

PMI Audio Group

Three in One

NIGEL PALMER talks quality and value with PMI's finest.

PMI Audio Group, established in 1995 by owner Alan Hyatt, and located in Gardena, California, is a pro audio distribution company with a difference. Owning all of the companies it distributes allows PMI to direct product development and offer global price parity.

The relative youth of the organisation belies the depth of experience within it, and brands covered are respected names such as Joemeek, Toft Audio Designs, Studio Projects, and Stephen Paul Microphones.

Both Hyatt and Director of Marketing Reid Mason started their careers as musicians over 20 years ago, and the two met in the late Eighties when Mason started working at Hyatt's AMH Sales, manufacturer's representatives responsible for looking after AKG microphones, Steinberg, Sony Pro Audio and Kramer guitars (among others); after a stint with other companies Mason rejoined Hyatt at PMI in 2003.

Hyatt started PMI as a one-man concern, his first distribution line in 1995 being the Joemeek signal processing range, which he imported, later buying the company from its founder, Ted Fletcher when it went into liquidation. "But Alan wanted to do more," says Mason "and with his background in recording and pro audio, microphones were the next logical step." Alan Hyatt takes up the story: "I found a microphone line in Germany and became their distributor, only to find later that they were actually manufactured in China! It only made

sense to go directly to the source, so I developed a relationship with 797 Audio, one of the largest and most respected pro audio manufacturers located in Beijing." Thus, Studio Projects was born, with the first deliveries of C1, C3, and T3 microphones in 2000 being widely distributed – PMI presently accesses around 70 countries worldwide. Hyatt: "The timing couldn't have been better. With Studio Projects, I was able to provide a quality product at a price that was a real value for end users. At that time, there really weren't any companies that were competing in that arena. We're flattered that our mics are compared to those from the finest German manufacturers. We never intended it that way."

Hyatt met Malcolm Toft, of Trident console fame, through his Joemeek connections. Their working relationship developing Toft's signal processor product line built on the good reputation that Trident already enjoyed in America, with older desks such as the 80B being sought after in high-end facilities for tracking and mixing, a trend that continues. Mason says: "Malcolm Toft is truly an industry icon! As head engineer at Trident Studios, he recorded many artists, including The Beatles, and he was founder of Trident Audio Developments, the console company that came out of Trident Studios." Mason enthuses about the forthcoming, and intriguingly phonetic, Trident Series™ ATB mixer from Toft Audio Designs: "We've seen the industry come full circle in regards to consoles. When DAWs

STUDIO PROJECTS PRODUCTS

Microphones

B Series

- B1 single diaphragm condenser.
- B3 multi-pattern large diaphragm condenser.
- TB1 cardioid large diaphragm tube.

C Series

- C1 single diaphragm condenser.
- C3 multi-pattern large diaphragm condenser.
- C4 small diaphragm condenser.
- T3 multi-pattern large diaphragm tube.
- LSD2 large stereo diaphragm condenser.

Mic Pres

- VTB1 single channel tube
- SP828 eight channel solid state.



took the place of tape, everyone was in a hurry to "mix in the box", forsaking their mixing desks for moving a mouse around on screen. Now they're beginning to realise that analogue summing done right sounds fantastic, and having a few more microphone pre-amplifiers is not a bad thing." He continues: "The ATB console series will do for mixers what Studio Projects did for microphones. By utilising our manufacturing ties with China, we're offering 'big console sound' at a price point that is unheard of!"

Owning Joemeek, Toft Audio Designs, and Studio Projects has advantages all round, it seems: "Most distributors have very little input in terms of product development. offers Mason. "As owners of the companies we distribute we're uniquely suited to direct product changes, when needed" We pride ourselves on being very accessible, which allows us to react quickly to input from end users. If we hear enough of a demand, we'll make changes to a product." He cites the ATB as an example: "We have a very active user forum. Malcolm's original design included four auxiliary sends. There was such an outcry for six that we changed it. I call it 'user-driven design' – we're willing to do that on any of our products." Hyatt: "Having a distribution network in addition to being the manufacturer has distinct advantages. We have our own facility in Torquay, England, with R&D, warehousing, shipping and repair. From there, we freight to all of



The TAD Trident Series ATB console.



