

Studio Monitor™



by Christopher Walsh

KEY TO THE GATEWAY: The new year is witnessing a flurry of activity, as the pro audio community is shaking off collective doubts about the viability of new production environments. Despite several studio closings in recent months, many others, tailored to specific applications, are appearing to replace them. In the case of Gateway Mastering's new mastering suite, the re-purposing of an existing room to accommodate an incessant demand indicates the vitality of both the organization and the high-end of the industry.

The Portland, Maine, facility, owned by revered engineer **Bob Ludwig**, is one of the best-known mastering studios in the world, with thousands of album projects completed there. In recent years, the facility has added DVD authoring—overseen by engineer **Brian Lee**—as surround sound is increasingly applied to music and music video projects.

More recently, engineer **Adam Ayan**, a Gateway staffer since 1998, has been instrumental in the conversion of a client-attended editing suite to a second, full-fledged mas-



tering studio. An outgrowth of his initial duties at Gateway, the re-purposing of the editing suite allows a greater workflow, key to the continued growth of the busy facility.

"I came to Gateway as a production engineer," Ayan says, "then began assisting Bob, helping him set things up. When we both got comfortable, I started coming in early. I'd cut a couple of tracks in the morning, and he'd come in and say, 'Let's tweak it a little' or 'It's cool as is.' That grew into him signing off on me as a mastering engineer."

Working around Ludwig's schedule became increasingly difficult as Ayan's own business increased. Ayan, who has worked on projects for **Tracy Chapman**, **Robbie Williams**, **Jeff Trott**, and upcoming Nashville-based act

Emerson Drive, found himself spending many early mornings, late nights, and weekends at the studio. (Ludwig himself is booked four to six months in advance.) "I'd occasionally drag some equipment into the other room and do a project there, when it was just an editing room," Ayan says. "That got me thinking, and we started talking and decided to build this second room to refurbish our editing suite as a second mastering room."

In the new mastering suite—smaller than Ludwig's enormous studio but nonetheless large by mastering room standards—an existing workstation was replaced with one designed by Ludwig and Gateway's technical engineer, **Scott McConville**. "Scott and I ironed out the ergonomics of how we'd be working in the room," Ayan says. "We put in the new workspace and also adjusted a few other workspaces in the room. We have many computers in the room, of course, and needed another table top for computer space."

With multiple formats, including CD, DVD-Audio, DVD-Video, and Super Audio CD (SACD), multiple workstations are an increasing necessity in a mastering studio. The new suite includes a Sonic Solutions workstation, one of five on the premises; a SADiE Artemis 24/96 system; a Pro Tools MIXplus workstation; and a Sony Sonoma DSD editor for SACD.

Hardware includes a custom Manley analog console, as well as a Manley Massive Passive stereo tube equalizer; an Avalon AD-2077 mastering equalizer; a Millennia TCL-2 twin-topology compressor/limiter; TC Electronic System 6000 multi-channel processor and Finalizer; and Weiss EQ and compression.

The studio also features three Pacific Microsonics Model 2 A/D and D/A converters. "The idea," Ayan says, "is that it's a 2-channel mastering room, but a 6-channel editing room. We do a lot of stuff for DVD, so we find that when we're editing stuff to picture after mastering, we have to, at the very least, conform to video and verify that from beginning to end it works out OK."

"We probably do more 5.1 stuff than almost anybody," Ludwig adds, "but it's still only about one a week. So, at the moment, we use the big room for that. The surround in the new room is going to be, at first anyway, mostly for doing quality control checking—making sure there's no dropouts on things and stuff like that."