In a city dense with recording studios, most of them purpose built, acoustically insular and functionally singular, ***Bandwagon Studios & Spaces*** *represents a marked departure from convention.* ***PALM Expo Magazine*** *steps inside for an exclusive first look at a facility that refuses to follow the playbook. Conceived by composer and producer* ***Zubin Balaporia*** *and realised with acoustic consultants* ***Vijay Benegal*** *and* ***Mujeeb Dadarkar*** *of* ***OdBle Consultants****, the facility marries technical rigour with an unusually expansive view of what a modern creative studio can be.*

GETTING OFF THE BANDWAGON

Inside Zubin Balaporia's New Studio, Where OdBle Reframes Technical Design, Workflow and Creative Use in Mumbai

In the primary control room, optimised acoustics support reliable monitoring on passive Dynaudio M2s and Sonodyne three-way speakers, while Pro Tools paired with a Yamaha DM7 Compact forms the studio's core production system

The project emerged not from ambition alone but from necessity. The original **Bandwagon Recording Studios**, established in 2006, was compelled to vacate its premises following redevelopment. What initially appeared to be a logistical hurdle became an opportunity to rethink the very idea of a studio, not just acoustically, but culturally. The rebuild was entrusted to Mumbai-based **OdBle Consultants**, led by **Vijay Benegal** and **Mujeeb Dadarkar**, whose work spans acoustically demanding studios, performance spaces and broadcast environments.

From Two Studios to One Ecosystem

Bandwagon originally operated with two traditional studios, **Studio A** and **Studio B**, designed and built in house by **Zubin Balaporia** two decades ago. Over time, however, usage patterns shifted.

"There was less demand for operating two full studios simultaneously," Balaporia explains. "When we moved into this new facility, which is substantially larger, I began thinking differently. The idea was to scale up conceptually."

That conceptual scale up lay at the heart of the new design. Instead of duplicating recording spaces, the new layout centres on a single, fully equipped recording studio, supported by a multi art, multi use room that can transform rapidly, sometimes within an hour, between rehearsals, exhibitions, workshops, podcasts and intimate performances.

This emphasis on mutation is deliberate. "Within an hour, the whole area must be able to mutate instantly into another room," Balaporia elucidates. "The philosophy was efficiency, reducing setup and cleanup time to the absolute minimum."

Technically, this translated into recessed amplifiers mounted on dollies,

A purpose-built floating drum isolation platform decouples low-frequency energy from the building slab, reducing structure-borne transmission during high-SPL rehearsals

Recessed amplifiers on dollies, fixed wiring paths and modular storage platforms streamline infrastructure, minimising changeover time and enabling speedy room reconfiguration, in the multi-art room

fixed wiring, a mixer concealed in a drawer, and rolling modular storage platforms sized precisely for different equipment types. Functionally, it eliminated the friction that usually defines studio logistics.

A Radical Shift for Mumbai Studios

In Mumbai, most professional studios are designed around linear workflows: record, mix, leave. Communal spaces, if present at all, are incidental. Bandwagon challenges this paradigm by giving equal design importance to non recording zones, treating them not as ancillary, but essential.

"Recording rooms are often beautiful," Balaporia notes, "but the moment you step outside, it's a claustrophobic space, and you're eating off a folding table. That doesn't foster creativity."

Natural light, rarely prioritised in urban studios, became non negotiable. So did comfort, proportion and spatial sequencing. Even regulatory constraints, such as a mandatory fire window that prevented full depth construction, were reframed as opportunities, resulting in a sit out zone that has since become one of the most used and appreciated areas of the facility.

Structural Reality Meets Acoustic Reality

While the conceptual direction was clear, the technical journey was far from smooth. One of the most significant challenges was a structural loft occupying nearly one third of the floor area. Initially welcomed as additional space, it soon proved incompatible with the acoustic and volumetric needs of a recording studio.

"It was like a full third of the entire floor space was actually a loft," says Mujeeb Dadarkar. "The problem was that it was such a heavy gauge loft, which for us proved to be a problem."

"That 'problem' actually became one of the most loved spaces in the studio," Balaporia says. In practical terms, this approach expands the studio's role beyond production into community building, hosting private listening sessions, rehearsals without audience pressure, exhibitions by emerging artists, and workshops that blur the line between education and creation. Partial modification was explored, but structural interdependence between lofts across units made this unfeasible.

"If you want to do that, you present a design and it goes to London because the structural consultants are overseas," Balaporia recalls. "I was thinking we'll build the studio in 2028."

Ultimately, complete removal was the only solution, executed under strict constraints imposed by interconnected steel I beams.

"You can't just cut anything you like," explains Vijay Benegal. "If you cut one point, somebody else's loft will fall down."

The removal process alone consumed nearly a month, but it restored the vertical volume critical for both acoustics and HVAC performance.

***PALM Expo Magazine* sits down with Vijay Benegal, Mujeeb Dadarkar and Zubin Balaporia to discuss the creative journey and challenges behind the studio**

Isolation Under Real World Constraints

No less challenging was the issue of sound transmission. Early rehearsals revealed significant bleed into neighbouring units, particularly from drums and low frequency sources. "Through the neighbouring corridor, I could hear the whole rehearsal," recalls Benegal. OdBle addressed this with a layered strategy: secondary internal walls incorporating mass loaded membranes, targeted reinforcement against flanking paths, and—crucially—a window within a window solution, since the building's external glazing could not be modified.

Fire sprinkler systems added another layer of complexity, needing repositioning to accommodate revised ceiling profiles and new wall assemblies—an often underestimated but critical compliance challenge in studio builds.

