Secret Hand Studios Chooses Focusrite



Jeff Friedl has been around. The in-demand studio and touring drummer is a co-founder of The Beta Machine and has recorded, performed, and toured with artists such as A Perfect Circle, Puscifer, Devo, Filter and Celebrating David Bowie. So when he put together his own recording studio, Secret Hand Studios, in a large, comfortable guest house on his property in Los Angeles in 2019, he wanted it to be as varied as his own career has been, and flexible enough to accommodate anything. “I wanted everyone and anyone to feel comfortable working and staying here,” he says of the facility, which includes welcoming lodging and living spaces.

More recently, Secret Hand Studios underwent a small but significant update: last year, Friedl invested in an array of Focusrite devices that have vastly expanded the studio’s tonal palette and workflow. Now, its classic API 1608 console shares space with state-of-the-art components from Focusrite, including a Red 8Pre audio interface; a RedNet A16R MkII 16-channel analogue I/O interface; an ISA 828 MkII eight-channel mic pre; a RedNet R1 Desktop Remote Monitor Controller; and a Clarett+ OctoPre interface.

Since its founding, Secret Hand Studios has attracted clients as diverse as music-recording projects for artists such as Devo (with whom Friedl has performed and recorded), Poppy, Powerman 5000 and Narrowhead; commercials for clients

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including SalesForce.com (the music tracks for which, produced by Mark Mothersbaugh, Friedl did percussion and drums); and television programs like the new 2023 Netflix hit That 90s Show (Friedl played drums on this as well). “What we were learning over time is that a diverse range of clients wanted flexibility in terms of how they worked,” he says. “Often they wanted to set up stations around the studio so they could move quickly between instruments and working configurations to keep the creativity flowing and not worry about having to connect everything every time.”

But the biggest advantage the Focusrite gear brought to Secret Hand Studios is no secret at all: a wide array and number of microphone pre-amps that offer a range of tonality to match the needs of the studio’s diverse clientele. “The API 1608 has great preamps but there are just 16 of them, and that’s not enough for a complex project where the client wants to move around a lot without having to constantly repatch,” Friedl explains. “That’s what got me started on looking at Focusrite in the first place. The ISA 828 MkII, with its ISA ADN8 card, and the Clarett+OctoPre gave us eight more each. And all that without additional hardware or a lot of extra cabling. All those different pre-amps give us so many tonal color options and the ability to mix and match sounds, and the R1 controller makes managing it all easier, letting us toggle between pre-amps and between monitors remotely, and letting us build custom cue mixes. The Focusrite gear is among the best investments I’ve made.”

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