A new era has arrived at Sweetwater! We’ve just completed the move into our new $30 million facility west of Fort Wayne, Indiana. After almost two years of planning and construction, this bold move relocates Sweetwater’s sales force, distribution center, and administrative staff into a state-of-the-art environment providing all of the tools required to serve our customers with the speed and efficiency you’ve come to expect. Our new warehouse is more than four times as large as the old one, with cutting-edge inventory technology and conveyor systems that will guarantee the fastest shipping times in the industry. When you visit our new campus — and we hope you will very soon — you’ll find a greatly enlarged and enhanced retail store, with big demo rooms and a huge selection of gear and instruments. Whether you’re an engineer or a musician (or both), you’ll be treated to a state-of-the-art retail experience, all designed to make shopping at Sweetwater the best there is.

— continued on page 4
AES And More

I love this time of year. The weather cools off a bit, the leaves turn color, and the AES Convention and Tradeshow takes place! Over the years I’ve had the pleasure of attending more tradeshows than I care to remember, but I admit it: I still get a real charge from seeing the new gear! The 121st AES Show, which was held in San Francisco, California, followed in the footsteps of its many predecessors, with a plethora of new toys on display from hundreds of manufacturers — you can read my full report on all the exciting product introductions on page one of this issue.

This year, Sweetwater had a booth at the show — it’s been a few years since we exhibited, and we had a ball seeing everyone who stopped by to say hello! One of the things that took place in the booth was a series of live interviews with some of the industry’s leaders. I had a chance to sit down and chat with noted journalist/author/musician/technology guru Craig Anderton, Digidesign general manager David Lebolt, EveAnna Manley, president/CEO/owner of Manley Labs, Russ Berger, world-renowned studio designer and president of the Russ Berger Design Group (and designer of the new Sweetwater training auditorium and Sweetwater Productions recording studios), and Roger Nichols, 7-time Grammy-winning engineer/producer and president of Roger Nichols Digital. The discussions ranged from the state of the industry to equipment trends to the enduring popularity of vacuum tubes to the future of music production.

You can check out video excerpts from each of these interviews at www.sweetwater.com/feature/aes_live/, and for more on the 121st AES Show, check out our full daily coverage at www.sweetwater.com/publications/reports. I think you’ll find them full of insightful perspectives.

Naturally, I came away from the AES Show with a major case of “I need to have that” syndrome. But since the holidays are right around the corner, I hope that Santa Claus is good to me this year!

Speaking of the holidays, I hope that your holiday season is relaxed and filled with peaceful bliss. May the New Year be kind to you and yours.

Sweetwater Welcomes A Designs Audio

We admit it. We’re gear freaks. We love finding new, cool, great-sounding gear of all types. We’re especially fond of unique products that add new flavors to our recording studios. That’s why we’re so pleased to welcome A Designs Audio to the Sweetwater family!

Pieces of Eight

When asked to elaborate on the origins of A Design’s company motto, “Making Pro Audio Affordable” founder Peter Montessi said, “No one seemed to be focusing on the fact that anyone could produce a high-quality mic pre at an affordable price.” A result of A Designs Audio’s focus is their 2006 TEC award-nominated mic pre, the Pacifica, based on one of the best-kept secrets of pro audio, the Quad Eight consoles from the 1970s. Back then, there were three major players in large-format console design: Neve, API, and Quad Eight, which grew out of Electrodyne. Of the three, Electrodyne/Quad Eight was the first to incorporate modular design, and more importantly, had a sound that rivaled the others at one-tenth the price. (Pink Floyd’s The Wall and Boston’s More Than A Feeling are two examples of hits mixed on Quad Eights).

The Clone Wars

According to Montessi, the decision to base the Pacifica on the Quad Eight was the result of a meeting with audio designer Jon Erickson, who spent years bringing vintage classics back to life for top L.A. studios. For inspiration and a unique sound, Jon suggested they look at Quad Eight, since he had experience with their Coronado, Ventura, and Pacifica boards. In the process of researching the company and old specs, they made a great discovery in the form of Tom Reichenbach, the son of one of the Quad Eight designers. Tom had the original specs, but they didn’t provide the sound that Peter and Jon were looking for. After several re-designs along with custom transformers hand-built by Reichenbach, the Pacifica preamp was born. Therein lies an important distinction: The Pacifica is not a clone! The name pays homage to its inspiration, the Quad Eight Pacifica console; but it has a unique sound all its own. In fact, after beta-testing the new preamp with noted engineers and owners of vintage Quad Eight consoles, the feedback was that it sounded better than the original boards!

Has A Designs fulfilled the company motto? Based on the raves the REDDI II, Pacifica, and MP series tube preamps are receiving, we’d say they most certainly have. Call your Sales Engineer or visit sweetwater.com for more information on A Designs Audio products.

Moving? Moved? Want more than one copy? Call, fax, or email us your new address and don’t miss an issue of SweetNotes!
Steinberg Cubase 4

Steinberg’s Cubase software has been a fixture in pro and project studios since the very beginning — Steinberg introduced some of the earliest sequencing software way back in the 1980s. Over the years, Cubase has evolved into an incredibly powerful digital audio workstation application that could handle just about any audio or MIDI task. You'd think there wasn’t much more the programmers could add. …

But now, with the release of version 4, Cubase ascends even higher, replacing Nuendo as Steinberg’s flagship music production software. (Fear not, Nuendo users. … Nuendo isn’t disappearing, it’s just being refocused for post-production work in future releases.) And since Cubase is now the king of the proverbial Steinberg kingdom, it stands to reason that version 4 incorporates some pretty significant upgrades.

Some of the upgraded features needed to step into the world of high-end audio production come directly from Nuendo, including implementing the Nuendo Audio Engine, as well as a virtual control room allowing precise control over monitor mixes for the performers, and support for surround sound encoding. But the cool new Nuendo-esque features in Cubase 4 aren’t all that’s new — there’s a veritable boatload of new plug-ins that run in the VST3 format, plus four new virtual instruments, instrument tracks, a boost in notation abilities, and a new sound management engine that makes it quick and easy to locate the sample set you need for your song. Cubase 4 also boasts an improved user interface, making it easier than ever to record, edit, and manipulate audio and MIDI inside the software.

For those who don’t need to harness the full power and capabilities built into Cubase 4, there’s Cubase Studio 4, a lighter version with many of the upgraded features of Cubase 4. Included in the streamlined version are two new virtual instruments, 25 new VST3 plug-ins, and like its big brother, Cubase Studio 4 supports an unlimited number of audio and MIDI tracks.

These latest additions to the Steinberg line are compatible with Windows computers as well as PowerPC and Intel-based Macs. Both Cubase 4 and Cubase Studio 4 are significantly more powerful than their predecessors and mark a big step forward for the Cubase family. There’s so much more to discuss about these amazing programs; call your Sweetwater Sales Engineer now to get the full run-down on all the features and to order your copy today!

Classic Players
Strats and Teles

When Fender wanted to create a new series of guitars aimed at working musicians, they took a unique approach. They turned to the master builders in their Custom Shop and told them to create a “dream list” of features they felt would resonate with today’s players. In essence, they were letting the Custom Shop design these new Strats and Teles, but planned on having the instruments built in their state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Ensenada, Baja. No corners were to be cut, and no ideas would be off limits, but the specs should represent a real working musician’s instrument rather than a showpiece. Eventually, three Strats and one Tele were created.

The Classic Player ‘50s Strat is available in either Two-color Sunburst or Shoreline Gold over a select alder body. The maple neck has a 21-fret maple fingerboard, a soft “V” shape, and a gloss polyurethane finish. The pickups selected are American Vintage Strat single-coils with Alnico 5 magnets on a single-ply white pickguard. Finally, there’s a vintage-style synchronized tremolo with steel saddles and a milled solid steel block.

