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MAKING THE WORLD SOUND BETTER FOR 25 YEARS

Slowhand In Japan

Along for the ride was Eric Clapton's



FOH engineer since 1989, Robert Collins, overseeing a sizable audio system from Concert Sound.
—page 59

Sweetwater Turns 25

The Fort Wayne, IN-based online and mail-order retailer celebrates its 25th anniversary.
—page 12

Post on Cloud Nine(teen)

Cloud Nineteen, including principal Michael Tucker, has opened a full-service DVD production



and post-production boutique in Culver City.
—page 47

Surround Optimism Abounds Conference Stresses 5.1 Progress

by Steve Harvey

BEVERLY HILLS, CA—Surround 2003, the 5th annual international surround conference, held in mid-December in Beverly Hills, appeared rather more optimistic than in previous years. Most technological challenges have now been overcome and surround sound production is flowing pretty smoothly in all market segments. The final hurdle, it would appear, is to win over consumers.

George Massenbourg's special address at the UE Media-hosted event offered a note of guarded optimism. "Whereas the 'format war' may have stalled progress in the last few years, now you can envision a time that does not matter," he stated, noting that both DTS and AC-3 decoders are available in the majority of the existing 100 million-plus DVD-V players.

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Retail Buyers Hit NAMM

by Janice Brown

ANAHEIM, CA—As the retail distribution chain is increasingly the source of gear for audio pros, wherever they work—from personal and commercial studio facilities, to houses of worship or local, regional and touring SR companies—retail buyers at Winter NAMM 2004 will inevitably influence the provisions of audio pros more this year than ever before. Local and national retail buyers alike come out for NAMM's annual Winter Convention in

Anaheim, CA. Where they put their money reflects market trends, customer demand and foresight.

Mark Braveman, of Brewer, ME-based Mark's Music, makes a point of attending NAMM not only to "see all the newest products in categories like sound reinforcement and MI," but also to "check out whatever else is new and hot in categories we can expand our business into." Dealing largely in the house-of-worship

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Midas Verona SR Console
Exclusive review of the mid-sized but feature-packed Midas Verona console, being debuted at Winter NAMM. Page 54



LON COHEN

PIONEER SPIRIT: Dweezil Zappa performed two of his father's tunes as part of the tribute to Frank Zappa during the second annual Surround Music Awards, where the elder Zappa was named Surround Pioneer 2003. The SMA's were held in conjunction with the Surround 2003 conference in December. For more on the Zappa tribute, see Music Etc. on page 98.

SR Closes Heady Year

by Clive Young

The last 12 months have seen the live-sound industry swing through ups and downs that were simply over the top. Between war, SARS, unemployment, terrorist threats and a tragic nightclub fire in Rhode Island, there were plenty of reasons for audiences and tours to stay home—and yet, 2003 saw major sound reinforcement companies as busy as ever. Meanwhile, the sluggish economy,

in fact, powered the rising adoption of modern audio technologies in various segments of the sound reinforcement market.

They say it takes money to make money, and that was clearly the case in 2003, which *Pollstar* listed as the most profitable year yet for the concert business. The industry raked in \$2.5 billion; lots of acts were on the road, creating work for the sound reinforcement business. Much of that business went to Clair Brothers Audio

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