Bass that he's had for years, plugged into a direct box provided by Clair Bros," shares Kunkel. "His bass was coming in on a tie-line so I plugged into that. I used a GML mic pre and that went straight into some Lavry Engineering Converters (formerly known as dB Technologies Blue) that fed Pro Tools HD. No EQ . . . flat, but when I mixed it, I did EQ a little bit and compress using the GML 2020. During the recording and mixing I monitored with my Dynaudio BM-6p."