You can get the Classic Player ‘60s Strat in either Three-color Sunburst or Sonic Blue over a select alder body. The maple neck has a 21-fret maple fingerboard, a soft “C” shape, and a gloss polyurethane finish. The pickups chosen are three Custom ‘69 single-coils mounted on a 3-ply Mint Green pickguard. A vintage-style tremolo with steel saddles and a milled steel block wraps up this design.

The Deluxe Players Strat is a revised version of the “Super Strat” — it’s a powerful workhorse guitar, featuring a selection of Three-color Sunburst, Sapphire Blue Transparent, Crimson Red Transparent, or Honey Blonde finishes over an ash body. The modern “C”-shape maple neck is available with either a maple or rosewood fingerboard with 21 medium-jumbo frets. Three Vintage Noiseless single-coil pickups drive the sound, with 7-way switching. Gold-plated hardware and a vintage-style tremolo complete the package.

The Classic Player Baja Telecaster is finished in Blonde or Desert Sand over a solid ash body. The maple neck has a soft “V” shape and gloss polyurethane finish. One “Twisted” Tele single-coil was chosen for the neck position and a Broadcaster for the bridge. A black pickguard (white on the Desert Sand model) adds contrast, while a vintage-style, 3-saddle, string-thru-body bridge and S-1 switching complete the picture.

>> Classic Player ‘50s Stratocaster • Sweetwater price $799.97
>> Classic Player ‘60s Stratocaster • Sweetwater price $799.97
>> Deluxe Players Stratocaster • Sweetwater price $599.97
>> Classic Player Baja Telecaster • Sweetwater price $799.97

www.sweetwater.com/cubase4

(800) 222-4700 | www.sweetwater.com
And this is only phase one! Next summer the entire facility will be completed, including a 225-seat technical training auditorium designed by Russ Berger Design Group. Sweetwater Productions, our studio division, will move into new multi-room studios, also designed by Berger, with gear, features, and amenities on par with the world’s finest recording studios. Warehouse, studios, auditorium, administrative offices, and retail store will all be connected by a glass-encased atrium that will represent one of the signature work environments in the Midwest.

Yes, we’re excited. It’s a dream come true for Sweetwater and its dedicated employees. But you are the reason this has all come about. The new facility was designed and built with one goal in mind: to serve you better.

The new sales center will accommodate Sales Engineers eagerly waiting to serve your every need in music technology and instruments.

And this warehouse team move mountains...of gear.

New inventory technology will guarantee that we “pick and pack” exactly what you order in record time.
Novation XioSynth

Open the rucksack of today’s electro-bard and you find a Lilliputian laptop accompanied by an infinitesimal interface, a minuscule MIDI I/O module, a compact controller, and a slim synth—all of which can add up to a big mess, since none of the above fits comfortably into a rack. Even on a desktop, all those little boxes and connecting wires can make for a messy situation. Novation’s new XioSynth lets you travel light and heavy all at the same time.

First and foremost, XioSynth is just what the name implies—a synthesizer—and a Novation KS-engine synthesizer at that, so we’re talking 200 big honking sounds (that’s where the heavy part comes in). So how did they fill those 200 slots? With presets from artists and producers the likes of James Zabiela, Ferry Corsten, Rennie Pilgrem, and Roots Manuva. But that’s just for starters. The Xio surname tells us that there’s much more going on behind its pretty blue LCD. In fact, it contains everything in the aforementioned rucksack plus more...and less. More, in that along with an ultra-low latency 2x2 audio interface with an XLR input and phantom power, there is a MIDI interface, and a 25- or 49-key MIDI controller with lots of assignable controls, 16 onboard plug-in/virtual instrument controller templates, and hybrid modes for simultaneous MIDI control and synth playing. Less, in that you only have to carry one small, lightweight keyboard to have it all—and beginners will appreciate how the XioSynth allows you to quickly get down to making music.

Getting back to the “more” portion of our show, the XioSynth also features the new X-Gator, a 32-step patch programmer that can literally gate each onboard sound to create interesting and exciting rhythmic patterns, an Xpression pad and pitch/mod joystick that are both freely assignable, allowing six parameters to be tweaked at once, template editor software that makes it easy to build control templates for your VST plug-ins, and a video tutorial DVD.

The XioSynth is USB-powered and fully class-compliant, which means no drivers to install and only one USB cable to have all its features at your command—even when the host interface is running as a stand-alone mixer.

The good news? We’ve already got the Xio in stock and ready to ship to you! Check out Sweetwater.com for a complete discussion of the Xio’s capabilities.

Novation XioSynth

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The XioSynth is USB-powered and fully class-compliant, which means no drivers to install and only one USB cable to have all its features at your command—truly plug-and-play. Call your Sales Engineer now to learn more!

MOTU 8pre

The personal computer has changed studios at every level: home, project, and commercial. Part of that change has been a need for a way to get quality audio signals into the computer, as well as monitor and route them. MOTU has been at the forefront of the computer-based DAW movement from the beginning, with a long list of successful hardware interfaces. Now the company has announced their latest interface, the 8pre. With its eight built-in phantom-powered mic preamps, 16 channels of audio I/O, and latency-free CueMix DSP system, 8pre is the ideal centerpiece for your studio, or an excellent addition to your existing rig.

Thanks to FireWire connectivity, the 8pre can interface with just about any computer—Mac or PC. There are drivers that support nearly all DAW and audio software packages as well. With eight great-sounding mic/line preamps and ADAT optical I/O, the 8pre has plenty of ins and outs—at 96kHz! The front panel provides LED metering for each input along with level control and switches for phantom power and -20dB pad. The 8pre also features two banks of ADAT optical ports, which give you an additional eight channels at up to 96kHz. MOTU designed the 8pre to be expandable up to four units, so if you need more I/O, you’re set. If you already have a MOTU FireWire interface with onboard CueMix DSP mixing, connect the 8pre via ADAT lightpipe and its inputs appear directly in the host interface’s CueMix mixer—the 8pre becomes a transparent extension of your system, operating together with your primary interface as a single, integrated unit—even when the host interface is running as a stand-alone mixer.

The Central Hub

The 8pre can not only tie everything together from a zero-latency, no-mixer-needed monitoring standpoint, but also by providing a 16-channel MIDI interface with sample-accurate timing. Connect a MIDI keyboard, sound module, or control surface, and you’re ready to go. For even more flexibility in the recording process, the 8pre supports up to four separate stereo monitor mixes, which can be assigned to any digital or analog output pair, and the “CueMix Bounce Back” feature lets you route one of the four mixes back to the computer. This allows you to record, for example, your entire mix including monitored inputs back into the computer. There are also Talkback and Listenback buttons in the CueMix console so you can set up dedicated communication mix in your control room and live room.

The good news? We’ve already got the 8pre in stock and ready to ship to you! Check out Sweetwater.com for a complete discussion of the 8pre’s capabilities.
Guitar 101:
Bridges and Tailpieces

By Jim Miller

The bridge of the guitar is the part of the instrument that transmits the energy of the string vibrations into the instrument’s body. It helps keep the strings under tension and held in place. On a steel-string acoustic guitar, the strings are anchored by six bridge pins (or pegs if you prefer) pressed into openings in the wooden bridge, which is typically made of rosewood or ebony. The strings then pass over a bone or plastic “saddle,” which is slightly slanted so the intonation is more accurate. On nylon-string guitars, the strings are looped and tied behind the saddle.

