

Gray Spark Audio's newest space, Studio D, has two acoustically treated room spaces with two workstations and is equipped with Dynaudio Monitors for an exemplary listening experience



GRAY SPARK AUDIO OPENS NEW STUDIO SPACE FOR ACADEMY STUDENTS

*In 2010, two Pune-based recording engineers, **Ronak Runwal** and **Harshad Sathe**, established **Gray Spark Audio** to provide a platform for aspiring and seasoned recording artists and sound engineers to experiment with their craft in a spacious facility in Pune, India. Today, Gray Spark Audio has expanded into a space with four studios, catering not just to the needs of several music and film production houses, but also helping students of Gray Spark Academy learn audio engineering on the ground. **PALM Technology Magazine Team** talks to Ronak Runwal, to explore how the newly-designed Studio D is poised to become a haven for the students*

The History:

Talking about the history of **Gray Spark Audio**, **Ronak Runwal** shared, "Gray Spark Audio started as a recording studio in 2010 with the goal of creating a space that could handle all ranges of projects and clients and has finally evolved into a recording complex comprising four studios. The studio attracted a lot of newer engineers from various audio schools who were again trained at our facility as Assistant and Associate Engineers; what struck us was that though these bright engineers were coming into the studio, they lacked a sense of practical knowledge which in a field like this is a must. This is where the idea for Gray Spark Audio Academy was born."

Runwal shares more details about the existing studios at Gray Spark Audio, "Gray Spark Audio is a complete Music Production and Audio Post-production Facility based out of Pune, housed in a massive 4000 sq. ft facility with state-of-the-art equipment and an acclaimed team of audio engineers."

He adds, "Studio A is the prime mixing mastering suite with ample space for recording 25 musicians. The equipment and gears range from everything in analogue and digital, with a wide range of microphones and preamps. Studio B is a smaller version of Studio A with digital gears and selective microphones. This space has been created to enable solo instrument tracking, vocal tracking, film dubbing, voiceovers, ad mix, and sound design. Studio C is a writing/tracklaying room with Neumann Monitors and digital interfaces that are perfect for mixing/mastering or a producing and programming space dedicated to our students. Studio D has two acoustically treated room spaces i.e. a control room and a massive live room which is big enough to track a 5-piece band and conduct regular classes for 30 students. This space has two workstations and is equipped with Dynaudio Monitors for the best listening experience and a range of interfaces and preamps."

Creating A Studio-Within-A-Studio For The Students:

Elaborating on the reason behind creating a studio-within-a-studio at Studio D in Gray Spark Audio, Runwal comments, "The main reason was

to provide a dedicated space for students to work and a classroom in the form of a studio. The secondary reason was to have different spaces dedicated to carrying out different jobs, which increases the efficiency of the space's utilization.

Runwal illustrates, "Let's say a band's album recording would be carried on in Studio A, as it's well equipped to carry out a multichannel recording session, while for a film dubbing or Foley session, Studio B is well equipped. Students who need to work on a mixing assignment can utilize Studio C, while other students can record a band in Studio D (a mix of control room as well as a live room), which also is equipped with adequate preamps and mics. The best part about this is that all of these can be carried on all at once, side-by-side, without any hindrance."

The Acoustic Design:

Fleshing out the acoustic design of Studio D, Runwal, who helmed the project, informs, "When it came to designing acoustics for the new place, the goal was pretty clear. It had to be different from the other spaces i.e. Studio A, B, and C in terms of sonics.

The Live Room was designed in a manner where it was not too dead but also had a little bit of liveness and room character, hence the diffusers were calculated

and built and placed accordingly. The control room was designed to give a fuller sounding and balanced experience for mixing and mastering. There is only one reflective surface in the control room, and live room and that is the see-through glass, which is also calculated and angled in a way so that it does not cause any issues for monitoring. Studio D's design is unique in the shape of the room, there are no parallel walls in Studio D, and the room has the right balance of a tight vs. live-sounding room."

He continues, "As the space was meant for students, the acoustics were done in a way where the setup can be dynamic while still retaining the same sonics of the room. While there are two systems and workstations, they can easily be moved or replaced accordingly with different monitors or interfaces. The spaces were created to have pristine recordings, and well-balanced sonics for mixing, mastering, and producing."

