



# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2020**

*Filing Date:* September 23, 2020  
*Case No.:* 2020-008542LBR  
*Business Name:* Secret Studios, Inc.  
*Business Address:* 2200 Cesar Chavez Street  
*Zoning:* PDR-2 (PDR PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND REPAIR) Zoning District  
65-J Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 4327A/007  
*Applicant:* Happy Sanchez  
2200 Cesar Chavez Street  
*Nominated By:* Mayor London Breed  
*Located In:* District 10  
*Staff Contact:* Katherine Wilborn - 628-652-7355  
Katherine.Wilborn@sfgov.org

**Recommendation:** Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

## Business Description

Secret Studios, Inc. is a music recording studio and rehearsal space that has been in operation since 1982. Secret Studios initially opened at 250-C Napoleon Street, in an industrial area just south of Potrero Hill, and was comprised of just two small rooms to rehearse and record music. San Francisco's dense housing stock doesn't lend itself to "garage bands" and homegrown rehearsal space. It became evident that San Francisco residents were in need of space to come together, practice and record their music. In 1983, one of these residents looking for space to practice, was a young, local musician taking classes at San Francisco State University's Audio Production department. This local musician, Greg McKee, would go on to become friends with the owner and soon began working at the studio. Three years later, in 1986, McKee (who legally changed his name to Happy Sanchez) was offered the opportunity to purchase Secret Studios and has been keeping music traditions alive as the owner ever since.

The demand for studio recording space has kept Secret Studios at full capacity throughout its years, with no need for advertising. The word-of-mouth reputation the studio garnered from the artistic community, as well as the changing demographics of musicians in the Bay Area, has consistently put pressure on the business to expand its

space and offerings. In 1992, Happy Sanchez moved Secret Studios to its current location, at 2200 Cesar Chavez, and later, in 2002, the growth was so tremendous that the studio took over the whole building. Today, Secret Studios is the Bay Area's largest rehearsal facility, with 130 monthly studios, 2 recording rooms, and 2 music rehearsal spaces.

Secret Studios is active in its community and has provided San Francisco and the Bay Area music community with the space they need to work on their craft, cultivate their creativity, and realize their dreams. Secret Studios has been involved in providing rehearsal space and donating equipment to the Mission District's Carnival festival for over 30 years. It also have provided space for neighborhood 12-step meetings and has provided hourly rehearsal space for the Latin Jazz Youth Ensemble of San Francisco. Despite its lack of advertising, Secret Studios was used as the "call back" audition space for NBC's popular show "The Voice," and was the first space to host the "Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp" by Gilbert Klein, the owner of Rock & Bowl on Haight Street. The Bay Guardian has also recognized Happy Sanchez and Secret Studio's impact on the Bay Area's music community, in a 2011 article title "Landmark to Loudness." The space has been used by many notable musicians, from Jerry Garcia and Mick Fleetwood, to Sara Bareilles and PINK. However, just as importantly, the studio has served the local community; from Bay Area legends (such as the drummer, Brain) to aspiring musicians, to the enthusiastic hobbyist, Secret Studios has been there to serve them all for over 38 years.

The business is located in a warehouse structure at 2200 Cesar Chavez Street, and is in a Category B (Unknown / Age Eligible) building on the North side of Cesar Chavez, between Connecticut and Vermont streets in Potrero Hill neighborhood. It is within a PDR-2 (Production, Distribution, and Repair) Zoning District and a 65-J Height and Bulk District, and the Industrial Protection Zone Special Use District. The building at 2200 Cesar Chavez has not been evaluated or included in any surveys and maintains a Planning Department status code of "B" (Unknown / Age Eligible).

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

#### 1. *When was business founded and what is the ownership history?*

The business was founded in 1982.

Secret Studios was under sole proprietorship until 2002, when it became incorporated and an investor was brought on. The business's ownership history is as follows: Ian Cartmill (1982 – 1983); David Mighel (1983-1986); Greg McKee/Happy Sanchez (1986-2002); Happy Sanchez and Dino Ropalidis (2002-Present, as an incorporated business).

#### 2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Secret Studios qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Secret Studios has operated continuously in San Francisco for 38 years.

- b. Secret Studios has contributed to the history and identity of the Potrero Hill neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Secret Studios is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with the musical arts and the craft of music recording and rehearsal.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

No. However, the business has served as a recording and performing venue for many famous musicians throughout the years (see below). The property is located in an Industrial Protection Special Use District, in the Potrero Hill neighborhood, and is age eligible for a Historic Resource Evaluation. However, the property has not been evaluated for its individual significance or its potential as a historic or cultural district. A Historic Resource Evaluation for the subject property is outside the scope of this review.

