

AES Audio Engineering Society - Pacific Northwest Section

Around the Puget Sound, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

November Meeting Notice An Evening With Roy DuNann

**Presented by
Pacific Northwest Section
of
The Audio Engineering Society**

**7:30pm, Tuesday, November 27th, 2007
Opus 4 Studios
Bothell, WA**

Important: RSVP now required!

[Directions to Opus 4 Studios](#)

You've heard about Rudy Van Gelder. Now meet Jazz' other legendary engineer.

So begins an article in *Stereophile*, a magazine usually devoted to the pursuit of high-end audio. In the post-WW2 1940s, Warren Birkenhead (who is probably as nameless today as he was 60 years ago) got one of his Navy buddies a job with a budding record company in Los Angeles. He started out in QC, but was eventually rescued when the record company decided to build their own studio. Warren and his friend were drafted to set up four lathes for lacquer mastering at the new studio. Eventually Warren's friend ended up as the studio manager and along the way recorded hundreds of sessions, including Nat "King" Cole, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin (including "That's Amore"), Peggy Lee, Kay Starr, Jo Stafford, and Stan Kenton. That studio and the record company was Capitol Records.

In 1956, a Dixieland label owned by Lester Koenig branched out into recording modern jazz and he decided to set up his own studio. That label was Contemporary Records. The studio was their shipping room. The control room was the office across the hall. Lester hired the studio manager away from his job at Capitol Records. By now, you've probably guessed that the engineer's name was Roy DuNann. We are indeed fortunate that Roy now lives among us in our own little corner of paradise. He was Capitol's first engineer until 1957, when Koenig hired him away from Capitol. He later spent 20 years at A&M, not as engineer, but as a maintenance engineer because his hearing had deteriorated to the point that he needed hearing aids.

Roy's jazz recordings are well known by jazz aficionados although the Contemporary catalog

languished until it was rereleased by the JVC XRCD reissue program. Now they are accessible to a new generation of jazz enthusiasts. His recordings are notable in their clarity, naturalness, and sense of ambience. Above all, they are musical. That they were made in a shipping room surrounded by stacks of records, and an Addressograph machine over in the corner is even more remarkable. That they sound as good as they do is truly amazing.

Some of his output at Contemporary includes: Barney Kessel, Ray Brown, Shelly Manne, Art Pepper, André Previn, Leroy Vinnegar, Sonny Rollins, Ornette Coleman, Bob Cooper, Curtis Counce, Teddy Edwards, Victor Feldman, and Hampton Hawes, to name a few.

Legendary engineer Rudy Van Gelder gets the engineer credit for most of the Blue Note and Verve jazz output during the 50's and 60's. His recordings are good, though not necessarily technically excellent. Van Gelder is famous for being secretive and reclusive, and he steadfastly refuses to disclose any of the equipment or techniques used for his sessions. Photos from his sessions at his studio are always devoid of gear. Judging from some of the technical flaws in his recordings, he may be guilty of simply letting the musicians play their music and minimizing any intrusion from the recording process into their art. But that is this writer's conjecture, and nobody except Van Gelder himself knows for sure, and he isn't telling.

Coming back to the quote at the beginning, Van Gelder's silence is contrasted by Roy DuNann's willingness to talk about his remarkable work more than 50 years ago. Come join us for what promises to be a remarkable evening with an even more remarkable man.

Bernie Grundman (famous recording and mastering engineer): "Roy did a lot for this industry. He showed us all how good it could be. His best recordings are not just good for their era. They are some of the best-sounding recordings of all time."

The quotes in this meeting notice were taken from Thomas Conrad's article, "The Search for Roy DuNann" that appeared in the April 2002 issue of Stereophile magazine. That article was also the factual basis of this notice. The comments about Rudy Van Gelder are mine, as are any errors.

Important Change: due to limited seating capacity at Opus 4, we request you indicate your intention of attending the meeting by sending your RSVP to: [Opus \(dot\) four \(at\) verizon \(dot\) net](mailto:Opus(dot)four(at)verizon(dot)net)
Please indicate that you found out via the website or via the email list.

A Query

We have been contacted by Centrum, a non-profit arts umbrella organization in Port Townsend about a possible multi-day (across a weekend) workshop on Live Sound in Difficult Rooms. This would cost money (\$170-240, headcount dependent) and take place in Port Townsend. The fee covers food and lodging as well as the event itself. The workshop content is not yet firm, but a broad strokes description would be (new information in boldface):

- Hang and set up a 2x5box line array system.
- Use instrumentation to assess its performance.
- Make adjustments needed to optimize it.
- Experiment with prerecorded program material to explore the performance parameters of the system.
- Using a live band, explore how the system interacts with the stage sound, the room, and your ears.
- Everyone will have an opportunity for hands-on experimentation.
- The event would begin on a Friday evening. Loadin, hang, set and experiment would be Saturday, the live band would be Sunday. We would wrap by around 4pm on Sunday.
- 20-30 people is the range of interest needed to make this happen. **Currently we have about 12 names.**
- Possible dates are 3/1-3/2, or 4/26-4/27. Later dates conflict with existing programming. **So far, the late April dates are preferred.**

Please indicate your interest in attending and participating in this event by sending [email](#) to the Section Chair.

n.b. *The material presented at our meetings is the opinion of the presenter and not necessarily that of the Society. You are encouraged to conduct your own research and to form your own opinions before adopting the presented material as Truth.*

Our meetings are open to anyone interested in Audio. AES membership is NOT required for you to attend our meetings.

Last modified 11/21/2007.