



Mondosonic Studios in Kerala, India with the ASP8024 Heritage Edition console at its heart

# Mondosonic Studios' Varun Krrishna on Preferring Analog-Over-Digital Setup

*(And Why He's Still Building a Spatial Studio)*

**Varun Krrishna** is not just a mixing engineer and music producer out of profession, but also out of passion. With an ardent love for music, Varun Krrishna is also the founder and owner of **Mondosonic Studios** in Kerala, a space he has built for music to breathe free. So, it isn't a surprise that the man of music is always in a quest to stay abreast with the latest trends in the world of acoustics, and knows just how big the spatial audio boom is. To encapsulate the essence of spatial sound, Varun Krrishna is upgrading **Mondosonic Studios** with an extension for spatial audio. In this article, Varun Krrishna talks about why he prefers an analog setup over a digital one, and why, even then, a spatial studio upgrade, for him, is the mandate of the moment.

Producer, mix/master engineer and owner of **Mondosonic Studios**, **Varun Krrishna** is on a constant mission to break records and set new benchmarks in the world of music. To accomplish this in a bigger, better, and faster manner, Varun is currently considering upgrading **Mondosonic Studios** with Spatial Audio.

Regarding the newest development undertaken at **Mondosonic Studios**, he shares, "I am already working on the pre-plans for a Spatial Audio mixing setup. I don't want to rework the existing space, because that is designed specifically for a stereo production. I am not a huge fan of overly clinical-sounding and dry room treatments. I need the room to be on a balance of dry and live conditions."

Talking about his current studio, he explains, "What I care about predominantly is the low-end response of the room. 50% of my overall investment of my control room has been put into

controlling the sub-low frequencies. To me, bass frequencies are the soul of the music, and it's the most difficult frequency to control inside a room, so I have ensured I have the best bass response in my room. My studio is almost 8,500 cubic feet, and hence, I have a great amount of headroom to play around with most of the frequencies without much trouble."

## Analog or Digital: Varun Krrishna Shares His Pick

For **Mondosonic Studios**, Varun Krrishna leans slightly towards analog gear than digital plugins. Even then, to him, it is all about treading that fine line of balance between the old-school and nouveau. But, what role does an analog setup play in an era where digital reigns supreme? Responding to the scepticism surrounding the viability of a huge, traditional studio, Krrishna says, "Many of my industry peers ask me why



**Varun Krrishna prefers a hybrid way of producing music**

I need such a traditional, analog setup, especially in this digital age. I say, it's all subjective, and I am sure you can get great results in any of these mediums. My studio is designed to withstand any future modifications."

He adds, "At the end of the day, I don't think that digital plugins are inferior to analog, particularly when technology is at its peak. But, for my specific workflow, I always prefer analog and I am quite happy with the results. None of my analog gear has been faulty for at least the last six years, except for some tube swaps, which is easy to work on. So for me, I like the predictable nature of it! That being said, I have a couple of plugins that always stay in DAW, and I like the transparent nature of plugins. With a very minimal set of plugins and a few outboard analog gears, I have limited myself to old-school techniques that create a balanced environment for more creativity. Analog and digital. The best of both worlds. That's what I prefer. A hybrid way of producing music."

Even as he prioritizes analog over digital whenever he can, Varun Krrishna plans on building a spatial audio setup. Clarifying his reason for considering a development of an immersive studio, he says, "Regarding immersive audio in music, the industry is still unsure how this will evolve the hearing pattern of the listeners. To be frank, I'm still not convinced by the immersive music heard on a pair of headphones. Apart from a few EDM tracks specifically designed for immersive perspective, not many songs have the soul of stereo or mono music. The coherence of a stereo mix is not there in an immersive mix. I can understand the requirement of immersive audio for a specifically designed song, and simply placing the instruments all over the speakers randomly just for the sake of spatial audio does not make it feel good, but distracts the overall behaviour of the music. I am a huge fan of Dolby Atmos on movies. The movie needs such spatial aspects, especially the sound design works. For

music, the spatial audio feels like a gimmick, at least for now. Even though it is okay to be heard on a physical speaker configuration, it doesn't feel great to be heard on a binaural augmented headphones."

