Celebrating 40 Years of Innovative Loudspeakers

Community

As the Woodstock era stretched and opened its eyes, it gave birth to much more than just acid rock and tie dye. A new generation of entrepreneurial spirit was emerging, founded in the counter-culture, anti-establishment ethos of the day. These were companies whose start-up capital was measured not in dollars or stock options, but in innovation, ambition and a desire to mold their own destiny. The refusal to simply accept the status quo, to challenge convention, brought a fresh perspective to a generation that would forever change the rules of Business As Usual.

Certainly, not every endeavor was a success. Many young entrepreneurs were quickly overwhelmed by the harsh realities of the marketplace, and the stark realization that the rules of economics bent only so far. Others became victims of their own success stories, too naïve or ignorant of the disciplines of management and organization to sustain their momentum. Only a few have managed to grow and prosper, and even fewer have maintained the essence of that independent, innovative spirit.

This is the story of Community, a company founded on dreams and strengthened by hard work and inspiration. A company that has traditionally eschewed marketing hyperbole in favor of innovation, boasting more "firsts" than any other loudspeaker manufacturer. While others may build a reputation on fanfare and fluff, Community continues its tradition of unassuming excellence – modestly, quietly leading.

Early Days

Bruce Howze's own journey began, paradoxically, not with sound but with visuals. In the late 1960s, heady, oversized light shows were a staple of almost every major concert, with companies like the Joshua Light Show holding court at venues such as Bill Graham's Fillmore, and countless others touring with bands. "Custom lighting was a new technology," Bruce recalls. "There was more demand for lighting than sound at the time. No one knew a lot about lighting controls, but we figured it out. Before we knew it, we were 'experts.'"

Bruce quickly became a mainstay at a number of local Philadelphia clubs, including the area's largest venue, the Electric Factory. "They were in an old warehouse near downtown Philly, and had a listed capacity of 1500" says Bruce, "though they probably held more like 2500 on most nights."

The Electric Factory grew in prominence, sponsoring increasingly larger shows and outdoor festivals. A logical outgrowth of this expansion was the formation of a touring sound company, "Festival Group," later named Activated Air. It was an easy fit for Bruce, who quickly developed a taste for audio engineering, mixing the concerts of Janis Joplin, Dr. John, Frank Zappa, Blue Cheer and other major artists of the day.

One thing that became apparent to Bruce early on was that the soundtrack to the concert experience was somewhat less stellar than the visuals. Groups were playing larger and larger shows, needing higher levels of sound, but little existed in the way of equipment to make it happen. Most of the PA systems of the day were assembled from cinema loudspeakers, which were designed to project over long distances and handle a reasonably wide frequency range, but were not particularly high-powered. And, being typically two-way designs, they lacked the essential midrange intelligibility needed to communicate.

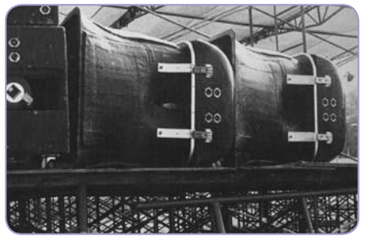
The other problem with cinema loudspeakers was that they had been designed largely for permanent installation. Their dense wooden cabinets were extremely heavy, making them less than optimal for touring applications, where portability was key.

Helming the sound for several large shows, including the 1968 New Orleans and Atlantic City Pop Festivals, Bruce was eventually invited to hit the road with Jefferson Airplane. "I did a couple of tours with the Airplane, which was a tremendous learning experience," he reveals. "I got to experience working with the touring PA systems that were available, and gained valuable insight into what worked and what didn't work. We figured out, for example, that if you replaced the stock 30W driver with a beefier 100W driver, you could drive it a lot harder."

As the mystique of life on the road gave way to the realities of loading heavy gear on and off a truck every night, Bruce began to wonder if there might be better ways of creating a more optimal audio experience. "I decided I'd rather be here looking for solutions than on the road making do with what was available."

Building the Dream

And so, in 1968 Bruce teamed up with Thomas Walter, a recent graduate of Philadelphia College of Art, and Community set up shop in an old factory in Philadelphia's warehouse district. (The dominance of lighting was reflected in the company's original moniker, Community Light and Sound.) Going up against established giants like JBL, Electro-Voice and Altec, the two men shared a firm resolve – to create concert-worthy loudspeakers that were both powerful and lightweight.



