

EM Editor's Note: Studio Power in Your Hand

BY MIKE LEVINE
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Researching this month's feature on Apple iPhone/iPod touch music apps was quite an experience. Sometimes it felt like I was trying to hit a moving target. Just when I thought I had a handle on the music apps that were available, more would appear in the iTunes Store. From instrument emulations to recorders to programmable beatboxes to utilities and much more, the breadth of software available is pretty astonishing. So is the variety of developers, ranging from established music software companies to individual

programmers.

Although the current generation of apps is unlikely to revolutionize music production, these programs do offer hints at the potential for producing, performing, and recording music with a handheld device, which is sure to improve as the technology is refined. I love the idea that in my phone, which is with me at all times, I now have a tuner, a metronome, a decibel meter, and an audio recorder for capturing ideas and rehearsals. But that's not all. I also have several apps that offer emulations of classic drum machines, a 4-track recorder, a controller for my DAW, and a loop-based workstation that gives me sampling, editing, and sequencing abilities, and lets me transfer the files wirelessly to my computer. Even better, most of these apps cost under \$10 each.

If you had told me ten years ago that I'd be

able to carry all that power in a device that fits in the palm of my hand, I might have thought that you'd been watching too many reruns of ***The Jetsons***, or at least that you were overly optimistic. But at the rate things are going, it's possible that in a few years, our phones will offer the same recording power that we have now in our laptops.

When doing the interview with Scott Kirkland and Ken Jordan of The Crystal Method for this month's cover story, I had the opportunity to visit Crystalwerks, their shiny new studio complex in L.A. (Please check out the video tour of Crystalwerks on emusician.com.) It was fascinating to contrast this beautifully designed space with what they told me about their previous studio, The Bomb Shelter. Although they had more vintage synths and cool gear in their old setup than most of us will ever have access to, they had to deal with

issues such as poor ventilation, lack of air conditioning, not enough room to properly place studio monitors, and the necessity to put overdubbing musicians in the kitchen.

Those of us who record at home can relate to those problems because we've all had to deal, to one extent or another, with the limitations of producing music in an improvised setup. Such obstacles as lack of space, funky acoustics, outside noises, and so forth all go with the territory. Like Jordan and Kirkland did so successfully in *The Bomb Shelter*, we all strive to make up for such deficiencies with ingenuity, engineering skill, and determination.