

VINTAGE KING BLOG

YOUR GUIDE TO EVERYTHING AUDIO ONLINE

TRACKING WITH JOHANN SCHEERER OF CLOUDS HILL RECORDINGS



If you were to look at the building that houses Clouds Hill Recordings (<http://www.cloudshillrecordings.com/>), one might think that it took years to find such a perfect place for tracking and mixing. Located just outside the hustle and bustle of Hamburg's city center, the beautiful German studio space is secluded enough to give artists some much-needed space, while still remaining close to a cultural hub. Surprisingly, it was discovered by complete accident.

Clouds Hill owner Johann Scheerer got his start in the music industry by signing a recording deal with Sony/Epic at the age of 16 . He quickly moved into producing, began an apprenticeship at a studio in Hamburg and, ultimately, built out his own studio space in 2003. Yet, he still craved something more.

"I just had my first kid, I opened up my first real studio and shared the recording room with another guy who also lived in the studio," says Johann of his studio prior to Clouds Hill. "When the conditions got worse I decided to move out and find a new space. That's when I accidentally found the space Clouds Hill Recordings is in today."

Taking up two floors of a converted warehouse, Johann imagined Clouds Hill as an all analog studio that would buck the growing trend of digital technology in the recording industry. "I wanted an analog-based studio from the first day," Johann states. Thanks to an "all or nothing" attitude fueled by the need to provide for his child, the young father began blazing a trail of analog glory and quickly became known as the man to work with in Germany.



“Due to noise isolation reasons, I was forced to rent the space under the recording room, too,” Johann says of moving into the building. “I was worried that the financial pressures were going to be too high, but it turned out to be the right decision. I was now able to offer an artist apartment included in the studio price for international clients.”

By renting the third floor space to keep the noise of the fourth floor separate from other tenants, Johann created a unique recording studio that offered the amenities of home and beyond (i.e. scenic views and a Playboy pinball machine). However, his studio set-up is what truly sets him apart from other recording spaces in Germany. The space features two large rooms used for tracking, along with a room dedicated to a 48-track Neve 8068, originally built for George Martin.

With the continued growth of the studio, the need for expansion became abundantly clear to Johann. After building out a mastering studio space and a second, smaller control room, the studio owner looked to pick up a new API 1608 (<http://vintageking.com/api-1608-recording-console>) console. Unsatisfied with the results, he reached out to Vintage King’s Mike Nehra and Jeff Leibovich for an alternative desk to bring home to Hamburg.



“My partner came to me and advised I set up the second control room to satisfy my personal needs, not for the industry’s needs. That’s when I started talking to Jeff and Mike about getting a new console for that room,” Johann says. “The API

(<http://vintageking.com/api-audio.html>) 3232 is a very punchy, but warm and big sounding console. I like the fact that it is ergonomically not perfect. I like to arrange things and love to let gear lead the production process. It keeps the mind fresh in every session.”

With Johann’s philosophy of selecting gear that leaves a distinct “sonic imprint,” the API 3232 console was a perfect fit for Clouds Hill second control room. After his initial purchase from Vintage King, Johann and Jeff worked on bringing in more unique gear across the Atlantic for the studio including Pultec MEQ-5s (<http://vintageking.com/pultec-meq5-6474-used>) and PEQ-1as, Neve 32264 (<http://vintageking.com/neve-32264a-vk-wood-racked-pair-20400-k-20182-k-vintage>) modules, Sony C37as (<http://vintageking.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=Sony+C37a>), RCA BK5As and more. “I have never received anything that wasn’t in excellent shape. That alone is outstanding,” Johann says of the Vintage King experience.

Nearly eight years after opening the doors at Clouds Hill Recordings, it’s obvious that Johann’s analog vision remains intact and influences his in-studio decisions every single day. Whether selecting a new piece of gear or deciding on a project to work on, Johann says “I try not to follow trends. I just want to feel, smell and hear the equipment during the production process.” Based on the recordings he has made with diverse artists like Faust, Pete Doherty and Omar Rodriguez-Lopez, Johann has gone above and beyond in sealing Clouds Hill place in history.



This post was posted in Tracking (<http://vintageking.com/blog/category/tracking>)