"Everyone was making horns from wood, sheet metal or cast iron. We thought fiberglass would be an ideal material for small runs. It was lightweight, strong, portable and relatively easy to mold to shape. We could make horns that were far more accurate to mathematical equations, without the imperfections of wood, and with far less weight."

- Bruce Howze

Two years later, John Wiggins came on board. An audio enthusiast since the age of 13, John had recently moved from central Pennsylvania with the goal of getting into the audio industry. "It was really serendipity," he recalls. "I had been invited to a party, and it turned out the guy who lived there was doing sound for Rod Stewart and the Faces, and nearly everyone at the party was involved in the audio industry."

Among the people John met that night was Thomas Walter, who invited him out to the Community offices. "They were over on Ridge Avenue in Philadelphia, in a former Civil War era cannonball factory. I walked in and told Bruce I'd like to work there. He asked when I could start, and I said today."

The company's first actual product, introduced in 1970, was the LMF, a midrange horn fashioned from fiberglass, a radically different idea. "Everyone was making horns from wood, sheet metal or cast iron," Bruce recalls. "We thought fiberglass would be an ideal

1968

Community Light & Sound is founded by Bruce Howze as a company dedicated to the lighting and audio needs of the fledgling concert touring industry.

Community revolutionized an industry by introducing lightweight fiberglass composite loudspeaker enclosures and horns, which quickly made wooden and metal horns obsolete. Today, Bruce still serves as Community's President and Chief Engineer.

1970

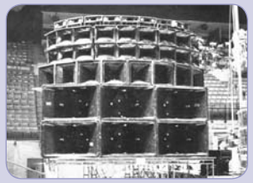
Community introduces the revolutionary LMF, a midrange horn fashioned from fiberglass. Using fiberglass was a radically different idea; it allowed Community to make horns that were far more accurate to mathematical equations, without the imperfections of wood, and with far less weight.

1970

John Wiggins joins Community. Today, John serves as Community's Vice President of Business Development.

1971

Elvis Presley tours with Community's newly created Leviathan fiberglass composite basshorn and the Clair Brothers sound company.



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- Bruce Howze

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As is frequently the case with radically different ideas, mass acceptance of Community's fiberglass creation was far from immediate. "At the first AES show we attended, we had people laughing at us, cracking jokes about our 'plastic horns,'" Bruce recounts.

A young woman named Christine joined the company in 1974. Christine, who would eventually become Bruce's wife and Community's General Manager, also remembers that first AES show. "We had a booth right next to Altec, and I spent most of the show just trying not to cry. The older engineering types would come by and look at our fiberglass horns and laugh themselves silly with jokes about plastic horns. I knew how much work and emotion had gone into creating these products, and it felt like such a cold slap in the face. Ultimately, it just made us even more firm in our resolve."

Bruce also had another important objective. "At the time, touring systems were mainly comprised of large folded bass horns, topped with multicellular high frequency horns," he explains. "There was nothing that could do 500 Hz well, which left a big hole in the midrange. Midrange is where voice intelligibility lives, and to my mind is the most important aspect of a loudspeaker – to communicate. We focused on that midrange right at the outset, and it continues to be paramount in everything we do."

Even today, performance and intelligibility continue to be Community's top priorities. "There's been a trend among loudspeaker manufacturers to overlook intelligibility in favor of the 'wow' factor of big bass," Bruce observes. "That sort of misses the point that all the critical information is in the midrange. If you don't get that right, the rest of it doesn't mean a thing."

Humble Beginnings

Christine Howze's first memories of Community are typical of the fledgling startup companies of the day. "It was a small group of people struggling in a run down warehouse. I spent my first day there just cleaning, which was pretty much a waste of time. Then Thomas asked if I'd come in and help out with other things. I worked afternoons for a couple of months, but I just couldn't stay away. What Bruce was doing was so intriguing, to me it was the most exciting thing I'd ever seen. I started doing whatever needed to be done. I loaded PC boards, I ordered supplies, I did shipping. They needed a bookkeeper, so I learned how to do the books. I pretty much just did whatever other people weren't interested in doing."

