

TREVOR HORN

With a career spanning more than 50 years, Trevor Horn has established himself as one of the most important record producers in music history, often referred to as “the man who invented the 80s”. He first gained attention as an accomplished musician and lead singer of the Buggles, whose prophetic debut single “Video Killed the Radio Star” was a huge hit; the song’s groundbreaking music video was the first ever to be shown on MTV in the US and UK.

After a spell as lead singer with rock band Yes, Horn focused on pursuing a career in music production. An early adopter of audio-sampling electronic technology, Horn pioneered its use in pop production with such bestsellers as ABC’s “The Lexicon of Love”, Dollar’s “The Dollar Album” and Malcolm McLaren’s “Duck Rock”.

In 1983, he co-founded the record company ZTT Records with his wife Jill Sinclair and journalist Paul Morley, and purchased Basing Street Studios in Notting Hill, London, changing the name to Sarm West. The studio became well-known for its revolutionary

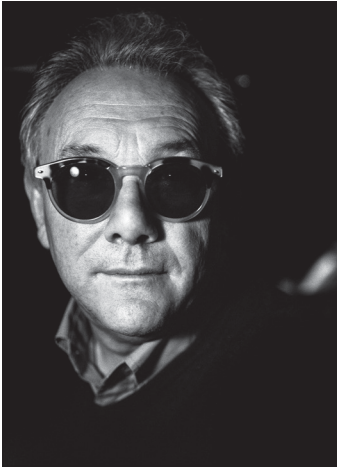
recording techniques and equipment, attracting the world’s biggest artists. It was also the historic venue for the recording of Band Aid’s “Do They Know It’s Christmas?”, which became the quickest-selling single in UK chart history at the time, with the 12” single, mixed by Horn on the desk offered for sale here.

As a producer, Horn has worked with an array of artists such as Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Grace Jones, Robbie Williams, Seal, Pet Shop Boys, Hans Zimmer, Tina Turner, Mike Oldfield and many more, helping them produce successful chart hits and albums that have redefined their careers.

His work during the 1980s was a major contribution to his legacy and heavily influenced the decade’s sound. Stretching the limitations of the era’s technical boundaries, the innovative, addictive records produced by Horn are, to this day, held up as masterpieces of the medium. He was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2011 for services to the music industry.



Michael Ochs Archives / Stringer



Steve Pyke / Contributor

412 Trevor Horn’s Sarm West Studio 2 Solid State Logic SL 4048E+G Series Mixing Desk Used To Create Some of the Biggest Hits of the 1980s † Trevor Horn

Trevor Horn’s Solid State Logic SL4048E+G Series mixing desk (serial number “4101”), used extensively in Sarm West Studio 2 for a variety of singles and album projects.

In June 1983, this desk was installed new, from the factory, into the legendary Sarm West Studio 2, the most state-of-the-art British recording complex of the 1980s. It stayed in service until the facility closed at the end of 2014 and remained in Horn’s ownership until 2017. Horn used it in the recording, overdubbing and mixing (in its entirety or in part) of his most celebrated production work. This desk is a culturally significant piece of British pop history.

Throughout his career, Horn has owned seven different Solid State Logic studio consoles that have been installed in his commercial studios, Sarm East, Sarm Hook End Manor and Sarm West. This SL4048E+G console is the only console not to have been changed, sold or replaced. Horn kept it for 34 years, and it is the only studio console associated with him – and more than three decades of his most successful work – that has ever come to market.

Asked why he only kept this particular desk, Horn stated, “Because it’s lucky. A disproportionate number of hits were made with it.”

Once it was installed, the console was immediately used to record a single for the Yes album 90125, which Horn produced. The LP had been scheduled for release at the end of 1983, but both the record company and Horn felt it lacked a “hit single”. Horn wanted to create a new version of “Owner of a Lonely Heart” (the fourth and final attempt at recording the song) using the latest machines. “Owner of a Lonely Heart” became a massive hit for the band, particularly in America, and remains Yes’ biggest commercial success. The song is also regarded as the first example of rock music played by machines, incorporating the pinnacle of technology at the time.

