

## CHICAGO ENGINEERS GROUP IS A SUCCESS

(Continued from preceding page)

tween studios," says Reid Hyams, co-owner of the 24-track Chicago Trax Studios. "We all realized we had a lot of the same goals—to bring in more business to Chicago rather than fight about the gig next door."

A standard feature of EARS meetings is the "tech shootout," in which different makes of equipment are evaluated en masse in A/B testing situations.

"One evening at [Evanston's] Studiomedica, we had 12 engineers compare 13 different digital reverb systems costing under \$1,500," says Rasfeld. "They were rated by numbers for ease of use, versatility, and sound quality."

Other presentations set up by EARS have included a console automation demo at Chicago Trax and a Dolby SR demonstration at Chicago

Recording Co. "Dolby offered EARS members a discount if they bought SR cards for their studios, and they gave back 1% of that billing to EARS in appreciation for the exposure," Rasfeld says.

In keeping with Rasfeld's description of the EARS seminars as "a balance between the technical and the educational," the group has also presented sessions on how to bill record companies (moderated by Chicago Trax's Hyams and Pumpkin Studios' Gary Loizzo) and related business topics.

EARS' business committee has also been working on modifying credit and client-information forms as well as stressing to EARS members that Chicago's rate structure (reportedly the lowest in the country) is actually detrimental to overall business.

The organization's main dividend, however, is the communication it has fostered between competitive facilities. "If a client's been passing bad checks, now everybody knows," says Rasfeld. "And if somebody runs out of 2-inch tape or needs a piece of equipment, they can borrow it from another member. It may sound like a little thing, but it isn't—before EARS, we were too intimidated to talk to each other."

"There's an openness now about using other peoples' studios," adds Hyams. "For instance, our studio is blocked out tonight, so we're using Tone Zone for a session. That

wouldn't have happened before."

EARS has also begun holding benefits, the most recent of which was a roast of Paragon's Feldman, which raised more than \$1,500 for the Center for Deaf Children in suburban Des Plaines.

Future plans include forming a committee to gather EARS members' opinions on what they would like to see in portable and studio DAT recorders. The information will be passed on to hardware maker Nakamichi, the company which solicited EARS' support on the study.

"We want to be exploited as a source of information in the industry, on what kind of equipment we would really want to see in our studios," says Rasfeld.

Another event being planned is the administration of the nationwide Society of Professional Audio Recording Studios' recording engineering self-evaluation test. So far, 35 EARS members have signed up to take the exam.

Few EARS participants belong to SPARS at this point. Rasfeld says this is because the group's \$365 annual dues are prohibitive to smaller studios, although he points out that Chicago Trax and Acme Studios both plan to join SPARS in the future.

"A lot of people here don't think they'd benefit from SPARS," he says. "As a national organization, it obviously doesn't deal with local concerns. There's a need for that, and EARS fills that need."



**Loose Boys.** Miami Sound Machine's Emilio Estefan, top, and Clarence Clemons cavort in Miami's Criteria Studios, where the sax man put down a solo on the title track from MSM's new album, "Let It Loose." Estefan also produced four tracks on Clemons' upcoming album.

## Sound Investment

A weekly column spotlighting equipment-related news in the audio and video production, post-production, and duplication industries.

**LIVE FROM DOWN UNDER:** Australia's **Metropolis Audio** has constructed a live acoustic environment in its Studio One. The variable design allows the studio to be adjusted to create a number of different room types.

**EXPORT SURGE:** It's not all that common these days to hear reports of U.S. audio firms doing booming business in Europe. For **Altec Lansing Consumer Products**, however, that's just the case. The Milford, Pa.-based maker of speakers and electronic devices says it has just opened a sales/marketing office in London headed up by **Ben Hogan**, former European managing director for Altec Lansing Professional Products.

**MASTER THE POSSIBILITIES:** New York's **Master Sound Astoria** is expanding. Owners **Ben Rizzi** and **Maxine Chrein** say they recently installed the **Digital Creations** moving fader console automation system as well as a new **Sony 1-inch**

VTR in an effort to broaden the studio's capabilities for both digital/analog recording and audio post-production. Also new to the studio is **David Browning**, formerly of **Regent Sound**. He heads up MSA's new postproduction division.

**NO OPTICAL ILLUSION:** Synclavier owners can now take advantage of optical disk technology. New **England Digital**, manufacturer of the Synclavier, has released an optical, disk-based, digital audio storage and retrieval system, designed to augment the existing Winchester hard disk storage systems. According to **Mark Terry**, director of marketing for NED, the optical disk package allows the user to store up

to 5½ hours of sound on a single disk in any format he or she chooses (sound effects, dialog, music, etc.). Terry says as many as 20,000 one-second or 1,300 15-second sound effects can be stored, archived, and accessed "with a single keystroke from the Synclavier keyboard."

**A FIRST FOR MASTER MIX:** **Hank Williams**, studio manager of **Master Mix Studios** of Nashville, says the facility has acquired the first **Calrec UA 8000** console in the U.S. The board features a flexible channel function arrangement, a proprietary console automation system developed by AMS, and other special features.

Edited by STEVEN DUPLER

### AUDIO TRACK

(Continued from preceding page)

**Vincent Invasion**, **Bryan Jay** and **Marc Ferrarie** of **Keel**, **Tommy Thayer** of **Black 'N' Blue**, **Eric Carr** of **Kiss**, **David Glen Eisley** of **Giuffria**, **Paul Shortino** of **Quiet Riot**, and members of **Alice Cooper's** touring band.

NASHVILLE

**THE SOUND EMPORIUM** recent-

ly hosted **Suzy Boggus**, who was in to work on mixes with producer **Wendy Waldman** and engineer **John Wiles** for a Capitol Records project. Also, **Royal Court of China** worked on overdubs with engineer **John Mills** for an A&M release. Additionally, **Sawyer Brown** was in with producer **Ron Chancey** to mix tracks for a Capitol release. **Les Ladd** engineered.

The **Music Mill** was the setting for Alabama when it worked with producer **Harold Shedd** on the band's 10th album. The RCA project was engineered by **Jim Cotton**, **Joe Scaife**, and **Paul Goldberg**. Also there, **Larry Boone** and producer **Ray Baker** cut material for a Mercury/PolyGram project. **Jim Cotton** engineered. In addition, the **Goldman Boys** worked on cuts for CBS Records. **James Stroud** produced.

OTHER CITIES

**A STREET RECORDS'** **Hybrid Ice** was in at the **Warehouse** in Philadelphia to cut basic tracks for the group's second album release. **Bill Grabowski** produced with **Chester Cianci** engineering. Vocals and overdubs are being tracked at **Susquehanna Sound**, Northumberland, Pa., with **Scott Berger** running controls.

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