

## INTRODUCTION

By Tom Kenny

I was still a young assistant editor when Stephen St.Croix sent in a column that had to do with a Finland-to-U.S. flight; three seats and a MIDI guitar; and a run-in with a flight attendant and eventually the pilot. Stephen had been asked to turn off his portable CD player, and comfortable in his full-blown rock-star persona, he refused. Well, the pilot won, but, naturally, Stephen got the last word. After landing, he called a friend at the FAA, did his research, and found that buried in all the RF of modern aircraft, the cockpit-to-landing gear signal operated very near 44.1 kHz. It would be nearly two years before the domestic airlines started asking passengers to turn off electronic devices.

Great story, I thought, but still, what does this have to do with professional audio? We're Mix magazine, and our readers don't care about international flights and rocker attitude and landing gear. They want real information. Real audio.

Boy, did I have a lot to learn, and over the next 15 or so years, I learned plenty from Stephen. He had one of the most astute technological minds I have ever come across. He also had an artist's soul. The blend of the two was a real pleasure to tap into. He was one of the more original characters to ever roar through pro audio.

Stephen filled a room with his personality, but he also worked like a dog. When he was manufacturing the Marshall Time Modulator in the early '70s, a few months straight of 18-hour days, hand-assembling units in a team of four to get the charter plane filled and ready for Europe, was not uncommon. He often slept in the studio while working on the first DVD releases of *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone With the Wind*, because he was developing new technologies to clean up the original tracks while he was mixing. He also played hard, and it usually involved open highway, one of his custom Harleys and occasionally a firearm. We didn't call his column "The Fast Lane" for nothing.

Yet, it was when Stephen slowed down that he became even more interesting, offering up the human side that his readers rarely saw. Shortly before 9/11, he was diagnosed with melanoma that metastasized five years later. Before another year was out, he was gone.

It was in that half-decade, in casual conversations and through his column, Stephen revealed a humanity and sense of self that served as a lesson to this editor in how to conduct a well-balanced life. He had spent his time as an insane workaholic, as an up-all-night producer. He had made millions and flown private. He had been, in his own words, a "real asshole" at times. After the diagnoses, he seemed to work just as hard, committing most of his energies to helping the federal government combat terrorism through the use of audio technologies. Yes, he kept working, but he cut back the hours, because finally he had found balance in his life. He had met his wife Teresa.

So when I look back and think of Stephen, a little more than two years following his passing, I can't help but think of the glory he found in his life balance.

We honor that balance that Stephen brought to his column, and that balance that he found in his life, in our presentation of his selected works, neatly broken down into sections entitled *Art, Technology and Life*. Stephen saw the importance of all aspects of his life informing his art, and all aspects of his art informing his life. I miss those regular calls with Stephen... I'm so grateful that I'll always have his words.