

AES KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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Thinking back over my 40 year career, I've been reflecting on all the changes that have happened in our profession. Audio and Film are not new at all. The technology actually began with the daguerrotype in 1837 and the invention of the cylinder recording device in 1877. So this was already an old business that had already undergone many, many changes when I first got involved.

I started out as a filmmaker, upon my return from serving in the military as a combat photographer stationed in Germany. I had settled in the East Village across the street from the Fillmore East, and was active in the underground, off-off-Broadway theater scene. That's where I met many of the refugees from Andy Warhol's Factory, and from those relationships, I ended up making a film called *Ciao Manhattan* (1967-68). The verité style of the film was very much like the documentary style of my combat photography, and was made possible by the new lightweight cameras that had recently become available. While preparing the soundtrack for that film with composer Gino Piserchio, I discovered the Moog synthesizer, and realized this was how to make the soundtrack for the film. It was because that technology existed, I was able to apply it. And because I loved the synthesizer and what it could do, it actually directed the course of my life.

After that project, I left filmmaking behind and was consumed by my new passion – making sound and music using the synthesizer. There were no manuals or textbooks or courses for this. But I learned on my own and became a synthesist – eventually both making music and recording it. At Media Sound (1971), which was founded by the creators of the Woodstock Music Festival, I became the studio synthesist and resident madman. They made TV commercials there, and I created electronic music and sound for the commercials. The night maintenance man there was Malcolm Cecil. We made TV commercials during the day, and Malcolm fixed the studio at night, because all the analog equipment started breaking the minute we turned it on. Malcolm was an excellent jazz musician and we became friends, and in time, we became collaborators and partners. Malcolm taught me how to become a recording engineer, I taught him how to become a synthesist. And together we created Tonto's Expanding Headband – a band with one instrument played by several people at the same time. It's idea whose time has still not come. Eventually, we made a synthesizer album called *Zero Time* for Herbie Mann's label Embryo records played entirely on this huge synthesizer which we called Tonto (The Original Neo Timbral Orchestra) played by Malcolm and me simultaneously.

So what's the significance of this story? Well, it's about how technology makes innovation and creativity possible. If art – to be art – needs an element of originality, new technology can inspire new ideas. My introduction to the brand new technology of the synthesizer while I was making a movie – that event determined what my career would be from that moment on, including the 100s of records and soundtracks I would be part of.

Because the next event in the story was when Stevie Wonder heard about Tonto through an article in Rolling Stone magazine. He came to the studio one evening to meet with Malcolm and me, and never left. He wanted what we had. We would work with him for the next five years.

By the way, Stevie coincidentally came in the nick of time because by then, I needed to be rescued from my day job.

- (Story of the toilet paper commercial – “Make it sound more like a tablecloth.”)

After a year or so, Stevie, Malcolm and I moved to Electric Lady Studios where we completed *Innervisions* and started our next project together. It was a wonderful collaboration. With our help, Stevie brought synthesized electronic music to rhythm and blues, and we became part of the creative music community.

I recently returned to Electric Lady Studios to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the studio. Electric Lady was Jimi Hendrix' studio – the first studio built by an artist for his own use. Even when I was there a few weeks ago, I felt Jimi's presence in the studio. This was a creative, artistic, hip environment, and with Jimi gone – he died two months after the studio was completed – Steve kind of took his place as the artist in residence there. Electric Lady had it all – technology, acoustics, an inspired, totally artistic collaborative space. The studio was an instrument – an extension of the artist's creativity – the studio is as much an instrument as a guitar or a piano. That's where I met John Storky – a friend to this day – who designed Electric Lady and has gone on to build many of the finest studios in the business.

Two years later in 1974, we moved to L.A. because Stevie wanted to be close to Motown Records. The owners of the Record Plant -- Gary Kellgren and Chris Stone -- offered us a home there, which they offered to build to our specifications. So, we brought in John Storky to design it, API delivered a quad console to the Record Plant and we built our first studio with quad monitoring.

- (The brandy and first Earthquake experience story)

The technology of quad came from film sound. So, once again, a new technology became available and turned out to be at the root of all kinds of creative and business developments for me. (You may know, surround audio is a big part of my business today, but I'll get to that a little later. Let's stay in 1974 for now.)

We made “*Superstition*” in quad. And although quad never really flew as a consumer format – because we could never get 4 discrete channels on a 33 1/3 vinyl record, monitoring in quad in the studio changed the sound of my recordings forever. It gave the artist the opportunity to occupy the same space as the music.

- (Quad and how it changed the sound of stereo recordings)
- Where do sounds come from?
- No reverb

Every step of the way, our work was full of technological change, collaboration, driven by creativity and an unconsciousness about the future. We lived in the “now”. Maybe we were high (and lots of times we were), but we were never afraid of change, we never resisted it, we always embraced it.

