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Grammy nomination sounds pretty sweet

GRAHAM ROCKINGHAM

The Hamilton Spectator

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When Stoney Creek native Roman Klun's name is read out at the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles tomorrow, he'll be at the opposite side of the country doing what comes naturally -- getting the best sound possible for the artist he's recording.

Klun, who built his first recording studio when he was still attending Orchard Park Secondary School, received a Grammy nomination for sound engineer of the year on Leslie Mendelson's soft-rock album, *Swan Feathers*.

"I got the invitation (to the Grammys) in the mail about a week ago, the free ticket, all the parties and everything," Klun said in a recent interview from his parents' home in Beamsville.

"I almost booked my flight ... but I've been asked to produce an album with a jazz-hip hop band called New York Electric Piano in New Jersey. Because of the players involved, it's a nightmare scheduling sometimes. It's got to be done."

Klun now lives with his wife, Maria, in the United States and has a home and studio near Woodstock, N.Y., and an apartment in New York City.

During his 20-year career as a sound engineer and producer, he's worked on albums by a varied array of artists including Sarah McLachlan, Anthrax, Pete Seeger, Tony Levin, Maestro Fresh Wes, Ornette Coleman, Gino Vanelli, Joan Osborne and the Holmes Brothers. He's also recorded three CDs of his own as a singer-songwriter.

He has won a Genie Award, worked on several Juno-award winning albums and has been honoured by the Audio Engineering Society, but this is the first time he has been nominated for a Grammy.

Klun realizes he's up against tough competition, especially veteran soundman Al Schmitt, whose illustrious career stretches back to the '50s working with people like Frank Sinatra and Sam Cooke.

"For me the victory has already been won. It's just getting the nomination," he says.

Still loyal to his roots, Klun returns home to the Hamilton area several times a year, working with Ian Thomas on his *Lunch At Allen's* projects, and at Dave King's Barn Window studio with blues guitarist Steve Strongman.

Klun is one of several world-class producers and engineers who learned their craft in Hamilton.

The list includes Daniel Lanois, who is also nominated in two Grammy categories this weekend for his production work on U2's latest CD *No Line on the Horizon*. Lanois' Grant Avenue Studio also apprenticed star producers like Mark Howard (Lucinda Williams, Tom Waits, Chris Whitley) and David Bottrill (King Crimson, Tool, Mudvayne).

Klun's entry into the local music scene was through Ian Thomas, a Dundas-born songwriter who has had songs recorded by Santana, Chicago, America and Manfred Mann. Through Thomas, Klun met Hamilton guitarist Bill Dillon, a studio magician who has recorded with some of the biggest names in the business, including Robbie Robertson and Joni Mitchell.

Dillon convinced Klun to spend some time at the Lanois team's Kingsway studio in New Orleans in the late '80s. Instead of applying the time to recording other people's music, however, Klun ended up writing his own songs there.

That music stayed tucked away in the back of his mind until last year, when Klun recorded his third solo album. It's called *Kingsway* and contains an impressive backing band of A-list musicians, including Tony Levin and Jerry Marotta (Peter Gabriel, King Crimson) and members of Levon Helm's band.

"I don't want to be known as just 'a good engineer,'" Klun says. "I'd rather be known as a guy who can do it all, write a good song, make it



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sound great and produce it. I'm trying to fill as many of the departments I can."

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