

IN THE MIX

WORDS PAUL WATSON

"WE HAD STEVEN TYLER ON MYMIX LAST YEAR AND HE ABSOLUTELY SMOKED IT. HE THOUGHT IT WAS VERY COOL."

Designing and building recording studios is something JOHN EDWARDS knows all about. He started out in 1987 and since then, has created esteemed facilities for the likes of Stuart Copeland, Teddy Reilly, and Christina Aguilera. Recently, he has been busy putting together a delectable studio for acclaimed songwriter and producer, Oliver Leiber, who he has been buddies with for some 25 years, after building the artist's first studio back in 1989. This one, however, is a little different: try a 3,400 sq ft studio, right in Leiber's back yard! According to Edwards, it's his best work yet.

"This one really is my absolute pride and joy; it's huge!" Edwards smiles, explaining that work commenced in 2009, and doors were already open the following year. "It's a private studio, he doesn't rent it for anybody, and everybody that uses it loves it. The compliments are so high, and they can't believe it's in a back yard! It makes me feel good, as I did something right, for once!"

Edwards is being modest, of course. In all his projects, he designs and builds the rooms, pulls the permits, does all the acoustic treatments, all the wiring, specs the kit, then shows the owners how to use the kit!

"I did Letterbee in '89 with a British guy, Bruce Miller, who was an SSL guy at the time, and Bruce ended up getting a job at Letterbee as their head guy, so we did it together," Edwards continues. "Then Michael Jackson rented one of the rooms for two years - as you do - and I was then asked to do the other Letterbee on Letterbee Street in Santa Monica. So we went to Hawaii, we drank a lot, I came back, and then did the Santa Monica studio! And then Prince rented that room for a year! That was a good collaboration, and it launched me into getting gigs. I have never advertised, it's all been through friends."

That's some word of mouth! So what's Mr. Leiber hiding in this back yard of his, then?

"Well, I bought a 1977 8068 Neve, tore it apart, then fixed the whole thing back to complete spec the way it came out of Neve; and then I

bought an 8066 in Canada from the same year, bolted it on the end, and made it all talk to each other," Edwards reveals, praising the techs that helped him out on the build. "It's all wrapped around that and Pro Tools. And it's a guitar room. In the control room, the back wall is all [guitar] heads, and it goes from any room at any time to all the respective cabinets."

A PERSONAL TOUCH

One of Leiber's closest friends is Paul Peterson who works in Minneapolis. He introduced Edwards to a personal monitoring system that has, in his own words, 'blown his mind'. Enter myMix.

"When I first saw myMix, they were playing in Oliver plays in F Deluxe, Oliver's other band, which is also Prince's backup band; and he said we had to get this thing," he recalls, with a smile. "We had another system which was supposed to be the best, but the guy was going through a bankruptcy and the whole thing was a nightmare. Anyway, when I first saw it, I thought there was no way that it was going to be able to keep up with a rock drummer... I was wrong! It just kicks, it completely works."

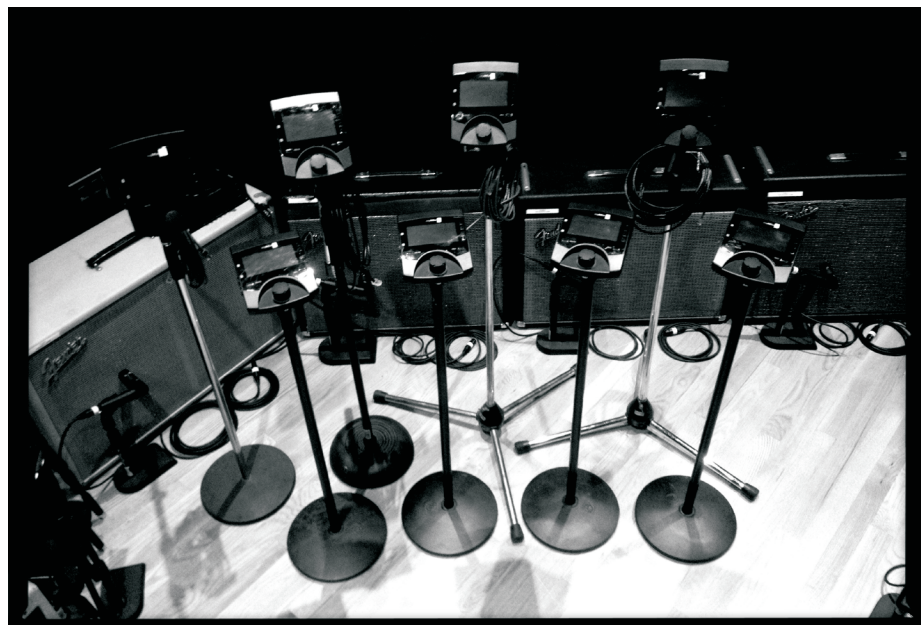
A recent Beth Hart session at the facility utilised a bunch of myMix units, and included a best of the best in session musicians. And it all went rather well.