Another major Horn production that used the console was Grace Jones’ Slave to the Rhythm. This ambitious project took several months to complete, starting out as a single, but resulting in an entire album. This album demonstrated new techniques in creating music across an extended frequency range, utilising the latest equipment. It became a de facto “audio test card” that hi-fi manufacturers still use to demonstrate their products’ functionality and sonic limits.

During the 1990s, Horn returned to Studio 2 to record and mix Seal’s self-titled albums, which were released in 1991 and 1994, and between them spawned the hit singles “Crazy”, “Future Love Paradise”, “Killer” and “Kiss from a Rose”.

The console features an SSL SL4048E +G series computer with all drives, a 48-frame fully loaded, and an external, attached patch-bay. It is equipped with total recall; BBC spec PPM VU meters; remote controls for an AMS unit and EMT plate reverb; multiple two-track transport buttons; a spare channel; a test Jig; and a complete set of extender cards and channel pullers. Sarm maintained the desk throughout its life with additions and modifications, including a TFT internal screen, LED meter bridge lamps, and separate external cue PPM meters. All PSUs are contained in a separate tower.

The desk is in working order and comes complete with an extensive spares package and full manuals, following complete restoration by marque specialist Mark Derksen of MARK1 Audio in Holland. It has been independently appraised by UK expert Peter Higgs of Mode Engineering, and a printout of the appraisal will be included with the lot. Dimensions (console): 261.5 cm x 145 cm x 109.5 cm (103” x 57” x 43”); (power bank): 58 cm x 56.5 cm x 171 cm (22.75” x 22.25” x 67.25”); (drive): 80.5 cm x 52.5 cm x 106.5 cm (31.75” x 20.75” x 42”)

Installation and recommissioning are available worldwide for an additional cost. Please enquire for further details.

Contains electronics and mechanical components; see notice in the Buyer’s Guide.

Special shipping required: see special shipping notice in the Buyer’s Guide.

Estimate: £100,000 – 200,000

“THE TREVOR HORN CONSOLE” “The desk that recorded the soundtrack to the 1980s”



“I was aware, for a few years, that we were well ahead of the field.”

— Trevor Horn

Notably, this desk was used throughout the making of Frankie Goes to Hollywood’s acclaimed 1984 debut album, *Welcome to the Pleasuredome*. Both Studio 1 and Studio 2 were constantly in use during the creation of this ground-breaking record, which demonstrated a new, sophisticated sound and conveyed a new genre of music.

The band’s provocative themes meant the BBC briefly banned their 1983 single “Relax”, which, only helped raise their profile. This was further pushed by the edgy slogan T-shirts and merchandise that Paul Morley conjured up for the record company.

Welcome to the Pleasuredome produced several hits for the band, including “Relax”, “Two Tribes” and “The Power of Love”. “Two Tribes” was the longest-running number-one single of the ‘80s

“‘Relax’ was done in Studio 1 on 24-track analogue, but everything from ‘Two Tribes’ onwards was a pair of Sony Digital 3324s [24-track digital tape machines] locked together. We spent ages in Studio 2 on ‘Two Tribes’. And we stayed in there and mixed it on this board... both the 7” and the 12”.

— Trevor Horn

Some of the hits Horn recorded and mixed on this desk, in their entirety or in part include:

YES – “*Owner of a Lonely Heart*” – single

ART OF NOISE – “*Who’s Afraid of the Art of Noise*” – album work

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD – “*Two Tribes*” – single

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD – “*Two Tribes*” – 12” Annihilation Mix

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD – “*The Power of Love*” – single

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD – “*Welcome to the Pleasuredome*” – single

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD – “*Welcome to the Pleasuredome*” – album work

