

Padgham's Sofa Sound goes commercial

Famous producer opens his doors to business as Miloco takes over management

UK: As reported in September's *PSNE*, the Miloco studio group has added yet another top of the range facility to the portfolio of London recording studios that it operates and manages. Producer Hugh Padgham has enlisted Miloco's services to hire out his Sofa Sound Studios on a commercial basis when he doesn't require it for his own projects.

Padgham says that this move makes sense on a number of counts. "I was a bit reluctant at first to 'go commercial' at first," says the producer who has won a string of



The control room at Sofa Sound, based in the old Stanley House building in West London

awards, including four Grammys.

"After all, it's my personal studio and I'm wary of letting other people use the facilities and equipment. But on the other hand, it's empty a lot of the time – especially when I'm working in the States – and it seems daft to let such a great facility lie idle. Now, whereas it was more of a hobby before, it is now being run on a sensible business basis.

"I'm not the first to do this," he continues. "Miloco is already looking after a number of other studios and other artist/producer owners like David Gilmour and Mark Knopfler let out their facilities to selected clients. It's a bit of a trend and benefits all concerned.

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"We are hugely proud to

announce that we have been asked to represent Hugh Padgham's first-class SSL room, taking our total number of studios to nine," says Miloco's operations manager Nick Young. "With the sad demise of West London's Eden studios, we have seized the opportunity to end our barren existence in the west of the city, and are honoured to be representing the area's leading SSL room. Sofa Sound's equipment further includes a vast amount of plug-ins and a large range of outboard gear – including rare vintage EQs."

The first client to book Sofa under the new arrangement was Mark Ronson. "We're officially open for business," adds Young. "The studio has a lot to offer and we are confident it will attract a high calibre of artists."

Miloco also represents

Lofty gue

PORTUGAL: "I'm alive and well working in Lisbon at the best sounding mix facility in the world!" Strong words indeed. But when they come from James Lock, you can't help but sit-up and listen.

Lock is the former Decca chief engineer and two-time Grammy award winner (with ten nominations), and is legendary in the recording industry having worked with names such as Pavarotti, Sir Georg Solti and Karajan amongst others.

Lock is currently spending a few seasons in Portugal's flagship studio O Ganho do Som as resident sound chief engineer and international business consultant. "Lisbon is such a warm and sunny capital and the introductory post-production costs at this studio are way below anything you can get anywhere in the world for the same high-end quality," he says. "Besides, if I had a dream for the ultimate listening experience, this facility would be it. I had never heard my recordings sounding so damn good!"

Housed inside a residential loft in Lisbon, O Ganho do Som recently went through a state-of-the-art acoustic facelift by a Portuguese firm called Audiodesigner. The major concern of the studio was to make sure the sound engineer could listen to everything exactly as recorded, with no negative influence from the room or the monitoring chain.

The studio is based around six B&W 801D Nautilus speakers, powered by six audiophile Electrocompaniet Nemo monoblock amplifiers, capable of delivering 1,200 watts/4 ohms each.

Recordings, editing and mixing is supported by a Pro Tools system, with 196 tracks and 24 physical faders on a D-Command mixing desk. Audio resolution is up to 24 bits and 192kHz, with

