

view **from** the **top**

Creating A Complete Package

Tony van Veen, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Disc Makers



by Nancy Caronia

When Ivin Ballen founded Disc Makers in 1946 he wanted a place to press his label's records, and those of other Philadelphia area labels. In the early days, the company made 78 RPM shellac records, then moved on to 33 and 45 RPM vinyl, and in the late '70s and early '80s began to replicate cassettes and, for a short time, 8-tracks. By that time, Ballen's son, Morris, was running the helm, and he was more than ready to expand the family business.

Enter, Tony van Veen, vice president of sales and marketing, Disc Makers. In 1987, after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, van Veen was hired to support the younger Ballen's vision for the company's evolution. At the time, according to van Veen, the company's business

was 70 percent vinyl and 30 percent cassette. He recalls, "Morris hired me to put together a program that would offer more services and create marketing pieces that would target independent musicians. We had just started offering jacket design, jacket printing, mastering and other services that weren't typically available at that time from a record pressing plant, and needed to get the word out."

Since van Veen's arrival, the company has seen a tenfold increase in sales. And in addition to offering CD and DVD replication and duplication and blank CD-Rs and DVD-Rs, Disc Makers offers turnkey packages which include a graphic services department with more than 20 full-time designers, high-quality in-house laser scanning and color separating, photo retouching, digital plate-making and state-of-the-art printing. There are also in-house multimedia specialists who are able to custom-design and produce interactive multimedia presenta-

tions for any enhanced CD, CD-ROM or DVD project. These enhanced CDs can include high-quality video clips, Flash animation and screen savers to interviews, promotional materials and Web links. Most recently, the company began to sell CD-R and DVD-R duplicators and blank media.

Today, Disc Makers boasts two manufacturing plants in Pennsauken, NJ and Fremont, CA in addition to four regional offices in New York City, Los Angeles, Tukwila, WA (near Seattle) and Puerto Rico. "Disc Makers is the name brand for independent audio CD manufacturing," van Veen points out. "We're by far the largest company in terms of the independent audio volume that we manufacture. There are plenty of plants that are larger, but they focus on major record labels and large corporate clients, while we focus on strictly small clients. Our average run is 1,300 pieces. We've pieced together a sizable business by focusing on the

small runs and on the kinds of production runs that most of the large production plants are not interested in. We're not known as a really low-priced shop, but if you want it good, and you want it fast and you want it to be simple and hands-off, we're the right place."

And while musicians today can manufacture professional level masters with high-quality home project studios and instruments, van Veen says artists need more than a master to make it in the music industry. "Great gear just gets you to the master stage," he insists. "Regardless of how it sounds, you need to have a quality finished product that represents what you're about. That's what we're about. Disc Makers has been in the forefront of this movement and effectively helped create this 'do-it-yourself' ethos that has been a part of the music industry for independent artists in the past decade.

"There was no such a thing as a manufacturer
(continued on page 94)