

In Memoriam

David Smith, AES fellow, died suddenly on June 17, at the age of 57 on Long Island, New York. My first meeting with David Smith was about 20 years ago. I still remember the conversation as if it were yesterday. David was asking me about temperature effects on resistors in digital to analog converters, and how they differ for various converter architectures.

Over the next few years, our friendship grew strong as I learned to know, love, and respect David and his many qualities.

Born in New York City on September 30, 1949, David, a talented child, began his life-long love for music when his father played a recording of the *Pastoral* (Beethoven's Sixth Symphony) and soon after he also developed an appreciation for opera. He developed a taste and appreciation for most types of music, but his first preference was classical music. Between live concerts, he listened to his top-notch audiophile system at home.

David studied classical piano for many years, but music was not his only interest. He became equally interested in technology and graduated in 1970 with an electrical engineering degree from Polytechnic Institute.

Music and electronics were only a part of David's interests; he was equally interested in mechanical engineering. He loved high performance cars. His first performance car was a GTO, which he later upgraded to an Alfa, and recently to a Ferrari.

His passions, classical music, opera, quality electronics, and mechanical high performance all came together in one device — the microphone. David was a quality microphone appassionato. He was a collector of rare vintage microphones, which he valued greatly. He was also a "microphone guru," who spent a lot of time studying the various aspects



David Smith
1949–2006

of what makes a great microphone.

As an engineer at Sony Music, David gained many years of recording experience, both in the Sony facility and in the field. Because of his talent and high standards as Sony's "Golden Ear," the recordings he oversaw were superb. His focus on microphone quality was particularly noticeable for recordings of many world-class musicians.

His interests fit well with his many talents. His phenomenal memory was the perfect complement to his never ending quest for deeper learning and understanding. This soft spoken man rose to the position of vice president at Sony Music, with responsibility for all the audio gear. Many of his friends say he was married to his work, but most of them realize that David was fortunate to be able to combine work with his passions, from listening to music to system configuration, from vinyl audiophile projects to multi-tracking, from CD manufacturing to building prototype circuits.

David's genuine and deep commitment to audio prompted him to become involved in all aspects of the music industry, from being an active AES member, to ongoing communication with many industry movers and shakers, and lending a helpful

hand or advice. Until his death he was vice chair of the AES's Technical Committee on Studio Practices & Production. He was always busy. At one time he was looking into the microscopic aspects of what makes a quality CD; another time he was taking a recording crew with gear to a remote location, or setting up new mastering rooms. He enjoyed spending much of his "after hours" time in the lab.

When I first met him, he was busy modifying the old Sony portable F1 recorder to conform with the AES standard. More recently, he was experimenting with high-voltage phantom power in his highly tweaked tube microphone prototype.

I will always remember David's talents and capabilities, but I will miss him for the extremely kind, considerate person he was. He went out of his way to make sure that the people around him were comfortable. As an engineering vice president, while constantly approached by people wishing to sell gear to Sony, David was able to stay true to his commitment to excellence and did so without offending. A soft spoken, deeply caring and supportive person, he will be missed by all who knew him.

More than 15 years of our near weekly phone calls came to a premature end. Our long talks about music, orchestral conductors, opera stars, audio gear, microphones, and so on were suddenly interrupted by unexpected arterial heart disease. In our last conversation, four days prior to his death, we discussed his breadboarding of a PLL circuit, and his coming to my home after the AES Convention in San Francisco this October. I am just one of very many who will miss dear David.

A fund is being established by Sony Music Studios in David's name.

Dan Lavry
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