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## Reflections on 20 Years of Audio Technology Innovations

--Editorial by George Petersen

If a time capsule took you to a recording studio on January 1, 1983, you'd be in an alien, yet strangely familiar world.

You might see acoustic drums with a Beyer M88 on kick, Sennheiser 421s on rack toms, an E-V RE-20 on floor tom, a Shure SM57 on snare, Neumann U87s on overheads and an AKG C-414 on hi-hat. So far, nothing's too weird, but the drums are in a low-ceiling booth attached to the main room, which was finished in dark wood paneling accented by natural rock facings and overhead perforated acoustic tiles. That small 1983 control room probably had JBL 4311 monitors—but no computers or MIDI gear. The outboard



selection might include familiar MIDI City: goodies, such as Pultec EQs or UREI LA-2As, but nothing like

the scads of effects toys you find in today's high-end rooms. In today's "typical" (whatever that means) studio, the mic selection is mostly the same, except for high-end ribbons, tube reissues and a preponderance of low-cost knock-offs designed to look like classic models. Those same drums are still there, but for recording, the kit takes center stage in the middle of the main studio. Nowadays, the old "drum booth" is strictly used for overdubs or to iso a guitar amp. But the big difference is in the spacious control room, with its large stereo mains, near-fields and supplemental 5.1 system on speaker stands.

Unlike the control booths of old, modern environments are designed with ample space to work and overdub guitar, bass, keys (virtual or real, synthed or sampled) and sometimes vocals! Today's console might not even be a console at all; perhaps it has morphed into a workstation controller, providing tactile access to all of those faders and plug-in effects; or as a worksurface controlling racks of audio mixer electronics in a distant machine room. Ironically, today's