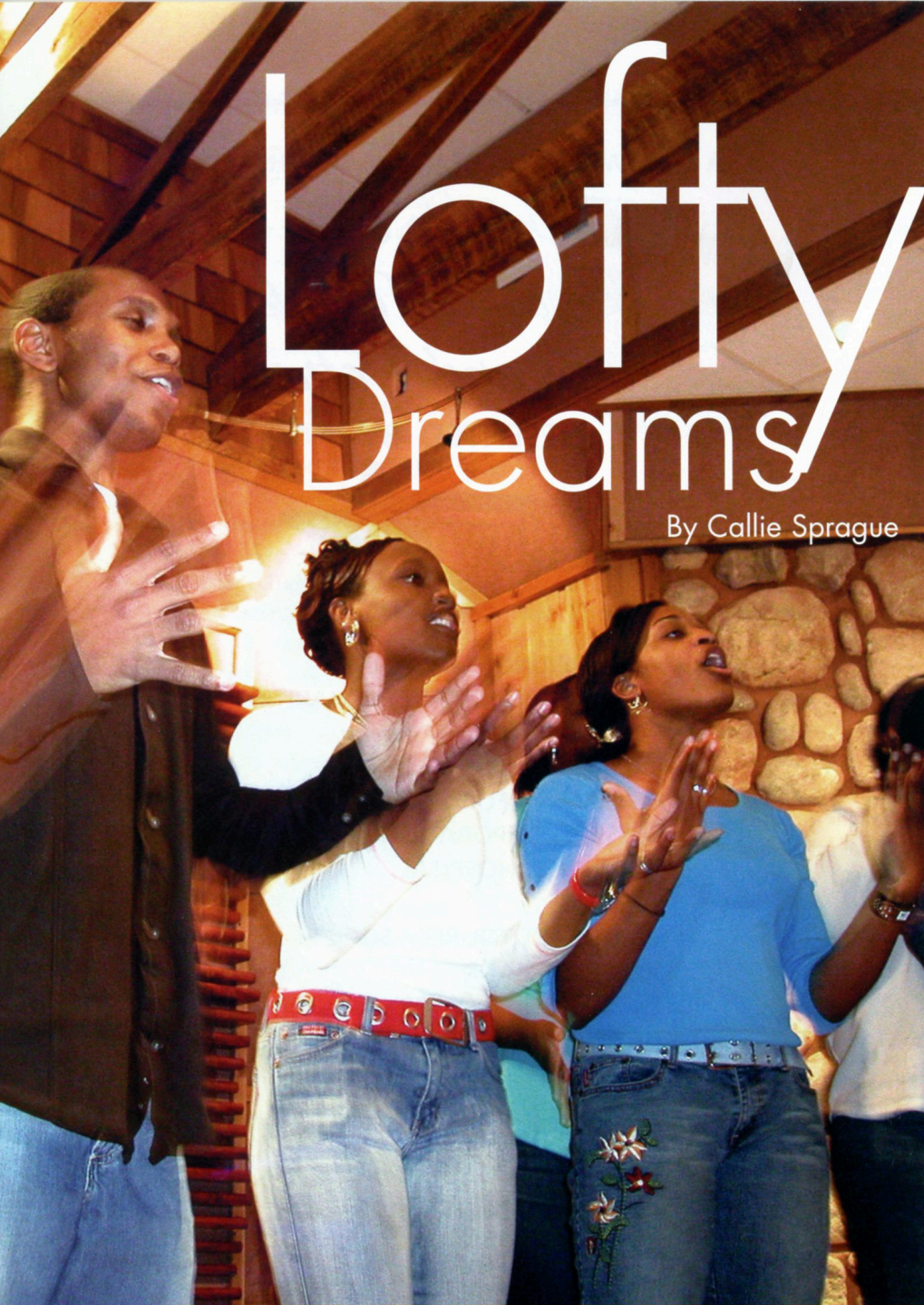


Lofty Dreams

By Callie Sprague



In fact, if you ask Jesse Deese, that dream will come true for Lauren Miller, Jen Woodhouse and Josh Becker. "I can play a voice for you right now that you will hear on the radio," Deese said, rushing to his console. As senior partner of The Loft Studio and mastermind of the project, Deese communicates through his sound board, letting the music recorded in his studio say what words just can't.

