



Sugar Ray's Vintage Recording Studio

Dean Amos is behind the project to create an old-style recording studio in Wickford, Essex

For many, the idea of owning their own recording studio is stuff of fantasy. However, three friends from Essex decided to turn their dreams into reality. Dean Amos tells us more...

"The idea really came off the back of Pat Reyford's amazing recordings with Dave Privett, who is another partner in this project.

"Pat, Dave and I have known each other for 30 years. We grew up together in music, forming Pat's first band Sunny 56 with drummer Tim Bignell. We all went on to play in many bands visiting many studios along the way, with the same old format... Always uninspiring modern tech studios with a guy with shoulder-length hair telling you he knows what sound you're after!

"Three years ago we had the idea to create our own studio, and after much talking and planning we decided to go for it. I would take care of the design, build and decoration of the studio. Pat and Dave would look after the recording component side.

"This took nearly two years, with trips to the States to collect everything, and for me to work out the design and materials, etc. There was a lot of praise from the Americans and lots of interest in what we were doing. We bought some of our equipment from an elderly gentleman whose partner was a former radio broadcaster in the 1950s. He had everything in storage for all those years and was so pleased it was going to be used in our studio. He gave us a picture of him using the equipment, which will be on display in the studio."

Valve recording

"I didn't set out to copy one particular studio in the States, as they were mainly all different. There weren't any blueprints... just ideas of the day but by following their basic idea of angle design and sound board which is filtered to leave a semi-live sound ideal for valve recording.

"Purely by chance we ended up with a live room measuring 18 x 31 feet - the same size as Sun Studio. I suppose it really has that Sun feel to it. I did, however, get hold of the plans for the acoustic panels used in RCA Studio B and had them copied exactly over here, complete with the right handles. It's an example of the attention to detail we have put into the studio.

"I think for the first time we are truly going back to the original format used in the day. It never broke; they didn't need to fix it. They just moved on with music changing and the need to move with it, but we never tire of those old recordings which can only truly be recorded this way and inspire us all.

"We are truly proud of the end result. It's the product of lots of hard work, sleepless nights and lots of dreaming."

Vintage

"Sugar Ray's will be using only original vintage recording equipment, and a vast collection of original mics, to make the whole process exactly as it was done in the 1950s. We don't think there is any other studio offering this in the UK. Our aim is to inspire bands and artists in great surroundings. This is why we have decked out the lounge area with original period furniture. The walls are covered with pictures, which I think adds to the experience.

"It's not just a recording service. We can offer clients a full range of services. We will be offering DVDs with credits, and editing done with soundtrack attached, promotional photography, CD and logo designs, and 'Red Letter Days' when anyone can come and record using our house band and DVD production.

"Pat and Dave will focus on producing. Tony Diavolo will handle design. Ruth Archer and Chris Magee will look after photography and DVDs, and I will be involved in all aspects of studio promotions."