

Member Spotlight

Richard Factor, WA2IKL

Richard Factor, WA2IKL, has had a ham license for more than 50% of the time that radio has been in existence. He was first licensed in 1959, and has retained his original call sign, despite upgrading to Amateur Extra while a high school student in New York City.

Richard bought gear on New York's famous "Radio Row," built Heathkits, and also designed and built equipment of his own. Not having access to power tools, Richard, with true ham ingenuity, made do with hammers and screwdrivers.

"I built a RTTY modem," Richard recalled. "I told my mom I was sick, stayed home from school, and built a tube demodulator. It's amazing I didn't kill myself."

Beginning a Business

These early experiences led to Richard's career in designing and selling recording equipment that's been used by everybody from Aerosmith to Emerson, Lake & Palmer. It began when Richard and friends Kenny Schaffer (now N2KS) and Steve Katz (ex-WA2RBX) were building a recording studio.

"At another studio, Steve had a very tiny control room, and needed to run a tape machine, but there was no room for an assistant," Richard said. To solve the problem, he built a locator that automatically rewound to a specific spot. They ended up selling the device to Ampex, which made big multitrack recorders. "Suddenly, we had a product and we had a business," Richard said.

They brainstormed other products and brought them to Audio Engineering Society conventions in the 1970s, when music recording and production was undergoing great change. Digital

was taking hold, and integrated circuits were brand new. A product that Richard and his partners called the "Instant Phaser" became the foundation of their company, Eventide. Until that point, phasing required an engineer to manipulate reel-to-reel tape by hand. The Instant Phaser changed all of that.



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Another product — a digital delay line that slowed down audio

and created effects — practically sold itself when Richard lent it to recording studios. When it was time for the studio to give the delay back, they didn't want to. Sales were made, and Eventide continued to develop the product over the years.

An Eventide product called the Harmonizer® — designed by Tony Agnello — could change pitch, which was a revolutionary achievement. Eventide moved from New York City to Little Ferry, New Jersey, in 1984, and the company's success continued. "I don't remember the 1990s at all, I was so busy," Richard remarked.

DXCC and GRAMMY Honors

During Eventide's early years in New York City, Richard built a Heathkit SB-104 and used it with a vertical at the office. When the company moved to New Jersey, he put up towers and resumed what he calls his "DXing career." He'd earned DXCC back in

the 1960s, but his New Jersey station enabled him to make it to the top of the DXCC Honor Roll. "With the exception of North Korea," he laughed.

For the past several years, Richard has lived in Sedona, Arizona. He's still involved with Eventide, and he's on the air — mostly chasing DX, but occasionally for a ragchew or to hop into a contest for a few hours.

Eventide, which is coming up on its 50th anniversary, has been so successful that its innovations earned Richard and Tony Agnello a 2018 Technical GRAMMY Award, which, according to the Recording Academy's website, goes to "individuals who have dramatically pushed boundaries and made groundbreaking, important, outstanding, and influential contributions of technical excellence and innovation to the recording field throughout their lifetimes."

When asked what he received the Technical GRAMMY for, Richard said, "We were very early pioneers in digital equipment, and our fingerprints are all over most canonical records after the Beatles — David Bowie, Led Zeppelin. Almost every major recording studio in the US and UK had Eventide equipment."

When one considers that past winners of the Technical GRAMMY include Ray Dolby (1995), Les Paul (2001), Apple Computer (2002), Phil Ramone (2005), Yamaha (2007), and Thomas Alva Edison (2010), it's easy to understand the magnitude of Richard's contribution to the recording industry.

Richard and Tony attended the main GRAMMY ceremony in January 2018, and received their award at a July 2018 ceremony. Richard describes the feeling of winning a GRAMMY as "some part amazement at the unexpected honor, and some part 'let's get back to work, there's a lot to be done.'"

Keep an ear out for this industrious ham on the 40 – 10 meter bands.