

WORLD

# Recording Architecture – The Book

This summer, Recording Architecture publishes *RA – The Book*, a large-format full-colour production that highlights a handsome cross section of the 500-plus studio projects that designer Roger D'Arcy and his team have been involved with over the years. We asked D'Arcy to select his top 10....

I am naturally flattered to be invited to select a career-spanning top 10 of RA studio designs. The task is daunting as there are so many factors that can be considered – size, acoustic quality, interior design, the location, the experience of the design and implementation process, the subsequent success of the studio and perhaps one of the most significant, the relationship with the client. Without a good client, it is virtually impossible to create a good studio.

I have decided to select the final 10 out of those built from scratch rather than from remodelling projects or purely acoustic fit-outs – a decision which in itself painfully excludes some major RA landmark successes like CTS 2 and Lansdowne for Adrian Kerridge, Konk for Ray Davies and Songphonic for Osman Kent. The projects are not ranked in any particular order.

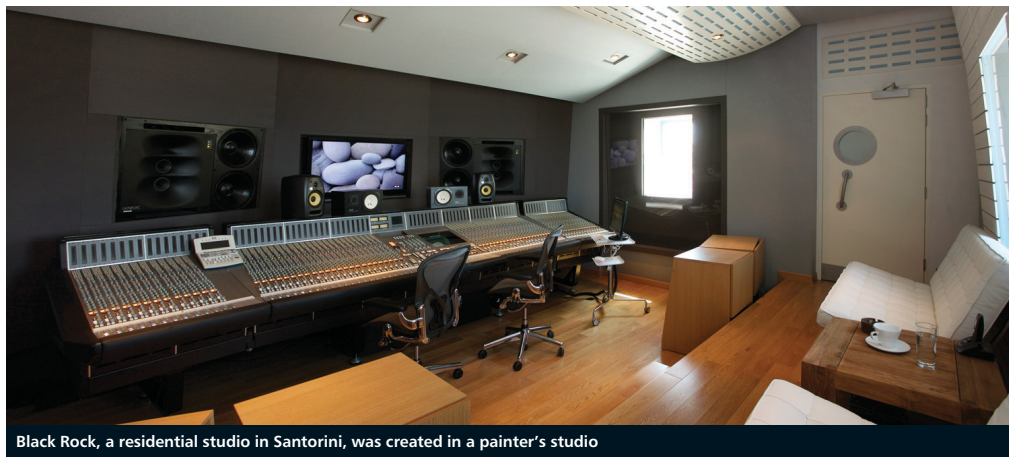
## Hulgrave Hall/Pluto Music, Cheshire, UK

The first completed RA project designed for film music composer, Keith Hopwood (Herman's Hermits) in the winter of 1987. This project still represents everything that a designer could hope to achieve in a project, including an idyllic countryside location (a listed historic barn and manor house with Welsh hill-fort ruins on the horizon) and a supportive client – the solution was necessarily radical.

The control room is conceived as a fully independent, cantilevered vibration-isolated concrete 'pod' suspended at high level in the barn on a series of columns over protected 15th century cattle-feeding troughs. The live area is formed at the same upper level with sound isolation carefully integrated to expose the historic roof structure and window openings. Keith Hopwood is the first in a line of respected clients that have enabled RA to achieve the results we have. The project also introduced us to Russell Hatt, structural engineer and collaborator of RA ever since.

## Plato Place, London, UK

This began life as a private music studio for Rick Astley and was constructed from scratch on the ground floor of an office/design studio development around a courtyard, making sound isolation from neighbours a particularly critical design issue. The project is perhaps most noteworthy for the dramatic 'stealth bomber' shaped plan – acoustically desirable but in part generated by the physical planning constraints of the unit and the position of a supporting column. Control rooms for Babajim, Amar Mohile, Robert Miles and Karl Jenkins have similar plan shapes generated by acoustic considerations/host building constraints.