On electric guitars, the bridge and tailpiece can be combined or they can be separate. The simplest design is the bridge/tailpiece combination designed by Ted McCarty and first seen on the 1953 Gibson Les Paul. Called the “stop tailpiece,” this remains a reliable method of anchoring the strings and providing good intonation. The tailpiece is fastened to the top of the guitar with two large studs, which can be raised or lowered, while two small setscrews are used to further tweak intonation. Gibson continues to use this tailpiece on models such as the Les Paul Junior reissue while Paul Reed Smith guitars without vibrato tailpieces have made good use of this basic design, but with a few modifications.

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When Leo Fender built the Telecaster in 1950, he designed a bridge that used three brass saddles that could be adjusted using bolts passed through the raised edges of the metal bridge plate that also housed the bridge pickup (see left). This setup allowed for acceptable intonation, but by 1954, when Leo got around to his masterpiece, the Stratocaster, he realized the need for adjustable saddles for each string. Over at Gibson, Ted McCarty had already figured that out for himself and had patented what we now know as the “Tune-O-Matic” bridge (top left) late in 1952, though it wasn’t used until 1954 on the Les Paul Custom.

The Tune-O-Matic bridge, with its individually tuneable saddles (adjusted via setscrews) was placed in front of the stop tailpiece, which continued to be mounted onto the guitar’s top with two studs. This is the design found on almost every Gibson guitar made today, as well as on many other guitars from other manufacturers. The only problem initially was that the saddles were held in place by string tension and would fall off if the string broke. Eventually a restraining wire was added to eliminate that problem and later modifications anchored the saddles with small adjustable screws.

That’s it for this issue. Check back next time, when we’ll delve into the world of vibrato tailpieces!

Digi Strikes Again!

Digidesign has been busy, between releasing Pro Tools 7 — not to mention updates and upgrades — and their A.I.R. (Advanced Instrument Research) division pumping out new virtual instruments that raise the bar when it comes to intuitive user interface and sound quality. The latest creation from A.I.R. is Strike, a virtual instrument that’s more of a virtual drummer than it is a drum machine.

Virtual instruments are typically judged on one criterion: Do they sound real? Using that as our basis of measurement, Strike passes with flying colors. When Digi came out to demo Strike for us, two things struck us (no pun intended): It sounds fantastic, and it’s really easy to use. Inside a single Instrument track, you get a full drum kit with a mixer to adjust the levels for all drums and cymbals, as well as control over the type and position of the microphone, amount of room ambience and overheads, EQ, and two insert effects processors. It seems like an oxymoron, but the drum machine-style interface yields some of the most realistic — not to mention humanistic — virtual drums we’ve heard. No matter what you need drum tracks for, Strike will fit the bill.

It’s About Time

Digidesign has also released Time Shift, a new free AudioSuite time-stretching and pitch-shifting plug-in for Pro Tools. Time Shift has four algorithms: Polyphonic for chords or a full mix, Monophonic for vocal or single-note instruments, Rhythmic for loops, and Varispeed for sample-rate conversion. We tested Time Shift on a close-miked drum kit recording, stretching it by 20%. The drum track sounded just like it had pre-processing, just slower. There were no artifacts or glitches.

Set Phase to Stun

Digi’s free SignalTools comprises SurroundScope, which shows levels for each channel, and PhaseScope for indicating the phase of a stereo signal. PhaseScope shows out of phase (–1), perfect mono (+1), and perfect stereo (0). We ran the same drum tracks used above through PhaseScope to find the meter happily hovering around the +1 mark. We added room mic tracks, and the meter slid down to zero — a perfect stereo image. It was interesting (and educational) to see how adding or removing tracks affected the overall phase. Who knew phase could be so fun?

Following The Muse

By Daniel Fisher

When I was a teen, I had a dream: I wished there was a way to take my upright piano and 400-pound organ over to my friends’ houses (where the jams were). Eventually that dream came true; I’ve owned a number of more “portable” keyboards that sounded pretty good. But I wanted excellent sounds and realistic tone, and there was never one keyboard with the best piano, B-3, synths, horns, etc. So I had to schlep multiple keyboards in heavy cases because I couldn’t enjoy performing unless the sounds were right. But I still wished for a smaller, lighter, and simpler rig.

Then virtual instruments exploded on the market. I sold my heavy keyboards and bought a laptop to run plug-ins. But balancing my precious computer on a barstool (with wires just begging to be tripped over) left me too nervous to relax and enjoy myself. And my poor hard drive was filled to the brim with my regular computer data plus my plug-in libraries. There I was… wishing again.

With the Receptor by Muse Research, I can play all the sounds I need on a module I can put in a rack bag and carry under my arm. I just plug in a MIDI controller, run cables to the PA, and the sound is exactly what I dreamt about.

I also like to play electric guitar, but I hate relying on the random guitar amps found at the club and I can’t justify bringing my own amp just for a few songs. Now I load Native Instrument’s Guitar Rig 2, plug my Parker into the Receptor and I’m ready to rock. You can even use the Receptor to add studio-quality effects to your vocals.

Don’t get me wrong, the Receptor is capable of more than just live performance. Using UniWire you can connect it directly to your Mac or PC via Ethernet to add tons of additional power to your DAW setup. You can even connect a computer monitor, keyboard, and mouse directly to the Receptor and run it as a stand-alone unit. Another fantastic feature is the ability to mix different plug-ins, set velocity and key ranges, choose routings, add effects, then save the whole thing as a Multi you can call up in one shot.

Clearly I’ve only scratched the surface of what you can do with the Muse Receptor. Give us a call. Your knowledgeable Sales Engineer will be happy to fill you in on this incredible musical tool!

—Daniel Fisher, Director of Product Optimization

Customer Studio: Scott Freiman

In this issue of SweetNotes, we have the pleasure of featuring Second Act Studio, a professional music and video studio for composition, recording, and production built for Sweetwater customer, Scott Freiman. Located 30 minutes north of New York in a beautiful, rustic setting, Second Act provides an inspiring and relaxing alternative to Manhattan-based studios.

Second Act takes up most of the third floor of a 1907 house listed on the Westchester County Inventory of Historic Places. It was designed by Robert Reilly and studio designer John Storyk, who, beginning with Jimi Hendrix’s Electric Ladyland studio, has designed over 900 world-class recording studios, video facilities, and radio stations. Second Act Studio consists of three main rooms — a control room, recording room (iso booth), and screening room. All rooms are interconnected, and both the control room and the screening room are configured for 5.1 surround.

The majority of Scott’s equipment comes from his long association with Sweetwater and Ted Hunter, his personal Sales Engineer. According to Scott, “I’ve relied on Sweetwater for years. Most of the hardware and software in my professional studio was purchased from Sweetwater. Their salespeople are extremely helpful and knowledgeable. They seem less interested in ‘pushing product’ than making sure the customer gets the right product. If they don’t know the answer to a question (which is rare), they find out and get back to me. This service is more important to me than getting the lowest price, but somehow Sweetwater’s pricing is always the best.” Obviously the respect is mutual, as Ted Hunter elaborates; “Scott’s a great guy...he’s demanding and knows exactly what he wants, yet is easy to deal with and always interested in my opinion.”

By way of background, Scott did his undergraduate work at Yale where he had a double major in computer science and music, followed with a master’s degree in composition at NYU. When he’s not working with children and producing up and coming artist Lisa Lynn Mathis for Garagista records (of which he is a partner), Scott focuses his time and talents on film. A true renaissance man, the skills Scott offers to the film community include composing and arranging music ranging from orchestral to contemporary, sound design, dialog editing, and full post-production services. We wish Scott continued success in all his endeavors. For more information about Scott Freiman and Second Act Studio, go to www.secondactstudio.com.

Want to see your studio in SweetNotes? Email photos to Mitch Gallagher now! (mitch_gallagher@sweetwater.com)

Moving? Moved? Want more than one copy? Call, fax, or email us your new address and don’t miss an issue of SweetNotes!
Mix it Up!

