



SPOT ON SOUND

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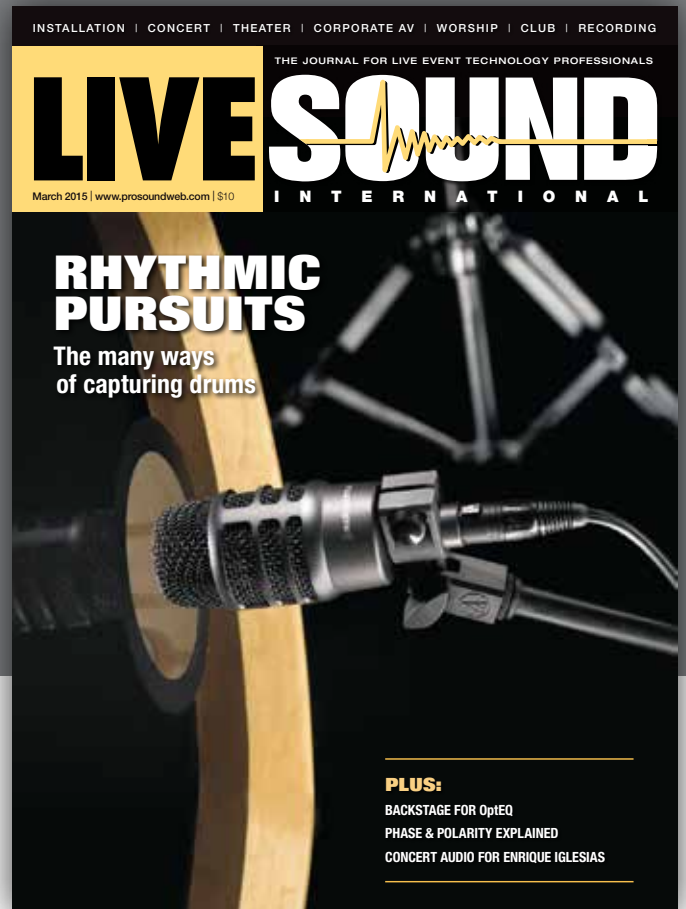
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MAGAZINE ARTICLE**

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As featured in the March 15' issue of **Live Sound International**, Spot on Sound Productions is honored to have been highlighted in their “**In Profile**” segment. Dedicated to the art and science of sound reinforcement, LSI is one of the most trusted publications in the sound reinforcement and production industry.

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IN PROFILE: SPOT ON SOUND

Combining varied interests to build a growing business. *by Kevin Young*

FOR JOHN VEIT, founding a sound company a couple of years ago wasn't just an opportunity to launch a new phase in his career, but a chance to combine the skills he'd developed in dramatically different settings over his professional life.

Spot On Sound, located in Longmont, CO, places an emphasis on artistry; a product of Veit's experience as a professional bass player with roughly 3,000 gigs to his credit. Over time, he's also brought his engineering background to bear on a career in technical support/sales at companies handling high-end IT integrations throughout Europe, Asia and the U.S. in the financial, commercial and health care sectors.

"I'm now in my early 50s, and I've got 15 to 20 years in me to really 'hump it,' but I wanted take my artistic background, my technical expertise and business skills and roll them into one offering," he explains. "That's what we've done with Spot On Sound."

The company name, Veit notes, comes from a phrase he picked up during his travels. "For seven or eight years I spent a considerable amount of time in London, and when things are done absolutely correctly, the British say, 'That's spot on!'"

That's reflected in his and partner (and wife) Maggie's approach to their business. "When I talk to clients, I don't talk about the equipment," Veit says. "I talk about providing a solution to a problem and allow them to focus purely on their vision while we help out with not only production, but logistics."

To that end, Spot On Sound seeks to go beyond providing technology and get involved in every aspect of the event to

ensure the client's vision is realized on budget, and even – if necessary – help in finding sponsors for an event in order to provide clients with an experience they may not be able to afford on their own.

"We're a sound production company," he continues, "but we employ what I prefer to call a 'production integrator model for the music and entertainment industry,' and that's resonated with a lot of people in the short time we've been in business."

COST OF ENTRY

Veit approached the launch of the new venture in the way many start-ups take to building their brand: investing in marketing and articulating clearly the benefits Spot On Sound provides for the corporate, concert and house of worship markets. "That was the cost of entry," he says. "I did that before I even got out the door."

His initial goal was to create a full-service sound reinforcement, lighting, video, staging and backline provider for what he determined to be an underserved market – 200- to 2,000-capacity venues and events in the Denver region – and offer clients a compelling value proposition. That prompted interest from not only his target market, but with far larger venues and events, some of which attracted between 15,000 and 20,000 people. "My business model, however, didn't involve investing a million dollars in capital in equipment and then having to refresh that again in five years," he notes. Instead, Spot On Sound partners with other regional providers when additional infrastructure and gear is required, and ultimately formalized some of those relationships in



John and Maggie Veit at one of Spot On Sound's Allen & Heath consoles.

2014 in creating Talent Production and Logistics (TPL) – a talent acquisition, production management/event planning company and a partnership between Spot On Sound, Marquee Event Solutions and Pat Emerine Productions.