And as with most struggling companies, optimism was far more plentiful than cash flow. "We were really operating on a shoestring," Christine remembers. "We didn't even buy cartons – we purchased flat cardboard and made our own."

Another challenge during the early years was that of maintaining a stable location. "Because of the practical aspects of working with fiberglass, we always required a fairly large area," Bruce explains. "We could never fit the description of the typical 'garage industry' in that sense. We were always in a position of needing lots of space, and not having enough money to afford it. Initially we ended up renting space in a building belonging to a factory that was downscaling because their business was on the decline. It was cheap rent, but since they were struggling to make ends meet, the building was slowly deteriorating. One day the landlord came in and told us the business had gone bankrupt. He said we could stay if we wanted, but he was leaving. Of course, that also meant the utilities were being turned off, so we had no option other than to move."

The company found a larger facility in south Philadelphia, under very similar circumstances. Not surprisingly, within a short time they were once again facing relocation. "After the second time, we decided the only way to maintain some stability was to buy a building," Bruce explains. So in 1981 the company purchased the original 72,000 square foot building at 333 East Fifth Street in nearby Chester. The company would add the 18,000 square foot building next door in 1994, providing Community with a level of continuity rare in any industry.

Doing Things Differently

Despite its dubious AES debut, the LMF was garnering a growing fan base. One of its early customers was Activated Air, Bruce's former employer, who used the horns at the Atlantic City Pop Festival and other major events. The exposure certainly didn't hurt. "Engineers kept asking about these incredibly loud horns, and everyone was amazed at how lightweight they were," says Bruce. "Fiberglass became our trademark, in a sense."

While hardly a household name yet, Community began to develop a certain notoriety for its uniquely different approach. Those much-maligned "plastic" horns began to pop up in locations as diverse as Philadelphia's Franklin Institute and Southern California's Bolsa Chica State Beach, and OEM relationships blossomed with companies like Stromberg-Carlson and Peavey.

"I wanted us to document everything. It was important to create products that appealed not just to the rock market, but to develop loudspeakers that were well documented, well understood, and honestly presented."

- John Wiggins

Following the LMF, Community's next product was the aptly-named Leviathan, an enormous horn that was as visually striking as it was powerful. Within days of Bruce's completing the final mold, Activated Air had placed an order for several Leviathans for use in an

1973

Community introduces the first coaxial all-horn system, the FRC (For Real Coaxial).

1974

Christine Howze joins Community. Today, Christine serves as Community's Vice President and General Manager.

1974

Community begins testing and documentation of spherical propagation characteristics of all brands of professional loudspeakers in a free field acoustical environment.

1976

Community publishes the coverage patterns of its loudspeakers, setting the industry standard.

1978

Community distributes the first electroacoustic modeling software, "the Community Cluster Computer," which ran on a then sophisticated Hewlett Packard HP41 calculator.

1979

Community's newly-released NC12 stage monitors, BBH (Boxer Bass Horn), M80 midrange horn and 365 Super 90 horn are featured in the Ramones' movie Rock 'n' Roll High School.

1979

The band Boston embarks on a tour backed by a battalion of Community gear.

1980

Community introduces the first Wavefront Coherent signal-aligned sound reinforcement loudspeaker system using Time Delay Spectrometry from Richard Heyser.

upcoming tour for the band Traffic, with Steve Winwood. Another early client was a young company called Clair Brothers, who took a number of Leviathans out on tour with Elvis Presley. The Leviathan began to make its appearance on tours with Earth, Wind and Fire, Linda Ronstadt, the Eagles and a host of other major headliners of the day.

Another new product, the FRC (For Real Coaxial) followed, finding a home in Buddy Rich's New York nightclub, as well as the famed Latin Casino in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, which regularly hosted appearances by such luminaries as Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett. Even more interestingly, the FRC took to the road on the tour bus of then-presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. (To this day, Community products are a fixture in the White House Rose Garden and media areas.) At the other end of the ideological spectrum, the Ramones' movie Rock 'n' Roll High School, released in 1979, prominently featured an abundance of Community products, including the newly-released NC12 stage monitors, BBH (Boxer Bass Horn), M80 midrange horn and 365 Super 90 horn, and the band Boston embarked on a tour backed by a battalion of Community gear.