Black Rock, a residential studio in Santorini, was created in a painter's studio



Mumbai's Sound City is an expansion of Enterprise Studios



Babajim boasts three independent studios

## Alberts, London, UK

This is in-house music recording studio for artist development. The project included extensive ancillary accommodation for artists and the associated publishing operations of Australia's Albert Productions, represented in the UK by George Young of the legendary Easybeats and fronted by veteran road manager, Robbie Williams (no, not that one...). It was constructed from scratch within a former 1950s wood-working factory and warehouse space tucked away behind residential buildings in the heart of London's Islington Green district.

## Salt Records and home studio, London, UK

The first RA project for Robert Miles was an in-house, twin-studio facility built in an industrial unit in north London for his Salt Records label. This design was another example of rotating the control plan relative to the host building axis to achieve more efficient acoustic and ergonomic proportions.

Dramatic colours led to it being featured on the homepage of RA's website for years. RA went on to design a fabulous small home facility in the glass-sided penthouse of Robert's London home – the customised Black Box bases acoustic control system was subsequently taken down and reconfigured in a new studio within his villa in Ibiza.

## Private music studio, Mumbai, India

A private music studio for film score composer Amar Mohile located in an upper floor of a commercial building in Mumbai. A representative instance of when it is not vital to impose a fully floated, independent 'room-within-a-room' solution for all spaces. The solid nature of the reinforced concrete host structure and the corner location (with therefore only one immediately adjacent neighbour) made it possible to more fully exploit the relatively limited surface area and restricted headroom. It is another good example of the potential advantages in rotating the control room axis in plan through 45° relative to the host building to enable a wider and acoustically more appropriate shape to be achieved.

## Scramble, Covent Garden, UK

This commercial music and post facility comprises three control rooms – one coupled to a large live area divided acoustically for music and voice over, the other two with smaller isolation booths purely for voice over. Dramatic plan shapes and interior design featuring metallic sprayed walls, etched glass blocks and custom Black Box elements directly inspired future clients, Bill Grishaw and Kristin O'Connor, to commission RA to design Rainmaker Studios in Richmond, Virginia after

seeing photographs published in *Mix Magazine*. The client, veteran engineer and producer Bill Gautier, had been a staunch and loyal advocate of RA since the earlier Magmasters project which we created around him, ultimately leading to the design of his private music studio, Marthas.

## Rainmaker, Richmond VA, US

The studios in this commercial music and post facility were constructed from scratch within a 19th century iron framed, timber floored commercial warehouse under residential apartments in Richmond's historic Shockoe Bottom district. The isolated shell walls were formed of exposed Virginia brickwork, independently floated from the host structure and carrying twin isolated lids (a double

## Sound City, Mumbai, India

A ground-up project extending the landmark Empire Studios in Mumbai and providing the envelope for a large Dolby-certified double-storey film mix theatre over two floors at an upper level including foyer areas for preview audiences and clients. The machine room is housed under the rear raked seating area with visual contact to the raised mixing level.

This marked RA's first use of structural glass for the flooring area around the console. It is still considered by many to have the finest film mixing acoustic in India. The striking interior design was passionately encouraged by an exceptionally supportive client, the charismatic Yusuf Lakdawala.

## Black Rock, Santorini

A residential music studio comprising control room, a main live area, two isolation booths, machine room and ancillary accommodation. The studio was created in a painter's studio and parts of the attached villa. An external sound lobby to access the control room and the drum booth were constructed as ground-up extensions to the villa using the local black volcanic rock that gives its name to the studio – in turn, the first project to be recorded (for blues guitarist, Joe Bonamassa) was named *Black Rock* in recognition of the studio.

## Babajim Studios and Mastering, Istanbul, Turkey

A commercial facility with three independent studios built from scratch over three floors in former retail/office premises in the heart of Istanbul. Studio A features a gallery over isolation booths linked by a bridge to the upper control room level, which in turn looks back out over the gallery and studio areas.

The studio features large hinged sections of moving wall for varying the acoustic characteristics. These wall sections can also be arranged to form a variety of separation zones. Studio B comprises a control room and isolation booth, while the third studio is a dramatically shaped, stand-alone mastering control room. The project was conceived by sound and mastering engineer, Pieter Snapper. ♣

(as told to Jim Evans)

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The private music studio of film score composer Amar Mohile in Mumbai