"It's a one-stop shop," Veit says, "like a general contractor for the event industry." The idea is to draw on each partner's strengths in providing more 'bang for the buck' for clients in bringing a level of resources to the table that opens up larger events and markets.

"Right now we're in growth mode," he states. "I would say about 80 percent of the events we do on our own with our existing gear." Typically, he takes on smaller gigs as an engineer, while larger events are handled by Spot On Sound production manager/engineer Kevin Mitchell. They also recruit additional crew given the particular needs of projects.

Regardless of the scale of an event, one thing Veit believes sets Spot On Sound apart is his personal understanding of the connection between performer and audience, informed by his experiences as working professional musician.

ON THE JOB

Originally hailing from Indonesia, Veit's parents moved to the Netherlands – where he was born – after World War II. "My family all played instruments and my father was a jazz musician who performed in Indonesia, Holland and Germany," he notes. The family relocated to the U.S. in the 1960s when he was nine,



:: In Profile ::



Veit at work with plenty of tools at front of house.

but it wasn't until a family reunion in the Netherlands, five years later, that he actually picked up an instrument.

"It's a funny story. My brother, my uncles, and my father had a jam session. I didn't play, but my uncle sees me tinkering with his Hofner bass. At the end of the day, he said, 'I saw you had some interest in the bass. Why don't you take it home? If you like it and pursue it, it's my gift to you. If not, the next time you visit, bring it back with you.'"

Six months later, Veit's father asked him to sub in for his band's usual bass player, who'd injured his hand. To say he felt woefully unprepared is putting it mildly. He hadn't played much, adding, "and I certainly didn't know any jazz, but my father said, 'don't worry about it, just listen and use your ears.'" He got through the gig but decided it would be his last - until he got paid. It was 75 dollars, and after doing the math and calculating what he could earn on weekends, Veit was motivated and learned, literally, on the job.

Playing regularly by age 16, he continued during his time studying electrical engineering at UMass Lowell. Not a huge fan of his studies, he accepted a gig offered by R&B band The 5th Gear

Band and took to the road, touring with the group for almost a decade.

During that time Veit began developing skills as an audio engineer in exactly the same manner that he'd honed his chops as a player - on the job. "We toured up and down the East Coast in the 80s with a five- or six-piece band and one crew guy who ran lights and sound," he says, "but we didn't have a monitor engineer, so that was me." He quickly noted that even a part of the chain impacts the

enjoyment of a show and heightens the connection between artist and audience, which further motivated his pursuit of engineering and mixing skills. As he simply sums up: "When things sound right, you play better."

COMPLEMENTARY SKILLS

Maggie, on the other hand, has no experience in music or audio. "Our connection was that we both loved to travel and we've been all over the world together," she explains.

Born and raised in New York City, she traveled often, spending a portion of every summer at a family member's farm in Puerto Rico. Later she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at Rider University in New Jersey, studied architectural design overseas, and served as a contracts officer for the U.S. Army in Germany.

Although she stopped working full time to devote her time to raising she and John's two children, she continued to volunteer her time to a variety of nonprofit organizations, churches, hospices and educational institutions, and now serves as a member on three Boulder-area Chambers of Commerce.

The interpersonal skills she brings to the table from this service has been



Some of the company's QSC inventory deployed for "100 Men Who Cook."



a true asset to Spot On Sound, Veit notes. "I'm a sales guy and I may come on somewhat strong at times, whereas Maggie is totally disarming."

Additionally, her extensive contacts within a variety of community, ethnic and municipal organizations have helped to substantially broaden the scope of the company's client base. Networking has been key, leading to gigs such as a five-day event headlined by 2013 Grammy winner Santa La Cecelia for ALEF (Americas Latino Eco Festival board) and the 2014 World Lacrosse Championships at Commerce City's Dick's Sporting Goods Park.

MAKING CHOICES

A primary reason Veit launched Spot On Sound was his dissatisfaction with the quality of sound at gigs he's played at

and attended, large and small, and in part it informs how he's built his equipment stable. "I did a lot of research before buying inventory," he recalls. "Keys are scalability/interoperability, ease of use, and of course, cost and reliability. Basically, I wanted something that I could use for a 125-people show but could easily augment and scale up to a 12,500-person show."

That led him to a package that includes Allen & Heath iLive T112 and Qu-24 consoles and an IDR48 MixRack, as well as a host of QSC loudspeakers and amplifiers, Shure wireless gear, and various lighting and high-definition projection equipment. "With Allen & Heath consoles and Waves plug-ins, I have all of the processing I need. They also provide consistency venue to venue and operator to operator." It's enhanced the company's modular design approach

- systems specifically designed to scale up or down, depending on a given event's requirements.

While the business model has evolved substantially since they began, the long-term goal is to make an impact on a national level and partner with other providers in other markets to do so. Still, Veit insists, "I got into this because of the artistic side, and want to keep a component where I'm mixing the smaller, 1,200 to 1,500-capacity gigs because that's where I get my joy. With a great act and venue, it doesn't matter if they're only playing for 200 people. If everything's clicking and everybody's in the groove, it makes everything else go away." ■

Based in Toronto, KEVIN YOUNG is a freelance music and tech writer, professional musician and composer.

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