Notable Secret Studio clients include: Jerry Garcia, Mick Fleetwood, Sly Stone, Gene Simmons, Jerry Cantrell, James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett, Cliff Burton, Robert Trujillo, Jello Biafra, East Bay Ray, D.H. Peligro, Klaus Flouride, Pink, Toots Hibbert, Tito Puente, Michael Franti, Chris Isaak, Paul Collins, Jane Wiedlin, Sara Bareilles, Michael “Fat Mike” Burkett, Aaron “El Hefe” Abeyta, Don Was, Mickey Thomas, Craig Chaquico, Joe Louis Walker, Roddy Bottum, Billy Gould, Mike Bordin, “Brain” (a legendary Bay Area drummer), Romeo Void, Translator, Metallica, and Faith No More.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary. The building has a Planning Department Historic Resource status codes of “B” (Age Eligible / Unknown) because its age-eligible for evaluation but has not yet been evaluated, in regards to the California Environmental Quality Act.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. Secret Studios has been published by Bay Guardian and was the venue for the 2011 “call back” auditions for the popular NBC show, “The Voice.”

**Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business**

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 2200 Cesar Chavez Street (1992 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 250-C Napoleon Street (1982-1992)

#### Recommended by Applicant

- Maintain and support the tradition of music creation, by continuing to provide space for local and Bay Area musicians to create, perform, and record their music.
- Retain the business's use as a music recording studio with a variety of business features, including hourly space rentals, monthly space lockouts, central location, audio and video services, music accessories, stage and stage props, and music equipment rentals.
- Continued support and participation in the area's community and cultural events, such as the Mission District's annual Carnival festival.

#### Additional Recommended by Staff

- None

### Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

#### ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
  - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
  - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
  - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

## DRAFT RESOLUTION NO. ###

**HEARING DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2020**

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*Located In:* District 10  
*Staff Contact:* Katherine Wilborn - 628-652-7355  
[Katherine.Wilborn@sfgov.org](mailto:Katherine.Wilborn@sfgov.org)

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR SECRET STUDIOS, INC. CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2200 CESAR CHAVEZ STREET, BLOCK/LOT 4327A/007.

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on October 21, 2020, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that Secret Studios, Inc. qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Secret Studios, Inc.

*Location(s):*

Current Locations:

- 2200 Cesar Chavez Street (1992 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 250-C Napoleon Street (1982-1992)

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:*

- Maintain and support the tradition of music creation, by continuing to provide space for local and Bay Area musicians to create, perform, and record their music.
- Retain the business's use as a music recording studio with a variety of business features, including hourly space rentals, monthly space lockouts, central location, audio and video services, music accessories, stage and stage props, and music equipment rentals.
- Continued support and participation in the area's community and cultural events, such as the Mission District's annual Carnival festival.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file to the Office of Small Business October 21, 2020.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED:



## Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2020-21-013  
*Business Name:* Secret Studios  
*Business Address:* 2200 Cesar Chavez Street  
*District:* District 10  
*Applicant:* Happy Sanchez, Owner  
*Nomination Date:* September 22, 2020  
*Nominated By:* Mayor London Breed

**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

☒ Yes ☐ No

250-C Napoleon Street from 1982 to 1992 (10 years)  
2200 Cesar Chavez Street from 1992 to Present (28 years)

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

☒ Yes ☐ No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

☒ Yes ☐ No

**NOTES:** N/A

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** September 23, 2020

Richard Kurylo  
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program

### Legacy Business Program

Office of Small Business  
City Hall Room 140  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 554-6680  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org  
[www.legacybusiness.org](http://www.legacybusiness.org)





September 22, 2020

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
San Francisco Office of Small Business  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi,

I am writing to nominate Secret Studios for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

The purpose of the City's Legacy Business Registry is to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City. Per ordinance, a business must be nominated by the Mayor or a member of the Board of Supervisors to be reviewed, processed, and approved by the Small Business Commission as a Legacy Business at a public hearing if it meets the criteria set forth.

Originally founded in 1982, Secret Studios has served musicians in San Francisco by providing quality spaces to rehearse and record music. For nearly four decades, Secret Studios has welcomed artists of all backgrounds, from aspiring vocalists to renowned rock stars. By creating an accessible environment for new musicians to grow and for professionals to record their work, Secret Studios has supported San Francisco's diverse and cherished music scene. Art and expression are critical to the history and identity of our City, and through their work to serve musicians, Secret Studios has helped foster civic engagement and pride.

It is an honor to recognize the legacy and contributions of Secret Studios to our great City of San Francisco.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "London Breed".

