

Rory Behr relies on Focusrite



In the high-velocity world of Top Dawg Entertainment (TDE), where albums are crafted across studios, hotel rooms, basements, and tour buses, reliability isn't optional. For nearly a decade, Rory Behr has been the steady technical force behind that creative chaos. As TDE's longtime recording and mix engineer, DJ and studio manager, Behr has shaped releases from artists including Isaiah Rashad, SiR, Jay Rock, DoeChii and collaborators across the roster.

Throughout his journey, from late-night emergency sessions to building a 24-hour studio facility in Los Angeles' Studio City, Behr has leaned on Focusrite gear as a constant. The Scarlett 18i20 and ISA preamp range have served as the backbone of his mobile and in-studio setup, capturing everything from early Isaiah Rashad demos to charting singles and immersive Dolby Atmos deliverables.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Rory Behr joined TDE in 2015 after studying at Burbank's Icon Collective. His break came unexpectedly when he answered a 3AM call to engineer a last-minute Isaiah Rashad session, a date he later realized would change everything. That impromptu late-night recording became the single "Free Lunch," a pivotal release for Rashad and the moment that launched Behr's decade-long career inside Top Dawg Entertainment. Today, Behr oversees TDE's 24-hour studio complex and serves as one of the label's primary recording and mix engineers.

Throughout his career, Behr's 18i20 has been the backbone of his portable recording rig, capturing early versions of Isaiah Rashad's "Sun's Tirade" and "The

Thursday, 08 January 2026 19:43

House Is Burning," and countless demos created while traveling. "The Focusrite 18i20 was the workhorse from 2016 on," Behr says. "We cut some of Isaiah's biggest records on that thing, in apartments, on tour, even in his mom's basement in Chattanooga. It never failed. The 18i20 also powered full Ableton live playback for Isaiah Rashad's European tour, running stems directly to front of house without redundancy, and without a single failure. You plug it in, and it just works. That little 18i20 recorded some of Isaiah's biggest records. It's an amazing piece of gear."

Behr now splits his time between TDE's Studio City facility and his new home base in Vermont, a move that followed a devastating chapter in his life. After losing everything in the Los Angeles wildfires, he relocated to the East Coast to rebuild, reset, and create a healthier balance between intense studio schedules and personal wellbeing. Vermont offered space, quiet and a fresh start, while still giving him the flexibility to remain deeply connected to TDE's workflow. While working between TDE's Studio City facility and the VT Music Lab outside of Burlington, Behr has now incorporated Focusrite's ISA Two and ISA 828 preamps into a wide range of recording scenarios, from stereo overheads and acoustic instruments to small drum setups and multi-musician jam sessions.

"The ISA Two has been a recent little tool I've really been loving," Behr says. "It's warm and buttery, and super versatile. I've used it for stereo overheads, 414s, even U87s on piano, and it just delivers. Recording an acoustic guitar through a ribbon mic to the ISA Two, the color was natural and beautiful. It really shines on anything where you want that warmth and detail."

When Behr employed a Focusrite ISA 828 at the TDE Studios, the impact was immediate. "That eight-channel box changed everything for us," Behr explains. "We only had a dual 1073 setup before, so we were really limited. Suddenly we could track drums, percussion, DI bass and guitar, and full-band jam sessions without fighting over inputs. It opened up the room and made day-to-day sessions so much smoother." Behr has been using the ISA 828 at TDE on smaller drum kits, percussion overdubs, DI guitar and bass, multi-musician jam sessions, live instrumentation over two-track beats and more. Together, the ISA Two and ISA 828 have given Behr the flexibility and tonal character needed for the diverse range of artists and recording styles he encounters across the TDE ecosystem.

When engineering away from TDE's Studio City complex, Behr relies on a monitoring setup that gives him absolute translation and confidence. His personal room is anchored by ADAM Audio A7X nearfields, paired with the ADAM T10 subwoofer for low-frequency accuracy. "I've worked next to far more expensive monitors, but I still end up trusting the A7Xs," Behr says. "I just know how they respond. They're consistent, honest, and they don't lie to me." Working with artists who rely heavily on 808s, sub-bass, and punchy kick drums, Behr needs a monitoring environment that can tell the truth, especially at lower volumes. "The T10 sub gives me all the clarity I need on the low end," he explains. "When the kick and 808 balance feels right on this setup, I know it's going to translate anywhere." Whether editing vocals in Vermont, prepping stems for Dolby mixes, or tightening

rough mixes before bringing them into TDE's ATC or Augspurger rooms, the ADAM system remains Behr's most trusted personal reference.

Behr is currently engineering Isaiah Rashad's next album, contributing to an upcoming TDE label compilation, and overseeing new work from SiR and Jay Rock, with many sessions still built around the same mobile chains that defined his early days. When asked about his use of Focusrite throughout his career, Behr responded, "Focusrite gear has been with me from dorm rooms to platinum albums. It's never let me down. If I'm bouncing between home studios or traveling with the artists, Focusrite is always in the chain somewhere. It's guaranteed."

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