100 per cent liability. Like, every patch cable and patch point is a potential disappointment for me when I get the files back and open it up and there's some fizzle and crackle on the right side of the overhead. So, I try to keep the cabling to just one piece of wire from the microphone into my interface if I can.

PS: In Monkey House's "Shotgun," there's a lot going on instrumentally, but everything comes through in a balanced, clear, crisp way in the mix. What's your secret to achieving that?

Bailey: My general ethos is to defend the vocal at all costs. So, anything that is competing with the vocal, I have to find a place to put in where it's not competing…

If I'm accused of anything, it's that I tend to mix vocals really hot, and I put a lot of effort into making the vocal presentable in a way that it works when it's really loud, meaning every little spit noise, every S, every T, I'm going in and cleaning all that stuff up so that I can present the vocal really, really forward. The Sony C 800 G is one of those microphones that doesn't do you any favours in that way because every little noise and every little crackle is there in super detail. It does make extra work, but for me, it's worth it.

I'm actually thinking about the vocal all the time, and all the other stuff that's going on around it for fun and entertainment purposes, it has to be complementary, so I do a lot of automation on stuff like horns or Hammond organ or things that tend to have a lot of mid-range. I'm doing a lot of level automation on it to make sure it is not competing with the vocal and then when it does have its moments to shine, it's popping out in just the right places. I like having elements that stick out in the left or right – just discrete elements that are kind of like, "Hey, what's that?"

In the end, mixing is all about sonic entertainment. You're trying to create a journey that goes from the beginning of the song to the end of the song that is not just a static picture. You're moving a spotlight around and shining it on different things all the time. That is what makes it fun and entertaining.

PHOTO: HEATHER POLLOCK

Jason Dufour

Nominated for:

"Push for Yellow (Shelter)" & "There's Still a Light in the House" by Valley

PS: There is an ethereal quality to the vocal sounds on the Valley album. How did you achieve that?

Dufour: Yeah totally. I think they were recording with an Apogee Quartet [audio interface]. I'm not sure if they were using any compression or EQ on the way in. I think some vocals were with a [Shure] 57 or 58 and some were with a [Neumann] TLM 103.

Truthfully, most of the songs came at me with at least two Pro Tools sessions. They were using so much processing that they couldn't even play it on their computer, so I would get a session for the music and then a session for the vocals. Then, with the really big songs like "Push for Yellow" and "Light in the House," I got four sessions for those. There'd be one session that had all the music, one session with all the vocals, one session that had all the choir, and then another session that had, like, all the saxophones and guest guitar solos and stuff like that.

There were a lot of tracks and … they were doing a lot of processing themselves, so I was going in and looking at all their processing and deciding, "Can I do that better? Can I take that off? Can I adjust it?" Obviously, they got it to a certain point and they're very specific with their sounds, so if I just start taking processing off and start fresh, they would probably hate the mixes. So, I took an approach of just fine-tuning what they had already done and then doing my thing on top of it.

As far as my vocal chain inside the computer, I don't really remember. It would probably change for every song. Some of the vocals on some songs are distorted, some of them are a little bit cleaner, but a lot of the work I did was volume panning and EQ – just an old-school approach to make something pop. It was a lot of de-essing and EQing their reverbs and stuff like that, because a lot of the reverbs had a lot of high-end. So, I would go in and just tailor them a little bit and then there were a lot of reverbs and delays I added to enhance what they had already done. If I was inspired from a moment in their music, I would add a little echo or add a reverb to supplement what they're trying to get across and what they had already done, production-wise.

There is a lot of ear candy going on in their music and my job is to just sift through all that and make sure everything was blended correctly, and if there was anything I could do to enhance their ear candy, then I did that.

PS: In that process, what plug-ins or effects were you leaning on most?

Dufour: I'm looking at the session right now and there's a lot! I would say that the number one thing in here – not even talking about plug-ins – is that there is so much automation to make it work.

I think a very important part of this record, and my sound in particular, is I use that [Ampex] ATR-102 plug-in from UAD on the stereo bus. I can't even mix without that thing. I'm pretty sure I use it on every single mix I ever do. And if I don't use that one, I use a different flavour of it, whether it's a Waves or whatever, but I'd say nine out of 10 songs I mix, that ATR-102 is on it.

Another thing I would say is important is I used Slate VCC on every single channel, and I have multiple stereo buses. I kind of treat my Pro Tools sessions almost as an SSL Duality or an SSL 9000 that has multiple stereo buses. Basically, every single audio track and every single stereo bus gets a VCC, whether it's a mix bus or a channel. I think that is a big part of my sound and really adds to the dimension and depth.