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TRACKING WITH BILLY CROCKETT OF BLUE ROCK STUDIO

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Part of what makes any studio experience excellent is the elimination of roadblocks. A well-prepared team will have everything ready for your session, whether it's an impressive selection of microphones, tape for more than a day's work or items as minute as extra guitar strings. By essentially removing the potential for any disasters, everyone involved in a production can feel free to be as creative as possible with minimal interruption.

What about taking it a step further? What about an all-encompassing studio? This was the thought studio owner Billy Crockett had when he first started dreaming up [Blue Rock Artist Ranch And Studio](#). Based just outside of Austin in Wimberly, Texas, Crockett created a destination studio that not only boasts world-class recording facilities, but extremely plush lodging, live performance area and beautiful scenery for miles too.

"Isn't it great when things flow?" Crockett says. "A good night's sleep is at least as important as the right preamp. A great kitchen and chef on-site make a huge difference. Just being in an interesting place can put us in touch with our muses. It seems artistry in our time is endangered. Our goal is to give songwriters and artists the chance to remember and do what they love."

As a performing and recording artist with a background in production, Crockett worked in the studios of Miami, Nashville and beyond, taking notes all along the way about what made certain facilities better than others. By the time Billy and his wife, Dodee Crockett, officially moved to Texas, he found himself inspired to create something like the Caribou Ranch in the Rocky Mountains.



Born from the natural materials of the Texas hills that surround Blue Rock, architect Lou Kimball worked on the structure and aesthetic features of the building, while acoustics expert Michael Cronin and engineer David Cherry helped create the studio space. With Cronin handling acoustics and Cherry creating a complex cabling system, Crockett decided to select a majority of the actual gear with a little help from Vintage King's co-owner Mike Nehra.

"Mike cared about our baby Blue Rock as though it was his own and was a terrific help and consultant," Crockett says. "I did so much of the original outfitting of the control room (pres, EQs, compressors), cue system and mic closet with Mike. He would often send all my gear options to audition and I'd send back the ones I didn't pick and keep the winner. Glory days, really."



When it came time to select a console for his space, the budding studio owner didn't need to travel farther than the neighboring city of Austin to find his answer. The storied Texas town was the current home base for Rupert Neve (who was working for Taylor Guitars), when Crockett befriended the pro audio legend.

"Rupert (and his wife Evelyn, too) told me he would never build another console," Crockett says reminiscing

about how he attained his [Rupert Neve Designs 5088 console](#). "Imagine our surprise (and hers!). What a thrill to welcome this beautiful beast. We knew it would be great sounding. Still, I was surprised by the flow of tracking sessions, and the substance of the sonics. The daily benefits have been even more profound than I had expected."

The relationship between Crockett and Neve has extended even further past the purchase of the Rupert Neve Designs 5088, as Blue Rock has become a testing ground for nearly every product released by the brand since its inception. "It's my joy to have spent quality time with Rupert and his team discussing our dream and its execution, as well as theirs," states Crockett.

After a decade of recording, live performances, lodging and more, Blue Rock has become established as one of the leading destination studios in the world. Yet, if you asked Billy Crockett, he would say he is just content with being the guy who gave artists like Sarah Jarosz, Lyle Lovett, Nels Cline, Jesse Winchester and more, the chance to spread their wings and create freely in a beautiful environment.



"I love records that sound great and artists with something to say. I love the power of songs to unlock us, to make us see ourselves (and each other)," says Crockett. "And what I love most is the chance to work with engineers and artists who love this stuff, too. For this, I stay excited and am so grateful."



