



# The Return of the Mack

By: Phil Ward

You can achieve a lot in seven years. You can become a doctor, or an architect, or you can paint the Golden Gate Bridge. If you're The Beatles, you can make the astonishing artistic leap from "Please Please Me" to *Abbey Road*. Or, if you're Jim Mack, you can lead the transformation of a music technology maverick into a pro audio powerhouse.

These things are not easy. When Mack joined PreSonus in 2008, the company had a solid reputation in project recording and an open-minded attitude to technology integration. Shortly after that, it emerged that the global banking system had been harboring a far too open-minded attitude toward credit. A great many businesses folded in the aftermath, and even those that survived did so on a policy of belt-tightening and cautious navigation—as opposed to any kind of aggressive expansion or recalibrating of core values.

Yet, two years on, PreSonus had moved into live sound and was able to announce a 46% increase in sales. According to some sources, the combination of the StudioLive 16:4:2 console and Virtual Studio Live software on its own accounted for 30% of overall sales in 2009-10. By 2012, the company had also consolidated its position in Europe with the formation of PreSonus Europe Ltd. In some reports, year-on-year growth has been as high as 50%.

Perhaps "maverick" doesn't do jus-

tice. Prior to Mack coming on board, countless MI and pro customers, me included, had appreciated the advances made by the Studio One DAW, or the ACP88 compressor/gate, or any one of a number of timely FireWire interfaces. Then, when it came to adding a dedicated software development resource, it wasn't just any old software development resource: It was the one that gave the world Cubase, forged in the creative computer music crucible that is Hamburg. PreSonus Software Ltd. is still based there—and in Ireland.

Ireland's attractive corporation tax played its part in that decision, alongside favorable R&D tax credits skillfully negotiated by EMEA head of group finance Eugene Greenan, who estimates that salary support of up to 55% is obtainable from Ireland's Industrial Development Authority. One way or another, growth is becoming eminently fundable and it's hard not to see this platform as the basis of a serious challenge on the main stage of corporate pro audio.

At the heart of the technology is a PreSonus invention called Active Integration, the company's take on networking and a solution instantly extended to every component in any given system. This now includes loudspeakers, of course, and no doubt it was Mack's experience at JBL and his acoustics background that helped to pave a natural path to Dave Gunness and his coaxial contribution to the

StudioLive AI range. Once again, not just any old resource: If you're going to weave sound-reinforcement speakers into your tapestry, it's not a bad idea to sit around a table with the guy behind decades of EAW's biggest electro-acoustic breakthroughs.

Now that Mack is leaving PreSonus, it makes the latter-day addition of North Carolina-based WorxAudio to the portfolio seem like the final jewel in the crown of his tenure. Whether or not Guinness' coaxial designs can ultimately be distilled into large-scale touring rigs—and there's no shortage of confidence within PreSonus that they can be—the assault on live sound can now begin in earnest through the auspices of WorxAudio's battery of line array as well as point source offerings. As DSP makes its way through the industry, all of these elements can be harnessed in the right hands and—believe me, they are not paying me to say this—the right hands at PreSonus know exactly what the left hands are doing.

Mack would be the first to say it's a team effort, and he's right: PreSonus would not be what it is without the vision of Jim Odom and Brian Smith, and the extraordinary HR amassing gradually around them. But someone has to be holding the map the right way up. As Henry Kissinger said, the task of a leader is to get people from where they are to where they have not been. 📡