

project studio

Chiller Sound



John Altschiller calls his Chiller Sound a "high-end boutique overdub/mix room."

Located in New York's Chelsea neighborhood, Chiller Sound (www.chillersound.com) reflects its owner's good nature and wide-ranging tastes. In addition to recent projects recording Disco Biscuits, Deborah Harry and Bob Weir's RatDog, John Altschiller has mixed multiple artists (Ben Folds, My Morning Jacket, The Roots) for broadcast on the FUSE network, and mastered *Grand Theft Audio IV* and EMI's Jim Croce, Motown and Phil Spector compilations. Designed by Francis Manzella, Chiller Sound's 2,000-square-foot space (outfitted with RPG and Auralex diffusers) is equipped for live recording, but Altschiller views his studio more "as a high-end boutique overdub/mix room."

Altschiller runs Apple Mac Pro-G5/Digidesign Pro Tools HD Accel 3 7.4 (Apogee AD-16X converters) from a Digidesign ProControl, splitting his mix into 16 individual outputs into Chris Muth's Dangerous-2 16x2 summing mixer. "It's like putting a Neve console

at unity gain," he explains. "I can then push my level to about +24, about 8 dB hotter than normal. From the Dangerous I go into an analog compressor or EQ, usually a pair of Helios mic pre's for warmth. Then I'll choose a compressor."

Compressors include two API 525s, two Anthony DeMaria Labs ADL1000s, Tube-Tech LCA 2B and Vintech Custom Shop 609CA. "After compression," Altschiller continues, "I re-record through the Apogee Special Edition AD8000s. Pro Tools cycles back and I re-record to 2-track; then I can stack mixes as time goes on."

Altschiller has recorded everything from string quartets to folk singers to Pearl Jam drum overdubs in his space (using his Yamaha Oak Custom kit), and he can talk for hours about his mic collection (BLUE Dragonfly, Gefell M3000, Neumann U67 and 87, Telefunken/BLUE U47

and more), but his pulse really rises over the possibilities offered by plug-ins.

"I use Waves' Mercury, Q Clone, SSL 4000 and Universal Audio Neve packages, and Bomb Factory Fairchild—it gives girth to guitar and vocals. For EQ, the Sonnox Oxford is really precise, but the Massenburg MDW 5B EQ is phenomenal; it can take input level and won't distort. And you can invert the frequency and really zero-in on what you want," he enthuses.

Instruments also abound, from an ancient LinnDrum to a 1968 Gibson ES335 guitar, Wurlitzer electric piano and a 1969 Guild D-40. Analog signals relay via various mic pre's: two API 312s, Focusrite ISA 428, two Great River NP2NVs, Millennia HV-3D-8, four Neve 33115s, Summit Audio MPC-100A and a Tube-Tech MEC 1A.

Altschiller often mixes live performances for

DVD and broadcast, so surround monitor support is a must. (He vehemently believes in running bass, not just sound effects, through the subwoofer channel.) Altschiller's Blue Sky SAT 6.5s complement a pair of Genelec 1031As for 2-channel.

Out in the Chiller lounge, Gold and Platinum discs from Dave Matthews Band, Phish, John Mayer and Simon & Garfunkel attest to Altschiller's successful 18-year career.

"When I was called to do [Phish's] *Rift*," Altschiller says, "all of a sudden being in Phish's camp helped. But it helps more now than it did then. It gave me some credibility. At the end of the day, I just like to sit between speakers and make music sound good. Let's just get it done. No problems, only solutions." ■

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