

**From Conception to Shrink Wrap: An Individualistic
Approach to Producing the Progressive-Rock Audio
Recording, “Paul Czech: 7 Songs”**

Recording Project Summary and Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The audio recording, “Paul Czech: 7 Songs,” is the result of an 11-month study which focused on the process of modern music production. The creation of professional modern recordings usually requires several skilled people performing several different roles within the studio environment. Among these roles are: Artist, Studio Musician, Recording Engineer, Record Producer, Graphic Designer and Marketing Representative. “From Conception to Shrink Wrap: Producing the Progressive-Rock Audio Recording, ‘Paul Czech: 7 Songs’” documents the process of one individual performing all of these modern music-production roles from the beginning stage of song sketching/songwriting (Artist role) to the recording stage (Session Musician, Recording Engineer and Record Producer role) to the final stage of product packaging and product distribution (Graphic Designer and Marketing Representative role). The end result of the project is the progressive-rock audio recording product, “Paul Czech: 7 Songs.”

This paper is an overview of the topics of individualistic approaches to working, songwriting, studio performing, basic music production techniques, studio politics, the audio mastering process, Compact Disk (CD) cover art design and product distribution on the World Wide Web. This project originated from the need to explore such easily-accessible technology and to increase individual knowledge of the tools and music-making techniques available to the modern musician.

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INTRODUCTION

During the past 20 years, the music community has had the opportunity to witness many of the major trends and growth spurts involving music technology. In addition, several of these musicians have been fortunate enough to utilize these developing pieces of software and hardware in both a live performance setting and recording studio environment. One benefit of the growing field of music technology is that it has made previously inaccessible, expensive equipment usually available to major studios now available to the common computer user. Before the recent digital revolution, it was an extremely expensive endeavor to create a professional recording of one's own music and to do so, one had to hire several people to fill different roles throughout the recording process (Keating, 1998, p. vii). For example, if solo artists wished to create a professional recording of their music, they would not only need to rent studio time but they would also need to hire a sound engineer, a group of studio musicians, a record producer, a graphic designer, and a distribution company. Thus, because making a recording proved to be expensive in previous years, an artist needed the backing of a major record company in order to produce a professional product.

However, because current music technology equipment and software have become affordable and accessible to the average consumer, musicians now have the tools and training information available to create professional, Compact Disk (CD) quality recordings in their own homes and small project studios (Huber & Runstein, 1997, p. 9). As a result, reasonably-priced software combined with online education tools such as internet tutorials and videos (Han, 2004, p.1) provide the modern musician with the equipment and knowledge needed to create professional recordings and make them

conveniently available on one-streamlined computer workstation (Huber & Runstein, 1997, p. 9).

The goal of this project was to produce a professional-quality musical recording using many of the popular digital music technologies available today. Taking an individualistic approach and seeking minimal help from outside sources, I set out to experience all of the major roles associated with modern music production team and throughout the course of this project I played not only the part the solo artist, but also the part of the studio musician, the recording engineer, the record producer, the graphic designer and the marketing representative. Because my past recording experience usually centered on the roles of solo artist/songwriter and studio musician/drummer/keyboardist, I wanted to increase my knowledge of the roles in which I was inexperienced, namely that of the recording engineer, record producer, graphic designer and marketing representative.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creativity and the Production Process: An Individualistic Approach

As mentioned earlier, the traditional model of the music production process is based on the collective effort of several people working as a team. According to its proponents, this collectivistic model not only saves time and money, but also allows specialists in various fields to focus more energy on perfecting different parts of the production process. Thus, in a collectivistic approach to music production, the recording engineer is solely responsible for recording and mixing a musical performance and is not responsible for designing the cover artwork of the musical recording. Likewise, the

marketing representative is responsible for distributing the final product to the public and is not responsible for songwriter's task of writing lyrics and music.

However, because digital technology and user-friendly multimedia software are so easily accessible to modern consumers, more and more musicians are taking an individualistic approach to the music production process. As a result, these "Do-It-Yourself" musicians are acting as their own session musician, recording engineer, music producer, and product distributor.

According to Goncalo & Staw (2005), research shows that many organizations are shifting towards work philosophies that are based on collectivistic principles. In general, collectivistic principles promote the notion that the needs of the group outweigh the needs of the individual. Thus, individualistic approaches to workplace performance (once valued in 1980s corporate America) are now discouraged and are regarded as selfish, opportunistic and narcissistic (p. 2).

In contrast to the new collectivistic trends, a 2005 study conducted by Cornell University's Goncalo and Berkeley University's Staw show that an individualistic approach to working can be beneficial when creativity is the main goal. Although the study showed that collectivistic approaches may encourage feelings of teamwork and cooperation, they may also smother the creative spark that is essential to innovation (Goncalo & Straw, 2005, pp.2-4).

In addition, Turner (2001) writes that positive results regarding the creative process are better achieved by people working alone than in groups (p. 326). According to Turner, groups may generate a larger number of creative ideas than individuals who work alone, but many of the creative ideas produced in a group setting are derivative of

ideas offered by other group members. Also, the subtle pressure to conform to group standards may suppress "outside-the-box" thinking when working in a group setting. In contrast, an individual working alone may have the opportunity to entertain novel ideas without the fear of being ridiculed by fellow group members (Turner, 2001, p. 326).

Thus, in a highly-competitive music industry where creativity, new sounds, and novel ideas are highly valued and sought after, taking an individualistic approach to music production can be beneficial. Although musicians who take an individualistic approach to music production may produce quality work without the direct assistance of a group, their self-reliant actions, ironically, are “based on a strong sense of community” (Davis, 2000, p. 82).

Interdependent Individualism: A Balanced Approach to Individualism

According to Larry Davis, author of the book *Pioneering Organizations: The Convergence of Individualism, Teamwork, and Leadership*, it is the community which creates the foundation for the individualist’s state of mind. Research by Davis shows that communities provide five psychological supports which produce five psychological strengths found in healthy individualistic worldviews. Thus, for a person to emerge with a well-balanced sense of individualism, the community must provide the following (Davis, 2000, p. 71):

1. Strong social ties
 - Fosters a sense of belonging
2. Encouragement to think for one’s self
 - Produces an inquiring, independent mind
3. Support for Self-Direction

- Produces courage of convictions

4. Freedom of Action

- Produces Self-reliance

5. Opportunity to Contribute

- Produces self-esteem from service

In contrast, community members such as parents, teachers and peers can stifle the development of healthy individualism through promoting internalized doubts, unexplained criticisms, labeling and negative self-images (Weiner, 2000, p. 205).

Davis coined the phrase, "Interdependent Individualism" to describe a well-balanced approach to individualism. According to Davis, Interdependent Individualists:

- Realize they are seldom fully independent, and will strive to avoid arrogance.
- Realize they are seldom fully dependent, and will avoid acting helpless.
- Realize that most of the time they are interdependent and responsible for themselves through cooperation with others.
- Possess a "can-do" attitude. Much of the time, they can do what is needed. When they can't, they will ask for the help they need.
- Are accountable. They avoid hiding behind excuses, a team, a job description or a bureaucracy.
- Often think they have a better idea, and will fight for it while considering the ideas of others (Davis, 2000, pp. 84-85).

Thus, musicians approaching the music production process with an Interdependent Individualist mindset can be seen as possessing a healthy self-reliance in

regard to their creative work. Realizing their interdependence with other individuals, these “Do-It-Yourself” musicians seek outside assistance when they need it but ultimately realize that they are responsible for their own work. In addition, awareness of their interdependence with others keeps them from the narcissistic belief that they are the sole creators of their final product.

Examples of Individualistic Approaches in Pop Music

The “Do-It-Yourself” method of producing an audio recording has not been practiced only in recent times. Established pop artists such as Prince, Stevie Wonder and Lenny Kravitz have had total control over their recordings during a large part of their musical careers (Brackett & Hoard, 2004, p. 48-59). These artists, all multi-instrumentalists, not only play all or most the instruments on many of their recordings, they also record, mix and make executive production decisions regarding their final products. Regarded as a rare find in the music industry, these three artists are fine examples of people who take an individualistic approach in regard to their creative work.

