

Installation Profile



CUSTOM CONFIGURED ASHLY AUDIO DSP IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF CARL TATZ DESIGN'S AWARD-WINNING PHANTOMFOCUS™ SYSTEM MONITORING PROTOCOL

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE – In science fiction stories, the world is often populated by secret wormholes – magical confluences in space and time that can transport people to other planes of existence. Such wormholes provide a nice analogy to the proprietary PhantomFocus™ System monitor tuning protocol of acoustician, studio designer, and all-around sonic sorcerer Carl Tatz. Tatz' ingenious tuning system, which is a multi-dimensional mixture of hardware, knowledge, and application, can deliver “the sweet spot from God” in any studio control room, from the newest multi-million dollar mega-studio to the humblest of bedroom arrangements. Recently, two of Tatz' PhantomFocus System installations earned *Mix Magazine's* “Class of 2011” Studio Design Awards. Like most PhantomFocus System installations, Carl Tatz relies on an Ashly Audio signal processor engine to deliver a perfectly tuned sweet spot, which makes imaging and frequency response so transparent and lifelike it has reduced industry veterans to tears... literally.

The two awardees are Nashville's The Blue Grotto (shown above) and Murfreesboro's RedDoor. The Blue Grotto is owned by South African engineer and producer Sean Spence and will be used to develop new talent, with full capacity to record and mix-finished products. Middle Tennessee State University professor and veteran engineer/producer, John Merchant, commissioned RedDoor, which he will use primarily to teach advanced master classes. In part to accommodate students, the RedDoor studio features one of the largest control rooms in all of Nashville.



The RedDoor Studio

When it comes to the importance of good monitoring, few engineers or producers need much convincing. Nevertheless, Tatz is amazed at how frequently the monitoring system takes a back seat to the recording chain equipment when it comes time to lay down some money. “Of course a good studio has to have a good recording chain, but there’s a pretty big performance versus cost plateau after you move past the junk,” he said. “When people sacrifice the monitoring system to chase after the modest rise in that plateau, they’re making a bad decision. While it’s true that humans have an amazing knack for mentally filtering the sound of their monitoring system, learning what translates to other systems and what doesn’t, and then making better mixes on suboptimal systems, it’s much more efficient – and much more satisfying – to work on a great monitoring system from the start.”

Tatz is emphatic that PhantomFocus System involves no psychoacoustic trickery. Using client-specified monitors and basic physics, Tatz implements an Ashly ne4400, ne4800, or ne8800 signal processor engine in a custom PhantomFocus System configuration. The only “trick” is that Tatz spends two full days tweaking over fifty different aspects of the system’s performance in both the time and frequency domains to ensure that everything arrives perfectly at the sweet spot. “The PhantomFocus System will work with any monitors in any room,” he said. “After the two-day procedure, which involves the set up and tuning, the client will have a monitoring system unlike anything they’ve ever heard before. Beyond the accuracy and the professional boost the PhantomFocus System gives its users, it is a thrilling emotional experience to hear music so clearly. I have actually had clients turn around after their first listen with tears in their eyes.”

In almost every PhantomFocus System installation, Tatz uses custom configured Ashly processing. “I have tried all the major processor manufacturers out there and had blind shootouts with Ashly and the other top contenders,” he said. “Despite the fact that the Ashly processors are considerably more affordable, no one could detect a difference between the Ashly sound and the sound of the much more expensive units. In fact, when people do detect a difference, they favor the Ashly processors! From a designer’s perspective, I’m glad it works out that way because I love working with Ashly’s Protea™ software. It’s fast, easy, flexible, and accurate.”