Dan Vargas uses TASCAM CD-A580



The early Los Angeles punk scene has amassed a lot of publicity over the decades, as have notable figures whose music, art, media, and literature helped shape the influential cultural movement. To help bring the popular ‘70/80s generation music to still more listeners, Producer/Recording Artist Dan Vargas elected to digitize a collection to not only make this music more accessible, but to also preserve the nature of a generation’s artistic endeavors. To help with the process, Vargas employed the versatility found in the TASCAM CD-A580 Cassette Recorder/CD Player/USB Flash Drive Player/Recorder.

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Many affiliated fixtures of the ’70/80s LA punk scene remain under-documented and relatively unknown; Dan Vargas is one such artist. Music on Fire is his latest venture. It is a self-released debut LP, written and engineered by Vargas at Safe at Home Studios in Long Beach, CA. The Los Angeles native cut his teeth in the scene’s salad days as a producer / manager working with artists such as Legal Weapon, Odd Squad, Sludge, The Brat, and Cambridge Apostles. He discussed his experience using the TASCAM CD-A580 on his latest initiative - known as the Eddie Ayala Project.

“Renowned East L.A. musician Eddie Ayala passed away in November 2023,” Vargas reports. “Eddie, who was a mainstay as a lead vocalist and frontman (Los Illegals, Orbit, Odd Squad, and Cactus Flower) also had a large unreleased catalog of recordings that he accumulated throughout the years. These recordings existed primarily in cassette format, along with a few CDRs. After his death, I was given access to these recordings in the hope that I could digitize them for Eddie’s loved ones.”

“These cassettes were in all different conditions,” Vargas added, “coming from three sources and stored in different environments. I tried to use a conventional cassette deck, but some of the tapes were weathered and wouldn’t play. I needed a more robust solution and the CD-A580 is an easy and efficient tool for projects such as this. I transferred multiple cassettes and CDRs directly into my workstation and the playback results were great. I used the CD-A580 to transfer 21 cassettes and three CDRs in real time. This amounts to roughly 120 songs, including rehearsal and studio takes - all of which remained unheard for decades.”

Vargas shared his thoughts on the CD-A850’s attributes he found most appealing. “The cassette function of the CD-A580 is exceptional because the sound quality delivered a faithful audio reproduction of the music. Even though some of the tapes were not well kept and over 30 years old, the CD-A580 transport system was able to play, fast forward, and rewind the tapes effortlessly. In some ways, I think the CD-A580 rescued the music that couldn’t be played on a regular cassette deck. Eddie’s music is his legacy and the CD-A580 brought back the songs that he sang and now the world can hear.”

With many electronic products, questions arise. Hence, responsive and capable support services are crucial for keeping projects on schedule. Vargas shared his experience with TASCAM’s customer support services. “To be honest, the CD-A580 is a very intuitive piece of studio equipment and as a result, I didn’t require any support. I will say, however, that past experience has demonstrated TASCAM stands ready to assist their customers and they have always been very responsive.”

Before turning his attention to the business of the day, Vargas offered these final comments, “The CD-A580 is an incredible tool for use in any home or professional studio’s arsenal. Its audio performance is excellent and it’s a well-made, robust piece of equipment. I experienced nearly effortless transfer of both cassette and CDR content with top-notch A/D converters. Coupled with TASCAM simplicity, this

project was all music and no fuss. The CD-A580 was a central fixture throughout the project, and I couldn’t be happier.”

A celebration of Life for Eddie Ayala will be held September 22 at the Pacific Island Project in Highland Park, California.

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