

1. I really loved the 2 releases you produced for Jeff Beck, *You Had It Coming* & *Jeff*. I thought they were very inspiring & progressive. Were there any particular artists or songs at the time that influenced you on the production?

Thanks, they are stand out records for me too in a 25 year career, particularly 'You had it Coming'. I was flattered to get the call from Jeff's management and after meeting him was inspired by his desire to create something fresh. I wasn't particularly interested in making records that only appealed to musicians so I decided on something more beat driven. Artists that inspired me at the time were Chemical Brothers, Fatboy slim and Leftfield.

2. How did the process go, were the guitar parts written in the studio or already laid out or did Jeff come in the studio & just improvise?

We started with some basic ideas but not much in the way of concrete themes. I employed a beats programmer called Aiden Love who was making beats that sounded like tracks in themselves. Both Jeff and I found them inspiring so I set up 10 minute stretches of the most developed part of the beat and we jammed to it. I played along with keyboards or bass lines primarily to keep Jeff playing or perhaps steer a change in mood. Over the course of up to 10 takes Jeff would often do something that he would get off on and then follow it up with stretches of real inspiration that would often make up large parts of the resulting composition. After this I would fastidiously trawl through the performances which were recorded straight to pro-tools. I had imaginary baskets which contained riffs, textures, rhythm parts and interesting bits of soloing. First I would loop up textures or rhythm beds into 2 or 4 bar repeats onto individual tracks. I would then mute them and look through the riffs choosing my favorite as the 'chorus' and then loop that. After this I would open up the textures or rhythm guitar loops underneath the riff until I found combinations that would go on to make up passages in the songs. Although this was time consuming and required a lot of focus I found it thoroughly absorbing and, of course, I was working with amazing bits of playing.

3. What microphones were used to record the guitar parts? You can be as detailed as possible with miking techniques and pre-amps as well as processors? Take us through a little bit of the recording process and the gear.

Jeff's technician arrived for the pre-production with a Marshall JCM 800 top, a 4x12 cabinet a Fender Stratocaster and a cry baby Wah pedal. We stuck the amp in the vocal booth of my programming room and stuck an SM57 in front of the cabinet about 2 inches from the middle. The mic was jammed at the other end into a Urei 1176 and from there straight into a Digidesign 888. I had a Mackie (I think SR32) desk through which we monitored 24 channels from the protools. It really wasn't much more complicated than that at any point. Jeff created a huge variety of sounds with different combinations of settings both from the guitar and on the JCM 800. He regularly did takes with the cry baby set to a static position which sounded really edgy and I had a habit of cranking the sh*t out of the Mackie desk eq's until it sounded like it does on the record. We often joked that Jeff would sound amazing playing a cheap supermarket guitar and to be honest I would say that may be not too far from the truth!

I had booked 2 weeks time in Metropolis studio A which housed a Focusrite desk and all the standard upmarket Studio Kit. We were to record Jeff's band in there and I anticipated a truck full of guitars, amps pedals etc. to arrive for this part of the project. When I turned up that morning I saw Jeff's technician arriving in a car only to reposition the JCM, 4x12 and Strat in the vocal booth of studio A. We recorded some valuable parts on those sessions but by and large the guitars were recorded back down in my programming room. The lead guitars for Nadia and Blackbird were recorded in Studio A and the sound was added to with the sound of the live room recorded on a Brauner VM1. The cabinet also had a Schoeps M221 series mic directed at it. Jeff however seemed to prefer the intimate environment of the programming room. He positioned himself about a yard away from the glass door to the vocal booth and, as the sound proofing was not particularly good, he could partially hear the sound from the amp with the door closed.

4. How did you accomplish your vision of getting the guitar tone recorded? Was this discussed with Jeff before hand or was it something that just came together in the studio?

Pretty much as above. It wasn't really a part of our conversation before we started working together, and, as it sounded great from the off, didn't really become a topic later. We were very much more concerned with what kind of music we wanted to make, the structure and form of the pieces. We were working at a phenomenal pace and didn't get too sidetracked with technical issues. About 5 weeks into the process Kaz (the A&R man from Epic records) flew over from LA and was totally blown away with what we were doing insisting that we didn't change anything. This was the just the impetus we needed, giving us the confidence to believe that what we were doing was special.

5. How do you go about getting the fat beefy rhythm crunch sound on songs like *Earthquake & Loose Cannon*? It sounds as if there are several layers of guitar? What's your process?

This is covered largely in question 2. I created the filter up section on Earthquake by utilising the input on the Waldorf Pulse synth. I also had a selection of Lovetone pedals (the Meatball, Big Cheese and Brown Sauce and also I think the Ringstinger ring modulator), which I fed some sounds through. The layering was very much a product of our system of editing loops of textures that Jeff played over the course of the day and combining them either with each other and also with our choice of riff. One thing that became very evident to me was how Jeff's technique created really unusual harmonics and resonances that were often almost impossible to replicate. Perhaps combinations of subtle vibrations and random cross resonances played a bigger part in this instance as we were looking for special parts that we repeated as opposed to long continuous performances.

6. Do you have a favorite can't-live-without guitar processor/effects that you used on the recordings?

On 'You had it Coming' it would have to be the Cry Baby and on 'Jeff' we used the 'Snarling Dog'. The Lovetone pedals played an occasional part but it was a very organic process.

7. On the beautiful song *Nadia*, did you program the drum n bass groove before hand & have Jeff play over it or were there multi musicians that came in after the basic guitar melody was laid down?

There was a different process for making this song as it is a cover of the Nitin Sawney track. I first worked out how Nitin had pieced together his version so that I could repeat the process with Jeff. Once I had the arrangement of melodies sketched out I made a beat with Aiden and added the inspiring chords from the original with my Roland JD800 keyboard. There was a degree of construction as we wanted to perfect the nuance of the singing on the guitar. Astonishingly Jeff played the piece immaculately live which is an incredible feat when all the quarter tones and modulations are taken into account. Pretty much all the rest of the arrangement was laid down by myself and Aiden in the programming room. We carried this process through to the piece 'Blackbird' which many people found inspiring, the bird song being even more complicated when you try and work it out in notation.

8. Anything you'd like to add, any guitar recording tips or advises?

Get to know your instrument! That is the most inspiring thing about Jeff, he knows his instrument inside out as well as being a highly accomplished musician. Making something good is often more about music than technique. In this instance it was also about challenging conventions. It is important to be original and I find that most of the recordings I get sent from guitar students are just copies of other guitarist's playing style. Whilst this is probably a good starting point in terms of technique, it won't get you noticed.