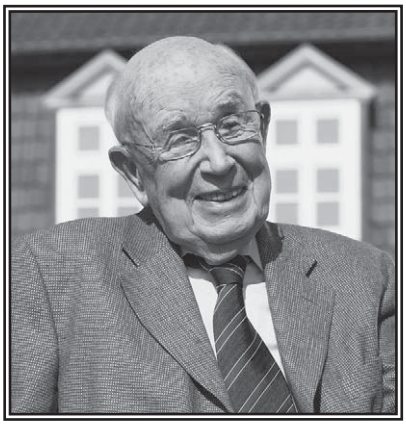
In Memoriam

Bill Porter
1931–2010

On July 7, Bill Porter passed away. More than a great engineer and icon, Bill was a true country gentleman, generous with his knowledge to several generations of audio students. As an engineer, Porter was recognized as the creator of the Nashville Sound, a clean sound that utilized the ambience and equipment in RCA Studio B to develop a technically and aesthetically new approach to recording.

After graduating from East Nashville High School in 1949, Porter served in the Army reserves, then took a job at a local television station in 1955. Porter left his job as audio engineer at WLAC-TV in Nashville in March, 1959, and started working for Chet Atkins at RCA Records. One of his earliest recordings at RCA was "Lonesome Old House" for Don Gibson, after only two months it was a crossover hit that skyrocketed Porter's reputation. Artists and producers started asking for him by name. He went on to record nearly 600 records that charted, 49 top 10 hits, 11 No. 1s, and 37 certified gold records. The majority of these recordings were done at RCA Studio B, a room that Porter had modified acoustically, along with over-tightening the springs on the EMT plate to achieve a brighter and fuller sound. When famed Nashville producer Owen Bradley asked Chet Atkins how he got that sound, he credited Bill Porter. ➥



Fritz Sennheiser
1912–2010

Professor Fritz Sennheiser died on May 17 at the age of 98 at his home in Germany. He was a man of many and very different interests. We all know him as a successful entrepreneur, as well as a splendid engineer and inventor. But more than this, he was a man who loved the arts and music. His most beloved hobby was raising flowers in his greenhouse.

I was lucky to get to know him a little bit in some meetings and on other occasions.

He was a very friendly, openhearted, and relaxed person. He was someone who would always listen to people. And, of course, had a lot of history and stories to tell.

Some years ago, he would still come several times a week into the company offices, which were about 2 km from his home. He came as long as he could, and he would always have time for a talk with everyone on the campus.

The Professor had a huge personal musical library comprised of many different musical styles. He was never involved in recording music. He probably never attended a recording session, although he visited the Deutsche Gramophone several times. The Sennheiser company is close to Hannover, where the recording center of DG was based.

He was a perfectionist, not only with regard to technical things. I believe, that it was exactly his love for perfection in addition to love of the arts ➥

Emil Torick
1932–2010

Emil Torick died on June 19 in his home in Santa Barbara. He was active in the Audio Engineering Society for many years. From 1984 to 2009 he served as president of the AES Educational Foundation, overseeing nearly 200 financial awards to students for graduate studies in audio engineering. He received the AES Distinguished Service Medal in 2009. As AES president in 1977–78 he established the basis for AES technical standards activities and chaired a working group that developed the first standard (for preferred digital sampling frequencies). His other AES awards were the Bronze Medal in 1984, Honorary Membership in 1979, and the Fellowship Award in 1969.

Growing up his major interests were music and science. When it came time for college and career planning he chose music and earned a B.M. degree in violin and organ performance at Duquesne University. Following service in the Korean War, he worked as a freelance musician, and, returning to his interest in science, earned a B.S. degree in physics from the University of Pittsburgh. Later he received an MBA degree from the University of Connecticut. Torick's career in audio engineering began in 1958 when he joined the professional staff of CBS Laboratories (later renamed the CBS Technology Center). It was the beginning of a 28-year associa- ➥

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Porter did groundbreaking work during his time at RCA. In addition to No. 1 hits by Tommy Roe "Sheila," The Everly Brothers "Cathy's Clown," and the Browns "The Three Bells," Porter recorded every No. 1 hit recorded by Elvis Presley following his return from Army service in March 1960, including "It's Now Or Never," "Stuck On You," "Are You Lonesome Tonight," "Surrender," and "Good Luck Charm." During this period Porter also worked at Monument Records, where he recorded all of Roy Orbison's early hits, including "Only the Lonely," "Oh, Pretty Woman," "It's Over," and "Running Scared." Porter also recorded Boots Randolph's "Yakety Sax" and Al Hirt's "Java" at Monument. When he left RCA in 1964 he worked for Columbia for six months, then settled into Monument where he worked until mid 1965 when he accepted a position at MGM Records.

In October of 1966, Porter moved to Las Vegas to work for Bill Putnam as manager of United Recording of Nevada. There he continued to work with Presley, mixing "Suspicious Minds." In January 1970, Porter was called to mix a live show in Las Vegas for Presley, who was so impressed with the sound that he insisted Porter do all of his live shows from that point on. He left United Recording in 1972 to work freelance on live recordings, also working for Ann Margaret and Bob Hope among others.

