

# Offers A Blend Of Digital & Analog River North: New Windy City Studio

BY MOIRA McCORMICK

CHICAGO River North Recorders, a new 24- and 48-track downtown studio here, plans to compete with its neighboring big three facilities—Universal Recording Co., Chicago Recording Co., and Streeterville Studios—by offering a blend of digital and analog, state-of-the-art and vintage equipment, producing “a sound different from our competitors.”

“We’re committed to the combination of the warm sound of analog recording coupled with the quietness of digital mixdown,” says Joe Thomas, business manager of multimillion-dollar River North, located at 299 E. Ontario.

River North has already been operating at up to 80% capacity in its Studio A for the past four months. As with other downtown studios, it has primarily commercial and jingle accounts, but the studio is “looking forward to doing album work as well,” according to chief engineer Larry Millas.

The studio has already hosted Billy Idol with producer Keith Forsey, who did overdubs for a live recording, and Survivor, which worked on overdubs for a live Westwood One broadcast.

Business manager Thomas is president of the privately held corporation River North Recorders Inc. Chairman of the board is Steve

Deveck. The studio employs a staff of eight, including Millas, studio manager Don Arbuckle, and engineer Frank Pappalardo.

“We also have several engineers who work here on an independent basis,” says Thomas, who claims that River North’s competitors discourage indie engineers. “Once they come to work here, they usually don’t leave, and they bring their clientele with them,” he says.

The 5,000-square-foot “floating” facility, designed by top studio architect Tom Hidley, is housed on the site of the former Chez Paree, a nightclub popular in the ‘40s. River North currently encompasses three studios; the fourth, a keyboard/MIDI production room, is scheduled to begin construction in October.

Studio A (2,400 square feet) features a Neve 8068 console with a Diskmix moving fader automation system by Digital Creations; Studer recorders; Sony PCM-3202 2-track digital deck; TAD monitors; and a complement of “both modern and esoteric tube gear, which sounds wonderful,” according to Millas, who adds, “We’re the only studio in town with a Lexicon 480L digital reverb.”

Studio A is also equipped with a Lynx SMPTE lockup system for video sweetening. Millas says that all the studio’s rooms are capable of video and multimachine lockup.

Studio B (900 square feet) is a

keyboard and production studio, dubbed the “Giz Room” (for “gizmo”), with a 24-track board used primarily for MIDI keyboard work. Studio C (240 square feet) is described as a “song development” room, with a Yamaha 1604 16-input console, 12-track AKAI recorder, and assorted synths and drum machines. Used mostly for vocals and voice-overs, Studio C has also been utilized for recording acoustic instruments.

In selecting River North’s gear, Thomas says, “We really did a lot of research. We flew to Los Angeles to gather opinions from other professionals.”

The modified Neve board and the “hand-picked gear, both acoustic and computerized,” were designed to impart to River North a sound distinct from its competition, says Thomas.

“There has been a basic situation in Chicago, where everyone is accustomed to a certain board, monitors, and outboard system,” he says. “We don’t want to compete with that mentality; we want to offer instead a music room that album people would like to use, yet that’s also geared to the commercial client. This approach will probably eliminate some clients who are used to a particular setup, but it will give us the chance to work with young, up-and-coming clients who want something more musical.”



**Tub O' Gold.** The Fat Boys were recently gilded with Ampex Magnetic Tape division's Golden Reel Award for their album "The Fat Boys Are Back." The award was presented at Quad Recording Studios in New York. Also honored with gold were producers Kurtis Blow and Aldo Marin; engineers Chris Lord Alge, Dave Ogrin, Akili Walker, Antonios Smailos, and Franklyn Grant; and Quad and Unique Studios. Pictured at the studio are, from left, Larry Anderson of Unique; Lou Gonzales of Quad; Laurie Gonzales of Quad; Charles Stetler, band manager; Fat Boy Darren Robinson; Rawlston Charles of Rawlston Recording; and Fat Boys Damon Wimbley and Mark Morales.

## Book On Synchronization Published By Tascam

NEW YORK As the audio, video, and film industries continue to merge, synchronizing various machines in the studio grows ever more important.

Tascam, the Montebello, Calif.-based tape recorder and audio equipment manufacturer, has published a clear and concise book called “Understanding Synchronization” that may come in handy for both studio pros and relative novices.

The book defines synchronization and its various recognized ma-

chine languages (SMPTE, MIDI, FSK, click track, control track, etc.). It then goes on to discuss tape decks, synchronizers, editors, switchers, computers, and other hardware.

Diagrams are included, illustrating an on-line editing system, an audio sweetening session, and other technical setups.

The book can be obtained without charge by writing to: Understanding Synchronization, Tascam, 7733 Telegraph Road, Montebello, Calif. 90640.

