

SPECIAL LIVE ISSUE

MUSICIAN

PLUS:

PAUL McCARTNEY
"How I Wrote *Flaming Pie*"

PAPAS FRITAS'
Home Studio

PC SOUND CARD
Roundup

SUZANNE VEGA
Recalls LAURA NYRO

COLDCUT'S SESSIONS
With Grandmaster Flash

CHICK COREA
The Meaning of Bud Powell

LIVE MUSIC

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OF THE
AEROSMITH
TOUR

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HOW TO BE YOUR
OWN ROADIE

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The Future of Performance
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WHAT DRIVES STAGE SOUND
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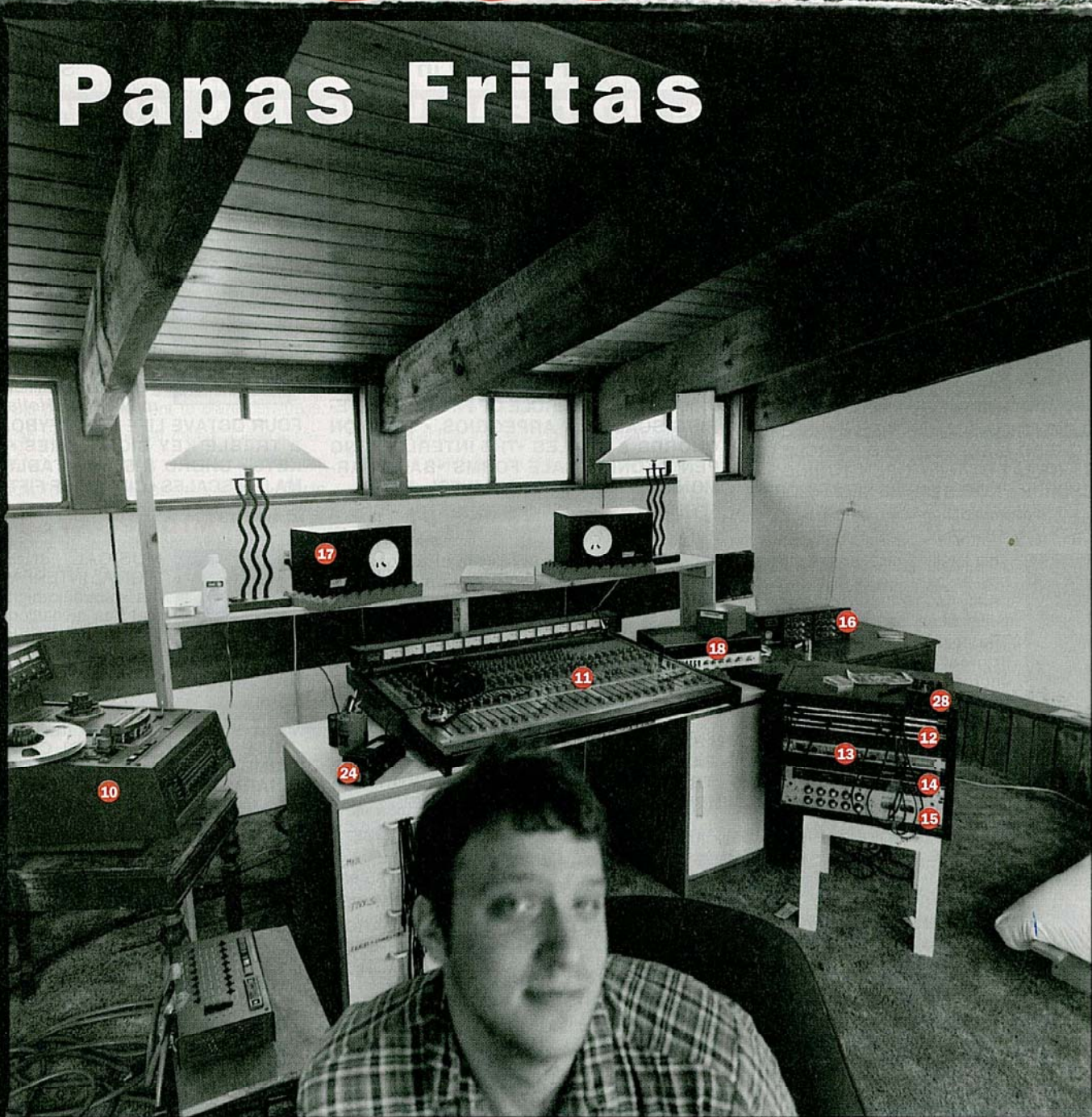


