

# VINYL "RULED" AT 111TH AUDIO ENGINEERING SOCIETY CONVENTION

During the recently ended Convention of the Audio Engineering Society, November 30 through December 3rd at the Javits Center in New York City, the Historical Committee of the AES hosted an exhibit featuring a working analog recording studio based on equipment of the 50's, 60's and 70's with guest presentations by some of the biggest names in audio engineering. It turned out to be a huge draw among the convention participants, most of whom attended the convention to see the latest in gear and techniques.

"When Vinyl Ruled" had a room to itself, just off the main convention floor, near the entrance. On display were two-track and three-track analog tape recorders, a vacuum tube, hand-built mixing console and, as a key attraction, a fully restored and operating Neumann disc cutting system.

The first day of presentations started with veteran engineer Al Grundy, demonstrating various aspects of analog disc cutting. He was followed by Joe Tarsia (who created the Philly Sound and made the reels spin for "The Spinners"). The presentations concluded with four veterans of Bell Sound, who described the time when that independent studio stole the limelight from some of the big record labels.

The second day opened with a presentation on the virtues of analog recording and vacuum tube circuit design by "Mr. Analog", Walter Sear of Sear Sound. Mastering engineer Bob Ludwig of Sterling Sound, Masterdisk and presently, his own Gateway Mastering Studios, outlined some of the problems he encountered creating vinyl masters of some of the biggest hit records. George Massenburg, famed engineer and producer of "Earth, Wind and Fire" and "Little Feat", talked about recording those and other major artists. Finally, David Greene walked us

through the many steps it takes to make successful direct-to-disc recordings and live-to-two-track recording.

The third day opened with classical music veterans Jack Renner, Max Wilcox and John Woram in a panel moderated by producer Judy Sherman. Excerpts were played of recordings they had made in Boston's Symphony Hall and other venues. In the afternoon Sid Feldman talked about how vinyl records were manufactured. He accompanied his talk with slides taken during his own days of mastering Lp records. He was followed by Eddie Kramer, whose work with the Rolling Stones, Led Zepplin and Jimi Hendrix changed the shape and sound of modern rock. Mr. Kramer talked about working with those and other legends. The third day wrapped up with presentations on 1970's Latin sounds by Bernard Fox, the Museum of Sound Recording by Dan Gaydos, and the art of tuning the listening room by Steven Durr.

The final day of "When Vinyl Ruled" featured a live direct-to-disc recording session. A jazz quartet featuring Rob Aries on keyboards, Bill Harris on saxophone, Terry Silverlight on drums and Dave Anderson on bass were picked up with vintage RCA and Schoeps microphones and mixed through the exhibit's tube console by engineer Robert Auld. The mix was sent to the Neumann lathe and Al Grundy cut discs from the live signal as the musicians played. The discs were then played back, and all present were impressed with the superb fidelity of the recordings.

The final presentation featured veteran engineer Irv Joel recounting his experiences with Capitol Records when stereo was being introduced. Excerpts were played from a stereo demonstration record that featured Irv's recordings of the Staten Island Ferry, railroad trains, and of the Pittsburgh Symphony.

Besides these presentations, throughout the four days of the convention David Baker and Paul McManus played vintage master recordings on the machines that mastered them, and Al Grundy gave further disk cutting demonstrations. The exhibit room was lined with posters featuring advertisements from the 1950's and 60's for the vintage equipment and tools used for recording and editing analog tape.

The entire exhibit was created and staffed by volunteers from the Historical Committee of the AES. The exhibit heads were Irv Joel and John Chester. The first meeting of interested participants was held in May, 2001. According to Irv Joel, "eighteen people showed up for that first meeting. What was most remarkable was the eagerness of each person to offer equipment or services. I didn't have to twist any arms. When I mentioned that we needed something, right away two or three people would say 'I can help with that.'"

The AES Convention was originally scheduled for late September, but had to be postponed because the Javits Center was being used for emergency services following the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center.

We would like to thank The 111<sup>th</sup> Convention Committee and the HQ staff for all their help in making this project possible. Our special thanks goes to Claudia Koal for her part in making the live direct-to-disc recording session happen.

## **THE VINYL CREW**

Robert Auld  
David Baker  
David Bialik  
Jerry Bruck  
Tim Casey  
John Chester  
Bob DeGraw  
Steve Durr  
Sid Feldman  
Bernard Fox  
Dan Gaydos  
Paul Gold

Al Grundy  
Kurt Hulit  
Irv Joel  
Chris Langhart  
Louis Manno  
Elliot Mazer  
Jay McKnight  
Paul McManus  
Don Plunkett  
Roger Rhodes  
Len Schneider  
Walter Sear  
Alan Silverman  
Eric Silverman  
Eric Somers  
Patrick Tamby  
Zoe Thrall

## **MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS**

Albert B. Grundy  
Audio History Library  
Durrell Associates  
Museum of Sound Recording  
Paul McManus  
Vidipax  
Walter Sear

## **WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK**

David Robinson  
Dutchess Community College  
Wes Dooley,  
Emtec Pro Media  
Frank Abbey  
KYW-TV, Magnetic Reference Laboratory  
Julius Konins  
Posthorn Recordings  
Solebury School  
Sprague Magnetics  
The Sandbook Studio,  
Transco Products Corporation  
Western Fumigation Division  
Whirlwind  
Claudia Koal