London N. Breed  
Mayor

## Section One:

### Business / Applicant Information.

Please provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

<b>NAME OF BUSINESS:</b>	
SECRET STUDIOS INC.	
<b>BUSINESS OWNER(S)</b> (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business):	
HAPPY SANCHEZ	
<b>CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
2200 CESAR CHAVEZ ST SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94124	
	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
	secretstudios@gmail.com
<b>MAILING ADDRESS – STREET ADDRESS:</b>	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – CITY AND STATE:</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business Address	
	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – ZIP CODE:</b>
<b>WEBSITE ADDRESS:</b>	
secretstudios.com	
<b>FACEBOOK PAGE:</b>	
NONE	
<b>TWITTER NAME:</b>	
NONE	
<b>APPLICANT'S NAME:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
HAPPY Sanchez	
<b>APPLICANT'S TITLE:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
OWNER	
<b>SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:</b>	
BAN 0440358	
<b>SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (If applicable):</b>	
C2419122	

## Section Two:

### Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS	ZIP CODE	START DATE OF BUSINESS
250-C Napoleon Street	94124	1982
<b>IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<b>DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATION</b> 1982 to 1992

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
2200 Cesar Chavez Street	94124	Start: May 1992 End: Present

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
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OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

## Section Three:

### Disclosure Statement.

#### San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☒ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☒ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☒ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☒ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☒ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☒ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☒ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

HARRY SANCHEZ

Name (Print):

Date:

9/17/20

Signature:



**SECRET STUDIOS INC.**  
**Section 4: Written Historical Narrative**

**CRITERION 1**

**a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.**

Secret Studios Inc. has been providing San Francisco and Bay Area musicians and performers with high quality rehearsal space since 1982.

Secret Studios began in the early 1980s as a single hourly rehearsal studio located on the second floor of the American Industrial Building at 2345 3rd Street in the historic Dog Patch neighborhood. The studio was called Third Street Studios and was established by Ian Cartmill, a Canadian from Toronto who also worked as a sound man and road manager for such well known Punk Rock groups as The Dead Kennedys, Flipper and DOA.

In 1982, the business was renamed Secret Studios and relocated to 250-C Napoleon Street in the industrial neighborhood just south of Potrero Hill. In a tiny 16-unit business park among the warehouses and small businesses that populate the area, Unit C was converted into two rehearsal rooms with one room doubling as a recording studio. The owner, Ian, took on a partner, a budding recording engineer from Portland Oregon named David Mighel, who would be in charge of running the late night recording sessions that would take place after midnight once the last of the rehearsal clients had finished. Over the next four years, Secret Studios was home to such well known local bands as Chris Isaak and his band Silvertone, Translator and the seminal new wave band known as Romeo Void. A few other up-and-coming groups that would go on to find great success passed through the rehearsal studios such as Metallica and Faith No More to name a few. By the mid-1980s, the San Francisco music scene was in full swing, and Secret Studios had well established itself as one of the city's premier rehearsal facilities.

By 1984, likely in 1983, Ian turned over full ownership of Secret Studios to David and moved to Reno to open a burrito shop. It was at this time that a young local musician named Greg McKee had been rehearsing at Secret Studios with his band Voodoo A Go Go and who at the time was taking classes at San Francisco State University's Audio Production Department. Greg struck up a friendship with the studio owner David and was soon offered a job working evenings in the office and running late night recording sessions in the 8-track studio. Over the period of a year, Greg learned the ropes of running a rehearsal studio business and got to know years' worth of clientele. Then in 1986, David applied for and was offered a job at Microsoft in Seattle. It was an opportunity he could not pass up. David offered Greg the chance to own Secret Studios, and he took it.

Over the next two years, Greg worked 10 to 12 hour per day to save up enough money to expand his business. In 1988, when an adjacent unit became vacant, McKee leased the space and built two

more hourly rehearsal studios. By this time, Secret Studios was running at practically full capacity and enjoyed a stellar word of mouth reputation. In fact, there was never any need to advertise, the phone constantly rang with musicians looking to book time – the secret was out!

Around 1990, it was becoming apparent to Greg that demand for monthly rehearsal studios was growing. Bands were seeking the convenience of leaving their musical equipment set up for long periods of time versus the hassle of having to set up and break down in an hourly rehearsal studio. In the spring of 1992, as Secret Studios lease was expiring at 250 Napoleon Street, Greg rented and moved the business to the rear portion of a large warehouse on 2200 Cesar Chavez Street that had once housed the sets of the popular TV program Midnight Caller. He shared the space with another well-known San Francisco business, McCune Pro Audio.

In 1997, Greg McKee legally changed his name to Happy Sanchez.

In 2002, McCune Pro Audio decided to move its operation to South San Francisco, at which time Secret Studios took over the whole building. To raise money for this large expansion, Happy converted Secret Studios from a sole proprietorship to a California corporation and brought on an investor, Dino Ropalidis. Once the expansion was completed, Secret Studios Inc. became the Bay Area's largest rehearsal facility with 130 monthly studios, 2 recording studios and 2 hourly rehearsal studios.

**b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?**

Secret Studios has been open and continuously in business without any cease in its operation since 1982. Secret Studios has kept its doors open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. every day of the year including all major holidays since 1992, even during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 during which time the business was allowed to operate with restrictions.

**c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.**

Secret Studios had been a sole proprietorship up until 2002 when it was incorporated.

