

BRINGING AN ETHEREAL VISION OF SOUND TO LIFE



How Sound & Vision Studios Is Elevating Its Oeuvre Through Expansion

With continued excellence as its cornerstone, Sound & Vision Studios has built an entirely new studio with state-of-the-art pro audio technology in Versova and revamped and transformed its current recording facility in Andheri East to an entirely dedicated mixing facility. PALM Magazine Team explores the newly-built studios in detail

Nestled in the lap of nature in a quiet nook at the end of an arterial lane in Versova, Mumbai, **Sound & Vision Studios** stands as a creative haven for recording artistes, sound engineers, and sound directors. Occupying the first and the second floor of a residential building, an untrained eye would look at it as a challenging development for studio professionals to work in. But leave it to the studios' Managing Director **Mona Shetty**, Technical Director **Shantanu Hudlikar**, and Acoustic Consultants Munro Acoustics, driven in this endeavour by Shetty's husband **Mohit**, to design a seven-room studio in Versova, fitted with the latest equipment and modern technology. It sits well in a residential complex, catering to the needs of production houses, film studios, and streaming service platforms. Moreover, to reflect the team's commitment to unceasing excellence, a two-room recording facility in Andheri East was transformed into a six-room mixing facility.

An enormous undertaking such as this deserves a spotlight. **PALM Magazine Team** explores the design philosophy behind the studios, the concept behind maintaining a seamless configuration across all rooms, the innovations employed during the acoustic design and treatment, and more.



Sound & Vision Studios' Managing Director Mona Shetty and Technical Director Shantanu Hudlikar with the Studios' team

The Beginning:

"This is where it all started. This is where the original studios were. It has always been only ADR and Dubbing (Localization)," remarks Shantanu Hudlikar, standing with us at the entrance of the Sound & Vision Studios' original space on the second floor, as he is just about to guide us for a walkthrough. He further reveals that the studio's main focus was, is, and might always be on voice recording.

Delving a little deeper into the history of Sound & Vision Studios, Hudlikar states that the facility at Versova has been subjected to quite a bit of transformation. Originally, the Studios at Versova had four studios and one mixing room. The facil-



The corridor and walls of Sound & Vision Studios, decked with all-white interiors, crafted under Shetty's supervision, exude calmness and serenity



The Studio 7's Dub Room, like the rest on the premise, offers a delicate balance between being an acoustically dead room, yet delivering a bit of liveliness to create experiential sound

ity across the road from Versova studios consisted of two studios and one mixing room, which is now transformed into an administrative space.

Mona Shetty added to the conversation, weaving an attention-gripping narrative about the origins of the Sound & Vision Studios, while talking about her own journey from being a child voice actor to an entrepreneur passionate about voice recordings, "I have been a voice actor since I was child. I have performed voice acting for many areas - from advertising to radio to film to television. I used to help my mother with running the company when she started it in 1993. Because she was so good at her work, she kept getting more projects. What started as a creative

endeavour turned into a business."

She further comments, "My mother soon realized the need to have her own studio, and so, the recording studios in Andheri East and the studios across the road in Versova came into existence. I took over the studios after she passed away. I was pregnant at the time, and it was becoming very difficult to run things which were all over the place by commuting from Andheri West to Andheri East almost every day. So, just to make it more convenient for myself, we started building and expanding. Today, I have gone from being a voice actor, to a dubbing director, to an entrepreneur."

Shetty elaborates on the idea behind expanding Sound & Vision Studios, "The idea was that now we need to expand, because we need more infrastructure for the kind of work we are getting, and also, our work is erratic. We wanted to have a better arrangement of resources, so that we can manage better and the run cost can be contained."

Sound & Vision Studios already functioned with four studio rooms on the second floor. But, when the team sought expansion, they fortunately found just the space they desired for maximizing capacity on the first floor of the same building.

Shetty affirms, "This was ideal, because all the studios are just a floor apart. We just had to add on to the infrastructure as opposed to building a new facility altogether. This area is also very artist-friendly, parking-friendly, and it is accessible as well."

