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# **ATC MONITORS SURROUND FAMED RECORDING ENGINEER MICHAEL BISHOP**



LAS VEGAS, NEVADA – JULY 2016: “Seasoned veteran” is perhaps too weak a term to describe audio engineer Michael Bishop, whose passion for breathtaking audio capture has earned him ten Grammy wins in a career that has spanned nearly 45 years.

He served as the Chief Recording Engineer for Telarc Records from 1988 up until 2008, when Concord Music Group closed Telarc's in-house production team, and now partners in Five/Four Productions, Ltd. with two of his former Telarc colleagues, Robert Friedrich and Thomas Moore. A tireless advocate of cutting-edge technologies, Bishop was experimenting with 24-bit, 192kHz recording when most engineers were still coming to terms with 16-bit, 44.1kHz and has since moved on to record/release in DTS, SACD, and now DSD. Since 1999, Bishop has relied on ATC monitors to reveal all of the minute details that cumulatively add up to a world-class recording. Three of his most recent projects include the recording of two new pieces by Jonathan Leshnoff performed by Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, a traditional multi-track studio session with Eighth Blackbird, and the hip-hop/orchestral fusion of Pharrell William's collaboration with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.

Bishop traveled to Atlanta's Woodruff Symphony Hall – a space where he has recorded nearly one hundred times – to create the world-premier recording of Jonathan Leshnoff's Symphony No. 2 and Zohar. Although he's never been one to create “documentary-style” recordings, Bishop is riding the leading edge of the wave that is moving traditional classical recordings in the direction of movie soundtracks. “There's a lot more activity on the engineer's part,” he said. “The audience is expecting more detail and colour, and modern composers are writing pieces that really require the microphone technique needed to capture all of the details, actions, and interactions.”

Amazingly, Bishop mixed all 28 microphones on stage down to a stereo mix live in the moment that he recorded using DSD technology at 11.2MHz, or 256 times greater than the benchmark CD rate (44.1kHz x 256 = 11,200kHz!!!). As always, he brought his ATC SCM150ASL monitors. “The ATCs play a crucial role,” he said. “I'm making all of my recording, mixing, and mastering decisions right there, and it is thus paramount that I have an accurate image of every detail. Moreover, the 150s have the size and presence to give the producer and conductor a true impression of the recorded piece, which closes the feedback loop and gets us to a winning take with all due speed.” At a session cost of \$300 per minute for the orchestra, that's obviously important. Direct-to-stereo mixes have always been a hallmark of Bishop's work over the past few decades so that it's second nature.

“With ATCs, I'm able to make, say, a one-inch change in the angle of a microphone and really hear its effect,” Bishop said. “Most monitors gloss over that kind of detail, but those Eighth Blackbird are the details that add up to a great recording. Moreover, every ATC loudspeaker, from the 20s to the 300s, provides that same consistent level of detail.” Indeed, Bishop tracked on ATC SCM25A nearfield monitors at IV Lab Studios in Chicago, where he recently recorded the Chicago-based avant-garde

ensemble Eighth Blackbird performing pieces written by five different contemporary composers for their Hand-Eye release on Cedille Records. “Eighth Blackbird was closer to a modern studio session, with the backbones of songs laid down, and followed by overdubs and manipulations of the recorded material as dictated by the composers.”

Bishop and longtime collaborator and former Telarc producer Elaine Martone were under pressure to work quickly. “The detail revealed by the ATCs greatly aided our decision making process and enabled us to make good decisions on the spot. With any recording session, there are a million things to worry about and manage,” he said. “ATC’s consistency and truth remove one of the most potentially damaging variables – we’re confident that what we’re hearing is the truth. That puts Elaine in a comfortable place and lets her focus on the musical aspects. She doesn’t have to question what she’s hearing.”

The Dallas Symphony Orchestra commissioned pop artist Pharrell Williams to compose a piece that he called “Rules of the Game” that also involves dance, sculpture, and video. Bishop crammed into the pit with a 28-piece chamber orchestra augmented by a hip-hop rhythm section, triggered samples, and an unusually heavy dose of percussion instruments. Of the session’s 72 tracks, 24 were devoted to percussion! Arranger and composer David Campbell, who has done similar work with Justin Timberlake, Beyoncé, and others, led the effort.

“Working in the pit is the pits,” Bishop laughed. “We were jammed in there, and I had to mic everything very closely. Everyone was on in-ear monitors so that they could stay in time with pre-recorded samples. It was pretty uncomfortable.” Back in the friendlier environs of the Five/Four studio, Bishop is mixing the performance on his 5.1 set of ATC SCM150ASLs. “The turnaround is tight because the dance company needs the recording for performances without a live orchestra,” he explained. “As always, the ATCs make it easy to mix and know that my work will translate to any system whatsoever. Since moving to ATC seventeen years ago, I’ve never been surprised by what a mix sounds like on a different system.”