At Gray Spark Audio, Runwal believes in integrating state-of-the-art technologies to elevate the workflow and make it all seamless. He affirms, "Over the last year, we have worked with a few artists to release their music through Apple's new "Spatial Audio" format. Spatial Audio is an immersive audio experience that also allows for features like head tracking, which allows the mix engineer to place sounds around the listener."

Taking A Holistic Approach Towards Pro Audio Education:

Runwal places emphasis on utilizing the studio-within-a-studio layout at Studio D to deliver an educational platform for aspiring sound engineers and mastering engineers, "We believe in learning audio by practicing, making mistakes, and learning from them under experienced engineers and producers. The whole idea of having a separate studio is so that students get a dedicated space and playground for experimenting with their sounds, making mistakes, understanding where they went wrong, and improving upon them."

Sharing more insight into how Studio D is poised to go beyond just technically training students, Runwal adds, "Recognizing that more musicians want autonomy in the creation process, we have focused more on training students in our academy from a more holistic approach to audio engineering and music production. Now, as technology is evolving and as the needs of the market are also evolving, these two job roles are getting more and more blurred. Today, it is imperative for anyone who is coming in this industry to have technical as well as creative skills. At Gray Spark Audio Academy, we have curated a 15-month-long course aiming to equip and mentor the audio professionals of tomorrow."

The Inventory:

At Gray Spark Studios, the inventory consists of microphones, cables, headphones, headphone amplifiers, MAC-operated systems, and more. Runwal shares, "We have two MAC-based systems in this studio, with a **Liquid Saffire 56** and an **Audient iD14** being used as the primary converters. We also have **Dynaudio LYD5** and **Kali Audio LP6** for monitoring in this space. Other than this, we also have an entire mic locker available to be used in this space."

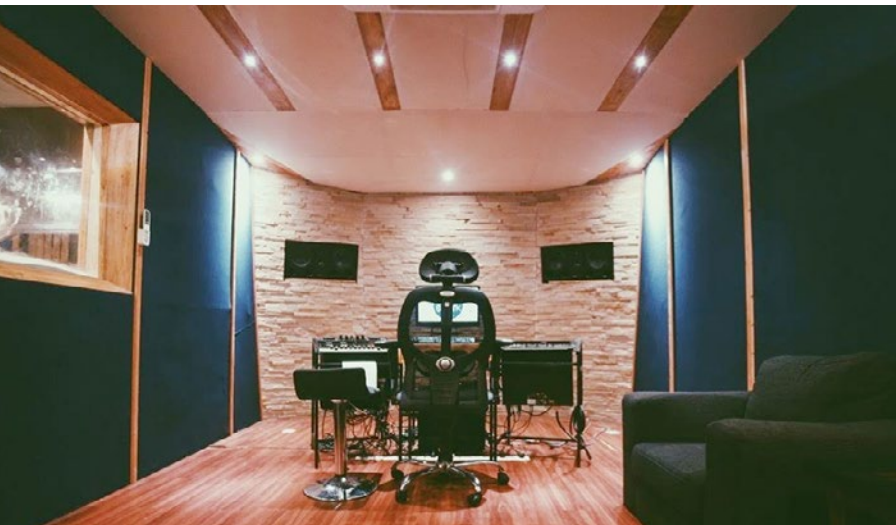
All the equipment was sourced from **Pro Audio Brands, The Inventory, and Bajao**.

What's Next For Gray Spark Audio:

Runwal concludes by sharing the project pipeline for Gray Spark Audio, "A few of the big names we have worked with are Easy Wanderlings, Aswekeepsearching, F16s, Raman Negi, Sanjeev Thomas, Piyush Bhisekar, Vinay Kaushal, Celestial Teapot, Xander Naylor, etc. In the coming year, we are looking forward to the release of Adi Rao's debut EP and we'll be starting mixes for a few EPs by Palindroma, Derric & Nida, and more."

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Gray Spark Audio original studio room, Studio A, is a mixing and mastering suite designed to accommodate 25 musicians, equipped with analogue and digital equipment, microphones, and preamps.