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SUPPLY

PHIL JONES BASS | BY ALEX HARRELL

THE SCIENCE OF DESIGN

Phil Jones has always considered himself a bass player first and an engineer second.

It's one of the reasons he began making bass amps — because he can see the amp from both sides: inside and out.

“I've always wanted to get that bass sound you got in a world-class studio monitor in the control room — that super clean, powerful sound,” Jones said. “I started Phil Jones Bass [out of] the desire to make the ultimate bass sound come alive and be available to bands.”

After making enough money while working in Iran as an engineer, Jones returned to his home in the United Kingdom. He started a concert sound company before becoming a live sound engineer in London. It was there that he was inspired to make near-field studio monitors through various companies. Jones then relocated to America and founded American Acoustic Development, PJB's parent company.

That was 15 years ago.

Since then, PJB has cultivated a reputation of being known for its high fidelity quality and small, lightweight size. Having 30 years of loudspeaker design experience, Jones has created the technology and infrastructure to design amps with the power to do just what he was looking for all those years ago.



Phil Jones

How Phil Jones Bass challenges & rethinks the standards of conventional amp design

SPEAKERS & SCIENCE

Though PJB is based in St. Louis, it has a 1.2 million square foot factory in China with over 3,500 employees. It has a fully blown anechoic chamber to measure acoustics in an entirely

null environment. It also has a Klippel Laser to scan a speaker with a laser beam in real time as the speaker produces a full range of frequencies — thus allowing Jones to see how each frequency behaves. Each model is tested on

a vibration table for 48 hours.

“I look at building a speaker as really like a science,” Jones said. “Some people would be like, ‘Let's try this and see if it works.’ We never do that approach. Everything that we do is calculated mathematically.”

Granted, 30 years ago he would have had to follow the trial-and-error method, building hundreds of prototypes before achieving what he was looking for. But by using the latest technological tools available, Jones can expedite that process on a computer and build cutting-edge products previously available.

“I put my money into research instead of marketing which may not be a good thing for me,” Jones joked, “but it's a good thing for the customer.”

Since it was founded, PJB has spent more than \$6 million in U.S. research, according to Jones, to create a foundation based on technological advancements instead of one based on hype and marketing efforts. As a result, PJB has built tens of thousands of speakers, and Jones said he could count on his hands how many of them have failed over the course of 15 years.

“The spirit of humanity is innovation,” he continued. “We always want to be innovative, and I'm always looking at how we can [improve things].”

Plus, innovation is remem-

bered for much longer than a clever advertisement. Investing in technology instead of brand equity may not have been the easiest road to take, but for PJB, it was worth doing.

“If you don’t have anything unique and special, there’s no point in doing something that’s already been done before because how do you get noticed?” Jones asked. “The only thing you get noticed for is being first. The first guy to cross the Atlantic alone was Charles Lindbergh, but we don’t know who the second guy was; nobody cares.”

Regarding amplifiers — which have been around “longer than I’ve been living,” Jones said — he knew that the only way to stand out from the pack was to do something with technology.

“I wanted to build something radically different,” he said. “And not different because we wanted

to be noticed as being different, but different to be better.”

That’s one of the reasons PJB wasn’t quick to pull the marketing trigger. Another reason was wanting to use quality materials. So, its premium cabinets are made with Russian Baltic birch instead of plywood and some have dovetail joints on the corners.

“To me, one of the most important things is reliability,” Jones said. “When you build a product, if that product lets you down and lets your customer down, that hurts your brand, so it’s very important that we build products that are as reliable as they possibly can be.”

Which results in cabinets that are intrinsically sound; some may use rectangular wire instead of copper wire, for example. Every individual aspect of PJB’s products are scrutinized

by Jones himself.

“We put a lot of attention and detail into every single component in a speaker; I’m kind of a fanatic about detail,” Jones said. “We even design our screws. Every screw in our cabinets is usually built by us and designed by me.”

STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Jones equated building the company to building a house. First and foremost, you need a strong foundation.

“You can’t build on a weak foundation, you have to look at the soil condition where you are, you have to look at how you build the foundation, and then build up,” he said. “So what I looked at was that our foundation was the technology.”

And now with a solid platform of technology in place, Jones felt ready to begin building up the brand and thus hired Rick

Carlson as PJB’s director of sales and marketing earlier this year.

“It may have taken me a few years to design the product, but it took me 15 years to find a guy like Rick,” Jones said. “There are very few people on the planet that are like Rick — he has the drive and the determination, the focus and the ability to actually make things happen.”

With Carlson now on-board, the company’s biggest initiative is expanding brand awareness and growing its dealer base. PJB has roughly 40 dealers within the United States — including the recent additions such as Musician’s Friend and Zorro Sound in New Jersey — and has over 160 dealers listed in Japan.

“We’ve got a foundation of technology and a marketing direction as well,” Jones said. “Now we’re ready to go out for the big guns.” **MI**



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