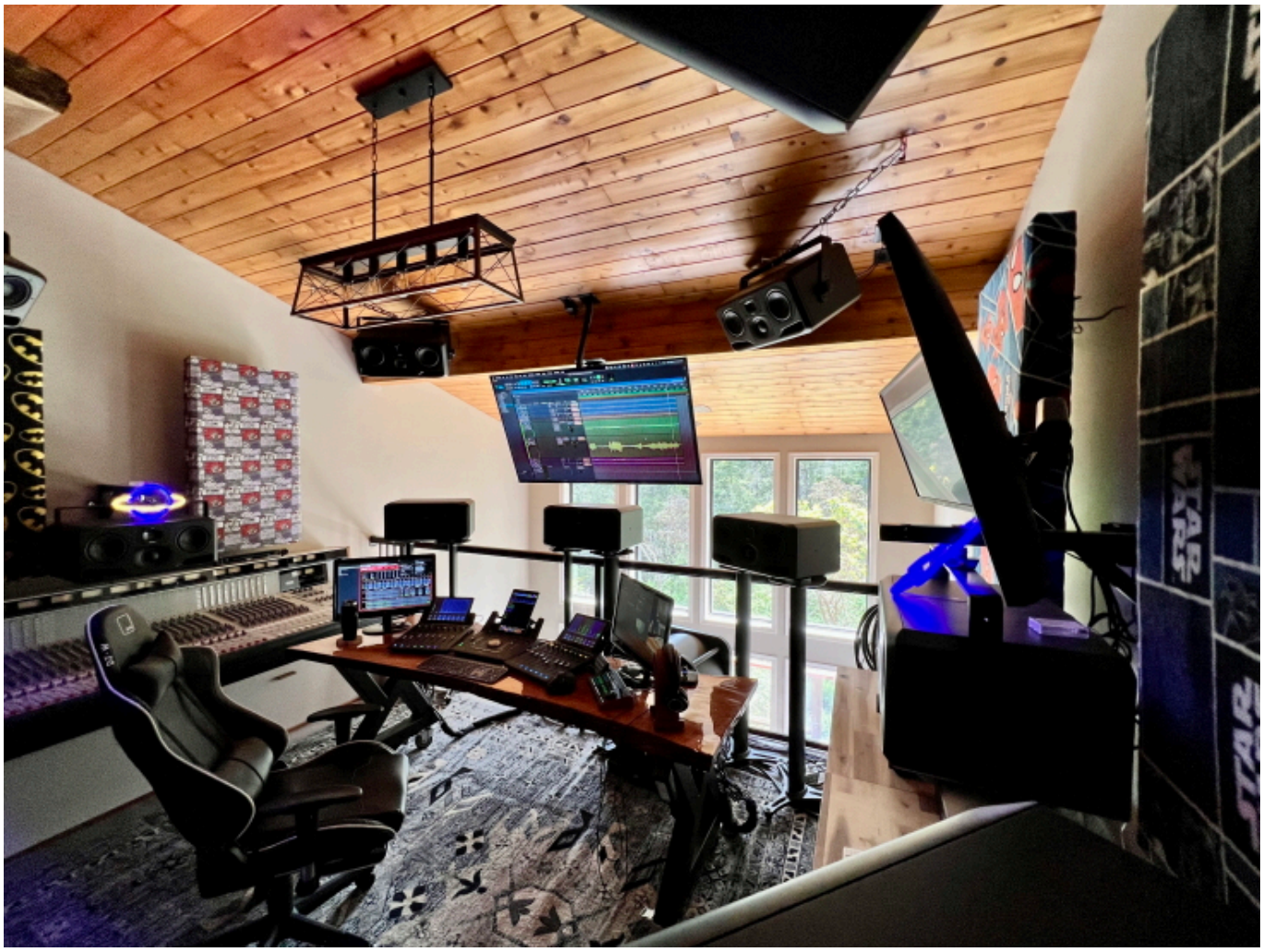
Focusrite Equipment used at Sonic Forest Studios



