UNITED KINGDOM

Classic Sixties sounds

A new company, Phædrus Audio has released a range of all-tube, modular, outboard products based – as the name suggests – on various 'classic' design references.
Jim Evans spoke with co-founder Richard Brice

Who else is involved in Phaedrus?
"Phaedrus Audio is myself and Ian Titmuss. Ian has been the proprietor of Independent Circuit Design for the past 20 years and is an expert on PCB and mechanical design. He is responsible for the mechanical design of the products – in fact for taking my rat's nest prototypes and turning them into real products. Ian also oversees the production and everyday administration of the business. I confine myself to the design of the products.

"Phaedrus Audio came out of a project that Ian and I started to build a '60s audio console for my small studio in France. We called it the London Console and we did it to amuse ourselves, but – once we started our website – there was so much interest, we realised there was a market for a range of modular products based on sections of the mixer."

What are the key products?
"We are launching with five products: the PHAB tube microphone preamp; the PHAME instrument preamp; the

Richard Brice: creating classic designs using modern technology

PHILTER tube equaliser; and the PHI Tube DI-box. All these products are based on Mullard application notes – the same design references behind the design of the famous modular amplifiers in the iconic mixers of the 1960s. They are tube, purist design; they most

certainly aren't modern designs with a tube inside for 'character'.

"The fifth product is the SHUpHLER, a unique product that offers stereo processing ('shuffling'). To our knowledge, the SHUpHLER is the first product to combine the EMI Stereosonic shuffling

circuit invented in the '50s with Blumlein's original shuffler – a circuit designed to derive loudspeaker stereophony from binaural recordings. Finally, we will be launching the PHAMULUS in the autumn which is a delta-mu compressor based on the Altec 436C."

Where are the products manufactured?
"The products are manufactured in the UK. I live in France and the design and auditioning work is done here, but all manufacturing is in the UK."

What distribution arrangements/ plans do you have?
"Phaedrus Audio's go-to-market strategy is via partners and we have designed attractive partner-programmes to support customers and partners."

And marketing?
"As yet, we're a bit unsophisticated! There's really a lot of information on our website: information on the history and genesis of the products, as well as

There are currently five products in the range with another set for launch in Autumn

remake, so they could re-record the album using the PHAB preamp and the PHI-DI for the bass. Everyone was so impressed with the track they recorded with the Phaedrus gear that they just couldn't bear going back to listen to the tracks they already had in the can!

"In addition, I have been involved with the idea that stereo can be improved for 25 years, from the days when I invented the Francinstien processor. That work was inspired by the stereo I heard in the recordings of Barbirolli recording with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Abbey Road Studio 1 in 1967 and the English String Music recorded on the prototype REDD console in Kingsway Hall by Barbirolli."

Are you still involved with Haivision?

"Absolutely, I am the VP sales EMEA for Haivision, which is the most exciting company operating in the IPTV field today. With the acquisition of KulaByte by Haivision in late July, the company now offers a range of solutions for television over IP inside and outside the firewall, with IPTV and streaming applications in medical, military, entertainment, education and enterprise. It's fabulous to be part of such a great company and such interesting technology... But I don't think they'll be any tubes in the H.264 encoders anytime soon! ♙
www.phaedrus-audio.com

information on our forthcoming compressor. But we haven't spent a lot of time marketing the products. In truth, we started making the Phaedrus Products for ourselves. As we sold the odd product to interested musicians around the world, we realised there was a market. We've just gone from there."

What is special about Phaedrus products?

"There are many other tube-based mic preamps and equalisers, and quite a few based on the classic '60s designs. Many give wonderful performance, but they are very pricey. Because we started out with the intention of building a whole mixer as it would have been built in the late-'50s/early-'60s, the whole London Console project could have been prohibitively expensive if we hadn't been innovative.

"When the EMI REDD team built the REDD.51 which was used for the majority of the Beatles records, the unit cost was £125,000 (€143,000)... and

that was in 1959. Even if you assume 3% annual inflation during that time, that's over £500,000 in today's money. Even Ian and I aren't big enough fans of the Beatles and the Abbey Road sound to afford that! So, right from the start, we looked to exploit the benefits of modern materials for the transformers and modern components for HT generation and stabilisation. In so doing, we managed to recreate the designs but at a fraction of the cost. This has enabled us to create a range of modular products that are in the 'middle-end' market; for serious musicians and engineers for sure, but out of the 'stratospheric' price range."

Who are they aimed at?

"Everyone who is serious about the values of recorded sound as they were back in the heyday of the recording industry. Our initial adopters have been amazed at the difference these units can bring to their recordings. We know of one producer and band who went for an entire

Viva Zen at Vigo's PlantaSonica2

Paul Watson

Audient's automated Zen console was recently chosen as part of a major transformation project at the world-class PlantaSonica2 studio facility in Vigo, Spain. Originally designed by British acoustician Philip Newell and built by Audient's distributor Reflexion Arts in 1997, it is now owned by the recently formed Planta Sonica SL company, and managed by 29-year-old producer Pancho Suarez, who was recently nominated for best record producer in Galicia.

Audient says the Zen console is ideal for a modern studio environment as it combines analogue mixing technology with flexible DAW integration. Alongside the Zen at PlantaSonica2 is a comprehensive Signex patchbay and a Black Series BlackRack which boasts five EQs and compressors.

Lynx, Apogee, and Digidesign converters complement the Audient hardware; and the studio also boasts a vast collection of high-end microphones by Neumann, Sanken, Violet Designs, AKG, Sennheiser and Shure.

"It's great to see the studio have a new lease of life, not least because we often take customers to the studio for equipment demonstrations," says Sergio Castro of Reflexion Arts. "Customers come from all over Europe to see and listen to what can be achieved in properly treated rooms." ♙
www.plantasonica.es

Philip Newell's design has been overhauled with an Audient Zen console