

# making a Commitment to the music



*a candid interview with Edensong founder James Schoen*



**Hear Technologies:** Share a little bit about the history of Edensong and how the band got its start..

**James:** The history of Edensong is tough to pin down. A lot of us go back to playing together in high school, and probably early on in high when we had a band called Echoes of Eden, which was somewhat similar music, progressive metal.

**Hear Technologies:** So from the start, the group was already writing and recording original material.

**James:** Yes, that's when we started writing music together.

**Hear Technologies:** How did the name Edensong come about?

**James:** I renamed the band Edensong when the three of us who played in Echoes of Eden all went our separate ways. I continued making music under the Edensong name. Then, back in 2009,

about a year after our debut, the Edensong record came out, featuring the guys who I collaborated with back in high school. That went to form what is the modern day Edensong lineup. Really, it just goes back to a bunch of friends in high school making music. We're very fortunate that we still have those collaborations going today.

**Hear Technologies:** How did the love for progressive rock as the style you focused on happen?

**James:** Well, I think, growing up we had a basis in classic rock, and then started to get into metal. The first words Tony, our drummer, ever said to me was, "Do you like Metallica?"

**Hear Technologies:** What grade was this?

**James:** I think, that would be sixth grade, or something. He (Tony) was really the one who introduced the metal influence. Progressive rock was really something that I discovered by going through my father's record collection, and just discovered how great some of that music from the seventies was. That opened my eyes to the classic progressive rock era. I, in turn, shared that love, and enthusiasm for that music with the other guys in the band.

**Hear Technologies:** And the other guys in the band shared this love for progressive rock?

**James:** Yes, over the years, I've been fortunate enough to start working with other like minded musicians, who also share some of those influences while also bringing in very different elements to it. Barry, our flute player, comes from a more classical compositional background, also, improvisatory avant guard. I would say Stephan also shares a little bit of that background. I work in some of my acoustic, and folk, British folk influences. With five guys writing music together, there's bound to be a lot of disparate influences in addition to those that are shared.

**Hear Technologies:** Talk a little bit about how you got into making that decision to pursue music as a full-time thing. Where did you make that switch to say, this is what I'm going to do?

**James:** I don't think it was ever really a decision for me. It's just always been in my life, and I couldn't imagine a life without it. It was never really a conscious decision. Like, "okay, I'm going to make a stab at this." It's that I couldn't imagine not doing it.

**Hear Technologies:** So it's all about the commitment.

**James:** Yes. There was never a time when I thought "...maybe I should stop making music." It was always, "okay, this is the music that I'm interested in writing. What's the next step to get this out to a wider audience? What's the next

step to getting this music made, and recorded? That type of thinking actually led me to a career of recording music for others. I think, I've largely built my life around a passion for writing. I think, the other elements of my life have gotten structured around it. So, I'm not sure really was such a conscious decision to pursue music as much as it was a logical progression.



**Hear Technologies:** Let's talk about the state of the industry. You've been around it for quite some time now. Obviously, the recording side of the business and even the touring side has gone through some very major shifts in the terms of with streaming music. Talk a little bit about the realities of the economics of the business today.

**James:** Well, it's a very challenging business, especially, on the artist side. It is not something to be done unless there's a real passion for the music. We're doing this because we love the process of writing, and performing, and putting music out into the world. There's just no way to weather the industry without that underlying love.

**Hear Technologies:** I guess that is especially true if you're working in a genre like progressive rock.

**James:** I mean, this is not music that makes money. This is music that costs money to make. It's just the economics of it. Like this past album. We spent years in the studio making this record. The truth is most people are downloading their music, and not paying for it, or streaming their music. Artists will get pennies for that. So it is a very challenging business model for an artist.

**Hear Technologies:** So how do you adapt?

**James:** I think, that I've adapted in my ability to provide services to other artists. I mean, that's how I personally feed back financially into the band. I'll provide recording services to other artists. In turn, I'm able to put money, and resources, into continuing Edensong, and that's really the truth of it. The income from touring, and from ... It does not outweigh the expenses. I mean, it's a very tricky industry to navigate. I do feel like we're getting places, but it's definitely a slow climb.

**Hear Technologies:** We talked a little bit about touring and live shows, but let's get a little more into it. I know that when you guys tour live you go out with a pretty sophisticated setup. One of the elements of that is the Hear Back PRO, the personal monitor mixing system that you use on stage. Talk a little bit about the approach to touring and the use of the Hear Back PROs on stage for your live setup.

**James:** The Hear Back PROs were really revolutionary for us. With our newest



album, “Years in the Garden of Years,” we really approached it with no boundaries in terms of the composition. We weren’t thinking about how to replicate this stuff live. We weren’t thinking about the live show. We were purely thinking about this in terms of writing music that excited us, and really going all out in terms of exploring compositional possibilities.