Hudlikar stresses on the fact that in a rapidly changing recording landscape, a studio should avoid being too specialized in a particular area. "Our studios are designed in a way that they can take on any eventuality, except orchestra recordings. But here, we can do music, foley, sound design, and more."

The studios' expansion and transformation is more external and technical in nature, while the internal workflow of the studios, even when updated to cater to modern-day standards, remains the same. "We are doing no different. The work structure is exactly the same." Hudlikar remarks, "The volume has increased. The



Studio 8's Control Room is fitted with monitors from Genelec and consoles from SSL, among other prominent equipment

technology is better. We are able to incorporate more microphones since the world of dubbing and ADR requires a different kind of workflow. So, the new studio rooms are built to adapt mainly towards that."

As we step into the first studio, Hudlikar explains, "If you notice, I have taken the old-fashioned, traditional route, which I feel is absolutely necessary, because this leaves it flexible for everyone. There is a mixer and console, a patchbay, where you can interpatch all the equipment – external preamplifiers, external compressors, really high-quality A to D and D to A converters, and a very comfortable working environment, with ergonomically designed custom tables."

Hudlikar comments, "These are not just bought off the market, I sat down with Kapil, and we designed these tables ourselves. Being an engineer myself, I know that sometimes, companies design tables and hand them over to the engineers to work. When the engineer starts working, problems begin to crop up. With these tables, everything is within an arm's reach – the engineers don't have to bend or move much. Everything is absolutely comfortable over here."

As we move into the other rooms, we begin to notice room standardization. Hudlikar confirms, "All the rooms are built to a particular specification, and they are all absolutely consistent with each other, in terms of sound. Everything is exactly the same, everywhere, except two studios where there is an addition of external preamps, which we need to record music for songs, voice recording for songs – this is essential, especially when we have more than two artists or four artists or a chorus."

Hudlikar adds, "We now have 11 studios, and on an average, we have around 20 projects going on at any time, in multiple languages. As a result, it can become a logistical nightmare trying to assign studios to engineers and directors. We decided to keep the configurations similar so that regardless of the size of the room, moving from one room to another would be seamless."

The Acoustic Design:

Hudlikar shares the reason behind relying on professional acoustic design consultants to design an impeccable studio, and why Munro Acoustics was chosen to design the studios at Versova, "One place you can never compromise on is room design and acoustic treatment. Which is why we chose to go with Munro Acoustics. In the end, acoustics is a science."

He further expands on the need to rely on acoustic consultants to get the science behind the sound right, "In acoustics, for instance, you always have to follow the Rule of Thirds principle. In the middle of the room, you always get into room modes, which means early reflections from all sides, the centre of the room



Sound & Vision Studios' Reception Area creates a symphony of a cosy, homely ambience, making visitors feel at home in an instant

is actually the worst spot to monitor – because you get random reflections from all parts of the room. So, when I am sitting at the desk, my main monitoring has to be my LCR. Anyone can build a studio. But can we really do this scientifically? Which is why, I prefer to go to a person who knows this science.”

Hudlikar adds, “We had to make it very clear that our focus is mainly going to be on the recording of voice. For voice, you need the rooms to be acoustically dead, not completely dead, but not as live as you need it for instruments. When we say we want a good recording studio in terms of acoustics, we mean to say there should not be an unnecessary disturbing waves and frequencies.”

Elaborating further on the acoustic design of the rooms, Cyril Thomas, Senior Acoustic Designer, Munro Acoustics, tells us, “All the rooms were designed with respect to different aspects. The control rooms were a little bit more live and the booth rooms were as acoustically dead as possible, but the client did want a little bit of liveliness to the room as well, since they had a few ideas with respect to how he wanted to room to sound in terms of reverberation.”

Thomas reveals that the studios’ acoustic design presented its own set of obstacles, “The main challenge was fitting in seven studios in that space. The other challenge was, due to limited space, if we go ahead with a traditional form of construction, where we build a frame, then do layers, and then add another frame just for the acoustic treatment, it doesn’t work. So, we went for an inverted frame approach – where the layers are on the outer side. Basically, the frame that is built for the outer shell, for soundproofing, covers the acoustic treatment as well. Technically, we are accomplishing two things in one go.”

