

café MUSIC

CAFE MUSIC RECORDING STUDIOS

Situated in the basement of an eye-catchingly shambolic house in an otherwise anonymous-looking corner of London's East End, Café Music has been quietly ticking over for the last 20 years. Owned and run by Mark Sutherland, who converted the property from a café and brothel in the mid-80s, it is currently enjoying the most fruitful period of its history – against the industry trend.



The bohemian atmosphere is a big asset: those new to the studio environment are instantly put at ease, and more experienced artists are delighted by the pervading quirkiness. There is a baffling array of trinkets, toys, decorations and old vinyl in the lounge that serves as a hang-out for the procession of musicians that passes through in the average day. The basement studio itself has such a cosy atmosphere that it's easy to lose track of time, as concentrated work comes to feel like a relaxing experience. The 30ft-square live room is dark and intimate, particularly conducive to singer-songwriters but equally able to handle a full band.



The building also houses two smaller studios, which are rented by **Jon Hopkins** and **Leo**

Abrahams – both of whom have varied careers as artists/producers/session musicians.

Hopkins, a very highly-regarded solo artist and remixer on the Just Music label, recently used the main room to record and produce the forthcoming **King Creosote** album (with Sutherland as engineer), and last year's acclaimed 'Around In Circles' by **Arborise**. Abrahams recorded all three of his own albums there, including a forthcoming release on Mercury, which features **Brian Eno** and **KT Tunstall** on guest vocals. He is currently using the studio to produce Real World artist **Iarla O'Lionaird** (ex-Afro Celt Sound System), and upcoming dark bluegrass duo the **Smoke Fairies**. At various stages over the last few years Leo has brought in **Ed Harcourt**, **Sarah Cracknell** (Saint Etienne), **Imogen Heap**, **Petra-Jean Phillipson**, **Foy Vance** and **Andi Sexgang** among others for sessions in the studio.

As the studio has grown in popularity, especially among acoustic-based artists, Mark and Leo have responded by adding to its already-enviable inventory equipment. The range of mics includes *Neumann*, *Coles* and *Calrec* alongside a selection of *Beyers*. The principle mic pre is the *Thermionic Culture Earlybird 2*, and the impressive-looking rack also boasts an *Empirical Labs Fatso*; *Chandler EQ*; *Universal Audio 6176*; *SPL Channel One*; *Summit*, *DBX* and *Ashley* compressors; and the new *Apogee Ensemble* for full integration with Macs and Logic Pro.

With an ethic that combines the personal with the professional, Café Music has found a valuable niche in a market decimated both by a declining record industry and the growth in home recording. Whether a client is there to record drums or vocals for a day or two, or if they've booked in for the long haul, they always leave happy - having had a unique studio experience.

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