ers and there are quite a few application-specific instructions for running within Cubase - mostly having to do with the multiple ways one can apply the DSP effects. The instructions covering these issues were clearly written and in short order I was able to audition the famed Lexicon reverbs applied over the tracks I laid down. These are a major selling point for the Core 2 and the lush, artifact-free reverbs did not disappoint. Hardware DSP is still superior - you obviously get none of the often echo-y 'trailing bits' found in most software plug-in 'verbs, and you also get to lighten the load on your CPU. Another surprise was the 'DBX' logo on the LexPanel control applet. At first I was thinking noise reduction *("but why???")* but then found out it is actually four levels of soft-knee compression (or soft-saturation/tape emulation). In practice it actually imbued an audible character to the sound - something I can't say I've experienced with any digital I/O cards to date. It did seem to warm up the upper midrange on my recordings. If you don't care for it, it can be either lessened or bypassed all together, but you must remove the card and set some jumpers to do this. Clearly the Core 2 is drawing upon its reputation as a distinguished DSP hardware company in designing this card. If you want the sonic quality and convenience of onboard, hardware-based DSP, this unit is an excellent choice. It has only 4 inputs, but the whole package costs around $500. Minor gripe: while I'm grateful they included a well-made break-out box, the multi-pin adapter cable that attaches it to the PCI card is way too short - only 4 feet. The stiffness and weight of the cable also exerted a bit of 'tail-waggin-the-dog' behavior while connected to the comparatively lightweight box. You'll need to anchor it securely.

The **Sek'D Siena** install took less than 20 minutes including driver installation. This is a straight-ahead, no-frills package. The RCA-type in/out fantail is fairly short and I'm assuming many users will elect to build their own patch bay. The software control panel applet is as straight-forward as the hardware - the emphasis seems to be on plain simplicity with not much time given to aesthetic gloss. Setting up the controls for Cubase was quick and extremely easy. There's a handy latency control for users of DirectSOUnd drivers that you can set on 'automatic' or manually to test different buffer settings. Thanks to new ASIO drivers I was able to monitor a recorded track directly through hardware and record another with no annoying delay. Cubase system manager indicated that latency was down to a very usable 18ms. Playback was glitch free and it seemed that the card itself produced no discernible noise - which was encouraging since all the A/D-D/A conversion takes place on the board and the input/output cables are just standard, unbalanced, consumer grade wire. It passed the basic tests without a single problem. This package is the essence of simplicity and economy of design, while retaining top notch specs and trouble free setup and performance. In fact, the Siena carves out a very clear position in the increasingly crowded digital audio market space: where else can you get 8X8 connectivity and 24-bit 96kHz specs for $500?

The **Yamaha Sound Factory DS24416 (w/ AX44 Patchbay)** installed rather quickly and included a succinct testing application that verifies that all was installed correctly. I would recommend right off the bat that one pay the extra amount for the AX-44 powered patchbay. The card itself has a 4 analog stereo ins and digital in/out and there's no sense in continually having to get at the rear of your PC to change connections. The AX44 splits the stereo ins/outs into 8 mono in/out -a more practical arrangement to be sure *and* has a headphone output. Both components looked extremely well-made and sturdy. One note on the AX44 that raised an eyebrow: it draws its power from a spare 4-pin Molex connector from your PC's power supply (good idea); however, it's connector pin orientation is exactly opposite of the

DIGITAL GLAMOUR

by Hillary Johnson

While spending 6+ hours copying, formatting, recopying, restarting, plugging, unplugging, screaming, crying, etc., I had time to think about how the wonders of the digital age affect the above average recording engineer in the year 2000. I wanted to write a little something about how much time we now have to spend formattin', defraggin', trouble shootin', and otherwise getting eye cancer with the latest computer technology available to us because we don't trust anyone else to maintain our "master tapes" (hard drives). Granted, with 24/96 we have finally arrived, but, sonics aside, I personally have spent a few too many hours doing the aforementioned tasks to assure a certain degree of compatibility between different systems. This is due, in part to the increased level of knowledge and skill required of a strapping young engineer who works on different systems that have as many users as there are virtual tracks. The home setup can become bug-free if there's only one or two users but when you have to deal with draggin' yr projects around from studio to studio via an external hard drive, you should expect to spend at least as much time getting situated as you would getting an analog deck calibrated. Also, sticking around to make sure your projects are backed up properly isn't quite as glamorous as sticking around to just stick around while the assistant or intern labels the tape reels or splices leader tape in-between songs... those were the days! I can't forget to mention how important file maintenance is - especially at 3am. It's equally as important as labeling a track sheet respectfully. Something I did forget to ask - am I getting paid for those six hours?

Tape Op Magazine #18 - 2000

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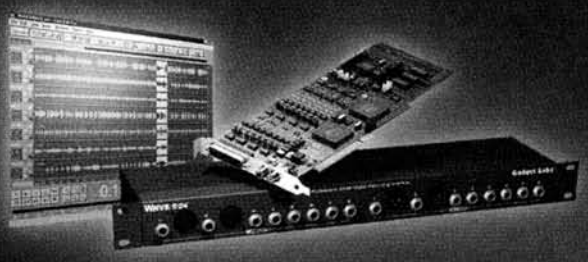

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