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GUEST EDITOR:**

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discusses selling  
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BEST OF BOTH WORLDS:

# NATHANIEL

# KUNKEL

The busy engineer records Graham Nash in multichannel and remixes James Taylor's classic album *JT* for 5.1.

AUGUST 2002

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*Songs For Survivors*, the latest solo project by Graham Nash, has the distinction of being the first album to be released by a major artist in the DVD-Audio format in advance of a stereo-only version. Initially released in April by DTS Entertainment on DVD-A in 48 kHz/24 bit 5.1 and stereo, as well as DTS 5.1, *Songs For Survivors* is now also available on stereo CD through Artemis Records.

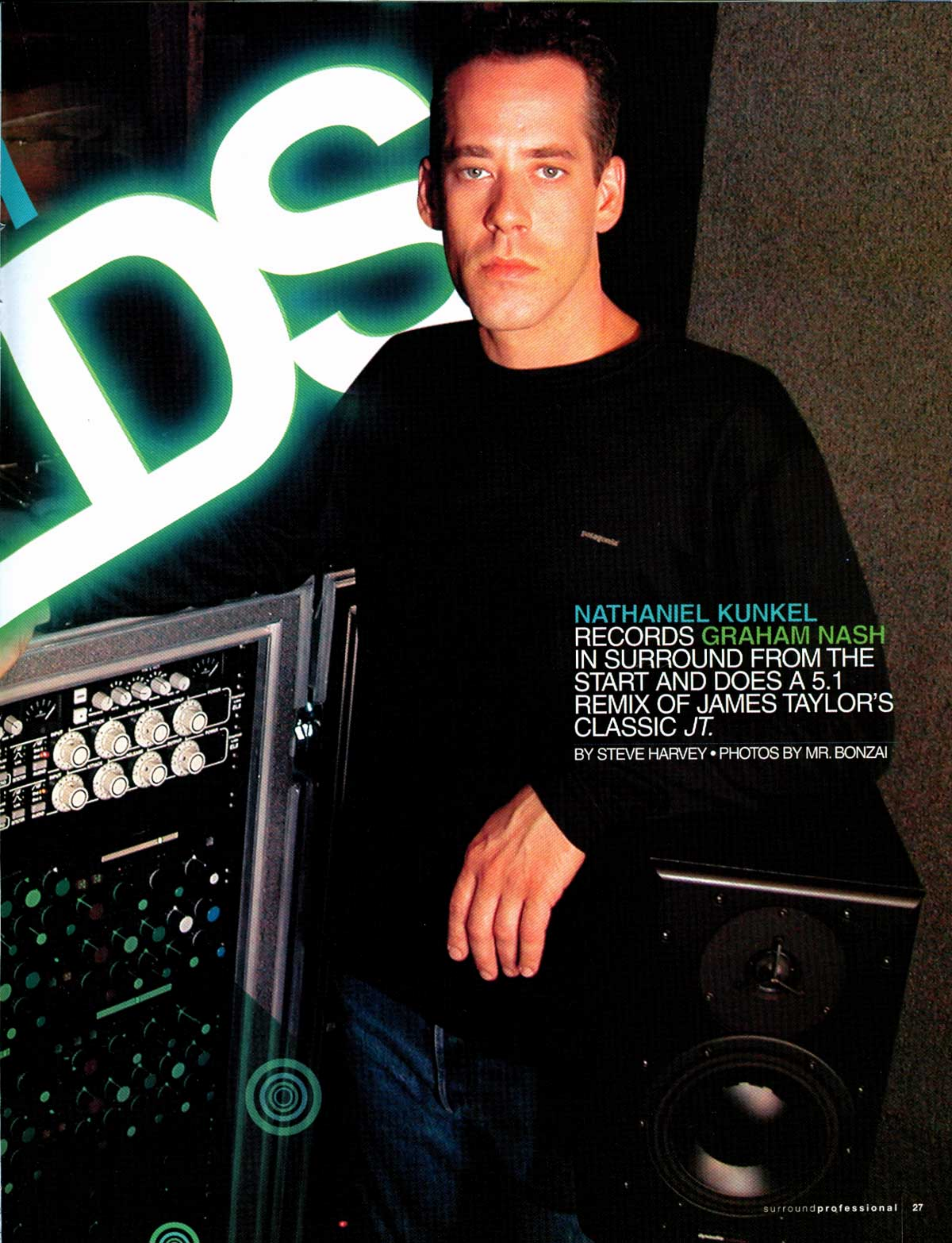
The first solo release from Nash since 1986, *Songs For Survivors* is the singer/songwriter's fourth in total since 1971's *Songs For Beginners*, released when Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young were arguably at their peak. This latest album was co-produced, recorded, mixed, and mastered by Nathaniel Kunkel, whose father, Russell, not only shared the producer's seat, but also sat behind the drums on the project.

