

GC PRO PRESENTS AUDIO

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

I want to open a new chapter of our *Audio Solutions* magazine by introducing you to some of the staff that represents our core values. Each month we will present a key member of the GC family who helps support our customers, vision, vendors and the industry in general. After all, companies are made of people, and we have the very best in the business.

Meet Dinshah Sanjana, Buyer/Category Manager, Software. Dinshah began his career at Guitar Center nine years ago, working with our keyboard and recording products. He took charge of the software category about three and a half years ago. After talking to customers and discussing their needs, it became crystal clear to Dinshah that we needed to expand our offerings of software products. But it wasn't simply about increasing our inventory; it was about how our customers shop, and the best ways of providing them access to what they need, *when they need it*. For many of our customers, a 9-to-5 job means playing a gig at 9:00 p.m. and getting home at 5:00 a.m. or mixing a track at any hour of the day or night.

Dinshah started working on a proprietary Electronic License Delivery (ELD) system that would deliver licenses quickly to all the retail channels we were offering our customers. He envisioned a system where a producer, engineer or musician could access and download licenses for any software instantaneously. Working from this vision, he created an ELD system that immediately delivers licenses across all our retail channels, be they brick and mortar or online portals. The ELD system it is extremely intuitive to use, with the customer receiving, almost instantaneously, an invoice with the license code, a download URL to download the installer and content, and a tech support email or phone number in case there are any issues during installation. Bam—done!

We have also expanded our inventory to include some of the top brands in the industry: Ableton, Arturia, Acoustica, Antares, Audiffex, Arobas, Audio Ease, Bluecat Audio, Cakewalk, Celemony, D-16 Group, Diffusion Audio, FXPansion, Garritan, Gobbler, IK Multimedia, Image Line, Impulse, iZotope, Lexicon, Loop Loft, Make Music, Metric Halo, Musiclab, McDSP, Nugen Audio, Ohm Force, Parallels, Pianoteq, Presonus, Propellerhead, Serato, Sonic Reality, Sonnox, Sony, Sound Toys, Sugar Bytes, Syncro Arts, Wave Arts, XLN Audio and Zynaptiq, to name a few, with more to follow.

A few months ago I shared my thoughts on adding value and how it's not merely about the price, but rather the total customer experience. Dinshah is just one of hundreds of people who are working to provide you with the best possible customer experience, and that will translate into greater customer satisfaction and even stronger long-term customer relationships.

Visit our website at stores.guitarcenter.com/gcpro for access to our staff and exclusive content, and who knows, maybe tonight at 3:00 a.m., when you find yourself in need of a new piece of software, thanks to Dinshah you won't have to wait up to 24 hours—you'll have it immediately.

Rick Plushner
Vice President, GC Pro



SOLUTIONS

OCEAN WAY HR3X HIGH-RESOLUTION REFERENCE MONITORS

GC PRO TAKES LISTENING TO THE NEXT LEVEL



Those who have heard the Ocean Way HR3 High-Resolution Reference Monitor System, introduced in October 2012, will tell you that you don't so much listen to it as experience it. Most of those who have done so at the unique GC Pro recording/listening demo facility at Guitar Center Hollywood on Sunset Boulevard came away with a new understanding of what music can sound like. At close to \$60,000 per pair, including custom subwoofers, equalizer and crossover, it's hardly an impulse buy. But at the same time, price is not an object for dozens of high-end audio professionals who have come to rely on them for a truly accurate picture of what the sound is.

Now, that experience has been taken to the next level with the introduction of the Ocean Way HR3X monitoring system. Installed in that same GC Pro custom demonstration facility, the HR3X includes some new technology and materials, while

retaining the lofty mission that its creator, Grammy Award-winning Allen Sides, set for the HR3: to bridge the gap between audiophile Hi-Fi and world-class studio monitoring.

