Subject: Re: BUMMER!
Posted by Wayne Parham on Thu, 04 Dec 2008 18:23:57 GMT
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Yeah, that's kind of how I felt too. I think what Audiokarma did was terribly selfish and irresponsible. It's not like they didn't know about the LSAF schedule in advance. In my opinion, that should have been a hard stop for them. I know I would never have scheduled LSAF on top of an existing audio show or similar event.This opens up a topic that has been on my mind for some time. What is the purpose of the regional shows and the agendas of the people that attend? To me, they have one purpose. They are a way for small niche companies and well organized hobbyists and DIY'ers to get together. They are a cross between a large audio club meeting and a small trade show. Their whole reason for being is to bring people together that otherwise have no organized gathering place.Big box stores put most common electronics in front of people. You can easily get a computer, TV or boom box at Best Buy. If you want a little higher end products, you can go to specialty shops. But you're still getting factory made stuff for the most part. If you want to audition one of the dozens, perhaps hundreds of craftsmen made products or kit offerings, you really have no place to go other than someone's house that already took the plunge and bought one.That's what make regional shows so nice. They're where you can find AudioKinesis, Audio Note, Bottlehead, or any number of other niche companies like that. Where else can you meet people like Bob Brines, Jef Larson or Jim Griffin? These are crafsmen and designers that have transitioned from DIY'ers to offering products that you'll never find in any store.When Dan Schmalle put together VSAC in Washington State and Mike Baker put together MAF in Ohio, to me, they were really on to something. These were much smaller than CES, tailored for small niche companies and DIY'ers. In a way, they were extensions of audio clubs and were a perfect way for the hobbyists to get together with one another and with smaller companies that would never attend something like CES or NAMM. Out of those sprang RMAF and LSAF.RMAF grew quickly, becoming almost like a mini-CES. It was modeled after VSAC, I think, sort of the typical kind of trade show, where a promoter contracts to purchase several rooms, marks them up and resells them for a profit. That's fine, and the money generated by them can be used for advertising and other perks. But it does make attendance much more expensive for exhibitors.LSAF was more like the original MAF in that the cost to exhibitors was basically just the cost of the room. There was no additional fee. At MAF, there was a small fee, actually, but only like ten bucks, not thousands. At shows like MAF and LSAF, you don't have a budget for advertising but the cost is low enough that DIY'ers and transitional companies can attend. Advertising is basically word of mouth, with a website to announce dates and exhibitors. That's it.Personally, I don't care what type of show we have but I do think it is impoprtant to maintain one here in this part of the country. I, for one, would prefer it not cost $2K to get in, but I wouldn't mind $500. The rooms are $100/night or so, and so for a three night stay you're looking at a minimum of $300 anyway.I can't blame AK wholly, in that I was getting too busy to mess with LSAF much. I was to a point where I could maintain the website and visit with the hotell staff to make arrangements, but not much else. I don't have time to research the area for new places, nor do I have time to approach all of the prospective exhibitors. These are the things that take time, not hours a day but certainly hours a month. Somebody would have to have some time for that, in order to keep LSAF going.We have had some volunteers, Fred Thompson, Paul Hileman and many others. Lots have helped. But we were getting a little thin on time, and we really needed a push. This was true ever since the first year we moved to Dallas. It also didn't help that the first year in Dallas, we happened to get an Embassy Suites that was probably the worst in the nation,

and since I wasn't living in Dallas to really monitor it, the place was unsuitable the first year we went there.  Remember the damnable construction?  That really took the wind out of our sails, I think.So this year, we knew we needed to move to a new location.  I like Embassy Suites, always have, and we looked at some of the others in Dallas.  Seemed promising at first.  The New Orleans club was intersted in getting involved, and I had hoped they could rally support and get the word out.LSAF has always been a grass roots thing, after all, so whatever we want out of it, we each have to put into it.  There is no promoter, keeps the costs down, but we all have to pull some weight or it doesn't get done.Paul Hileman stepped up to the plate, and did a lot of legwork this year, finding prospective hotels.  We pretty much narrowed down to one in North Dallas, which is perfect since it is the most attractive part of the city.  I thought we were probably going to settle there.  I had spoken to them about the available weekends, tried hard to negotiate for the weekend we had always used.  Consistency was important to me, something everyone could count on.  That's why the AKfest thing was really the straw that broke the camel's back.  It was just the last straw, at least for this year.Now, if we could put something together in the next six months, I'd be there for sure.  The website is a keeper, I'll maintain it as long as I'm around.  We can always post information about new event dates and get everyone together.  Or we can put something together for next year, just skip this year.  We can either choose different dates, perhaps make it the last weekend in May or whatever, and hopefully AK won't make the same mistake again.  Maybe we can figure out a way to get across to them that overlapping schedules is bad for everyone, and they'll respect that, I dunno.  Since we're so far south, maybe we should go earlier in the year, maybe March, because we're already warming up by then and Michigan isn't.