

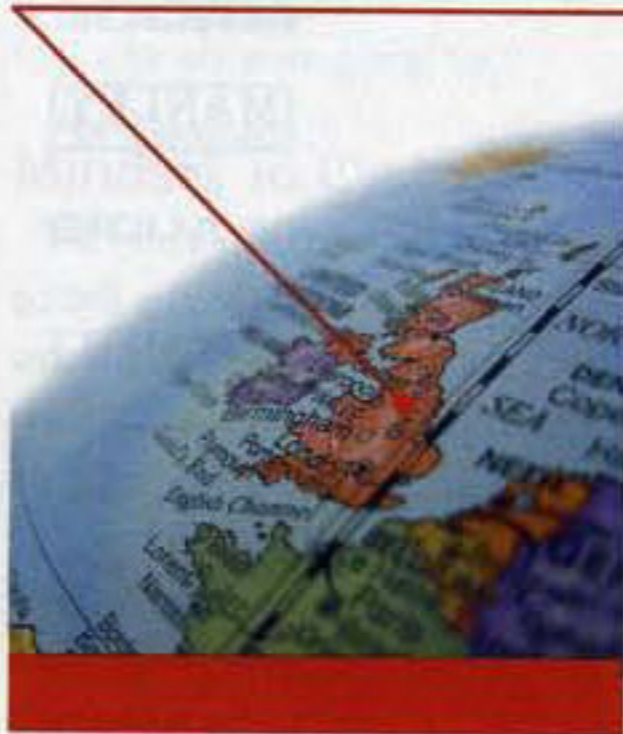
# FutureMusic **Studiofile**

The world's finest recording and production environments

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

A few essential bits of information about...

# Motor Museum Liverpool, UK



### ADDRESS

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### WHO RUNS IT?

Mike Crossey, Producer

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**W**alking into Liverpool's Motor Museum, the first thing that strikes you

is how unusual the building is. Producer and studio manager Mike Crossey fills us in on its history: "It used to be a bus depot, then about 25 years ago it was made into a car museum. Shortly after that it was made into a recording studio by a Greek guy called Hambi Haralambous, which is why it's got a Greek feel to it. It was later taken over by Andy McCluskey from OMD. He still owns the building and works in one of the rooms."

McCluskey has been resident in the building for nearly a decade but Crossey only took on the studio lease last spring, recruiting his assistant engineer Oliver Buchanan in London and moving up to Liverpool the next day, lured by the outstanding facilities on offer. "The studio's got quite a lot of history to it because two of the biggest bands of the last two generations recorded their first singles

here. Oasis did *Supersonic* here and the Arctic Monkeys recorded their first single here too. It seems to be a bit of a lucky charm."

### Rooms within a room

The unique setup of the Motor Museum houses three live rooms, offering a variety of sounds when recording. "We've got a pretty neutral all-purpose middle live room. It used to be carpeted but it was a little too dead for my taste so we re-worked it to give it a livelier sound. The other room is solid stone, really explosive and fantastic for drums. The booth gives us a really nice option to blend between a drier kit sound and a more Bonham-esque sound."

The fully-stocked microphone cupboard houses everything you could possibly want, from boutique ribbon mics to classic condensers and bread and butter dynamics. Crossey offers a great piece of advice for home recording on a budget: "The Shure SM7s are real workhorses and in terms of value for money they're



ATC T16s

"I really liked these when I heard them in Alan Moulder and Flood's Assault and Battery studio. They're detailed for hearing exactly what compression's doing to the signal."

**Tannoy Little Gold**

"These sound like really nice hi-fi monitors for me. Acoustic music and more gentle tracks sound really good on them."

**Pioneer SR-202W Reverb**

"We've just got this and we haven't got the right cables for it yet. Apparently the Beastie Boys used it a lot. I can't wait to hear it."

**INTRODUCING...**



L-R  
**Oliver Buchanan**  
Assistant Engineer  
**Mike Crossey**  
Producer

**Moog Minimoog**

"The Moog is mainly used for fucking stuff up! We run the bass or guitars into it and use the filter to get crazy sounds."



**Boutique Guitar Goodies**

The Motor Museum is heaven on earth for guitar nuts, with the cupboards crammed full of the finest guitars, basses, amps and effects money can buy. "We've got a really big collection of guitar amps," Mike tells us. "A lot of them are owned by Alan Wills, a friend of mine who runs Deltasonic Records. The WEM

Westminster's great for a Rolling Stones Rock'n'Roll sound and the 1964 Ampeg fliptop is about as good as it gets for bass. For recording guitars we use a Little Labs PCP distro box which lets you run multiple amps with different pedals and a routing matrix. It allows you to audition lots of different amps and

blend them together. "We've got a 1972 Fender Telecaster Custom, the Keith Richards guitar. We've been waiting for a Tele as good as this one for two or three years. We find when bands come in they don't tend to use their own guitars or amps." Somehow it doesn't surprise us! When pressed to choose his favourite amp, Mike

picks out the Silvertone 1485, a budget 1960s model featuring a 120-watt head and 6x10 cabinet. "The Silvertone is probably my favourite. Jack White uses it as his main amp and it took him five years to find his. If you're lucky enough to find one, it's outrageous. It only does one thing but it does it very well."



