

# The return of the big-room studio?

## Glamour and gear at NY's Jungle City

With many of the world's iconic, big-name recording studios currently closing their doors for the last time, and the music industry as a whole in search of a new economic paradigm, you'd have got fairly long odds against anyone deciding that now was a good time to open a brand-new, big-room facility. And even longer odds against them doing it in a top-dollar real-estate location such as the heart of Manhattan.

Recording engineer and founder of the new Jungle City studios, Ann Mincieli, however, has a different take on this picture: "The past few years have witnessed a huge shift in our city's recording community," she says. "Major studios like Sony and the Hit Factory



Cheryl Fleming (www.cherphotos.com/architecture)

closed their doors, not because they weren't busy, but to take advantage of windfall real-estate profits.

"Simultaneously we saw the impact of laptop recording and mixing, and the escalating construction of small, powerful 'vest pocket' studios. Many top engineer/producers are confident that they can recreate high-quality sound in their basements, attics or garages. They know they can find larger studios for live sessions in the city, and that they can overdub tracks in their own small iso booths. But those studios are simply incapable of reproducing the audio quality or creative vibe of a full-up, fully staffed, high-end studio.

"My dream was to create a luxurious, technically impeccable, 21st-century haven for first-tier artists, producers and engineers. By crafting an ideal creative atmosphere and providing every conceivable tool to support their pursuit of excellence, we hope to make a real contribution to the art of music recording,

and help to establish New York City as the 'music capital of the world'."

Having spent the last ten years working as Alicia Keys' engineer/album coordinator/studio director, and working with artists ranging from Mariah Carey to Usher, Mincieli was well placed to transform 4800 square feet of raw real-estate in NY's High Line district into a showpiece studio complex with natural light, high ceilings, a 370-square-foot terrace, a 2400-square-foot rooftop deck, and spectacular river views. Housed on the 10th and 11th floors of a new luxury office building at 520 West 27th Street, at a cost of over \$6 million, the new Jungle City facility offers a main live- and control-room pairing plus two autonomously functioning audio-production suites, each with individual iso booths and private lounges. On the 11th floor, Studio A's control room features an SSL Duality SE 48-input analogue console/DAW controller, alongside a rare, rebuilt EMI TGI 12345 Mark 3, from around 1968. The two production suites on the floor below offer a choice between a Euphonix S5 Fusion and a 32-fader Avid Icon D-Control Pro Tools control surface. All three rooms run Avid Pro Tools 9 software recording systems, with a mountain of premium plug-ins and outboard.

Studio designers Walters-Storyk Design Group have brought their own unique flourishes to this facility, mounting Studio A's custom Augspurger Dual 15, vertical-cabinet, main monitors in an outsized glass speaker baffle. "This is only the second time we have done this, creating a kind of transparent 'wall of sound' between the live and control rooms," comments WSDG principal/architect/acoustician, John Storyk. This not only provides artists and engineers with the creative advantage of good visual communication, but also maximises a panoramic view that ranges from the Empire State Building to the Hudson River.

The acoustics are tuned with innovative, perforated, American-cherry absorbing diffusers and unique ceiling treatments that also serve as low-frequency absorption, while programmable colour-LED, mood lighting and coordinated fabrics and colors



Cheryl Fleming (www.cherphotos.com/architecture)

assist in fully realizing Ann Mincieli's dream of making Jungle City a new landmark facility within NY's recording industry. The soon-to-be completed, world-class HotelAmericano directly adjoining the studio will be an added inducement to international artists seeking deluxe accommodation during their recording projects.

"Everyone associated with Jungle City's design and construction contributed an astonishing level of effort and attention to detail," Mincieli states, helping her to



Photos: Rachel Mincieli

realize her aim of re-establishing NYC as a destination point for major recording artists. The list of clients who have worked at Jungle City Studios since its opening in January, 2011 — Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, Kelly Clarkson, Jennifer Hudson and Bono (in with hip-hop star Swizz Beatz) — suggest that she may be well on the way towards achieving that goal already. —

Dave Lockwood

<http://junglecitystudios.com>