

ABBEY RD STUDIOS

1931, 1960s & onward

One of the most iconic recording studios in music history



The studio was opened in 1931 as EMI Recording Studios. It was built by the Gramophone Company who established EMI (Electric and Musical Industries) the same year.

The above photo was taken outside Abbey Road Studios and is the cover of The Beatles album “Abbey Road”.

Located at 3 Abbey Road, St John's Wood, City of Westminster, London

People still flock to Abbey Rd to get their photo taken on this pedestrian crossing (including me). There is a set of traffic lights there now! People race out onto the crossing as soon as the “Walk Sign” turns green to take a photo.

The Studio and Its Artists



As you can see it says EMI Recording Studio. The name was officially changed to Abbey Road Studios in 1976.

The studio is iconic for its sound and the quantity of successful music generated by the studio, particularly in the 60s.

The Beatles contract said they could record as much as they liked in the studio at no cost. The Beatles were signed to Parlophone Records, a subsidiary of EMI.

Some of the historic moments include record producer Sir George Martin, who produced all The Beatles records.

In **1958** Norrie (Norman) Paramor took **Cliff Richard** and the Shadows into Abbey Road and recorded “Move It”.

Norrie and George Martin held the title jointly for producing the most number 1 UK hit singles until 1997 when George Martin produced Elton Johns “Candle in the Wind 97”.

The Beatles are the band most associated with the studio and that alone makes the studio iconic. It became basically their second home, with all their albums being recorded here (from **1962 – 1969**).

In **1963 Shirley Bassey** recorded “Goldfinger” for the James Bond movie of the same name. John Barry took an entire orchestra into the studio to record the song. This session is also notable for the fact that the session guitarist on this recording was **Jimmi Page** (later to become legendary as part of Led Zeppelin).

In late **1965** George Martin producer the **Cilla Black** song “Alfie” for the movie of the same name featuring Michael Caine. Again, an orchestra was used, along with the songwriter, Burt Bacharach on piano and British female vocal group “The Breakaways” on backing vocals. Burt also conducted the 48 piece orchestra.

In **1969** The Hollies recorded “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother” in Abbey Road Studios. The piano player on this song was a young Reginald Dwight (Elton John) who was working as a session musician at that stage.

In **1973** Pink Floyd recorded their classic album “Dark Side of the Moon” in this studio.

In **1997** Oasis recorded their album “Be Here Now”

Artists to record at Abbey Road (then called “EMI Studios”) include

Gerry and the Pacemakers, Cliff Richard, Cilla Black, The Hollies, Shirley Bassey, The Beatles, The Zombies, Pink Floyd, Paul McCartney and Wings, Spice Girls, Adele, Queen, Lady Gaga, composer John Williams (Indiana Jones and Star Wars soundtracks) etc etc

Other notable recording studios used at the time included Olympic Studios (The Rolling Stones), Trident Studios (David Bowie) and Pye Studios (although Pye was usually used by artists signed to the Pye Record label eg The Kinks, Petula Clark).

Glenn Miller recorded at Abbey Road during World War II when he was stationed in the UK.

The Mixing Consoles

In the 60s there was very little in the way of prebuilt desks, so studios built their own.

EMI REDD.37 was used to record the Beatles single “Love Me Do” in 1962. It had been introduced to the studio in 1958.

They also had the EMI Redd.17 which was also introduced in 1958.

These mixing consoles used valves. Their function being to amplify signal and also act as a switching device.

If you have any rudimentary electronic knowledge then you know that the transistor eventually replaced the valve in most electronic devices. Making them more compact and more affordable.



Cliff Richard and The Shadows 1958



Shirley Bassey, Sir George Martin and Stuart Eltham

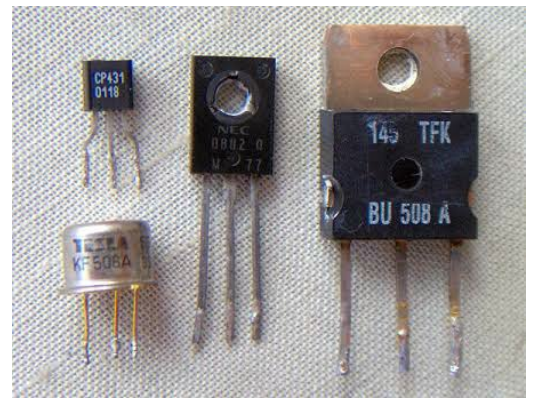
EMI REDD.51 replaced it 1963.



Guitarists are the main people today that prefer valves in their amplifiers to transistors as they give a warmer sound and are much more musical when pushed into distortion.