The Next Step

Not content with simply making enclosures for other people's drivers, the company set its sights on creating their own high-powered midrange driver. "We didn't want to just make standard drivers like everyone else," Bruce reports. "Our goal was to create something more muscular, more loud and more powerful than anything else out there."

The company bought a 15,000 pound magnetizer, and Bruce, John and well-known former Altec engineer Clifford Henricksen began designing prototypes. "We finally settled on the M4, a 4-inch exit midrange compression driver, which we introduced in 1980," John remembers. "It had a 6.5-inch ultralight diaphragm that had the same mass as paper but was over a million times stiffer. We were able to achieve dramatically higher levels with lower distortion."

Community presented the technical paper for the M4 at the 1981 AES convention, to an enthusiastic industry response. "All the major manufacturers were impressed," recalls John. "The M4 was a brute force machine, with a peak output equivalent to one acoustic horsepower, and over 43% efficiency. We did things many engineers had thought were impossible. Now we had a product that was good not just for rock shows, but for stadia."

It was an exciting time. Almost immediately, the company's user base expanded broadly to include not only touring, but installed sound, and Community found itself in league with major acoustical consulting firms. As Bruce points out, these new alliances would prove to have a significant impact on the company's future direction. "The input of installed sound professionals, and their singular perspectives, certainly influenced the design of our products."

"I think what has always set Community apart is our dedication to our fundamental principles. Our goal has always been to offer something special, something different from our competitors. We don't try to be all things to all people. We concentrate on our core strengths, and we try to consistently be the best at what we do."

- Bruce Howze

Among the M4's early adopters were the Joiner Rose Group, WJHW and other major consulting firms. The M4 found a home in facilities like the Miami Dolphins' Joe Robbie Stadium, the first Busch Stadium in St. Louis, and Philadelphia's Veterans' Stadium. "Many of those older stadiums are being torn down now to make way for newer venues," says John, "but the sound systems are still in perfect working condition."

"The M4 put Community on the map in a big way," Bruce recounts. "That was really the turning point at which we truly became a loudspeaker company, as opposed to a component company. It was a major shift for us, and for where we were headed."

Making It Clear

Until the mid-1970s, the concert sound field had been dominated by engineers who created systems based on their own personal, if somewhat informal designs. Despite a scientific legacy of acoustic research dating back several decades, most PA systems were still being cobbled together by "experts," without much standardization or regard for the rules of audio, and with wildly varying results. There was clearly a need for a systematic, scientific approach toward testing and documentation.

"We felt strongly that bringing documentation to loudspeaker design was important to our own credibility, as well as to the credibility of the live sound industry," John recalls. "Bruce and I had enormous respect for those engineers who came before us, for the work that had been done at places like Altec Lansing, Western Electric, Jensen, and RCA. There were generations of very significant, accomplished engineers who had contributed to the foundations of audio, and we saw ourselves as part of a continuum that went way, way back. The most brilliant engineers in loudspeaker technology were the guys responsible for making the 'talkies' come to life. Those engineers had created a substantial legacy, and it needed to be studied, respected and built upon."

To create their testing environment, a 30-foot tower was constructed in a remote field in rural Pennsylvania, on a farm owned by Christine's parents. As Bruce explains, "we did free-field testing, using radio antenna motors to rotate the mic and speakers in ten degree increments, providing a complete spherical propagation map."

"Bruce and I spent several months doing comparative measurements of our products, as well as just about every other product that existed at the time," John continues. "No one had ever done so much detailed testing under such strictly regimented conditions, and so painstakingly documented the results. We tested our own loudspeakers, and we tested other manufacturers' loudspeakers too – loudspeakers from Altec, JBL, Electro-Voice, Bose – all under identical conditions. We published polar data, frequency response and sensitivity for every loudspeaker."

With digital analysis many years away, the process was slow and painstaking. "This was before the days of personal computers," John observes. "We collected the data on photographic film, and spent hundreds of hours transposing the data from film to spreadsheets. We used an HP41CV calculator to do the calculations for each position. We ended up with the most meticulously documented loudspeakers in the industry."