The Music Production Process: An Overview

Typically, the production process of most musical recordings consists of logical phases (Greenwald, 1992, p. 21). Most commonly known as the “Pre-Production,” “Production,” “Post-Production,” and “Distribution” phases, I chose to label the stages of this project as the “Conception,” “Recording,” “Tweaking” and “Shrink Wrap” phases. Below is an overview of each stage in the music production process and a summary of the roles and tasks associated with them (Greenwald, 1992, pp. 21-24).

Stage 1: Conception (Pre-Production)

- Artist role of songwriting and arranging music

- Hiring Session Musicians to play for the recording session
- Rehearsing music that is to be recorded

Stage 2: Recording (Production)

- Role of the Session Musician and the recording of his/her instrument
- Role of the Recording Engineer and the techniques of recording and mixing the musical material
- Role of the Producer who leads the production process

Stage 3: Tweaking (Post-Production)

- Role of the Mastering Engineer who works to give the final mixes of a recording the best sonic quality possible

Stage 4: Shrink Wrap (Distribution)

- Role of the Graphic Designer who creates the CD cover art
- Role of the Marketing Representative who oversees the final packaging of the product before releasing it to the general public

Stage 1: Conception (Pre-Production)

The “Pre-Production” or “Conception” phase is “the most important stage of the music production process” (Zager, 2006, p.189) and “is the first step in planning for a successful record to be released” (Cousino, 1987, p.1).

The Artist and Songwriting

According to Huber & Runstein (1997), “The strength of a recorded performance begins and ends with the artist” (p.17). All of the sophisticated music technology available today can achieve little without the main components of a well-written song and

an artist interpreting the song through human emotion and musical technique. Therefore, before entering the recording studio, many artists find it wise to create music in the pre-production phase (Zager, 2006, p. 189). Having songs written and well-structured before the recording phase allows an artist to concentrate on the musical interpretation aspect of the recording while in the studio and eliminates the need to be concerned with editing and creating music during the recording session.

The Studio Musician

After the songwriting phase is completed, an artist, if not recording all of the music alone, must recruit studio musicians or band members to assist in the recording of the musical arrangements. The selection of studio musicians should not be taken lightly. According to Jackson (2006),

...choose colleagues wisely. Don't casually fall into such a relationship, but allow a free-flowing initial meeting where you try to get a sense of where that person is coming from, to see if you share similar energies, work schedules, conceptions and even outlooks on life (p.19).

Thus, artists should be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of their ensembles and remain confident that their enlisted studio musicians will perform adequately in the studio environment.

Rehearsal

Once the band members or studio musicians have been selected, the next stage of the Pre-production phase is to properly rehearse the music that is to be recorded. Proper rehearsal and preparation of the music before entering into the recording studio not only saves time and money, but also reduces unwanted tension and frustration caused from

disorganization and ensemble members not being familiar with the music that is to be recorded (Rapaport, 1999, p.102).

Once the songs have been written, studio musicians have been selected, and music has been rehearsed, the artist is ready to enter the “Production” or “Recording” phase of the music production process.

Stage 2: Recording (Production)

The “Recording” stage of the music production process involves the roles of the session musician, the recording engineer and the music producer. This section of the paper provides an overview of each role and their associated tasks.

The Studio Musician

As mentioned in the previous section, studio musicians are enlisted to provide musical support for an artist and are often employed to “add extra spice and depth” to a recorded performance (Huber & Runstein, 1997, p.17). Few artists wish to waste time and money in a studio environment, so they hire players who make few mistakes while recording their parts. Thus, studio musicians are usually hired for their technical abilities with a musical instrument. Performing in a studio environment is much different than performing on a stage. When recording in a studio, musical performances are “put under a microscope,” and every imperfection or virtue of a musician’s technique can be heard during playback. In contrast, musicians who perform in a live musical setting usually have a room’s reverberation to mask flaws such as pitch or timing errors, and are usually able to get away with more mistakes than they would in a studio environment. With modern studio procedures such as close-miking musical instruments and requiring players to perform with strict tempo-keeping devices called click tracks, studio musicians

must have excellent musical technique in order to record professional-level performances. According to Parsons (1996) the fundamentals of good studio performance technique are: “performing with consistent dynamics, playing with a proper sense of groove, possessing stylistic knowledge of the music that is being recorded, possessing proper technical ability and keeping steady tempo throughout each recording” (p. 12). Finally, because many artists pay a large amount of money for a performance by a seasoned studio musician, studio musicians are expected to arrive at the recording session early, have their instrument prepared and have their parts well-rehearsed (Rapaport, 1999, p.114).

The Recording Engineer

During a recording session, the job of the recording engineer consists of selecting and setting up microphones, positioning musicians in desired sonic spaces within the studio, recording musicians and instruments to a tape or hard disk machine and mixing down all of the tracks to a stereo recording (Huber & Runstein, 1997, p.18). In order to foster creativity and inventiveness during the recording process, Huber & Runstein (1997) suggest that “there are no rules for the process of recording” (p. 457). Although conducting the recording process with a “no rules” approach can cultivate new and innovative techniques within the recording arts field, certain recording fundamentals should be practiced to ensure a smooth and professional flow during the recording session.

Some of these fundamentals include:

- using high-quality microphones
- using proper-microphone placement

- making sure that instruments are tuned before recording them
- making sure the recording room has good acoustics

(Huber & Runstein, 1997, p.151).

Of all the roles associated with the music production process, the recording engineer must possess the most technical knowledge in order to do his or her job effectively. Not only must engineers know the operational procedures of various pieces of studio recording equipment such as microphones, recording consoles, patch bays, audio effects and computer software (Hill, B.R., 2006, pp. 9-10), they must also have detailed knowledge about each instrument they are recording. Knowing the unique characteristics of musical instruments enables engineers to achieve the best possible sound when recording an ensemble. For example, if engineers know all of the different sounds they can get from various types of drumheads, they can suggest that a drummer use a certain type of head to achieve more of a “rock” or “jazz” sound on a recording. In short, recording engineers are artists and are responsible for the sonic quality of a recording from a technical perspective (Zager, 2006, p. 24).

After the recording phase of session is completed, the next stage in the music production process is the mixdown phase. Essentially, the mixdown process involves taking all of the individual tracks of a song that were recorded during the recording session (Drum, Bass guitar, Guitar, Vocals, etc.) and “mixing” them together into a two-channel stereo track. This two-channel stereo track is a recording which can be played on common consumer devices such as CD players, car stereos and portable media devices. Because the mixdown phase is a very detailed and time-consuming process, engineers must have sufficient knowledge of the techniques used to apply effects such as

equalization, compression and reverberation to a recording in order to achieve balance and harmony between each instrument in the mix. According to Porcello (1996), it is in this phase of the music production process that recording engineers must project themselves “into the listening space of the eventual consumer, making judgments about what is or is not an aesthetically...viable sound” (pp. 4-5).

The Producer

During the recording session, the Producer plays a leadership role by helping to guide the band throughout the music production process (Huber & Runstein, 1997, p. 18). Consequently, it's almost certain that the Producer's role, by its very nature, has the possibility of offending egos. In the recording studio environment, this is done either by labeling certain performances as unacceptable or by making decisions with which the other musicians disagree at the time. The producer has the power to unite or divide a band just by the leadership approach he or she decides to use. Regarding leadership approaches, Kurt Lewin, a prominent German social psychologist, identified three different styles of leadership in his work on group dynamics. These three styles of leadership are known as “Autocratic,” “Democratic” and “Laissez-Faire” leadership. In an Autocratic style of leadership, the leader makes decisions without consulting other members of the group. In a Democratic style of leadership, the leader involves group members in the decision making process and in Laissez-faire style of leadership, group members make their own decisions while the role of the leader is minimized (Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939, p. 273).

