

INSIDE PURPLE HAZE STUDIOS

Twenty-five years of history, and a track record that keeps India's finest composers coming back

*Most recording studios are built around convention, acoustic panels placed according to prescribed norms, monitoring systems calibrated to industry standards, and a small, purely functional window separating the control room from the dub room. At **Purple Haze Studios** in Mumbai, however, these conventions are quietly challenged. Join the **PALM Expo Magazine** team as they step inside the studio with its owner, **Ashish Saxena**, to explore a space that rethinks not just sound, but the experience of making it.*



Where other studios installed small, practical windows between their recording and control spaces, **Ashish** made a different choice. “At the time, most studios had tiny windows between the dub room and the control room,” he recalls. “We chose to install a large picture window instead. The effect was transformative: the artist is fully visible at all times, the rooms feel more open and connected, and the whole space has a sense of scale and calm that clients immediately respond to.”

It is a small detail in the broader context of a studio’s technical specification. But it is also, in many ways, the key to understanding what **Purple Haze** is — and why it has endured.

A Studio Inherited, Then Built

The story of Purple Haze begins not with Ashish, but with noted music composer **Leslie Lewis**, who originally founded the studio. Ashish was working there as a sound engineer when, in 1998, Lewis decided to sell. “We were in a position to acquire it from him,” Ashish explains. “That’s how Purple Haze became mine.”

The circumstances of the acquisition shaped the studio’s early philosophy. “The initial vision was straightforward; keep the studio alive,” he says. “We could see the potential for great work ahead and we had some amazing music composers and production houses already coming in and they genuinely loved the space. Our goal was to preserve that and build on it.”

Preservation, in the early years, required significant effort. The studio was operating in what Ashish describes as a transitional era — partly digital, partly analogue — and the path to full modernisation was gradual rather than immediate. “Getting our main **DAW (Pro Tools)** up and running was a major step, as was converting our consoles and outboard gear to meet the standards we wanted,” he says. “It wasn’t an overnight shift; it took a few years of gradual investment and learning. But each upgrade brought us closer to the

calibre of studio we envisioned.”

Two Rooms, One Philosophy

Today, Purple Haze operates two studio rooms, referred to simply as the big studio and the small studio, each distinct in scale but united by a consistent technical approach.

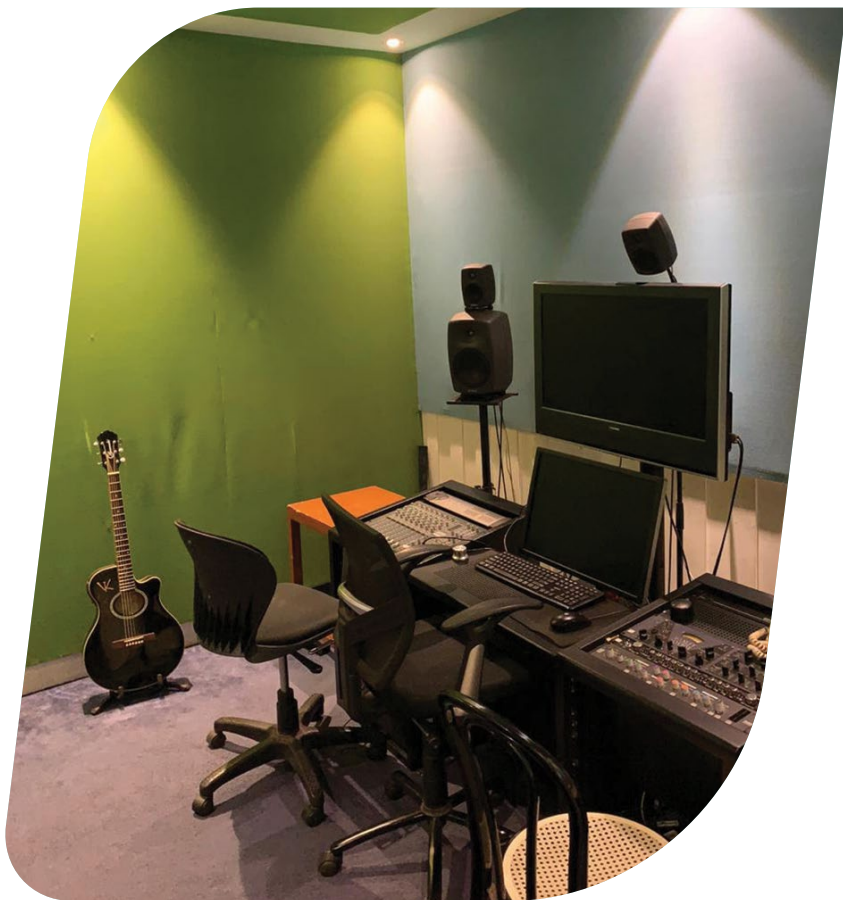
The big studio spans approximately 500 square feet and is built around a **Yamaha DM1000 console**. Monitoring is handled by **Genelec 8250 speakers** paired with a 7271 subwoofer — a full-range, SAM-calibrated listening environment suited to complex mixing and larger recording sessions. The small studio, at around 175 square feet, is more intimate but no less capable: it runs an **SSL X-Desk** as a summing mixer alongside **Genelec 8240 monitors** and a **7270 subwoofer**.