So, what pushes Krrishna in the direction of building a spatial setup for music production? He responds, "If one client has an immersive release, the others are forced to follow the trend. I have been talking to many clients on this topic, and as of now, none of those clients are really fond of spatial songs, but wish to mix them in that format. It's the nature of this industry, whether we like it or not, we have to follow suit. That's why I am now thinking more about my studio extensions for spatial audio. Sometimes, even though we disagree with what is happening, we should be prepared and follow the trend, and hence I have already started designing a room especially for immersive audio."

### On The Right Equipment For The Perfect Immersive Setup

Talking about the equipment that will be housed within his immersive setup, Varun Krrishna shares, "I have still not decided. But for spatial audio, considering a 7.1.4 setup, I have to make sure each speaker's response is well-balanced inside the room. Even though I am more into lively rooms when it comes to surround sound speaker setups, too much liveliness inside the room might interfere with the spatial localisations of the speakers. I am designing the spatial room with my room principles, but I will make sure that it meets all the requirements of a spatial audio mixing environment."

In his current studio's stereo setup, Krrishna uses a wide gamut of equipment, "In my stereo room, I am using Genelec 1238 DF along with its 7380 subwoofer. I have tried more than 12 monitor speakers from different companies before settling on Genelec. In my

space, none of the other speakers were able to fill in the space with such energy, and the translation was extremely good. I am also using a Neumann KH 310 as a complimentary monitoring, and I love them too. Its midrange detailing is unique, and I use it a lot to shape up the vocals. Even though it is underpowered for my studio area, it feels and sounds amazing. When your music sounds good on them, it sounds good everywhere."

### The Heart of Mondosonic Studios: Varun Krrishna Talks About The Audient ASP9024-HE Console

Krrishna's attention to detail stretches to visual as well as aural aesthetics. Mondosonic Studios is being designed in a way that the outboard furniture in his studio now matches the wood of the Audient ASP8024-HE console, the hero equipment, the centrepiece of his studios, the channel through which his labour of love comes to fruition. "When I get any improvements in the room, it is designed in a way that compliments my console. Ever since Audient ASP8024-HE reached my mixing room, it adds a powerful workflow and looks amazing. Everything looks more integrated and appealing," Krrishna comments.

Describing his Audient desk's features, routing and workflows as "nothing short of spectacular," Krrishna continues to appreciate his ASP8024-HE. "Its mixbus amplifiers are astonishing and I like its unique midrange crunch whenever the mix bus is driven hard and it particularly suits the rock/country genres. I use the on-board EQ a lot during the recording phase itself and I have been very confident with it while confirming the sound I need, even before the final mix."

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Varun Krrishna continues his praise for the famed Audient console, along with the brand's timely and efficient customer support, "I always have a lot of parallel processing and routings going on, right from the start of the mix, and it stays on my patch bay all the time. With the Audient ASP8024-HE, the routing options are endless. Apart from that, Audient's customer support has always been great and it's important, especially when you are investing a fortune on a gear. What I have in my studio is what I have always dreamt of. Let it be gear, workflow, or design – I like it to be hybrid, always. Audient offers just that."

Most recently, Varun produced Indian thrash metal band, Amorphia's third studio album, Lethal Dose which was very well received, as well as a regional song named Vaazhvin Neeve by the artist Remin Jose, released on his in-house record label. "I'm currently producing a song composed by my brother Pranav Das and I'm very excited about it," he adds. There are at least another six songs in the queue for 2023 already, so he is expecting to be busy.



**According to Mondosonic Studios' owner, Varun Krrishna, the desk's features, routing and workflows are "nothing short of spectacular"**