

BRIAN MONCARZ

By Andrew King

Brian Moncarz considers himself lucky – and why shouldn't he? After years amassing an enviable list of credits with some major names on both sides of the glass, the longtime producer, engineer, and mixer is now doing some of his best work out of his own studio space, Rattlebox North in Toronto. And at the end of the day, he has to spend just minutes in the car before being home with his family. It's an enviable position, for sure, and it's the product of a lot more than just luck.

A graduate of Ryerson University's Radio and Television Arts program, Moncarz honed his skills floating around the GTA as a freelance engineer. Quickly catching the eyes and ears of some industry giants, he had the opportunity to work with and learn from Midas-touched producer/engineers Bob Ezrin and David Bottrill. With Bottrill, he opened the original Rattlebox Studios and attracted an impressive clientele to downtown Toronto during its few years of operation.

When he and Bottrill amicably parted ways, he sought a new space in the city's north end, closer to his home in nearby Vaughan. "I was working downtown and driving 45 minutes to and from the studio every day," Moncarz explains about his years in the recording business to that point. "So I wanted to make sure that, with a new studio, I could get home for dinner and to put my kids to bed, and then go back to work if necessary." Subsequently, Rattlebox North was born.

Ahead of the transition, Moncarz called his contact at Fanshawe College, from which he and Bottrill had regularly sourced interns, and asked if they had someone willing to help open up a new studio. That's when he met Rattlebox North's first assistant, Mike Monson. "He helped me make the room really cool and vibey," says its owner. "We're in an industrial condo complex, so we wanted something that really invited creativity once you walked through the door."

Moncarz admits that his original vision for the space was to handle overdubs and mixing, taking drums and other major tracking work to larger nearby rooms; however, one of his earliest clients at Rattlebox North was rock outfit Bleeker, demoing a few songs for a FACTOR grant application. "I borrowed some extra mics and pres and we ended up tracking drums at my studio," Moncarz recalls, "and it turned out awesome."



The application was successful, and they ended up cutting the whole album at Rattlebox North. Moncarz did the same with the latest LP from Toronto's Secret Broadcast, due out via eOne Music Canada in 2017. In addition to Monson, who has remained on staff since the studio first opened, Moncarz also gets help from assistant engineer Justin Meli and a number of interns from Fanshawe.

But while Rattlebox North is open for and welcoming of full-album projects, Moncarz says there's been a shift in his business of late towards more mixing work. He recently added his touch to tracks from The Trews' best-of release, new material from Our Lady Peace with more expected in the coming months, and work with an American punk-tinged blues guitarist named Fantastic Negrito, who's currently touring with Temple of the Dog, the resurrected supergroup comprised of members of Pearl Jam and Soundgarden.

And at the end of the day, Moncarz heads up the road to be with his wife and their two children, Josh, 10, and Layla, three; however, that doesn't mean the music stops. "It's funny, so much of my personal life also revolves around music. My son plays guitar, so we like to jam together," Moncarz shares. "Growing up, I began my love affair with music that's led me to where I am today. I spent countless hours practicing guitar and taking in as much music as possible from grade six to finishing university, and that hasn't really changed at all. Listening, reading autobiog-

raphies, watching documentaries – I'm just always taking in as much as I can."

Moncarz says he first got into the studio business to be able to track his own projects; however, he found himself busy early on and just never had the opportunity to do it. Not long ago, though, he and members of Bleeker and Our Lady Peace wrote and recorded a ripping blues track. "It's the first time I've played on anything in, like, 15 years, so that's pretty exciting," he gushes. "I just need to find the time to mix..."

On top of his busy studio schedule, Moncarz is also reciprocating some of the good fortune he enjoyed working with the likes of Ezrin and Bottrill by presenting music production and mixing workshops for Ryerson's Radio and Television Arts students. "I just love teaching," he says plainly, which also informs his continual commitment to training interns and giving them a real-world opportunity to learn.

"It's been a great transition," Moncarz summarizes about his move north. "I think my main concern with the move was, how will this affect your business? I went with my gut and knew, for my own sanity, I needed to be closer to my family, and hoped that wouldn't mean too much of a decline, but really, my business has grown since moving here. I'm just really lucky and really happy."

Andrew King is the Editor of Professional Sound.