

►► technical side of the recording process. The duo fended off some considerable discouragement from doubting Thomases who, prior to their departure, were of the opinion that the technology would not withstand such a considerable journey, let alone the stresses and strains of the various climates and conditions they would encounter along the way.

"Before we left, everyone was predicting that the technology would go wrong, or that the weather in Senegal would be too hot and dusty. I built a cloth case for the laptop but it made it too cumbersome. It never crashed on us at all. To be safe I had a DVD-RAM, which had just come out, which gave us 5Gb of storage. Every night I'd save the day's work, then in the morning I'd FedEx a 5Gb drive back to London! We were in Sikkim for New Year and we got a 'red cross'

## Shed heaven



Michael Stipe contributed vocals to *The Way You Dream...*

**Red light fever? Forget about it. Duncan tells us why working on the move is the way to go...**

"When we occasionally got people who didn't perform or we didn't get anything usable then there wasn't the stress of feeling like we had to get something. The only time we had that stress was with Michael Stipe, as we wanted to make sure we got something we could use from him. We were with Michael for two days recording him in a shed in his garden. We set up the laptop with speakers and played over the track while discussing what to do with it. He was quite inspired, as we had Asha Bhosle's vocals on the track already [*Asha being the legendary Bollywood soundtrack chanteuse later immortalised by Cornershop*] and Jamie had written some lyrics as a starting point. He seemed inspired both by Asha and the tablas that we had on the track.

"When you take people into a studio environment you get their 'studio stuff' – red light fever. But we would turn up at people's houses, set up our laptop and write a song. I think also people were listening to our music. People have gone out before and recorded performances onto DAT, but we took our music out with us and got the artists to put headphones on and join in with our music. This being the case, they couldn't just do their own, usual thing, and I feel that perhaps this pushed them into territories that they hadn't gone into before."



Despite the best efforts of baggage handlers, Duncan and Jamie's studio went all round the world

parcel from Jamie's sister. We got a DVD of *The Matrix* sent out and I hadn't even realised I could play them on my G3. So there we were sitting in a little hotel up a mountain watching *The Matrix*."

Wondrously surreal moments such as that seem to have been de rigeur for the 1 Giant Leap boys as they made their musical way around the globe – fashioning a gem of an album in the process. So, what software were they running in order to facilitate the portable studio? "I'm using Logic with an EXS sampler," Duncan explains. "I've got a Titanium PowerBook now, but at the time of the trip I was using a 400MHz G3 Lombard with quite a small amount of RAM. The EXS sampler wasn't available when we went, so I recorded a lot of stuff as audio before we left. At the time I was using a VX Pocket card with digital in and out.

"I also had a little Roland digital mixer, but only because I needed a compressor and the Roland has really good mic amps and compressors built into it. An electrician friend pointed out to me that the first thing most pieces of equipment do when you plug them in is step down from 220 to 9, 12 or 15 volts. I asked him if we could bypass it, as the mixer was being given 110 volts when, if you look at the transformer inside, what it's actually feeding off is 12 volts."

### Losing it

Such frugality with power and convergence is essential to any project of this type. And while the thought of imagined technological disasters would be enough to put many a staunch computer musician off such an undertaking, Duncan can recount only two instances on the whole trip where there were any computer-induced hitches. Well, make that one computer hitch and one airline baggage-handler-type problem...

**"Although it's organic, it is all locked in tempo, and when you're in Africa working with drummers who work in really strange timings, it's really difficult for them"**

"We put the box we had built for the mixing desk and so on, on the plane at Heathrow and when we got to Senegal it hadn't arrived. We went to the airport every day and were told it was in Italy, or it was in Paris, so we finally realised it wasn't going to turn up. I ended up flying back to England to visit Digital Village and buying a new mixer and a JV-1010, getting a new flight case built in the East End, then staying up all night with the wiring guy before catching a flight back over to Ghana.

"The only other technical hitch we had was when we were working with Shrinvas in India. He's this wonderful, warm mandolin player who appears on the opening track, *Dunya Salam*, and on the first session we did with him the computer completely crashed. It wouldn't record or play back properly – every time it did play, it would jitter. So I did a Level 3 diagnostic on it and couldn't find anything wrong with it. When he came back later to try again, I recorded it on DAT as well as the laptop. Again, the computer played up, so I decided we could use the DAT, but there was one bit I wanted him to try again so I recorded it, totally forgetting that I'd reworded the DAT ►►