

From Music to Microphones

JAMES LAMB, FOUNDER AND
PRESIDENT, POINT SOURCE AUDIO

BY GLENN GREENBERG

Like many people in the pro audio business, James Lamb started out as a musician. The California native's career as a professional trumpet player led him to New York, where he also became an arranger and music director—and even conducted at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. Returning to his home state after a few years, Lamb met the owners of Apogee Sound, which led to him becoming the company's national sales manager around 1993. "I've been in the business ever since," he says.

In 2000, Lamb was hired by Digigram, a French manufacturer of broadcast sound cards and network audio. "[It's] one of the premier companies in the broadcast sector," he explains. Lamb ultimately spent 10 years at Digigram in Business Development. His stint there, he says, gave him the opportunity to see "a different side of audio."

After noticing that there was a niche in the market for a more durable earset microphone, Lamb founded his own company, Point Source Audio (PSA), in 2008. "The company literally began on the development of a single microphone feature—the 'Unbreakable Boom'—that continues to be the flagship feature in our entire premium line of head-worn microphones today," Lamb says.

At first, Point Source Audio focused primarily on OEM manufacturing. "We were a startup with one product in 2008 when we launched the CO-7 'Unbreakable Boom' microphone and we were also manufacturing for other OEMs," Lamb explains.

That changed a short time later, however, with the arrival of Yvonne Ho, who became Lamb's partner and currently serves as VP of Marketing. The addition of Ho, Lamb says, marked the company's decision to launch the PSA brand. "We have grown our product offering and market penetration steadily since."

Lamb says that 10 years after its founding, PSA now offers a full line

of miniature microphones from earsets, headsets, lavaliers, proprietary earmounts and communication headsets. "In the last three years," he adds, "we have secured three patents for our EMBRACE earmount mics and our CM-series in-ear headsets."

PSA, headquartered in Petaluma, California, designs all of its mics and headsets in-house, Lamb explains, with an eye towards developing innovations to "stay ahead of the curve in terms of identifying new tools and features that are useful to the industry." The company focuses on products for theater, broadcast, houses of worship and live sound.

Those efforts have already paid off, in terms of industry recognition, as a number of its products have won awards from industry press in recent times, including the CO-8WD Headset Microphone in 2014 and both the CO2-8WL Dual Omni Lavalier Microphone and CM-i5 Audio Headset with Condenser Mic in 2017.

PSA takes a team approach to developing products like those, Lamb explains. The marketing and sales departments act as customer advocates, while everyone provides input along with the engineers during the R&D phase.

"We're a customer-driven company," he says. "Whether it's an end-user or distributor, someone who is ordering one mic or 100, we treat them the same." He adds, "My job is to make sure everyone [at PSA] has the tools and clear direction they need to be successful, so that the good folks who use our products walk away—and come back—happy."

PSA's products are sold through what Lamb describes as "a network of resellers and distributors that have close ties and deep knowledge of their markets." The company is actively expanding its presence in Europe, East Asia and beyond. Lamb also notes that PSA handles distribution in the Americas for his old employer, Digigram, and for another France-based audio network technology company, Auvitrans, in North America.

Looking at the pro audio industry,



Lamb says that he does not see competition among the companies as a contact sport. "Everyone in the business is very good at what they do, and we really respect that," he says. "We approach [competition] like a game of golf—how can we keep improving our game and do better each time we go up to the tee?"

This strategy enables PSA to be "experts at what we do, be nimble and meet unfulfilled needs in niches that other companies can't approach with the same speed and tenacity," according to Lamb. "We've always taken a business approach that has allowed us to weather dips in the economy and keep our focus on innovations that fulfill the needs of our customers."

Lamb notes that much of his business perspective comes from his background as a musician. "I've been a musician since I was nine years old and I still think like one," he says. "My music teacher was my greatest mentor. He taught me the arts and how to nurture the special kind of

drive and discipline that is the true foundation for excellence."

That experience, Lamb says, has enabled him to understand and relate to "the challenges that people in the industry face while just trying to do their jobs." And in turn, it helps PSA "provide tools that help performers achieve the magic that they do on stage."

This month marks Point Source Audio's 10-year anniversary, and the company is planning new initiatives for both the short and long term—but for now, Lamb is keeping those plans close to the vest.

"We don't want to spoil any surprises," he says. But he does drop a hint: "As a business owner, artist, and performer, I am grateful every day for the opportunities I have had to work in this industry and be a part of the performing arts community. It's important for our company to give back, so to show our gratitude in our tenth year of business, we will be making a big contribution to the community." Lamb explains that the details of "a very inspiring program" will be revealed on January 1 on the company's website.

With Point Source Audio having reached its ten-year mark, Lamb says he is focused firmly on the company's future. "We are looking forward to the next decade," he says.

Point Source Audio
point-sourceaudio.com

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