When Solid State Logic showed us their innovative new XRack modular rack system, we got pretty excited. It’s not often that a manufacturer lets you literally piece together select sections of a high-end console for a fraction of the cost of the original board, much less with true total recall for saving your favorite settings. But SSL isn’t finished yet! Introducing their new 4-input module, aptly named Four Channel Input, and the Master Bus, which replicates the master section of the famed XL 9000 K console.

The original XRack modules were primarily focused on tracking, bringing the SSL SuperAnalogue front end to pro, project, and home studios. The new additions are tailor-made for summing audio and using outboard gear for mixing and summing your tracks. With these modules, you can create a rackmountable mixer to handle the outputs from your DAW, mix down from tape, or handle a variety of audio summing/routing/control tasks — all with the legendary SSL sound and quality!

Let’s get down to specifics. The Four Channel Input module is equipped to handle four line-level mono signals with controls for solo, volume, and pan. Signal coming through the Four Channel Input can be routed to either the Master Bus or Record Bus section of the Master Bus Module. The Four Channel Input sports insert points for patching other XRack modules or external devices into the signal path. This is the perfect way to integrate external devices into your DAW or analog system with the sweet sound of SSL circuitry.

With the Master Bus module, you essentially get the master section from an XL 9000 K. This module lets you monitor and control the XRack’s internal recording and master stereo busses. Plus, you’ve got facilities to insert devices, check mono compatibility, and meter the master output. Two pairs of monitors can be connected with dedicated controls for level, dim, and cut (mute). Combining seven of the Four Channel Inputs and a Master Bus Module in an XRack gives you a 28-input SSL mixing system. And of course, you can also mix-and-match the Four Channel Input and Master Bus Module with XRack mic preamp, EQ, and dynamics modules to create a system configured exactly the way you want it.

If you’ve been waiting to win the lottery to purchase an SSL console, your wait is over! With the XRack system, you can assemble the SSL of your dreams, and at a real-world price. Call your Sales Engineer now to find out all the details about this amazing modular system.

At Sweetwater, we’ve always been concerned with the environment. We’ve recycled packing materials and boxes from day one, and we’ve collected cans, bottles, and paper for recycling. It’s something I’ve always felt strongly about; I think we need to protect our planet and environment as much as possible, both for ourselves and for future generations of musicians and engineer/producers!

So when we began researching and planning for the new Sweetwater building project, we immediately started pursuing ways to make the facility “green.” That’s when we discovered the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program, which represents a coalition including the U.S. Green Building Council. LEED certification requires compliance with a range of criteria covering many aspects of the building. There are different levels of certification; we’re going for “Gold” certification, which requires serious efforts to minimize environmental impact during construction as well as through the long-term life of the building. We’re proud that we’ll have the first Gold-certified LEED facility in northern Indiana, and in fact, one of the first LEED-certified buildings in the country. Our hope is that many buildings in our area and around the nation will follow in our footsteps, improving quality of life for everyone in the process.

Achieving LEED certification — especially at the Gold level — isn’t trivial, and it added to our up-front costs of construction. But a significant amount of that cost will be returned through the life of the building, and, really, the cost pales in comparison to the positive effects on our world — it’s just the right thing to do, given the benefits to the environment, and the more efficient operation of the facility.

We think it’s a win-win for everyone involved. Our building is more efficient, we’re helping the environment, and you can feel comfortable that the orders you place are being delivered to you in the most environmentally friendly way possible.

Happy holidays from everyone here at Sweetwater! May you have a 2007 filled with wonderful music and joy!

> > Solid State Logic XRack 4 Input • Sweetwater price $925.00 • www.sweetwater.com/XRack4Input
> > Solid State Logic XRack Master Bus • Sweetwater price $1100.00 • www.sweetwater.com/XRackMasterBus

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Give the gift of choice this season! A gift certificate will never get returned, “fits” just right, and won’t sit collecting dust in the garage like the Chia Pet from last year!

Soundelux U195

The U195 is really two mics in one! The Fat/Normal switch tunes the bass response to the application, the high SPL level handling allows the U195 to deal with anything from guitar cabinets to drums. The U195 is one of the best do-it-all mics we’ve seen. Every studio should have at least one!

Gibson Les Paul Standard

Picking up a Les Paul Standard is like holding a piece of history. The 2-piece carved AA maple top has more than enough figuring to deliver a totally vintage look. If you’re not into the original chunky 1950s necks, you’ll appreciate the slim-taper 1960s profile of this baby. The Les Paul has remained relatively unchanged for the last 40 years, and there’s a good reason why — you can’t fix what’s not broken!

Novation ReMOTE SL 61

The ReMOTE SL 61 marks a major leap forward for MIDI controllers with the innovative Automap feature, which intuitively maps the virtual controls of the software to the physical knobs, encoders, buttons, and sliders of the keyboard. The ReMOTE SL 61 makes MIDI production painless.
Sweetwater – Your One-Stop

**Roland SH-201**
This synth is easy enough to get around on for newcomers to synthesizers, but full of features that synth pros will love! The front panel puts control at your fingertips, and you can even import external audio from CD or MP3 players and use the synth engine to modify the sounds. This is one of best ways to learn the basics of synthesis.

**Yamaha PSR-E203**
Here’s a portable keyboard from Yamaha that features huge, incredibly realistic grand piano sounds, more than 130 additional tones, built-in lessons, and much more! The PSR-E203 will keep you making music for hours on end. Includes a power adapter, headphones, DVD-ROM, pedal, and 2-year extended warranty.

**Audio-Technica AT2041SP Studio Pak**
The AT2041SP represents one of the best values around when it comes to microphones. Included in this bundle are the versatile and great-sounding AT2020 large-diaphragm condenser for vocals and the AT2021 small-diaphragm condenser that’s great for acoustic guitars, overheads, or piano.

**MusicWorks Guide to MIDI Orchestration**
This is the comprehensive guide to creating amazingly realistic MIDI orchestrations using samples and computer recording techniques. This is required reading for anyone serious about creating orchestral scores for television, film, or just for fun!

**Roland SH-201 Aura**
Built with premium tonewoods and with a polished gloss finish, this is a guitar that looks as good as it sounds! The sweet sound of this guitar is amplified by the Fishman Aura preamp.

**Squier AC-100 Acoustic Pack**
Whether you’re an aspiring songwriter or dreaming of playing stadiums, the AC-100 is the perfect starter guitar. The solid build of this guitar is accented with a spruce top for excellent projection. The included gig bag, pitch pipe, picks, and book simply add value to this great package.

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**Digidesign Mbox 2 Pro**
The Mbox 2 Pro adds FireWire connectivity and word clock (a first for a Pro Tools LE interface) to the already super-successful Mbox line. Pro features and extremely portable — very cool!

**List $295.00**

**MOTU Ethno Instrument**
Ethno Instrument adds a touch of world flavor to any of your projects. The 8GB library provides loops, phrases, and instruments sampled from all over the world.

**List $799.00**

**Apple MacBook**
The Intel-based Core Duo MacBook is a grand slam of portability and power! The most affordable of the Apple laptops, the MacBook has a brilliant new widescreen display so you see everything in pristine detail, and packs plenty of horsepower under the hood for all your audio projects.

**List $1499.00**

**Course Technology PTR**
**Acoustic Design for the Home Studio**
Sweetwater’s own Mitch Gallagher sheds light on the world of acoustics in the home studio, one of the most over-looked aspects of home recording. Read this book and see what you can do to improve your sound!