From an acoustic design standpoint, another massive challenge awaited Munro Acoustics. Thomas states, “There were two feet massive beams that hampered the ceiling height as well. Traditionally, a frame is suspended via an anti-vibrational element and then, on that frame, layers and treatment are added.”

Explaining how the team overcame the issue, Thomas says, “Here, we had to ensure that along the beam, we take up as minimal space as possible. To do this, we make sure that the frames are on either side to support the load and the sound-



To combat the challenge of fitting seven studios in limited space, acoustic consultant Munro Acoustics went for an inverted frame approach - building a frame to cover the outer shell as well as cover the acoustic treatment

proofing layers go below the beam with minimal depth of treatment.”

Equipment:

Sound & Vision Studios take voice dubbing and recordings seriously. Their choice of equipment is a definitive proof. Hudlikar informs us that they have created a two-mic setup and sometimes, using a large diaphragm condenser for a three-mic setup in order to give the audience an experience of the actual scene, “The large diaphragm microphone can be used to manipulate the sound – maybe for a special effects film – or you want to mangle the sound, distort it, or just have fun with it. All our rooms are capable of handling a maximum of six microphones. There is no dubbing studio in this country that actually gives this facility right now.”

The studios are fitted with microphones from top-of-the-line brands such as Sennheiser, Neumann, Shure, and Sanken, monitors and subwoofers from Genelec, consoles, preamps, converters, and compressors from SSL, Cloud Lifter, Universal Audio, Lynx Aurora, Klark Teknik, and Manley.

More Than A Typical Studio:

It isn’t just the modern-day technical upgrade that gives Sound & Vision Studios at Versova an edge, but also the sophisticated aesthetics that captures the onlooker’s imagination. The studio rooms enveloped in fabric of soothing hues and floral prints running across the walls at the back offers a cozy atmosphere. As we step out from each room within the studio, our attention is captivated by the calm all-white interiors with accents of dazzling gold shining upon our eyes by occasional luxurious chandeliers along the way. Hudlikar tells us that every inch of the interiors were decided on by Mona Shetty. The architecture of the Studios was completed by architects Malhar Ambekar and Rachel Jacob from Munro Acoustics.

Mona shares, “During the process of designing our studios, I visited another studio, and the interiors were all white. I made up my mind right there and then that I wanted my studios’ interiors to be all-white as well.”

Even the acoustic fabric wasn’t chosen purely out of fancy. Shetty made the final call on which fabric would drape the seven rooms of the studio. Thomas states, “When it comes to the treatment, we used a combination of perforations and membrane absorbers, but the fabric was chosen in consultation with the client, as they had a lot of say in the way the studio looks.”

As we sit with Mona in her serene cabin, she elaborates on the idea behind creating a sophisticated yet cozy interior design for her studios, “We are running this studio as a home where so many of us work for 10-12 hours a day. I have



All control rooms, which includes Studio 10’s Control Room, are equipped with ergonomically designed tables to ensure sound engineers can work with ease

always personally hated being in the studios for too long, even though I have been a voice actor, and I feel that the workplace needs to be a little more breath-easy, little more calming, less dark and dingy, and more enjoyable to work in, so that you don't feel like running away all the time. I think comfort was a very important factor."

Aar Pee Centre Studios:

Elucidating the reason behind turning the Studios at Aar Pee Centre into a mixing facility, Shetty states, "We only had three or four mix rooms and we needed more. Everybody, artists especially, were finding it very difficult to travel to Andheri East, where our other facility originally was. So, we decided to turn into a complete mixing facility, where all our mix engineers can work in one place."

The dimensions for the six mix rooms varied in range – from the smallest room standing at 9'5" x 6'9.5" x 8' and the biggest room sized at 12'4" x 7'4.5" x 7'10". The rooms are named based on the colours of the interiors in each room.

