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*Snoop in the Cathedral,
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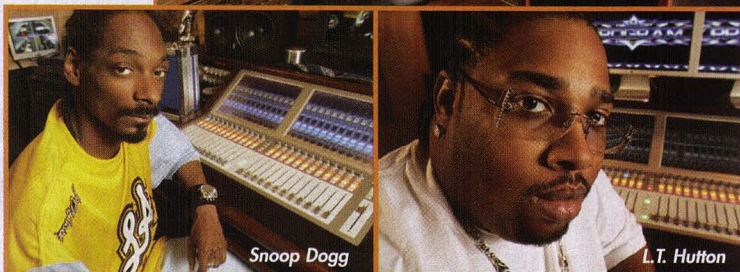
The Cathedral

By Heather Johnson

He's worked in some of L.A.'s finest studios during the course of his 12-plus-year recording career, but the ubiquitous Snoop Dogg—rapper, film star, cartoon voice, MTV variety show host and footwear designer—has always maintained a personal project studio. Ditto for producer L.T. Hutton, who, with partner Elton Brand of the L.A. Clippers, owns the Hollywood building that houses his studio/production company, The Program, and Snoop's new recording facility, Doggystyle, both of which operate under the name The Cathedral.

For years, Snoop has worked in residential spaces, converting suburban homes into recording destinations. His last studio, The Tabernacle, was located in a house in San Dimas, Calif. Before that, the "Gin and Juice" man worked out of a modified house in Diamond Bar, Calif., called The Church. (According to house engineer Nathan Oberman, Snoop considers the studio "sacred space"; hence, the spiritual theme.) When the lease expired on his last home/project studio, Snoop and engineers Oberman and Shon Don began looking for new digs. Coincidentally, Snoop's friend and producer, Hutton, had a vacant room at his new facility, located in the former Artisan Sound Recorders spot. Snoop saw the room, liked it and moved in soon after.

Though a few pieces traveled from The Tabernacle to The Cathedral, about 80 percent of the equipment is new. The control room has a Mackie Digital X Bus console used mainly for monitoring, along with a Pro Tools|HD workstation, two Avalon 737SP mic pre/compressor/EQs, a Mackie Onyx mic pre and one *serious* monitoring system. Four custom George Augspurger 1603Bs with TAD woofers and Bryston amps comprise the mains, complemented by two Mackie 1801 subwoofers, Mackie 1530 three-way midfields, and Mackie HR824 and Yamaha NS-10 near-fields, with playback controlled by a Mackie Big Knob. Aside from the "traditional" Augspurger/Bryston combo, their setup mirrors Hutton's neighboring room. "They both like the quality of the Mackies," Oberman



says. "They're bright and in-your-face."

"We're probably the only people using Mackie speakers as mains and subs, and the sound is incredible," adds Hutton. "Snoop has the Augspurgers; that's the only difference, but honestly, I think my Mackies beat harder!"

When it comes to console choice, a Platinum-selling artist such as Snoop could certainly own a board 10 times the size of the Digital X Bus. But rather than go with a desk the size of a football field, both Snoop and Hutton stuck with a brand they've known through most of their careers. "Snoop had the D8B at his other studios," says Oberman. "The quality is up to par, and it just made sense to go with something compact. Also, he's pretty interactive [in the control room] and he's used to that kind of setup."

"We've been working together since 1994," says Hutton of his relationship with Snoop. "We used to live together, and that's when I first got a Mackie setup. I put some speakers, an old analog 32x8 and a sidecar in a room in the back of the house. It was small, but I thought, 'We don't need a big studio no more; we can do it like this'—especially when we started

getting those *bills* from the studios!

"I've been in the studios with the [big consoles], but one of my best boards is still the 32x8 and a sidecar,"

Hutton continues. "We put so much quality into our work, all we really need is the ins and outs, and Mackie has come up with products to assist us since the beginning of our career."

Currently, both Pro Tools/Digital X Bus configs are running full-throttle. The Cathedral stays solidly booked with Snoop's myriad projects, including the follow-up to *R&G (Rhythm & Gangsta): The Masterpiece* titled *The Blue Carpet Treatment*, due out in 2006. In addition, he records most of his commercial work, voice-overs and film over-dubs at his own place, including his voice for the animated film, *Racing Stripes*. To lessen commute time, Snoop is also building a second, two-room facility. Meanwhile, Hutton keeps busy producing new acts for The Program, as well as tracks for Da Brat, The Heights, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, Tha Dogg Pound and Blackstreet vocalist Chauncey Hannibal.

While the workstations hum along at all hours, those Mackie speakers simply *scorch*; that's right, Snoop Dogg likes to listen l-o-u-d. "I have to take frequent bathroom breaks," Oberman says with a laugh. "I would be deaf by now if I didn't!"

PHOTOS: PETER FIGEN