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Phil Dudderidge at 70!

*Focusrite Executive Chairman recalls 45 years at The NAMM Show and celebrates 30 years at Focusrite’s helm*

The NAMM Show, Anaheim, CA, January 24, 2019 – When it comes to industry stalwarts, Phil Dudderidge is among the most respected and revered. This January is Phil’s 45th year at The NAMM Show — an incredible feat in itself — but that’s not the only milestone he’s celebrating.

Dudderidge’s first NAMM show was in 1974 — it was the Summer edition, which he recalls was uniquely in Houston, Texas, that year. “I was representing my first company, Soundcraft, which was less than a year old. NAMM had been suggested by Paul Ash, son of Sam and brother of Gerry Ash, who I had met at the Frankfurt Music Messe. At neither show did I have a booth of my own, but by day two at NAMM I had found a partner in Greg Hockman who invited me to put my Series One mixer on his booth (Systech). The night before the opening of the show I was rubbing shoulders and getting to know NAMM people at the bar of the hotel, drinking Harvey Wallbangers — the drink of the moment apparently!”

As a younger man, Dudderidge had been enveloped by the explosion of music technology in the heady days of rock and roll. At 21, he was on the road with Led Zeppelin as “sound guy” for their North America tour in spring 1970. While his international touring days were fleeting, his passion for music and technology never faltered as he shifted his focus to business, and enabling music makers through creating desirable products at competitive prices.

Phil and Soundcraft co-founder Graham Blyth sold the UK console firm to Harman in 1988, where it still stands as a core property in a global technology giant. In 1989, the Focusrite opportunity arose, in which Phil immediately saw potential after the brand fell on unfortunate times. Dudderidge bought Focusrite and its highly acclaimed (but costly and impractical) Forte console design, before reimagining the company and its products. By adapting the console’s beloved circuitry to the fast-changing recording market — in his words, “shaking off the mistakes of our formative years and the lure of consoles,” Dudderidge capitalized on the trends in music production. Before long, he and Focusrite were leading the charge in the democratization of music making.

Key to this success was keeping a keen eye on the market, and making business decisions in response to the flow of consumer habits. “The constant has been to identify market opportunities and customer expectations and meet them,” says Dudderidge. “Some years ago I coined the dictum ‘best choice,’ applied to everything Focusrite has to offer. To the end user, best choice of audio interfaces at each price point. To the reseller, best choice of brand and vendor for the categories we offer, in terms of customer satisfaction, trading relationship, trustworthiness and achievable margin. The same principles apply to Novation, of course, the brand we acquired in 2004 and rebuilt as part of the Focusrite company. Always delivering the best possible quality for the money, and industry-leading customer support too. We set out to become The Interface Company in 2005, and the effect of setting that goal has enabled us to achieve it.” Today, with numerous ranges of best-in-class audio interfaces for practically every customer, Focusrite has met and exceeded that goal.

Partnerships have been important to Focusrite and Dudderidge’s success too. With Digidesign at the turn of the millennium, Focusrite entered what was then a fledgling DAW interface market. Focusrite designed the first-ever mobile interface for Pro Tools, the co-branded Digidesign/Focusrite M-Box, and planted a partnership that maintains strong today. “Brand relationships like those we enjoy with Avid and with Ableton, as well as our partners in the Focusrite Plug-in Collective, are central to Focusrite’s success. Business always goes better when you have others on your side and I / we strive to ensure that win-win underpins all those relationships.”

But above his entrepreneurism, business acumen, and close industry relationships, Dudderidge puts his achievements down to people. “The success of Soundcraft and Focusrite/Novation has depended almost entirely on the talent and work of others. My co-founder at Soundcraft, Graham Blyth, was the designer while I took the products to market. We built a team that made it possible for us to build one of the leading mixer and recording console brands in the world. At Focusrite, starting with a handful of engineers, I was able to build a team that just grew and grew. From a cottage business we have grown to a company of over 225 people globally, who develop, market and sell our products. Delegation has been key, allowing people to have their own vision and — in concert with their peers and subordinates — develop not only world-leading products but the systems and practices that make achievement at scale possible, successful and profitable. I suppose my skill has been to make good hires, especially in the formative years, people who have themselves chosen well for the company. CEO Tim Carroll, who replaced Dave Froker after he retired, was my latest personal hire, and he’s a fantastic example of the very talented people we have on-board — the company’s success is intrinsically linked to their commitment. I like to think we enable people to meet their potential and together achieve extraordinary things. I love seeing our people grow, often new graduates who bring their massive potential but who may not realize what they might become. I love to see them become parents and build families. I love to hear their music at our many company events. Their achievements become my achievements.”

At Winter NAMM 2019, Focusrite invites you to join celebrations for Phil Dudderidge’s trio of milestones: his 30th year leading Focusrite, his 45th year at NAMM and his 70th birthday, which falls shortly after this year’s show. The Focusrite press conference takes place at 11am on Friday the 25th at booth 11110 in Hall A.

Photo File 1: PhilDudderidge\_1.jpg

Photo Caption 1: Phil Dudderidge walks the floor, 1974.

Photo File 2: PhilDudderidge\_2.jpg

Photo Caption 2: Phil Dudderidge today.

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