**d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.**

The ownership history of Secret Studios is as follows:

1982 to 1983	Ian Cartmill
1983 to 1986	David Mighel
1986 to 2002	Greg McKee (legally changed his name to Happy Sanchez in 1997)
2002 to Present	Happy Sanchez and Dino Ropalidis

**e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business**

**prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Although Secret Studios was established in 1982 under a different ownership, it has been under the ownership of Greg McKee aka Happy Sanchez since 1986, over 30 years ago.

**f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.**

The historic resource status of the building at 2200 Cesar Chavez Street is classified by the Planning Department as Category B, Unknown / Age Eligible, with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act.

## **CRITERION 2**

**a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.**

Since the days of the Barbary Coast, San Francisco has been at the forefront of performing arts and entertainment. In the 1850s, San Francisco was home to the first opera companies on the West Coast. One hundred years later, San Francisco figured prominently in counter culture scene and was the center of the free spirited 1960s. A lot of great music grew out of this era, launching the careers of The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Janis Joplin to name a few. This also established the city as a place that would give rise to many other popular up and coming musical genres including Latin rock (Santana, Malo), hardcore metal (Metallica, Testament), punk rock (Dead Kennedys, Flipper), alternative rock (Sheryl Crow, Train) and classic rock (Huey Lewis, Journey). Each one of the musical acts mentioned above as well as countless others started off as unknown artists working countless hours creating and rehearsing their material. Secret Studios has provided the San Francisco and Bay Area music community the space they need to work on their craft, cultivate their creativity and realize their dreams.

**b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?**

Because of the close proximity to San Francisco's Mission district, Secret Studios has been involved behind the scenes providing rehearsal space and donating equipment to Carnival for over 30 years.

In August of 1989, Secret Studios was the location for the very first "Rock & Roll Fantasy Camp" that was organized by Gilbert Klein, who was also the owner of Rock & Bowl on Haight Street. The Camp featured huge rock stars like Mick Fleetwood and Gene Simmons from Kiss.

In 2011, the 2 hourly rehearsal rooms at Secret Studios were used for the "call back" auditions of the popular NBC program "The Voice."

**c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?**

On February 1, 2011, the Bay Guardian published “Landmark to Loudness – Happy Sanchez keeps the secrets beneath the noise of Secret Studios” written by Ryan Prendiville:

<https://sfbgarchive.48hills.org/sfbgarchive/2011/02/01/landmark-loudness/>

**d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?**

Notable Secret Studios clients include: Jerry Garcia, Mick Fleetwood, Sly Stone, Gene Simmons, Jerry Cantrell, James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett, Cliff Burton, Robert Trujillo, Jello Biafra, East Bay Ray, D.H. Peligro, Klaus Flouride, Pink, Toots Hibbert, Tito Puente, Michael Franti, Chris Isaak, Paul Collins, Jane Wiedlin, Sara Bareilles, Michael “Fat Mike” Burkett, Aaron “El Hefe” Abeyta, Don Was, Mickey Thomas, Craig Chaquico, Joe Louis Walker, Roddy Bottum, Billy Gould, Mike Bordin and Brain (a legendary Bay Area drummer).

**e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?**

Over the past 35 years, Secret Studios has provided space for neighborhood 12-step meetings. The business has also provided rehearsals hourly rehearsal space for the Latin Jazz Youth Ensemble of San Francisco.

**f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.**

Because of the density of San Francisco’s housing, the traditional “garage band” is not practical. Secret Studios’ typical clients back in the 1980s and early 1990s were San Francisco residents that were leading more artistic and alternative lifestyles – best described as individuals who had ample time to play music their music, including the freedom to go on tour for extended periods of time. These clients were typically self-employed or working at lower paying jobs such as baristas, bartenders, retail clerks or a doormen at night clubs. Around the late 1990s, the demographics started to shift. Because the emerging tech market was centered in San Francisco and Silicon Valley, there was a huge influx of younger, highly-educated people that had moved to the city. Some of these folks enjoyed playing music during their free time, and thus began the a whole new type of Secret Studios client – well paid individuals who came to play music and hang out, perhaps taking a break from their 10-hour-a-day jobs.

**g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?**

2200 Cesar Chavez Street was the location of the indoor sets for the NBC drama Midnight Caller. The production of this television series took place from 1988 to 1991 in San Francisco.

**h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?**

Secret Studios consists of a community of 800 to 1,000 local musicians and performers. Due to the rising cost of doing business in San Francisco, the amount of workspace geared towards creative endeavors such as rehearsing and recording has probably shrunk by over 500 percent since the 1980s. A lot of the buildings in neighborhoods like South of Market and the Mission that were affordable and available in the 1980s and 1990s became home to start up tech companies in the late 1990s that were able to pay exuberant amounts of money to set up shop there. Ultimately, the transition in the use of these spaces – from local music scene to heavily funded tech – really hurt the local musicians that had been living on shoestring budgets and could not afford to compete with multi million dollar corporations.

