

GATEWAY OPENS SECOND MASTERING ROOM

By Paul Verna

In his two decades at New York mastering powerhouses Sterling Sound and Masterdisk, Bob Ludwig built a reputation as one of the world's most gifted engineers, and left an indelible impression on his peers. The six or seven engineers who worked with Ludwig at those studios used his priceless tutelage to help them build solid careers of their own.



PHOTO: KEVIN BRUSIE

However, until he opened his own facility in 1993, Ludwig had never actually trained a protégé. His first such student was Brian Lee, a young engineer who joined Gateway soon after it opened.

With a mentor like Ludwig, Lee might have launched a career as a mastering engineer in his own right, if his graphic design skills hadn't proved so valuable to Gateway's ground-breaking DVD operation. As it turns out, Lee went on to head the studio's DVD-Audio and Video Authoring department, leaving an open slot for a new mastering trainee.

Adam Ayan answered that call in 1998 when he joined Gateway as a production engineer. Although his primary job consisted of cutting production parts for the studio, he also put in extra hours assisting Ludwig in the big mastering room. In a matter of months, Ayan was setting up Ludwig's room for him in the morning and mastering individual tracks, which Ludwig would oversee and approve. Soon, Ayan began doing his own album projects, working mornings, nights and weekends around Ludwig's hectic schedule.

When Ayan's clientele grew to the point where it became impractical for him to operate out of the big room, Ludwig decided to convert Gateway's second floating-floor studio—previously used for editing and quality control—into a full-fledged mastering suite.

"The new room is larger than most New York City rooms," says Ludwig. "It is based on the same magic ratios and acoustical design that make the bigger room so spectacular."

Ayan's suite features a Manley analog console; two Duntech Sovereign monitors; Sonic Solutions, SADiE and Pro Tools workstations; the Sony Sonoma Direct Stream Digital Editor; Manley Massive/Passive and Avalon AD2077 equalizers; Weiss digital EQs and compressors; the TC Electronic System 6000 and M5000 processors; and three Pacific Microsonics Model 2 AD/DA converters. Ayan couldn't be more thrilled with his new job and work environment.

"I love being here," he says. "I love working for Bob and Gail [Ludwig, Gateway's CFO]. I've gotten to learn so many great things from Bob, and I continue to learn on a daily basis. I'm the loading dock for all the new equipment that comes in." Among Ayan's credits are projects by Phish, José Carreras, Tracy Chapman and the band Jezebel, whose latest album was mixed by Mick Guzauski.

Having helped Ayan launch his career, Ludwig is now training a new engineer, Laurie Flannery, in the art and science of mastering. Could a third mastering room be far behind at Gateway? ■