Owner Todd Hooge put his Sonic Forest Studios together with the assistance of Dolby engineers, who helped him with acoustical advice and technology selections right down to the ADAM Audio speakers that create his 7.1.4 monitoring matrix. Not surprisingly, since Hooge was predicating the new mix facility – opened in January 2021 and located in his home on five lush acres near Victoria on Vancouver Island in British Columbia – on the continued momentum of the immersive Dolby Atmos format in cinema, gaming, music and other media genres. “In recent years, it has become the de facto standard in home theaters, soundbars, other devices, and now in your car,” he states. “Streaming services such as Apple Music, Tidal, and Amazon HD are the latest to adopt this format for music. It’s the future, period.” And while Sonic Forest Studios has an enchanting look about it, perched on a glassed-in mezzanine beneath a vaulted wood-trimmed ceiling and with a striking off-center chimney anchoring the room, its infrastructure is all business, and relying heavily on a Dante network and Focusrite Red and RedNet interfaces.

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“Investing in Atmos is no small thing,” Hooge says, citing both equipment costs and the renovations to his home the studio required. “So before I did it, I wanted to make sure that was the way the market is trending. I didn’t just read the pro-audio magazines but also the financial papers and magazines. I wanted to be absolutely sure this was the way to go, the thing to do. Like any major life decision, I wanted to do my homework.”



Not surprisingly, his infrastructure component choices were equally carefully considered. They include:

- A Red 16Line 64-In / 64-Out Thunderbolt 3 and Pro Tools | HD compatible audio interface. “This is the main interface for the entire rig, and the hub for all the Atmos,” he explains. “After I decided I wanted to go with Dante connectivity for the whole studio, I saw that the 16Line was perfect, because

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all of the Focusrite gear units can also talk to each other over Dante. It's my digital patch bay and through it I can reach any other device in all seven recording-enabled rooms of the house."
Three RedNet HD32R 32-channel HD Dante network bridges. "This is what enables me to have a full 128 objects," he says. "I work in Pro Tools HDX 2, and without the HD32R I would have fewer channels. I wanted to max the system from the start."

- A RedNet 5 Pro Tools HD bridge. "This enables me to include my older Pro Tools rig that I have in a tracking room," he says. "It breathes new life into older gear."
  A RedNet R1 Desktop Remote Monitor Controller, which provides the flexibility to control a range of different monitor output setups, ranging from mono through to 7.1.4 surround, including Dolby Atmos and other immersive audio workflows. "I can't do without it," says Hooge. "I have a Yamaha RX-A8A Atmos receiver and with the R1 I can instantly switch to it to capture immersive audio, such as Apple Spatial sound, in the wild. Also, the R1 has power over Ethernet, so it doesn't need external power."
- A pair of RedNet X2P 2x2 Dante audio interfaces. "I can put them anywhere in the house there's a Cat-6 jack and tap into the entire system from there," he says. "I can use it as a headphone mixing device, put a singer in one of the rooms and record remotely, because it has two mic pre's on it."
  Three RedNet AM2 stereo audio monitoring units. "These are like the X2P, but without the mic pre's," he says. "They always perform flawlessly as plug-and-play headphone devices."
- A RedNet PCIeR card, providing bi-directional Dante audio connectivity with the studio's computers with full network redundancy. "I'm running two fully-loaded Mac Minis - got some of the last of the Intel stock, which I was happy about - and they can talk to each other in perfect sync through the card," he says. "It keeps the rendering process moving along without a hitch."
- The 7.1.4 immersive configuration is made up of 11 ADAM Audio S3H Active Studio Monitors and a Genelec 7370A Smart Active Studio Subwoofer. A team of Dolby technicians helped spec the room and recommended the ADAM monitors for their headroom and low end.

"I'm not sure how I could have achieved what we have done here without RedNet," he says of Sonic Forest, which has worked with dozens of artists including Stacy Earle, Neil Osbourne of 54-40, and Jay Semko of Northern Pikes. "It's definitely part of the backbone of the studio."

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