

# view from the top

## GC Pro Gets Plush

Rick Plushner, Director, GC Pro

by Fred Goodman

**G**C Professional director Rick Plushner started in the pro audio business back in the late '70s, when he was designing high-end disco systems for clubs while still in college. The Miami club scene was booming at that time, and, he relates, it became a good business for him, providing an introduction to higher-end products, while learning the way the business actually works.

In the early 1980s, Plushner was offered the position of national sales manager for Sony's Digital Audio division. The compact disc was not yet released, and he was hired to handle the emerging high-end digital recording products. He worked on the launch of the compact disc from the professional side. "Sony/Philips needed the music industry to fully embrace digital audio recording to ensure a successful launch of the compact disc," he remembers. "My mission was to meet with high-end artists, record executives and recording studio owners. I introduced everything from Sony's 2-track recording/editing systems to its 24-track digital multitrack recorders."

Plushner's growing interest in consoles took him to Neve as general manager,

West Coast operations. There, he introduced the Neve VR series consoles, post-production and broadcast line of products. After several years, Euphonix called him, and he accepted the position of vice president of sales. He undertook the launch of the "very successful" CS2000 series and was part of the team that took the company public in August of 1995.

In 1997, he went to Solid State Logic, where he held the position of president, North American Operation. "SSL is a great company," he says, "and I couldn't resist the challenge to build its sales and service organization." He was there shortly after the launch of the SL-9000J series and the full line of broadcast/post-production consoles. Towards the end of his eight-year tenure, Plushner introduced a full line of SSL outboard gear, and in coordination with Guitar Center's GC Pro division, the AWS900 series console. "That's when I met the people from Guitar Center and grew to appreciate the integrity of the company with their nationwide reach. I saw the direction that GC Pro was going, and I felt it was my future."

Plushner continues, "I was looking for the next big challenge—a way to take my

high-end, pro-audio background and utilize it in a different way. The products mainstream manufacturers are designing today are plug-and-play. Digidesign really started this revolution; the days of taking two weeks to commission a recording console is gone. You open the box, plug it together with some cables and you're up and running in a relatively short amount of time. The nature of the design of the equipment has progressed, and the distribution is perfectly suited to an organization like GC Pro. A studio owner, live-sound venue technical director, artist or enthusiast comes by one of our 28 offices, or we go to them for face-to-face consultations. We're a boutique-style, professional products dealership offering competitive prices with a unique person-to-person, brick-and-mortar approach."

GC Pro has a 66-member staff, stretching from Boston to San Diego, from Seattle to Miami, and "all points in between." The company's offices are staffed with professionally trained account managers offering consultation on everything from musical instruments through Digi ICON and Neve Genesys consoles. Half the business, Plushner reports, comes from products that are special-ordered items. "We also have 214 Guitar Center stores to draw upon, a massive distribution center and a special-order department ready to service our demanding client base. So we're using all the tools that the Guitar Center organization has afforded us."

Plushner adds, "Since our prices are competitive, what we offer is enhanced customer service. Items are either in stock or available, in most cases, with overnight delivery. Where else can you find a rare vintage guitar and an HD recording system available for overnight shipping on a nationwide basis? So as I mentioned before, we're there when you need us. If you have a session and it's a weekend or late in the evening, you can get somebody on the line. We're all networked on Blackberrys and PCs, available nearly 24/7. If an account manager is faced with a question on gear or an interface they're unable to answer, the collective knowledge base from within our group can be accessed within minutes to provide proven answers to complex questions."

Specifically, Plushner is responsible for the division's P&L, sales force recruitment/training, vendor relations, overseeing web-



site management, public relations, print advertising, sales campaigns and "everything in between." He points out that the main markets on which the company focuses are recording, live sound, post production, house of worship and education. GC Pro does a lot of business with universities, schools and church organizations, and it's getting more and more involved in live sound.

The newly released initiative, GC Pro Installation, offering complete turnkey systems, is off the ground. "This new initiative was developed in direct response to customer demand and employs a network of experienced localized systems installers and integrators in the markets where GC Pro has a presence," Plushner notes. "It is really taking GC Pro to the next level in customer service."

As GC Pro continues to grow, it is taking on some very specialized product lines exclusively as a distributor in the United States. The latest offerings include Neve's Genesys consoles and Ocean Way's line of monitor speakers. Plushner says, "We're able to employ all our sales and marketing energy to promote and bring these great new recording/mixing products to the U.S. market."

Plushner concludes, "The main focus of our business is listening to our customers, helping them clarify their needs, and offering the correct advice and product solutions. It's all about getting the right gear for our customers' needs the first time around."

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