For most projects, Producers who avoid an autocratic approach in their leadership role usually foster healthier relationships within a studio environment. According to

Michael Zager (2006), author of the book, *Music production: A manual for producers, composers, arrangers and students*:

Most musicians and singers are highly sensitive. The manner in which producers communicate with artists is the key to achieving positive results. Autocratic producers are usually ineffectual. Accomplished producers are hired because of their creative vision and expertise. Therefore, a producer must appear confident and create an atmosphere of mutual respect and friendship with artists. If a producer does not pose a strong “artistic vision” to an artist, the artist will eventually lose respect for him or her, and the relationship will eventually deteriorate (p. 4).

Effective producers know how to express what they want to both musicians and engineers and are skilled at orchestrating groups of people. According to Huber & Runstein (1997), “it’s the job of the producer to help the artist and/or record company create the best possible recorded performance and final product” (p. 17).

Stage 3: Tweaking (Post-Production)

The “Tweaking” stage of the project entails making final tweaks to the overall sonic quality of a recording by submitting it to undergo the Mastering process.

The Mastering Process

The mastering process involves adding a “final, sonic gloss” (Zager, 2006, p. 25) to the final mix of the recording through the application of Equalization (EQ) and dynamics processing (Huber & Runstein, 1997, p. 543). In short, the mastering process can unify all of the individual songs on one recording and make them flow together so that they sound naturally connected. Many times during the recording phase of a musical

production, individual songs are recorded at different times and under different conditions. These small differences in condition can be enough to make individual songs sound disjointed and unrelated to one another. For example, during the recording phase, one song may be recorded at a slightly lower volume than another or the EQ settings between songs may be different. If listened to in this manner, the transitions between songs sound awkward and “stick out like a sore thumb” (Huber & Runstein, 1997, p. 543). In order that songs have a professional flow and evenness to them, the mastering process irons out these inconsistencies by making all of the songs on one recording sound homogeneous.

According to Huber & Runstein (1997), the mastering process can make a recording flow together and sound consistent in four ways. They are:

1. EQ Matching and Dynamics Processing

An experienced Mastering Engineer applies equalization and dynamics processing techniques to make the recording sound consistent under a wide range of playback conditions (radio, home stereo, car stereo, Web, etc...).

2. Placing a Series of Songs in the Right Order

The Mastering Engineer creates an overall flow to the recording by working with a Producer to set individual songs in the best possible order. This is done to achieve a positive flow of energy from one song to the next. This stage of the Mastering Process also involves setting gap times between songs so there are smooth transitions between each piece of music.

3. Using Compression Techniques to Achieve Optimum Playback Levels

An experienced Mastering Engineer uses compression techniques to set the average level of a project to the highest possible value. This is beneficial in helping the recording to “stand out” during a wide range of playback conditions (radio, home stereo, car stereo, Web, etc...).

4. Matching Levels Between Songs

By matching dynamic levels between songs, the Mastering Engineer improves the overall flow of the whole recording (p. 543).

In the music production world, the mastering process is considered to be a specialized art form (Zager, 2006, p. 25) and in most cases, professional results can only be obtained by someone who has years of experience in the field (Huber & Runstein, 1997, p. 543).

Stage 4: Shrink Wrap (Distribution)

After the Pre-Production, Production and Post-Production phases of writing, recording, mixing and mastering the music were completed, the next stage of the music production process is the “Shrink Wrap” or “Distribution” phase. This final stage involved transforming the master recording into a salable product and deals with the designing of CD artwork, the mass production and packaging of the product via the CD duplication process, and the submission of the product to an online music store where it is made available to be purchased by the World Wide Web Community (Huber & Runstein, 1997, p. 553).

CD Cover Art and the Graphic Design Process

According to Knab (2002), author of *Music is Your Business*, a well-designed CD Cover “is the best advertisement for your music” (§ 2). Just as a catchy melodic hook

can attract a music consumer aurally, an attractive and well-designed CD cover can attract a music consumer visually.

On a more technical note, creating CD artwork is a strict discipline which contains a set of design standards that, if followed correctly, guarantee professional results. For example, for each section of the CD artwork (front cover, back cover and CD label), there are specific dimensions that a graphic designer must follow in order to make certain that the artwork is printed correctly. Also, it is recommended that CD artwork, if produced with graphic design software such as Adobe® Photoshop or Adobe® Illustrator, be created at a high resolution of 300 dpi (dots per square inch). In addition, creating artwork in four-color printing mode, also known as the “CMYK model,” is suggested for professional printing results.

CD Duplication and Shrink Wrapping

Another step in transforming the final recording into a salable product is to mass-produce it by hiring a professional CD Duplication company to create multiple, professionally-packaged copies.

Online Product Distribution

After a recording has been professionally-packaged and duplicated, the next step of the music production process is the marketing and distribution phase. According to Dean (2003), author of the book, *\$30 Music School*, when marketing a finished CD, “the Internet is the best way to cheaply promote your music worldwide” (p. 331). Likewise, Latonero (2004) adds that the Internet “is poised to transform the way music is produced, distributed, and consumed” (p.2). As a result, independent recording artists have the opportunity of reaching a worldwide audience without the traditional need of being

promoted by a major record label (Gordon, 2005, p xiii). As of this writing, several online music stores which sell independently-produced recordings exist on the Internet. Among the most popular of these online music stores are CD Baby, Mp3.com, and Soundclick.com (Gordon, 2005, p. 213). Submitting a recording to one of these companies is a simple and streamlined process and in about a week's time, one's recording can be posted on a website and advertised to the World Wide Web community.

It must be mentioned that although it's a simple process to market an independently-produced audio recording on World Wide Web, the likelihood of getting one's music noticed by a majority of consumers decreases simply by the fact that "everyone else is doing it too" (Dean, 2003, p. 331).

METHODOLOGY

Interdependence with Others

Although an individualistic work method was used while producing "Paul Czech: 7 Songs," and one person performed a majority of the tasks associated with the music production process, it quickly became apparent that without the help of other people, the project would not have been completed. John Donne's words that, "No man is an island," is definitely an understatement when it comes to the process of music production.

Although digital technology and user-friendly software make it easier for one person to produce music, "Paul Czech: 7 Songs," was produced through the efforts of numerous individuals.

When viewing the matter from an interdependent individualistic perspective, it is easy to see that people such as professors, band mates, and private music teachers have all had a hand in helping to make this recording possible. The knowledge, assistance and

musical techniques provided by these individuals all played a part in the completion of the final product. However, it must be mentioned that several other people, many of them not known personally, also contributed to the production of “Paul Czech: 7 Songs.” The numerous individuals who contributed to this project through their voice in print, video and the Internet must also be acknowledged for offering help along the way. Technology and the Internet have made the world interdependent and much knowledge or advice can be gained from individuals who write online articles, answer questions through online forums and teach music production methods through online video tutorials. These individuals, all of them who I am unlikely to ever meet personally, have contributed to this project. Although digital technology has made the music production process easier for a person to take an individualistic approach in creating a musical recording, the same technology has allowed us to take a collectivistic approach when working with others. Thus, through technology, we are better able to connect with one another and share valuable ideas, knowledge and advice. I am deeply indebted to those who have shared their knowledge with me along the way to producing “Paul Czech: 7 Songs.”

The Music Production Process: Paul Czech: 7 Songs

Stage 1: Conception (Pre-Production)

The Artist and Songwriting

The songwriting process for “Paul Czech: 7 Songs” began roughly six months before the recording of the project. At the conclusion of the writing period, seven songs, two of which were instrumental pieces, had been written and arranged to be performed by a four-piece rock band. The songwriting method used for this project involved constructing songs from rough sketches of musical ideas that had been written over the

last few years. In the past, riffs and small musical fragments had been composed during improvisational periods of playing the guitar or piano and were recorded as ideas which had potential for future songs. Using dedicated music production software such as Cakewalk's SONAR (version 6.0.1) made the task of organizing these musical bits into complete songs extremely convenient, as song sections could be plotted out and tested to see how various musical ideas blended with one another (See Figure 1).

