

Audio Specialist A Blast from the Past

By Jon Lebe

“We are a dying breed,” says Audio Specialist’s owner Howard Bardach of the Studio City vintage musical equipment store celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

With the striking rise in internet industry and the historic emergence of gargantuan and impersonal chains during the last half century (in most sectors and

satisfying customers that has kept me going,” said Bardach. While they certainly work with CDs and DVDs, they also repair reel to reel recorders, cassette recorders, turntables (remember those?), record changers, amplifiers, guitar amps and virtually all major brands of vintage and current home entertainment and professional audio equipment.

The Bardach family has been immersed in music for generations. Sigmund Bardach, Howard’s father, owned a store in North Hollywood called “Sig’s TV & Stereo.” As young as eight years old, Bardach can remember hurrying to finish his school work, so that he could work as his father’s assistant and watch pioneers like Abe Cohen and Victor Brociner in pursuit of the best quality sound. Bardach furthered his hands-on education of the business by attending Los Angeles Trade Technical College and received his C.E.T. certification from the International Society of Certified Electronic Technicians.

Now, more than four decades after he rushed home to help his father at his shop, Bardach is still selling and repairing what he feels to be the best quality musical

equipment. He is a member of numerous trade organizations and holds seminars with students of electronics on technical and practical aspects of the industry. He has even appeared on KPFFK’s “In Fidelity,” the audiophile’s talk radio program.

Much has changed in the music equipment industry, says Bardach, during in his forty year tenure. “There have been tremendous changes in technology that advances extremely rapidly. Nowadays there seems to be a planned obsolescence in musical equipment production,” he says.

After two or three years, Bardach contends, equipment becomes run down, and is advertised as technologically ob-

solete. Vintage equipment, on the other hand, “lasts longer and sounds better.”

And Bardach is not the only one who feels his equipment has more to offer than its new and heavily advertised competitors. Bardach has supplied equipment for the likes of rock star Billy Idol, Cabaret singer Michael Feinstein, the late Ralph Belemly – all music aficionados who have heartily endorsed his store, evident by their signed headshots that adorn Bardach’s store.

“Vintage audio fans in Southern California are truly blessed to ... have Howard Bardach. He is a skilled service provider and wealth of information on audio history,” enthuses Stephen Dreher, a loyal Audio Specialist customer.

With recent economical turns and twists after September 11, Bardach is un-

certain what the future holds. He has seen a sharp decline in business in the last couple years - things were best, Bardach says, in the mid to late 90s.

Additionally, Bardach worries about his business’ longevity because of social and economic changes in America. “People just don’t repair things anymore. People would rather buy a new product every couple of years rather than buy one that could last a lifetime. My instincts say that we won’t be here in 40 years.”

But for the now, if you are looking for a way to revive the vinyl play in your home, Audio Specialist can breathe life back into your turntables so you can actually listen to music yet to find its way to CD format.



PHOTO BY JAMES KAPLAN

THE SPECIALIST
AUDIOPHILE HOWARD BARDACH
CELEBRATES 25 YEARS IN S.C.

absolutely in musical equipment), it seems that friendly service and employee amiability are relics of a lost time. Instead of quick and available service, it seems more and more often one finds oneself waiting in line, only to receive robotic assistance.

But as Bardach’s words imply, these trends need not apply to his store. In fact, Audio Specialist is the only true seller and repairer of vintage music equipment in Studio City. And Bardach prides himself on his store’s personalized care of its clients.

“After more than forty years of fixing and selling musical equipment, it has been the love of what I do and the joy of

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