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Philadelphia Post celebrates 20 years: A personal story

By SCOTT WAZ

Hours after the Philadelphia Liberty Medal ceremony in May 2007, I had the chance to tell Bono of U2 a little about my life story and how my company's name and tagline is Dream Out Loud. He immediately recognizes his own lyric found in two of his songs and as he grabs my hand, clenches it, pulls me in close and my heart is racing and he says "Right on;" it serves as reinforcement to a vision I have had since I was 13.

You see, from an early age, and at the time probably quite common, I had a fascination with all things audio. From building a crystal radio, to the smell of a brand new handheld AM/FM transistor radio, a CB radio, my first stereo, adding components to that stereo to never ever thinking you could work in radio or TV because that was just Hollywood magic. Unreachable, so unthinkable. Growing up, my bedroom window in Rutherford, NJ overlooked the New York City skyline and I just knew that the music, voices and pictures were coming from the tallest buildings, so the fascination was there very early.

At 13, now in Toms River, NJ, I had this luxury in the earliest days of cable TV of being able to watch stuff that came from NY or Philadelphia. It was strange to see two worlds presented and I consumed all of it – news, commercials and odd show programming.

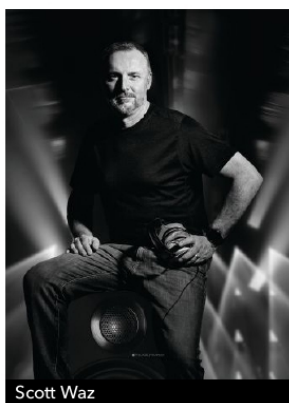
Somewhere around that time, I began to watch commercials with strong interest. I became a critic. Not every day all of the time, just when things struck in a particular way. How something was said, a turn of phrase, good and bad acting, good and bad "production values," things that didn't have industry terms to me then but I use like a second language today. I found myself commenting out loud about commercials I liked but most often about ones I disliked. It's easy to dislike low budget spots. They already looked and sounded bad. My attention was on commercials during prime-time, and I would tell my parents how I would have done this or that differently. Questioning why something was said and how it was said. It was always in the moment but I'd say what I thought. My parents would drop the newspaper down just far



Steve Campagna, Scott Waz and John Baker



Gold early studio.



Scott Waz



Bono and Sue Waz

enough to say, "What do you care. It's a commercial." And I'd say yeah but it could have been better if they had done it differently. Who knew then that 20-40 years later people would pay me well to hold these opinions. Hahaha.

At Trenton State College (now TCNJ), between my sophomore and junior year, after bouncing around a bit academically, I asked the age old question, "What do I truly love?"

It's always been audio. The radio. The spoken word. Commercials. I loved the media. I liked how radio stations presented themselves between songs. The thing is, I wasn't musical. I mean I still play the same ten chords on a guitar. So I called the Communications department that summer and spoke to a lovely woman who said, "Honey you just come in and sign some papers and we'll get your schedule made out." Well, since I had taken everything under the sun to that point, for the next 2 years, I only took communications courses, including advertising, PR and marketing courses. And I got A's in all of it. Why? Because I loved it. It was everything I already found near and dear to my heart and I was getting credits for it! And my GPA shot up into respectability.

I had a professor who put me in charge of the radio production studio. I had another adjunct professor who was a voice for a national news show and did voiceovers for national spots, and then I met Gary Moskowitz, then owner of Baker Sound Studios. One visit and I asked how do you work here? I had no other options, and I had no other interest. Fast forward nearly 13 years and I needed to own it or own my own. In June 2001, I opened Audio Post Philadelphia. Slogan? Dream Out Loud.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

When 911 happened, the phone didn't ring for three months. I figured this was the end. Two phone calls changed that. One from AstraZeneca who needed to create audio programs to teach its sales force that the government no longer wanted them to shower doctors with gifts and that a new way of doing business was upon the Pharma industry, a two year rollout. And the second was a call from the agent for movie



John Baker, Steve Campagna and at right, John Baker at Sigma Sound in the early days.



trailer god Don LaFontaine, the original, “In a World” guy. He spent two months with me voicing hundreds, not kidding, hundreds of promos for every network, film and TV show that existed. He put me back on track. A few years later, my family slept over at his house in the Hollywood hills. My son, 13 at the time, remarked, “Dad, it’s like MTV Cribs here.”

