

“Whether clients are new or old, my approach is more consultative than transactional.”

You've played music professionally. How did that lead to high-end audio?

I made my fair share of money in my younger days playing in several bands. My wife has been totally supportive of my music; however, I realized one day that I hadn't played for a couple years, having pursued a career in electronics. I also realized I wasn't hearing certain instruments in the tracks I was playing. Tambourines and cowbells were lifeless, congas lacked texture, and resonances were lost. While performing, I was focused on the technical aspects of the music, and all those things were present; however, when I was listening to my system, it seemed that my mind was filling in the missing instruments. The search began for better sound.

How did being a musician inform your career in audio?

There were piano lessons in my youth, and then drums in hard rock and R&B bands for 11 years, where I developed a keen awareness of the sound of instruments. The percussive attack of the hammers in the piano, cymbal sustain, resonances and textures of my drum kit were very apparent to me. I still have friends who perform professionally. Some are recording engineers (one has a Grammy); two others play and also own a company that manufactures studio electronics. Through them I understand the processes, and attending live music keeps me connected. I look for products that can deliver the natural reproduction of instruments—acoustic or electric. This has always been one of my criteria for choosing products to represent.

How would you describe your approach in working with clients, new and old.

Whether clients are new or old, my approach is more consultative than transactional. The goal is to understand the client's listening habits, music preferences, current equipment, and sonic goals. I prefer to work with individuals who desire a relationship to guide them. My ideal client understands that my experience and exposure to multiple products can lead to



more long-term satisfaction than those dealers who simply take a transactional approach to building a system. I want to assist the client in making an investment with a holistic approach. This is much less expensive in the long run.

How did you come to call your business "The Voice That Is"?

When trying to find a name, I wanted to honor my wife somehow and looked for something personal. *Our* song is "My One and Only Love," as sung by Johnny Hartman. I committed to that thought and chose the name from his album *The Voice That Is*. I admit the name doesn't make you think audio, let alone music; however, it does make people ask, and I take that opportunity to give them an elevator pitch.

What are the unique challenges that high-end dealers face today?

Dealers today face the challenges of online sales; manufacturers selling direct to consumers; etc. I believe there is serious erosion in the perception of the value a good dealer can bring a customer, what that dealer's role can be, and how he should be fairly compensated. I recall an editorial by Robert Harley—"Your System's Most Important Component" [*From*

the Editor, Issue 271—RH]. The first few paragraphs pretty much touch on this. I receive calls, some internationally, asking for guidance, based on my reputation and experience. I get requests for help with repair on used products purchased elsewhere. The challenge for me comes when I am solicited for my experience, sincerely engage the caller as a potential client, try to earn his business, only to have him disappear and purchase elsewhere. I feel this is rampant in our industry.

What is the key to being a successful dealer?

I believe being prudent with product choices, being consistent with those choices, having a good working relationship with manufacturers, maintaining margins, and, most importantly, openly and honestly communicating with the client. I believe that we must avoid the race to the bottom at all cost. If all dealers focused on these things, especially maintaining margins, we would maintain a healthy livelihood and the ability to provide quality service to our clients.

Name a few of your favorite "desert island" recordings.

Man, that's a hard one because there are so many. Off the top of my head: Weather Report...if not all of them, I'll settle for a *Best Of*. Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*. John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman. Gerald Albright, *Slam Dunk*. Horace Silver, *Song for my Father*. Herbie Hancock, *Maiden Voyage*. Yellowjackets, *The Spin*. Marcus Miller, *Silver Rain*. Oliver Nelson, *Blues and the Abstract Truth*.

Outside of audio, what do you do for fun?

I love golf and have played over 225 different courses in the world (I collect logo balls from each course). I also love to travel with my wife—camera in hand.

What inspires you about your work?

The many times people call or write to tell me they appreciate my efforts. Especially gratifying are the calls from clients to tell me they continue to enjoy the system we built together.