BAND AID – “*Do They Know It’s Christmas*” – 12” remix

GRACE JONES – “*Slave to the Rhythm*” – single

GRACE JONES – “*Slave to the Rhythm*” – album

PET SHOP BOYS – “*Left to My Own Devices*” – single

GODLEY & CREME – “*Cry*” – single

SEAL – “*Crazy*” – single

SEAL – “*Future Love Paradise*” – single

SEAL – “*Killer*” – single

SEAL – “*Kiss from a Rose*” – single

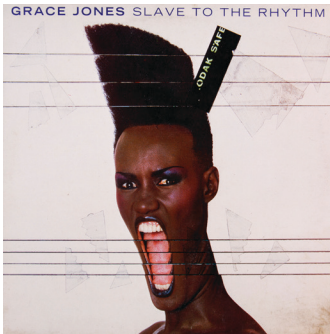
SEAL – “*SEAL I*” – album work

SEAL – “*SEAL II*” – album work

261.5 cm (103”)



Bill Images



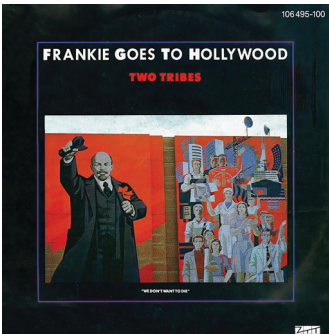
EyeBrowz



Lynne Sutherland



Records



Vinyls



When not being used by Horn on his projects, Sarm Studio 2 was rented on a commercial basis, and some artists and producers chose to make it their main workspace. WHAM!'s "Careless Whisper" was recorded and mixed on this console. Indeed, George Michael was based in this room for much of his career.

Footage from a 1990 edition of the South Bank Show, with Melvyn Bragg, shows Michael sitting at and using this console, while explaining the ideas and recording process for his song "Waiting for That Day".

Some of the hits George Michael recorded and mixed on this desk, in their entirety or in part include:

