

Alon

and the Alonomorphic Control Station

AS MUSICAL TECHNOLOGY evolves and automation becomes a staple of digital performance, more artists are doing one-man-band shows using delay pedals and loops to create their own rhythm section or add depth to their solo sound. Pennsylvania-based indie artist Alon has gone to great lengths to customize his unique performance and enlisted engineer Chris Gately to design the "Alonomorphic Control Station" (or ACS), a powerful collection of performance devices strung together in a pointedly original configuration. Acoustic guitar and voice are Alon's instruments of choice, but to hear his songs on record or on stage is the farthest thing from a conventional singer-songwriter experience. Alon has many "sounds" as a result of the ACS. The textures are otherworldly and often soaked in echoes and harmonics that create the impression of a guitar choir, a synthetic orchestra or a multi-timbred harp.

Some of Alon's material is very atmospheric and almost wholly instrumental, while other pieces clearly follow a traditional song format, with up-front vocals. He plays some songs that have lush and thought-provoking New Age arrangements, and others that seem fueled by the spirit of hard-edged industrial music. His CDs reveal this duality as well. 2002's *Persian Butterfly* is a beautiful portrait of Alon's more compositional sounds. The focus of *Butterfly* is on his guitar and the **Eventide Ultra-Harmonizer H3000SE**, with its rich accompaniment. His just-released 2005 effort, *The Artist Manifesto: Document 1*, is a short collection of songs featuring full-band performances, lyrics and vocals. "On this new disc," Alon explains, "we actually did the whole project on a laptop: a **Mac Powerbook G4**." Tracking and mixing entirely with **MOTU's Digital Performer** and **828mkII FireWire** audio interface, Alon and the team at Pennsylvania's Great Egg Studio bred instrumental performances with electronic production and programming. Despite the control available with software plug-ins, the ACS is not lacking on the album, defining with its fireworks the very sound that makes Alon's music what it is.

The heart of the ACS is **Yamaha's O1V** digital mixing console, from which Alon recalls scenes with his custom built MIDI control pedal board. The board's transport pedal can also trigger backing tracks from the **Sony CDP-D11** CD player. A **Roland DEP-5** digital effects rack accompanies the Ultra-



Harmonizer, and in conjunction with the **O1V**, they create wild soundscapes. For lead vocals, a **Crown CM-311AE** wireless headset allows hands-free, consistent proximity and a **Shure Beta 87A** on a stand serves as a backing vocal or "effects" mic. Its channel is usually rife with cascading delays and harmonies, activated with the scene recall triggered by his feet, like the other presets. In addition to vocals,

Alon might just strike the mic occasionally, triggering rhythmic sound effects. "I use that mic stand for an effects mic with huge reverb or a funky delay to augment what I'm doing vocally."

He alternates among picking, strumming and **E-Bow**-ing his guitars, a **Gibson WM-10** and a **Guild D212CH** twelve-string. Each instrument has mute and routing switches on the pedal board, allowing for quick tuning with his **Korg DTS-1000** digital tuner. Alon is endorsed by **Morley** pedals and uses a **PVO Series** volume pedal for routing signals to processors, as well as **BOSS DD-6 Digital Delay** and **MT-2 Metal Zone** effects pedals. And if all this audio trickery isn't enough to captivate your senses, the Alonomorphic Control Station will be growing in the months to come. "We're going to be expanding the ACS to include a rack-mounted **Mac G5** that will control the MIDI implementation, and about a year from now we'll have added a light show."

Alon's carousel of swirling guitars and effects may someday be a full-on multimedia experience, but for now, the maestro always tries to blend his pieces into each other like a multi-movement concert work, in preparation for the day when his show becomes exactly that. ■

