

Kronos Quartet Records at Women's Audio Mission

The Grammy Award-winning Kronos Quartet recorded and mixed tracks at Women's Audio Mission (WAM) for the ensemble's "Women's Voices" performance at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco on May 11. Women's Audio Mission founder Terri Winston and staff engineer Laura Dean engineered the session, assisted by Jenny Thornburg. SoundPure.com coordinated microphone loans from Manley Labs and Telefunken ElektroAkustic for this project. "Kronos Quartet especially liked the [Telefunken CU-29] Copperheads on violins and the ELA M 260 and [Manley Labs] Reference Gold on cello," Winston says. The WAM team recorded to Pro Tools|HD2 with Lavry Blue converters; Avedis MA-5, Great River MP-2NV and Millennia HV-3R mic pre's; and Earthworks QTC30 microphones.



Photo: Marsha Vidovin

SPARS Sound Bite

Infrastructure Time

By Russ Berger

I don't need to tell you that in the past few years the studio business has taken a beating. Those studio owners who have maintained, or even grown, through the down years have done so through a combination of tenacity, experience, expertise and no small measure of cunning. Now, as businesses begin to emerge from survival mode, it's a great time to sharpen the saw—to reinvest in infrastructure upgrades that can improve your studio's performance.

Resolve to address those issues you've let slide during the downturn, to fix those things that have been driving you crazy. Maybe you're dealing with a noisy HVAC system, or that booth with the ringing low-frequency resonance. Is there a flutter echo in the studio you've never been quite able to identify, or an annoying amount of sound bleeding from one room to the next? It's time to make improvements that can provide real value to your clients and help you deliver better results.

A renovation doesn't have to be flashy or expensive; it just has to yield solid results. You can't paint over poor performance with marketing hype or a spiffy Website. If your control room doesn't reference, fix it—and not just at the mix position. Configure your monitoring environment to promote collaboration between everyone in the room by allowing them all to hear clear and accurate spectral balance, imaging and a realistic impression of the product.

But be smart. You can find all kinds of common "wisdom" on the Internet, but that's no replacement for expert knowledge. And sometimes a "fix" done incorrectly can lead to more problems in the chain. Know when to get help from a professional.

Often it only takes modest changes to your studio's infrastructure to remove obstacles that hinder productivity, and to provide new inspiration to those who work there. If an upgrade is well planned, improvements don't have to be costly, overly difficult, or disruptive, but they can yield significant contributions to your bottom line. It's a great time to fix your facility to ensure the future health of your business.



Hit Factory Criteria Miami's Studio E control room

Hit Factory Criteria Miami Adds Bag End Subs

Hit Factory Criteria Miami (criteriastudios.com) recently commissioned the Walters-Storyk Design Group to calibrate and tune each of its rooms, and recommend changes. Chief Operating Officer Bob Lanier felt it was important that the facility continue to meet its clientele's desire for more bottom end and a "club sound." Storyk and WSDG Senior Engineer Dave Kotch recommended a new subwoofer for the Studio E control room. After extensive evaluations, Lanier, Trevor Fletcher (Hit Factory VP and general manager) and Simon Soong (head of the technical department) selected the Bag End IPD18E-I subwoofer. Kotch says that when installing a new sub, maintaining the sub's proper time-alignment and room position is a major challenge.

MERCEDES-BENZ SIGNATURE SOUND



From left: Herbert Waltl, Leslie Ann Jones and Dann Thompson



If you are going to mix for an 80-speaker discrete playback system in a custom venue, you want to mix on site. And if you want to tailor tracks for playback in the new Mercedes SL Roadster, to demonstrate real surround for all positions in the car, you might just want to bring the car to your studio. That's what happened recently up at Skywalker Sound, where producer Herbert Waltl, engineer Leslie Ann Jones and assistant Dann Thompson pulled a prototype Mercedes into the scoring stage and mixed licensed songs, from the Pro Tools sessions, for the auto environment.

"Sitting in a car should be one of the best places to enjoy surround audio," says Waltl, of mediaHYPERIUM. "But acoustics and speaker placement in cars are so different from any other listening space that a mix made for a home entertainment system would never sound the same without taking into consideration the tuning processes car audio systems are delivering today. In surround modes, presets take control over what audio information the many installed speakers receive, and the music is getting lost in the process, as is the intent of the music makers. Music is human; and there is a true artistic element in surround productions. Creative decisions should not be left to algorithms of presets."

"The record companies delivered us Pro Tools sessions at high sample rates with much of the original documentation," Jones explains. "We would then begin to compare the source tracks to the finished version. We would go back and forth, from the control room to the car and back, until we got something that really made a musical statement in the car. Then Michael Romanowski brought a portable mastering setup out to Skywalker and mastered in our control room so that he too had access to the car for playback. We constantly sent DVD-V image files to the sound experts from Daimler's R&D group in Germany so they could listen and comment as well. It was hard work even given the excellent acoustic parameters of the car, but ultimately it was a total blast!"

The Mercedes Benz Signature Sound DVD comprises a pop and classical music program; the production concept behind it is a unique innovation, which has been developed and produced exclusively for Mercedes-Benz.