So, what's happened since 1974, or as I say, What the Hell Happened? The art and craft of film, TV and music have continued to evolve.

Faster and faster – exponentially faster.

Just look at the timeline --

It took over 50 years to get from the cylinder recorder in 1877 to the LP in 1930/31. Another 50 years to get to the CD (1982). But just 10 more years to the .mp3 in 1993, which was the beginning of the end of the record business as we knew it.

Now it speeds up even more: the DVD (with 5.1 encoded) four years later in 1997, the iPod in 2001, Blu-ray in 2006, and now 7.1, 3D for the home, streaming 1080p picture with 5.1 discrete audio. We are now officially in the process of leaving the physical media behind.

Along the way, personal computers and other desktop technology, home studios and the fact that the laptop has become the new folk instrument – much as the clavinet Rhodes piano and acoustic guitar were in the 70s. The home studio built around PC or Mac is really Part I of the democratization of content creation, and has changed our world forever.

- It's like everyone was out of the bleachers and into the playing field
- It sure is democratic. And it's quite noisy out there.

The last 10 years alone have proven that without a doubt we're in the midst of a genuine revolution in music, film and television –

This revolution is not just the media business, but in a more profound way, our entire culture has been in transition on many levels; primarily, in how the role of technology continues to affect our lives – socially, personally and especially in business.

Not only was the way we listen to music revolutionized by the creation and launch of devices such as the iPod in October of 2001 (and iTunes as well in 2003), but technology continued to fundamentally reinvent the very nature of personal, business and social communication in our culture. This happened via what's known as “new media” such as e-mail, Peer-2-Peer, blogs, websites, social media such as MySpace (2003), Facebook (2003), YouTube (2005), Twitter (2006), Wikipedia (2001), Netflix, Hulu, text messaging, viral and guerilla marketing. And now we have all things 'indie', 'Long-Tail' and DIY (Do it yourself). While many of these phenomena are still trying to figure out ways to monetize, what they all have in common is that they were game-changers. They not only changed the way we thought about and experienced entertainment – especially music – but they changed our behavior and relationship to the content and the artists who created it.

No interlocutors, no screening structure. It's democratic, it's on demand, it's one-to-one-to-one...

THAT's What the Hell Happened. And THAT's What the Hell is Happening!

And What's Happening is good and bad... but mostly good.

DEVELOPMENTS

- Web: Personalization. One-to-one. The website knows who you are and presents content and commercial messages based on your interests. Your Friends and fans are there, too, as part of a vast, yet still very personal, word-of-mouth network.
- We've gone from a push business (broadcasting) to a pull business (on demand). People get what they want when they want it – and it's all inside the computer and their set top boxes and hand held devices. (which by the way, can all share the same subscriptions, playlists and content)
- Trending away from quality toward convenience. Consumers want content NOW, so on-demand, streaming and downloading are their convenient choice, even at the expense of quality. But this will be temporary. Improved bandwidth and compression are enabling better and faster delivery. As I mentioned before, for example, Netflix 1080p/5.1 is now a reality. So this is the future – and there's quality in this future.
- It's no longer a mass market. It's a lot of different markets. Narrowcasting v broadcasting.
- Communication advances allow ideas to mingle across distances. Social networking brings people together and allows them to create or join communities. When these advances happen, they happen to many people simultaneously, so many people tend to see the next step forward at the same time. Through social media people find each other. Work with each other through file transfer and Skype.
 - One thing they can't do is touch one another. Can't do everything in the bedroom or the garage.
 - We need to make sure artists have a place to collaborate in – the recording studio.
- iTunes has turned dollars into dimes –
 - (Explain "Dollars Into Dimes" in the world of iTunes.)
 - What's wrong with that? If you only have one great song on your album, that's the song you're going to sell. The consumer will buy 10 songs from 10 different artists instead of 10 songs from one artist. GREAT! But if you have a whole album's worth of wonderful songs, maybe you'll sell the whole album.

BUT SOME ESSENTIAL THINGS HAVE NOT CHANGED

- Music or film – the song or the story – will never be the same as entries on Facebook or Twitter, because they are not created by the public. They depend on the artist. Content is king and never forget it. Because content is king, in our world, our job is either to be an artist or to support the artist. There's a lot to be done by media professionals.
- For the singer, songwriter, filmmaker, do what your heart tells you. You don't need anyone's permission. You can create and publish in one stroke. That's a good thing.
- For the engineer, quality counts. We need to strive for the highest possible quality of creation – so that every bandwidth can be served. (Even though many people are listening on earbuds, others are listening in 7.1 home theatres). The ability to stream high quality is only going to get better. Many people don't even know what high quality is, they've never heard it. The reason that "good enough" is acceptable to the majority is that they've never heard what "great" sounds like. The perception of what the high-resolution surround sound experience offers is that it isn't worth the expense or the inconvenience of making room for more speakers. That couldn't be farther from the truth. There will be a convergence of convenience and high resolution in the future, with more and more people able to access quality
- So the question becomes How do we bring the "great" experience to the masses??? Certainly not by catering to the low-end and outputting source material that only lives up to those low expectations! This is a Top-Down industry, not Bottom-Up! We must continue creating high-quality content offered through high-quality delivery formats or everyone loses. This convenience trend has the potential promote a downward spiral if we let it. But we're not going to let it, are we?