WHAM! – “Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go”– single

WHAM! – “Careless Whisper” – single

WHAM! – “Last Christmas” – single mix

WHAM! – “Make It Big” – album work

GEORGE MICHAEL – “Careless Whisper” – single

GEORGE MICHAEL – “I Want Your Sex” – single

GEORGE MICHAEL – *Faith* – album work

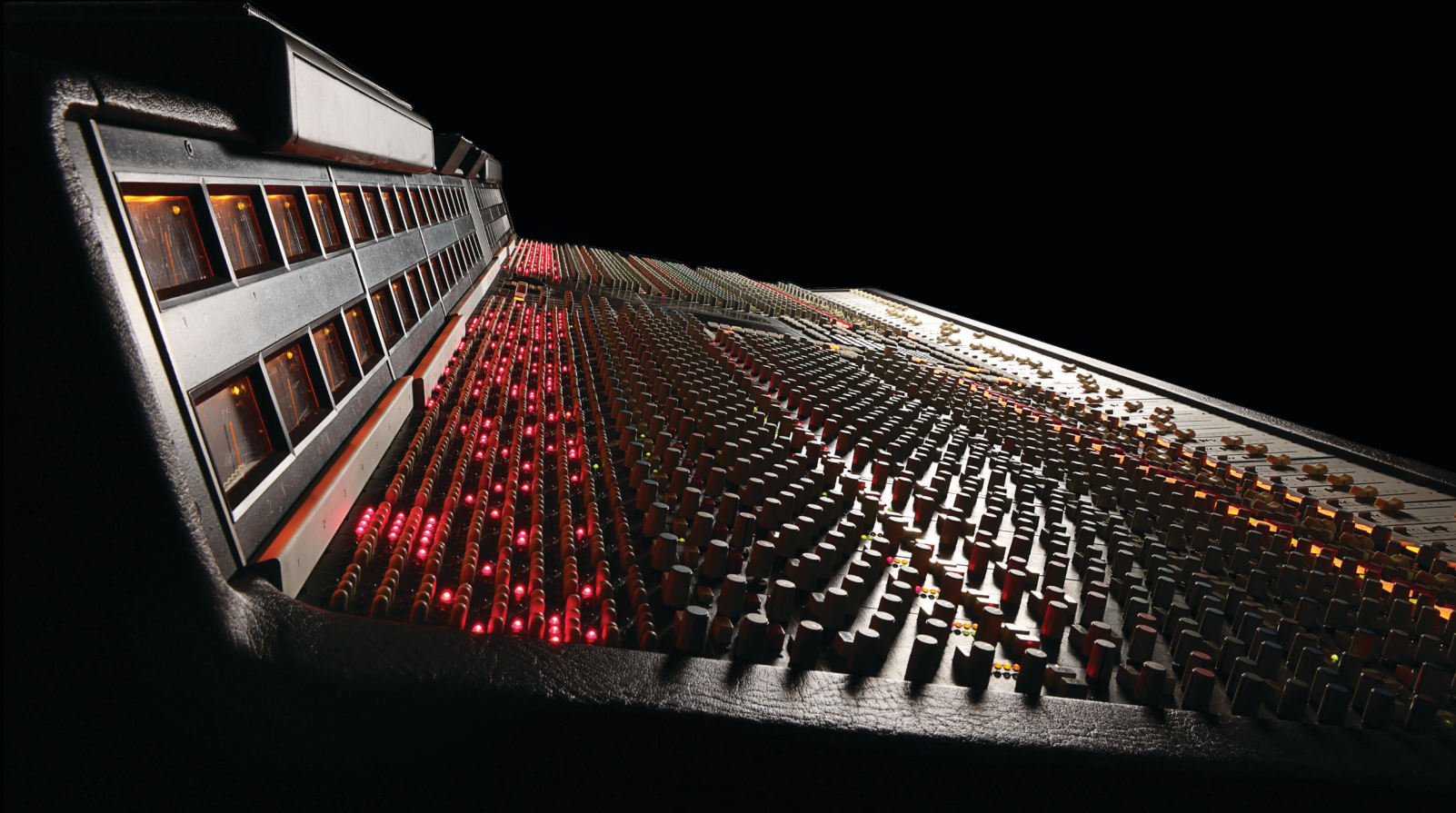
GEORGE MICHAEL – “Freedom” – single

GEORGE MICHAEL – “Waiting for That Day” – single

GEORGE MICHAEL – *Listen Without Prejudice Vol. 1*– album work

GEORGE MICHAEL – “Jesus to a Child” – single

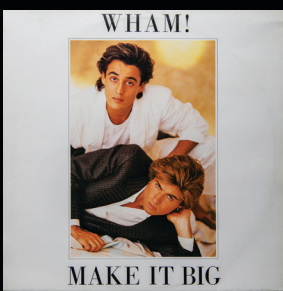
GEORGE MICHAEL – “Older” – album work



TheCoverVersion



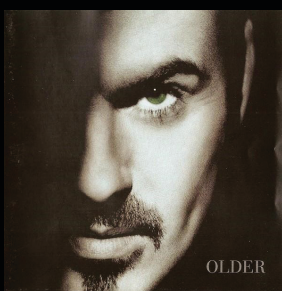
David Lichtneker



David Lichtneker



David Lichtneker



Andrew Macpherson

“Over 80 percent of George’s output came out of Sarm Studio 2. If we couldn’t get in because Trevor was using it, we would have to record the occasional track elsewhere, like ‘Last Christmas’, but it came back to Sarm 2 to be mixed, along with the rest of the songs we had done in that room – songs like ‘Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go’ and ‘Careless Whisper’.

Later, when George got so famous he would be mobbed on the street, we would have to go abroad to record... We did that with ‘Faith’. But we always returned to Studio 2 at SARM to finish recording and mix everything. It was our base for over a decade.”

— Chris Porter
(George Michael’s co-producer/engineer)

In subsequent years, additional clients using this console in Studio 2 have included: Gary Moore, Wang Chung, Tasmin Archer, Del Amitri, Coldplay, Shakira, Metallica, Justin Bieber, Alicia Keys, Kaiser Chiefs, Paolo Nutini, Lily Allen, Blur, Mark Ronson, Pharrell Williams, Propaganda, Aswad, Rihanna and Pet Shop Boys.