Miller's voice floats softly through the air. The music and words are her own and the sincerity is readily apparent in her tone. She sings, "And you are the stars to grace the horizon. And you are the everything I need," and as the emotion builds, her voice strengthens — still sweet and pure, but pleading now. More lyrical than Avril Levigne, the nuances in Miller's technique are comparable to a seasoned professional, but she is a Columbus High student of only 17. Her sensitivity to the lyrics and emotional vocal approach are astonishing for a teen-ager. As the song ends, Deese's eyes mist. He intimates that he can't listen to her song without tearing up, saying that a young girl has just poured out her soul for us to hear.

It is this passion for good music that drives Deese and his partners. Perched on the third floor of the Spencer building on Broadway in uptown Columbus, The Loft Studio borrows its name from the well-known performance venue, The Loft. Buddy Nelms, owner of The Loft Live, teamed up with Deese of Atlanta's VMG Studio and Joe McClure of the McClure Broadcast Group to build The Loft Studio which officially opened for business in January.

Ever dream of being a rock star?
Most of us have at one time or another.
But for a few lucky Columbusites,
that dream just might come true...

Above, Singers from LaGrange High School recording in The Loft Studio.



Owners Jesse Deese, Joe McClure and Buddy Nelms show off their newly completed studio.

From the street, electric-blue doors open to an imposing staircase, but the studio above exudes only warmth and serenity. Softly lit wood and stone walls create a soothing backdrop for the state-of-the-art control room. With high aspirations and sparing no expense, the trio equipped the studio with technological and musical features too numerous to list. From the Neve 8108 console to the hand-made, maple Cadeson drum kit and red-oak sound diffusers, every aspect of the studio represents top-notch quality.

Nelms first met Deese at The Loft in 1992 when he was booked as an act. "He started sponsoring some of our singer-songwriter shootouts," Nelms said. The winners received free recording time in Deese's Atlanta studio. "That's how the studio part of it started happening," he remembered. Deese recalled the first time they discussed recording in Columbus. "We were standing out in front of The Loft and I asked him if he ever thought about putting in a studio."

"We did a live recording one time for John Scott Evans and David Ragsdale and ended up selling a lot of the product and hit some of mainstream radio, so I knew the possibilities were there," Nelms said.

Both realized they shared a common vision, one which led to wiring the stage at The Loft Live directly to The Loft Studio to facilitate live recordings.

"We're all long term music industry people, and to be able to work in that industry is a dream come true," Nelms says. McClure revealed that his own music dreams motivated him to invest in the studio. "I'm at an age where I know I'm not going to be famous. But being involved with this studio gives me the chance to be a part of someone else becoming famous. That's exciting."

"Passion," Deese declared. "It can't be about the money, or it becomes all about greed." He and his partners built the studio on a foundation of love of good music and a belief that Columbus is poised to become a music city. And the three anticipate success.

McClure has a background in radio, and while he says his deep love of music drew him to the project, his position as financial backer requires a more pragmatic view. "With The Loft next door I knew we'd have good artists coming in," he said. "With the CSU music school downtown, I knew we'd have talented musicians nearby, and



Joal Rush recording in The Loft Studio.

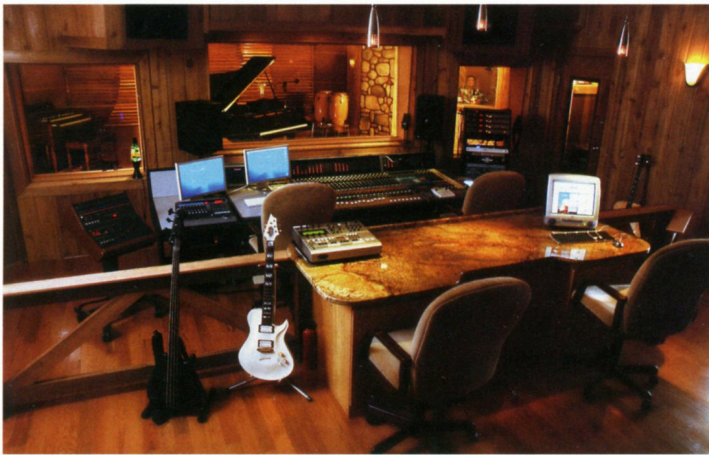
with all the live music up and down Broadway, it just seemed like this area was becoming a music center. Ultimately our goal is to help people make great music. If we do that, then I think we'll all make money along the way."

Sean Schoff, graphic designer and engineer, shares their view of Columbus' potential. "The only reason you would build a

*Our Roots
Run Deep In
Our Community*

Cable TV
—of East Alabama

334-298-7000



The Loft Studio control room equipped to compete with studios in Nashville, Atlanta or L.A.