Secret Studios had the good fortune to be situated in an area of San Francisco zoned as IPZ or Industrial Protected Zone. At the beginning of the 2000s, San Francisco was hit by a wave of business loft construction. Commercial real estate Investors began buying up empty lots and distressed or undervalued properties in San Francisco's industrial and warehouse neighborhoods, tearing down existing structures and constructing multi unit lofts for small businesses. Fortunately, the City and County of San Francisco saw where this was going and put a restriction on any building of this type in and around the area that Secret Studios is situated, thus protecting it from this type of commercial real estate speculation. This for now, unless there are any zoning changes, Secret Studios is safe.

If anything were to happen and Secret Studios were to shut down, there would be a tremendous negative impact on the musical community of San Francisco. There are definitely few alternatives to the services that Secret Studios provides due to lack of rehearsal spaces in San Francisco.

### **CRITERION 3**

#### **a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.**

Secret Studios features quality rehearsal rooms and courteous, professional service. The business accommodates musicians' needs with both hourly and monthly rentals available, in double-walled, spacious rooms. Secret Studios is open from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 a.m., 7 days a week, 365 days a year. For safety, Secret Studios has a manager present during business day hours, and a security guard is on duty during night hours. Security cameras were recently installed to ensure the safety of the facility and equipment. The current location, 2200 Cesar Chavez, offers over 80 parking spaces in a gated lot as well as plenty of street parking. Features of the business are as follows:

- Two Hourly Space Rentals
- 130 Monthly Space Lockouts
- Private Parking
- Central Location – Easy Freeway Access off of Highway 101
- Audio Recording and Virtual Video Streaming Services Available
- Music Accessories
- Stages w/ Risers
- Colored Stage Lighting

- Mirrors
- Storage
- Music Equipment Rentals
- Recording Equipment Rentals
- Lounge with Café Style Seating and Vending Machines

Secret Studios has established itself as a place where musicians and performers, recording studio engineers and producers, songwriters and music teachers can work on their creative endeavors in a private soundproofed environment that is clean, safe and free of any outside distractions. Secret Studios has worked hard to support the local music community by keeping the atmosphere and physical surroundings free of any racism, sexism and political views. Secret Studios has strived to create an environment of inclusion and freedom of thought and expression, as long as it is peaceful.

**b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)**

Secret Studios is committed to maintaining its historical tradition as a place for local San Francisco and Bay Area musicians and performers to create, perform and record music.

**c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).**

Secret Studios consist of small private individual studios (average size: 14'wide x 18'long x 10' high) laid out in a grid like fashion inside of a larger warehouse. The studios are all designed and built with double walls to insure adequate soundproofing between rooms. Every bit of the public access space including all hallways and the parking lot have security cameras – safety and security is the most important feature because each studio contains thousands of dollars of musical equipment. The parking lot adjacent to the building with enough parking to accommodate 80 vehicles and thanks to Lyft and Uber, a lot of the clientele rideshare to and from their rehearsal space. The San Francisco building department has reviewed and approved all of the construction. All of the rooms contain fire sprinklers and the building has ample Fire Department-approved emergency exits.

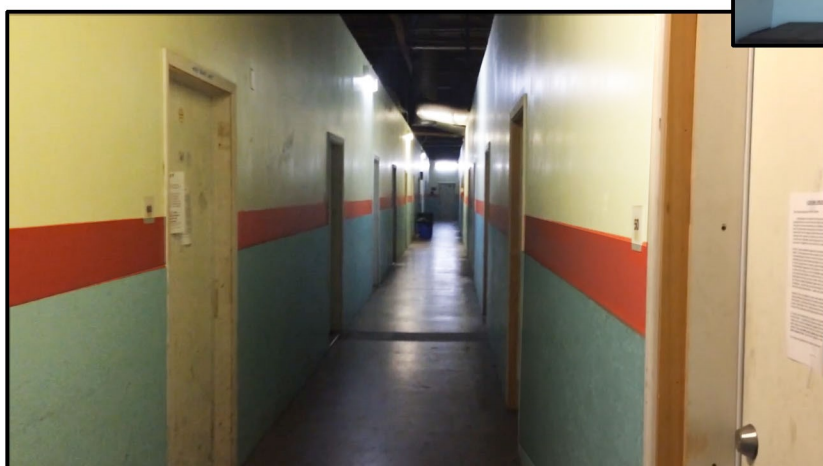
**d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Not applicable.



