



L.A. GRAPEVINE

by Maureen Droney

Some people are going to find that their lives are a whole lot easier now that multitalented engineer Bruce Maddocks has opened Cups 'N Strings, a one-stop studio in Hans Zimmer's Media Ventures complex in Santa Monica. Maddocks, a veteran of such top facilities as The Hit Factory, Record Plant, Capitol Recording Studios, Paramount Pictures and Sony Pictures, has put what he's learned over the years to use in an



Bruce Maddocks inside his Cups 'N Strings studio.

elegantly designed, multipurpose room. Need to do a surround mix? A multichannel transfer in a multitude of formats? ISDN, FTP, MP3 or Internet transfers? Digital archiving of a precious analog master? Or maybe rent a 2-inch 8-track head stack for your Studer? Yes, yes, yes — and more yes.

"I can do that," seems to be one of Maddocks' favorite phrases. "It's something I learned from Record Plant and its founder Chris Stone," he says with a laugh. "We were doing everything there — studio recording, live remotes, location sound for sitcoms — and we also had Scoring Stage M at Paramount. It was always, 'Say yes.' That was a great learning experience."

Since his very first music-biz job, Maddocks has worked at both the mixing and the technical sides of the board. He started in the tech shop at New York's legendary A&R Studios, and a day or so later, he found himself working on, and providing technical assistance on, a Phil Ramone session. It went on from there; years later, at Sony Pictures in Los Angeles, when he wasn't mixing sitcoms he was modifying equipment in the engineering department.

"I've worked in every area of audio," he comments. "With all of the different disciplines, I've learned to deal with situations quickly and efficiently. What's happening now is that the different functions and services from those different areas have been blurred. Take ISDN. Traditionally, all of that point-to-point communication was used in broadcast. Now, we're using it to record remote vocals, etc. Something that started out in broadcasting and then became a post-production tool has been embraced by the recording industry. Seeing that, and also the continuing move toward surround sound, I wanted to offer high-quality stereo and surround mixing, with digital-transmission capability, in a comfortable environment. For example, we have full ISDN: Dolby Fax and MPEG for remote mix approvals, vocal overdubs or even real-time 5.1 streaming, and we can burn .WAV files, DATs or CDs from it. It's all coming together, and I've incorporated it all into the studio."

The heart of Cups 'N Strings is a Sony DMX-R100 digital console, which was configured to create eight channels of digital and analog outputs simultaneously. There is also a very classy collection of outboard, including specialty items such as an Altec tube mic preamp; ARX mic pre's, gates, EQ and compression; a Behringer Magician; and a rare Magnatech 29 EQ. Mixes can be made from the studio's vintage Ampex ATR 124 2-inch 24-track, or to almost any configuration of analog or digital multitrack, or digital hard drive systems.

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Surround mixes can be encoded into Dolby Digital (AC-3), DTS or DVD-A bitstreams. For those with budget constraints or missing multitrack masters, Maddocks has had good luck creating surround mixes from 2-track or mono sources using TC Electronic's Model 6000 Unwrap software.

Monitoring, in addition to Yamaha NS-10s and Genelec 1031As, is by Maddocks' own TEC Award-nominated TLC 3s, powered by Hafler Trans•nova amplification with calibrated bass management.

Obviously, with so many formats available, transfers are a specialty. So is "asset digitization": Maddocks has expertise in creating digital-storage archives for entire catalogs or single masters. Tapes are evaluated, with repairs or restoration, including convection oven "baking" provided as needed.

Next to the comfy 300-square-foot control room is an overdub suite, which gets used frequently for voice-overs that often use ISDN technology, which, because of the facility's dedicated lines, has particularly fast transfer rates. Clients also have private parking and full use of Media Ventures' rooftop patio and art deco-style indoor lounge and kitchen.

Maddocks especially enjoys working in the creatively charged atmosphere of the Media Ventures complex: "My first session, which I did even before I finished building the studio, was mastering a reel for one of the composers



whose office is here. It's great working in an environment with so much going on. There's a wonderful energy here."

As you'd expect from someone so tech-savvy, Maddocks has an efficient, fast and informative Website at www.cupsnstrings.com.