



Man behind the music

Music producer David Ivory adjusts a drum machine during a recording session with rock group Halestorm. In the background lead singer Liz Hale tunes up with guitarist Joe Huttering. Halestorm expects to sign a record deal with Disney's Hollywood Records label. Ivory has worked on many noteworthy projects, including Erykah Badu's triple-platinum "Baduizm" and Patti LaBelle's "Gems."

Area studio owner helps others record hits

David Ivory mixes sounds and grooms artists for success

By BRIAN BINGAMAN
Staff Writer

Gwynedd Valley may seem like a strange place to put a recording studio, but it makes perfect sense in the case of David Ivory's Dylanava Studios (a combination of his children's names, Dylan, Lana and Ava).

"I'm lucky to get up every day and make music," said the 47-year-old Ivory.

In 1999, the same year he engineered The Roots' Grammy-nominated (for Best Rap Album) "Things Fall Apart," Ivory, who grew up in Zieglerville, and his family moved from Philadelphia to Lower Gwynedd and converted a two-car garage on the property into a working recording studio.

Within walking distance of the Ambler train station, the location is accessible for musicians from Philadelphia or New York, Ivory

said. And they have good reason to travel from the cities to record albums and demos there. Ivory has built a name for himself with engineering credits on Erykah Badu's triple-platinum "Baduizm" and Patti LaBelle's gold-selling "Gems" disc.

Those releases were recorded at Philadelphia's Sigma Studios, where Ivory worked as an independent producer renting space from the studio.

On the Web:

www.ivoryproductions.com

Ivory also has producer and engineer credits on R&B group Kindred the Family Soul's debut CD "Surrender to Love," which made number eight on USA TODAY'S top albums of 2003 list.

He said that portions of the songs he worked on were done at Dylanava (pronounced dill-LON-ivah) Studios, which houses hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment, a combination of "old, old stuff and the cutting edge."

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Photos by Geoff Patton/Staff Photographer
Above, David Ivory adjusts levels on a sound board during a recording session. At left, Liz Hale and Joe Huttering of Halestorm warm up before cutting a recording at Dylanava's relaxation space known as the Vinyl Room.



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Another thing that makes the studio's location unusual is a remodeled smokehouse on the property that serves as a lounge, dubbed the "Vinyl Room" because it houses a large record collection.

Involved in the music business since his early 20s, Ivory takes pride in producing up-and-coming artists whose sounds he grooms for success.

The York band Halestorm, who according to Ivory is on the verge of a recording deal with Disney's Hollywood Records label, recently cut a five-song demo at Dylanava.

Other new artists Ivory is working with that he thinks show great promise are Doylestown singer/songwriter James Harvey, Philly rock band Silvertide, Philly rapper Baldwin, singer Carla Gio and the Australian folk trio Fruit.

"In Philadelphia, if you're going to make a good living, you've got to do ... a lot of different styles," he said.

Factors that Ivory considers before recording a new artist are commitment, talent, knowledge of how the music business works and willingness to take criticism.

"A lot of bands aren't good bands when they wake up. The best bands become good bands over time," he said, adding that he often makes arrangement suggestions to the artists he works with in order to polish the music product.

Ivory said he takes an artist-friendly approach and doesn't charge by the hour.

"Here, you can do what you want and not worry about other people waiting in the hall (to use the studio). If you



Geoff Patton/Staff Photographer
Recording studio owner David Ivory works a sound board during a recording session.

can't make a great record in this building, you have a lot of problems," he said.

One music business notable that frequents Dylanava is Ivory's friend Walter "Bunny" Sigler, who penned songs for a long list of '60s and '70s soul and disco acts, and more recently, OutKast, plus Nelly's hit "Dilemma."

"He comes here all the time," Ivory said of Sigler.

A songwriter himself, Ivory wrote a song with Sigler called "Nobody Else

for Me" for an upcoming Patti LaBelle album that Ivory is producing basic tracks for at Dylanava.

"Song-writing is essential in the success of every successful artist. It's the one thing you can't get around," he said.

The year 2004 looks like it will be an active year for the producer.

"There's lots of things bubbling. You would never imagine all of the things happening here," said Ivory.