**Secret Studios, located at  
2200 Cesar Chavez St, SF**  
 <-----

**Entrance to the building**  
 ----->



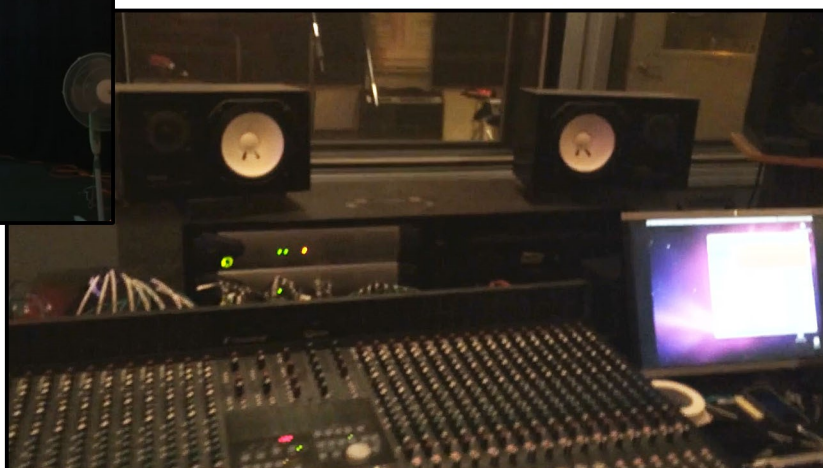
**One of many hallways with  
 <----- monthly studios**

**Hourly rehearsal studio**  
 ----->



**Green screen and streaming  
 <----- studio**

**One of Five recording studios  
 within the facility** ----->



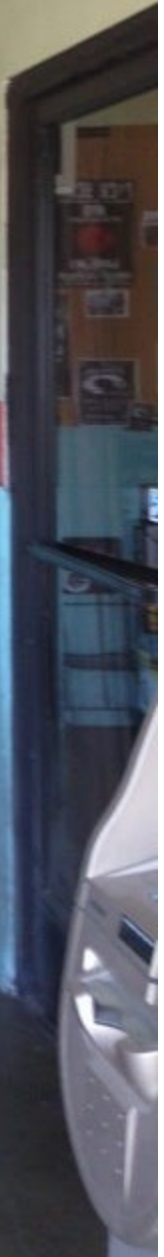




# SECRET STUDIOS

San Francisco's #1 Rehearsal Facility

NO  
SMOKING









# Landmark to loudness

Happy Sanchez keeps the secrets beneath the noise in Secret Studios

By Ryan Prendiville  
arts@sfbg.com

**MUSIC** Happy Sanchez's office is above the cafe, by the entrance. There are only a couple of windows. One opens onto the parking lot, where a car alarm blares during our interview. The other is dark; below it are the building's two hourly rehearsal rooms. Aside from the vibration of a double bass revving, we're cut off from the activity going on at Secret Studios. As the owner, Happy makes up for this isolation with a wall of closed-circuit TVs showing the hallway and common areas tying the Studio's 130 monthly rehearsal spaces together.

"Mostly it's just about dealing with the headaches of running a business," Sanchez says. The headaches, when your clients are all musicians, can be numerous. Bands arrive at 2 a.m., fresh from a gig, and decide to toss utility carts down the stairs. People try to smoke inside, piss in the parking lot, live in their units. Watch out for speed freaks. Make sure women aren't being harassed. "Sometimes I feel like I'm the principal of the school," Sanchez says.

Sometimes it's just plain traumatic. "The one thing that upset me the most, this fucking guy was pissed at his girlfriend, took her cat, put it in the [rehearsal] room, and left it for weeks. Fucking poor cat was skin and bones by the time the girlfriend came and asked me to look for it. Most I've ever been upset at anyone. He was banned."

"But most of the time people are pretty cool," Sanchez is quick to add. "The people who are on the lease are level-headed. It's always the friend or the guy that's just hanging out that makes problems." There is reason for me to doubt this statement, having just heard Sanchez tell another story about being held up at gunpoint by a rapper who wants his demo tape. But I'm still inclined to believe him, given the sheer number of clients he's come in contact with in the 25 years since he took a job as a

studio manager at Secret Studios, back when it was a small two-room operation.

At the time, Secret, like most of the studios in town, was about hourly rehearsal and recording space. The two units of Secret Studios were originally at Third St., before a mid-1980s move to 215 Napoleon St. in a building with lots of neighbors. "Mostly we did a lot of punk rock recordings, back in '87," Sanchez remembers. "This guy David [Pollack], who I later bought the studio from, at the time I was just working for him and he set me up with all these gigs." They'd rent the place out for parties, for extra money. "Metallica rented it, back in the days when I guess they were big in Europe but they weren't really that big, yet. Before the Black Album [1991's *Metallica*] came out, when they blew up."

Those involved in Secret during the Napoleon Street era attempted to confine major sessions to nighttime, but it eventually became clear — as the neighbors bitched — that a different location was needed. After the owner sold the business to Sanchez ("Basically, he gave it to me at minimal cost"), he was able to expand and then move into 50 units at the current location on 2200 Cesar Chavez St. The large warehouse with a single floor of small rooms was previously the sound stage for the talk radio TV drama *Midnight Caller*.

Sanchez credits some of his success to timing. "I got in at the right time. It's just more expensive to build nowadays. People have tried to build big studios like this and it's just not affordable anymore. They see it as easy money, but it's not easy to pull off."