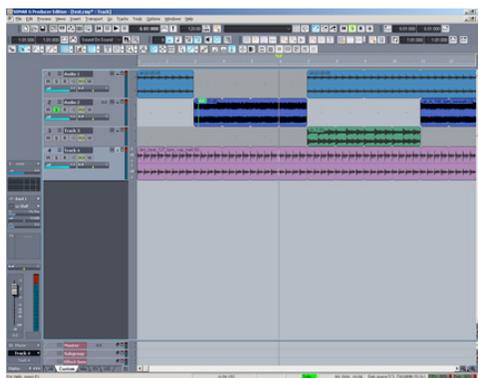


Figure 1: Organizing musical ideas during the songwriting process in Sonar

According to Cadiz (2006), computer software such as SONAR can influence a composer's writing process in unique ways (p.1). Thus, the "cut and paste" compositional technique described above not only allowed the writing process to flow quickly and intuitively; it also inspired different combinations of musical ideas that might not have been chosen were a more logical and analytical writing approach taken.

After organizing the riffs into complete songs and creating a rough arrangement of each piece, the lyric-writing process was begun. The main goal in this endeavor was to create words that appropriately matched the mood of the previously-written music. As with the small musical ideas that were quickly composed in the past, several scraps of paper containing incomplete lyrical ideas had also been spontaneously written. After sifting through notebooks and several scraps of paper, five main lyrical ideas emerged

which blended well with the dark, driving hard-rock feel of the music. From this point, it took approximately two weeks to transform the words into final drafts of lyrics for each song. The songs that were written were entitled, “Shift,” “Zealot,” “Time and Space,” “Mood Storm,” and “That Is This” while the instrumental songs were entitled, “Song for Sot” and “Meat.”

The Studio Musician

Although I am a multi-instrumentalist and am able to play drums, guitar, piano, bass guitar and sing, the technical complexity of the musical arrangements for “Paul Czech: 7 Songs” called for a few musicians to perform song sections that I lacked the ability to perform. Because of this limitation, three musician colleagues from my hometown of Canton, Ohio were recruited to play some of the more complex parts throughout the recording. The individuals enlisted for the project were James Stafford (Vocals), Tony Agelopoulous (Guitar) and Jon Agelopoulous (Bass Guitar). For the recording, I played the drum set and synthesizer. Since I had performed many times with these individuals, had a good knowledge of their musical abilities, and had maintained a growing friendship with them throughout the years, I felt confident in asking them to donate their skills to the recording project. After all members agreed to contribute their time, the band began rehearsing the music for “Paul Czech: 7 Songs.”

Rehearsal

During the pre-production phase of the project, the ensemble scheduled five two-hour rehearsal sessions to learn the material for the upcoming recording. To prepare for the rehearsal sessions, musical scores of each song were created using the popular notation software, “Sibelius.”(Sibelius, version 4.0) Individual parts, along with demo

recordings of the music were submitted to each band member before our first meeting. Doing this ensured that we would have productive rehearsal sessions as each member would be familiar with the music that we were going to record.

Stage 2: Recording (Production)

All of the tracks for “Paul Czech: 7 Songs” were recorded at a provisional home studio located in Canton, Ohio. After the recording session in Ohio ended, the finished tracks were transferred to my home production studio located in Statesboro, Georgia to undergo the mixing process. Recording the main tracks in Ohio was necessary due to the fact that 75% of the band members live in Ohio. The main recording space for the recording was a makeshift studio constructed in a residential, finished basement.

The Recording Stage of the production process involves the roles of the Session Musician, Recording Engineer and Producer. Many times throughout this project, the duties of each role overlapped. This section of the paper describes my experience performing each of these roles.

The Studio Musician

As a session musician, I was responsible for three activities during the recording session: Setting up the drumset, tuning the drums and recording the drum parts. In order to make the session run more efficiently and to save valuable time during the recording process, the drumset was assembled and tuned a few hours before the other musicians arrived.

The recording process went very smoothly as all the drum tracks were recorded on either the first or second takes. To ensure a top-notch recorded performance and that a solid tempo was kept throughout each song, the drum parts were recorded in sync with a

metronomic time-keeping device known as a click track. In short, a click track is a regularly-repeating “click” which is played inside of a session musician’s headphones to help him or her keep steady tempo with the music he or she is recording.

The Recording Engineer and the Recording Process

As the recording engineer for the project, my job consisted of setting up all of the microphones, recording the session onto the computer workstation, and mixing the final recording. As mentioned previously, the recording of all the music was done in Canton, Ohio. The mixing phase of the project was done in Statesboro, Georgia. At the time of the recording, the main focus was on recording the ensemble rather than on completing the mixing process.

At the start of the recording session, one goal was to use high-quality microphones to ensure a good recording. The microphones used for the recording session were as follows: For the drumset, one AKG D112 (Bass Drum) , three Shure SM57 dynamic microphones (Snare Drum, Rack Tom, Floor Tom and Hi-Hat Cymbal) and two AKG 414 Condenser microphones (Drumset Overheads) were used. For the guitar amplifier, two Shure SM57s dynamic microphones were used. For the bass guitar, no microphones were needed. Instead, a device which transforms a high impedance line level into a low-impedance microphone level, known as a “direct box” was used. Finally, for vocals, the band rented and used a Neumann, BCM 705 Studio Microphone.

The computer workstation used for the recording was a custom-built, Pentium 4, 3.0 GHz SystemMax computer containing 2GB of RAM. For software, Cakewalk’s SONAR (version 6.0.1), and Adobe Audition 1.5 (version 1.5) were used for recording and editing. The recording process went extremely well as the ensemble was directed to

record each song in stages through multi-tracking. In short, multi-tracking is the most common method of recording modern music and allows for the individual recording of numerous sound sources at different times. After all of the sound sources have been recorded, they can be mixed together to create a cohesive-sounding recording.

Following the training received in Georgia Southern University's Music Technology Graduate Program, we began by recording all of the drum and bass parts simultaneously in order to obtain a solid musical foundation for the project. The main goal of this stage was to capture a perfect drum recording more so than a perfect bass recording. Being that the drum part provides the main pulse of modern music, it was a priority to capture a strong drumset recording. Thus, if the bass player made a mistake during this stage, we did not stop to correct it. The error would be simple to fix later during the overdubbing process. After we were satisfied with all of the drum and bass parts, we recorded all of the rhythm guitar and lead guitar sections. The last thing that was recorded during the session was the vocal parts. All in all, the recording process went more smoothly than expected. Due to productive rehearsal sessions during the Pre-Production phase and because all of the players were warmed up and well-prepared, there were a minimal amount of mistakes. As a result, a large majority of the recording was done in one or two takes from each musician.

The Producer

As the producer for the project, my job was to make aesthetic choices, keep the band focused and make final decisions regarding the overall recording. For this project, the band agreed to follow a democratic leadership approach, and when there were

disagreements, the band resolved them collectively. Thus, our main goal was to follow the majority vote of the band rather than one personal vote.

Allowing other members of the ensemble to participate in the decision-making process was beneficial because everyone felt like they were contributing to the project rather than being forced to follow a view with which they did not agree. For example, during the recording, I thought that a few of the improvised guitar solos, although well-executed, contained note choices that I didn't find pleasing. However, because the guitarist seemed passionate about keeping the part in question and was not forced to re-record another solo, he became more focused on the project. Therefore, he contributed to a more successful final product. Although he was recording another person's music, he felt that he was actively contributing to it by having a certain amount of decision-making freedom. Ultimately, the successful flow of the recording phase of the project was largely a result of positive group dynamics and mutual respect between all of the band members.

The Recording Engineer and the Mixdown Process

After returning to Georgia with the recorded tracks of "7 songs," I loaded all of the material into my home workstation to begin the mixing process. Following the Music Technology training received from Georgia Southern University, the procedure for mixing a recording is to begin with broad strokes and over time, hone in on subtle details. For example, the first broad stroke was to create a "rough mix" of each tune. Rough mixes involve setting appropriate volume levels and tentative pan positions of each instrument within the stereo field. In other words, using the fader controls located on the virtual console in Cakewalk's, SONAR, I increased or decreased the volume of each instrument in relationship to one another and using the panning controls, placed some

instruments a certain degree to the left or right within the stereo field. Some instruments, such as bass guitar, Kick Drum and Snare drum usually aren't panned left or right and instead stay panned to the center of the mix. (See Figure 2 for a visual example of the mixdown session in SONAR).

