



Max Clark (below) is an audio engineer and producer, and plays multiple instruments, which enhances his collaboration with artists.

Maxed Out Studios Welcomes An Array Of Talent

Eagle County native Max Clark teaches guitar lessons and cuts records for a variety of musicians in his Gypsum studio.

By Laura Lieff

Music is in Max Clark's blood. Both of his parents are musicians (his mom plays piano and was a classical violinist for the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphony in Minnesota and his dad plays acoustic guitar) who introduced him to music at a young age. Additionally, he specifically recalls his parents loving classic rock which was usually playing at home.

"My mom started teaching me how to play the piano when I was really young—well before my feet could reach the pedals," Clark remembers. "I always had an ear for music, but wasn't interested in

reading sheet music or learning piano the traditional way. So, instead of teaching that method, my mom focused on developing my ear and musical memory. We'd pick a song, she would play it on the piano while I watched and listened, and then I'd play it back. We went through songs section by section until I had the whole thing down!"

Clark continued playing piano and learned guitar from his dad who taught him basic chords and songs from his song book. Then, with online websites becoming more accessible, he was able to look up and learn more songs and chords from there.

PATH PIVOT

While learning guitar as a young kid, Clark started writing some of his own songs and performing them at various talent shows. But in his early years of high school, Clark began focusing on sports more than music. He became an avid whitewater kayaker, a hockey goalie for Battle Mountain High School, and played lacrosse and golf. Then, at age 15, he got into a kayaking accident that resulted in a major shoulder surgery, some complications from that surgery, and a lengthy recovery time which took him out of sports for the rest of that year.



Clark has worked with an assortment of artists from a variety of genres and has recorded both demo EPs and full albums.

“Since I wasn’t able to play sports, and my right arm was largely unusable, I needed something else to fill my time,” Clark explains. “I couldn’t actively play guitar or piano because of the situation with my arm, so I started looking into other ways I could still do music.”

His search for an alternative activity led him to music production—specifically Electronic Dance Music (EDM). Because this type of music is based on chord structure, synthesis, and programming, Clark didn’t need the use of his right arm to create music within the genre. He then began participating in remix competitions, where he orchestrated new songs around a vocals-only tracks provided by the artist. After winning a few of those contests, he realized production was a viable path. He graduated from Battle Mountain and then went on to earn his BA in Music Technology and his BS in Business Marketing from Montana State University.

Clark explains, “I studied music technology in college, which is basically a combination of audio engineering and music production, and through this program I was able to work with a lot of different artists, learn more about microphone and mixing techniques, and have an opportunity to be immersed in music and production on a daily basis.”

YOU CAN GO HOME AGAIN

After earning his degree, he moved back to where it all started and opened Maxed Out Studios in 2021. The recording facility offers four acoustically-treated rooms and quality audio gear to ensure artists and bands get the sound they want. Clark also uses state-of-the-art audio equipment and plugins to make sure tracks are ready for radio.

“I wanted to provide a place for artists in the Valley to get a great recording while using quality equipment,” Clark explains. “But more than anything else, I wanted them to have a chance to focus on their own music and performance.”

As a Vail Valley native, he knew before opening Maxed Out Studios that the music talent here runs deep, but that recording options are limited. He was also aware that although some may have home studios and



Maxed Out Studios offers a place for local artists to record their music in a professional environment.

smaller setups of their own, it can be frustrating to focus on the music and performance side of things while also placing the microphones, using software and equipment to record, and working on the overall engineering. Maxed Out Studios offers an alternative and so far the response has been extremely positive.

“I like to talk to the band or artist ahead of time to get an idea of what they are looking to accomplish with their project, and the best way for us to go about recording it in the most efficient way possible,” he adds.

STUDIO OFFERINGS

Clark has worked with a wide array of artists from a variety of genres and has recorded both demo EPs and full albums. He says the amount of time it takes to cut an EP or album depends on many factors such as whether or not it will feature live drums, programmed elements, or session musicians.

Currently, Clark is working on recording five songs with local favorite The Evolution (also featured in our “Live From Eagle + Gypsum!” article on page 18). He says each song features a combination of drums, bass guitar, electric guitar, piano, keys/synth, organ, trumpet, lead and background vocals, and various percussion parts. “It takes a lot of work to record an album, but they are doing great with going through the process and making sure their parts are dialed in ahead of time,” Clark explains. “Their band brings so much energy into their recordings, and all of their songs have such a great groove. It’s the kind of music that makes you want to dance!

Working as an audio engineer and producer, Clark found that being able to play most of the main instruments is

helpful when collaborating with artists to develop their sound and their songs. So, in addition to guitar and piano, he learned to play bass and drums, and does a bit of singing. At Maxed Out Studios, he offers guitar and bass guitar lessons, generalized music theory, and private recording/audio engineering lessons.

Additionally, for those interested in the music engineering industry, Maxed Out Studios runs an internship program that is primarily intended for high school and college students. His program allows interns to get hands-on experience with the equipment in the studio, as well as learn important audio tasks like recording, mic placement, audio editing, and mixing.

“I basically offer all the skills necessary to create great sounding modern music,” Clark says. “I’m only able to take on a couple of interns each year, usually in three to four-month segments, and I’ve had a great response!” The internship program also provides potential opportunities for future work for tasks like session prep and audio editing.

When asked about his favorite part of the recording process, Clark says “meeting people and hearing their stories.” He adds, “Regardless of the genre, music is a form of expression, and anyone who comes to me with a song has a story they are trying to tell. It’s really fun for me to be a part of bringing that story to life!” **MTN**

CONTACT

maxedoutstudios.com
info@maxedoutstudios.com



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