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SESSIONS AND STUDIO NEWS

STEVE GABOURY'S LIVEWIRE NEW STUDIO HAS ROOM FOR KEYBOARDS, CREATIVITY

by David Weiss

When is a project studio not a project studio? When the studio you're talking about is Livewire Production & Recording (New York City, www.livewirenyc.com), the audio headquarters of Steve Gaboury.

The keyboardist for Cyndi Lauper, prolific arranger, producer and highly seasoned engineer, Gaboury may refer to his 1,600-square-foot facility in the deep south of Manhattan as a "project studio," but for him and his clients, it's actually an expansive artists-first womb for the incubation of world-class pop, jazz, soundtracks and beyond. "I really like to have the studio represent a place where the music and the musicians come first," says the easygoing Gaboury. "I always want my engineers to take on the mindset of the musician: What's going to inspire them and facilitate them coming up with the best music they possibly can? That's versus what I see in other studios, where a producer will spend two-and-a-half hours putting up a mic, focusing on the technical aspects and burning the music out."

Burnout seems next to impossible at Livewire, with its casually Zen atmosphere that reflects the lower-key Tribeca environs where it was established by Gaboury in 1995. A studio operator of some sort or another since his first East Village fling in 1981 ("My old space was kind of a loft bed that expanded into a studio," he says.), the Grammy-nominated Gaboury won the right to own a real New York City recording home through persistence and an always-keen ear. The result is a skylight-kissed facility with a main live room, drum booth, two vocal booths and—most important to Gaboury—a control room with plenty of space for ideas and stretching out.

"Every studio that I had in the past, I ended up enlarging the control room three times!" he says with a laugh. "But so much of the work is in the control room that I designed Livewire around it. I'm a keyboard player, but before this I never had room to have my organ—my dream for this place was to have a full keyboard studio that could hold my 7-foot Steinway Grand,



Livewire houses Gaboury's 7-foot Steinway and multiple keyboards—a necessity for the musician/producer.



*Producer/engineer/arranger/
musician Steve Gaboury*

Hammond C3, Wurlitzer, Fender Rhodes, Clavinet...so that I and other keyboard players, composers and singer/songwriters could do their thing."

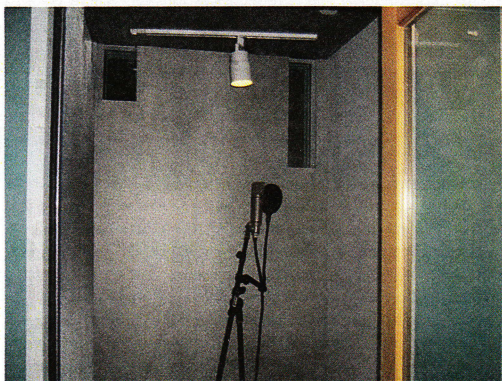
Before the music—for a client roster that has included Gato Barbieri, Lauper, Medeski, Martin & Wood, Bobby Previte and Lenny White—hits the Digidesign Pro Tools HD3 system (with a 192 I/O interface), it

usually passes through Livewire's Trident Series 70 28x52x16 console. "The Series 70 is the little brother of the classic 80 board, but it has the same electronics and it's a little smaller," says Gaboury. "I love it because it's kind of the workingman's Neve: It's warm, definitely not thin or transitory sounding; it's got a lot of meat to it.

"I only have eight [stereo] outputs, so I'm mixing more and more in the box. One advantage of that is if I go out for three weeks with Cyndi, I can leave the mix here, and when I come back it's right where I left off. But the other thing I've loved about working in Pro Tools is that when I go on the road and my chief engineer, Chris Agosto, is working here with a client, they can come in and do vocals, and I know I've left the mix for them exactly the way I want them to hear it."

To Gaboury, one of the keys to his musicians-first philosophy comes via a headphone mix on the Furman HRM-16 headphone/audio remote mixer that offers maximum flexibility during tracking. "The Furman gives you eight individual outs and can send effects back," notes Gaboury. "Before this system, I had so many problems over the years with monitoring—the most difficult part of the sessions was really straightening the headphone mixes. The HRM-16 just speeds the whole thing up because each musician custom-mixes exactly what they want to hear, and the engineer can focus that much more on the other 9 million things he has to think about."

So a project studio Livewire isn't. Instead, for Gaboury and the artists who seek him out, it's something much bigger. "I love playing live and I love recording," he says. "To me, recording is the opportunity to photograph music. If you've got the patience, you can get it as you dreamed and—with any luck—get it better."



Vocal booth with "borrowed light" windows