Pet Shop Boys

The console and Studio 2 also became the venue for extensive recording and mixing work on six albums by Pet Shop Boys. They include:

PET SHOP BOYS – “Actually” – album work

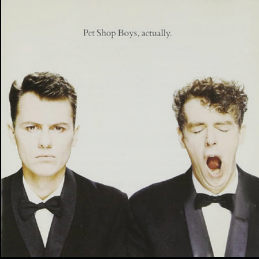
PET SHOP BOYS – “Behaviour”– album work

PET SHOP BOYS – “Bilingual”– album work

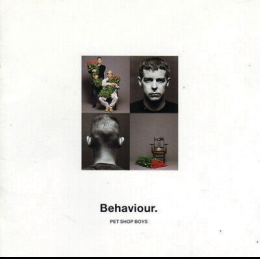
PET SHOP BOYS – “Introspective”– album work

PET SHOP BOYS – “Nightlife”– album work

PET SHOP BOYS – “Very”– album work



Cindy Palmano



Eric Watson



Mark Farrow



Mark Farrow



Alexei Hay



Mark Farrow





Sarm West was the most state-of-the-art British recording complex of the 1980s. A modern design, filled with the latest equipment available, all specified by Trevor Horn. Originally named Basing Street Studios (formerly Island Studios), when owned by Chris Blackwell's Island Records in the 1970s, it had been used by Led Zeppelin, Bob Marley, AC/DC, Joe Cocker and Free among others. Horn and his wife, Jill Sinclair, purchased the complex in 1982 and set about rebuilding the studios into the most sophisticated recording and mixing complex available.

Already the owners of Sarm East, where Horn had produced several award-winning number one albums, this new complex was big enough to house more rooms and additional offices for a record company.

Sarm Studios had a reputation for having the best engineers, who were taught to an exemplary technical standard. Many studied under Horn, and some became well-known producers in their own right. Engineers associated with Sarm and this console include Gary Langham, Steve Lipson, Julian Mendleson, Stuart Bruce, Dave Meegan, Niall Flynn, Danton Supple and more.

Studio 2 (where this desk was installed) was in the basement, next to the toilets and the kitchen, with a big coffee machine. Although smaller than Studio 1 upstairs, it quickly found favour with artists as it was hidden away from the ground floor comings and goings, and the floors above. During the 1980s, it was not unusual to look at the US Billboard charts and see at least three of the top 5 hit singles having been made at the facility.

This console recorded and mixed arguably two of the 1980s' biggest songs - George Michael's "Careless Whisper" and Frankie Goes to Hollywood's "Two Tribes". They battled it out at the top of the US Billboard charts throughout 1985, trading the top spot back and forth several times.

The Official Top 40 best-selling songs of 1984				
	TITLE	ARTIST	PEAK	YEAR
1	DO THEY KNOW IT'S CHRISTMAS?	BAND AID	1	1984
2	I JUST CALLED TO SAY I LOVE YOU	STEVIE WONDER	1	1984
3	RELAX	FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD	1	1984
4	TWO TRIBES	FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD	1	1984
5	CARELESS WHISPER	GEORGE MICHAEL	1	1984
6	LAST CHRISTMAS/EVERYTHING SHE WANTS	WHAM!	2	1984
7	HELLO	LIONEL RICHIE	1	1984
8	AGADOO	BLACK LACE	2	1984
9	GHOSTBUSTERS	RAY PARKER JR	2	1984
10	FREEDOM	WHAM!	1	1984
11	WAKE ME UP BEFORE YOU GO GO	WHAM!	1	1984
12	I FEEL FOR YOU	CHAKA KHAN	1	1984
13	WHITE LINES (DON'T DO IT)	GRANDMASTER FLASH & MELLE MEL	7	1984
14	WE ALL STAND TOGETHER	PAUL MCCARTNEY AND FROG CHORUS	3	1984
15	99 RED BALLOONS	NENA	1	1984
16	THE POWER OF LOVE	FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD	1	1984
17	THE REFLEX	DURAN DURAN	1	1984
18	LIKE A VIRGIN	MADONNA	3	1984
19	TAKE A LOOK AT ME NOW (AGAINST ALL ODDS)	PHIL COLLINS	2	1984
20	WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT	TINA TURNER	3	1984

All British No. 1 records except "Last Christmas", which was kept off the top spot by another Sarm recording "Do They Know It's Christmas?"