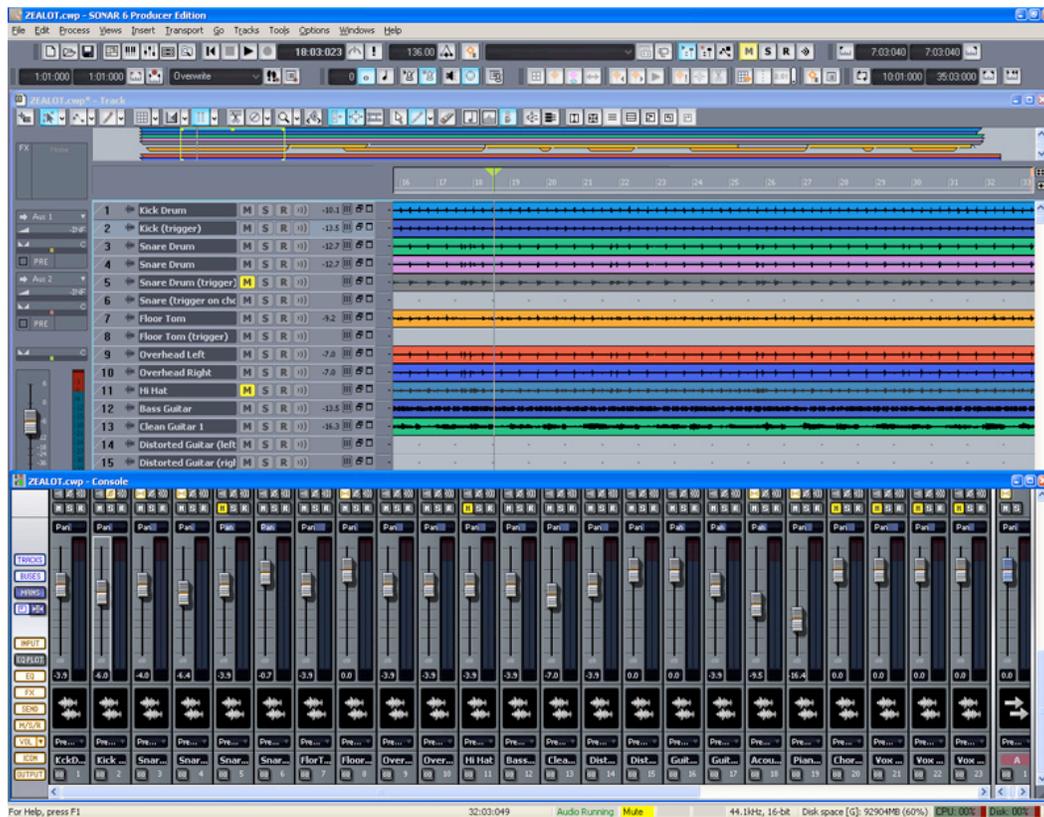


Figure 2: Mixdown session of the song, “Zealot” in Sonar

After the rough mixes were set, more detailed aspects of the mix became the main area of concern. According to the training received in my graduate program, one method of achieving a good mix is not only to set proper volume levels and pan positions for each instrument, but also to make sure that each instrument sonically stands out by itself without being cluttered by other instruments. This was primarily achieved through the use of EQ techniques, the application of various amounts of compression and the use of different types of reverbs. Due to the mixing process being a tedious undertaking, the

final mixes of all seven songs took approximately two weeks to complete. At times during the mixdown, the work periods were so long that my ears became fatigued and I began hearing strange frequencies that I hadn't noticed before. When this occurred, it was usually a sign that it was time to stop and take a break. Returning to a mixing session after taking a rest made all the difference in the world as my rejuvenated ears could more skillfully determine instrument balances, levels and frequency ranges. Once all of the songs had been mixed down and transformed into stereo tracks, the project was ready to be mastered.

Stage 3: Tweaking (Post-Production)

Because no one in the band possessed professional experience in the art of mastering a CD, we decided to send the recording to a professional mastering house in order to achieve professional results. After doing much research, a Texas-based company, called "Alien Beans Studio" was chosen to master the project. A CD containing final mixes of all seven tracks was sent to them and in under a week, a completed, mastered CD was received in the mail. Alien Beans Studio did a great job of adding a "shimmer" to the music and the difference between the pre-mastered and mastered recordings was extremely noticeable. The mastering process definitely brought the recording to life and transformed "Paul Czech: 7 Songs" into a professional-sounding recording.

Stage 4: Shrink Wrap (Distribution)

CD Cover Art and the Graphic Design Process

When planning to create the artwork for the "Paul Czech: 7 Songs," the goal was to keep the design as simple as possible. Being that simple and uncluttered layout is a staple of strong graphic design technique, it was decided to include graphical elements

that supported only what was essential. Thus, the final design, although visually conservative, employed colors and graphics that effectively conveyed the darker musical mood I felt the recording possessed (See Figure 3 through Figure 6).

