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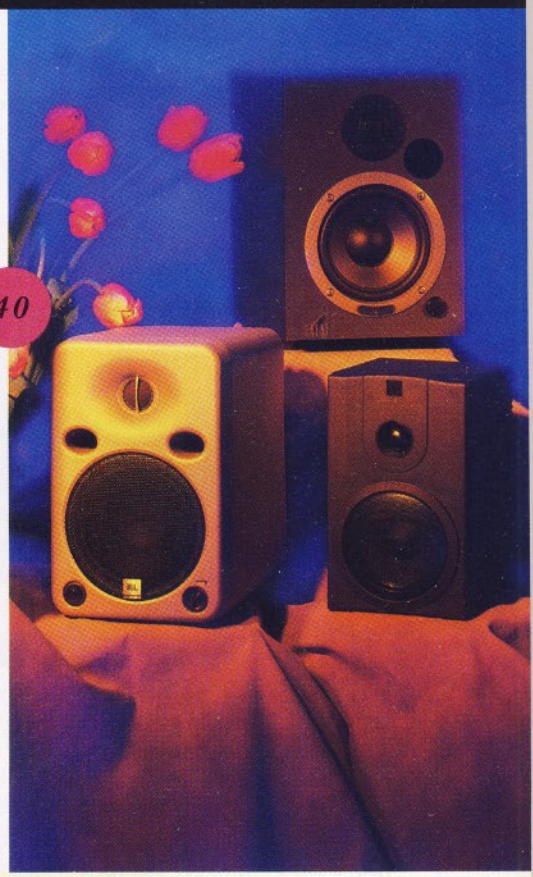

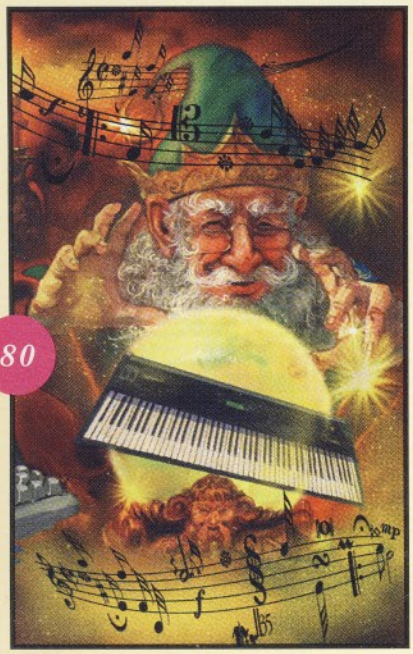

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PRO FILE

By Rick Weldon

Love Is a Warm PC

Meg Lee Chin gets things done in her London flat.

Meg Lee Chin is an American musician currently living in London. For her dance record *Piece and Love* (Invisible Records, 1999), she mixed the beats with streamlined, memorable pop hooks. The music is aimed at the dance floor, but *Piece and Love* originated on Chin's home computer.

"Egg Studios is in my living room," she says. "It's basically a PC that I built, a Pentium II/333 MHz running Steinberg's *Cubase VST*. I swipe drum loops from sample CDs, and I flesh out the other parts with [Sonic Foundry's] *Acid* and [D-Lusion's] *Rubber Ducky*. *Rubber Ducky* is a really simple program that generates bass sounds. While I'm working, I have the program randomize bass lines, and I grab the little bits that sound nice and hooky. I usually import them into [Steinberg's] *Wavelab*, loop them, and put them into a song. On 'Deeper,' for instance, I used a bass line that *Rubber Ducky* created in its Randomize mode." Most of *Piece and Love* is similarly PC based.

Much dance music is the product of the audio tweaker's quest for the perfect original sound, but Chin often relies on immediately usable sounds. She remarks, "Presets are often pretty good. The people making them usually go to the trouble of getting them to sound fairly decent. I know a lot of people reckon that they're better engineers than the people who do presets. But my feeling is that you can use them and get on with making music, or you can spend loads of time messing around, customizing every single thing.

"I like the presets on keyboards, as well," Chin adds. "My friends sometimes say to me, 'Meg, you really ought to learn how to program synths.' When do I have the time for that? I'm writing, I'm playing, and I'm doing video on my computer as well. When do I have time to design my own synth sounds? Why not just quickly get something that sounds good?"

Chin relies on what's at hand to flesh out her songs, but the songs' structures are hardly the product of a formulaic approach. "I'm Miss Versatile—I can do anything," she states emphatically. "A popular Japanese book, *The Book of Rings*, says, 'Never get used to the same weapon,' meaning that you shouldn't always approach things the same way. When I write songs, I can work with a general idea, a melody, a vocal line, someone else's lyrics, someone else's voice, a guitar riff, a breakbeat, a bass line—nearly anything."

Chin feels that she has grown as an artist by kicking the habit of using gadgets and program features to fix problem takes. "When I first got *Cubase*," she says, "I spent about six months kicking the notes around in MIDI by little increments. It was that long before the lightbulb finally went on in my head, and I thought, 'Well, screw this. I'll just do the take over.'

"That's a typical beginner's attitude: trying to fix something with a function key instead of getting a good take. For the same reason, I won't use [Antares's] *Auto-Tune* to fix an out-of-tune vocal. Trying that is usually more trouble than it's worth. It's easier to just redo a track if it's not right."

That approach was helpful in the making of *Piece and Love*; nonetheless, Chin has found that technology can be quite a seductress when it comes to achieving artistic perfection. "Okay, I'll admit it," she adds. "I nudge vocals to make them fit with the beats. I don't *Auto-Tune* them, but I nudge them."

For more information, contact Invisible Records; e-mail egg@yolk.demon.co.uk; Web www.invisiblerecords.com.

***Piece and Love*/Meg Lee Chin**