One of the more understated but critical technical interventions at Bandwagon Studios & Spaces was the design of a dedicated drum isolation platform within the multi use room. Early rehearsal tests revealed significant structure borne transmission, with low

frequency energy from the drum kit bleeding through the building slab into adjacent units. To address this, OdBle designed a floating isolation platform sized specifically to accommodate a full drum kit—approximately 7.5 by 9 feet—large enough for comfortable performance without obstructing circulation paths. The platform was engineered to decouple the kit from the floor while remaining visually unobtrusive, finished with felt and carpeting so that when the kit is removed, it reads as a neutral floor surface rather than a stage. This approach allowed the room to retain its multi functional character while effectively controlling low frequency transmission during high energy rehearsals.

Material Logic: Robust, Predictable, Repeatable

Material choices were guided by performance and longevity rather than aesthetics alone.

"We don't use brick over here because of loading," says Benegal. "We use masonry where possible, limp mass membranes, aluminium framing, gypsum board, bison board, and mostly Rockwool."

Rockwool is used extensively for broadband absorption, while foam is applied selectively in body contact zones to prevent compression and long term degradation. Ceiling elements, despite their sculpted appearance, are constructed from MDF, not plaster.

"Plaster would crack because this is under the loft," Benegal explains. "So, this was MDF creatively made to look like plaster."

Geometry as an Acoustic Tool

Rather than relying entirely on treatment, OdBle used room geometry as a primary acoustic tool, particularly in the control room.

"We always strive to avoid dimension ratios that will cause the room to support specific frequencies," Benegal notes. Interestingly, circulation requirements introduced angled walls that ultimately benefited the acoustics.

"That works very much in our favour," says Benegal. "Now we don't have four parallel walls." A critical live room wall was rotated by approximately ten degrees before construction. "That turned out to be perfect," he adds.

Target reverberation times were conservative, typically between 0.9 and 1.2 seconds.

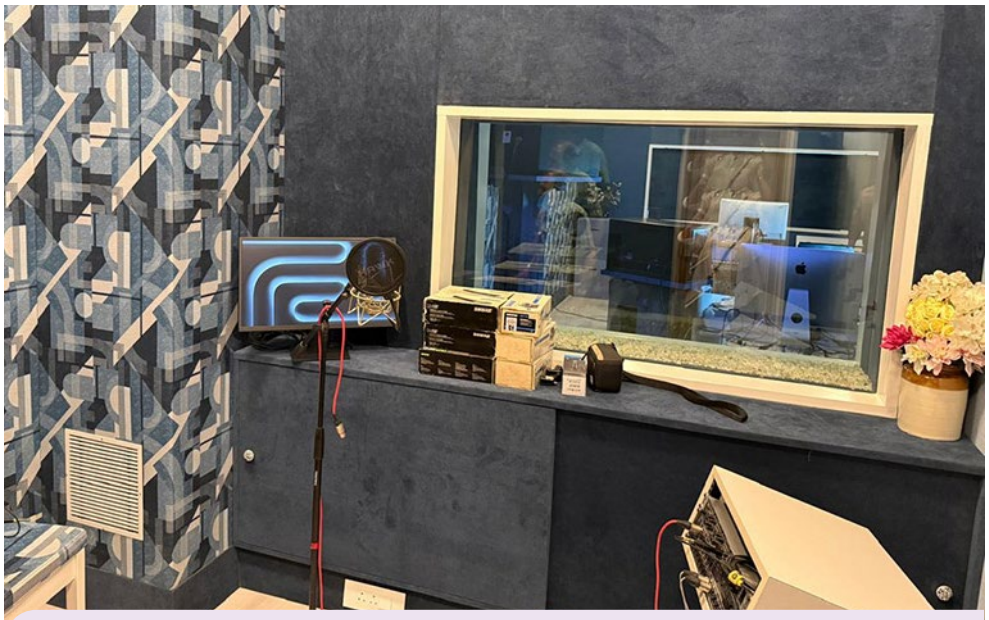
"It's better to err on the side of safety," emphasises Dadarkar. "If the room is already too 'reverby', you can't take it out afterwards."

Infrastructure Built for Evolution

Signal flow at Bandwagon reflects the studio's flexible philosophy. The entire system is Dante based, minimising analogue cabling and simplifying expansion.

The core setup revolves around **Pro Tools** paired with a **Yamaha DM7 Compact**, functioning as both console and interface. Additional I/O is provided via a live room stage box, connected through a single network line.

"Tomorrow, if he wants permanent I/O here, it's just a question of buying a box and attaching it to the network," explains Dadarkar. Monitoring performance benefited directly from improved acoustics. Passive **Dynaudio M2s**, problematic in the previous control room, now perform reliably, while **Sonodyne three way monitors** emerged as an unexpectedly strong reference. The team praised Sonodyne's quality as well "People don't seem to accept that an Indian product can be of the quality we require," explains Benegal. "But it is."



Angled walls and volumetric planning serve as primary acoustic tools, while a Dante-based networked signal backbone simplifies routing, reduces analogue cabling and allows the studio to scale and evolve without structural change

Planning as a Technical Discipline

The entire project took roughly eight months, extended primarily by planning, iterations and compliance navigation. "We went through seven layout iterations," says Dadarkar. "And that was before the multi art space was even fully defined." In hindsight, the team views this time investment as essential. "It's better to get a plan in advance than later," Benegal concludes. "Because once something is built, fixing acoustics often means damaging finished work."

A New Reference Point

Bandwagon Studios & Spaces is not a studio that was rebuilt — it is one that was rethought. In a city that has long treated the recording room as the beginning and end of the creative conversation, Balaporia and OdBle have quietly proposed something more radical: Mumbai's studio landscape has, for decades, known exactly what a studio is supposed to look like. Bandwagon has other ideas, and the blueprints to prove it.