

# computer music

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SOFTWARE

## 1 GIANT LEAP

The story behind the all-star global laptop recording project

# All the world's a

Armed with a laptop, a handful of mics and not much else, Jamie Catto and Duncan Bridgeman – aka 1 Giant Leap – travelled the globe for six months to record an ambitious album project that redefines the concept of 'world' music...

As starting off points for globetrotting, culture-straddling, consciousness-raising musical projects go, London's Notting Hill could've been invented for the job. It's here, amid the rich diversity of cafes, trendier-than-thou nighthaunts (Pharmacy anyone?) and the more rarefied climes of Portobello's wonderful antiques markets that we caught up with the two intrepid musicians-come-internauts that form the ambitious and fruitful 1 Giant Leap project.

Formed through a mutual love of Eno and Byrne's seminal *Bush of Ghosts* album, former member of Faithless/video director Jamie Catto and producer/remixer Duncan Bridgeman (Eurythmics, Take That) set out, almost two years ago, from the offices of their label Palm Pictures, armed only with a laptop, a mixing desk, a digital video camera and a truckload of imagination on what could genuinely be called a musical odyssey. The resultant music, mood and insight now sees the light of day as the intoxicating 1 *Giant Leap* project/album that's been released via Palm Pictures.

### Star turns

At a time when the misused concept of 'world music' comes pre-packaged on countless sample CDs, 1 Giant Leap sought to do it properly. Along the way, they enlisted an absolute dream cast of contributors, including Michael Stipe, Baaba Maal, Brian Eno, Robbie Williams, Neneh Cherry... the list goes on. Even counter-culture legends Dennis Hopper, Tom Robbins

and the godlike Kurt Vonnegut made appearances.

The eponymously-titled CD and DVD act as a genre-defying, technicolour snapshot of Catto and Bridgeman's musical adventure, and as a testament to the creative sonic possibilities now being realised by the humble laptop. Duncan Bridgeman explains how this 'have-laptop-will-travel' journey became possible. "It came about through a combination of G3s, G4s and

**"I'd been so scared before we left because everyone kept telling us that we couldn't do it on a laptop, but you can – and we did"**

the ability to have a multitrack studio contained within a laptop that was running off batteries. Add to that a card that allowed us to patch in microphones and we didn't need to be in a studio anymore. We made the world a studio."

That they certainly did. Crossing numerous continents and taking in countries as far-flung as Ghana, New Zealand, India and North America, that's undoubtedly one well-travelled computer. "It's almost two years ago now since we started the project and more people seem to be catching on to the idea that a laptop is effectively a portable studio. There was a time when you needed to have Pro Tools because the internal Mac processor wasn't up to it, but Apple update their processor very frequently now."

"When we came back, I managed to get some money from Palm and we bought a Pro Tools rig, and I couldn't even run what I was running before using my ASIO driver. So I ended up taking Pro Tools back and investing in a dual processor (G4). Similarly, the native plug-ins for Logic are immense. If you use third-party ones they do get a bit hungry, but if you just use the native ones everything runs fine. Antares Auto-Tune is great, although once you've started using it you can't really go back to not using it. It's like when you start working with a drum machine and you suddenly find that any flams are unacceptable."

With 'musician duties' shared equally between the pair, Jamie was also in charge of recording all things cinematic for posterity, while Duncan dealt with the



Jamie (left) and Duncan (right) in action...



Indian strummer: Duncan gets down to business with electric mandolin player Shrinvas...