

Preproduction seemed to move so damn fast. After a few days when all the arrangements were together, the gear was moved over to the studio and we started recording.

RECORDING AT THE CHÂTEAU

This was a time of huge change for Elton. Everything about the recording was different, but Gus and I knew that there was one thing we had to try and keep as close to his past recordings as possible: the piano sound. Trident had one of the best pianos ever for recording pop/rock music, a Bechstein grand that had the brightest sound I've ever heard from a piano. We realised how much a part of Elton the piano was so we had to try to make the piano at the Château match it as closely as possible.

We worked on matching it for a bit and did a quite good job, but then hit a small snag. The problem was that Trident had an enclosed drum booth, so you didn't have to worry too much about drum leakage into the piano mics. There was no such room at the Château, however, which meant that we had to set up the drums in the same room as the piano, and that gave us a huge leakage problem. As a result, we had to find a way to block off the sound.

How did we overcome this? Easy. Gus called in some carpenters to make this big plywood box that went over the entire piano after its lid was taken off. The height of the box went about 3 feet above the top of the piano, and there were a couple of holes in it so that I could poke the mics through. It ended up working out really well.

Another huge change: this was the first album recorded with Elton's touring band. They had individually played on tracks before, but up until this time he'd used mostly session musicians. Apart from recording in a different country and studio, Elton and Gus also wanted a different feel from the previous albums. They'd done the orchestral thing before, so now they wanted this record to sound more like a band and have more of a rock feel.

They couldn't have asked for three better musicians. Dee Murray was such a beautiful and melodic bass player, and very precise in his