

# 1. Air Studios

## 1. AIR Custom Neve History

Our vintage Neve is one of three unique Neve consoles designed solely for AIR Studios. The first console, designated A4792, was designed in 1977 and destined for AIR's new facility on the Caribbean island of Montserrat. George Martin was heavily involved with Rupert Neve in the design process of what was a radical new desk.

The 56 channel, 24 track desk was the first Neve designed around twin  $\pm 15$ Volt rails running the TDA1034 operational amplifier, later to become the NE5534A. Instead of standard audio Neve transformers they are all of toroidally wound construction. The 31106 EQ module frequencies were chosen by George and Rupert to be the most musically useful. These modules are unique to this desk as are the 34427 remote mic pre-amps. These reside in the studio live area and are remote controlled via a "phantom" current signal. The 32436 aux module has 6 monos and one stereo send.

This unique design philosophy and implementation results in a desk that has a frequency response from 40Hz to 100KHz  $\pm 1$ dB! The desk has +26dBu headroom with typical 0.003% THD in any one channel. With a noise floor sitting at -80dBu this gives a dynamic range of 106dB. You can hear the mix like never before the usual comment being "it sounds better as soon as you push up the faders".

In 1981 an identical console, A7971, was constructed and installed in Oxford Street Studio 1. In 1986 Rupert Neve, now at Focusrite, was commissioned to produce a 16 channel sidecar, taking the total number of channels to 72. These modules, designed to be as near to the original 31106 as possible, became the famous FSA110. The original Montserrat console was sold to A&M Records in Hollywood. A third console, again for Oxford Street, is now at The Warehouse Studio in Vancouver.

The legacy of this console lives on in the re-issue of the ISA110 by Focusrite, and now the recreation of the "AIR Montserrat" remote mic pre-amps for the Neve 88R. Of course the desk itself continues to be used day in day out. Now fitted with GML automation, including automated auxiliary switching. It can truly be described as one of the greatest consoles in the world.