Solid State Logic (SSL) was founded by the late Colin Sanders in Oxford, England in 1969. The E series of consoles was introduced in 1979 and proved a game-changer for record production. The SSL automated mixing desk is the most iconic studio console ever designed, incorporating the best features of many different consoles made by various manufacturers up to this point, and adding many more.

All SSLs had a standardised layout to aid familiarity and speed. Song settings could be easily recalled with the computer, meaning projects could be worked on in different studios in different cities with similar results. The desk also allowed 12" mixes to be created more easily with multiple computer recalls.

Almost overnight, the Solid State Logic E series mixing desk became the most technically advanced piece of top-tier professional recording hardware of its era. and was the perfect tool for pop music at the height of the 1980s, with record-breaking sales and the new invention of the CD. It completely reshaped music production. All other console manufacturers would subsequently follow its design.

Colin Sanders founded Solid State Logic with £13 in 1969 at the age of 22. He set about designing the ultimate ergonomic and technically advanced music production desk that incorporated the best features of many different hand-made consoles made by different manufacturers, but with the addition of a computer. Up until this point, all other consoles were unique to a certain degree, and an engineer would have to get familiar with various idiosyncrasies in each studio he visited.

The E Series console was an 'in-line' desk that meant each channel could access two different inputs simultaneously: a tape machine track and a microphone or line-level input.

Two faders (one big and one small) allowed for twice as many signals to be replayed. Thus, a 48-channel console like this one could easily replay 96 signals. Every channel also had a built-in dynamics section that contained a 'compressor and expander' to squash the sound or make it explode, effective on drums. And a 'noise-gate' to clean up background noise. This made it an incredibly powerful sound sculpting tool, especially in the right hands.

Tape machine transport functions: The play and record buttons could be accessed directly from the console. The built-in computer could also record all analogue control inputs, meaning the fader settings and mutes could be reproduced later, multiple times, allowing complex mixes to be constructed over many days or even weeks. Song settings could be easily recalled with the computer, meaning projects could be worked on in different studios in different cities with similar results. 12" mixes could be formed more easily with multiple different computer recalls.

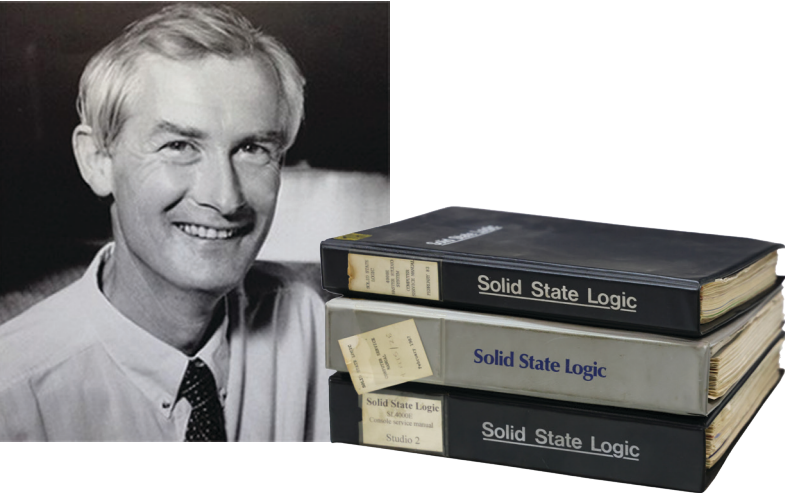
SSL consoles were an immediate, global success: They revolutionised music production.

SSL received the Queen's Award for Enterprise (Export) in 1981. The then-prime minister Margaret Thatcher named Sanders as one of the country's most successful entrepreneurs and invited him to Downing Street. He sold the company in 1986 for £27 million and was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) the same year. He was killed in a helicopter crash in 1998 at the age of 50.

In 1996, Billboard magazine reported that 83% of all number 1 singles that year had been made using an SSL mixing desk. Indeed, in the history of Rock and Pop, more Platinum-selling albums have been made using SSLs than all other manufacturers' desks combined.

Solid State Logic was awarded a special, technical GRAMMY for its contribution to the recording industry in 2004. Peter Gabriel bought a controlling share in the company in 2005.