**List $199.99**

**Native Instruments**
**Komplete 4**
NI Komplete 4 is the ultimate bundle for musicians and producers, providing unlimited creative freedom for live performance, music production, instrument emulation, and sound design. Komplete 4 features groundbreaking synthesizers, samplers, emulations, effects, and a virtual guitar studio, giving you a truly comprehensive, professional production suite.

**List $1499.99**

**Sweetwater Custom Computing**
**Creation Station**
Our Creation Station computers are built with one goal in mind — to provide the absolute best PC available for audio production. From the type of RAM used to the custom OS tweaks, every facet of these machines is hand-picked and optimized by our pros to meet the demands of the modern computer-based studio.

**Starting at $999.97**

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*Digidesign Mbox 2 Pro**

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**Starting at $999.97**

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Find the right gear for the musician in your life!

iPod, iPod nano, iPod shuffle
Carry your music, photos, video, contact lists, lyrics, and calendar! The iPod 80GB features a 2.5” screen. The iPod nano weighs just 1.41 ounces but can carry albums, press kit, and band photos. The iPod shuffle holds up to 240 songs.

Line 6 Floor POD
The Floor POD is the latest incarnation of the POD family and packs 12 classic amp and cabinet models and seven effects into a redesigned unit that incorporates a built-in volume/wah pedal. The Floor POD can function as a multi-effects processor in front of an amp, or as a complete direct-to-PA and recording solution.

Squier Bullet
The perfect starter guitar for the budding rock star in your family, the Squier Bullet is a simple, affordable, and practical guitar designed for beginners and students.

Fender G-DEC
The G-DEC will change the way you practice! The built-in MIDI synthesizer lets you jam along with a virtual band, and the on-board DSP effects and amp modeling provide nearly limitless sonic capabilities. A 14-second phrase sampler makes it easy to learn difficult licks. The G-DEC is loaded with a Special Design 8” speaker driven by 15 watts.

Sweetwater’s 2007 Holiday Gift Ideas pages are overflowing with this year’s hottest and most popular music gear and pro audio equipment! Find the latest and greatest for your own wish list or to send to loved ones — you’ll find the season’s best gifts here!

- **Holiday Gift Guide** — Just send friends and family to www.sweetwater.com/giftguide. We’ll show them dozens of gifts appropriate for every type of musician, in all price ranges.

- **Sweetwater Gift Certificates** — The gift that can’t go wrong! Gift Certificates are available in any amount. Call toll-free or order online at www.sweetwater.com/giftcert.

- **Write your own Wish List** — Go to www.sweetwater.com/wishlist and create an interactive email that friends and family can click on to see the gifts you really want! Don’t worry, nobody checks to see if you were naughty or nice!

Find the right gear for the musician in your life!
Komplete Solutions

Far be it from Native Instruments, a company that has blazed new trails to bring us the virtual instrument as we know it today, to rest on their laurels. Native Instruments continually raises the bar and develops even more powerful virtual instruments, both upgraded versions of NI classics, and brand-new beasts like Massive, a tremendously powerful virtual synth.

Massive is the culmination of 10 years of developing cutting-edge virtual instruments. Native Instruments packed enough sound-sculpting capabilities into Massive to keep even the most ardent knob-twiddlers happy, while keeping the interface user-friendly with slick features like drag-and-drop modulation. On top of an array of filters, oscillators, and effects, Massive gives you absolute control over the signal path. Performer, a new type of envelope step sequencer, lets you create custom modulation sequences in mere seconds, and a traditional step sequencer combined with crossfade-able LFOs and morph-capable envelopes let you take modulation further than you’ve ever gone before. We’ve just scratched the surface of what Massive can do; this is one amazingly powerful synth!

But Native Instruments didn’t stop with Massive. The new Komplete 4 bundle is the definitive library of virtual instruments from Native Instruments, and features additions and enhanced versions of several important instruments. Komplete 4 includes the award-winning Kontakt 2 sampler, Pro-53, Vokator, NI-Spektal Delay, B4 II, Reaktor 5, Elektrik Piano, and Guitar Rig 2 software. New to Komplete 4 are FM8 (with new features like a step sequencer, new effects, preset morphing, and more), Absynth 4 (with new oscillator modes, live input, unison mode in the patch window, frequency shifter, major envelope enhancements, and more), Battery 3 (with a new 12GB sample library, up to 128 sample cells, improved effects, new performance articulations, beat unison mode in the patch window, frequency shifter, major envelope enhancements, and more), and Akoustik Piano. There are also thousands of sounds — over 2,000 instruments for Reaktor alone! Plus, with more than 25GB of professional sample libraries, you may never leave your studio!

Komplete 4 is the perfect companion for Native Instruments’ groundbreaking Kore sample management system and should be required for anyone who’s serious about creating great music in a computer-based environment. With the massive number of sounds available with Komplete 4, and the addition of Kore to help you manage and manipulate those sounds, the ultimate virtual instrument workstation is at your fingertips!

Komplete 4 continues to reign supreme in the land of software instruments. It’s far and away the best value in virtual instruments, and is compatible with nearly any DAW on either Mac or PC. And Massive simply amplifies the fact that Native Instruments is a major player and innovator in virtual synth technology — and intends to stay that way. Whether you’re looking for a library for your composition suite, you’re assembling a portable laptop synth rig for the stage, or looking to melt minds in the studio with innovative sounds, Komplete 4 and Massive should be in your arsenal.

Q: How do I install the additional MIDI Fill files that are available from DrumCore’s website (www.drumcore.com) into DrumCore?

A: To install the DrumCore MIDI Fills, drag the folder called “DrumCore MIDI Fills” from the source location to your DrumCore Data/Pending Imports folder. The location depends on your platform (Macintosh or Windows) and the destination location chosen when DrumCore was installed. If you can’t find your DrumCore Data folder then launch DrumCore and open the Preferences window — the DrumCore Data folder path will be visible at the top of the Preferences window.

Macintosh: The default location for your DrumCore Data folder is in your Applications folder. Drag the DrumCore MIDI Fills folder into the Pending Imports folder inside the DrumCore Data folder. If no Pending Imports folder exists then just create one inside the DrumCore Data folder.

Mac HD/Applications/DrumCoreData/PendingImports/DrumCore MIDI Fills

Windows XP: The default location for your DrumCore Data folder is on your system drive. Drag the DrumCore MIDI Fills folder into the Pending Imports folder inside the DrumCore Data folder. If no Pending Imports folder exists then simply create one inside the DrumCore Data folder.

C:/DrumCore Data/PendingImports/DrumCore MIDI Fills

The next time DrumCore starts up, it will display a dialog box asking if you wish to import the MIDI Fills folder. Select “Yes” and the program will handle importing the files automatically.

Q: Is there a way to keep an eye on my send groups in Pro Tools without opening each send fader window individually?

A: Yes, and it’s actually really easy. In the Mix Window command-click (Mac) or control-click (Windows) on the Send Assignment Selector. Inside the pop-up menu, you can then choose to view any send. A+J. When the send is selected, you’ll see the send meter, and view the controls that would normally be displayed in the send window that’s opened by activating a send.

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Native Instruments Massive • Sweetwater price $299.97 • www.sweetwater.com/Massive
Native Instruments Komplete 4 • Sweetwater price $1349.97 • www.sweetwater.com/komplete4
Native Instruments Kore • Sweetwater price $499.97 • www.sweetwater.com/kore
Arturia
French virtual instrument wizards Arturia announced Analog Factory Reloaded, which bundles 1,000 new presets with the popular Analog Factory software synth. If you purchase Analog Factory before December 31, 2006, you can download Analog Factory Reloaded for free.