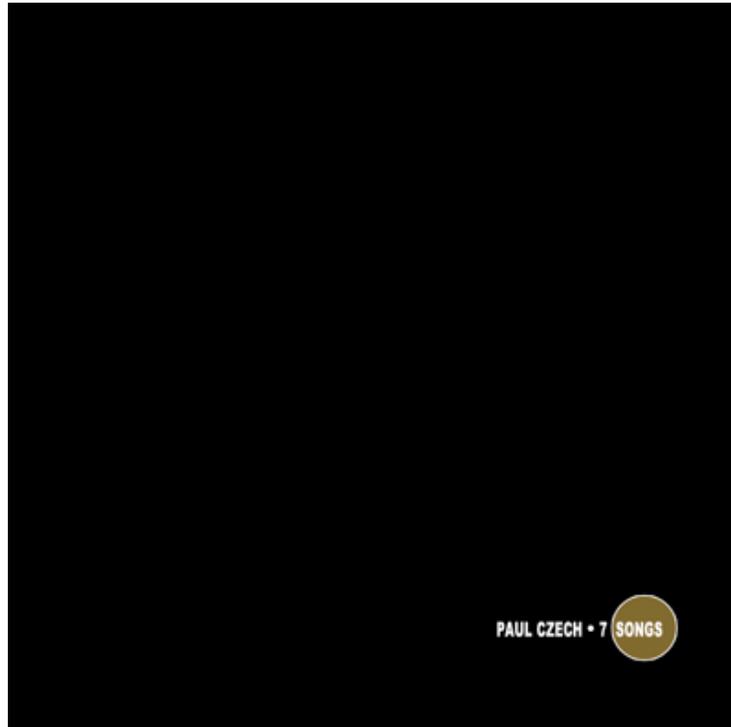


Figure 3: Front Cover Design of CD



Figure 4: CD Label Design



Figure 5: Inside Cover Design of CD

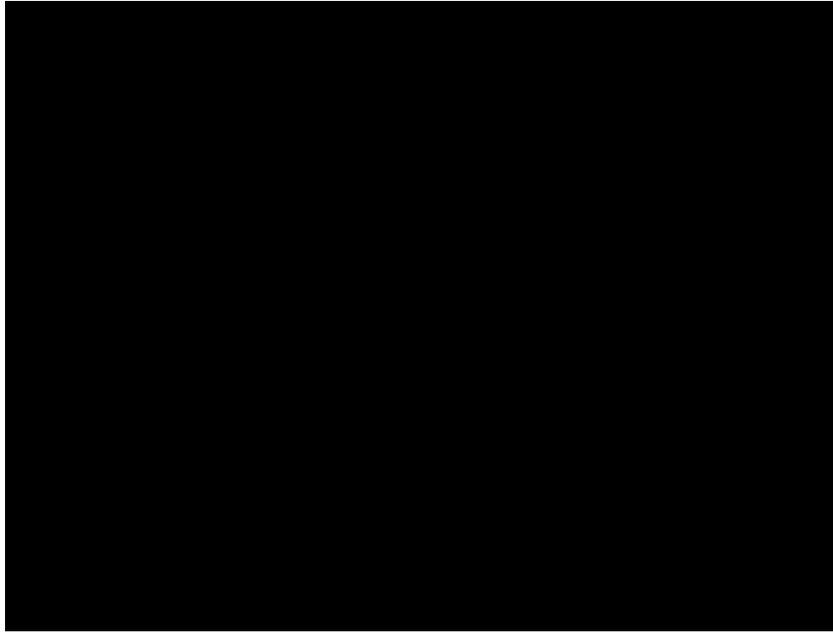


Figure 6: Back Cover Design of CD

CD Duplication and Shrink Wrapping

After searching through numerous web sites dedicated to CD-Duplication services, a company from Castro Valley, California called CD DVD Now! (<http://www.cddvdnow.com>) was chosen. They were offering an attractive deal to produce “100 Retail Ready CDs” for a little less than \$200. Compared with other CD-Duplication companies, they had the best price. They also offered, for no extra charge, to include a product bar code along with each copy. Having a barcode attached to a sound recording is essential in order to keep track of retail CD sales once it is distributed online for purchase. The customer service representatives at CD DVD Now! were very pleasant to work with and they answered all of my questions thoroughly. After receiving final clearance from my graduate committee in March 2007, the project was sent to CD DVD Now! to undergo the duplication and packaging process. According to their customer service representative, the procedure will take one week to complete.

Online Product Distribution

As of this writing, since the online music store CD Baby is the largest online retailer of independently-produced music, I will choose to market and distribute the CD with them. One attractive feature about signing up to sell a recording on the CD Baby store is that in addition to advertising one's CD on their website, they also submit recordings to be sold on other major online music stores such as iTunes, Yahoo Music, Rhapsody and Napster.

Signing up and submitting the recording to be sold on the CD Baby online music store is a simple and streamlined process. One simply needs to log onto <http://www.cdbaby.com> and fill out an online form which asks an artist to specify a variety of information about his or her recording. After paying CD Baby a one-time, web page setup fee of \$35 and sending them at least 10 copies of a CD, it will take CD Baby roughly one week to process all of the information until an advertisement for the recording is posted on their online store (See Figure 7).



Figure 7: www.cdbaby.com Homepage

Although “Paul Czech: 7 Songs” will be available for any member of the World Wide Web community to purchase, it will be just one CD competing against thousands of others for attention and listening time. It will be interesting to see if this recording attracts any listeners and if it is able to be sold within the next year.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the course of this 11-month project, I learned a tremendous amount about the music production process and have shown that an individual, with the available technology of 2007, can compose, record, produce and distribute an independent CD-Recording in a professional salable format to the general public.

Although it was an extremely challenging and time-consuming process to perform most of the roles associated with the music production process, I will still approach future recording projects with an interdependent individualistic work method. Hopefully, with continual practice, I will gain more experience and learn how to perform each role of the music production process equally well. My interdependency with others allows me to not only find help when it is needed but also to give help when others seek it. I realize that although I work as an individualist, my finished products are not solely a result of my own efforts. The countless individuals I have come in contact with in person, in print, on video or on the Internet have helped to make me a better musician and practitioner of the music production process. Thus, I can not receive recognition for my own skills without crediting them.

The Internet has become the most efficient way of sharing information with a worldwide audience, and as the number of independent musicians selling their music online continues to increase, so does the competition of trying to get one’s music noticed.

Still, even with vastness of the World Wide Web making independently-produced CDs more and more inconsequential, there is a drive for an artist to share his or her creative work with an audience.

As Huber & Runstein (1997) so adequately describe it, one reason artists produce creative works is:

...the human desire to create content with the intention of sharing and communicating one's experiences with others. This has been done for centuries in the form of books and more recently by movies and television. In the here and now, the Web has been added to the communications list . . . in that it has created a vehicle that allows individuals (and corporate entities alike) to communicate a multimedia experience to millions and then allows each individual to manipulate that experience, learn from it, and even respond in an interactive fashion (pp. 347-348).

Thus, the wish to foster the age-old relationship between artist and audience may be essentially what compels us as home recording artists to continually create our work. Despite the fact that few, if any of us, will become world-famous pop stars, technology allows us better opportunities to share our musical and philosophical experiences with one another and in the end, make connections on a human level.

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MUSIC SOFTWARE

SONAR® version 6.0.1. Cakewalk, Boston, MA.

Sibelius® version 4.0. Sibelius, London, England.

Adobe® Audition version 1.5. Adobe Systems Incorporated, San Jose, CA.

Adobe® Photoshop CS. Adobe Systems Incorporated, San Jose, CA.

MUSIC EQUIPMENT

Pearl® Session Masters 4-pc. Drumset

13” Zildjian® High Hat Cymbals

16” Zildjian® Z-series Crash Cymbal

20” Zildjian® Z-Series Ride Cymbal

20” Wuhan® China Cymbal

Fender® Jazz Bass Guitar

Whirlwind® IMP 2 Direct Box

Ibanez® RGT6EXFX Electric Guitar,

Line 6® Floor POD Plus Multi-Effects Pedal

Marshall ® AVT50HX Half Stack

Yamaha® CSX1

(3) Shure® SM57

(1) AKG® D112

(2) AKG® 414

Neumann® BCM 705 Studio Microphone.

APPENDIX A: LYRICS

Track 01 "Zealot"

Words and Music by Paul Czech

He's talkin' about things I do not want to hear him say,
 He's bringin' up things that make me run away (he is)
 Teaching me things that I have never learned before,
 He's running upstairs and knockin' down locked doors (once more)

This is bliss this innocence

Hey Mister, my young man,
 Has the cat got your tongue again?
 Is that a cough I hear in your lungs, my friend?

He's wakin' me up to worlds where one and one is three
 He's shakin' and shiftin' time and symmetry (help me)
 Stand ground, shut down my castle, hurry close the gate
 No more mystery, my mind's been up to hate of late

This is bliss this ignorance

Hey Mister, my young man,
 Has the cat got your tongue again?
 Is that a cough I hear in your lungs, my friend?
 Say Mister, my young man,
 Tryin' to share another thought again?
 Is that a last breath I hear in your lungs, friend?

This is bliss unconsciousness

I'm shootin' him down before he casts his spell
 I warned him and now I'm sendin' his soul to hell

Hey Mister, my young man,
 Has the cat got your tongue again?
 Is that a cough I hear in your lungs, my friend?
 Say Mister, my young man,
 Tryin' to share another thought again?
 Is that a last breath I hear in your lungs, friend?

This is bliss this righteousness

Track 02 “Mood Storm Moving”

Words and Music by Paul Czech

Sister, sit right here and tell the story
Of how you lost your gun and why it's gone
Mister may I make one quick suggestion?
You better pack your bags right now and just move on

*There is a shadow lurking, silent and brooding
There is a Moodstorm moving over us all*

Lover, look here...what are you doing?
Don't lock it up now, better let it go
Mother with all your children gone before you
Won't you teach us all the truth you've come to know?