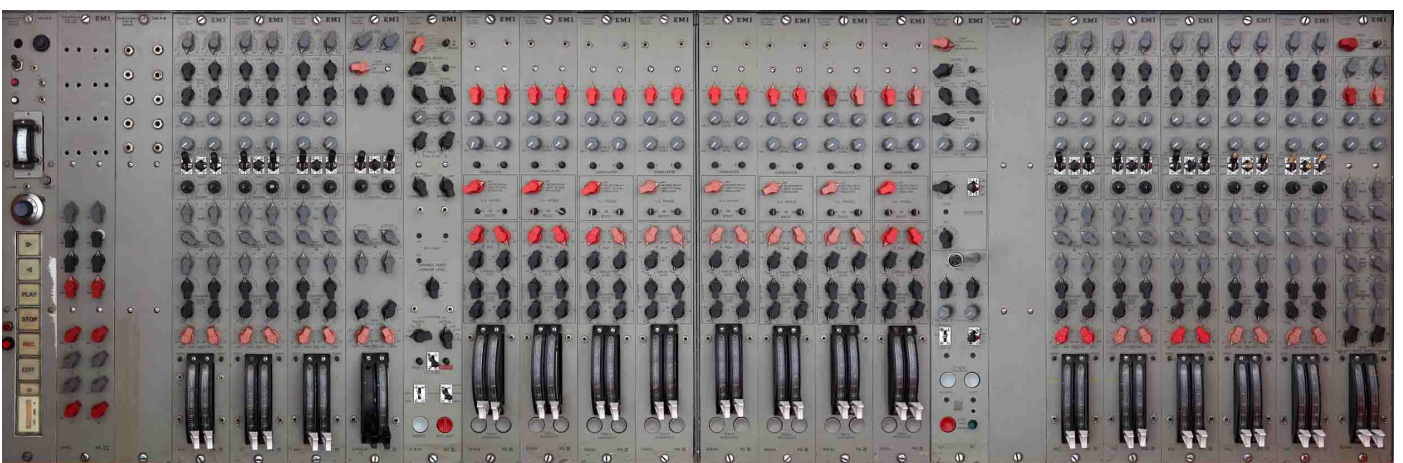


Valves

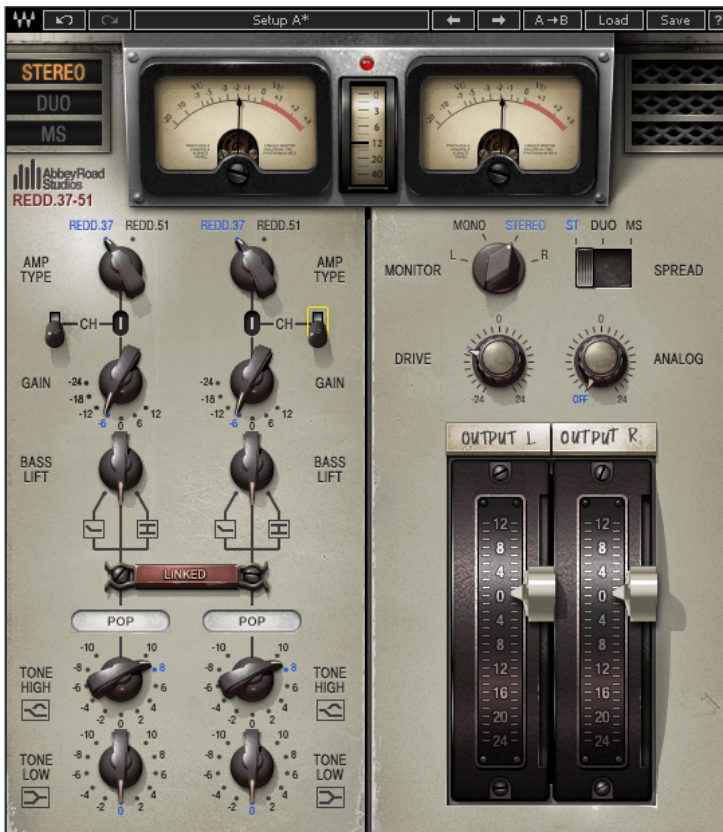


Transistors

In **1968** the desk was replaced by the **EMI TG12345**. This was solid state (transistors NOT valves).



This desk was used to record both The Beatles' "Abbey Road" and Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon".



This image above is actually from a software package by Waves – the “Abbey Road” Plugins series.

Can be used in conjunction with such programs as Protools (a recording and mixing software produced by AVID to emulate the sound of the original EMI Redd desks.