The choice of production team continues a familial association with Nash that began when the elder Kunkel, a stalwart session drummer who has recorded and performed with top artists such as James Taylor and Jackson Browne, played on a 1972 Crosby and Nash album.

Nathaniel Kunkel, who learned his craft working with such masters as George Massenburg and Lovett, Little Feat, Bon Jovi, and Billy Joel, also teamed-up







**NATHANIEL KUNKEL**  
RECORDS **GRAHAM NASH**  
IN SURROUND FROM THE  
START AND DOES A 5.1  
REMIX OF JAMES TAYLOR'S  
CLASSIC *JT*.

BY STEVE HARVEY • PHOTOS BY MR. BONZAI



# BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

with Nash last year to remix *Songs For Beginners*, their first 5.1 project together. Although not yet released in that format, a stereo version appeared on Classic Records vinyl in October 2001.

Further continuing the family connection, Nathaniel Kunkel was also recently involved with the 5.1 remix of James Taylor's *JT* album, originally released in 1977 on Columbia. The album, coincidentally, also features the senior Kunkel on drums and Graham Nash on backing vocals. *JT* is being re-released in mid-August on Super Audio CD.

Very particular about his choice of audio tools, Kunkel relates, "I've been mixing in 5.1 entirely on the Sony DMX-R100 console. I absolutely love it. When I

run out of channels I just get two [consoles]. Depending on the technology, I'm either using the dB Technologies Blue converters or the Pacific Microsonics HDCD Model 2. For stereo, I monitor exclusively on Mastering Lab Tannoys, and for 5.1 stuff I've been using the Dynaudio BM-6's."

Kunkel has also included an equipment list on *Songs For Survivors'* liner notes: "All signals were recorded through Class A discrete circuitry and always bypassed as many stages of amplification as possible. Microphone preamplifiers included GML and API, and GML EQs and limiters were used exclusively.



Microphone preamps were, whenever possible, placed right next to the mic stand. The recording also employed Cello and Wire World high-resolution cables. The very best of all possible microphones were chosen for each instrument."

At least one reviewer has written that *Songs For Survivors* was obviously crafted with multichannel playback in mind but, according to Kunkel, that was not strictly the case. "The intention from the very beginning was to make a stereo album," he says. "We mixed the entire album in stereo in Hawaii before we started it in 5.1."

Explains Kunkel, "When we started the record, Graham didn't have a deal. Rory Kaplan at DTS Entertainment, a friend of mine for many years, had always said that if I had anything going on in 5.1 to give him a call. Rory loved the project and was willing to make the concessions that he needed to, because Graham felt very strongly about going with a different label for the stereo release.

"The relationship that we had with DTS was so positive that they ended up getting the release out before Artemis got the record out. It wasn't a conscious decision, we just had such a great time working with the people at DTS."

Nash's Hawaiian home studio was originally intended only for writing but, says Kunkel, "We built it, looked at each other, and said, 'We could mix here.'" With *Songs for Beginners* completed, the pair turned their attention to the new album. "The 'Chelsea Hotel' mix on *Songs For Survivors* is the first 5.1 mix we did on the album."

Asked to explain his 5.1 mixing philosophy for *Songs For Survivors*, Kunkel says modestly, "I wish I could tell you what I did. All I did was sit there and make it feel good. I moved things around; some things are coming from behind you, some things aren't. Since I

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## BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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was also the co-producer, Graham gave me a lot of free reign."

Reiterating a comment that he has made in previous interviews, he adds, "The only thing I can tell you is that there are no rules. With stereo mixing you're locked into this over-compressed thing that has become the vibe for stereo mixes for the radio. People are really used to it. It's not that it's bad or good; you need to give people what they're used to. People are used to sitting at a 5.1 system and listening to a DVD-A that's incredibly dynamic and extended and enveloping, and that is so much fun, to have the listener expect that. It really makes providing it worthwhile."

According to Kunkel, the 5.1 mixes on *Songs For Survivors* feature little that could be considered unusual: "The drums are in front, the drum 'rooms' are behind, then I would just spread out the rhythm section in front of me and off to the side. Guitars on the left will be pulled into the left surround, and guitars on the right will be pulled into the right surrounds, to wrap them around you a bit.

"If there was some type of statement where something really needed to be separated, I'd put it behind you. Every duet vocal comes from behind you on Graham's album. There's a David Crosby vocal and also a Sydney Forest vocal that are entirely in the back."

