



Ronan Chris Murphy reconfigures Veneto West Studios

Santa Monica facility now features FAR prototype main monitor speakers coupled with IsoAcoustics Modular Series stands.

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Producer, mixer, engineer and recording artist Ronan Chris Murphy has upgraded the main room at his Veneto West studio complex in Santa Monica, California, removing the vintage analogue mixing console and placing a greater emphasis on the monitoring signal path.

The reconfigured studio now features a pair of FAR (Fundamental Acoustic Research) prototype main monitor speakers that are decoupled from the floor using custom-configured IsoAcoustics Modular Series aluminium acoustic isolation stands.

“These one-of-a-kind FAR speakers weigh about 300 pounds each. I was surprised that the IsoAcoustics stands could accommodate them,” said Murphy, who has hundreds of albums in a broad range of genres to his credit, including hip-hop, classical chamber music, acoustic jazz, singer-songwriters and progressive rock from artists such as King Crimson, Steve Morse, Terry Bozzio, Tony Levin and Norwegian experimentalist Ulver. But he explained that the IsoAcoustics Modular Series stands were up to the task, and have made a marked improvement to the performance of the main monitors.

“The FAR speakers are really great sounding, very full-range and very accurate, which isn’t always the case with very large monitors. I use them primarily for mastering work,” he continued. “But the difference with and without the IsoAcoustics stands is night and day. With the stands, the accuracy of the low end is just exponentially better. The FAR speaker cabinets each have dual 15in subs in them, and the subs alone are 1,000 watts a side. Without the stands they might have been more fun to listen to because they made the whole room rumble. But now, with the IsoAcoustics stands, they produce a much more realistic and clear representation of the low end, far more accurate and useful than before.”

The idea behind the facility makeover was to streamline the equipment that Murphy and staff recording engineer Diego Lopez use on a daily basis. “We got rid of the mixing console and replaced a lot of the functionality with the new Crane Song Avocet II monitor controller, which is the centre of the studio now. I invested in 16 channels of ultra-high-end Apogee converters – customised AD-16Xs and DA-16Xs – and the IsoAcoustics Modular stands. The two biggest changes to the sound of the room were adding the Avocet II and the IsoAcoustics stands,” Murphy reported.

Nearfield monitoring is provided by a pair of Yamaha NS-10s, which are isolated using a pair of IsoAcoustics ISO-L8R155 stands.

Veneto West is a multi-purpose complex that was originally three apartments, and also includes outdoor patio space with a barbecue area. Murphy created a large main studio from two of the apartments that comprises a control room and tracking area with no separation between them. “The entire room is designed to be modular depending upon the work that we are doing – one position for mixing, mastering and tracking,” he explained.

The space is also used for teaching. Murphy also runs *Recording Boot Camp*, which attracts people from around the world who wish to learn their craft in a working studio. “The whole idea is to offer them an opportunity to get a real-world education from audio professionals working in the trenches, without any corporate spin,” he said. “The program I have put together has had a huge impact upon people. I’ve been blown away by the experience and by the feedback. One guy said that one week with me was better than nine months in a big recording school.”

The main room at Veneto West is centred on an Avid Pro Tools | HD system and includes three racks of outboard equipment, including high-end mic preamps, equalisers, compressors and other processors from such manufacturers as A-Designs, Altec, Drip Electronics, Electrodyne, Empirical Labs, Eventide, Great River, Maag Audio, Manley Labs, Pete’s Place, RCM and TC Electronics.

A second room, built out in the third apartment, is a creative editing, overdub and songwriting space. It features Pro Tools running on a Mac Mini with an Apogee Duet 2 I/O interface.

Another one of Murphy's projects is *Ronan’s Recording Show*, a web-based program consisting of behind-the-scenes interviews, recording studio tours, production tips and real world product reviews, on which he recently reviewed the IsoAcoustics stands.

[Murphy also lent AMI his expertise on headphones as our monthly Expert Witness earlier this year..](http://www.venetowest.com) www.venetowest.com