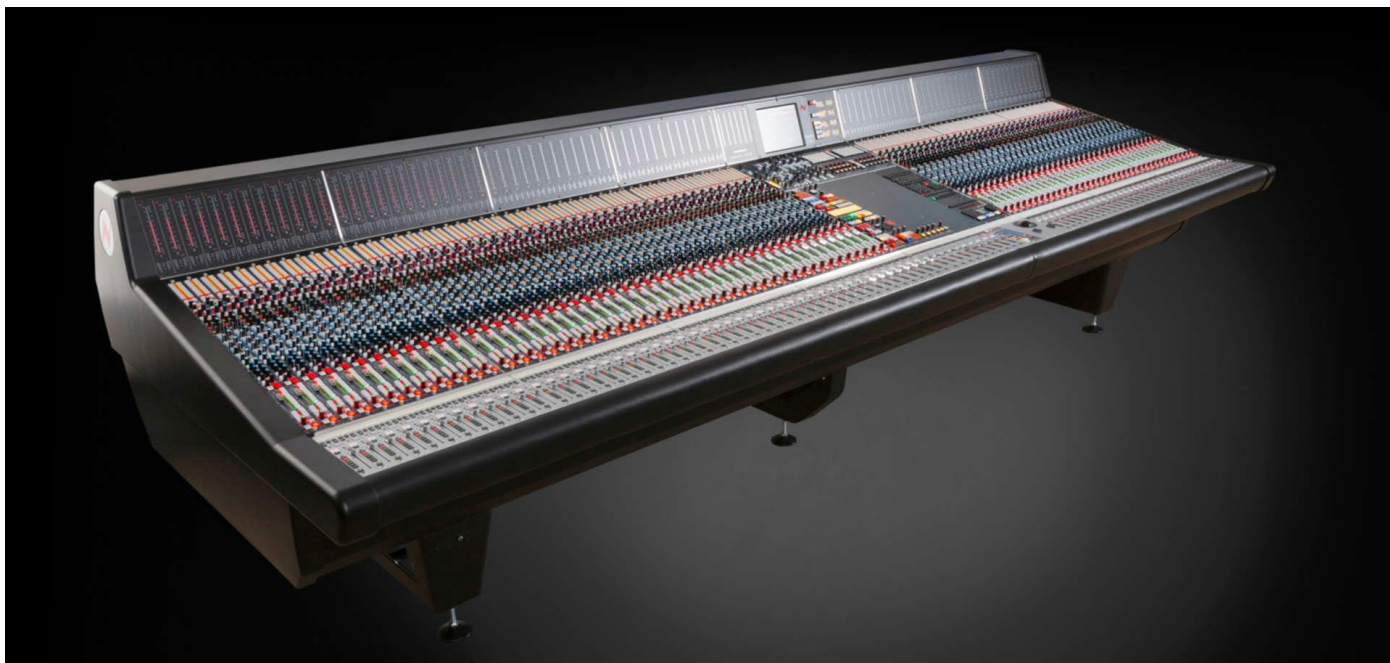
You can see the software has a switch to toggle between REDD .37 and REDD.51

Currently the studio has AMS Neve consoles and SSL Consoles

Studio One: AMS NEVE 88RS3 – 84 channels



Studio Two: AMS NEVE 88RS SP2 - 60 channels. AMS introduced the console in 2004.



Studio Three: Custom classic SSL 4000G+ - 64 channels



It also has retained an EMI TG12345 MkIII

To see more about their gear click the link <https://www.abbeyroad.com/>

Neither picture above is from Abbey Road however.

The Physical Environment

Abbey Road consisted of THREE studios

Studio One: capable of housing an entire orchestra



Studio Two: used predominantly by The Beatles



Studio Three: used by Pink Floyd



The Business

It was originally a 9 bedroom Georgian House built in 1831. Later converted into flats.

Purchased in 1929 by The Gramophone Company.

The Gramophone Company then proceeded to have it converted into a recording studio, which opened in 1931.

The neighbouring house is also owned by the studios and used to accommodate musicians.

The Gramophone company formed EMI and the studio was known as EMI Recording Studios.

The studio initially recorded classical artists, but when it seemed that this genre was not earning sufficient income they started focusing on pop music.

Through the sixties The Beatles became synonymous with the studios.

In 1976, to capitalise on The Beatles association, they renamed the studios “Abbey Road Studios”.

In the 1980s they moved into the film scoring business, thus expanding their income base.

In September 2012 Universal Music took over EMI and thus became the owners of Abbey Road Studios.

The British government declared Abbey Road Studios a Grade II [listed building](#) which protected it from major alteration.^{[34][35]} The following December, the pedestrian crossing at Abbey Road was separately Grade II listed on the [National Heritage List](#).^[36]

In March 2015, **Abbey Road Institute** was founded as a school for music production and audio engineering. This is currently an expanding dimension to the business. Currently has schools in London, Sydney, Paris, Amsterdam, Johannesburg, Miami and Mumbai, with a new one opening in Los Angeles in October 2026.

<https://www.abbeyroad.com/institute>

