

# GC PRO PRESENTS AUDIO

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

First off, I would like to thank you for exploring the new format of *Audio Solutions* over the last few months. We hope you are continuing to find this publication useful and informative, and that you enjoy reading about GC Pro and the products and services we offer.

Since many see audio as our main specialty (and we are proud of it!), some of our readers may not realize the range of other products we offer. When you approach GC Pro (and our Affiliate Program member partners) for projects big and small, what we offer is not merely the premiere inventory of high-end audio products, but also an extensive, industry-leading range of products for video, broadcast, lighting, digital signage and more. Our manufacturers list is long and varied. To name just a few:

- **Panasonic Professional:** offering fantastic digital cameras, flat-panel displays, digital signage and their famous HD projection systems
- **Middle Atlantic:** professional racks and enclosures for monitoring consoles, data and cabling management, studio furniture and more
- **Newtek:** offering an exciting product, entitled TriCaster, which is an all-in-one video production system combining cameras, video, graphics, audio, titles, network sources and custom animated effects
- **AJA:** offering a wide range of video products, including Ki Pro recorders/players and the FS family of frame synchronizers
- **Sonnet Technologies:** a world-leading manufacturer of pro data storage, media readers and Thunderbolt peripherals
- **Martin Lighting:** one of the best-known lighting brands, offering intelligent lights, LED spots, fog machines and their new line of RUSH fixtures
- **Marshall Electronics:** a leading manufacturer of LCD racks, monitors for broadcast, microphones, cameras, multimedia video and products for ENG use

All told, we can offer our customers the best of the best in audio, video, display, computers, professional lighting and more—for projects of any size. And don't forget, we have unfettered access to the entire inventory (in-store and online) of Guitar Center's collection of musical instruments, software, electronics, DJ equipment and so much more. With GC Pro, you are benefiting from truly the only all-in-one solution in the industry.

Enjoy this month's *Audio Solutions*, and don't hesitate to start exploring what GC Pro can do for you and your project. Please drop us a line to learn more—it's what we're here for.

Rick Plushner  
Vice President, GC Pro



# SOLUTIONS

## GUITARIST JOHNNY A. RECORDS, PRODUCES AND MIXES HIS DREAM ALBUM

VETERAN INSTRUMENTALIST SELF-PRODUCES NEW LP, *DRIVEN*, WITH GC PRO AND THE NEW SSL AWS948 CONSOLE



It can sometimes be a challenge for an artist to reinvent his skill set after decades at work, but that did not stop veteran Boston-area guitarist Johnny A. from taking a radically new approach for his 2014 LP, *Driven*, released in March on Aglaophone Records. With a resume including stints with Derek & the Dominos keyboardist Bobby Whitlock, CCR drummer Doug Clifford, Peter Wolf of the J. Geils Band and others, as well as a reputation for nuanced compositions, masterful playing and studio perfectionism (and a Gibson custom Johnny A. signature model to boot), Johnny A. has rightly earned his place in an elite group of musician's musicians, and he set the bar high for himself when he set out to make a new record.

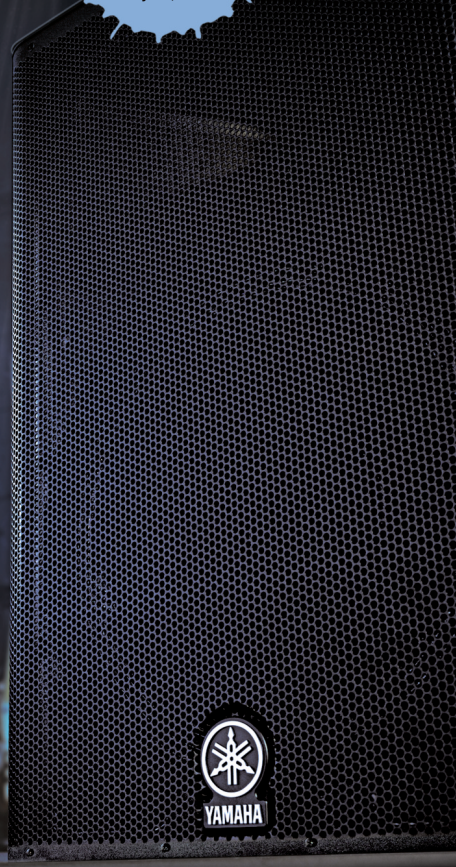
His production techniques have evolved over the course

of years collaborating and producing his own and others' records; he records his guitars direct, an approach that sets him apart from other guitarists and producers. And before *Driven*, he did not consider himself an engineer. "There was an extreme learning curve," he states. "I had never personally engineered a track in my life prior to this. I had made plenty of records, and I was always intimately involved in the mixes, but I was never the guy that was physically twisting the knobs or editing. I wanted to tackle this challenge and be responsible for everything on the album—all the instruments, engineering and production, from top to bottom. I was forced into learning all of this, because of the challenge, but also because I wanted to be free from the financial burden of hiring an engineer and relying on others."

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## GUITARIST JOHNNY A. RECORDS, PRODUCES AND MIXES HIS DREAM ALBUM



As the project began, his limitations became apparent, both in his skill set and in the gear he was using. He recalls, "Everything was sounding good as I was tracking, but there were certain elements missing. One big limitation was that I was 'in-the-box' and did not have a console for the project. I solved that by picking up a brand new SSL AWS948, which is now the centerpiece of my studio setup. It made a massive difference in the production of the record and the mixing process, and you can hear it in every note."