In August 2025, SSL released a 19" rack-mount version of the "Immortal 4000 Series" known as the "REVIVAL 4000 Series Analogue Channel Strip". The company states that it offers the "signature tone and sonic flexibility that form the very foundation of SSL's legacy - the most influential mixing desk of all time - the SL 4000E.



Interview with Trevor Horn

Q) In the 1980s, Trevor Horn productions were eagerly anticipated... like a Stanley Kubrick film:

It was like a spaceship had just landed, slap-bang, in the middle of Pop music. Did you know, at the time, that the records you were making were so different-sounding, so groundbreaking?

"I was aware, for a few years, that we were well ahead of the field. For about 3 years, nobody knew what the hell we were doing.

People didn't really understand it {the new technology}. From 1982-1985, we were so far ahead of everyone.

People used to come and ask me 'How did you do this ?'.. or 'How did you do that ?' They couldn't figure out how it was all done."

Q) Studio 2 was in the basement, next to the toilets and the kitchen. Although smaller than Studio 1 upstairs, it became the first choice for many artists to book into, sometimes for months at a time. They could hide away down there and get on with work undisturbed, with all amenities within a few footsteps. You probably spent more time down there than anyone..

"Studio 2 produced the highest number of hits in the building. Even though the design of the room was slightly wrong and the bass was only clear in the toilet at the back...For some reason studio 2 is where most of the hits came from...I don't know why it worked so well, but it just did.

And that SSL is the one that was always in there."

"Studio 2 wasn't that big but the control room was a really good size and the NS10s

{small speakers} sounded amazing in there.

There was no daylight so you could get carried away. I once spent 36 hours straight doing keyboard overdubs, and drinking mugs of coffee, on a SEAL album."

Q) What tracks are you most proud of? Which do you consider your best work ?

"When I get asked to name my best production work, 2 tracks come to mind: "Owner Of A Lonely Heart" and "Slave To The Rhythm".

Actually, both were made using that board.

In fact, all of the tracks I regard as good work that I did at SARM WEST were all worked on, at some point, on that board"

Q) During the 1980s SARM WEST studios exclusively used the Solid State Logic E series consoles in all rooms. How did they affect the way you worked. What did you like about them?

"There were 2 or 3 different things. For a kick-off any idiot could see where the mute button and solo buttons were on the channel strip. Whereas on a lot of other types of consoles you had to find them, they were hidden somewhere in the channel strip. The second thing was the amazing way that you could subgroup things. That was incredibly important for me back then as I was trying to get the record right, having those 8 faders in the middle that I could mute whole banks of channels quickly was absolutely brilliant. I don't think people realise what a game changer that was. The simplicity of the channel strip and the subgrouping were something else.

Also, of course, SSL had the first automation computer in a desk that really worked. Once I could see that using that, you could actually proceed in an orderly fashion towards a finished mix, you know, I never looked back. The other thing we used the computer for was comping vocals; it was quite good for that as well." **

*** Comping Vocals is a technique that seeks to compile one master track of a finished vocal performance from parts of multiple different takes. By programming the mixing desk's computer to mute different tracks being replayed, and at different times, a master 'take' can be constructed using lines, phrases, words and even syllables from multiple different performances. Pretty advanced for the early 1980s.*

Q) You have owned 7 SSL mixing consoles over the years, throughout your many studios. However, this is the only one you kept. All the others were exchanged, replaced or sold off. This console is the only original one from the 1980s glory days of SARM.

What made you keep this particular one for 34 years?

"Because it's lucky. A disproportionate number of hits were made with it."

This Solid State Logic SL 4048 E+G (serial number 4101), formally the property of Sarm West and Trevor Horn CBE and installed in the legendary SARM Studio 2 throughout the entire time the studio was operational, represents arguably the most significant and celebrated example of this console type.

A technically innovative design that revolutionised record production, used by the most technically innovative and revolutionary record producer (as well as significant other artists), to make the most successful pop records of the age. These records are still held up as masterpieces today.

On the 40th anniversary of its most famous work, the Trevor Horn Console is undoubtedly one of the most culturally important pieces of audio hardware to be sold in the history of Pop music.