

# Sounds



Newsletter of the Vancouver Adapted Music Society

Winter 2008

## From showcase to show business: VAMS cuts CD

Vancouver Adapted Music Society (VAMS) has produced a showcase CD to highlight the area's finest musicians with disabilities – and generate some radio play.

It is a brave marketing venture – members may have previously seen their own work released on disc individually, but never before has VAMS-branded product landed in the stores.

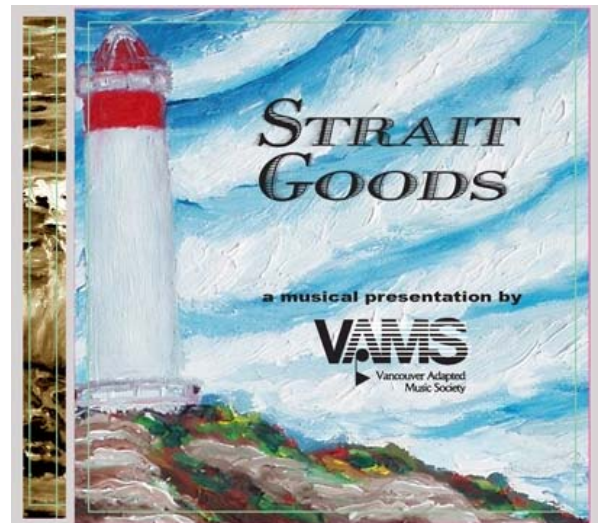
The CD, *Strait Goods*, shows the world that disability is no barrier to musicianship, states VAMS manager Kirk Duncan.

“There is a great deal of talent in the Vancouver area when it comes to performers with disabilities,” he said. “We want to help create awareness of this through a media campaign to promote the CD on radio and TV stations throughout Metro Vancouver.”

This will be played out through January and February, and will feature the artists themselves talking about how the musical non-profit society has helped them overcome barriers.

“I do not think I would be on stage singing if it wasn't for VAMS,” said jazz vocalist Jayne Dinsmore. “I remember when I really wanted to sing on stage, but I lacked confidence and had no contacts. I heard about VAMS, and they gave me opportunities to sing in front of people so I could get my feet wet.”

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Hear, here: The new VAMS release, *Strait Goods*.

## High tech studio opens up music making to all

Work starts January to re-build VAMS' Vancouver studio to create a state-of-the-art accessible facility for all musicians with disabilities.

This will be essentially a new studio, a complete replacement rather than an upgrade of what is presently in place at G. F. Strong Rehab Centre, and will offer the latest accessible computer technology.

Officially opened in April, it will be a composition studio that allows users to experiment with a variety of sounds – and burn demos – rather than an out-and-out recording studio, said VAMS manager Kirk Duncan.

“It will allow people to create music from a number of sources,” he said. “People can use equipment including the Magic Flute and Midi Wind, and create the sound of guitars and drums through the computer.

“The main focus is to attract people that think they would enjoy composing music, that have maybe had a little experience in music, or else they

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## Who are you?

VAMS is a non-profit dedicated so supporting and promoting musicians with disabilities in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.

It was co-founded in 1988 by two quadriplegic musicians: Sam Sullivan, who played keyboards, and drummer Dave Symington.

VAMS has subsequently introduced hundreds of adults and children with disabilities to opportunities that provide an outlet for musical creativity and self-expression.

## CD release – from Page 1

VAMS, said Dinsmore, helped her network with musicians and learn stagecraft, to a point where she is now earning money for her live work – something that would have seemed unimaginable a few years back.

*Strait Goods* covers a wide musical territory, from the silky jazz of Joe Coughlin and Jayne Dinsmore to up-tempo pop courtesy of Mark Audio Ash and Bobbi Style – via folk-tinged sounds of Jeff Standfield and sylvia macCormac, and Dave Symington’s ambient soundscapes.

It will aid the featured artists by bringing their work to a wider audience, creating additional recording and performance opportunities, but also – believes Duncan – create opportunities for other VAMS members by challenging notions about disability.

But this does not mean it is a political release. Nancy Briggs, who is featured on the release performing Mancini/Mercer classic *The Days of Wine And Roses*, sees singing purely as self-expression. “I find that music allows me to express all my emotions – and no-one knows I’m singing about myself.”

VAMS management hopes that people listening to *Strait Goods* will be able to separate the music from the musicians’ personal lives.

“We want people to listen to the people featured here as musicians first and foremost,” said VAMS executive director Duane Geddes. “The fact that some of them have faced some difficult physical ordeals in their personal lives is secondary. They are successful in the musical world, and are gaining this success because of their talent.”

*Strait Goods* will be available in the stores, or can be purchased for \$25 through the VAMS website, [www.vams.org](http://www.vams.org). It will be launched with a concert in February, to be announced later.

## Living legend Dal Richards – it’s an honour

Legendary Vancouver musician Dal Richards has been announced an honorary director of the Sam Sullivan Disability Foundation.

Dal, a long-time director, officially stepped down from the board in October. He was awarded the honorary position in recognition of his contribution to Canadian culture.

A bandleader for more than 65 years, Richards famously played Hotel Vancouver’s Panorama Roof for 25 consecutive years. In 1995, he was appointed to the Order of Canada.



Living legend: Dal Richards.

## Accessible studio opens April – from Page 1

just feel that it appeals to them. It can be for experienced musicians or for people new to music looking for something therapeutic.”

The technology includes:

- Magic Flute: a mouthpiece with a built-in gyroscope. The player tips the device, which is held on a stand, to decide what note to play, controlling the volume and pitch through their breath.
- Midi Wing: a computer-based controller that allows the performer to select notes and rhythms via switches and a controller – which can be a slider, knob or joystick.
- Head mouse: which replaces the standard computer mouse for people that have limited use of their hands to control a computer – in this case, to access a variety of music-making software – that features a wireless optical sensor, placed on the user’s head, that drives a computer pointer.
- Sip ‘n’ puff joust devices: essentially a mouth-operated joystick, driving the computer equipment.

In addition, tables, stands and anything holding the musical equipment is fully adjustable to meet individual requirements. More importantly, the studio will be staffed by technicians to ensure users spend their time getting the best out of the equipment. These will be accomplished musicians in their own right that can offer advice and encouragement.

Initially, these technicians will be available 20-25 hours per week, but this may be increased due to demand and additional funding, said Duncan. Work will begin immediately to turn the studio into reality.

“We are dismantling the current studio in January, and putting in new flooring and soundproofing the walls,” stated Duncan. “We will start installing the equipment in February and early March, ready for an official opening in April.”

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