The Grey Room is the tiniest room of the lot, "This room is really tiny, but even then, it is still symmetric. Due to space constraint, the speakers are a little smaller, however, we have maintained architectural geometry and symmetry, because of which, the size of the room is unimportant here," explains Hudlikar.

Fleshing out the technical configurations of the rooms, Hudlikar shares, "Five rooms here are 5.1



The Mix Room 6 at Sound & Vision Studios, located at Aar Pee Centre in Andheri East, is designed to be Dolby Atmos compliant with monitoring system from Genelec

Inventory (Sound & Vision Studios, Versova):

Microphone Pool:

- Sennheiser MKH 8060
- Sennheiser MKH 50
- Neumann U 87 i
- Neumann KMR 81 i
- Neumann TLM 102
- AKG C414 XLS
- DPA 4060
- Sanken COS-11D
- Shure SM58
- Shure SM7B
- Mojave MA-300
- Sennheiser MKH 416

Monitoring:

- LR - Genelec 8340A

Console + Preamps + Convertors + Compressors:

- SSL BiG SiX
- Cloud LiÖer
- Universal Audio 710 Twin-Finity
- Lynx Aurora 8 I/O
- Klark Teknik – KT-2A
- Manley ELOP+

System:

- Apple Mac Studios

Inventory (Sound & Vision Studios, Aar Pee Centre):

Mix Room 1- Mix Room 5:

- (5.1)
- S1 x 1
- 8 Fader
- LCR - Genelec Co-Axial Monitoring
- Surround: Genelec SAM with Genelec SUB
- Lynx Aurora 16 I/O

Monitoring:

- LCR – Genelec 8341A
- Surround – Genelec 8330A
- Sub – Genelec 7370A

Mix Room 6:

- 7.1 / Atmos (7.1.4); S1 x 2
- 16 Fader
- Dock
- LCR, Surround, and TOPS: Genelec Co Axial Monitoring, Genelec SAM with Genelec SUB
- Genelec SAM with Genelec SUB
- Lynx Aurora 16 I/O

Monitoring:

- LCR – Genelec 8341A
- Surround – Genelec 8330A
- Top – Genelec 8330A
- Sub – Genelec 7370A

configured and one room is 7.1.4 which is Atmos compliant, is equipped with superlative monitoring system from Genelec and Lynx Aurora. All equipment across the six rooms is standardized. We have used the new Genelec One Series, which is the new coaxial series, because we wanted a high-quality monitoring environment."

As we walk into the Atmos compliant room, Mix Room 6, Hudlikar draws out the difference in configuration between this room and the rest in the studio, "In this room, all the LCR are the same, except the LS/RS, four tops and rears. Instead of one S1, we have two S1s and a dock, which gives the engineers more tactile control. All deliverables are requested by the client, and we have to be prepared to give them every format that is required. But since Atmos is developing slowly, we decided to keep one Atmos room here and another one at the Versova facility. The rest of the rooms in both the facilities are Atmos-Ready."

Hudlikar informs us that the monitoring team from Genelec, along with Shiv Sood and his team from The Sound Team supported the acoustic design of the Atmos compliant room by performing external calibration."

All the six rooms in this studio are also equipped with ergonomically designed tables. "I personally sat there so that the designers can take measurements all around me to ensure a comfortable sitting space for all the sound engineers. I find this imperative since I believe 99% of the studios built in India are built by somebody who is not going to be working in there," remarks Hudlikar.

What's Next For Sound & Vision Studios?

Elucidating on what the future holds for Sound & Vision Studios, Shetty concludes, "We are building across the country, especially in South India. We have built six studios in Chennai and six in Bengaluru to stay connected with the local industry. We have three studios in Kochi, and the fourth one is in process. We have two studios in Hyderabad, but we need to build a completely new facility in Hyderabad. We are moving into Phase II. The upcoming studio in Hyderabad is the most important project for us now."

With expansion as its linchpin, Sound & Vision Studios is poised to not just grow spatially, but also broaden its horizons in the ADR/Voice Dubbing landscape to deliver bigger and better projects for its clients at every step of the way.