MI CASA

For the past 12 years at my company Mi Casa Multimedia, my partner Brant Biles and I have been making surround for DVD and Blu-ray. Mi Casa has been, in a way, a media-based business. We made contributions to those media, including 5.1 and 7.1 surround. Restoration of audio for film, creating surround soundtracks where none existed and recently the restoration of The Sound of Music in 7.1 surround for 20th Century Fox. We have many major credits which we're proud of. Check out www.micasamm.com.

As progress leaves the physical media behind, we too have had to adapt. Mi Casa creates content –3D audio for 3D video. Complete audio post production from locked picture for all media – theatrical, DVD, Blu-ray, digital delivery and streaming. In a way, Mi Casa has become the place for indie filmmakers to come and get it all under one roof – at highest quality. More and more we create audio that can be delivered through any medium.

And I've moved into the pure content business, with my high definition filmmaking. I've returned to my roots as filmmaker, and just completed my first film since Ciao Manhattan – Tall Ships: The Privateer Lynx. Needless to say, the sound for this film is pretty sophisticated for a documentary, because everything was done at Mi Casa. I've launched Safe Harbor Pictures, which is developing all kinds of family-friendly maritime-themed programming. (Sailing ships are one of my boyhood passions).

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Here's the lesson I've learned from my own story – you know the story about how a Moog Synthesizer changed my life. You need to look around at all the newest technology available to you, and do something great with it! That's what Mark Zuckerberg did when he created Facebook at the first moment in time the technology enabled him to do so. That's why Blockbuster gave way to Netflix, and Netflix has been smart enough to start figuring how to stream movies in high definition. 4G is replacing 3G and what that makes possible remains to be seen. I for one, believe surround audio will be everywhere – in homes, cars, and headphones. And what that means for music creation and production in the near future will be revolutionary. Not only streaming audio, but streaming discrete and encoded surround audio -- Spatialization programs like DTS neural, Dolby and Gen audio, Surround on earphones will be a reality. Maybe it's time to try surround music again.

WHAT ELSE?

Artists, do it for yourself. Create check-in points from your history, allow people to see your roots. Don't depend on the fat cats, they don't seem to get it. Build your fan base. Now you've got to get people to stick to you, and slowly grow your key tribe. It's not only music and tickets, but so much more. You're creating a club. Don't worry so much about getting paid. Build a sticky platform and grow your tribe.

Even though they took most of the money, the record companies of old did something of value. The A&R guys were fans and mentors for the artists, the producers were collaborators, the engineers and high-priced studios ensured that the product was good for now and good for the ages. The promo guys cut through the noise and got your single on the radio. The execs wrote checks. Artists today could use more those kinds of collaborators.

Some of the record companies are succeeding - like the small company within a big company called Interscope. Used to be the specialty label. They understand the artist, the studio, narrowcasting and social media.

I want see more humanity back in the business. Not everyone in the world has an iPad – not everyone in the world has a computer. Music has changed the way we live our lives. It can't just be about profit. Good news is that the this revolution has freed it from purely profit-making business and has allowed the artist to say what he wants and make the music and film he wants.

I think that there is a trend beginning toward people getting out of their home studio micro environments and will head back towards a more collaborative environment. After all music is the tribal beat of our culture. There is no substitute for people playing together in the same space. It goes hand in hand with musicians realizing they need good sounding rooms. Everything can't be done in a converted bedroom or closet, and who wants to work isolated and alone with no feedback. I think we will see recording coop's where individuals share good sounding spaces.

Entertainment business today is healthy. People are building studios. Buying musical instruments. Bands are playing in clubs. People are selling their music and films online. Shooting viral videos on You Tube. People are spending half of their waking hours with media.

- (concern about health - Wall-E generation - and ear damage).

Yes, we're supposedly coming out of deep recession. Unemployment is high and consumer spending is down. People aren't building home theatres like they did during the real estate boom. The highest end equipment may be only for that small slice of upper crust that worries about the death tax. And electronics are increasingly being manufactured in China.

But everything good we have done and what we do going forward can still capture peoples' imaginations. 3D home theatres will happen, and it won't be long before they are reasonably priced and out of the box.

The kids who listen on earbuds today will have homes and families to entertain and educate tomorrow.

Keep working and perfecting your craft. Keep supporting the artist.

Just remember, content is king.