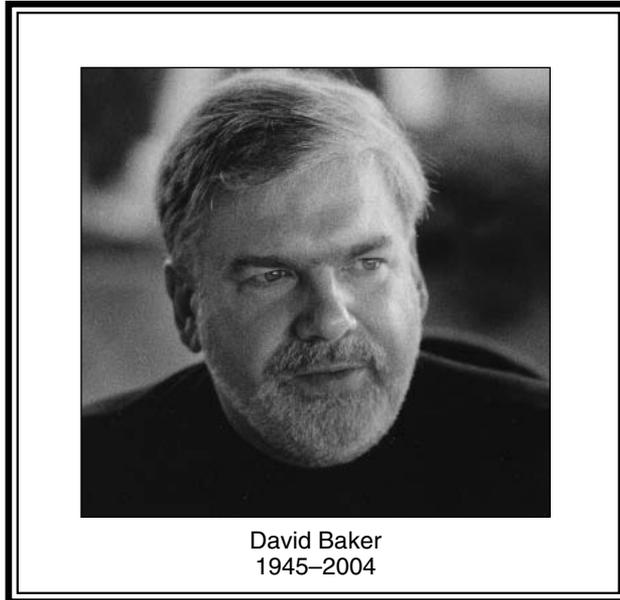


In Memoriam

David Baker, noted jazz audio engineer, valued AES member and friend, died at the age of 58 on July 14, 2004, in Rochester, New York. In the jazz world there are two David Bakers by name: one a leading composer from the University of Indiana and the other an unparalleled engineer. To those of us who knew Baker, there was only one.

David was born into the audio business: his father, Harry, owned Baker Audio in Atlanta. The company specialized in audio installations for home and professionals. David fondly recalled how, as a young boy, his father would take him to public spaces where he was responsible for the public address installation. The pair would stand and listen for a moment to the public address system and its quality. Harry Baker would exclaim to his young son: "That's my sound!" Looking back, I believe, that's where David started his quest to find his own sound.

In the back room at Baker Audio, David began experimenting with an Ampex 600 series tape recorder. His living in the south and his audio explorations would eventually lead to his documenting moments in the civil rights struggle of the 60s. The recordings resulted in the aural history album "Movement Soul," which was released by Folkways. David rarely spoke of his training at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto or at the Institute of Audio Research in New York City, but I am sure he felt that his real education began at the Apostolic Studios, which were a part of Vanguard Records in the 60s and 70s.



At Vanguard, David worked with many of the influential rock and jazz performers of the day. My first sightings of his credit for engineering were on "Introducing Larry Corell and the 11th House" and "Jaco" with Jaco Pastorius, Pat Metheny, and Paul Bley in the mid 1970s. With recordings such as these to his name, he was, in my mind, already a legend. During the early 1980s, David was no longer to me a credit line on a recording but a close and trusted friend. I remember seeing his date book listing his work for a month. There listed in his upcoming work was a *Who's Who* in the world of jazz: Art Blakey, Joe Henderson, Jack DeJohnette, Dave Liebman, Tommy Flanagan, Art Farmer, Elvin Jones, John Abercrombe, Max Roach ... one could only dream of working with musicians of this caliber.

David was always busy and always in demand in the studio. If I knew he was working, I would drop by the studio to watch him work and take a look at his layout of musicians and microphone arrangement. He played a recording studio like a

musical instrument and he was never afraid to let anyone, musicians, technicians, and producers alike, have the benefit of his knowledge. David always remarked that there were no secrets or mystery in audio and anyone who tried to say that there were was a charlatan.

He was also never afraid to have or give his honest opinion. I recently asked producer Michael Cuscuna about pianist Don Pullen's final recording "Sacred Common Ground," which Michael produced and David recorded in Power

Station's Studio C in 1994. He told me this story. The recording was a rather complicated arrangement with Native American drummers and singers, African percussionists, and jazz instrumentalists—all recorded direct to two track. Late in the session, which was early in the morning, around 3 a.m., a tired and confused Don Pullen asked Michael, "What do you think?" Cuscuna replied that he wasn't certain and he turned the question back to Don. Pullen had no idea, either. Don then asked David for his input. "I don't know, Don" was the response from David. He then left the control room to get some air. Don shook his head and said to Michael: "For twenty-five years, he's been giving me his opinion when I never asked for it, and now that I ask for it, he doesn't have one!"

And now that David has left the room, I'd like to hear his opinion one more time.

He is survived by his wife, Kyoko, four sisters, and a couple thousand wonderful recordings.

Jim Anderson