The SSL AWS948 console was sourced through GC Pro, along with a full complement of analog outboard gear and software assembled by Johnny A. and GC Pro Senior Account Manager PK Pandey (based in GC Pro's Boston office). Johnny A. recalls, "I had known PK for years, and over the course of this project, we got closer and closer, and now we're like brothers. He was well aware of my production techniques, of recording mostly direct, and I asked for his recommendations on analog gear—good, better and best. He knew all the right tools for the job here, and unsurprisingly, we went with 'best' in every case!" Johnny A.'s list of tools now includes multiple Apogee Symphony systems, two Neve 1081A EQs, two Vintech X73 preamps, an SSL XLogic stereo compressor, a GML 8200 EQ, a pair of Universal Audio LA-3A Classic Audio Levelers, an Isochrone master clock from Antelope

Audio, four Distressors, various items from Retro and Mercury Recording, a John Hardy Twin Servo preamp, a Logic setup and Addictive Drums software from XLN Audio.

Pandey remarked, "This has been an almost-three-year adventure, working with Johnny A. on getting his workflow right for this album. And with the AWS948 console, everything turned out much wider, deeper, higher and warmer than it would have been otherwise. He recorded all the guitars and did the drum programming himself, along with all the production and mixing. He told me it's his dream album, and I'm so proud to have had a part in getting him the right tools to bring his artist's vision to fruition."

Johnny A. is extremely satisfied with the result: "I guess I was a bit naïve in the beginning, thinking I could take on this whole album myself, but we made it happen. It was a daunting experience, but I'm blown away at the finished product. I expected it to live up to my expectations, but I didn't expect it to exceed them so thoroughly. And I have to give thanks to PK and GC Pro for helping to bring this record to life. What a ride!"

For more info, visit [JohnnyA.com](http://JohnnyA.com)





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## PRODUCER'S CORNER / CHUCK AINLAY

Chuck Ainlay is a multiple GRAMMY® Award winner, one of Nashville's top recording and mixing engineers, a pioneer in surround mixing and a leading advocate for high-quality audio. He has worked as a producer or engineer for such diverse talents as Dire Straits, Taylor Swift, Willie Nelson, Steve Earle, Lyle Lovett and many more. Ainlay was the ACM Engineer of the Year in 2009, 2011 and 2013. Chuck is a founding member of the METAlliance and is the current co-chair of The Recording Academy Producers & Engineers Wing Steering Committee.



*What was the last project you released?*

A few recent projects have been Lionel Richie's *Tuskegee*, Mark Knopfler's *Privateering*, *Love Is Everything* by George Strait, Peter Frampton's 35th anniversary release of *Frampton Comes Alive*, *Songs from the Movie* for Mary Chapin Carpenter, *Annie Up* for Pistol Annies, *Old Yellow Moon* with Emmylou Harris and Rodney Crowell, *Platinum* by Miranda Lambert and *I'm a Fire* by David Nail, as well as albums by Lee Ann Womack, Aubrey Sellers and Lady Antebellum.

*What is the most challenging aspect of the current business climate from your perspective?*

There are a lot of different challenges these days. First, it is harder to schedule things ahead of time—it used to be more major-label work, and I could make an itinerary several months ahead of time. I am still working plenty, but now more of the work comes in at the last minute with tight deadlines. It can be a challenge to balance the schedule for my work with major artists and smaller projects that come to me through the Internet or different contacts I have. And each project has a different budget, so agreeing on the right number can be tricky sometimes. But I like to be as accommodating as I can without sacrificing quality.

Also, another challenge is from the mixing perspective. Since so many projects are coming to me from independent artists, you never know what you are going to get as far as recording quality and documentation. Vocals might be done on a really inexpensive mic with entry-level effects, or tracking levels may max out and distort, but it's my job to fix those things as much as possible, or to give them my professional opinion. Just recently we re-recorded a vocal on a project rather than work with the track we had been given, and the artist said it's the best they had ever sounded. Home recording is great for independent artists, but so many shortcuts are being taken, and sometimes the project suffers.

*How has your production workflow changed in the past few years?*

In the past, I focused more on engineering and mixing in Nashville, and left my producing energies for Mark Knopfler and other projects outside of the country genre. I didn't want to alienate Nashville producers by competing for their production jobs with country artists. But in recent years, I have teamed up with Frank Liddell and Glenn Worf, which has gotten me in the loop producing for Miranda Lambert, David Nail, Lee Ann Womack and other Nashville artists. So now I'm tracking, overdubbing, mixing and producing. It's a much more engaging process, and I feel more involved in the records than I have in the past, which is a great shift for me creatively.

*Have you discovered any new gear or software this year? If so, what, and why do you like it?*

So many items. We all have tons of love for vintage gear, but I'm blown away by some of the brand new stuff on the market. Great new microphones, new electronics that are really worth using and don't break down. My friend Eric Boulanger, who is a mastering engineer and violinist, was showing me this brand new violin that rivals a Stradivarius, which you wouldn't expect. The high end of things is really pushing the state of the art forward in mind-blowing ways.

Specifically, I've been impressed with ADK microphones, Audio-Technica's AT4050ST stereo mic and the new JBL M2 mains and their smaller LSR308 and LSR305 powered studio monitors and AKG's K712 headphones. I am also looking at getting the Nuage controller from Yamaha, because I'm a longtime Nuendo user and it's really impressed me for that interface. Because I'm doing more and more work via the Internet, it's harder to mix and recall your settings on an analog console, so it might be time for me to update my workflow. Finally the plug-ins from Universal Audio and Waves continue to be my go-to in the digital world.



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