

Larry Cragg, founder and owner of Vintage Instrument Rental, has been involved in many aspects of the Bay Area music scene since the late '60s. Native to the Chicago area, he arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area a college student and power-trio bass player. By 1969, he was working professionally as the guitar repairman at Prune Music in Mill Valley and later went on to become a partner in ownership of the store. Prune was a well-known gathering spot for many musicians and it was during this time that Larry began working for Carlos Santana, Steve Miller, Mike Bloomfield, Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver, Big Brother, Grateful Dead, Crosby, Still & Nash, Bob Dylan and many others. Since 1973, he has worked as Neil Young's guitar tech both on the road and in the studio.

Though his work as a technician was taking much of his time, he put on his musician's hat whenever he could. He has played banjo, pedal steel, piano, organ and baritone saxophone with Neil Young and was the bari player in *Neil Young and the Bluenotes*. During the '80s he had the opportunity to tour with the *Nils Lofgren Band* playing keyboard, guitar and bari sax. He plays locally when he has the time. He has played baritone sax with the *Clarence Clemons Band* and in the mid '90s, played his favorite instrument, pedal steel, as a member of the *Bulls*, a Marin-based band that included singer-songwriters; Alex Call, Dave Jenkins and Lorin Rowan.

During the mid '80s, Larry moved his guitar repair business to a solo shop and now takes work only by appointment. Working with both electric and acoustic guitars, he specializes in set-ups and knows the importance of customizing the set-up to the player's individual style. Through the years he has experimented extensively with acoustic guitar amplification and with electric guitar pickup configuration. His experience in this area gave him the opportunity to work as a contributing writer for *Frets* magazine's 'new product reviews' column.

With his life being about instruments and the music they make, it was only natural for him to begin collecting. Through his local music connections and while on tour around the US and Europe, he bought vintage gear. Then, back in his shop, he tweaked each to be the best it could be. The collection grew. He was accustomed to his guitar repair customers seeking advice on 'tone', specific guitar pickups, guitar and amp combinations, etc. He shared his knowledge and gave his opinion and would sometimes pull out a couple of guitars to demonstrate the difference in tones. Soon, people were asking to rent a particular guitar or amp for their recording session and *Vintage Instrument Rental* was born.

Today, Larry consults with producers, bands and individual artists regarding equipment and tone. He rents equipment to bands recording in professional studios, to home-recording artists, to music video shoots, movies and photo shoots. The current V.I.R. inventory includes an extensive selection of vintage 'rock and country' gear, exotic rhythm instruments, vintage microphones and antique instruments as well as antique fans, telephones, wood-working tools, tweed luggage and '50s & '60s plastic radios.