

## HANDS OFF SITAR FOLEY GIG FOR “LOVE GURU”

### Engineer Matt Azzarto Finds Sony PCM-D50 Ideal Field Recorder

**NEW YORK:** Recording engineer/producer Matt Azzarto’s eclectic career has found him working with artists ranging from Nancy Sinatra to Sonic Youth. Though his Hoboken, NJ-based Think Tank Studio is outfitted with gear ranging from Pro Tools HD to a vintage Neve console, Azzarto <http://www.thinktankstudio.org/> is often on call to record on the fly.

“I’m always looking for the best way to make a fast, high-quality recording of an artist in the studio or in a club. Capturing the essence of an inspired performance can be incredibly helpful as a reference tool for a full up session or as a permanent record of memorable dates,” Azzarto says. “I’ve worked with a few hand-held digital recorders but have found them difficult to swing into action quickly and somewhat underwhelming in terms of audio quality and flexibility.”

When a colleague introduced him to the Sony PCM-D50 digital field recorder Azzarto ran a series of shoot-outs with his (then) current hand-held recorder. “We recorded material with both units in Think Tank and played the results back through my small Genelics. We also downloaded the files to a Mac and played them back through the Neve. I was impressed not only with the superior sound quality of the Sony, but especially with its user-friendly operation. I was able to get the recorder in action very quickly. There were no miss-punched controls, the record-level knob was conveniently positioned and easy to adjust, the dual condenser mics shift easily between X/Y or wide-stereo mode, and it’s sturdy enough to make you confident that it won’t fly into pieces if it takes a tumble.”

A recent urgent call put the PCM-D50 to the ultimate real-time test. “I’ve known music supervisor John Houlihan for many years,” Azzarto says. “He’s worked on major films like *Charlie’s Angels*, *Training Day* and all the *Austin Powers* movies. He was finishing the soundtrack for Mike Meyers’ *Love Guru* at a NY post house when he discovered that Meyers hand strumming a sitar in a pivotal scene was visibly out of synch with the music heard on the sound track.”

Houlihan immediately booked an expert sitar player for an emergency session and he asked Azzarto to rush in to handle the recording end “I set the PCM-D50 up about 3 feet from the artist and sat on the floor beside him as he played the song (Steve Miller’s classic “The Joker”) while watching Meyers’ scene on a video monitor. Somehow he was able to perfectly match his performance to Meyers’ fingering while making the song clearly recognizable. The Sony captured every nuance and, the Pre Rec Buffer option enabled me to capture the previous five-seconds of the set while continuing to record the live performance. That was extremely helpful in making sure we captured every note.

“This was an incredibly complex Foley challenge,” Azzarto adds. “In traditional ADR work the actors are trying to match the movements of the mouths of the onscreen talent as they speak. In this situation, the sitar player had to play a recognizable song on a complex instrument and make it appear as though the music was being performed by the fingers of the on camera performer. The PCM-D50 was totally up to the job.” Azzarto’s solo album, “Checkered” on P.O.S. Records (available on iTunes) under the moniker ‘Matt Madly’ features songs he demo’d with the D50.



Photo Caption: Recording engineer/producer Matt Azzarto in his studio with Sony PCM-D50 in foreground.

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