

# THE ENVY ISSUE

# BooM

**BOSTON'S  
MOST  
ENVIED  
PEOPLE**

**25**  
**LIVES  
YOU WISH  
YOU HAD**

*home  
design*

**GROWNUP  
PLAYROOMS**



**A MAKEOVER  
STORY**

**HOW  
GRETCHEN  
MONAHAN  
STYLED HER  
WAY TO  
STARDOM**

**THE NEW  
STATUS SYMBOLS**  
**The Latest Trends in  
Self-Aggrandizement**

*plus:*

**Sex, Power,  
and Image  
Sculpting at  
Sports Club/LA**

**Bitter Rivals  
Skewer the  
City's Hottest  
Chef**

*and:*

**ANITA SHREVE'S  
SCANDALOUS  
NEW NOVEL,  
DEVAL PATRICK'S  
SNEAKY WANNABE  
SUCCESSORS,  
AND FALLEN  
HEDGE FUND KING  
JEFF LARSON'S  
BOLD BET**

OCTOBER 2008

\$4.99 [bostonmagazine.com](http://bostonmagazine.com)







# The Hi-Def Rec Room

Lots of kids dream of rocking out like Aerosmith. Few get a rehearsal space that beats the band's own home studios.

**By Pamela de Oliveira-Smith  
Photographs by Sam Gray**



When your teenage daughters aspire to become rock legends, there are a few things you can give your nascent superstars: instruments, music lessons, and plenty of encouragement. And, if you're one Boston-area businessman, you also give them a top-notch recording space that rivals the home studios of Aerosmith's Steven Tyler and Joe Perry.

This one actually may be better—*aesthetically, anyway*—says Miguel Blackmer-Hart of Blackmer Sound in Cambridge, who designed and built all three with his father, Michael Blackmer, and uncle, Eric Blackmer: “We worked with Joe Perry and Steven Tyler to build something absolutely great, but it’s not like this,” he says, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 132**



Colored lighting that changes with the music plays up the live-concert vibe at this lavish in-home recording studio.





## MUSIC STUDIO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 127

referring to the sleek, minimalist white space they constructed for two very lucky teenagers.

The 1,000-square-foot basement includes a control room where the playback happens, a live room where the band can rock out, and an iso, or sound isolation, booth for recording vocals or an acoustic guitar—basically, any source that's not very loud. As in most professional recording spaces, the studio walls are nonparallel and constructed of layers of glued and screwed sheetrock faced with plywood; some have also been covered with

**In addition to a control room, live room, and iso booth, the studio comes fully equipped with guitars, keyboards, and a \$7,000 Yamaha drum kit.**

fabric, to further steer and shape the sound. To isolate it acoustically from the rest of the house, the studio was built as a room within a room. "You could rip off the entire house and this sound studio would still be there," says Blackmer-Hart. The result: Someone upstairs can sleep completely undisturbed while the entire rock band goes full throttle.

Along with the recording space, the client supplied his daughters with professional-caliber instruments, including guitars, keyboards, and a \$7,000 Yamaha drum kit, souped up with a cavalcade of cymbals. And while the playback room may lack the \$400,000 mixing console that might tempt a pop impresario (there's a more modest \$10,000 Digidesign C/24 instead), Blackmer-Hart notes that even pro studios don't have the big boards anymore.

But what really marks this studio as first-rate is the "outboard gear"—all the signal-processing equipment that makes recordings sound professional, like microphone pre-amps and compressors. For this project, the equipment is a veritable who's who, including Manley Labs, Universal Audio, and Vintech Audio. The mics themselves



are equally impressive: a Neumann U 87 vocal microphone (absolutely state-of-the-art, selling for roughly \$3,600), and several Earthworks Audio microphones (a high-definition variety used by symphony orchestras) designed, coincidentally, by Miguel's grandfather, David Blackmer. The bottom line for this top-of-the-line musician's paradise? Construction of the studio, plus the equipment, came in at just under \$1 million.

"This is the biggest project we've done for someone who's not a professional," says Blackmer-Hart. The best part, he says, is that the band has real talent. "There's an early teen who's easily one of the best young bass players I've ever seen, and I play bass myself. She's a tiny little girl, barely as big as the instrument, and she's tearing it up. The other daughter has a six-piece band, and she's an amazing singer."

Architect Nathalie C. Bellemare, of Somme Design in Milton, worked with Blackmer Sound to make the studio as visually compelling as it is professional, using Color Kinetics lights that change color as the music does. She also did the interior design for half of the house. "We wanted to give the basement a kind of hotel-lounge, 'oh-my-God-you've-got-to-see-the-bathroom' feel to it," she says. "The owner started renovations below ground because he wanted to be sure that the girls and their friends would be here, jamming at home, from the moment they moved in."

D. Thomas Scott in Attleboro executed the rest of the build-out, which includes a home entertainment center outfitted with Flexform fabric furniture from Showroom in Boston, plush club chairs, walls that alternate Designtex ultrasuede with natural walnut walls, and a custom-designed, cantilevered walnut bar (devoted mostly to sodas). There's also a 260-square-foot gym and a bathroom with Neo-Metro polished stainless steel fixtures.

By all accounts, such unwavering attention to detail paid off. "You should have seen the faces of the girls and their friends as they walked around the place," says Bellemare. "They just couldn't believe that it was theirs." ■