

# Event Speaker

Jim Smart of  
Smart Studios Inc in  
South Dublin



## SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT

*We all know when something sounds right but there aren't many of us who could tell when the quality of sound produced in a studio isn't quite reaching the perfection its facilitator had intended.*

It was exactly this issue which prompted Jim Dunne to establish his company Smart Studio – as having run his own consultancy company specialising in acoustics for many years, he found that the studios he was designing, never quite reached his exacting standards.

“My work had been based around a consultancy business doing acoustics design for houses, hotel and general construction architectural acoustics, but from 2010 onwards [due to the Recession], that went through a hole in the ground and all our customers went with it,” he says.

“My background previous to this was in the recording industry so I thought I would see what we could do with regard to getting studio building work in the UK. So I went over there and realised that it would be impossible to make a living there as we were Dublin based and conventional building was not going to work, so I came up with the concept of a modular build. Basically we would design and manufacture all the parts required for a studio, ship it to the UK or wherever and install it.

“Then by the time we got to 2015, we decided to turn this venture into a stand-alone company called Smart Studio as we realised that we never really achieved the acoustic performance which was suggested by our designs. We just weren't completely satisfied with the end result and reckoned that it was down to the actual building team as there wasn't a cohort of people in the construction industry who could build exactly what we wanted with the same attention to detail. They didn't seem to be able to understand the subtlety of it – so we decided to tackle it ourselves.”

And so Smart studio, the specialist acoustic company which designs manufactures and installs high performance critical acoustic studios for use in the audio post-production, film, gaming, and music performing production world, began.

With much of its business in the UK, the company went from strength-to-strength in the first few years but then the onset of Brexit caused problems, and this was followed not long afterwards, by the Pandemic.

“Brexit has been a real pain for us from the start,” says the owner, MD and Chief Designer. “Prior to this, we were working in the UK,

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and everything was a dream with no paperwork or red tape. Now we have to devote a lot of time to getting everything in order and the processing involved for getting stuff off the island of Ireland and into the UK takes so much longer. We have managed to deal with it, but it is still a pain – a bit like walking with a stone in your shoe the whole time, you can't get rid of the irritation.

“Then the Pandemic came along, and people started to be very cautious about everything. Projects which were already on the go were stalled or postponed and others were reluctant to commit to anything new. But we are still doing some jobs and have been working on our marketing. This has been really important as we are getting a reputation and are not the unknown quantity we were before. People are beginning to know who we are and there is some momentum building, which is very positive – so although it has taken its own sweet time, things are beginning to bubble up for us.”

With 10 staff working in the company, which is based in Baldonnell, Smart Studio is continuing to grow, and Jim says, help from the Local Enterprise Office made a real difference in helping the company to act on its plans.

“We are really tuning into the suite of supports offered by South Dublin Local Enterprise Office,” he says. “With both mentoring and financial support, the team down there really have it licked and have put on some very apt training courses with high quality presenters who fit perfectly into our slipstream in terms of detail. They offered some really practical help, and we are a very practical company, so we have found it really good.

***“Filing out all the forms is the only thing that you have to tune yourself into as there is a bit of work involved, but once you start, everything is very easy to navigate – we found it brilliant.”***

Having weathered the successive storms of Brexit and the Pandemic, Jim and his team are looking towards future expansion.

“We know from clients that our product is received very well – as its design, manufacture and installation is excellent,” he says. “So now that we have the confidence about what we do, we are looking to expand into Europe in order get more sales.

“So we have plenty of expansion plans and are very much looking forward to the future. It's a case of the more work we do, the more the word gets out and the better reception we get – this is all powerful momentum which in turns drives even more momentum.”

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