"That gap had never been bridged before," says Sides, an acclaimed engineer, producer and mixer who founded and built Ocean Way Studios Hollywood, Ocean Way Studios Nashville, Ocean Way St. Barth's at Eden Rock and Record One Studios Sherman Oaks—together the home of hits by artists including The Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Eminem, Janet Jackson and Radiohead, to name just a few. "When people think of studio monitors, what comes to mind is loud and harsh sounding, which has nothing whatsoever to do with accuracy or audiophile sound. If a mixer is using inaccurate speakers, especially at a very high volume, the relationship between the elements of a mix can be misleading, causing the mixer to duck certain frequencies, and that's how vocals get lost or low



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OCEAN WAY HR3X HIGH-RESOLUTION REFERENCE MONITORS

frequencies get distorted in a mix, and you won't realize it until later. If we can't hear accurately, we make bad judgments while mixing. With the HR series, I set out to change that."

And the HR3 has done exactly that for those who demand that kind of achievement for their music, including artists and producers Cee Lo Green, Rickey Minor, Steve Vai, Dave Grohl, Rob Cavallo and other A-list names, as well as commercial installations like George Lucas's Skywalker Ranch scoring stage, Trevor Horn's Sarm Studio London and Hollywood Records executive conference room. What the new HR3X brings to the table is an expanded system, and one that takes advantage of manufacturing and materials refinements. The enhanced HR3X adds two new Ocean Way S212 subwoofers, as well as refined Ocean Way electronics including 1/3-octave equalizers, and a new three-way crossover. The speakers have a reinforced cast frame and aluminum cones, driven by a very large magnet structure. According to Sides, two performance aspects that the HR3X has dramatically enhanced are overall volume level and low-frequency characteristics. The S212 twin 12" subwoofer produces an extended and detailed low end to 20Hz, and the overall system can attain SPL in excess of 120dB, over 10dB more than its predecessor. What you end up with is virtually unlimited dynamic range while maintaining absolutely matched uniform frequency response between channels.

"The system is designed to move a lot of air," says Sides emphatically. "At the same time, the low-end definition is amazing, down to 20Hz. We've added more low-end capacity with the HR3X, but it also produces a significantly enhanced dynamic range across the entire spectrum. And the high-frequency dispersion remains very wide, as it was designed to be—from 1kHz to 20kHz, the two stereo speakers typically fall within 1dB of each other, creating absolute symmetry in regards to stereo imaging, so there's very smooth off-axis response and no really narrow sweet spot that you have to sit in to get accurate imaging. We carefully select and match each diaphragm to get the left and right sides to match perfectly." Sides says the new HR3X system is designed to meet the needs of a generation of music production that is putting far more emphasis on low-frequency response, from hip-hop to full-range classical music. "You would not believe what a huge church pipe organ sounds like on the HR3X," he exclaims.

Manufacturing for the HR3X takes place in Ocean Way's Burbank facility, where the 6.5-foot-tall system takes about six weeks of detailed work to assemble. It's also the site of the research and development that led to the HR series of monitors and to the progressively improved iterations like the HR3X, which has individual toroids for each frequency band. "In the beginning, we did the work at the studios in Hollywood," Sides recalls. "But it became pretty intense over time. It needed its own place to keep developing."

Almost \$60,000 is a steep price for speakers, but Sides makes the case that monitoring is the most critical aspect of the entire music chain, whether you're creating it or simply appreciating it. The trend towards DSP-calibrated speakers plays into the desire for convenience but doesn't necessarily contribute to the quality of the sound. Combine that with the huge variation in mix and listening environments that contemporary music is made in now, and it has put more stress on monitoring than ever.

"The only way you can make the correct decisions is when you hear things accurately," Sides declares with finality. "Otherwise, you're just shooting in the dark." Not everyone is going to have the means to acquire an HR3X, but everyone is welcome to listen, inside the GC Pro Hollywood demo facility, including a Slate Digital console and a host of auxiliary gear. If you are lucky enough to be able to take one home, GC Pro's sales and technical team will work closely with Sides to consult on its installation, helping to integrate it into its new specific space and making recommendations about acoustics. But they don't actually have to do that much, because that's the real beauty of a monitoring system like this: it's not a matter of adapting the environment to it, or vice versa—it's simply ready to go.