Audio-Technica
There were three new handheld vocal mics from the Audio-Technica Artist series on exhibit at the show: the ATM410 dynamic cardioid, the ATM610 dynamic hypercardioid, and the ATM710 condenser cardioid. To create these mics, A-T relied on extensive consultations with leading touring artists and front-of-house engineers who use these mics on stage night after night.

Auralex
Auralex was showing their latest acoustic treatment products, including the new SonoSuede Pro System. The system includes four 16” x 48” x 2” back-beveled panels designed for corner trapping, and eight 16” x 48” x 1” panels for side wall absorption. The panels are covered in a very vibe-y synthetic suede material that looks great.

Also new from Auralex was the Screen6 System, which bundles six portScience SpaceCouplers, designed by Russ Berger, with the necessary hardware for easy wall mounting or for overhead suspension as a ceiling “cloud.” Foam inserts, available separately, provide additional absorption.

Digidesign
Digidesign’s A.I.R. (Advanced Instrument Research) group has been creating an enviable list of hits lately: Hybrid, Expand, and most recently, Strike, which generates amazingly realistic drum parts. Now the A.I.R. group has announced Velvet, a powerful RTAS plug-in focused on realistic emulations of vintage electric pianos. Velvet has over 100 presets covering the Fender Rhodes Suitcase, Fender Rhodes Mk I and Mk II Stage Pianos, and the Wurlitzer A200. Velvet uses a proprietary combination of optimized sampling and modeling called Dynamic Modeling to create authentic sounds.

On the live sound front, Digidesign’s Venue system got both bigger — and smaller — with the D-Show Profile, a new more compact version of the flagship D-Show console. D-Show Profile is compatible with all existing Venue hardware and software, but is sized to be more appropriate for houses of worship, corporate events, theaters, nightclubs, and remote broadcasts. D-Show Profile has 24 input faders, eight output faders, and one Mains fader, along with a single row of assignable encoders. When integrated with a FOH Rack and two Stage Racks it provides up to 128 inputs.

Drawmer
The new S3 from Drawmer is a 3-band stereo compressor utilizing 10 tubes to bring vintage warmth to mastering and mixing applications. The S3 houses an “electronic oven” to maintain ideal operating temperatures for its LDRs (Light Dependent Resistors); this helps it maintain calibration accuracy and achieve optimum performance. The circuit is a completely balanced Class A design, with high-performance input and output transformers.

Beyerdynamic
Headphones are great for monitoring in stereo, but what if you’re doing surround work? Then you need Beyerdynamic’s new HeadZone professional 5.1 monitoring system. These mobile phones use room modeling to control position of the loudspeakers in the room, their distance from the listener, as well as the room’s size and acoustic properties. An ultrasonic headtracker system detects the position of your head, fixes it, then compensates playback depending on your movement. Pretty amazing!
need to take control over your DAW.

**Gibson**

Imagine having total control over the sound of each individual string on your guitar. With the **Gibson HD.6X-Pro Digital Guitar**, six proprietary compact humbucking pickups deliver a separate output signal for each string, with the output carried over a standard Cat5 cable to a breakout box, which converts the digital signal to analog and provides Sum, Stereo, or Hex output to feed your amps, effects, or DAW. The whole thing is based on a traditional Les Paul, with standard humbucking pickups and a Tune-O-Matic bridge — you can plug it in and wall, just like any other Les Paul. But when you want to go to the next level, the Hex output can take you places never before explored by guitarists. Very cool!

**Earthworks**

Earthworks DK50/R Drumkit System is an all-in-one package for making a drum kit. The bundle contains two QTC50 mics, one SR30 mic, one KickPad, three switchable LevelPads, three foam windscreens, and one vocal windscreen, all housed in a Zeno/Halliburton case. The QTC50 mics are used as stereo overheads, while the SR30 is used on the kick drum in conjunction with the KickPad. We’re talking high-resolution, totally natural-sounding drums and cymbals.

**Frontier Design Group**

When you need to get your hands on your mix, but don’t have room for a large control surface, the **AlphaTrack** from the Frontier Design Group is the product for you. It gives you a 100mm touch-sensitive motorized fader, three touch-sensitive rotary encoders (knobs), jog/shuttle control, transport controls, an LCD display, punch and loop controls, user-programmable controls, and more in a compact unit that’s perfect for the desktop rig or anywhere you need to take control over your DAW.

**Glyph**

Glyph announced **FireWire 800** versions of their GT Series hot-swappable drives, which have a bus speed nearly double that of previous FireWire 400 models. Glyph also showed the **GT 062**, a 2-drive tabletop unit aimed at pro audio and video users. The GT 062 supports spanning the two drives to use them as one large drive, or RAID 0 applications. The back panel provides two FireWire 800, FireWire 400, and USB 2.0 connections. Naturally it’s backed by Glyph’s 3-year warranty with advance overnight replacement for the first year.

**Korg**

Korg surprised everyone by introducing not one, but two compact digital stereo recorders. But an even bigger surprise was that the two recorders each use the 1-bit digital recording format. According to Korg, using 1-bit conversion to capture audio eliminates the need for real-time decimation and other processes that can degrade audio (depending on the algorithms used). The **MR-1000** is the larger of the two units, and supports sample rates up to 5.6MHz. It offers 14-inch/XLR combi inputs with phantom-powered mic preamps, and XLR and RCA analog outs. A USB 2.0 connection provides easy transfer to computer. The **MR-1** is a compact unit supporting up to 2.8MHz sample rates. It includes a stereo electret condenser mic, and has dual balanced mini-plug inputs and a stereo mini-plug output, as well as USB connectivity.

Both units can operate on battery or AC power, have an internal 20GB hard drive, and come with AudioGate software for converting the 1-bit files to various PCM formats. Each recorder also supports PC/Mac recording at resolutions up to 24-bit/192kHz. These recorders are ideal for stereo mixdown, archiving in extremely high resolution, live 2-track recording, and other applications.

**M-Audio**

The **NVR10** from M-Audio is a unique tool combining an 8x2 analog mixer with a 10x10 24-bit/96kHz digital audio interface in one package. You can use the NVR10 as a stand-alone mixer, as an interface, you can return computer audio to the board for analog mixing and monitoring, and utilize the channels for latency-free tracking and overdubbing. Each channel has 3-band EQ, and there’s an integrated digital effects processor with 16 effects right onboard. The NVR10 is compatible with just about any software DAW, including Pro Tools M-Powered.

**Neumann**

Neumann introduced three new digital microphones equipped with DSP, the omnidirectional **KM 183 D**, cardioid **KM 184 D**, and supercardioid **KM 185 D**. The analog-to-digital converter is located immediately next to the capsule and supports dynamic range far exceeding that of the capsule with no coloration for absolute performance transparency — and no mic preamp is required! The integrated DSP functions — gain, compression, limiting, de-essing, peak limiting, and anti-clipping processing — can be controlled remotely via DM-2 and RCS control software.

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Primera
If you want a truly professional-looking CD-R to hand out to clients or to sell to customers, you want to print directly on the disc itself, not use stick-on paper labels. Getting pro-looking discs just got easier with the **Primera Bravo SE Disc Publisher**. The Bravo SE is an “all-in-one” disc duplicator and printer in a single compact desktop unit. The printer offers 4,800dpi full-color printing, and you can dupe and print up to 20 CDs or DVDs at a time. Advanced robotics make the process hands-free, and just a single cable is required to connect it with your PC or Mac. Easy to use software is included for both platforms.

**Roger Nichols Digital**
Engineer/producer Roger Nichols and his crew at Roger Nichols Digital were showing all their plug-ins, including the upcoming **Digital Detailer**, a stereo mastering processor developed by Roger and used by him on countless hit records. The process involves a combination of 3-band limiting, spectral harmonic detection, 3-band drive processing, and dynamic widening using psycho-acoustic processing. Roger has fine-tuned the process to provide the most effective result with the least amount of fiddling. A comprehensive set of meters allows you to adjust Detailer to perfectly match your audio signals.

