

GO WITH THE PRO

By Michelle Loeb

Whether walking into its Los Angeles-based store or visiting its state-of-the-art Web site, one need only look at Westlake Pro to know one is in the company of experts. George Adjieff and Joe Taupier—who had managed the store for many years before they became its Owners in a management buyout—have gone to great lengths to cultivate an environment that offers the best products and the highest level of expertise for customers of all needs and disciplines.

The first place that that's evident is in the selection of products Westlake sells. Since Adjieff and Taupier purchased Westlake Pro, it has become one of the largest Avid Audio Elite dealers in the United States. Westlake Pro is an Apple Authorized Reseller, a dealer for the top three recording console manufacturers—API, Solid State Logic and AMS Neve—and an authorized franchise dealer for practically every popular pro audio line.

Both Adjieff and Taupier are musicians who have been involved in the music and studio business for 25 years, and their store is set up as if the customer were walking into a music studio. All the mics, speakers and other components are in a real-life setting, so customers can demo the products in a real-world environment.

Westlake Pro
4101 Lankershim Blvd.
Studio City CA 91602
323.845.1145
store.westlakepro.com
Mon-Fri: 9am-6pm
George Adjieff
and Joe Taupier,
Owners

“It’s not like your typical music store, where someone might be playing AC/DC loudly in the corner and you can’t think straight. There isn’t that cacophony,” said Adjieff. “Also, each of our sales staff has a private office that you can go into to talk.”

Right now, there are two full-size studios, and Adjieff and Taupier are planning a third that will be more of a display area with a large mixing console. They also plan to construct a back-area sound stage so customers can see technologies like Dolby Atmos in action—an important experience for customers looking beyond Westlake Pro’s musical expertise and more into the company’s work in the audio post-production business.

“We started being involved in audio post-production back in 2000, and we service all the major film studios each month,” said Taupier. “Audio post-production is a very important part of Westlake Pro’s success.”

Adjieff and Taupier had the foresight to develop a technical side to their store, hiring a sales and technical staff whose members are not only proficient in music and recording, but also experts in design and integration.

“We are heavily involved with both selling products and installing and building out studios,” said Adjieff. “Most of our competition really doesn’t focus on that second part, whereas we thrive in that world and we take pride in understanding that language.” He continued, “Almost no integration company is a dealer for what they integrate. So, if someone needs something done, they have to go to a seller and then to an integrator. However, we sell, integrate and install. So, a client can come to us for one comprehensive solution.”

By developing that capability, Westlake Pro has been able to expand into many facets of the installation business. It has done hundreds of installations of all sizes and in many different locations. “Everywhere from Mumbai, India to right down the street,” Adjieff

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photo: moesssparks.com

SHINE A LIGHT

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affirmed. Westlake Pro works with many churches and schools, and it was even chosen to redo the PA system at NAMM's headquarters in Carlsbad CA. Taupier said, "There are a lot of companies they could've picked, so that was something really neat that

we're very proud of."

The next area of growth Adjieff and Taupier have their eye on is centered on government installations. Westlake Pro installed a large forensic audio system recently for the Office of Homeland Security, and that's an

area Adjieff and Taupier hope to continue to grow.

"It's not something you see a lot of in our industry. It's kind of neat to be a part of it," said Adjieff. "They are scientists, so they had very specific questions; you really need to know the product. Extra-detailed questions need expert answers. It's a whole different language."

The other arena in which Westlake Pro aims to expand is on the Internet. Since taking the reins of the company, Adjieff and Taupier have worked to create one of the most informative Web sites in the market today.


"It's impossible to run a business without an engaging Web site," Adjieff declared. "I don't think you can have a business today without one." He continued, "When we first took over the company, the Web site was sort of limping along. We wanted to create a first-class Web site that offered e-commerce, was informative and told the story of our business, so we could get the word out about our other services."

The company hired a former client, Peter Malick, to be its Director of Online Sales and Marketing. Together, they began looking not only at Web sites belonging to direct competitors, but also at business-to-business Web sites and sites for luxury goods. "We feel that we kind of do both at Westlake," said Adjieff. "We sell tools for people to do their jobs, but we also sell luxury items, because some of our customers

are hobbyists rather than professionals."

The Web site they created offers both an e-commerce element and a blog that features YouTube videos from Grammy-winning engineers, who offer step-by-step guides to their particular techniques. This allows the Web site to cover what Adjieff feels are the two most important reasons for customers to visit in the first place. "People go to Web sites for two reasons," he began, elaborating, "to shop and to get information." He continued, "There's a fine line between e-commerce and information, and we wanted to stick as close to that line as possible. Customers who want one, the other or both should be equally engaged."

Looking forward, Adjieff and Taupier hope to add more post-production content to their Web site, as well as to continue expanding Westlake Pro's singular mix of product knowledge and installation expertise. As the pro audio business continues to evolve, Westlake Pro strives to remain at the forefront of that evolution.

"We're fortunate enough to have some of the best, most creative, most knowledgeable clients in the world," said Taupier. "From top recording artists and engineers to the up-and-comers, they're the cream of the crop in record production, audio engineering and audio post-production." He added, "It's our privilege to service them." 

FIVE MINUTES WITH

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main thing we want to do, and we're increasing our campaign to accomplish more of that. It used to be that I was the only one who would go out and do those workshops. But our Sales Manager, Barry Hunn, is an incredible musician, and he has more banjo in his blood than I do. He's an incredibly good salesman, and we're starting to get him out to do workshops and train up store staff to be able to talk to people about banjos.

The banjo market has expanded beyond its normal niche. We survived most of our years with the banjo market just being bluegrass, folk, old timey and Dixieland. They were tiny, little niche

markets. But, in the last three or four years, it's started expanding into all kinds of other music genres to where, now, our customer base is much larger than it used to be. It's not the traditional customer base that it used to be. And there are people walking into music stores—people wanting to get a banjo—and they can't find anybody who can talk to them about it and help them figure out what they need. And one of the reasons we're really enjoying this new banjo ukulele we just made is we're finding out there are many, many stores that are going to carry this banjo ukulele that were never otherwise going to carry a banjo.