During this time Porter formed a partnership with Vic Beri called Vegas Music International (VMI), working with such artists as Benny Hester, Sammy Davis Jr., Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66, Gladys Knight & the Pips, Ike & Tina Turner, Danny Thomas, Andy Williams, Harry Belafonte, Paul Anka, Bobby Darin, and Louis Prima.

As Porter continued to freelance, he recorded Barbra Streisand, Sammy Davis Jr., and Diana Ross. By 1980 he had engineered over 7,000 recordings. Porter is the only recording engineer credited by Billboard as having 15 songs on its Top 100 chart all in the same week.

As an educator, Bill Porter authored and ran the Music Engineering program at the University of Miami School of Music from 1976 to 1981, the first program of its kind. In the late 1980s he taught audio engineering and music history at the University of Colorado, Denver, and he taught audio production and music history from 1999 to 2005 at the Webster University School of Communications in St. Louis, both in the Music Department of the Leigh Gerdine College of Fine Arts and in the Audio Production program in the School of Communications.

"Bill was the last of his kind," said Debra Carpenter, dean of Webster University's School of Communication. "We valued him so much. We developed a position for him so he could share his vast knowledge with our students. He was a role model and a living legend for our students. The students learned about warmth of sound from him, and other skills that maybe people perhaps don't consciously hear, but love all the same. But even more than that, with his students and colleagues, he was truly the quintessential Southern gentleman. He passed that respect for others onto his students as well, and that is what made him a joy to work with."

In 2003 Porter won the William T. Kemper Award for excellence in teaching. As the guest speaker at their inaugural event, he was bestowed with a lifetime achievement award from the Student Chapter of the AES at Webster University. Porter was also recognized by his peers. In 1989 he was the first engineer to be inducted into the Audio Hall of Fame, and in 1992 the TEC Foundation inducted Porter into the TEC Awards Hall of Fame.

On a personal note, the first time I met Bill Porter was June 21, 2002, when I interviewed for a teaching position at Webster University. Part of my interview involved teaching a sample class, and I was given Bill's Audio Production II class to teach. Not only was I on a job interview, but I had to explain microphone techniques to a class that included Bill, one of the true masters of this art. Bill was completely gracious and welcoming, and at the end of the class he paid me the finest compliment possible: he turned to the class and said "I hope you paid attention to this guy, because he really knows his stuff." I was impressed by his humility and kindness, and as I got to know him better I realized these traits ran very deep in Bill.

Bill moved from St. Louis to Ogden, Utah in 2005 after his fourth wife, Mary, passed away. He and Mary had been married for decades and they were devoted to each other. Her death took a toll on his health. He remarried in Utah in 2006. Bill is survived by his wife Carole, a brother, sister, and his two children.

Gary Gottlieb

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and technology that led to his close association with tonmeisters, producers, and musicians. Products like the famous MD 421, MD441, and especially the MD 409 could only be developed in an atmosphere that was based and formed by a man like Professor Fritz Sennheiser. It is this magical, collaborative atmosphere that nurtured the development of these classical mikes.

Prof. Fritz Sennheiser gave his employees as much freedom and responsibility as possible. This tradition has been continued by his son, Prof Joerg Sennheiser. This is one of the key features and reasons for the vast potential of innovation and the general openminded atmosphere at Sennheiser worldwide.

This atmosphere has been encouraged throughout the company from the beginning till today. The sons of Prof. Joerg Sennheiser, Andreas and Daniel, are now involving themselves in the management of the company. And they are driven by the same spirit that has characterized the company from the beginning.

Through his hard work and his broad treasure of interests and knowledge, Prof. Fritz Sennheiser laid the foundations for the production of a vast array of products, by which very many people in audio and related

Fritz Sennheiser

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fields can solve their daily tasks in a professional and creative way. Sennheiser's contribution to wireless audio transmission was and is still outstanding. His professional view of things did not stop at the measurability of these affairs. He looked much further, beyond the limits of measurability, This is something, that we should all keep in our hearts. Thank you Professor Fritz Sennheiser. Farewell.

Gregor Zielinsky

(Also see www.sennheiser.com for more information.)

Emil Torick

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tion, which resulted in more than 60 technical publications and 16 U.S. patents. He was named CBS vice president for audio technology and became responsible for leading all advanced audio and acoustics research for the CBS Radio and Television Divisions, CBS Records, and the CBS Musical Instruments Division. When the CBS Technology Center was closed in 1986, he became president of Broadcast Technology Partners, an organization established to license technical improvements in FM radio. Later he served as consultant to such clients as the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). He represented the Eureka-147 Consortium of fourteen government and industrial organizations from four European countries in the FCC Inquiry on digital audio broadcasting. He served in numerous industry standardization activities, and under Department of State auspices was for twelve years the U.S. Chairman of CCIR Study Group on sound broadcasting.

Emil was a popular and respected man, with a wry sense of humor. At conventions he was always promoting the work of the AES Educational Foundation, and bringing his expertise and experience to workshop panels on broadcast topics. He will be sorely missed in the audio world.