**SSL**
Our friends at Solid State Logic had a big show, with SSL Detailer to perfectly match your audio signals. Roger has fine-tuned the process to provide the most realistic musical experience possible. This sample pack simply installs right into Logic.

**TC Electronic**
The **UnWrap** algorithm in TC Electronic’s flagship System 600 processor has been much heralded for its ability to convert stereo material into 5.1 surround while remaining faithful to the original mix’s width, timbre, spaciousness, and other significant factors. Now, that same algorithm is available in Pro Tools TDM and PowerCore versions! Once processed, the 5.1 output can subsequently be downmixed to stereo with no sonic penalties. UnWrap includes customized up-conversion presets for film production and music mastering.

**Universal Audio**
They were shown under glass, but the new DCS (Desktop Console System) products from Universal Audio had some of the biggest buzz at the show. Two products, designed in partnership with the original Euphonix founders, were displayed: the **Remote Preamp** and **Monitor Master**. Each consists of a rackmountable “base station” and a DCS-Link remote control surface. The Remote Preamp has two console-grade mic preamps, a high-quality headphone amp with monitor-only effects such as reverb and EQ, and more. The Monitor Master is a speaker and cue controller — basically the master section from a large-format console. There are five stereo ins (three analog, two digital), mono summing, dim, mute, L/R solo, phase, and swap features. Talkback functionality is also built in, along with a reference-grade 24-bit/192kHz digital-to-analog converter. The DCS Monitor Master is designed to work seamlessly with the DCS Remote Preamp for a complete desktop production solution.

If you’ve ever tried to link two LA-2A limiters for stereo, you’ll appreciate the 2-LA-2. With this unit, Universal Audio has packaged two LA-2As into one dual-rackspace chassis, with stereo-linked or dual mono operation. Dual socketed T4 gain reduction modules allow for switching from slow to fast recovery time for increased flexibility.

**Waves**
Plug-in purveyors, Waves, moved their bundles into the liquid metal realm with the **Mercury Bundle**, which contains 91 processors, including everything from the Diamond Surround and Vocal bundles as well as the new MacxVolume dynamics processor, and the GTR plug-in and hardware, with the addition of three new **V-Series** vintage modeled plug-ins based on classic British consoles: V-EQ5, V-EQ4, and V-comp.

To learn more about these and other great new products from the AES Show, visit our show report online at www.sweetwater.com/publications/reports. Be sure to tune-in to our daily inSync e-newsletter at www.sweetwater.com/inSync for current updates. And, of course, your Sweetwater Sales Engineer is your best source of up-to-the-minute information on these or any products we carry!

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In my last column, we explored the inner workings of our Service Department with Eryk Foss, our Service Manager. This time, let’s visit with Brian Randol, Sweetwater’s Warehouse and Distribution Manager. His team is responsible for everything from receiving products from vendors to shipping orders to customers.

Tell us about your background and what brought you to Sweetwater.

BR: I’ve worked in the distribution industry for over 20 years. During this time, I’ve covered every aspect of the distribution cycle and its effect on customer service. I worked for UPS for 11 years in various management capacities. It was through UPS that I became aware of Sweetwater and the growth that was happening year after year.

Describe your department’s responsibilities.

My team is responsible for every part of the distribution cycle. As soon as the cool gear shows up at our facility, my team starts the process of making sure each and every one of our customers will be satisfied and has a great “out of the box” experience. This includes receiving the gear, putting it away in our warehouse, pulling the correct items for orders, packing orders to arrive damage-free, and last but not least, putting address labels on the boxes to ensure they arrive at the correct locations — and let’s not forget adding candy to the box! Every stage of the distribution cycle is critical in our mission of providing the Sweetwater Difference.

How do you view your department as part of the larger Sweetwater puzzle?

We talk constantly about the “Sweetwater Difference.” We treat every invoice, every customer, as a VIP customer! When our customers receive their gear, it’s my goal to make every one of them go “Wow, this is awesome!” As we “wow” them with their order, it builds their relationship with Sweetwater. If we fall short of taking care of a customer, I personally follow up to see how we can improve as a team. Every order my team ships presents the image of Sweetwater and the Sweetwater Difference to our customers. This is huge.

How long have you been at Sweetwater and how has your job changed during your tenure?

I’ve been here five years. The biggest change has been the volume of business we complete on a daily basis. Today, we’re doing more than double the volume compared to when I started. The amount of inventory we stock has more than doubled, and the number of invoices we ship on a daily basis has more than doubled. Because of our efficient processes and technology, the number of employees hasn’t had to grow nearly as much. With that said, our philosophy of treating every customer as a VIP hasn’t changed at all!

How has our new campus affected your department?

Our new facility is unbelievable. It’s so much larger than our old warehouse. The additional space alone makes us much more efficient. The new distribution center has a state-of-the-art conveyor system that moves gear through the process with very few handlings. In the world of warehousing, the less you handle an item, the better for everyone, including the customer. We’ve implemented bar code technology that helps us track inventory better and makes us more efficient and accurate.

How would you compare Sweetwater’s service to other retail organizations?

There’s no comparison. The steps we take here to satisfy each and every customer are amazing. As I mentioned earlier, every customer is a VIP customer. I talk about service each and every day with my team. We talk about our successes and we also talk about areas we need to improve upon. This constant awareness is part of the Sweetwater Difference.

Is there anything else you’d like to add?

Like other Sweetwater departments, the vast majority of the employees in my department are musicians. They’re very passionate about the gear they’re shipping to our customers. They understand the urgency in getting the equipment to our customers and how it impacts a gig, music department, church worship, studio session, etc. This understanding drives us on a daily basis.

Thanks, Brian. Rock and roll!

Jeff (VP of Sales)
Almost every musician dreams of performing in such revered venues as Carnegie Hall, Davies Hall in San Francisco, or Boston’s Symphony Hall. While only a select few will ever have the thrill of taking the stage in one of these concert halls, the rest of us can now hear what we might sound like there thanks to a miracle of music technology called “convolution reverb.”

Using convolution reverb, we can now effectively place any performer into his or her preferred acoustic space, whether it’s a world-class concert hall, a deep, dark cavern, or the back of a Volkswagen. The technology uses high-resolution (up to 32-bit) recordings of real acoustic spaces called “impulse responses” (IR for short) to create realistic reverbs.

Numerous companies offer products that utilize convolution technology to great effect. TASCAM has GigaPulse, which not only offers acoustic spaces, but also uses convolution to model rare vintage microphones. Audio Ease has Altiverb. Waves offers two convolution reverbs: IR-1 and the more affordable IR-L. Cakewalk’s SONAR Producer includes the Perfect Space convolution reverb. Logic Pro has Space Designer, and from Digidesign, there’s Trillium Labs TL Space.

I’ve worked with both Altiverb and IR-1, and I have to say both deliver incredibly detailed sonics via comprehensive impulse response libraries. I also have to admit that it doesn’t take long before you’re addicted. Having one world-class acoustic space is pretty awesome, but how about more than a hundred? That’s a good way to lose an entire weekend.

But it’s not just dedicated convolution reverbs that deliver on the promise of stunning acoustic spaces. Native Instruments’ Akoustik Piano package includes four sonic environments courtesy of convolution technology. The company’s Kontakt 2 also includes lots of impulse responses to use with any sampled instrument. MOTU’s Symphonic Instrument and Ethno have convolution reverb, as does BIAS Peak Pro 5 and probably a few others I’m forgetting. Talk about serious ear candy!

