

# AUDIOPROFILE ADAM

When Bob Mundy flew from Roost Sound Equipment to Adam Hall, few might have imagined just how far he would take the company. **MI Pro** talks to the UK MD – first to explore the secrets of Adam Hall's success, then to debate what wonders the future might bring...

## Deck the Halls...

**W**hen Bob Mundy joined Roost Sound Equipment in 1976 to look after the factory floor of the guitar amplifier manufacturer, he doubtless had no idea that his future would lie in the speaker cab packing company upstairs – Adam Hall. Over the next four years, Adam Hall's eponymous company grew while Roost floundered and Mundy was eventually asked to join as a buyer. He must have impressed, as one of his early tasks in 1980 was to head out to Taiwan to establish a purchasing office in Taipei – an operation that is still there today.

Adam Hall sold up in 1993 to the company's current chairman, David Kirby, who promptly moved out to establish the German arm and left Mundy as MD of the UK operation.

"At the time we were focused on our hardware and case products," he explains. "David was pushing for more audio products and so my mission was to grow the audio business from ten percent of turnover to 50 per cent." This objective was achieved some time ago, but it doesn't mean that Adam Hall's UK boss is putting his feet up yet. The past year and a half has seen the company move into MI through Traynor amps and Ventures guitars, as well as securing a prime brand for the pro audio OEMs in Beyma. Even at a quiet time in both MI and pro audio businesses, Adam Hall is obviously doing something right. That something is actually a very simple philosophy.

"We are a friendly company," explains Mundy. "We have the image of being a small company, I think our after-sales service is second to none and all of this is achieved by having a workable model. Mine is



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Marks & Spencer. Is there something wrong? Don't

quibble, just sort it out. You can never please all of the people all

**The Adam Hall UK offices and warehouse after enjoying 300 per cent growth in ten years**

of the time, but we appreciate that it all comes down to having relationships with people and that's the key to our success."

Another key is the sheer extent of Adam Hall's product range, from cables and connectors to speakers and, most recently, mixers, not to mention guitars and amps. Almost any area of the business could slump, but another would be there to boom. Thus the move to guitars. "Guitars are booming at the moment and that will probably run for at least three more years. We have always been interested in the MI side of things here – a lot of us are musicians – and I suppose it really started for us when Arbiter had its troubles and

we were next in line to get SKB."

Mundy brought in Ian Wood to get out to the shops with the Swedish case products and the foundation was perfectly laid for when Traynor approached Adam Hall in 2005 to raise its profile in the UK and then the Ventures guitars at NAMM this year.

Then, in what appeared to be a U-turn from a new trend towards MI, Adam Hall took on the distribution in the UK and Ireland for Beyma transducers. For anyone who knows Adam Hall's past, however, it was not so much a U-turn as a resumption of normal service.

"It might look like a move in the opposite direction, but one of the first things I did with the company in the 80s was Celestion speakers," Mundy points out. "Then we launched Eminence speakers globally and did very well with them until we parted ways. After that, we took

# HALL

## PLASA

ONE OF Adam Hall's big marketing expenditures each year is its presence at major shows, including Music Live and the London Guitar Show. PLASA is one such major event. Bob Mundy sits on the show's committee and is a fan, albeit a realistic one.

"PLASA is a show where I can get to see people, although I think everyone would agree that shows aren't as exciting as they were 15 years ago. With the imminent change of organiser and a possible new venue in three years, we have the chance to seize the reins and take the show to where we want it to be. NAMM has certainly done that and so has Pro Light + Sound. It's up to us."



**“ With the imminent change of organiser, we can seize the reins and take the show to where we want it to be. ”**

Adam Hall's stand (D46) will be showcasing the Beyma line this year, as well as many new hardware products.



## MARKETING

While Adam Hall has always had some presence in the stores around the country through its cables and cases, it was only when SKB and Ian Wood joined that its presence was truly established. Traynor amps and Ventures guitars have built on that further. And as sales manager Rob Fricker, sometimes only sees his reps a few times a year, trust that the men on the road are doing their job is paramount, especially as they have to market such a wide range of products.

"With marketing, the reps do a bit through special offers and the like," explains Fricker. "I tell them what we are doing and then the orders start coming in. The team is really very self-motivated."

Further to that, and ads in specialist magazines such as *MI Pro* and *Sound on Sound*

of course, a good deal of marketing budget is spent on end-user shows, such as Music Live and the London Guitar Show. "With such a history in OEM supply, we have had to learn about our end users in a new way," Fricker says. "When we took on SKB, we wanted to show just how reliable the product is, so we took on The Hamsters as endorsers and featured them in our ads with a 'gigometer' showing how many gigs the band had done."

For those of you not familiar with The Hamsters, it is a real troubadour combo that performs its brand of rock n roll at around 180 gigs every year. "They have done well over 300 gigs with the cases now," says Fricker. "We gave up on the gigometer after around 280 gigs as that was well over the target we were aiming at."

for eight years to pursue a professional music career] I was MD and sales director. Since his return, he has taken on the sales and the whole image of Adam Hall."

In the end, Mundy has a balanced, yet very optimistic view on his business and the industry as a whole. "People have to make

their own futures," he says. "You have to make sure you are offering something different for your customers. I know a lot of people are talking about a depressed retail environment at the moment, but if things were as bad as they say, why would people like Guitar Center be looking to come here?"



on Fane and ended up buying the company in 1996." The pressure of having a European manufacturing operation was not to Mundy's liking, though, and so Fane was sold on to Mr Adam Hall. Since then the company Adam Hall had kept an eye open for a new speaker to distribute to the OEMs.

"Nothing excited me, which is why it took so long. Then Levi Thomas got me interested in Beyma. When it became clear that the brand was up for grabs, I went out to get Levi on board first before taking it on." As Ian Wood is the champion for SKB, Graham Esgrove is for Traynor and Ventures, Thomas is the same for Beyma.

The company's main customers are OEM case and cabinet makers, although many of these take finished products as well. Adam Hall's general sales manager, Rob Fricker, says it is a very different sort of market to the retailer sales. "A lot of these customers make custom cases, which obviously takes some time," he explains. "When one of their customers comes in and wants something standard immediately, they can ask us to supply an SKB model. It adds another string to their bow."

When Bob Mundy joined the company, it operated from a single unit. Now, SKB alone takes up a warehouse. The company has enjoyed around

300 per cent growth globally over the past ten years – a figure Mundy feels is quite sustainable. "Growth is currently at around 30 per cent. With the plans we have, we are pulling things into place to keep that going. I am expecting around 20 to 30 per cent growth for the next five years."

Talking to Bob Mundy, one cannot help but notice his quiet enthusiasm for all things Adam Hall, but at 56 years old, surely any other managing director would be thinking of hanging up his suit for a long spell somewhere warm. "No, I'm still very enthusiastic about this business. There is still a lot to do. Even in the UK we haven't cracked everything yet. I think we are in a position where everyone knows us, but I don't think everyone knows everything we do."

Everyone comes to the end of their career at some time or other, of course, but for Mundy, that raises no anxiety. "I am in an ideal position, where I have a team that can function without me," he says. "In Rob Fricker I have the future of Adam Hall. With him on board I have a lot of weight taken off my shoulders. Before Rob came back [Fricker left Adam Hall