*There is a shadow lurking, silent and brooding
There is a Moodstorm moving over us all*

Con man, can I ask you one quick question?
How do you trick the truest heart on the block?
On and on and on and on and on and...
You better stop the pure hearts soon before they start

*There is a shadow lurking, silent and brooding
There is a Moodstorm moving over us all*

Track 03 "Time and Space"

Word by Christopher Stafford

Music by Paul Czech

Worked so hard, tried to find my way
Preparing for the moment for the day
It all consumes, it's all encompassing
This right to be, this right to sing

*I see your face you call out my name
Don't care about the world or the game
Therein lies still filling all my voids
On a death defying course to rejoin*

I see the way, I try to work it out
It permeates my mind, I sift through doubt
The life I seek is the life I choose
Look for the space, the time to groove

*I see your face you call out my name
Don't care about the world or the game
Therein lies still filling all my voids
On a death defying course to rejoin*

Notes fall down like the leaves of Fall
I learn to hear them speak, to hear them call

I see your face you call out my name
Don't care about the world or the game
Therein lies still filling all my voids
On a death defying course to rejoin

Track 04 “Shift”

Words and Music by Paul Czech

Everything I have seen,
Everything I have touched and heard, tasted and smelled, I cannot find the words,
Everything, anything opening all meaning means nothing

Everything I have seen,
Everything I have touched and heard, tasted and smelled, I cannot find the words,
Everything, anything opening all meaning means nothing

Subatomic, tragic and comic
I have gone inside, outside of space/time
Coming, going, hidden and showing
Attend, ignore
Here, in dimension...
SHIFT!

Everything I have seen,
Everything I have touched and heard, tasted and smelled, I cannot find the words,
Everything, anything opening all meaning means nothing

Particle and wave, constant and changed
I have gone inside, outside of space/time
Coming, going, hidden and showing
Attend, ignore
Here, in dimension...
SHIFT!

Spoken: “God is an infinite being beyond Space and Time. There is an invisible intelligence there and this invisible intelligence is everywhere. It is omnipresent. There is domain of existence in this universe where everything is inseparably one. And that is the Spirit...the Universal Spirit.”

Subatomic, tragic and comic
I have gone inside, outside of space/time
Coming, going, hidden and showing
Attend, ignore
Here, in dimension...
SHIFT!

Track 05 “Song for Sot”

Music by John Agelopoulous and Paul Czech
Instrumental

Track 06 “Meat”

Music by John Agelopoulous and Paul Czech
Instrumental

Track 07 “That is This”

Words and Music by Paul Czech

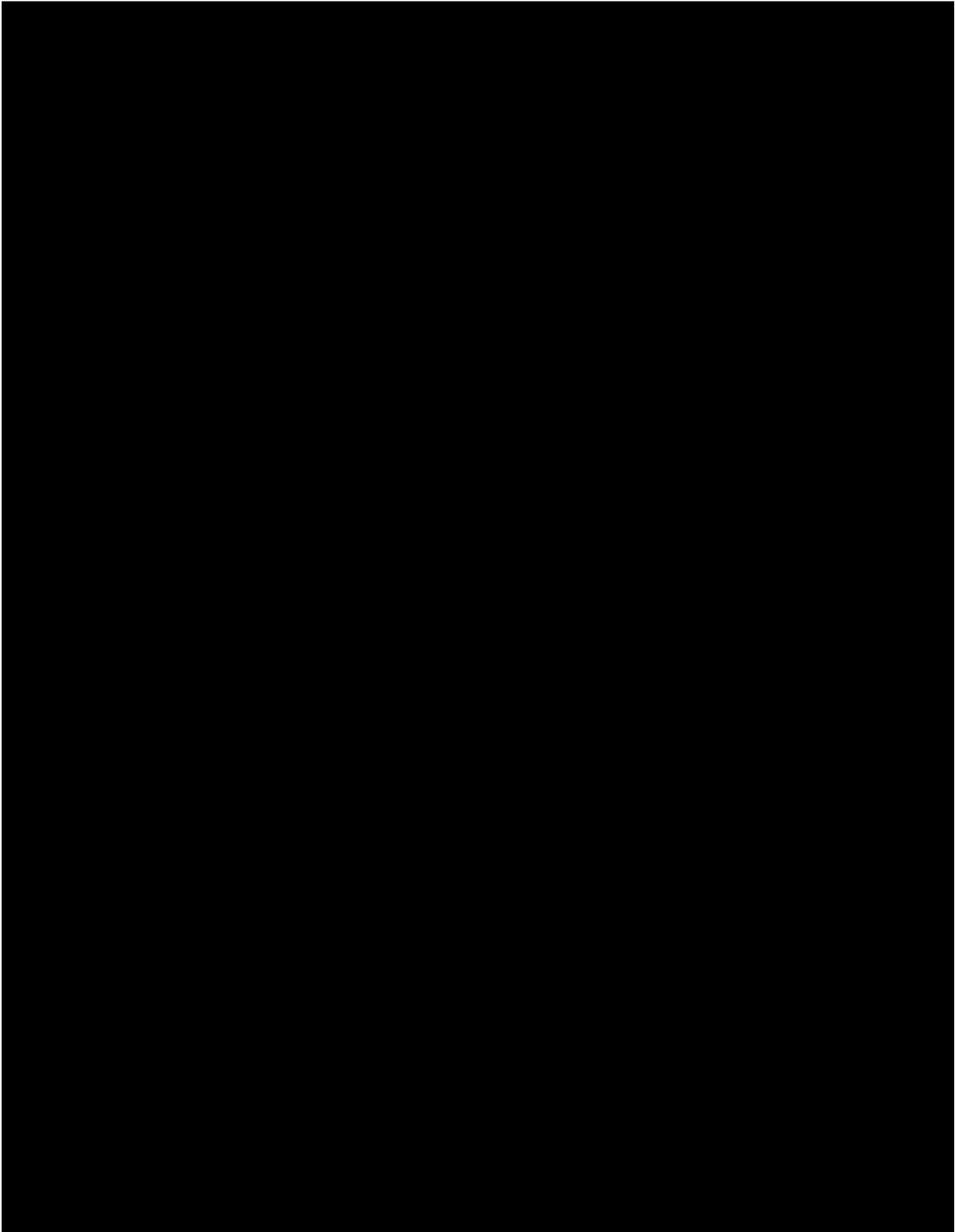
I am the teller of tale or two
You are the left side soul who walks in my shoes
I am the dreamer of myths and ancient acts
You are the hidden hand holding me back

*God and Mystery, Truth and Harmony
That is This and This is That
Myths and Sciences are alliances
Fact is False, False is Fact
Wars are always waged, Souls are always caged
When white is white and black is black*

I am the mystery man inside of this tomb
You are the sober son our forefathers fooled
I am the Jungle King hunting your blood
You are the white collar nipping the bud

*God and Mystery, Truth and Harmony
That is This and This is That
Myths and Sciences are alliances
Fact is False, False is Fact
Wars are always waged, Souls are always caged
When white is white and black is black*

APPENDIX B: LEGAL FORMS



| | |
|--|---|
| EXAMINED BY _____ | FORM SR |
| CHECKED BY _____ | |
| CORRESPONDENCE <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | FOR COPYRIGHT OFFICE USE ONLY |

DO NOT WRITE ABOVE THIS LINE. IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE, USE A SEPARATE CONTINUATION SHEET.

PREVIOUS REGISTRATION Has registration for this work, or for an earlier version of this work, already been made in the Copyright Office?

Yes No If your answer is "Yes," why is another registration being sought? (Check appropriate box) ▼

- a. This work was previously registered in unpublished form and now has been published for the first time.
- b. This is the first application submitted by this author as copyright claimant.
- c. This is a changed version of the work, as shown by space 6 on this application.

If your answer is "Yes," give: Previous Registration Number ▼ Year of Registration ▼

5

DERIVATIVE WORK OR COMPILATION

Preexisting Material Identify any preexisting work or works that this work is based on or incorporates. ▼

a

6

See instructions before completing this space.

Material Added to This Work Give a brief, general statement of the material that has been added to this work and in which copyright is claimed. ▼

b

DEPOSIT ACCOUNT If the registration fee is to be charged to a deposit account established in the Copyright Office, give name and number of Account.

Name ▼ Account Number ▼

a

7

CORRESPONDENCE Give name and address to which correspondence about this application should be sent. Name/Address/Apt/City/State/Zip ▼

b

Area code and daytime telephone number (912) 481-0244
Email paul@paulczech.com

Fax number

Paul Czech
1212 Woodland Drive
Statesboro, Georgia 30458

CERTIFICATION* I, the undersigned, hereby certify that I am the

Check only one ▼

- author
- owner of exclusive right(s)
- other copyright claimant
- authorized agent of

Name of author or other copyright claimant, or owner of exclusive right(s) ▲

of the work identified in this application and that the statements made by me in this application are correct to the best of my knowledge.