"I wanted us to document everything," John continues. "It was important to create products that appealed not just to the rock market, but to develop loudspeakers that were well documented, well understood, and honestly presented."

The result was the first edition of the Community White Book. The publication signaled a sea change in concert sound technology. "The live sound industry began to move from being this rag-tag bunch of inventors and tinkerers to a legitimate profession," Bruce

1981

Community introduces the M4, the first midrange compression driver which also happened to be the most powerful. This event marks the industry's first exposure to and enlightenment of three-way systems.

1981

Community purchases the 72,000 square foot building at 333 East Fifth Street in Chester, Pennsylvania.

1984

Community manufactures the world's first electro-acoustical system to equal the sound level of pneumatic warning sirens.

1992

Community wins the Pennsylvania Governor's First Place Export Award for excellence in the expansion of world trade of Pennsylvania exports abroad.

1993

Community wins the President's "E" Certificate for Exports Award presented by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce for United States' export expansion.

1994

Community manufactures the world's first suspension-less diaphragm HF compression driver, the VHF100.

1994

Community expands for the third time, by adding the adjacent 18,000 square foot building in Chester, Pennsylvania.

1994

Community is the first pro audio manufacturer with an internet website.

observes. "No one had ever done this type of detailed analysis, let alone publish the results. We were one of the first companies to really analyze the data. It removed the 'black magic' connotation and brought loudspeaker measurement down to hard facts and figures."

The book found its way onto the desk of pretty much every acoustical consultant and audio installation contractor in North America. "That book really raised the industry's collective impression of Community," says John. "Suddenly, here was this little speaker company in Pennsylvania actually shaking things up at big companies like Altec Lansing and JBL.

The Siren's Song

Community's growing reputation for intelligibility and power resulted in another unusual, if somewhat tangential partnership. As Bruce explains it, "We had been approached by a company named Whelen Engineering in Connecticut, which was involved in the emergency outdoor early warning systems market. Up to that point, the early warning systems in place used mechanical sirens, which were by far the loudest and most cost-effective option, but lacked the ability to communicate anything specific. Whelen was interested in creating a loudspeaker that could compete with the levels of a siren, yet provide speech communication."

John takes up the story. "After the nuclear near-meltdown incident at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island facility in 1979, the federal government had issued a mandate ordering voice warning evacuation systems in heavily populated areas. We worked with Whelen to build a high-powered horn with 45-degree horizontal coverage, that could repeat a message eight times for 360-degree coverage. Their goal was to have a loudspeaker that was capable of achieving the levels of a pneumatic air raid siren, somewhere around 153dB at one meter. We did additional environmental testing in a wind tunnel against 150 MPH winds, and created a horn design that met, and exceeded all applicable standards."

Whelen returned soon after to ask for more designs, including a 1000 Watt compression driver, and mass notification/emergency management systems became an integral part of Community's business. The relationship with Whelen continues to this day.

The project reaped other long-term benefits as well. "Through our research in designing ultra-high powered transducer technology for Whelen, we gained tremendous insight into thermal conductivity and reliability," Bruce observes. "These are components that are being driven a whole lot harder than any commercial loudspeakers. We were able to apply much of what we learned to the design of commercial speakers."

"We've always placed a much higher value on maintaining integrity than on chasing trends. Every Community loudspeaker is designed to deliver superior performance, and that performance is honestly and precisely documented. Our success is measured in the fact that Community products are installed in literally thousands of venues worldwide, from Olympic stadia to neighborhood churches."

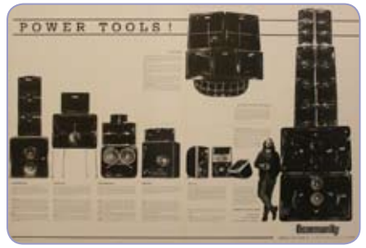
- John Wiggins

Putting It All Together

As the 1980s dawned, another change occurring in the live sound industry was the progression toward integrated loudspeaker systems design. Initially, most touring companies had assembled their rigs from separate bass, midrange and high frequency components, and as early as 1976 Community had introduced the Zoid series of rigid, structural foam-reinforced, trapezoidal horns that interlocked to create a streamlined system.

