



Looking around Newtown's only recording studio

Out & About

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May 15 - May 21, 2008

BucksLocalNews.com

From

DOWNTOWN to NEWTOWN

After working with the likes of the Rolling Stones and Bon Jovi, Jim Salamone decided to build his record studio in Bucks County

By Peter Ciferri
BucksLocalNews.com

Walking through Cambridge Sound Studios, it's hard not to be swept up by Jim Salamone's long and storied career. Gold and platinum albums from his work with artists from Bon Jovi to Vanessa Williams greet visitors as they cross a narrow hallway into the recording studio.

Important as those relics are to his success, Jim doesn't let the past dictate his future. He is a man constantly moving forward in a changing music industry.

"To me, the idea of production is a lot like a tailor, where you're custom-suiting something to somebody," he said, reflecting on a market flooded with short-term answers instead of long term solutions.

Salamone looks comfortable in his studio, tens of thousands of dollars worth of recording equipment line the walls and the smell of aromatherapy candles drifts through the air. Jim reflects on a business where too often the most talented artists are lost behind "hula hoop acts."

"One of the things that's hurting the music business today is too much of it is off the shelf. We're not really nurturing individuality anymore."

Likening pop acts to the children's toy, he explained that nearly every American has a hula hoop and a light bulb in their garage.

"Everyone knows who invented the light bulb, who invented the hula hoop?"

Looking back at two artists Salamone worked with personal-



Photo by Peter Ciferri

Longtime soundman Jim Salamone takes to the control board at Cambridge Sound Studios, his new digs in Newtown. "We need a lot of Bucks County talent to come in," says Salamone. "There's no facility like this in the area, so no one's expecting it."

ly, he sees the flaws in record companies putting their weight behind this lightning in a bottle strategy.

He explained that the shift came in the early 1990s, when two 11-year-old kids from Atlanta with no experience in rap music sold 11 million records after flipping their jeans around and going by the name "Kris Kross." At the same time, the late R&B singer Gerald Levert was consistently

putting out a string of insanely talented records that never became hits, but consistently sold 750,000.

"He was an artist worth developing because he was good," Salamone explained. "But you figure 11 million albums from Kris Kross: that's one marketing and development budget. If Gerald put out 11 albums ... that's 11 budgets."

But it is that kind of thinking,

Salamone says, that is killing the major labels. Over time, those novelty acts fade quickly and sales go down, while talented artists — often dropped for failing to reach 1 million album plateaus, are consistently drawing audiences.

"The record company is now paying for that because people got tired of the hula hoop," he said. He points to Philadelphia artists like G. Love and Melody

From downtown to Newtown

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Gardeau as examples that fans are now bypassing labels to find the artists through outlets like iTunes and WXPB, as well as local venues like Puck in Doylestown.

Born in Philadelphia and living in Richboro for the past 14 years, a Newtown studio was an easy choice for the Archbishop Ryan and Temple University graduate. Salamone's career has been reflected in Philadelphia music for around 30 years. His college professors were often more interested in his jazz fusion band than his Poli. Sci. papers and his first break came from Joe Tarsia, one of the innovators behind the famed "sound of Philadelphia."

It's not uncommon to see soul artist Teddy Pendergrass or Crystal Torres (commonly noted for her work with Beyonce) wandering the halls of Cambridge Sound Studios. There is also a bevy of developing bands like Beaucoup Blue, For-24, Cheers Elephant and Paddy's Well, who have devoted their loyalty to Cambridge.

"We need a lot of Bucks County talent to come in," Salamone said. "There's no facility like this in the area, so no one's expecting it."

Also floating around the interlocking web of rooms are employees Todd McCoy and Alex Baranowski, who say they often choose to work 10-, 13- or even 19-hour days just because they enjoy their jobs so much. With plush leather couches, a stocked fridge and a full shower, why leave?

There's also Le Sheppard of TSG Creations in Wrightstown, a graphic designer and longtime friend of Salamone's whose talents don't go to waste.

Salamone spent three months designing his new digs and 10 months building it. With a son in Council Rock South and another in Bucks County Community College, it's no surprise that the producer has started imparting his knowledge onto a new crop of music lovers.

"What we want to do is at least give them an overview of the entire process," Salamone said of the course he teaches Drexel's entering freshman audio engineering students.

Salamone said his students take a hands-on approach to producing, doing everything from setting up equipment to get the most out of an instrument to taking existing studio sessions and remixing them into new creations.

While he expects students to start class with little to no studio and software experience, Salamone hopes they leave not only experienced in software like ProTools, but with a full scope of the producing business, from "the good, the bad, the glamour and the frustrating."

He is uneasy of kids throwing their money into audio engineering schools with no backup plan, and, reflecting on his own law career-path, suggests most students pursue an associate's degree "in something real" while pursuing their dream career of music.

In the past, tape reigned in limits on

how many tracks an artist could lay down or how long it took a producer to work between them.

Salamone believes the move from tape to digital has not only forced producers to become better at their craft, but has also opened endless doors for time and creativity.

And today, with millions of tracks on a hard drive and instant e-mail communication between artists and producers thousands of miles apart, the possibilities are seemingly endless for individuals to find their way through the murky waters of a changing music industry.

Cambridge Sound Studios is located at 1 Cambridge Lane, Newtown. They can be reached at 215-579-9500 or on the Web at www.cambridgesoundstudios.com.



Photo by Peter Cilenti

Guitars at Cambridge Sound Studios just waiting to be used.



Photo by Peter Cilenti



Photo courtesy of Lisa Schaffer

Among the bands performing on the outdoor stage were Roi and the Secret People, JC Satellite, Cheers Elephant and Drink Up Buttercup.



Photo courtesy of Le Sheppard

Cambridge Sound Studio owner and record producer Jim Salamone joined in on the drums with Beauchoy Blue.

Recording studio opens in Newtown

A magical time was had by all on Sunday in Newtown at the Cambridge Sound Studio Grand Opening.

Mother Nature gave her best wishes with turning a stormy forecast into a picture perfect Newtown May Day.

Along with the official ribbon cutting by Miss Pennsylvania, the Mummers marching and the live bands all afternoon - the Cambridge area of Newtown was alive and well with a festival atmosphere.

In attendance to tour the state of the art recording

studio and enjoy the celebration including food, drink and live music were Upper Makefield Supervisor Dave Kulig and his family, the Newtown Business Association made a presentation to the studio, local celebrities, nationally known musicians and record industry mainstays, recording artists and hundreds of family, friends and supporters.

Jim Salamone, producer and owner of the Cambridge Sound said he couldn't have asked for a better day to kick off his new business in the heart of Newtown.



Photo courtesy of Lisa Schaffer

LauRen Merola, a.k.a. Miss Pennsylvania, is flanked by Jim Salamone, left, and Joe Tarsia, right, during Sunday's grand opening.