What unifies them is consistency. Both rooms run Pro Tools as the primary DAW. Both draw from the same microphone collection. And critically, mic preamps — including an SPL Gold Mike, Grace Designs, Neve, Manley, and Chandler units — can be shared across both spaces, ensuring clients receive equivalent quality regardless of which room they book.

The decision to anchor both rooms in **Genelec’s SAM (Smart Active Monitoring)** ecosystem was deliberate. “Genelec’s SAM technology allows the speakers to be calibrated precisely to the acoustic characteristics of each room, which was a significant factor in our choice,” Ashish explains. The result is a monitoring environment built on accuracy above all else, a priority that traces back to the studio’s origins as a space primarily serving advertising clients, where an honest listening environment was non-negotiable.

Acoustic Design: Expertise Over Exotic Materials

The acoustic treatment across both rooms was developed in collaboration with specialist designers, **Mujeeb Dadarkar** for the larger room and **Dam-**



Purple Haze's 175 square-foot small studio, replete with Genelec monitors positioned for nearfield monitoring. The room's compact footprint belies its capability — running the same Pro Tools workflow and shared mic preamp collection as its larger counterpart

an Sood for the smaller. Ashish is candid about the materials themselves: "While the materials used were fairly conventional, standard acoustic panels, treatment, and absorption, the real value lay in the expertise brought to the layout, placement, and room geometry."

The guiding principle throughout was neutrality. "Since we were primarily an advertising studio in the early days, accuracy and reliability in the listening environment were non-negotiable. We needed to trust what we were hearing." That trust in the room's honesty remains the studio's defining acoustic value, a flat, reliable response that serves the music rather than flatters it.

Room sizing reflects purpose. The larger room's footprint offers sufficient space for full sessions and small ensemble or orchestral recording. The smaller room's focused dimensions make it efficient and precise. Speaker

placement across both was designed in concert with the acoustic treatment, allowing the Genelec systems to perform at their calibrated best.

Signal Chain and Software

On the signal chain, Purple Haze takes an approach that is both pragmatic and well-considered. The analogue summing capability — through the **Yamaha DM1000** in the large room and the **SSL X-Desk** in the small — sits upstream of a **Pro Tools** workflow that the studio has refined over decades. Mic preamp options span the **SPL Gold Mike**, **Grace Designs**, **Neve**, **Manley**, and **Chandler**, each selected for the distinct character it brings to different sources and recording styles.

On the plugin side, the studio's mixing workflow draws from **Waves**, **McDSP**, **Plugin Alliance**, **Slate Digital**, and **FabFilter** — a broad palette that reflects the variety of work passing through Purple Haze's doors. "Each offers something distinct," Ashish notes, "whether it's the colour and warmth of certain **Waves** processors, the precision of **FabFilter's** dynamics and EQ, or the variety and depth within the **Plugin Alliance** and **McDSP** catalogues."

The team putting this chain to use is lean: two main engineers, one assistant engineer, and a head engineer in **Abhay Rumde**, whose influence on the studio's sonic output Ashish acknowledges directly. "His expertise and sensibility have been central to shaping the studio's sound."

Reputation Built Quietly

The names associated with Purple Haze tell their own story. The studio's long-standing relationship with composer trio **Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy** — which began in the advertising world before following them into film music — represents perhaps its most visible professional endorsement. But the list extends considerably further: **Zakir Hussain**, **Talvin Singh**, **John McLaughlin**, **Pritam**, **Ranjit Barot**, **Ram Sampat**, and **Louis Banks** have all worked within these rooms.

Landmark projects have shaped the studio's identity as much as the names attached to them. **KK's Pal**, the **Colonial Cousins** albums, and **Asha Bhosle's Rahul & I** are among the recordings that Ashish points to as defining moments — not just commercially, but as expressions of what the right studio environment can draw out of a performance.

What sustains these relationships, he suggests, is something harder to quantify than technical specification. "What keeps them coming back, I believe, is the atmosphere and the hospitality. Purple Haze has a relaxed, unhurried quality to it. There's no pressure, no noise, just a space where creative people can focus entirely on the music."

It is a quality that clients notice immediately and consistently mention. "People feel at home," Ashish says. "That's not something you can manufacture — it's the result of years of intentional choices, from the design of the rooms to the way our team engages with clients."

What Comes Next

For a studio with more than two decades of history, Purple Haze shows little inclination to rest. It recently underwent the 2025 IRAA Assessment, underscoring its ongoing investment in quality benchmarking. Beyond recording, the studio offers flexible access through hourly and full-day rentals, with dedicated facilities for podcast production as well. Ashish confirms that an upgrade to Dolby Atmos capability is planned for the near future, a recognition that immersive audio is no longer a niche consideration but an increasingly central requirement for music and film content delivery.

It is a characteristically measured move: not chasing novelty, but responding to genuine industry demand with the same methodical approach that has governed every significant upgrade the studio has made.

"Reputation in this industry is built quietly, through consistent delivery," Ashish reflects. After twenty-five years, Purple Haze Studios stands as perhaps the clearest illustration of that principle, a room, a team, and a window that changed the way people felt about being inside a studio.



The IRAA 2025 final assessment underway at Purple Haze Studios, as the jury concludes what has been a long yet invigorating process, and what better place to do it than Purple Haze Studios