

Obituaries

Phil Ramone 1934–2013



It's very difficult to sum up six decades of a great man's career in a few paragraphs. In Phil Ramone's case, it's impossible. His body of work is unparalleled. And

yet he was always striving for more. He famously said "when I go, don't tell anyone...I'd still like to get the calls." For Phil, everything and everyone revolved around the music. Apart from his family, music was the most important thing in his life. He was a mentor to anyone and everyone. For the raw recruits that he hired at his famed A&R Recording Studios in New York City, he was also a father figure. He would never hesitate to share his knowledge, both professional and personal, and always stressed that you must pass it on. Phil was not only beloved by the people he taught but also by the artists with whom he made music. His legacy includes hundreds of hit singles and seminal albums, music that will be enjoyed forever.

Phil was a founding member of the METAlliance, our small group of industry professionals dedicated to insuring the highest standards of audio production. Phil was a transcendently competent technologist who could make it all look easy... to merge the artistry and technology and make it all transparent. You never saw him sweat, not even when he had to face Frank Sinatra's manager.

Phil showed that what we do as music producers and engineers is an improvable, if not perfectible process, where one would strive to craft sound recordings

with imagination and strength of sonic imagination, each of which would be shepherded by record men and women to a willing and hungry market. Today's sound is too often a one-trick pony—crushed, turned up past eleven. Phil worked tirelessly to tweak, one by one, the problems that isolate a listener from the artistry, the extraordinary power, the broad reach, and the magic of great music.

In our group we had the honor and privilege to work with Phil, to stand and voice our mutual passion. His voice brought the weight and value that only someone of his stature could offer.

Whether it was to professionals, students, or innocent bystanders, he tried emphatically to convey what we all need to know. Music is much, much too valuable to turn into just a careless, saleable commodity. Our love and respect for Phil came not only from his love and passion for the art, but through our journey as friends, partners and truly brothers. He tutored and shared his knowledge without boundaries. He was genuine. He cared.

He will always be with us, always be our mentor, always be our friend.

Sincerely and with our love,
Chuck Ainlay, Ed Cherney,
Frank Filipetti, George Massenburg,
Jim Pace, Elliot Scheiner, Al Schmitt

Editors's note: Phil Ramone received the AES Fellowship Award in 2007 and the AES Gold Medal in 2011. He gave the Heyser Memorial Lecture in 2009 in New York at the AES 127th Convention. The AES Oral History—Phil Ramone "Music Production"—is available at <http://www.aes.org/historical/oral>.

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