

**England's School Farm Studios Installs New Solid State Logic 48-Channel Duality Fuse SuperAnalogueTM Console**

 *Located less than two hours outside London, School Farm Studios is a converted 17th century barn, focused on chamber orchestras, ensembles and choral work*

**Halstead, UK, December 20, 2023 — When music producer and composer Andrew Sunnucks built a studio on his rural property in the east of England, he chose to outfit it with high-end audio equipment familiar to him and his engineer from their many, many sessions at the UK’s best-known recording facilities. Top of the list was a mixing console from Solid State Logic. A new 48-channel Duality Fuse with SSL δelta control and integrated Fusion analogue colouration processor is now the centrepiece at School Farm Studios, a converted 17th century barn on a 850-acre working farm in Essex, less than two hours northeast of London.**

During 30-plus years in the business, Sunnucks has produced thousands of tracks of large ensemble orchestral, big band, and choral music for TV, film, advertising and corporate video, a large percentage of them at Abbey Road Studios in London. There, in recent years, he would typically work with staff recording engineer Stefano Civetta, who left Abbey Road to help build School Farm Studios. The residential facility offers tracking space for up to 30 musicians and supports Dolby Atmos 7.1.4 mixing. “Stef took care of all the technical side and gave me a shopping list of what he wanted,” Sunnucks says.

**An Abbey Road legacy**

“I have always loved the EQ, dynamics and compression of SSL consoles,” says Civetta, a composer, orchestrator and musician — who was the Pope’s organist at St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City for seven years, and recording engineer at Abbey Road Studios for six years. “The classic SSL Buss Compressor is quite a thing. I just love it, and I know what to expect from it. I was lucky enough to work in Studio 3 at Abbey Road on the SSL 9000 J. There was also a Duality in one of the other rooms at Abbey Road, which offered a lot of flexibility. So that's why I decided to go down the SSL route here.”

He adds, “It was the same thing with the outboard equipment. We went down the route of stuff that I was lucky enough to work with at Abbey Road because, again, I know what to expect from it.”

**A tactile approach**

Civetta is a hands-on, old-school engineer, and a big fan of the workflow found on SSL’s large-format consoles. “I very much have a tactile approach, rather than point and click. I point and click enough in the mixing process, but during recording I really like to have the faders. I also wanted an analogue path for our headphone feeds and reverb sends.”

He is a fan of printing live mixes through the Duality Fuse during tracking sessions. “I can do that through the extra busses,” he explains. On sessions where he sends tracks through the studio’s well-stocked outboard racks, he continues, “I also tend to print the live mixes, because not many people have access to high-end gear at home. If they like the sound of it, I might as well just give it to them. When they go home and open the Pro Tools sessions, with all the faders at zero it sounds as close as possible to what was going on here, and it saves time in the mix.”

Civetta had his hands on many of the projects that passed through Abbey Road during his time at the facility. His credits include Will.I.Am, Skrillex, OneRepublic and Ed Sheeran, Nile Rodgers’ recordings with Bruno Mars, The Carpenters, The Beach Boys, Mary J Blige, One Direction and a host of others. He worked with Giles Martin on various Beatles remixes, most notably the 50th anniversary reissues of “The White Album” and Abbey Road. He also worked on approximately 60 high-profile film scores, including Solo: A Star Wars Story, Rocketman and The Hobbit. “Stef was always the guy I asked for at Abbey Road, because I think there's no one as good as he is at score checking,” Sunnucks says.

**Retaining a unique acoustic character**

There are five studio spaces available for tracking at School Farm Studios, two of them in remote buildings, with the main room comfortably accommodating a 28-piece string section, says Sunnucks, who bought the property 27 years ago. The barn, built in the 1600s, was dilapidated and collapsing, but the original half-timbered interior has been retained. Once the resident horse and ducks had been relocated, Sunnucks explains, “We started a very, very elaborate build process. We wanted to keep the inside of the original barn to create the acoustic properties that we wanted. So we basically built another barn over the whole thing.”

Not every client visits the studio in person. “We have a lot of composers in Los Angeles and do quite a few remote sessions, putting strings on their projects for them,” Sunnucks says, using Audiomovers and Zoom for real-time audio and video collaboration. He and Civetta can provide a full range of orchestration services, he adds.

The control room is outfitted for Dolby Atmos work with a 7.1.4 ATC monitoring system and conforms to Dolby Labs’ specifications. Four DPA microphones are permanently installed in the rafters above the main tracking space to capture height information for immersive recording projects.

In 2001, Sunnucks co-founded Audio Network, with entrepreneur Robert Hurst, to produce high quality production music tracks for a variety of media. By the time the company was sold in 2019 it had become the largest independent music group in Europe. “You hear the music every single day of your life, but you never know who produced it,” Sunnucks comments.

Sunnucks remains as Chairman and continues to produce music for the company. “We release 16 albums a month in every style you can possibly imagine,” he reports, exclusively recorded live by ensembles of musicians, in addition to other music such as EDM. “It's all about authenticity.” He estimates that he has produced 7,000 Audio Network tracks at Abbey Road Studios. “For many, many years we were their biggest customer. We recently worked out that we did 90 days of recording at Abbey Road in 2019.” Then came the pandemic, bringing sessions to a halt. He has since resumed recording large ensemble and orchestral tracks at Abbey Road, he says, “But anything like a chamber orchestra or smaller we now do here at School Farm Studios.”

*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](http://www.solidstatelogic.com)*.*

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