



D THE INNOVATORS

By Jim Roberts

Phil Jones

WHEN HE WAS NINE, PHIL JONES

got a book on electronics for Christmas. He studied it and then built a radio. A few years later, inspired by James Jamerson's line on "Reach Out (I'll Be There)," he decided he wanted to play bass. And thus a career was launched.

Phil grew up in Wales. His parents weren't excited about his desire to become a bass player and encouraged him to get a "proper job." He studied electronics at Cardiff University, but then he went to the Welsh College of Music and Drama to study bass guitar. "They said, 'What is that? It isn't even a proper instrument,'" he recalls. "So I took up the double bass."

After completing a music degree, Phil struggled to make a living as a musician, so he turned back to electronics. He landed a job with a company developing navigation systems in Iran, which paid well. Despite the perils of working during the Iranian Revolution—"I was shot at a couple of times"—Phil banked enough money to start his own sound company in London. His desire to improve the gear he was using gave him "a good insight into learning how to build things," and he was hired as a speaker designer by Vitavox.

Phil's career took off when he designed a studio monitor that became popular in

top-rank recording studios; it was marketed as the AE1 by Acoustic Energy, which Phil co-owned with two investors. Business differences caused him to move on to other positions, including a four-year stint as the chief designer for Boston Acoustics. He then founded another company, Platinum Audio, where, he says, "we were doing super-high-end versions of near-field monitors and home audio." Platinum sold one pair of speakers for \$275,000 to the Sultan of Brunei.

But Phil wasn't happy. "I wanted to get back to my roots, which was bass. I wanted to incorporate everything from my experiences into one thing: bass guitar amplifiers." A partnership with a speaker manufacturer in China allowed him to do this, and today Phil Jones Bass products are made in a 1.2 million-square-foot factory in Guangdong Province. The line was launched in 2002 with the M-500 "Velvet Hammer" head and now includes more than a half-dozen amp heads and an array of speaker cabinets and combo amps.

Phil Jones Bass cabinets have 5" and 7" speakers rather than the 10s and 15s found in most contemporary units. "What matters is not the cone size but the amount of cone area," Phil explains. "If you put four 5" speakers together, you get the equivalent cone area of one 10"—and the 5 can encompass the whole audio range. The trick was to get it to go

low enough to produce true fundamental bass. It took me about ten years to get it right." The 5" speakers are found in cabinets ranging from the C4, with four drivers, to the 8T/16B, with an 8x5 top-end box above a 16x5 bass bottom.

Phil Jones Bass 7" speakers are featured in the recently introduced "Power Duo" rig, with a 350-watt BP-400 head driving a pair of 4x7 cabinets, touted as "extremely lightweight/space saving designs with maximum articulated low end." Another innovative new product is the Ear-Box, a near-field monitor for bass players that mounts on a microphone stand. The unit's two 2.5" speakers provide enhanced sound clarity. "When you're standing next to a speaker onstage, you don't hear the true fidelity of that amp," Phil says. "You don't hear the highs and the upper mids that well, and the Ear-Box fills that gap, so you can hear everything crystal clear."

Whether it's a big concert rig or small monitor, every unit designed by Phil Jones and built under his supervision has a bass enthusiast behind it. "I'm so happy to see the instrument that I have loved for more than a half-century getting what it deserves today," he says. "It's exciting—and my goal is to help every bass player get the ultimate sound they're looking for."

For more about Phil Jones Bass, go to philjonesbass.com. **BP**

Jim Roberts was the founding editor of *BASS PLAYER* and also served as the magazine's publisher and group publisher. He is the author of *How the Fender Bass Changed the World* and *American Basses: An Illustrated History & Player's Guide* (both published by Backbeat Books/Hal Leonard).