**Hear Technologies:** So you finished the album, then sat down to figure out how to produce it live?

**James:** Sort of. The truth of it is, when we were nearing completion on the record, we had this behemoth album that was very tricky to pull off live. I think that discovering the Hear Back PRO came at just the right time for us to take a look at what we had been doing, which was a pretty traditional rock band setup, amps on stage, and wedge monitoring.

**Hear Technologies:** It sounds like the Hear Back personal monitor mixers gave you some flexibility in your live setup you didn’t have before?

**James:** Yes. Before using the Hear Back PRO system, we’d be playing the parts live, but people couldn’t necessarily hear the intricacies of the music come through. First, because we couldn’t hear ourselves clearly, and second, we couldn’t rely upon how a sound guy to be able to know the ins, and outs, of the music in order to balance the levels perfectly for every new section. It would require incredible understanding of the compositions to be able to

predict that. When I discovered the Hear Back PRO setup, that really got me thinking about how to re-approach our live show. The end result of using the Hear Back PRO was being able to make the decision to play with in-ear monitoring. We would be able to hear our parts more clearly, dial in our own balances. We could each be listening to precisely what we needed to hear, and not worry about what the other guys in the band needed to hear. Also, it got me thinking about trying to automate some of the changes in the music live. All of my guitar sounds are actually automated. We’ll play through the songs, and I’ll use an amp monitor through software. All of my past changes are automated, and that goes for vocals, as well. It enables us to trigger some backing tracks, for some of those compositional layers that we’re not able to replicate live.

**Hear Technologies:** Can you share an example?

**James:** We recorded with a Gamelan for one of the instrumental pieces on the album. Now, we’re able to replicate that live through the use of backing tracks, so we don’t lose the layers. All of that stuff can be fed through our monitors through the Hear Back PRO system. We have a lot of control in terms of using software to run our sound. As a result, I feel like the audience is getting a much better depiction of what the music should sound like.

**Hear Technologies:** You rely a lot on the preset functionality of the Hear Back PRO, which lets you quickly and easily recreate the monitor mix you want. Is that correct?

**James:** Yeah, exactly. That was one of the major upgrades because we had been using the Hear Back Legacy system, which is great, and also, enabled us to do what we were doing. One of the major upgrades with the Hear Back PRO system was the ability to save presets, and know that we were walking on stage, and the mixer was going to be setup exactly as we left it. The sound was going to be exactly consistent, night after night.

**Hear Technologies:** So the preset functionality allowed you and the band to focus more on the creative process and not the technical side of running a live show.

**James:** Absolutely right. It is just revolutionary for me in that way. Knowing that I was going to be able to hear what I needed to hear at any given moment, and not having to worry about what terrible balance am I going to have in my monitors tonight. It was both



the Hear Back PRO, and also automating my guitar sounds, and everything, that really let me relax, and focus on just playing the songs, playing, and singing, and getting into music. It's ironic in the way that it's more technology on stage. It's definitely the most high-tech setup that we've used in the history of this band. It also felt the most organic because we could be focused not on what mysterious balance is going to come through the monitors, but just focus on making this music together.

**Hear Technologies:** Talk a little bit about what's on the horizon for the band.

**James:** We just wrapped up our tour. We do have some plans to head overseas in 2018. We're also about to get started on some more writing. I think that focusing our attention on writing is actually a logical next step. Hopefully, we can get some new very different stuff out there in the near future.

**Hear Technologies:** Thank you for using the Hear Back PRO on tour, and in the studio. We look forward to hearing much, much more about what's coming up for the band. Especially, in 2018, as you look to go out on tour.

**James:** Thanks so much. It's been great speaking with you.

Visit the Edensong website at [www.edensongtheband.com](http://www.edensongtheband.com)

Listen to the Edensong's music at [edensong.bandcamp.com](http://edensong.bandcamp.com)

Visit the band's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/edensongtheband](http://www.facebook.com/edensongtheband)

For more information on Hear Technologies and the Hear Back PRO, visit [www.heartechnologies.com](http://www.heartechnologies.com).



### **About the Hear Back PRO**

Built for musicians and engineers who demand pristine audio quality, professional appearance, and flawless performance – on stage or in-studio – the Hear Back PRO is the most high-powered, professional-looking, feature-filled personal monitor mixer system in its class. Designed in response to customers who demand the best, the PRO lets you quickly and easily set and store your perfect individual mix so you can focus on your creativity – not on menus. [www.heartechnologies.com](http://www.heartechnologies.com).

