

FEATURES

This "Man Cave" is home to some of the sweetest sounds produced in Montgomery

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ROCKVILLE – Entering Patuxent Studio is like stepping into a living room composed of different decades.

Perhaps it was the impression of the 1940s television set on the far right side of the room of the warehouse or the 1950s jukebox right next to it.

In the next room is the live space for bands to play and record, the birthplace of 280 albums.

Farther back is the control room, lined with photos from decades of musicians along the walls.

To Patuxent Music founder and producer Tom Mindte, it's his "man cave," where modern recording equipment meets vintage interior design.

Before opening his own studio at 409 North Stonestreet Avenue in 1990, Mindte said he started off with a reel to reel recorder.

He and his father eventually moved into the warehouse from an air conditioning shop across the street, where they originally set up shop in 1984.

"That building was too close to the railroad tracks. So if a train came by we had to stop. And then this place became available," Mindte said.

Upon moving into the warehouse, Mindte started his own label in a studio area as small as one small spot in his current shop.

"When I moved in here, it was just an empty warehouse, and that little room where the drum set is was

the studio," Mindte said.

Initially, Mindte's father, who rented the warehouse with him, had his metal sculptures in the waiting room out front.

Mindte also said the live space housed his 1961 Cadillac and his father's 1962 Lincoln, leaving only the back space left for recording.

According to the 59-year-old, as technology advanced, he couldn't depend on primitive equipment anymore, so he had to "evolve" away from analog and enter the digital world of recording.

In 2005, he moved equipment around to expand the space of the studio.

He also taught himself how to set up use the new digital equipment, with the help of his Master's degree in electrical engineering.

While he's upgraded his technology, traces of Mindte's love of history still adorn the studio's design.

Along the walls of the warehouse, Mindte hung his collection of old newspaper editions collected by his father, including when the Titanic sank and the U.S. entered World War II.

"I guess I just like old stuff," Mindte said.

Studio employee Robbie Denzing, who started working at the studio in September, said the music and décor help create an enjoyable work experience.

"I think it's amazing because music is my number one passion and to be able to come to work and be surrounded by bands that are playing and also the history of music is just wonderful. I think that probably at

tributes to the atmosphere. All the old posters and all the old records and stuff just makes this a great place for anybody who loves music," Denzing said.

Mindte also has a large collection of about 30,000 vinyl records, from 78s to the 33 1/3s. Most of them sit on the shelves filling the second floor from wall to wall. Some recordings he produced are also on the second floor.

More vinyl records are in what Mindte considers the lunch or the break room.

"It kind of got out of hand (with the records). This one guy who I used to record with passed away and his wife said he wanted me to have all of his records. There were 4,000 of them," Mindte said.

Away from recording new music, Mindte also fixes up the technology playing older music.

He restores vinyl records on each of his studio's two floors.

"Some people say, 'Hey, my dad was on this record, can you restore it?'" Mindte said.

Mindte also said he tries to give the studio a relaxed and warm atmosphere to calm nervous musicians down. Musicians can hang out in a room featuring the images of artists Mindte previously recorded, like Frank Wakefield, Larry Coryell, Buz Busby, and The Stonemans. He recorded two albums for The Stonemans and played in Busby's band for four years.

Mindte said he also tries to make a relaxed atmosphere for himself with some pictures in his control room.



PHOTO BY MARK POETKER

Tom Mindte in his recording studio.

"I'm into music, so all of the pictures over here by the door, those are jazz and Appalachian musicians from the 1920s. It's like my man cave, plus my work," Mindte said.

Denzing, who has also recorded an album at the studio, attributes the "laid back atmosphere" to Mindte and the experience Mindte brings to the studio.

"He's got a ton of knowledge on music, music history, and he knows what he's doing. He knows how to record people so I would say just because of Tom himself," Denzing said.

Denzing also said because there aren't so many people who work at the studio, everyone knows each other pretty well and there isn't a lot of stress during recording sessions.

"When bands come in here, there's not a lot of stress when it comes to recording a band. Every-

body here is as relaxed as possible to get good recordings. You don't want people stressed out when they come in here to record, so it's a nice laid back atmosphere," Denzing said.

Though some pictures in the control room are there because Mindte considers those musicians his heroes, Mindte actually worked with some of his musical idols.

"I've had some recordings that have been in the charts. So that's an accomplishment. And I got to record some of my musical heroes who I never dreamed I would meet much less work with them," said Mindte, who produces about 10 albums a year, mostly bluegrass, jazz and blues.

He is halfway to that total for 2016 with five albums recorded, all of which are now in post-production.

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