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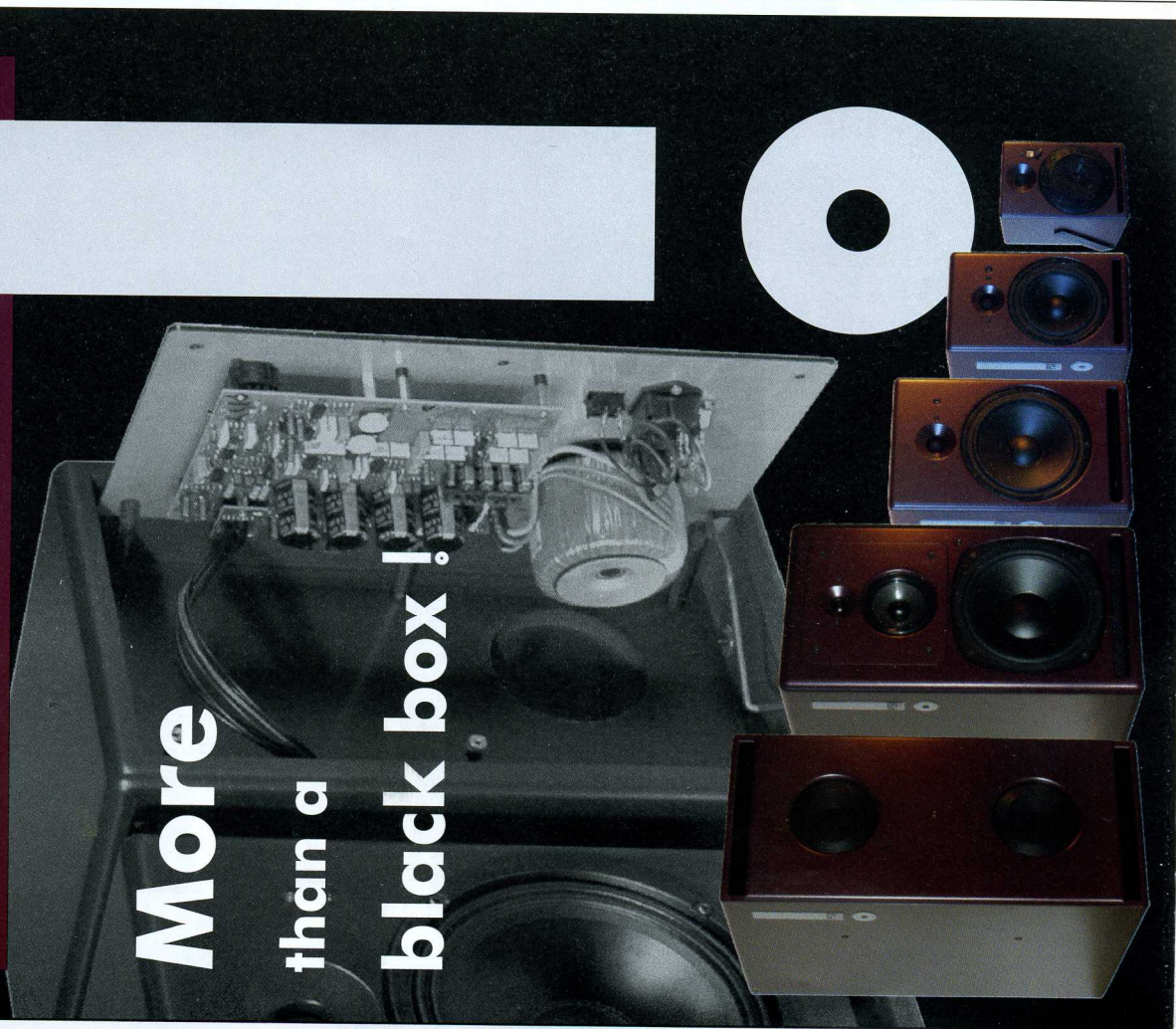
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Padgham started out as a tape-operator at Advision Studios, working in recording sessions for Yes and Emerson, Lake and Palmer. From there he went to Landsowne Studios and moved from tape-operator/assistant engineer to head engineer. In 1978, Padgham got a job at The Townhouse, where he engineered and/or produced acts including XTC, Peter Gabriel, and Phil Collins. And he's retained an affinity with London recording studios. "With Sofa Sound I want to promote the benefits of good top class recording studios. While others may be crashing out of the sky all around us, we're continuing to fly the flag."

Padgham and co-owner Chris Porter are gradually refurbishing the whole Stanley House complex which alongside the main studio also features a number of programming suites that are let out to individuals on a commercial basis.

Formerly the home of Stanley House Studios, Sofa Sound is based on the first floor of an Edwardian Warehouse, owned by Padgham, in Chiswick, West London. It consists of a large daylight control room and a good sized live room with two adjoining booths. The control room is light and airy, and features Quested monitoring. In the heart of the room is a SSL G+ series console with 62 mono, four stereo channels and 'E' EQs.

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Miloco also represents Musikbox, located in London's Kentish Town. Owned by the producer/engineer/artist Pete Heller, a key attraction to the studio is the vast collection of analogue keyboards. It boasts a Recording Architecture room, and in February this year was enhanced by a Neve VR60 console.

"We now offer fourteen rooms of varying size and specification, from basic long-let suites to an all-singing, all-dancing mix rooms," says Young. "While it's sad to see long established studios going out of business, we believe that the way we operate at Miloco is the way forward. There is business to be had out there in the commercial studio world, but you've got to get your sums right - and keep your costs and overheads down. Having a central administration helps us to achieve this."

Hugh Padgham agrees with these sentiments, but adds, "One thing we will certainly not be doing is discounting studio rates, letting the place out at silly prices. I'd rather it was empty than do that." ❑

JIM EVANS

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Lock is planning some 5.1 remasterings of late '70s recordings, as this facility is up to any form of analogue transfers and multi-channel remastering. There are also plans for O Ganho do Som and Lock to go on the road recording international classical music events with a set up of several Schoeps



O Ganho do Som main room