**Foxx Tone Machine**

"This thing is like a mental distortion fuzz thing with an octave on it. We just did an album with Blood Red Shoes and we doubled a lot of parts down an octave to make up for the lack of bass player."

**EHX Hog**

"We get a lot of use out of this. It can do so much, like a full guitar synthesizer. Rather than getting keyboards out to make pads we'll get the guitar player to freeze a chord and then run it out to multiple amps in the live room."



**Fender Precision Bass**

"This is Andy McCluskey's. He bought it in 1982 and forgot about it. It's in the first thousand guitars that Fender ever made and I found it when I was clearing out rubbish under the stairs. Now it's insured for about forty grand..."

**Fender Rhodes Stage 73**

"This is a really good example of a Rhodes. We like to have lots of things for musicians to play with and get inspired by. We've also got a Magnatone combo amp for it to get the classic Stevie Wonder sound."

great. A lot of the time with rock bands they'll beat all the really high-end mics for vocals. If you're recording at home and you don't want to hear too much of the room, they're great."

The well-equipped control room was also a big part of the appeal to Crossey: "The acoustic treatment was done by Roger D'Arcy of Acoustics & Architecture before I took over. Knowing that the room sounds so good was one of the things that allowed me to move up here from London." Mike went half-way round the world to find the exact console he wanted, a 32-channel Neve 8232. "It came from a radio studio in South Africa so it was barely used," he tells us. "To me the 82 series has a really nice sound to it, a little better than a VR. It's got a really nice sweetening EQ and the routing's nice and

max it out and it's no stress at all to work at 96kHz even with lots of tracks. I didn't used to think it was so important and pretty much worked at 96kHz just because I could, but recently I've found that there's a bit more openness and plug-ins sound better at 96kHz."

### Tale of the tape

Even with such a high-end digital recording setup, just about everything in the Motor Museum starts off with good old tape. "I record to two-inch tape every session," Mike tells us.

"I think you get a lot more out of a tracking session when you record to tape and it makes you work the band hard and get it right. It forces you into good engineering practice – with digital you can have your level anywhere and it'll sound OK but tape forces you to think about things like

gain structure. I tend to run on tape for the first half of a session, until we start running out of tracks. Inevitably you'll run out with only 24 tracks so we'll transfer to Pro Tools and work from there.

"I'm not

## Tape sounds better when you are mixing, plus I find EQ goes further

flexible. We use it in conjunction with the Thermionic Culture Fat Bustard so we have plenty of channels. I'm a bit of a Thermionic nut. Sometimes I use it as a drum sub-mixer when I mix. The bass cut in conjunction with the bass lift lets you get an illusion of a big bottom end without it actually being there."

Monitoring is taken care of by a wide selection of nearfields, led by the faithful Yamaha NS10s. Mike's choices were based on thorough research: "I worked in London for a few years and I pretty much just unashamedly robbed ideas for monitoring from my favourite control rooms! I used to do some mixing in Metropolis Studio E and they had a Bryston 3B driving their NS10s. The first time I worked in there I thought the NS10s sounded a lot bigger and had a lot more low end than anywhere else so I actually went into their amp room and found the exact model – the 3B NPB – and scoured eBay until I found one. To me it's the best amp for NS-10s." Digital recording is handled by the studio's 48-in, 48-out Pro Tools HD5 rig. "It's pretty hard to

anti-Pro Tools at all but when I first started working in studios it didn't sound good. That was back with Pro Tools 888 on a NuBus Mac and it was clear as night and day that tape sounded better. I avoided Pro Tools until HD came out but I still just have a real attachment to the tape sound. Everything's got a bit of glue on it. It sounds better when you're mixing, plus I find that a little bit of EQ goes further when things are recorded on tape. Everyone's using the same Pro Tools converters and plug-ins so everything is starting to sound similar. If you record to tape, it adds character and gives it a bit more of a sonic signature."

Located in a unique and interesting space, the Motor Museum is packed full of outstanding equipment and run by experienced, knowledgeable staff. It's no surprise that it continues to attract big names from all over the country. **FM**

### YOUR STUDIO IN HERE?

Want to show us around your studio? Drop us a line at [futuremusic@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:futuremusic@futurenet.co.uk), and we'll pop round for an Appletiser.