Derek Snyder, GC Pro Director, Western Region, says, "GC Pro has been the U.S. distributor of the Ocean Way Monitor system since its inception. We are honored and fortunate to have such a good partner and friend in Allen Sides. The HR3X system is sonic nirvana. As Allen said earlier, 'The only way you can make the correct decisions is when you hear things accurately,' and this is precisely what Ocean Way Monitors offer. We invite everyone to come out to our Hollywood demo facility and experience the Ocean Way Monitors for themselves. Get ready to be amazed." ♦

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PRODUCER'S CORNER / JEFF BALDING

Grammy-nominated producer/engineer Jeff Balding has worked with an eclectic range of artists, including Shakira, Megadeth, Celine Dion, Keith Urban, Taylor Swift, Blake Shelton, Thompson Square and Shania Twain. Balding currently serves as President and Governor of The Recording Academy's Nashville Chapter. He has also served on the Recording Academy's National P&E Wing Steering Committee and co-chaired the Nashville Chapter P&E Wing Committee. Balding is an alum of Leadership Music. In addition, he serves on the board of Belmont University's Curb College of Entertainment & Music Business.



What was the last project you released?

The latest project released that I've worked on is Shakira's new, self-titled album. Some other current projects include Jewel's upcoming release. We've been cutting a lot of it live on the floor with her and the musicians all in the same room. I've really enjoyed that aspect of the record. There's something special you get when "the take" [that] is *the* take. There's nothing wrong with doing overdubs, but to capture the take on the first shot is magic. I'm also putting finishing touches on the mixes for Don Henley's new album and working on projects for Cole Swindell and Jana Kramer.

What is the most challenging aspect of the current business climate from your perspective?

No one could disagree that there are new challenges in our industry. Revenue has been dropping—and as a result, projects budgets are lower—and music consumption is ever changing. This landscape is challenging for all producers and engineers. That said, I tend to be a glass-half-full guy. In times like this, I think we need to look outside the box to create new business models and new potential income streams. We also have the technology at our fingertips now to take advantage of new opportunities like developing an artist without a large capital investment.

I think another challenge is that we feel more pressure now to create a competitive product, and as you know, to do it on a smaller budget. I think this is because there's so much more at stake for artists now. Not only for major label artists but also for indie artists, since most of the indie artists are competing for the same slot as label artists. There's so much noise out there for an artist to break through.

How has your production workflow changed in the past few years?

I think my workflow has benefited for the better from the changes we've seen in the past few years in software, hardware and recording methods. It does require discipline, but the current workflow allows

for multi-tasking and multiple projects. I could never have done these things as easily before. Expectations have not been lowered either—in fact, expectations have increased because the industry has become even more competitive. One of the biggest changes for me is owning my own workspace. I would imagine it's one of the biggest changes for many producers and engineers. Before I had my own space I was definitely restricted by budget. I could only work where the budget permitted, and sometimes that was not my first choice. Now I have much more control and freedom to create.

On the other hand, there has to be a certain strategy when you have your own place in how you manage your time. Time, as everyone knows, is one of the most valuable assets we have in doing a project. Deadlines can limit the creative process, but even without a deadline you do have to call it "finished" at some point. In the analog days, I always thought how great it would be to have my own place to experiment and create the best possible music I can make, but it's easy to spend too long on a drum sound or a vocal and get obsessed with it. And it's just as easy to procrastinate on a project, too. But despite these management challenges, I love having my own place to work.

Have you discovered any new gear or software this year? If so, what, and why do you like it?

Isn't it a requirement that anyone in this business is a gear junkie? There's a lot of great gear out there, but the way I keep myself in check and out of the gear-of-the-month club is to decide whether a piece of gear (or software) allows me to do my job faster or easier, or allows me to make the listener's experience better. I love vintage gear. Luckily some of the vintage gear plug-ins sound really great. I'm a big fan of UAD plug-ins and some of my recent additions include the UA 610 tube preamp and EQ Collection, the Dangerous BAX EQ Collection and Pultec Passive EQ Collection. My latest gear craving has been for funky vintage mics. I recently picked up an AKG D19c and a Grundig ribbon. I like where mics like this place an instrument in the landscape of a track. ♦



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