

# sound recording

## Ocean Way Reopens Studio A

HOLLYWOOD, CA—For the first time in 13 years, Ocean Way's (www.oceanwayrecording.com) famed Studio A is available for outside bookings. The tracking studio, designed by Bill Putnam in 1958, had been booked long-term by producer/mixer Jack Joseph Puig, who has now taken over Studio D, Ocean Way's new mix and overdub suite featuring a Neve 88R. The customized Ocean Way Focusrite console remains in Studio A, which Puig will continue to utilize for tracking dates.

## SugarHill's Power Restored

HOUSTON, TX—SugarHill Recording Studios (www.sugarhillstudios.com) celebrated its 67th birthday by receiving the gift of electricity, 23 days after losing power due to Hurricane Ike. With the exception of a three-month closure due to bankruptcy in the 1970s, the 23-day interruption is the longest in the studios' history. SugarHill was forced to cancel its monthly Music Makers Mixer, reschedule various sessions, and move a few sessions to local studio SoundArts. The first week of October also marked the 12th anniversary of RAD Audio, the current ownership of partners Rodney Meyers, Andy Bradley and Dan Workman.

## Modern Consoles For Modular Gear

by Christopher Walsh

BOYERTOWN, PA—The digital audio workstation's dominance has encouraged a slew of front-end and controller products, as equipment has evolved to integrate with computer-based recording rigs. This, in turn, has spurred demand for consoles—the "enclosure" kind—for DAW-and-controller rigs, as engineers spend less time in front of large-format mixing consoles. These new consoles allow professionals a work environment superior to the makeshift setups implied by the term "desktop audio."

Several manufacturers have moved to fill the need for functional and ergonomically

friendly consoles to house computers, controllers, rackmount and modular equipment drawing on years of experience in studio acoustics and architecture to meet the demand for professional-level recording and mixing arrays.

Jim Maher's Sterling Modular Systems is one such company. Maher brings a long history of studio design to Sterling: His work is seen in facilities including Masterdisk, Sync Sound and Sterling Sound (no relation), as well as the now-defunct Sony Music Studios, all in New York. A decline in New York-area commercial studio construction, encouraged

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**GRAVITY BLUES:** The legendary Buddy Guy came to Gravity Studios in Chicago to record with studio owner Doug McBride for an upcoming Jive Records release. Stephen K. Jordan produced; McBride served as engineer. Pictured are Guy (left) and McBride.

## Curb College Delivers Distance Learning

NASHVILLE, TN—Beginning with the 2008 fall semester, Belmont University's Mike Curb College of Entertainment and Music Business (CEMB) embarked on a distinctive ap-

proach to teaching audio engineering and music recording. The faculty is delivering interactive real-time classes to students located 4,340 miles and four time zones away at the

University of Hawaii's Honolulu Community College.

Thirty years ago, Belmont pioneered a small music business program that has matured into a unique college specializing in entertainment and music business. Today, its audio engineering program is a freestanding program—the Curb College AET (Audio Engineering Technology) program, unlike most academic programs, is not embedded in a music, communications arts or electrical engineering program.

The Hawaii-based "Music and Entertainment Learning Experience" (MELE) was the dream of former Nashvillian and Warner/Reprise label head Jim Ed Norman, who has lived on the "Big Island" since 2005. The MELE program took flight after Norman introduced HCC Chancellor Ramsey Pederson to his former Music Row business colleague, now Dean of the Curb College, Dr. Wesley Bulla. In 2007, the two schools launched a beta test of a two-year program designed for entry-level music industry and production students on the campus of HCC in Honolulu.

At the center of the Curb College distance learning enterprise are the Toft ATB 16- and 24-channel consoles. The console's namesake, Malcolm Toft, was a founder of Trident Audio Developments and a designer of the classic A-Range, Series 80, TSM and

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## BERLINER MICROPHONES

### Model U77

"The human voice is a complex instrument so recording that perfect vocal sound can be a challenge. Since I added the Berliner U77 to my collection, its become my "go-to" vocal mic. It delivers that magical sound I look for in a high-end tube mic!"