"We had Michael Landaue, Waddy Wachtel, Rick Marotta on drums, Jimmy Cox on piano, Ivan Neville on the keys; and except for Rick, they were all in the same room, and everyone loved it," says Edwards. "I just walked in and said, 'this is how you scroll through it, pick what you want up, pick what you want down, that's it'. And because everyone is computer-based now, it's second nature. Even Beth, who is always really nervous about kit, was ripping through that thing in no time. She kept tweaking it as she was singing: keys down, let's move the drums, piano up. We had seven people playing through myMix at once, and it didn't falter at all."

And what about the setup? How does myMix talk to the console?

"Well, I did it a little differently to most," he smiles. "First off, we have a board that was built in 1977, so it's not like it's a seamless interface with new technology. So I have three interfaces that go just to the board from Pro Tools. Channel one is channel one on Pro Tools, and so on, so there's no patching; it's just basically like having two tape machines wired straight to your board where you don't have to do anything."

"Then I bought a fourth interface, and I designated the outputs of that just



to myMix, so in Pro Tools there is no patching, nothing. As soon as I interfaced that, I still had the inputs of that interface to use, which I have going into an API rack, but the outputs are all hardwired to the IEX interface for the myMix, and it works great."

PLUG & PLAY

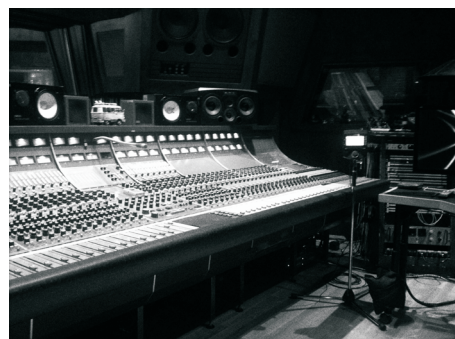
Prior to acquiring myMix, Edwards had already wired 24-input mic panels to all three of the studio's rooms, therefore Cat-5 was already available everywhere.

"That was cool, as we were prepared in advance, so we just plugged the Ethernet into the myMix, and plugged them all into the Cisco switcher which is provided by myMix," he says. "It took us no longer than forty-five minutes to hook the whole thing up, which just blew us away, to be honest."

Leiber's facility boasts 16 myMix: headphones come out of 1-15, and number 16 is hardwired to the console for talkback. One recent addition has been the myMix Controller, which has been really helpful in terms of workflow.

"I know a lot of people can't afford to buy another interface and dedicate it to a headphone mix, but by being able to do that, we solved every problem," Edwards admits. "We just got the myMix controller too, and my computer guy pulled that thing up in a matter of seconds, and said, 'oh this is perfect'; and he did the whole playlist with everybody's name, all within minutes, then sent it out to every myMix. It made everything so much easier, as before you had to name each individual myMix; the convenience factor of the controller is huge."

The myMix system has been in for a while now, and is used mostly for overdubs and



solo artists, and the occasional rock God:

"I had Steven Tyler on myMix last year and he absolutely smoked it, you know? He was like, 'yeah, this is really cool'. And no-one has ever said it sucks. Even the ficklest of artists like Vinnie Colaiuta - he is unbelievable on drums but he is a pistol! Vinny was like, 'this myMix thing is pretty cool, I kinda like this little system!'"

As far as Edwards is concerned, every studio project he works on from now will include a myMix system of some kind.

"The manufacturer has really come through for me personally, and it's made myMix a complete no-brainer for me," he states. "I've gone into Westlake Audio and places like that before, and they have these big mixers that are on, but the thing is, an artist looks at those things and there's a little bit of shaking in their knees, you know? Whereas with myMix, it's so approachable. Because the interface is so straightforward, it's as easy as playing a video game!"

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