



## AUDIO PLUG-INS FOR PROFESSIONALS

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### ARTIST SPOTLIGHT - STEVE CHADIE

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**Steve Chadie was studying music at Universty in Texas and then he got a call to intern at the studio of Willie Nelson. A long time Exponential Audio user he tells us his story and why Exponential Audio is so central to his otherwise traditional recording workflow.**

My earliest memory is being, I believe in 3rd or 4th grade. I asked my Mom to join a choir, which all the kids thought "what?" All the other kids were playing baseball, football and hockey but I wanted to be in the choir.

We moved to Texas shortly after that and I started playing saxophone. Then I started playing guitar. My Dad always had tons of vinyl. I grew up listening to Zeppelin, The Who, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, all your standard stuff that I still listen to now. People ask me "what are you listening to today?" and I'm like "the same shit I listened to 25 years ago" because it stood the test of time. Neither of my parents played

music but they always had hip music around.

**So we have to ask how does a guy go from studying music at college to suddenly working with perhaps one of the most prolific songwriters of our age? What's the Willie Nelson story?**

There was a teacher, a guy they had running the studio at college and he used to work at Willie Nelson's. He made a call and got me an internship there. When I arrived, the existing engineer was not happy to see me. It was really tough to break through but I worked hard doing anything I could to help. Then one day he turned to me one day and said "you know, you're pretty good, we think we'll keep you around". So I just came right out of school into that: worked there for free for what felt like forever. One day, he got sick and I did a session and the rest of the studio team said "this guy can do sessions." I assisted

him for another 8 years and then he moved. And that's when I took on the role of running the studio. I got it as an internship through the school and I never left, and here it is 20 years later.



**It's interesting that we have so many people that go to a college, sign up, get their Macbook and suddenly call themselves a producer. Yet you come from that tradition of being the tea-boy, the machine op, the tape op, go and get some gaffer tape, until one day someone's sick and you get your break.**

I just worked my way up until, like you said. Somebody got sick, and couldn't show up and then they had to throw me in front of the mixer. Of course I'd been watching them at this point for maybe 10 months or a year. It's not rocket science, in goes the out, out goes the in. I always joke around saying "I got a degree in engineering and then I got a gig at Willie's and f\*cked up a lot of records before I figured out what I was doing".

**It sounds like you have a a real old school way of recording; get in the band, get stuff in the board, throw up the faders and get the tracks down?**

Absolutely. I worked on tape the first 10 years I worked here. They didn't even have Pro Tools. Everybody else had Pro Tools but we were still an analogue studio. Two-inch tape. You've got to get it right to tape and it was tough because nowadays if you feel like stuff's bogging you down, you can say "you know what, that's good enough." But back then you had to go out there and go "guys I'm sorry, we've got to do this a bit more".

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"The ladies bathroom was attached to a golf course and after hours, we'd go in there. That was a great, short reverb for a snare. We used to throw up a mic—two mics if you wanted stereo—and pipe it out to the speaker"

### **What are the reverbs you were using over that period, before you got into using plug-ins?**

Lexicon 480 that was the shit! Eventide stuff, that was good for multi-effects. Lexicon 300, Lexicon 480, that's basically what I used. Or maybe the chambers and plates. Or we would just take a room in the studio (it was huge) and just make a reverb. The ladies bathroom was attached to a golf course, and after hours we'd go in there. That was a great, short reverb for a snare. We used to throw up a mic--two mics if you wanted stereo--and pipe it out to the speaker

### **So when did you transition to plug-ins for reverb?**

Lexiverb was pretty good, I don't know if you remember that product? I was like "this is pretty good and I can have as many of them as I want" so I started with that in maybe 2005 or 2006. I started running them off auxes back into the computer and then back to the console, just using the computer as digital effects. I wasn't actually bussing inside the Pro Tools mixer, I was bussing outside the SSL.

### **You were using the plug-in like a piece of hardware?**

Yes, exactly.



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### **So, how did you find out about Exponential Audio?**

Christopher Cross told me about them. I got to go and work at his house. Did all his vocals and

everything at his house, guitars all set up and he had a template and I brought the template over and was like "bus 1 or 2". I was like "damm that sounds good. What is that reverb I'm hearing?" He said "Exponential Audio. Check it out" That day I went home and bought the plug-ins they were that good.

**“Bottom line is I’m not trying to mix the reverb—which is great—because I want to concentrate on the music.”**

### **Michael has just made something very special hasn't he?**

He really has. I don't want to say it sounds like this, it sounds like that. It sounds very familiar and I'm comfortable with it. When I'm using a plug-in, whether I'm hearing it or not, I always think I'm hearing "that's a little grainy, what's up with that?. "That doesn't sound right". I've been raised on the analogue, chambers, plates or the 480 which was a fantastic machine. That's what I want to hear and I hear that kind of sound when I use Exponential Audio plug-ins. I'm not distracted by the reverb, let's put it that way.

You initiate the plug-in, you go to your really simple menu and think I want a plate or I want a medium room. I don't really need to do anything to the sound. You might shorten the pre-delay or if it's a vocal, you might take the high frequencies down. Bottom line is I'm not trying to mix the reverb--which is great--because I want to concentrate on the music.

### **You've had an incredible journey and I'm sure it's going to carry on. Looking back to that guy at school, thinking about a future in the industry, what advice would you give him now? Now you've gone through that whole process. What would you tell 16 year old Steve?**

Not to doubt your intuition. Find your own way. Give 3 people the same tracks and you're going to get 3 different personal expressions of their music and that's what I'm saying. Go with yours. Do what you do. Do what feels right.

People are going to like it or they're not but there's no right or wrong, it's just what you do.

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