Europe. The US office takes care of North America and the Pacific Asian countries. In countries that we can't service directly, we're set up through local distributors.

Hyatt continues: "This allows us to have 'global price parity'. The price of our products in Europe is the same as in the US. The only difference is the exchange rate. End users don't have to shop all over the Internet. They know that they can get the same deal from their local reseller as they can from the huge web-based retailer. Then if they have a problem, their local source is there to help."

Hyatt goes on: "We're also known for excellent product support. In fact, we're still fixing products that we sold back in 1998

– long after the warranty has expired. We rarely charge for it, usually just freight and our cost in parts. Our number one commitment is to keeping our customers happy.

Alan Hyatt's PMI Audio Group started off as one-man band in 1995, distributing the Joemeek signal processing range then owned by Ted Fletcher. A commitment to value for money and customer service became early trademarks, eventually complemented by an unusual global parity pricing policy. A series of company creations and acquisitions followed, starting with Studio Projects microphones in 1998 and going on to include Toft Audio Designs – with Malcolm Toft, well known in audio circles for his contribution to the original Trident company and consoles, on board – and the Joemeek company itself. In 2005 the company boasts a staff in double figures, distribution into nearly seventy countries and a permanent jumping-off point for Europe in the UK. Other assets include a strong portfolio of other distributed brands alongside in-house R&D, customising and repair, and PMI continues to serve every level of the industry from project studios to Grammy-award winners.

Another atypical PMI feature is that it offers in-house repair and custom facilities. Mason explains: "Brent Casey (VP of Engineering in the US office); is all-round brilliant. As a microphone designer, he's on par with the very best in the world. We fix all of the products we manufacture here, and Brent in particular will do lots of customisation, especially on microphones. He's always looking to make improvements, and when he comes up with something that sounds fantastic, it will eventually find its way into the product." This is backed with a similar service run by

TOFT AUDIO DESIGNS PRODUCTS



Signal Processing

- ATC-2 dual channel compressor EQ mic pre.
- AFC-2 dual channel EQ mic pre.

- DC-2 dual channel mono/stereo compressor.
- EC-1 mono channel compressor EQ mic pre.

Coming soon from Toft Audio Designs, the Trident Series ATB console. PMI also distributes Sony Professional Audio, Stephen Paul Audio and Groove-Doctors.

Joemeek's Allan Bradford in the UK.

What does PMI see in its crystal ball for the future? Alan Hyatt: "Tremendous growth. Toft Audio plans to re-make the Trident A-range the right way, Joemeek is going to be showing its new FireQ and we'll be entering the MI market with stomp boxes. Studio Projects is known for high quality/value mics, now we're going to address a more sophisticated user. Our new CS and E Series microphones are getting rave reviews with our beta testers and will hit the market soon."

Reid Mason: "Studio Projects Electronics is working with a world class designer on a series of high-end valve pre-amplifiers and dynamics processors." He adds: "You'll see products embracing new technology

yet harking back to an era when quality analogue equipment was all there was."

And a last word from Alan Hyatt: "I'm proud to know that not only are my products being used in project studios but also on Grammy-award-winning albums. We're going to continue to offer a great value proposition, and I just don't see anything holding us back."

PMI Audio Group.

☎ +1 877 563 6335. (USA)

☎ +44 (0)1803 215 111. (UK)

✉ sales@pmiaudio.com

🌐 www.pmiaudio.com

🌐 www.studioprojectsusa.com

🌐 www.joemeek.com

🌐 www.toftaudiodesigns.com

JOEMEELK PRODUCTS



Microphones

- JM27 small diaphragm.
- JM37 large diaphragm.
- JM37DP large diaphragm.
- JM 47 large diaphragm.

Signal processing

- ThreeQ mono mic pre compressor EQ.
- SixQ dual channel mic pre compressor EQ.
- OneQ studio channel
- TwinQ dual studio channel.