

**Solid State Logic SiX Desktop Mixing Console Helps DSD Audio Pioneer Gus Skinas Achieve Ultra High-End Results in a Minimalist Footprint**

*SiX SuperAnalogue™ preamps, intelligent routing options and ‘stunning sound’ are put to use in Octave Records’ first release by jazz great, Grammy Award-winner Don Grusin*

**Boulder, Colorado, May 2020 —** When high-fidelity audio equipment company PS Audio relocated to larger premises a couple of years ago, CEO Paul McGowan set aside space for a recording studio and mastering facility, which became the new home of digital audio pioneer Gus Skinas. That partnership, Octave Records, has now launched a record label of the same name that is releasing pure DSD projects produced using an all-analogue signal chain that includes Solid State Logic’s SiX SuperAnalogue™ desktop mixing console.

“Everything I’m doing is all DSD,” says Skinas, a longtime Sony employee who was subsequently instrumental in bringing the manufacturer’s Sonoma DSD (Direct Stream Digital) recording technology to the pro audio community through his Boulder-based Super Audio Center. Now, recording, mastering and remastering projects at Octave Records, he says, “We’re always really careful to use the best analog gear we can, because with pure DSD your main processing is analog, and your mixing is analog.”

At his Octave Records studio Skinas has a vintage Studer console. “But I replaced the front end with the SSL because it sounds better than the Studer. The SiX gets the summing of the groups and main buses, and I use it for talkback and all of that. It’s exactly perfect for these high-end DSD recordings,” he says.

The first release on the new Octave Records label is a solo piano project, entitled Out of Thin Air, by Grammy Award-winning jazz keyboardist Don Grusin. The release, available via streaming and on hybrid SACD, was the first project to be recorded at Grusin’s new studio, Moose Sound, at his home in Colorado. It was recorded live to two-track by recording engineer and producer Robert Friedrich, co-owner of Five/Four Productions (with fellow former Telarc Records engineers, producers and high-resolution audio innovators Michael Bishop and Thomas Moore). “It’s just stunning; it sounds wonderful,” says Skinas of the project.

The SiX may be the smallest standalone mixer that SSL has produced, but its performance, price and feature set made it ideal for the application and the project, according to Friedrich. “That little mixer sounded really, really good; I was stunned how good it sounded. It’s a very short signal path and when we ran stuff through it, it was very neutral. It’s also incredibly flexible; we had almost endless possibilities to route inputs and signals.”

Recording live to two-track is a little more challenging and requires more equipment than simply tracking to a recorder and mixing the sessions later, says Friedrich. “But the reality is that live-to-two-track eliminates that one step and brings you closer to the actual performance, in my opinion.” The SSL SiX was also a more practical solution since it is much more compact than Friedrich’s alternative, a choice of vintage mixing consoles from his own collection. “I was worried about shipping them, because they’re heavy and they could get damaged,” he says.

For the Out of Thin Air recordings, Friedrich reports, the main piano microphones were Sanken CO-100K condensers, which have a frequency response of 20 Hz to 100 kHz, with short cable runs to Forssell Technologies SMP-2 preamplifiers. The room pickup was an AEA R88 stereo ribbon microphone paired with an Integer Audio RMP2 preamp (the project will also be available in a surround mix).

Friedrich and Skinas set up the control room in Grusin’s drum booth (AKA Studio B), where Friedrich monitored on a pair of Hafler nearfield speakers and Audio-Technica headphones. He tracked the project through EMM Labs ADC8 Mk IV converters to a Sonoma recorder at 2.8224 MHz — 64 times the CD audio sampling rate — and at quad rate DSD (11.2896 MHz) into Playback Designs’ Sonoma Recorder software via the company’s Pinot ADC.

“The bandwidth of the console is great. I had all these high-bandwidth mics and mic pres going into it, and the DSD returning into it, using it as a monitor. What I liked about it was that when I flipped between the SSL console and DSD, it sounded pretty close — a lot closer than PCM is. You could be completely confident that you were capturing everything,” he says.

“I also mastered it as I was mixing because I didn’t want to go through another stage of processing,” says Friedrich, who had a TC Electronic System 6000 reverb and a Millennia NSEQ-2 equalizer available. “The Maselec MPL-2 peak limiter was there as a security measure, but I don’t think I even tickled it. Though solo piano can be tricky to record, if I can’t mix a solo piano live to two-track recording after doing it so many times in my career, there must be something wrong with me,” he laughs. Friedrich said he looks forward to making more recordings using the SIX.

Skinas bought the SSL SiX sight unseen following Friedrich’s recommendation. “He said, ‘We should try one of these.’ I just bought it to try it,” he says. He had no qualms about the purchase, though, having had a relationship with SSL since the early days of the company. “Years ago, in the ‘70s, I went to see an SSL console before there were any in this country. So I knew this console would be good. And it is good!”

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*Solid State Logic is the world’s leading manufacturer of analogue and digital audio consoles and provider of creative tools for music, broadcast, live and post production professionals. For more information about our award-winning products, please visit: www.solidstatelogic.com.*

For further information contact:

**Jeff Touzeau**

+1 (914) 602-2913

jeff@hummingbirdmedia.com

**Ross Gilbert**

+44 (0) 1865 842300

rossg@solidstatelogic.com