Typed or printed name and date ▼ If this application gives a date of publication in space 3, do not sign and submit it before that date.

Paul Czech

Date February 20, 2007

Handwritten signature ▼

Paul Richard Czech

Certificate will be mailed in window envelope to this address

Name ▼
Paul Czech
Number/Street/Apt ▼
1212 Woodland Drive
City/State/Zip ▼
Statesboro, Georgia 30458

YOU MUST:

- Complete all necessary spaces
- Sign your application in space 8

SEND ALL 3 ELEMENTS IN THE SAME PACKAGE:

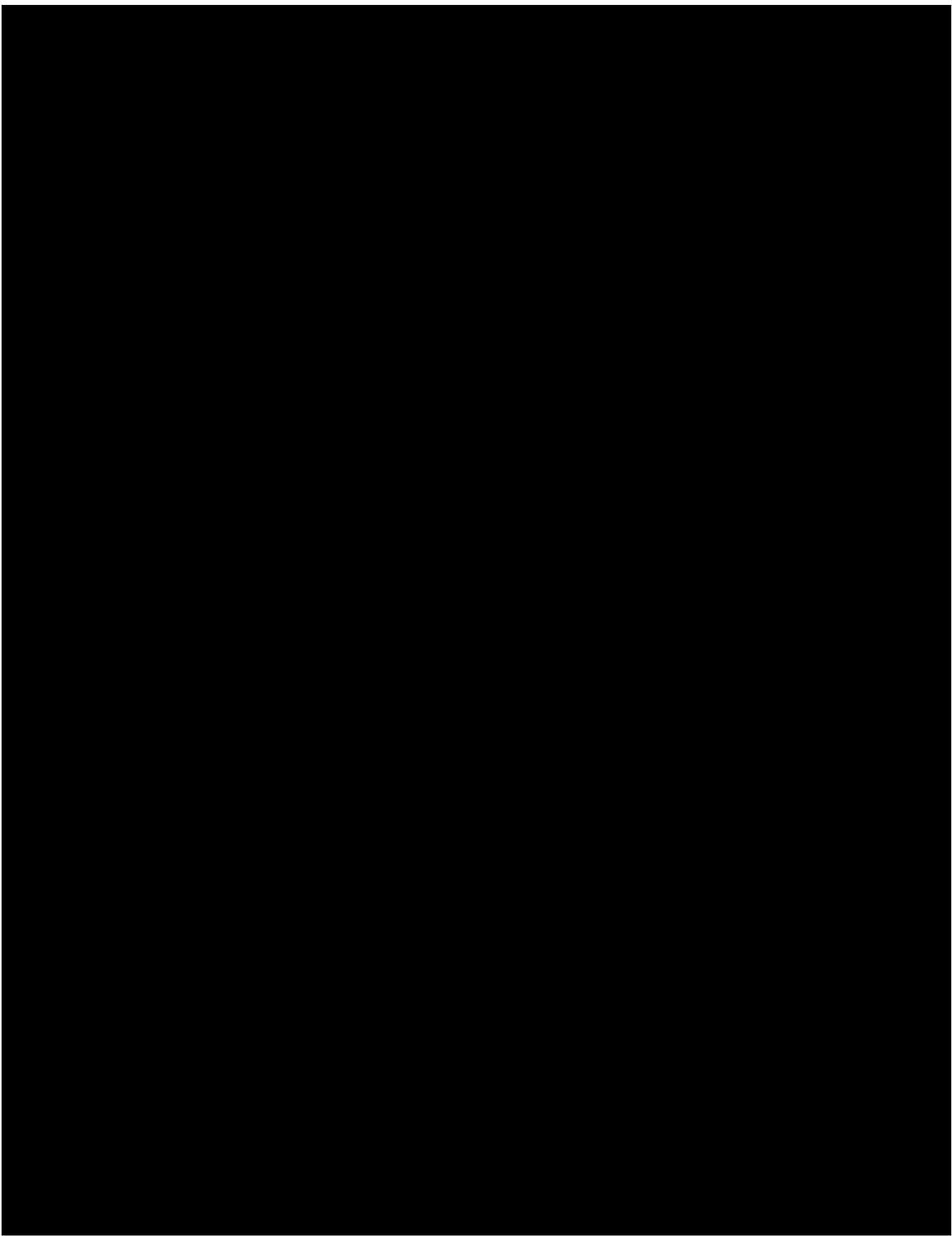
1. Application form
2. Nonrefundable filing fee in check or money order payable to Register of Copyrights
3. Deposit material

MAIL TO:

Library of Congress
Copyright Office
101 Independence Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20559-6000

9

*17 USC §506(e): Any person who knowingly makes a false representation of a material fact in the application for copyright registration provided for by section 409, or in any written statement filed in connection with the application, shall be fined not more than \$2,500.



| | |
|---|-----------|
| EXAMINED BY _____ | FORM PA |
| CHECKED BY _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CORRESPONDENCE | FOR |
| Yes | COPYRIGHT |
| | OFFICE |
| | USE |
| | ONLY |

DO NOT WRITE ABOVE THIS LINE. IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE, USE A SEPARATE CONTINUATION SHEET.

PREVIOUS REGISTRATION Has registration for this work, or for an earlier version of this work, already been made in the Copyright Office?
 Yes No If your answer is "Yes," why is another registration being sought? (Check appropriate box.) ▼ If your answer is No, do not check box A, B, or C.
 a. This is the first published edition of a work previously registered in unpublished form.
 b. This is the first application submitted by this author as copyright claimant.
 c. This is a changed version of the work, as shown by space 6 on this application.
 If your answer is "Yes," give: **Previous Registration Number** ▼ **Year of Registration** ▼

5

DERIVATIVE WORK OR COMPILATION Complete both space 6a and 6b for a derivative work; complete only 6b for a compilation.
Preexisting Material Identify any preexisting work or works that this work is based on or incorporates. ▼

a 6

Material Added to This Work Give a brief, general statement of the material that has been added to this work and in which copyright is claimed. ▼

b See instructions before completing this space.

DEPOSIT ACCOUNT If the registration fee is to be charged to a Deposit Account established in the Copyright Office, give name and number of Account.
Name ▼ **Account Number** ▼

a 7

CORRESPONDENCE Give name and address to which correspondence about this application should be sent. Name/Address/Apt/City/State/Zip ▼

Paul Czech
 1212 Woodland Drive
 Statesboro, Georgia 30458

Area code and daytime telephone number (912) 481-0244
 Email paul@paulczech.com

Fax number ()

CERTIFICATION* I, the undersigned, hereby certify that I am the

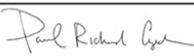
- Check only one } author
 other copyright claimant
 owner of exclusive right(s)
 authorized agent of

8

Name of author or other copyright claimant, or owner of exclusive right(s) ▲
 of the work identified in this application and that the statements made by me in this application are correct to the best of my knowledge.

Typed or printed name and date ▼ If this application gives a date of publication in space 3, do not sign and submit it before that date.

Paul Czech Date February 20, 2007

Handwritten signature (X) ▼
 x 

Certificate will be mailed in window envelope to this address:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Name ▼ | Paul Czech |
| Number/Street/Apt ▼ | 1212 Woodland Drive |
| City/State/Zip ▼ | Statesboro, Georgia 30458 |

YOU MUST:
 • Complete all necessary spaces
 • Sign your application in space 8
SEND ALL 3 ELEMENTS IN THE SAME PACKAGE:
 1. Application form
 2. Nonrefundable filing fee in check or money order payable to Register of Copyrights
 3. Deposit material
MAIL TO:
 Library of Congress
 Copyright Office
 101 Independence Avenue SE
 Washington, DC 20559-6000

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*17 USC §506(e): Any person who knowingly makes a false representation of a material fact in the application for copyright registration provided for by section 409, or in any written statement filed in connection with the application, shall be fined not more than \$2,500.