—Boris Milan, Recording Engineer/Mixer (Carlos Santana, Placido Domingo, Ricardo Montalán) 2006 Latin Grammy Award Nominee, Album of the Year - Fonseca Corazón, Latin Grammy Award, Best Merengue Album - Olga Tañón



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## soundrecording

# Modular Gear

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him to redirect his abilities.

"While I was doing studio design work," says Maher, "I noticed that one of the shortcomings of most designers' projects was that they never paid attention to the furniture and what it was doing to the acoustics. I started to pay more attention to that end of the design myself, and started to develop a couple of methods and things to watch out for that could create problems."

To address and correct acoustical problems, Maher reveals, "We started by making the console more angular and trying to avoid any surfaces that would be parallel to any surfaces that are in the room, so you wouldn't get any slapback echoes between the furniture and the walls. We design the consoles so that the 'pods' [typically containing 12U of desktop rack space] are on a 30-degree angle so that each speaker reacts the same with each side of the console. Your imaging stays similar: you're not pushing off from a 30-degree angle speaker to a 25-degree on the console. We design angles that have bridges so that the sound bounces up toward the ceiling before it gets to the mixer's

ears. A very low profile—we design the consoles to stay as low in the room as possible, usually staying below 35 inches and far below the mixer's ear level.

"We build the console so it has more of an open architecture and a frame architecture to the console," Maher adds, "so that nothing can get trapped inside. There are no boxes that can trap sound or amplify any low ends and distort that. We use fabrics wherever possible in the venting instead of metal perforations so that you get a much better acoustical response."

The popularity of modular, rack-based, front-end arrays has also spurred development of furniture to address this paradigm.

"We design the rack systems with the same thing in mind," says Maher. "We like to keep things on angles so that you don't have the slap reflection against anything in the room. If they're placed correctly, they bounce the sound away from the mixer."

Sterling Modular does a lot of custom work for Tonelux-based rigs, Maher adds—the company website displays a custom console for Tonelux modular and rack-mount equipment, fader packs and master fader. "That [console] is adapted from our regular 'Plan B' console," says Maher, "but we had to make accommodations for more venting because of the amount of heat that analog equipment gives off.

"For something so big that you're putting in the middle of your acoustic space," Maher concludes, "I don't think enough attention is given to the fact that the console can really destroy your acoustics. That's why we developed this."

**Sterling Modular Systems**  
[www.sterlingmodular.com](http://www.sterlingmodular.com)

More information online at [www.avworshipsystems.com](http://www.avworshipsystems.com)

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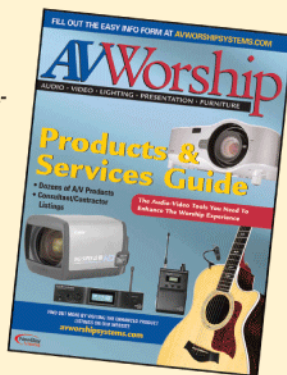
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## Belmont

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Series 65 consoles that were staples in studios all over the world in the early 1970s. "Most, if not all, of our faculty teaching production came up through the industry working on Trident consoles," says AET program coordinator, Dan Wujcik. "Trident had an easy-to-follow signal path and great-sounding EQ and microphone preamps. When we heard the ATB line was coming out, we immediately thought it would be a good fit for classroom application."

The Toft consoles are used in the programs' Survey of Recording Technology class that is required for all students in the music business, songwriting and audio engineering technology programs. "While that's not an unusual requirement for a program such as this," says Dean Bulla, "what's unique about this particular 'Survey' is that, along with the familiar audio recording equipment, it is taught in a classroom outfitted with multiple remote-controlled cameras and state-of-the-art IP teleconferencing and webcasting systems."

Four thousand miles away at the Honolulu Community College is a classroom outfitted to mirror the one on the campus at Belmont University, from microphones right down to the Toft ATB console, monitors and onboard gear.

Students attending the MELE program in Hawaii attend class and interact via teleconference with the instructor and students in the classroom in Nashville. The course introduces students to the history of recording technology, as well as the basics of recording production and studio operations. The students participate in lectures and demonstrations by interactive class. "We set the classrooms up so everyone in the class can see and hear each other so it's like having one big classroom," Bulla explains.

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