Before I close, I want to mention another cool little item I just got the chance to play with — err, I mean field test — the M-Audio MidAir 25 Wireless USB MIDI controller. It’s built around the same Frontier Design Group wireless technology that’s used in the Transport DMW Controller.

M-Audio just seems to keep coming up with exciting products that almost every musician can afford. The MidAir 25 sells for under $200 with free shipping included. It’s got a 50-foot range and lightning-fast response plus it functions as a standard USB-MIDI interface. Makes you wonder what’s next!

Casio WK-8000/WK-3800/AP-45

Once upon a time, Casio was known primarily for digital watches and calculators. But that all changed in 1980, when they released the Casiotone electronic keyboard, designed to be fun to play without special training or hours of practice. The overall goal was to have fun with music using an intuitive and easy-to-navigate device and tones that replicated pianos, organs, and guitars.

Now the tradition goes pro with the WK Series of keyboards, which feature powerful built-in sounds and intuitive user interfaces. The WK Series delivers an amazing array of tones — 894 to be exact — from orchestra to synths and all points in between. Casio also loaded the WK Series keyboards with a realistic emulation of a drawbar organ with a rotary speaker. Manipulate your sounds with built-in effects including reverb, chorus, and EQ. The WK-8000 has 88 full-size velocity-sensitive keys while the WK-3800 sports 76. Both keyboards boast similar features — with the number of keys and the WK-8000’s stand being the differentiators.

The WK Series keyboards are fully equipped for the practice room, studio, and stage. In Synthesizer Mode, you can edit the built-in sound to create your own custom tones, and then save up to 120 presets for future use. Once you’re done creating new sonic landscapes, returning to a traditional piano sound is one touch away with the dedicated piano voice key. Built-in Auto Accompaniment provides realistic backing performances and you can record up to six individual parts in the memory bank along with all their parameters for playback. The center LCD display is a great teaching tool, as it can show you fingerings, notation for notes played, and it’s backlit so it’s easy to read on a dark stage. The WK-8000 ships with a custom stand.

With the AP-45, Casio merges grand piano sound with the functionality of a digital keyboard and packages it neatly inside a traditional console design with a rosewood-style cabinet. Electronically, the AP-45 has 64-note polyphony, reverb and chorus, a metronome, split and layer function, MIDI I/O, and a 4-speaker system. The 88-key touch-sensitive keyboard faithfully emulates the feel of a traditional piano. The AP-45 measures a mere 4.5’ x 1.5’ x 2.7’, giving you traditional piano sound and feel while taking up relatively little space compared a grand piano.

Whether you’re a pro looking for good keyboards for practice, or a parent with kids that want to learn to play piano, the latest keyboards from Casio are jam-packed with features and great sounds that will satisfy for years to come. And they’re priced very attractively as well!
By Mitch Gallagher

A few issues ago, I discussed how I keep my software instruments organized. Since then, I’ve gotten a fairly steady stream of emails from readers asking for more details about how the system is set up. So I thought I’d go more in-depth, hopefully answering the questions, and providing some recommendations at the same time. Remember, this system works for me, but that doesn’t mean it will work for you. It’s the concepts that matter, not the particulars.

Let’s begin with the hardware. (To see a diagram of the rig, visit www.sweetwater.com/studio/notebook.) The centerpiece for my studio is a Mac 2.6GHz dual-G5 computer. It has 2GB of RAM installed. Recommendation #1: Never skimp on RAM! There are two internal drives installed. A 160GB SATA drive serves as the system drive, and contains all the software applications and plug-ins. I only have audio/music software on this computer. Recommendation #2: Dedicate your studio computer. The second 200GB SATA internal drive holds all the audio tracks. Recommendation #3: Get the fastest audio drive you can for recording your tracks.

There are five external FireWire drives attached to the computer. One is a Glyph removable GT Key hot-swappable drive used for back up. Recommendation #4: Back up. Now. Another is an old FireWire drive that holds iTunes songs and reference material. The remaining three are the fixed Glyph 200GB drives detailed a few issues ago; they hold software synth data and sample libraries. (You can download past issues of SweetNotes at www.sweetwater.com/publications.) Recommendation #5: Don’t skimp on data storage.

There are several USB hubs connected to the computer: two for iLoks and other dongles, a third for an E-mu Xboard 49 USB controller keyboard and M-Audio TriggerFinger, and a USB 2.0 hub for the Native Instruments Kore and Guitar Rig 2 Rig Kontrol 2 hardware, and a CompactFlash card reader for transferring files from my portable recorder.

I use two different audio “systems” with the computer. First, there’s a Digidesign Pro Tools HD Accel system installed in the PCI slots. Second, I often use the built-in optical ports on the Mac for native audio applications. The Pro Tools interface’s AES/EBU output and the computer’s optical output both feed digitally into a Benchmark DAC-1 D-A converter, which goes directly to JBL LSR6328P monitors and an LSR6328P subwoofer, and serves as the monitor volume controller.

Recommendation #6: For consistency, monitor through the same D-A converter for all your applications. I use the Pro Tools interface for my inputs, augmented by Benchmark ADC-1 and Universal Audio 2192 A-D converters. A Digidesign Control 24 is my Pro Tools control surface. Recommendation #7: Control surfaces are essential for performing mixes and interfacing with your DAW.

The hardware of the studio is rounded out with several mic preamps (Groove Tubes Viper, Universal Audio LA-610, Millennia HV-3b and M-2a, Focusrite ISA-428, and A Designs Pacifica), and a selection of microphones (Royer, Neumann, Soundelux, AKG, Audio-Technica, Rode, Microtech-Gefell, Earthworks, Shure, and Mojave Audio). Recommendation #8: A selection of diverse preamps and mics gives you a broad sonic palette from which to draw. A Mackie Big Knob provides talkback, cue, and headphone amp functions. Auralex ProPanels, SpaceCouplers, and LENRDs provide acoustic treatment.

Next issue we’ll take a look at the software setup, then examine two portable rigs. See you then!

Gibson Labs Guitar Amps

It’s strange how market trends will affect a particular manufacturer’s history. Gibson has been building tube amps since the 1940s and was actually the first company to produce an amp that was truly considered “loud.” The GA40 Les Paul model had a 12-inch Jensen speaker, lots of volume, and rich, clean tone. The GA5 Les Paul Junior was the most popular amp of the 1950s. In the 1960s, with the explosion of rock and roll and then surf music, guitarists were looking for a tone with tons of treble. In fact, several manufacturers produced treble boosters that would make the newer, brighter amps sound even edgier. The British Invasion of the mid-60s was all about bright, crisp guitar tone and that wasn’t the Gibson sound.

In 2003, Gibson reintroduced the GA5 Les Paul Junior, which quickly became the best-selling amp in its range. This gave the company a reason to begin crafting a new line of hand-built amplifiers with a distinctively retro look that clearly pays homage to its golden-era roots. The GA5 is still available and more popular than ever. The five-watt, all-tube, Class A power amp has point-to-point wiring, a solid-state rectifier, and a universal power transformer, all in a classic beige tolex cabinet with a custom-voiced 8-inch Goldtone speaker. This compact amp delivers a smooth, buttery sustain at volume levels that won’t cause long-term hearing loss.

The GA20RT is a 15-watt Class A, hand-built combo amp with point-to-point wiring, tube reverb, tube tremolo, a pentode/triode switch, and a 12-inch Eminence Legend speaker. The two-tone Vintage Brown and Tan Tolex cabinet gives it an unmistakably classy look and is a perfect complement to the cream control panel with classic “chicken head” control knobs. The GA40RTV is basically the same amplifier, but with a 30-watt Class A power amp.

Check these amps out today — they look great, and best of all, sound wonderful! You can learn more from your Sales Engineer or at Sweetwater.com.
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