Studio life wasn’t easy but I was doing it. There was always me, a young engineer, and young engineer wannabes, and they varied over the years, some of who I keep in touch with, a few who interned and went to LA and are now mixers for movies and TV shows, my studio manager **Jeanne Fryar**, and bookkeeper extraordinaire **Patty Snyder**, making our way.

By 2008, and just before the economic collapse, I had a one hour phone conversation with **John Anthony** of MAJA. We both loved the idea of being in business together. Another gift in that decision was working with **John Baker** and **Bryan McGee**. John Baker actually interned at Baker Sound when I was just starting out circa 1991. We survived the downturn, and we thrived when things got better. John Anthony left a few years ago and he and I still work on projects together. In 2013, **Steve Campagna** interned. I liked Steve so much that he just kept working. Today John, Steve and I work on hundreds of advertising projects a year with some of the very best ad agencies Philadelphia has to offer and we have relationships with so many producers, and agencies across the state, and work with some of the biggest TV and movie making studios in the world.

HACK, THE TV SERIES

A huge break was another phone call from the post team that worked on Hack, a CBS TV series starring **David Morse** that shot in Philly in the early 2000s. They wanted me to create the same ADR setup I had done for them then but now in Brooklyn for The Good Wife. The Good Wife was a dream gig. Recording ADR for a tremendous cast with unbelievable guest stars was about as good as I could ever imagine. It led to Madam Secretary, The Good Fight, FBI and now Organized Crime. Rerecording dialogue (ADR) and working so close with actors week after week, creating relationships, fine tuning my skills and gaining trust was all part of the dream. Breaking down in tears after working with Michael J. Fox, seeing the struggle in front of your eyes after growing up with him on TV and in the movies was overwhelming. I had the courage to talk to him about mundane things on future recordings. Working with Henry Winkler, and asking him for a hug afterwards, as he understood that my 10 year old self wanted to hug The Fonz. Recording Will Smith for MIB3, or Sly Stallone directing local actors for Rocky Balboa, and recording loop group and actors for several days for Disney’s Invincible reminds me every day that I’m doing what



Above, Steve Waz and Don LaFontaine. Right, John Baker in studio.

I’m supposed to be doing in this world.

Funny thing is, all of this, and I mean all of my decision making, was about saying YES. When clients, teachers and colleagues reach out and want you to work on something, join something, be part of something, they want you to say yes. As a studio, we said yes to so many things that were above our expertise. We researched, we asked questions, we pushed ourselves behind the scenes and when the moment was upon us, we flourished.

DREAMING OUT LOUD

Why? Dreaming out Loud isn’t a slogan—it’s a way of communicating, thinking, expanding, teaming up, responding, performing, wondering, working. Can’t do any of that without the expertise of JB, Steve and relationships from the past; John Anthony in particular, all the way back to Gary Moskowitz, and professors who cared.

We are celebrating 20 years. And we celebrate our profession in weird ways. We send each other audio related articles in the middle of the night. We remind each other of project details so that none of us feels alone in the process. We ask each other questions, we critique our methods, we add our two cents to almost every job so that as a whole, our clients get the best of what we do individually. If ever there is a doubt, we bounce mixes, ideas and preparation off of each other because if one of us fails, we’ve all failed.

The other night, at ages 76, both my parents were over and we watched Law & Order Organized Crime together. It’s one of the shows that I have very deep involvement in these days and lo and behold, a few of the local commercials were spots we mixed here at the studio. I smiled to myself. My parents just enjoyed the show. The commercials were perfectly done. No critiquing needed. Hahaha.

The Dream is real. And we do it out Loud and 20 years as a studio owner is a thing. This journey has been incredible. I’ve worked with some of very biggest names in the industry, and we’ve also helped some of the most wonderful people bring their treasured visions to life through our sound capabilities. We work with people who think what we do is amazing and others who demand us to be even better. We take nothing for granted. Advertising and television is a here today gone tomorrow proposition, and on to the next. So we don’t think too highly of ourselves, because we know the truth...ad agencies take all the risk. We just aspire to be a preference. It’s humbling, but it drives us. And to my wife, **Sue**, thank you for 20 years of love, support and trust. Dream out Loud folks, it can get you places. Peace. 🙏