home

by matt ashare
photographs by john soares

studio

Papas Fritas





The members of the Boston-based pop trio Papas Fritas weren't being too subtle when they christened their home studio "The Columnated Ruins." As any Beach Boys fanatic will tell you, the name's taken from a line in the *Smile*-era Brian Wilson tune "Surf's Up." Fittingly, Columnated Ruins, where Papas Fritas recorded their latest album *Helioself* (Minty Fresh), is located only a mile or two from where the cold Atlantic surf crashes up against the rocky shores of Gloucester, Massachusetts, in part of a building that once housed a Montessori school on 18 acres of wooded land. The structure even features a couple of columns and the ruins of what looks to be a long-abandoned construction project. You can imagine that Wilson and Van Dyke

Parks might have had a setting like this in mind when they penned "Surf's Up." But the inspiration for the location Papas Fritas singer/guitarist Tony Goddess chose for his live-in studio/rehearsal space owes more to the legacy of another revered Sixties ensemble, namely the Band.

"My father always used to tell me stories about Big Pink, the place where the Band lived and recorded the *Basement Tapes* with Bob Dylan," Goddess recalls. "He'd say, 'When you get your band together you should just go out to a shack in the woods and practice your ass off.' So to me the ideal was always doing music as an organic thing, creating it in cool surroundings. I mean, the vibe here is great for recording. We can wake up when we wake up, figure

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out what we want to do that day, eat breakfast, start tracking, make lunch, go out and play Frisbee, come back and listen to what we recorded."

After recording their eponymous Minty Fresh debut in the basement of a house in Somerville, Massachusetts, Goddess and his bandmates, bassist Keith Gendel and drummer Shivika Asthana, have taken full advantage of the space afforded at Goddess' new abode. They rehearse and record basic tracks in the large, open living room, where they've constructed a makeshift isolation booth for drums and vocals. Today Goddess' vintage **Fender Rhodes** keyboard ④, a **Hammond M2** organ ② that he picked up for \$75, and his **Mesa/Boogie Fifty Caliber** guitar amp ③ are set up near Gendel's **Kustom 250** bass amp ④ and pieces of Asthana's drum kit ⑤ (dismantled for a gig), which she says is "not even worth mentioning." ("There really is no brand name and I don't know how it's lasted as long as it has.") Goddess' guitar is an early **Kramer** (serial number 22) from

the Seventies with an aluminum neck; Gendel plays a 1971 **Gibson EB-3** bass. (The **Peavey** keyboard amp in the background ⑥ is used solely as a speaker stand.)

A worn-looking **Vose and Sons** upright piano from the Twenties ⑦ stands in the middle of the living room, close to an **Epiphone Cortez** acoustic guitar ⑧ and an Indian sitar (built by "Madhu B. Mirajkar, satar [sic] maker") ⑨; a door leads out to a rustic deck overlooking the property. To find the nerve center of the Columnated Ruins, you have go upstairs to a tidy room which houses an **Otari MX 5050** half-inch 8-track machine ⑩, a **TASCAM M-520** mixing console ⑪, and very little in the way of outboard effects or processing equipment. There are two **Furman** patch bays ⑫, an **Aphex 107 Tubessence** preamp for microphones ⑬ ("You can plug directly in there and go straight into the machine"), a **Behringer Composer** compressor ⑭, and a **Bellari Dual Tube** compressor/limiter ⑮. The band relied on the **Ashly Audio SC-66** stereo

parametric equalizer ⑯ back when they were still using a now packed-away Mackie CR 1604 board to record 1995's *Papas Fritas*, but haven't had to use it since they got the M-520. A pair of **Yamaha NS-10Ms** ⑰ serve as the main monitors, powered by an old **Harman/Kardon 330B** amp ⑱ that was handed down to Goddess from his father and subsequently knocked around a bit. "Someone knocked it over in a subway station when I set it down to get my change," is how Goddess tells the story. "But it still works and it gives off a really nice glow when it's on."

"We don't have much in terms of gear," Goddess admits, "so we approach getting sounds from a physical standpoint. If we want a deep drum sound we put T-shirts over the drums or tune the drums lower. Or say you don't want a real resonant sound on an acoustic guitar track, you just want to get the strumming sound: We do that by putting note cards over the sound hole and a towel around [cont'd on page 80]"

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