

Focusrite Interfaces Help The Record Co. Make Music Production Accessible for Everyone



Boston-based recording services provider The Record Co. (TRC) is a 503(c) non-profit enterprise, founded in 2010 by Berklee College of Music graduate Matt McArthur. The organization is dedicated to offering a truly affordable and equitable music workspace and providing space and resources to the entire spectrum of the city's music makers, from veteran professionals to aspiring home recordists. As its mission statement puts it, "We exist to make sure that no matter who you are, no matter why you make music, you can keep making [it]." In further pursuit of that lofty goal, TRC opened a new facility in January: a 12,500-square-foot studio complex in Boston's Newmarket Industrial District. The new space features four recording studios covering a range of capabilities, from full-on tracking to small song-workshop and production-type spaces, and 15 fully backlined hourly rehearsals studios. They expect to host upwards of 1,000 sessions and rehearsals per month, running 16 hours a day. Key to the setup are Focusrite preamplifiers and interfaces (along with Novation MIDI controllers), which offer the flexibility to simply plug in and play for any skill level or scale of production.

Focusrite solutions in use at The Record Co. include the Red 16Line 64-In / 64-Out Thunderbolt 3 and Pro Tools | HD compatible audio interface; the ISA 428 MkII and ISA 828 MkII devices, which incorporate four and eight, respectively, of Focusrite's

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renowned mic pre's, as well as instrument inputs and line ins, in a single simple-to-operate unit; the RedNet A16R 16-channel analogue I/O interface; and a number of interfaces from the Scarlett Range, deployed in some of the 15 rehearsal studios in the new facility, allowing musicians (who also use the facility's Novation Launchkey MIDI keyboard controllers) to flexibly record their sessions there.



McArthur says the concept of TRC came to him a decade earlier as he was looking for a business model that would allow the greatest number of users to access a highly flexible facility that could accommodate music producers of any genre and virtually any skill level. "It needed to be a shared resource that no one really owns, a community resource," he says. "We would need space, gear, a good attitude, and an open mind about how the space is used and who uses it. A non-profit was the way to go." McArthur also realized that the nature of how recording studios are utilized now had changed significantly in recent years, with the large battleship consoles of yore giving way to a plethora of software applications and digital control surfaces. "Music makers today all have their own ways of working, their own preferred software and plug-ins," he says. "That makes RedNet and the other Focusrite technology we selected the best fit for a facility like TRC this because of its expansive interfacing options and compatibility with almost any DAW."

Jamie Rowe, TRC's Studio Manager, echoes that. "One of the big attractions for us about the Focusrite Pro technology is its ability to function over multiple platforms,"

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he explains. “Being able to access HDX and Thunderbolt were key for us, as well as Dante compatibility. Our entire facility is outfitted with Dante connections across every room. Even within a single room the RedNet AR16s are providing additional analog inputs over a hyper-local Dante network.”

Thunderbolt compatibility was especially important for the new facility, amplifies McArthur: “Before, we weren’t able to offer the multi-DAW compatibility that today’s music makers need. Now, we can accommodate just about everything they want to use, from Pro Tools | HD to Ableton Live to FL to PreSonus Studio. You name it. If we want to make the space as comfortable and accessible to as many people as possible, it has to be as transparent as possible, to allow them to use any platforms they want as easily as they would in their living rooms. Focusrite technology totally unlocks those possibilities in the new space.”



Rowe says the ISA preamps are now available in every studio as patchable outboard gear. “We had two in the old facility, but everyone was using them so often that we felt we had to have more of them and in every room, including the two smaller studios,” he says. “The 428s have the Hi-Z input on the front panel and people have been bringing in guitars and keyboards, so they’re been getting used a lot because of their flexibility. Also there’s a lot of turnover in the rooms every day so people want to make the most efficient use of the time as possible, so the ease of use of the Focusrite units - their plug-and-play capability - is very important with shorter

sessions and our wide range of users.”

TRC has become a valuable member of the Boston music community in other ways as well. For instance, in partnership with The Boston Foundation and more than 500 donors, TRC has distributed more than 750 low-barrier COVID-relief grants to local musicians, producers and engineers experiencing lost income as a result of gig cancellations due to COVID-19. To date they’ve distributed more than 750 grants totaling more than \$160,000. “We’ve spent 10 years thinking about what musicians and artists need in order to create, in terms of technology,” says McArthur. “What COVID did was make us realize that they also had very human needs, to buy food and pay rent, which is another way we can help the local community. The chief motivator behind TRC’s expansion is our desire to serve the rich mix of music makers who come to our door. Our new, larger facility will not only support an increased number of users, but will also enable us to reach a more diverse demographic of music makers with respect to age, racial identity, economic means, and creative goals. On the technical side of things Focusrite technology is a big part of reaching, serving, and inspiring those new makers.”

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