

By JEFF GLOR, MOLLY KORDARES / CBS NEWS / January 17, 2013, 11:31 AM

# McIntosh: Made in the U.S.A.



(CBS News) For arena rock concerts, one band, surrounded by tens of thousand of fans, is a simple formula that works.

That is, unless you were at Shea Stadium on August 15, 1964, when The Beatles played their first ever arena rock concert...over a PA system. The crowd was so loud, no one could hear the music.

That's where McIntosh -- at the time, a small audio and speaker company based in Binghamton, New York -- came in.

"Basically, those venues were using what you would find in a club," says Charles Randall, the current president of McIntosh Labs. "They weren't adequate enough."

Using amplifiers, they built a system capable of broadcasting clear sound to thousands. It was first attempted at Woodstock in 1969, but best employed five years later, when The Grateful Dead began touring with 92 amps - the "Wall of Sound."

"They actually played in front of the sound system instead of it being off from the side," Randall said. "So they actually had a chance to feel and hear what the attendants were hearing. 28,000 watts, that's a lot of power for that time frame."

Propelled by their work at Woodstock and the ensuing decades, Randall's company became an industry darling, known for making world-class audio equipment the old-fashioned way: by hand, and by some of this country's longest-serving employees. The average tenure is 17 years. Some workers have been at McIntosh headquarters for more than 40 years.

Randall started at McIntosh in 1986, as an engineer. He says, even though company ownership has changed multiple times, from domestic to foreign, the core philosophy has not changed: made in the U.S.A.

We asked him, "You have 138 workers. Any factories overseas?"

"No."

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"Any jobs overseas?"

"No."

"Anything overseas?"

"Nothing overseas. As long as I'm steering the ship, you will never see it built or manufactured overseas."

"I'm sure you've been told this, but you can certainly make more money if you sent jobs overseas."

"Sure. Absolutely," Randall told us. "But my quality will suffer. And I won't allow that to happen."

That quality can be seen in the company's longevity.

"People always say, 'How long does our stuff last?'" Chuck Hinton, another McIntosh employee, told us. "We don't know how long they last. We've only been making them for 63 years."

Hinton spent twenty years waiting for a job opening at McIntosh. He says he hopes it's the last job he ever has.

"We love what we make and we think it's the greatest thing," Hinton says. "And if you guys like it too, great. Buy it."

McIntosh has made about a million pieces of equipment since 1949. They estimate that three-quarters of that gear is still in use. McIntosh products are so coveted by collectors, they often re-sold, after decades, for five or six times their original sale price.

Focused on the long haul, the company has long shunned publicity aimed at short-term gain. For decades, they refused to advertise. They wouldn't even submit equipment for review.

Not that there was much to worry about. Rolling Stone called their latest product, the McAir, "the WiFi stereo of the gods." And at \$3,000, it's by no means cheap but their price point is line with their philosophy: spend more on the good, hear less of the bad.

"I don't think there's any definition of wrong music or right music," says Randall. "There's music the way it was intended to be heard by the artist. Our job is to get out of the way and just deliver it."

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### Jeff Glor

Jeff Glor was named anchor of the Sunday edition of the "CBS Evening News" in January 2012 and Special Correspondent for "CBS This Morning" in November 2011.

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