## Audio Track

NEW YORK

**AT INS RECORDING**, Robert Clivilles and David Cole were in working on the remix of Tramaine Hawkins’ 12-inch single “Freedom.” It was produced by Tito Jackson with the Jacksons doing background vocals. Dan Sheehan engineered the session. Jhon Fair of Munich Madness Productions was in to do some overdubs and edits on Claudja Barry’s next release on Epic Records. Sheehan also engineered and assisted with the edits on a project titled “Secret Affair.” And the Latin Rascals and Joey Gardener worked on percussion overdubs on “Don’t Be Afraid,” TKA’s release on Tommy Boy Records. Steve “Griff” Griffin was behind the board.

Producer Lenny White completed an album with the band Animal Nightlife at MediaSound’s studio A. Alec Head engineered. Also there, Carl Beatty produced an album for newly signed Working Week on Virgin Records. Beatty engineered with the assistance of Mike Reiter. In studio B, Steve Thompson and Mike Barbiero finished mixing albums for Elektra’s Guns ‘N’ Roses and Epic’s Insiders.

Unique Recording saw Kenny Loggins in its programming room with producer Keith Diamond to work on new material for Loggins’ next album. Also, the Force M.D.’s cut new tracks for their next album on Tommy Boy Records. Victor

Bailey produced with Mike Finlayson and Jeff Lord Alge engineering. George Karras assisted. Additionally, having traveled all the way from London, Virgin’s Delta mixed its debut album. Jay Burnett produced and engineered the mixes. Junior Vasquez edited the tracks, and Ken Collins assisted.

Virgil Blanding was in at Record Plant working on tracks with producer Bernard Purdie. Chuck Cavanaugh engineered. Also there, singer/songwriter Marla Adler worked on recording her new project with producers Alan Palanker and Gary Salzman. Frank Pekoc engineered.

Turner Broadcasting System recently called on the ASL mobile unit to record audio for the taped world broadcast of the World Of 5 Billion show from the Palladium. Live performances by the Neville Brothers, Nona Hendryx, Clarence Clemons, and Alan Toussaint, among others, were recorded. The audio/video date was engineered by Jerry Solomon and Steven Remote. Scott Macaurley, Steve Satkowski, and Andy Bigan assisted. Tom Beers handled production responsibilities.

LOS ANGELES

**WHO’S BEEN HANGING** around at Sunset Sound? Producers Brian Portnoy and Carlos Davidson were in to put the finishing touches on the U-Boy 12-inch dance single “It’s You.” Benny Tao handled engineer-

ing duties.

Portions of Joan Baez’s documentary video were recently filmed at Red Zone Studios. The video highlights the recording of her album “Recently,” produced by Alan Abrahams. Charlie Paakkari engineered. Also, Eddie Chacon was in doing a dance remake of “All You Need Is Love.” The project was produced by Victoria Claire and David Bianco. And L.A. Rocks tracked five new tunes with Aldi Damian producing and Craig Hall engineering. Steve Shephard assisted on all three projects.

At Larrabee Sound, Paul Gurtvitz mixed the dance version of the Fat Boys’ “Wipe Out,” featuring Dweezil Zappa on “surf guitar.” Keith Cohen engineered with the help of Jeff Lorenzen. Also there, Michael Froendeli mixed the Poison single “I Won’t Forget You” on Capitol Records. And, finally, David Bianco mixed the 12-inch and single versions of “Get Away” and “Surrender” for Marlon Jackson’s upcoming solo release on Capitol.

Florida-based rock group Rated X completed tracks on five masters with producer Dana Strum at Baby-O Studios. The material is half of the group’s debut album. A number of rockers dropped by to lend a hand with backing vocals, including Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora of Bon Jovi, Bret Michaels of Poison, Vinnie Vincent and Mark Slaughter of the Vinnie  
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## Engineers Group A Success Chicago’s EARS Forms Network

CHICAGO When the owners of three rival Chicago-area studios first discussed forming a regional support group for engineers, their intent was to provide something other than the rumor mill as a forum for information exchange.

One year after its inception, the Engineering and Recording Society not only facilitates communication between previously adversarial studios, but it also sponsors technical and educational seminars, stages benefits, and publishes a monthly newsletter.

Mike Rasfeld, owner of 16-track Acme Studios and chairman of EARS, says the idea for the group was proposed by himself, Paragon Studios owner Marty Feldman, and former Remington Road Studios chief engineer Michael Freeman “during a conversation on an elevator at the Audio Engineering Society convention in New York four years ago.”

Two years later, Feldman was named president of the Chicago chap-

ter of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences. He then proposed to form the studio support group as a NARAS committee; the board of governors agreed, and NARAS now assumes printing and postage costs for a monthly newsletter, The Eardrum, as well as the regular information sheets circulated by EARS.

Rather than charge dues, says Feldman, EARS encourages its members to join NARAS.

EARS meetings, held the last Tuesday of each month, initially attracted some 40 engineers from area studios; attendance is now over 60 and growing, says Rasfeld.

Major downtown facilities Universal Recording Co. and Chicago Recording Co. have both sent representatives, and regular attendees include engineers who work everything from 8-track demo rooms to 24- and 48-track, world-class operations.

“It’s been amazingly easy to break down communications barriers be-  
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