Other manufacturers were beginning to introduce two-way systems in a single box, using integrated crossovers. Initially, Community resisted the urge to go there. "Maybe we were guilty of trying to be purists," Bruce opines, "but we felt most people would prefer to create their own systems, rather than have it done for them. And we honestly felt that individual components sounded better."

But the writing was on the wall, and as it became clear that the convenience of the integrated approach would win out, the partners knew that any integrated system bearing the Community name would have to be nothing short of the best. Adapting the emerging technology of TEF time-delay spectrometry to analyze and design their new products, in 1981 Community introduced the RS440, the first truly signal-aligned three-way system. The RS440 utilized a three-decade approach, with low, mid and high frequency components covering the ranges of 20 to 200 Hz, 200 to 2 kHz, and 2 k to 20 kHz



respectively. "Previously, most systems had been two-way designs, which left a giant hole in the midrange," John explains. "It's always been our philosophy that it's important to achieve very clear intelligibility. We filled that midrange gap, promoted three-way system design, and educated people worldwide on its importance."

The RS Series caught on immediately with installed sound designers, addressing much-neglected intelligibility problems in reverb-heavy venues like gymnasiums, auditoriums and lecture halls. Within two years, the RS Series "plug and play" signal-aligned systems represented nearly 67% of the company's sales. "We took that as a sign it was time for us to get into building integrated systems," John poignantly observes.

More signal-aligned horn loaded systems followed, including the Boxer Series and signal-aligned asymmetric coverage cinema-market TheatreStar systems. The RS Series was su-

"It's a great bunch of people, and we're really all family. There are no limitations on anyone here. People really care about each other, and about the company and the products we make."

- Christine Howze

1995

Community manufactures the world's first triaxial full-range weather resistant horn system, the Leviathan II.

1996

Community supplies the first three-way cinema loudspeaker system to Paramount's Executive Studio and Warner Brothers Screening theater and film scoring/mixing room.

1997

Community manufactures the world's first compact full-range weather-resistant horn system, the R-Series. To this day, Community remains the undisputed industry leader in weather-resistant loudspeaker technology.

1998

Community introduces the premium quality weather-resistant loudspeaker series, the WET Series (Weather Environmental Technology).

1999

Community wins the Pennsylvania Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence, in recognition for taking effective pollution reduction measures.

perseded by the Solutions Series in 1996. All along, Community's integrated, signal-aligned loudspeaker systems have remained among the top selling in the industry.

Shifting with the Paradigm

As the 1980s gave way to the 1990s, a paradigm shift was occurring throughout much of the technology sector. The emergence of digital audio and signal processing, along with the debut of the personal computer, signaled a shift in concept and design that shook the very foundations of much of the audio industry. The gilded towers of the professional recording studio began to crumble under the weight of the burgeoning project studio industry, and the blurring of the lines between professional and consumer electronics gave birth to the "prosumer" market.

The impact of this shift was undeniable throughout every corner of the audio world. The introduction of new technologies began to bring professional grade audio to a new – and significantly larger – audience, the MI market. In music stores across America, pro-audio departments began to appear alongside electric guitars and drum kits, as the MI market began its quantum leap.

"MI represented a very different type of culture and customer, for us as well as everyone else in the industry," says Bruce. "Prior to the project studio evolution, most of the audio industry had been populated by people with formal educational backgrounds in engineering or acoustics. All of a sudden we saw an influx of people whose background was more musician oriented, with a corresponding shift in priorities. Our customer base, which had been largely dominated by design engineers, increasingly included the music store customer."

This technological revolution represented a major leap in the level of quality and performance of MI products. Most music dealers were still smaller, independent retail establishments, and few outside the more sophisticated urban areas carried pro-audio gear. Suddenly, major retail chains began to emerge and expand, building increasingly larger stores to accommodate inventories of mixing consoles and sound systems.

"In the MI market, the music store customer was ultimately our customer," Bruce points out. "The price-to-performance ratio was a more important consideration, since you were dealing with the consumer's budget, not the contractor's. And as products became increasingly sophisticated and end-users became more savvy, expectations naturally increased."

Addressing these new criteria, in 1985 Community introduced the CS series, a portable sound reinforcement line designed to meet the needs of the performing musician. The CS line, which would later evolve into the CSX series, became another of Community's landmark products, with a successful run of more than fifteen years.