One person who tried — and succeeded — was Greg Koch, who developed the nearly 180-unit Downtown Rehearsal in 1992. Earlier, Sanchez had passed on its Third Street location. "It was shady at night when most of my clients would be around," he says. "That building was cheap, though. They couldn't give it away."

Downtown was a major competitor until the summer of 2000, when Koch attempted to evict all



Secret Studios' Happy Sanchez on running a music rehearsal space: "The people who are on the lease are level-headed. It's always the friend or the guy that's just hanging out that makes problems."

GUARDIAN PHOTO BY BEN HOPFER

of his tenants without notice in an attempt to flip the property for a huge profit. In the process, he instigated a musical community revolt, resulting in a large cash settlement and the formation of a then-hopeful, now apparently stagnant non-profit, SoundSafe. At the time of the turmoil, Secret Studios was still expanding to its current size of 130 units. "I basically opened my units and saw a huge influx of bands," Sanchez says.

Sanchez has had many models for what Secret Studios should — and shouldn't — be. He recalls that Francisco Studios, a Turk Street basement space, had a bathroom out of *Trainspotting*. He's quick to admit that since he's taken over the business, there have been mistakes and failures. A plan to start the International DJ Academy in the front offices of the building, with a partner who managed Invisibl Skratch Piklz, fizzled. "They never could quite get it off the ground," he says. "It was a good concept, but I think they needed someone to run it as a business." Along with a rap studio that was going at the time, the academy devolved into something that included a barber shop and a night club before Sanchez had to shut it down.

Which, technically, makes two rap studios Sanchez had to end. Back in the late 1980s, at Secret's old location, there was a lot of money to be made from hip-hop. "These rappers were coming in and

you could pretty much just charge them anything," Sanchez says. "I think there was always the drug dealer in the background financing it. I swear, we had like three clients over time that got murdered. The first time it was kind of a shock. They found the guy in a trunk in Oakland. The second guy got murdered on the night of the earthquake in 1989. The scene just got too crazy. Gangster rap came out, and the whole vibe changed. It got really hardcore." After a hold-up occurred at the studio and an expensive keyboard was stolen, Sanchez stepped away from the rap game in 1991.

Many artists have come through Secret Studios, but it's not something Sanchez brags about. In part this stems from his respect for overall security, a high priority when theft is a concern. But it also has to do with his respect for confidentiality. The music business exposed him to a lot of drugs in the '80s, and he himself struggled with addiction. From 1989 until 1992, he hosted a Narcotics Anonymous gathering — the Straight Edge Rockers meeting — in the studio on Sunday nights. "There were a couple people there that you would definitely know their names," he says. "I'm actually thinking about getting it going again. It's not as easy to pull off, but I always thought that meeting was so cool. There are a lot of people in the music industry that need that."

Sanchez is desensitized to star-

dom. He'll say that no one really big has ever been at Secret Studios, then rattle off a long list of names: the Dead Kennedys, Michael Franti, the Go-Gos, EPMD, Romeo Void, Chris Isaak, Mike Pistel, Toots Hibbert. Some of these connections are long relationships, some are incidental. MC Hammer rehearsed at Secret before he was big (but had the parachute pants). Gene Simmons came down in a limo.

Sanchez is happy with his success so far and grateful for the freedom to be a musician with a stable business. With another 10 years on the lease (which he hopes to extend to when his two-and-a-half-year-old son reaches adulthood), he's satisfied with assuming a more administrative role at Secret. He does the books, handles the day-to-day issues, and makes his own music, composing for movies and television as the Latin Soul Syndicate.

For a lot less drama, Sanchez is a little less in the know about his clients and their role in the scene of the moment. A while ago, for example, he needed to contact a band about a bill. But the band was on tour, and he was referred to its business manager. He went online to look it up. He had no idea who the band was until he Googled "The Dodos" and a video popped up showing the band playing on *The Late Show with David Letterman*. **SFBG**

www.secretstudios.com

# Secret Studios

Professional Rehearsal Facility

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## Home

### About Us

Since 1982, Secret Studios in San Francisco, California, has offered musicians the space they need with **quality rehearsal rooms** and courteous, professional service. We've accommodated our musicians' needs, with both **hourly and monthly rentals** available, in **double-walled**, spacious rooms.

Secret Studios is open from **10 a.m. until 4 a.m., 7 days a week, 365 days a year**. For your safety, Secret Studios has a Manager present during business day hours, and a **Security Guard** is on duty during night hours. We've recently installed security cameras to ensure the safety of the facility and your equipment.

Our current location, **2200 Cesar Chavez** (Army Street to us locals!), offers over **80 parking spots** in a gated lot as well as plenty of **street parking**. Our location is conveniently located in the **Mission District** (close to excellent taquerias for when you break) and off **Highway 101**.