A review of *Songs For Survivors* noted that "bass extension is downright startling," especially on the track "Liar's Nightmare." "I don't mix with bass management," responds Kunkel. "I'm one of those people that firmly believes that all frequencies should all come out of every speaker. Call me kooky, that being the [DVD-A] spec and all!"

He credits musician Viktor Krause for much of that sound. "He is one of the most stunning upright bass players I have ever heard or had the pleasure of recording in my life. The extension on his bass is downright startling. On that record, when he goes down and he's in every speaker and the subwoofer, you've got as much bass as you can have."

Kunkel reports that, on the remix of Taylor's *JT*, he was pleased to find himself working again with the album's original producer, Peter Asher. "Peter and I have worked together for many years. When I spoke with James about mixing the record, I

asked if Peter was going to be involved with this. One of the greatest problems I have with these remixes is that the original producers aren't getting involved, and the intent that they had with the record isn't always making it across."

After a brief initial consultation, says Kunkel, Asher entrusted him with the remixes. "I did all my work with Peter in three days. We started with Peter coming down. We pushed all the songs up and looked at what all the comps were, if there were some undocumented things that were done during the mix that didn't make it onto the documentation.

"Then we had a short discussion about how we were going to spread it out. It was important for Peter not to have this be a very gimmicky 5.1, to have the 5.1 enhance what was already there. In a lot of ways, some of the 5.1

[mixes] consist of a stereo mix in front of you and stereo mix behind you."

*JT* was originally a 24-track, 2-inch Dolby A tape and came to Kunkel as a high-resolution Pro Tools file. "I mixed from that, then played it through the HDCD converters." Following Kunkel's usual practice, also utilized with Nash's project, the final mix was upsampled to 192 kHz and printed to analog.

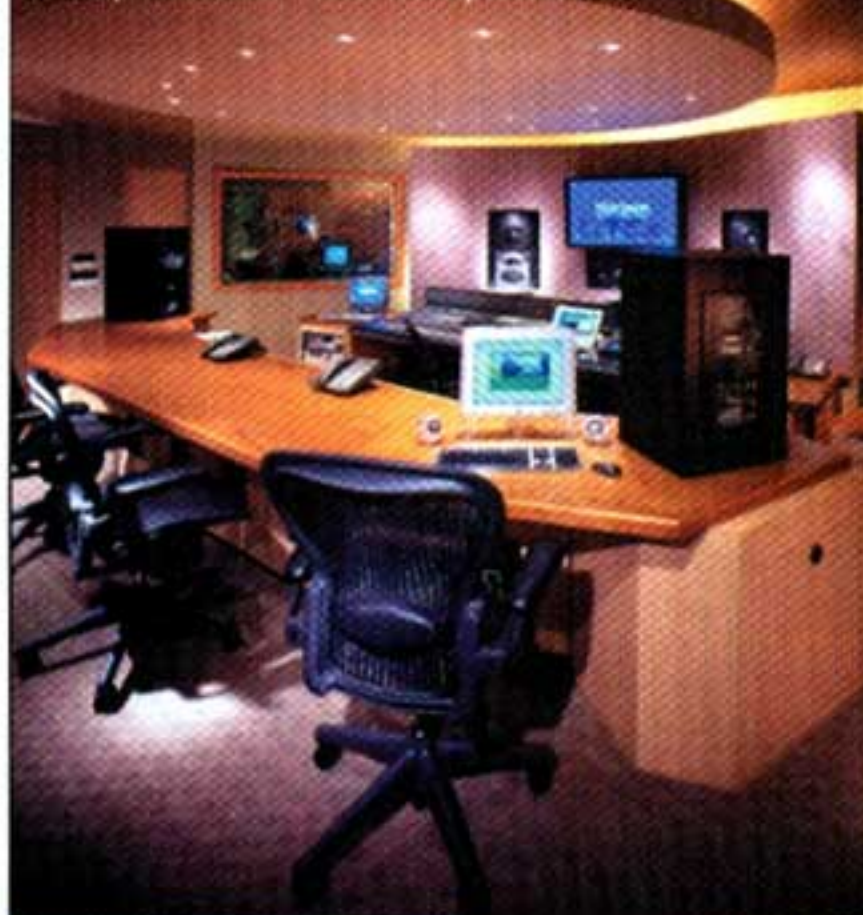
"It was important for us to be very true to the intent and feeling of the original album," says Kunkel of *JT*'s 5.1 remix. "It's really much more of an exaggerated stereo, a performance that happens in front of you that wraps all around you. When we were doing quad stuff it was really things like a strings pass that was double, perfect for quad. That was really the doing of Peter Asher. I'm quite happy with it — it's very enveloping." ■

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