Pro

"The more time it takes to create something, the less likely you are to create something. With GarageBand, I can lay out a song in minutes."

Patrick Stump of Fall Out Boy composes smash hits using GarageBand during the fleeting moments before a live show.

Fall Out Boy: Out of the Garage

By Dustin Driver

You'd expect an international super band like Fall Out Boy to write all its music in a massive audio laboratory, a studio crammed with enough gadgetry to make the guys at NASA jealous. But that couldn't be further from the truth. Fall Out Boy cooks up multi-platinum hits with GarageBand and a few MacBook Pros. The band's lead singer and rhythm guitarist, Fall Out Boy, composes and records his demos almost exclusively with GarageBand. In fact, most of the band's chart-smashing hits were written on his MacBook Pro using a combination of GarageBand software instruments and live recordings. And if that wasn't enough, Stump also uses GarageBand to compose for other groups, including Cobra Starship and Gym Class Heroes. In every case, his tracks only hit pro studios for finishing touches and polishing. GarageBand is Stump's main means for making music.

"I jokingly say that GarageBand is my main instrument," he says, "but honestly GarageBand is pretty all-consuming for me. I can't remember the last time I watched a really good movie or played a video game. I pretty much play with GarageBand." It's an obsession that has spawned a gaggle of mega hits and has made Stump one of the most prolific composers in the business. "The beauty of GarageBand is that it's only limited by what you want to do with it," he says. "Ultimately, you can do anything. It's a sequencer and you can record and edit audio. And it runs on my laptop. I've composed and recorded on the plane, on the bullet train in Japan. It's made me so much more prolific because I don't have to think about where and when I can record or write music. I can do it anywhere."

Precocious Play

Stump didn't always use GarageBand. Like a lot of musicians, he laid down his first grooves on an archaic four-track tape deck. But it wasn't long before he made the leap to digital recording and MIDI sequencing. "One day I found myself trying to record with my old system," he says. "Everything was

Mobile Hit Making

Today Stump uses GarageBand primarily on the road. His 17-inch MacBook Pro and GarageBand have replaced a heap of outboard gear. "With Pro Tools I had a suitcase full of stuff that I carried around," he says. "I had an MBox, a drum machine, tons of stuff. Now with GarageBand I only really need my MacBook." The composer barely uses MIDI controllers or keyboards while he's traveling. "I just use Musical Typing because essentially all you need is your laptop," he says. Using his MacBook's keyboard isn't limiting. In fact, watching Stump compose with GarageBand and Musical Typing is a lot like watching a jazz musician freeform a solo. He pounds out beats, bass lines and choruses in minutes with virtually no interference between his ideas and his music.
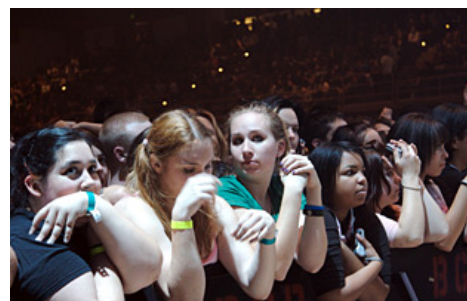
"I can just play using the MacBook's keyboard," he says. "It's not completely perfect, but I can use the Enhance Timing feature in GarageBand to quantize and line everything up after I play it. In the end it's just like I played it using a MIDI keyboard." Stump can modify his MIDI input in a flash, extending the duration of keyboard hits and duplicating parts to beef up his sound using GarageBand's intuitive interface. He's so quick that he was able to produce Cobra Starship's record while he was on tour.

"Somehow somebody got me to do preproduction on the road with Cobra Starship while we were touring with them," he says. "In retrospect it was kind of a bad idea, but we pulled it off. We were on laptops, bouncing back and fourth. I was able to use the moments before and between the shows to write stuff with GarageBand." Cobra Starship's album was penned almost exclusively on the road during the tour. "Likewise, Stump produced many songs for Gym Class Heroes while touring the country."

Creative Sprint

Speed is the key to being prolific, especially when you're short on time like Stump. "Speed is absolutely

Gallery

Fall Out Boy fans eagerly await the show. Photos by Dustin Driver.

Playlist

Listen to Fall Out Boy on iTunes

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When you compose with a computer, you're bound to end up with bits that can't easily be reproduced during a live show. To ensure fans hear all the nuances live, Fall Out Boy exports parts out of GarageBand. "I bounce a stereo track, one side with the elements we need and the other side with just a click," says Stump. "In some shows we actually play that track on an iPod, just plug it right into the board."

plugged in and should've been working, but it gave me a communication error. I got like a cave man and got so mad at it. I was completely fed up. I'm not an engineer, I'm not a computer whiz. I don't know anything about electronics. All I know is that I want this thing to make noise, I want to write music, and it's not working. I had been messing around with GarageBand for fun and I just started using it."

It was a match made in heaven. Within a few hours Stump was composing and recording with GarageBand, without any communication errors. "I started by cutting up the built-in loops, making hip-hop beats out of other beats," he says. "Then I really got into using MIDI and software instruments to write music and that's primarily how I compose today."

Learning GarageBand was quick, intuitive and just plain easy for Stump. "I think that musicians like playing around with musical things even if they're not really good at it," he says. "I mean, if I had a piccolo in front of me I would probably figure out how to play 'Hot Cross Buns' or something. So the first thing I did when I got a Mac was play around with GarageBand. Then I quickly realized that it's not just a toy program, it can do everything. There's really no reason not to use it."

key to creativity," he says. "The more time it takes to create something, the less likely you are to create something. With GarageBand, I can lay out a song in minutes. Because I can do that, it frees me up to think about my music creatively rather than having to deal with communication errors or technical issues."

That speed has allowed Stump to work with a multitude of artists, including Cobra Starship, Gym Class Heroes, Lupe Fiasco, Timbaland, Newfound Glory and Ghostface Killah. In many of those cases, he was able to export tracks out of GarageBand and email them to his collaborators. "I can just bounce a track out as an AIFF and send it to studios or wherever," he says. "And a lot of times those original files will end up on albums without much adjustment. It's really amazing that you can do all that with a program that just comes with your Mac."

Fall Out Boy fans can expect even more polished pop rock from the multi-platinum group as well as hip-hop/soul joints from Stump and his collaborators. "I'm making more music than I ever have before and I don't think I'll be slowing down at all," he says. "All I need are GarageBand and a Mac and I can write all day."

Amplified

There's nothing quite like the sound that comes out of an old Fender tube amp. But tube amps are cumbersome to say the least and it's just impractical to haul around more than a few when you're on tour. To get the vintage sounds they're after, Stump and Fall Out Boy guitarist Joe Trohman turn to GarageBand guitar amp simulators. "We both use the guitar amps in GarageBand a lot when we're writing demos," says Stump. "They sound great and they allow us to get the effects we're looking for. And in some cases, our GarageBand guitar recordings have made it to records."

Equipment List

- MacBook Pro
- GarageBand
- Apogee Duet Audio Interface

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