### Contact Information

#### Secret Studios

2200 Cesar Chavez St.  
San Francisco, CA 94124

**Phone:** 415-821-1957

#### Business Hours:

10 a.m.-4 a.m., 7 Days a Week

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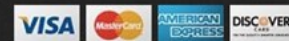
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David C. On 05.31.2012

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## Services

Secret Studios in San Francisco, California, has 24-hour security, so you can rest assured that your gear is secure when you're not around. We also provide carts to load in and out, and if you happen to get hungry or break a string or a stick while you're practicing, you can visit our snack and accessories shop.

- Hourly Space Rentals
- Monthly Space Lockouts
- Professional Rehearsal Facility
- Private Parking
- Central Location - Easy Freeway Access off of Highway 101
- Audio Recording Services Available
- Music Accessories
- Stages
- Risers
- Mirrors
- Storage
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- Recording Equipment Rentals



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## By The Hour

### Facilities Per Hour

Secret Studios in San Francisco, California, offers a 24'x24' hourly rehearsal room that includes a 12'x24' stage with an 8'x8' drum riser, 8-channel PA with two main speakers and separate monitor mix, and three SM58 microphones with stands. There are mirrors across from the stage. Equipment rental is available. The hourly schedule for Secret Studios is as follows:

- 11 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. -Morning Slot
- 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. - Afternoon Slot
- 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. -Evening Slot
- 9:30 p.m. – 12:30 a.m. -Night Slot

The price for a 3-hour block is \$45. You may call to find out if a certain slot is available, but you may only book a slot over the phone if you are on file. If you are not on file, you must come down to the studio and prepay your first rehearsal.



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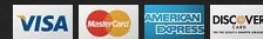
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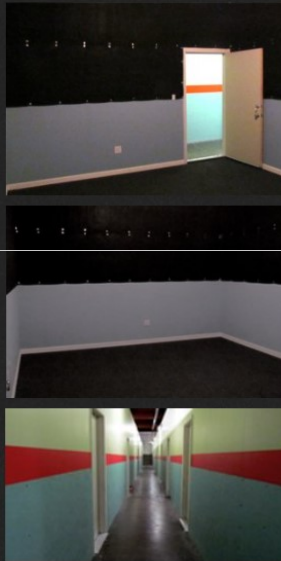
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## Facilities Per Hour

Currently, Secret Studios has monthly spaces available. Contact us at 415-821-1957 for more information.



## What Musicians Can Expect:

- High-Quality Soundproof Rooms and Professional Service
- Reasonable Monthly Rates (Starting at Approximately \$650 Per Month)
- Plenty of Private Parking
- Convenient City Location
- 24-Hour Security Guard and Surveillance Cameras
- Carts for Easy Load-in of Gear
- Acoustically Treated Rooms for Great Sound

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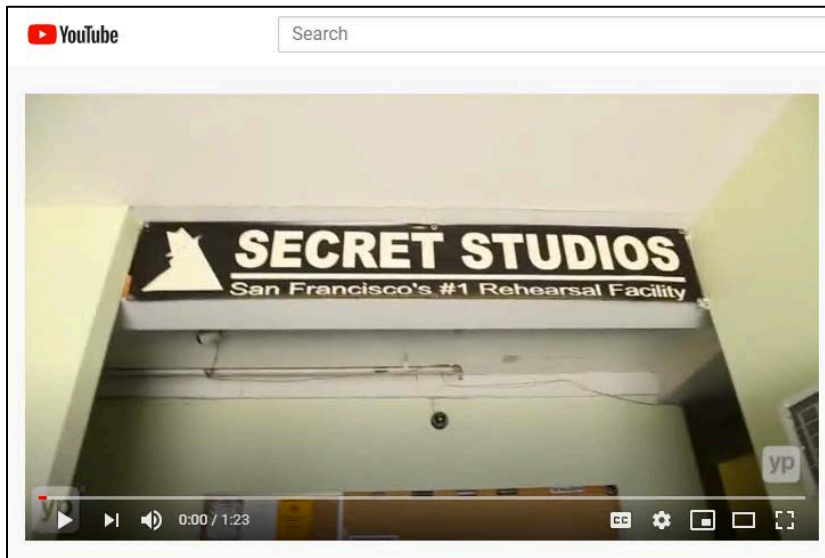
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# VIDEO



## Secret Studios | Rehearsal Space | San Francisco, CA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hESKOefxijE>

Published on Jul 19, 2012

Posted by [yellowpages](#)

"Secret Studios is located in San Francisco, CA. They are a professional rehearsal facility that has been serving bay area musicians for over 25 years. Since 1982, Secret Studios has offered musicians the space they need with quality rehearsal rooms and courteous, professional service. They have accommodated their musician's needs with both hourly and monthly rentals available in double-walled spacious rooms. Visit us at <https://www.yellowpages.com/san-francisco-ca/mip/secret-studios-453693383?lid=1001764361293>."