

Myles Clarke is the musical maestro making dreams happen in the brilliant, and famous, [Grand Cru Studio](#) that bobs about in St Katharine Docks. We thought we'd ask him about it and what Pete Townsend has to do with the place.

### **What's the history of Grand Cru, Myles?**

In the early seventies, the Canadian Consulate in Paris bought Borneo, a 1912 dutch cargo barge, changed its name to Grand Cru, and used it as a champagne party boat. Pete Townshend then bought it as a part of a pair; one to be turned into a studio, the other as accommodation.

Acoustician Eddie Veale was in demand, building rooms for various Beatles and was commissioned to transform Grand Cru into a studio while it was moored outside Pete's riverside home in Goring-on-Thames. In the meantime, Pete bought a boathouse near Twickenham, and started building Eel Pie Studios. Grand Cru was moored outside for 30 or so years. It's had various set-ups inside – Ian Broudie used it as his room in the 90s. I think that 3 Lions was/were conceived here.

### **Why are you on the boat?**

I've known it for about 14 years. I started working as engineer for Pete around 2002. When the studio was sold, the barge had to be moved from its mooring. I ran a room of my own in London Fields for a while, and did some great work there, things like Sparkadia, Cocknbulldid and Kid Harpoon, it was a good little room, but felt temporary. Grand Cru had been painted blue and was here in St Katharine Docks, Pete was working on projects where my hearing was more useful to him than ever and the whole thing fell into place. I moved on board and the studio, as it is, sort of grew from there. We've done a lot work of work on deluxe editions of Quadrophenia, Tommy and recently My Generation, The barge played a massive role in Classic Quadrophenia (a classical interpretation of the album with Alfie Boe, Billy Idol, Phil Daniels and Pete singing), work on the closing ceremony of the Olympics.. Loads of stuff. At the end of last year we decided to take it from being private, to commercial. Anyone (within reason) can book it... actually, I'm a lot fussier than that.

### **Doesn't everyone make their records on a laptop these days?**

A laptop with all the boxes attached can now sound great, the software inside is powerful – but it always sounds like a laptop. You need great microphones, a great sounding room, some sort of weird and wonderful electronics, some mistakes that turn into the best part of the track, a sense of occasion, someone to encourage you, someone to tell you you're being a dick, somewhere inspirational to sit for a break, a

deadline, some perspective, somewhere that impresses a manager or a label, somewhere you can brag about, somewhere you can walk out of at the end of the day and say 'it's finished' and it sounds amazing.

**Do singers have any idea what any of the buttons on your desk do when they give you feedback?**

The rumours of being able to make a terrible singer sound amazing with boxes go back years and years (not them), Two bad voices singing the same thing usually sounds better than one. Then reverbs and echoes sort of became the thing to mush the sound to hide the wobbles. Angels by Robbie Williams is kind of a cut off point. I can't think of any big pop tune since that where there are ANY bum notes that have been 'let-go'. That's when it really changed. That was released in 1997, Autotune version 1 went on sale that spring... and then eventually the autotune-celebratory Cher track, and then spiralling to T Pain levels.. and that bit of programming on that Vampire Weekend tune is genius – an instrument in itself. In my experience, 'Singers' (proper ones) have an idea of what the buttons do, because they know their own voice. There are others that are yet to get to that level, one way or another. If you think you're singing flat, sing it again and smile. It's a genuine trick that works every time.