"We introduced the CS25 and CS35 at the 1985 NAMM show," John recalls. "Our first customers were Sam Ash and Veneman Music, both of whom wrote purchase orders on the spot. We knew we had a good product, but even we were a bit surprised at how quickly it took off." Indeed, for much of the next decade Community consistently placed among the top three manufacturers in music retail.

During this same period, the Asian market began its exponential expansion, with the growth of nightclubs and karaoke bars in China and neighboring countries. It was an enormous new market for Community, and a series of awards that included the President's "E" Certificate for Exports, presented by the US Secretary of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Governor's First Place Award for Excellence

in the Expansion of World Trade, and awards for Outstanding Achievement in Export Sales, as well as for Environmental Excellence.

The focus on MI notwithstanding, Community's greatest strength still rested in the professional audio arena. The company broadened its direction with a line of specialized compression drivers. Moreover, Community's reputation for durable, weather-resistant products grew with the introduction of the WET series in 1998.

"We had gotten a call from Walt Disney World," Bruce remembers. "They had purchased some fiberglass NC12 stage monitors from us back in the 70s, and they were still going strong in the 90s. We were hearing from more and more theme parks, arenas and stadia, who had purchased systems with wooden loudspeaker enclosures that they were beginning to rot away."

To this day, Community remains the undisputed leader in weather-resistant loudspeaker technology.

Change is Constant

As the old adage goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Over the years, Community has quietly grown to become one of the industry's most powerful success stories, but the same values that guided the company's modest beginnings still resonate today.

"I think what has always set Community apart is our dedication to our fundamental principles," asserts Bruce. "Our goal has always been to offer something special, something different from our competitors. We don't try to be all things to all people. We concentrate on our core strengths, and we try to consistently be the best at what we do."

That consistency is reflected in the dedication of every employee. More than a third of Community's employees have worked at the company for over a decade, and many have been there twenty years or more. "It's a great bunch of people, and we're really all family" says Christine. "There are no limitations on anyone here. People really care about each other, and about the company and the products we make."

And, Christine observes, much of that dedication flows from the top. "Bruce is a guy who has worked 14 hours a day, seven days a week, for the past forty years. He never runs, he sets a steady pace, and he never stops. He was born to do this. He lives to create, to discover, and to learn."

And indeed, it's that joy of discovery, that passion for learning and thirst for knowledge that is at the heart of every successful entrepreneur.

"We've always placed a much higher value on maintaining integrity than on chasing trends," says John. "Every Community loudspeaker is designed to deliver superior performance, and that performance is honestly and precisely documented. Our success is measured in the fact that Community products are installed in literally thousands of venues worldwide, from Olympic stadia to neighborhood churches."

"I like to think we've never lost our integrity, never lost sight of who we are and what we stand for," Bruce concludes. "I've been in this business my entire life, watched the market change, and adapted to those changes. I loved this business when I first got into it, and I still love it today."

2000

Community wins the Pennsylvania Governor's Export Achievement Award for outstanding excellence in export sales.

2006

Community is featured on MSNBC's "The Winner's Circle," a national broadcast spot hosted by football hero Terry Bradshaw. The spot highlights successful small-to-medium U.S. manufacturers that comprise the backbone of America's economy.

2007

Over 275 Community loudspeakers are installed in three Olympic venues for the games in Torino, Italy.

2007

Community launches the VERIS and SONUS loudspeaker lines featuring its patent-pending carbon ring cone technology where a radial carbon ring is applied to the rear of the cone to stiffen the cone material without adding appreciable mass, while strengthening the area where the cone meets the surround. The result is lower distortion, higher reliability, and freedom from cone deformation.

2008

Community introduces ENTASYS three-way column line-array systems featuring its patent-pending Carbon Ribbon Emulator (CRE) high frequency drivers.

2008

Community celebrates 40 years of innovative loudspeakers.

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF INNOVATIVE LOUDSPEAKERS Community

The next 40 years of innovative loudspeakers starts now.

Community Professional Loudspeakers, 333 East Fifth Street, Chester, PA 19013-4511 USA
(610) 876-3400 • (800) 523-4934 • Fax (610) 874-0190 • www.communitypro.com