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Maddocks HAMMERs Away At Cups 'N Strings

SANTA MONICA, California -- With many years experience in sound engineering, location sound recording, and studio and loudspeaker design, audio engineer Bruce Maddocks brings a broad expertise to the audio restoration, mastering and transfers work done at his own Santa Monica facility, Cups 'N Strings. A studio owner with "golden ears," Maddocks is highly selective about the equipment he integrates into his studios, though recently he was the first to purchase A-Designs Audio's new HM2EQ, nicknamed the HAMMER.

The HAMMER is a dual-mono, three-band tube equalizer engineered with a filtering system that allows the even harmonics to flow through its 12AT7 tubes filtering out unwanted noise. Maddocks had been looking for "something different in a tube equalizer" for use in his mastering work. "I wanted to fit my analog mastering rig with a tube piece that had a greater transparency than some of the legacy pieces that I was using," Maddocks shares. He learned of the HAMMER just prior to the product's official unveiling, and first laid eyes on it at the Van Nuys, CA event launching Pete's Place, a new engineering collaboration division of A-Designs Audio.

"I was intrigued by the design concept of the tube warming the signal while passing no unwanted noise," Maddocks shares. "After going over the technical specs and speaking with an engineer who had helped beta test it, I knew this would be the perfect piece to use on a CD I was about to master."

Cups 'N Strings houses Maddocks' mastering suite, Cobaltt Mastering, as well as his extensive facilities for the transfer of "any format" analog tape to digital, high-res digital transfers for archiving, and tape baking and restoration. Out of Cobaltt, equipped with a Pro Tools HD2 Accel system and full 5.1 monitoring with custom-built loudspeakers, Maddocks has mastered Hans Zimmer film scores for *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *The Last Samurai*, and *Batman Begins*, as well as various videogame scores and independent artist releases. So far, the HAMMER has been useful on the broad scope of projects Maddocks masters.

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HAMMER at Cups 'N Strings / Add One

“On several of the film score and gaming sessions I’ve done, the EQ selection points and sweeping cut or boost controls have provided just the subtle lift and air tweaks I’ve needed,” says Maddocks of the HM2EQ. “The low-end band also has helped round out and warm some of the low bottom in recordings done in smaller studios.”

As for specific projects, Maddocks continues, “On two recent mastering jobs – one for soul chanteuse Pauline Drossart and another for the indie band Limelife – the HAMMER really helped with the vocal range, both warming and making the performance more present. I work with some other analog EQs and the HAMMER really helps to fill in the areas where the other EQs are lacking.”

Prior to working with the HAMMER himself, Maddocks was compelled by the comment of one of the product’s beta testers that “you don’t know it’s there until you take it out.” Maddocks’ experience with the product confirmed what he’d heard. “The truth is that since the controls are swept and the transitions are so smooth, you don’t get those ‘three clicks up or a couple of clicks down’ sonic association that comes with stepped controls,” he expands. “You really do need to take it out to hear what it has done. The HAMMER has removed that ‘tactile element’ of other EQs and you can just concentrate on the sound shaping.

“I have pushed the controls to the far end and did not notice any edgy or grainy character,” Maddocks adds. “I hope that I never need to do that in a session but, like horsepower, it’s nice to know it’s there under the hood.”

For more information on Cups 'N Strings, visit www.cupsnstrings.com.

A-Designs Audio is a boutique manufacturer of high-quality professional audio products, including the MP-A Series (all-tube microphone preamplifiers), Pacifica (stereo solid-state microphone preamplifier), REDDI (all-tube direct box), ATTY and ATTY2'D (passive line attenuators), and new EM Series (500 Series-compatible microphone preamplifier modules). For more information, please contact A-Designs Audio at 818-716-4153 or visit www.adesignsaudio.com.

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Related image: **Maddocks.jpg** – Bruce Maddocks with his new A-Designs HAMMER in Cups 'N Strings' Cobaltt Mastering studio in Santa Monica (photo credit: David Goggin)