

PARfiles

BY STEPHEN MURPHY

Marcussen Mastering

TYPE OF BUSINESS: Mastering

LOCATION: Hollywood, California

ESTABLISHED: July 2000

OWNER/CHIEF ENGINEER: Stephen Marcussen

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY: Aerosmith, Alice In Chains, Beck, Johnny Cash, Cher, Elton John, Don Henley, B. B. King, Kiss, Marilyn Manson, Willie Nelson, Nirvana, Roy Orbison, Ozzy Osbourne, Prince, REM, Rolling Stones, Santana, Stevie Wonder.

STUDIO A EQUIPMENT

PLAYBACK: Studer 820 two-track, Ampex ATR 102 two-track reel-to-reel tape recorders; Sony 7030 timecode DAT; Alesis MasterLink ML9600 hard disk recorder/CD recorder; Digidesign Pro Tools LE 5.1 digital audio workstation; Panasonic DVD A-7 DVD player; Sony CD XA7ES, Sony SACD SCD777ES CD players

MONITORS: Five B&W Nautilus 802s; three Velodyne subwoofers; two Quedstedt 108H closefield monitors

AMPLIFIERS: Five Aragon Palladiums; MacIntosh 240

CONSOLE: Custom six-channel analog console with custom switching and monitoring

ANALOG PROCESSING: Prism Sound Maselec MEA-2 equalizers; Prism Sound MLA-2, SSL G384, Manley Labs Vari-Mu and Pendulum Audio OCL-2 compressors

DIGITAL PROCESSING: Three Weiss EQ1 Mark II EQs; three Waves L1 limiters; TC Electronic Finalizer 96; dbx Quantum

DIGITAL CONVERTERS: Three each of Prism Sound's Dream AD-2 and DA-2 converters

EDITING: Sonic Solutions DAW with CD burner



This month, Marcussen Mastering celebrates the start of its third year in ultimate studio style: great gear, talented engineers and a packed schedule book. Founded by mastering engineer Stephen Marcussen, Marcussen Mastering features three expertly equipped George Augspurger-designed rooms housed in a converted newspaper press building. A former recording engineer, Marcussen's mastering career got off to a great start with Stevie Wonder's 1980 Platinum success, Hotter Than July. A look at his discography on Marcussen Mastering's website (www.marcussenmastering.com) confirms that he is one of the most in-demand mastering engineers around.

Any recent changes in your list of preferred mastering gear?

We recently switched over to the new Prism Sound A/D and D/A converters. I have three each of the Dream AD-2 and DA-2 converters, so whether monitoring in stereo or multichannel, everything now goes through the Prism converters.

You have a number of specialized analog mastering tools, including a revered custom analog board designed by fellow mastering engineer Dave Collins, Jonathan Little of Little Labs and yourself. Do you often find yourself sending projects originating in the digital domain to analog to take advantage of these tools?

There are some projects that come in where the engineers really took care to do everything right digitally-speaking; those tend to remain digital throughout the mastering process. Much of the digital source material I encounter can really benefit from running through the analog path, however. My analog set up is as clean as clean can be, so that's never an issue.

What new gear are you considering for your mastering facility?

There's a bigger market for 5.1 surround material than I ever really dreamed. I don't want to take away from people actually remixing in 5.1, but right now we're looking at variety of products designed to "unwrap" or "unscramble" a two-channel mix and create a credible surround matrix. These boxes are attractive to labels when, in the best-case scenario, nobody can find the original multitrack to remix, and in the worst case, they can't find the money to remix.

I haven't been able to draw any conclusions on which ones work best. However, it's much better when the project can actually be remixed in 5.1 than have a stereo mix "re-purposed."