



I continued to build the control room shell and decided to email Philip Newell and thank him for his fabulous book, which had influenced much of my work. I sent some build pictures too. He replied personally and advised me of some points that would improve my design,

anomalies he had spotted in the pictures. We struck up an online friendship and he helped with queries and advised on the finer details of my design including the rear wall 'waveguide' absorber system and flush mounting of the Tannoy FSM main monitors ... ray-tracing the dispersion figures from Tannoy's quoted specs on the control room plans. This showed there were no significant early reflections that might colour the sound in the listening zone.

Philip was impressed with the control room air handling specification. It includes a Daikin fresh air heat exchanger linked by controller to a Daikin air conditioning unit with a total 9 x 1m x 200mm steel silencers and 200mm flexible acoustic ducting to link all components. The result is excellent control of humidity and temperature with near silent operation. The whole studio is heat exchanged and air conditioned throughout.

The main monitors were flush-mounted into a sand-filled studded wall to reduce resonance and to maintain impedance matching of materials used in the acoustic shell. They sit on a concrete foundation the size of their footprint and are surrounded at the sides, top and rear with two 25mm layers of MDF bonded. The remaining void is packed solid with RW3 Rockwool to reduce any cavity resonance. They are decoupled from the wall, base and shroud with a 12mm medium density foam surround.

The walls are non-parallel throughout and a rear wall waveguide absorber system, as used in many of Philip Newell's designs, finishes the job of tidying up standing waves that might have occurred otherwise. The floor is split level and rises at the rear to give a listening experience similar to what is heard at the mix position. Large windows either side of the control room look directly into the live and dead room studios, giving an excellent line of sight throughout. The room has a very calm sound and feel, but it's not dead. There are many reflective surfaces... they're just not in the firing line.

It was decided early on to concentrate the design and budget on the building and acoustics, to start with a good foundation, and build a quality recording and listening environment. I researched constantly; looking at old and new recording equipment to compile a shortlist of reliable tried and tested gear that was good value for money without compromising quality. I bought a refurbished Soundtracs Jade 48 channel in-line after much deliberation. I'm really happy with the choice because it's got loads of personality, and it's a great production console to work with. It's interfaced to an eight-core Mac Pro with two 3GHz quad-core Intel Xeon processors. I use Motu 2408 Mk2 (two), Mk3 and 24 I-O, for 48 channels of A-D/D-A with Logic Pro 9. It's a classic analogue front end with a powerful recording DAW.

Some of the equipment has been around for years. I remember my earlier sessions at Decca and the fabulous sound of the Tannoy Gold Monitor speakers

used in the control room. In 1987 I saw an advert introducing Tannoy's 'new' FSM monitor — a 15-inch high power Dual Concentric with additional 15-inch I.F driver in one cab... sold, to the man over there! I've owned them ever since and as Summerfield's main monitoring they are hooked up to a Neva Audio StudioV passive amp. Tannoy PBM 8s are closefield and AKG LSM50s are on the desktop.

With the completion of the control room in January 2011, I realised the project was taking on its own life and was starting to look special. The budget had gone out of the window, now it appeared I would have to commercialise the studio to take it to the next level. I had to move more quickly with finalising the remaining rooms but I was starting to feel the strain of constant work and was actually getting slower as I took more time to concentrate on the detail. I was under pressure financially due to constant disruptions of my employment, with redundancies and spells of sporadic employment.

It took another year to finish the studio and by that time I had hooked up with young graduate Dan Coley who came to the studio with a band. I instantly took to him and was impressed by his maturity. I gave him the opportunity to run some sessions and quickly realised that he had amazing editing skills and a profound knowledge of software. He's well organised, is skilful and has been a key player in developing the studio's operations. I believe that a studio is only as good as the engineers and staff who operate it and Dan is first class.

I attained commercial planning permission by Christmas 2012 and emailed Nick Young, MD at Miloco, with a view to be considered for their Marketplace portfolio. Nick replied saying he felt the studio lacked vibe and there was a list of things that didn't sound positive. He was right; I had overlooked the aesthetics and been a bit complacent about the finish. I set to work straight away; looking at interior designs from the best studio pictures I could find and started to see a pattern emerge. A complete refurbishment of the studio's lighting, décor and furniture has been well received and Summerfield Studios is now turning the heads of key industry professionals. We have become one of the new additions to the Miloco Marketplace portfolio.

The journey has been long and hard, and if I were to do it again, I would, of course, do it differently — take more time planning, costing, and making sure the finance was available. However, this was my dream, a vision turned into reality through guts, hard work and determination. There was only one chance and I was brave enough to take it and work hard to realise it. There really has been blood, sweat and tears...and a lot of luck! ■

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