CASE STUDY

Blue May

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Acclaimed producer chooses 8380A Smart Active Monitors™

BLUE MAY: FROM LONDON TO L.A

British producer, songwriter, musician and mix engineer Blue May has built his career by combining the character of traditional recording techniques with the possibilities of modern production. That same philosophy shapes his Los Angeles home studio, where an extensive collection of vintage instruments and analog recording equipment now shares the room with a pair of Genelec 8380A SAM™ Three-way Main Monitors.

Originally from London, May became fascinated with music production as a teenager. His early influences included Jimi Hendrix, Aretha Franklin, Nina Simone, Al Green and David Bowie, and later, his discovery of Dr. Dre and Eminem introduced him to hip-hop and opened his ears to the producer's ability to shape an entire musical landscape. That realization inspired him to pursue a multifaceted career encompassing production, songwriting, performance, programming and mixing. He has since collaborated with artists including Lily Allen, Kano, Joy Crookes, Suki Waterhouse, Ghetts and Jorja Smith.

A SPACE BUILT FOR CREATIVITY

May's studio in Los Angeles' Beachwood Canyon reflects the breadth of his creative approach. The space is filled with guitars, drums, keyboards and drum machines, along with a vintage Neve BCM10 console, a 3M eight-track tape machine, classic Neumann, AKG and Sony microphones and a carefully selected collection of outboard equipment. A separate adjoining room serves as a vocal booth and overdub space. Depending on the project, May may record a full band to analog tape, build a track through contemporary programming or combine both approaches.

Although he had long relied on nearfield monitors, May felt his setup was missing a single monitoring system capable of presenting the entire frequency spectrum with confidence. When Genelec introduced the 8380A, its combination of classic proportions and advanced technology immediately captured his attention.

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>
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GENELEC®

THE MISSING PIECE

“I had been looking for a larger pair of monitors that could give me the full frequency range without needing to be augmented by a subwoofer,” May explains. “Because my work spans so many different genres, I wanted a monitor that could show me the entire picture. The 8380As felt like they could provide that missing space in my setup.”

After seeing and hearing the 8380A in person at The NAMM Show, May arranged an in-studio demonstration through professional audio retailer Vintage King. The monitors were installed and optimized for the room using Genelec Loudspeaker Manager™ (GLM) calibration software.

“I was blown away immediately,” he recalls. “They did exactly what I hoped they would do. With modern music, you need a very clear understanding of the entire frequency spectrum. With the 8380As, everything comes from one source, so I’m not having to question the crossover between smaller monitors and a subwoofer or

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imagine what may be happening in certain parts of the spectrum. The whole picture is right there in front of me."

GLM has proven especially valuable because May prefers the character and energy of a residential creative space over the more controlled atmosphere of a heavily treated studio. While his room incorporates some acoustic treatment, it also includes hard surfaces, a large collection of instruments and the furnishings of his mid-century home.

"I like working in an environment that feels natural and inspiring," he says. "The fact that monitors of this size can be calibrated to deliver such an accurate, solid response in a room that isn't heavily treated is incredibly impressive. The 8380As are substantial monitors for this space, but they never feel overbearing."

May has also been impressed by the 8380As' consistency across a wide range of listening levels. "They are incredibly enjoyable to listen to, but not in a way that feels hyped," he notes. "They seem to maintain the same soundstage

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at virtually any volume. With many large monitors, the character changes when you turn them down, but the 8380As remain balanced, consistent and detailed at moderate levels. When you turn them up, they don't become harsh. That consistency allows me to work longer sessions without the monitors becoming tiring."

The system's broad listening area is equally important in a collaborative production environment. "The sweet spot is remarkably wide," May adds. "I can move around the room and still hear a picture that feels very similar to what I hear when I'm sitting directly in front of them. That is a major benefit when artists, musicians and other producers are in the room. Everyone who has worked here since the monitors arrived has been impressed."

The 8380As have already played a central role in several of May's recent projects, including work on a new album by British singer/songwriter Rita Ora and the completion of an album by British rapper Kano. They have also given him a fresh perspective on projects begun in other studios.

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“I spent a month working at legendary Criteria Studios in Miami, and when I returned home and played that material through the 8380As, I immediately heard areas where I wanted to make changes,” he states. “Those decisions made a real difference. The monitors have given ongoing projects a new lease on life because I’m hearing details and relationships that I wasn’t hearing as clearly before.”

THE CONCLUSION

For May, monitoring must achieve more than technical accuracy; it must also support the emotional and creative momentum of a session: “Monitoring is the window into what you’re making,” he concludes. “You want the clearest possible picture, but the monitors also need to present music in a way that inspires you and makes you want to keep working. The 8380As give me both. They provide the full soundstage and accuracy I need to make confident decisions, while making the entire process more enjoyable. They make me want to work harder, stay in the room longer and keep creating.”

THE DETAILS

Studio Location

Los Angeles, CA

Loudspeakers:

- 2 x 8380A

Powered by GLM

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