A Yamaha concert grand piano stands in the large tracking room trimmed with cedar and Colorado River rock.

studio like this in a region that doesn't have it is because it needs it. And now this facility and everybody that is involved can give this area south of Atlanta a voice. You truly are giving this region a voice." He went on to say that the music coming from talented performers in this area is commercially viable. "Now it is our job to capture it and market it. If we can do those two things, then we can be successful."

Deese brought Schoff and engineer Kevin Knapke from the VMG Studio in Atlanta to Columbus to help run the studio. "Artist development," Deese said. "That's what we're about." He and his team plan to attract local artists and groom them for professional careers. "When you improve the business end of the music industry, you improve the quality of the music. We can cost-effectively, effi-

ciently develop them with the passion that brings us here as opposed to looking at them strictly as a product. Capitol Records can spend \$2 million on an artist. I think I can have the same impact for \$250,000," he claims.

A common misconception persists that all recording artists are rich. Few people realize that singers have to pay the record companies for studio time, voice coaching,

IRONIC, ISN'T IT? YOUR

CURRENT HEALTH PLAN

IS NOW HAZARDOUS

TO YOUR BOTTOM LINE.

Yes, employees deserve the best possible health plan. But the costs shouldn't raise your blood pressure. Evergreen, the local company, provides the best of both worlds: the unmatched care of local health care professionals, as well as an affordable monthly bill. Ask your insurance agent for a quote from Evergreen, or call us direct at 706/660-6175. We promise to help keep your bottom line in peak condition.



EHP AD04

studio musicians, photography, image development, video production and so on prior to becoming a star. Often artists incur serious debt before their first album is even released, and their careers fade soon after breaking even. Deese's team hopes to ready local artists prior to meeting with a major label. "We'll be talking to Capitol Records about marketing and distribution, period," he asserts. The artist will benefit from the more personal atmosphere of The Loft Studio and start a career with significantly less debt.

Jen Woodhouse may be one of The Loft Studio's first artists to launch a career. Woodhouse recently moved to Columbus from Oxford, Ala. to follow her music dreams. Her sound rivals that of Sheryl Crow or Alanis Morissette, but retains her unique quality.

Local talent Josh Becker and his band One Ton Teaspoon also show potential for greatness. Playing with incredible precision, his sophisticated music weaves strands of Steely Dan, the Allman Brothers and Parliament together in a single composition, defying categorization. "Josh is a big Tori Amos fan," Schoff revealed, "but he's definitely knee deep in Georgia clay." At times the familiar styles give way to a more modern sound, inspiring Schoff to dub it "Avant South."

Passion for the music can only take The Loft Studio so far, however. McClure often finds himself reminding his partners "that we are a business and we need paying customers." Fortunately, the group has varied skills and interests that they regularly employ to support the studio. "We're so diversified it is difficult to define who we are," Deese explained.

For example, his team utilizes the well-appointed studio to cater to the business world. "We are a commercial production facility. We can provide on a commercial level multi-media, audio, video, internet and web development." Although marketing materials and business presentations seem out of place in a music studio, the equipment works perfectly for both applications. In addition, Schoff's graphic design skills are put to use for commercial branding and logo design.

SongScope represents a music related money maker. "We developed an internet song-pitching application," Deese said. "We launched it in 1999 and it has been generating revenue and pitching songs ever since." Producers use SongScope to search

Columbus Museum
ART AND ANTIQUE SHOW

April 20-23, 2006

River Mill Antique & Design Centre
 3715 1st Avenue
 Columbus, Georgia

The Columbus Museum
 706.748.2562
www.columbusmuseum.com

Featuring over 30 nationally acclaimed antique dealers, regional artists, and Garden Designer P.Allen Smith

CHANGE YOUR MIND ... FOR GOOD

| Columbus, Georgia |

Discover...

Columbus State University's Coca-Cola Space Science Center, recently upgraded to become one of the most entertaining and hands-on educational science centers in the Southeast. Experience the universe like never before in full dome video. Still to come: the world's first public planetarium to Feature Digistar 3 LASER, the highest resolution single lens projection system in the world.

FIND OUT MORE AT:
WWW.CCSSC.ORG

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

for particular types of songs based on style, tempo, mood, etc. Rather than sift through hundreds of tapes or meet with a string of musicians face-to-face, producers can just enter their criteria and receive notification when songs match.

On the other end, song writers log in, pushing their songs via an online catalog. "Songwriters that otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity can get their stuff heard," Schoff said.

