

## Music Makers: State-of-the-art recording studio opens in Lake Havasu City

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Jazz artist Marlene Arden steps up to a microphone inside a glittering recording studio and begins to sing.

Behind double glass doors, recording engineer Steve Yates manipulates the control board as if it itself were a musical instrument. The glow of two large flat-screen computer

monitors illuminates his face while Arden's rich voice fills the booth with a velvety rendition of Michael Frank's samba-inspired "Down in Brazil."

It's scene you might easily expect was taking place in Los Angeles or even Las Vegas. The surprise is such beautiful music is being made right here in Lake Havasu City, in Yate's own state-of-the-art recording studio.

Yates built the 2400-square-foot studio — which from a certain angle looks like just another oversized motor home garage — after moving to Lake Havasu City from Denver, where he also had a studio.

"I built the whole thing myself. The only thing I didn't do is the concrete and stucco," Yates said. "Building it myself is the only way I could afford to do it."

He also got the approximately \$35,000 worth of recording and electronic equipment wholesale. A musician friend built the control console in exchange for studio time.

As a result, Yates is able to offer the services of a fully digital, professional level recording studio for less than it would cost in urban centers like Los Angeles or Las Vegas. He even built in an apartment to accommodate artists who come from out of town to do their recording.



For Arden and her partner, pianist Phil Conti, Yate's studio was just what they needed when they set out to record their new compact disk of jazz and popular standards.

The couple had been performing at a variety of local venues, sometimes with Yates playing the drums, and they

were ready to branch out with a recording.

In the studio, it's a team effort, with the three of them creating all the vocal and instrument tracks that are then assembled digitally.

"We're doing a lot ourselves because we don't have a band all together," Arden said.

Yates said it takes about 16 hours to complete a single song recording, from setting up to record the drum track to remastering the final mix. Arden and Conti are recording 13 tracks for their new CD, including George Gershwin's "S Wonderful" and Cole Porter's "Night and Day".

Though Conti's piano solos, played on an electronic keyboard directly into the computer, require just a couple of takes, Arden might record up to a dozen takes of a song before she feels she's gotten everything she can out of it.

Yates works closely with the musicians to combine the best parts of those takes into a compilation track.

"We try to take as big a section as we can, but sometimes we have to take just a couple of words," he said.

It's an arduous process, listening to sections of the different takes over and over, picking out the perfect phrase or intonation, then maybe having to adjust levels so that it all fits together seamlessly.

But Yates prefers this method to "punch in/out" recording, where the engineer attempts to re-record just the parts that need to be redone or improved.

As a singer, Arden also would rather do multiple complete takes. With punch in/out "you lose the feeling," she said.

Multi-track recording isn't new. What is new is how the technology has become so much a part of the creative process.

Yate's computer can take data input via the electronic keyboard and convert it into the sound of any instrument in an orchestra, even the distinctive sound a Steinway grand piano.

"That's what we want to do — use the digital sounds but make them sound realistic," Yates said.

Conti, who has a real grand piano in his living room, seemed to accept that digital partner.

"You don't need a Steinway grand piano anymore," he said. "You have the sound of a Steinway grand piano."

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