

View from the basement
Addendum 3: The Next Wave?

6/00 : Since I posted the previous information on 4-tracking back in February of 99 (and actually the info was almost a year old before then) there have been a lot of new units hit the consumer market. When I bought my Fostex the Mini-Disc multi-tracker was still in the beta stages of marketing, and hard disc recorders were just beginning to get noticed. The 8-track cassette was making a last ditch effort to survive by becoming available for a fraction of their original prices. Sadly, I do believe the 8-track cassette is doomed, as is the MD multi-tracker. I think what has hurt the MD market is the higher cost of blank media. HD recorders are the way to go but are not really "stand-alone" units. When the disc is full you need a PC, hard disc add-on or CDR that has the capability to preserve the original multi-track format as data or you sacrifice the option to re-do tracks once it's mixed down to stereo and the disc is cleared. Not a big deal as most commercial burners and DAT machines double as data recorders, but I think even this is about to change. To my knowledge, the Yamaha AW4416 is the first domestic unit of it's kind that does it all from start to finish. It has 16 digital tracks, built-in hard drive, built-in digital effects, fully automated recall-able track mix and mixdown settings and a built-in CD burner that also stores data, all in a package that sits on a desk. This technology is, for most of us, bittersweet because it obsoletes everything in my rack that I've worked so hard to acquire over the years. Nonetheless, this workstation looks like the perfect marriage of Porta-studio convenience and Roland-esque digital technology, and although I've yet to see a list price, the cost of this unit is probably less than a similar ensemble setup.

And if Tascam and Fostex follow suite, I expect other products will be released soon, some cheaper and more streamlined, and others with even more sophisticated features than can be imagined. The good old 4-track cassette is definitely on the endangered species list, and maybe it's just as well. I will miss maintaining this web site though. Maybe I'll start my own version of E-Bay that caters to guys like me trying to unload antique studio gear.



kind of makes you feel like you've been rubbing two sticks together all these years doesn't it?