The producers can quickly look through the list, listening to as much or little as they like. The program has garnered them worldwide attention since it was the first of its kind. Several other companies have copied the model, but the original creators continue to make improvements. "We're developing a new version of it now that will do ipod streaming," Schoff reported.

Nelms sees progress in the few short months the studio has been open. "Our studio has become fairly busy already. We're having to block out time now to record live from the stage, which is a good thing," he said. Beginning March 1, The Loft Live's open mic nights will be recorded live. Nelms hopes this will encourage more Columbus talent to come forward.

"There is so much incredible talent here that the studio is in the right place at the right time. A lot of our [music] is coming from out of town, but the 'wow' stuff that we're getting is actually the people that live in our community and it's just exciting. I know we're on the right track when I see these artists in the studio. They get in there and two or three minutes later, their shoes come off. They are piled up on the couch and they get in the zone. That's when they can do their magic."

"There are going to be investment opportunities in this room with these artists," Deese said. "We have a world-class music studio that equates with L.A., Nashville or New York," McClure said with confidence. Again, Deese speaks through the console, playing an excerpt of Miller's song. "Breathtaking, stunning — you can say these things to someone, but they won't get it. You have to hear it." The partners are planning an open house on March 22 to invite local business leaders to see the studio and hear some of the music being produced first-hand. "The opportunities are definitely there for people who are interested in Columbus and the area and who are drawn to the studio," Deese added.

"Give us a call. We'll give you a tour."

He believes Columbus possesses enough energy and interest in music to support the industry. "We were in Atlanta. Atlanta happened. Columbus hasn't happened yet. We're ahead of the curve." He thinks the music industry will soon discover the wealth of talent in the area, due in part to The Loft Studio's presence. Deese has three simple goals for the studio and its music. "Gold, Platinum, Grammy. That's where we are headed. We want to make something happen.

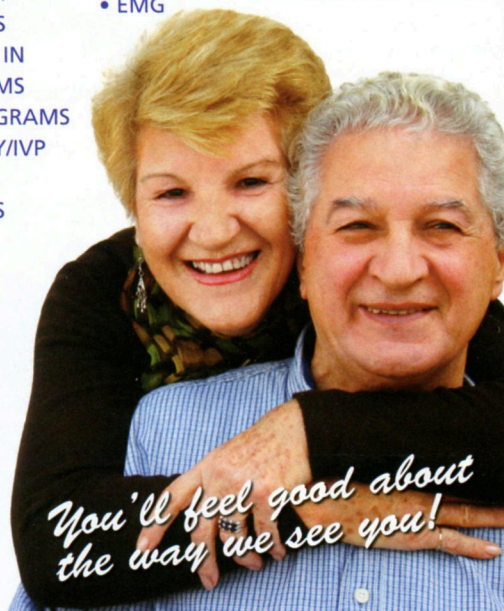
"Atlanta is urban, hip-hop. Not taking anything away from that, but that is not what we do. We're working on our own identity." Deese describes The Loft Studio as "acoustic, using real string sections, real horn sections, real choirs, not synthesized, sampled, fabricated music." The intimate music of singer-songwriters, the soul-lifting praises of gospel choirs, the inspirational lyrics of contemporary Christian groups. These are the sounds which will pour forth from Deese's console. These are the styles that will set the Columbus music scene apart from its neighbors. He puts it simply. "It ain't Atlanta or Nashville. It's Columbus." **C**

EARLY DETECTION IS EVERYTHING...

- OPEN MRI
- HI FIELD MRI (NON-CLAUSTROPHOBIC)
- MULTI-SLICE CT
- ULTRASOUNDS
- X-RAYS WALK IN
- MAMMOGRAMS
- ECHOCARDIOGRAMS
- FLUOROSCOPY/IVP
- EKG
- MYELOGRAMS
- VASCULAR STUDIES
- BONE DENSITY SCAN
- HOLTER MONITORS
- EMG



COLUMBUS
DIAGNOSTIC
CENTER



*You'll feel good about
the way we see you!*

2040 10th Ave. Columbus, Ga 31901
706.322.3000

PASSION WEEK Two Unique Services

TENEBRAE

Remembering Christ's Sacrifice

April 14th 8 - 9 pm

Good Friday

EASTER SERVICES

Resurrection Celebration

April 16th

8:45 am and 11:00 am

EVANGEL TEMPLE
5350 Veterans Parkway
706- 323-1876

www.evangeltempleonline.com

