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## Worthy Of Praise

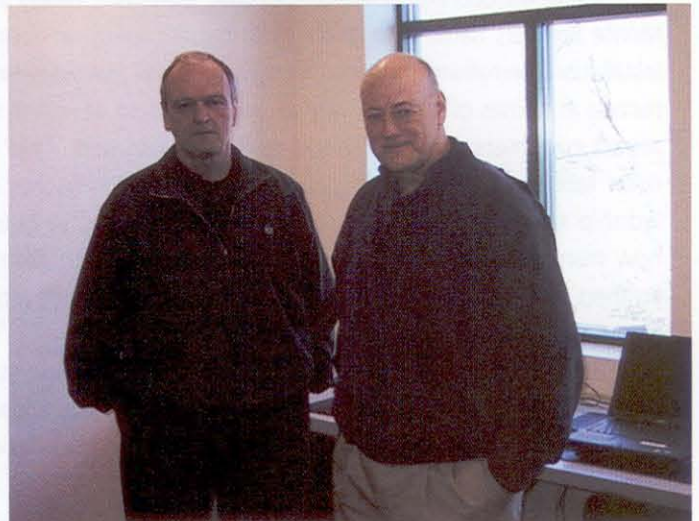
### Monte Brothers Specializes In Houses Of Worship

by Travis McGee

**M**ore than 40 years ago in Yonkers, NY, two high school kids named Steve Minozzi and Bob Pelepako formed a rock and roll band with dreams of fame and fortune. Today, those aspirations have come true, albeit in a different line of work. As the co-founders of the Monte Brothers sound contracting firm, Minozzi and Pelepako have established a reputation as a leading installer of sound systems across the country, particularly in houses of worship.

At an early age, Minozzi and Pelepako bonded as talented guitar players. After finding success in the high school band scene, they began playing nightclubs in New York City while attending college. While the gigs were lucrative, the violent atmospheres in these clubs was a major inconvenience for honest musicians trying to make a living. "The pay was fine, your health was the problem," Minozzi said. "The law wasn't enforced as well as it is today. So we started playing lounges."

Playing background music in lounges and restaurants proved equally profitable without all the hassle, and the duo typically played six nights a week. It was during this time that the Monte



▲ Steve Minozzi (left) and Bob Pelepako parlayed a music career into the Monte Brothers sound contracting firm located in Dobbs Ferry, NY.

Brothers name originated. "We went to a guy who owned a restaurant/lounge type of thing about playing at his place, and he loved the idea," Minozzi said. "But he said we needed a name."

"There were a lot of groups with 'Brothers' in their name back then, like the Righteous Brothers, Isley Brothers, etc.," Pelepako said. "So we came up with Monte Brothers, and it stuck."

In 1966, the pair embarked on a business venture, opening a

music store in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, under the Monte Brothers moniker. The store not only sold instruments, but offered lessons, and the business was successful enough that Minozzi and Pelepako made it a full-time profession upon graduation. In 1970, they purchased a building in Dobbs Ferry, NY, moving their store and adding a demo-caliber recording studio on the top floor.

With time, Monte Brothers began installing sound systems, performing its first church installation in 1972. This eventually became the company's primary source of income with the store and studio taking on a supplementary role. Minozzi and Pelepako officially hung up their guitars at the end of the decade after releases on Jamie Records and Roulette Records garnered critical acclaim, but no commercial success.

"There was a point where we couldn't do anything else except houses of worship," Pelepako said. "When you start doing one a week, it occupies your time. Dealing with a house of worship is a seven-day-a-week business. After we put the system in, we always go to the first service to make sure everything works. Dealing with churches is not just putting in a system, there's a lot of service required."

In 1986, Minozzi and Pelepako sold their storefront, taking the Monte Brothers name with them, and focused solely on sound installation. Remaining in Dobbs Ferry, they found overwhelming success in houses of worship, relying solely on word of mouth to attract customers. "We don't advertise," Minozzi said. "We've never taken out an ad in a paper. The end product in houses of worship speak for themselves, and I don't even want to guess how many people on a given weekend are listening to Monte Brothers sound systems. If the people are satisfied, that's the most important thing, and the word is going to get around."

In 2003, Monte Brothers relocated down the road to a brand-new site. The new 4,800-square-foot facility was built from scratch, with the priority of maximizing space to meet the needs of a sound contracting firm.

"When you're designing a building, you have to take several factors into account," Minozzi said. "One of them is we don't need the warehouse space now that we needed 10 years ago. We need maybe a third or less, because there are no more equalizers, limiters, everything is condensed. Everything is compact and can stack. As a contractor, you'd be smart to build, because you get what you need. We owned a building bigger than this, but it

didn't fit our needs. We ended up selling it to a bank. This piece of land is only 58 x 100 feet, but it houses a 4,800-square-foot building."

This practical approach is seen in every facet of the Monte Brothers business, where there is a strong emphasis on embracing new technology to further benefit the company in the future. A trademark in nearly all of the new Monte Brothers systems is the presence of digital technology—Minozzi and Pelepako, in fact, maintained a steady dialogue with Biamp during the development of its Audia digital signal processing system. "Technology has become phenomenal, and it's important that the owner is willing to spend the money and train the personnel," Minozzi said.

"Contractors must be aware of another plateau coming very quickly, which includes DSP and other technology. If they don't move on that, when it becomes a standard, they're going to fall by the wayside." At the same time, the company realizes that new technology isn't automatically better. "You have to be able to accommodate the customer," Pelepako said. "You can't shove the newest technology down somebody's throat simply because that's the newest thing going."

You have to look at what the customer needs, and give them whatever it takes. Every space is different, you have to know how the space is used. Some churches have a stage or a platform that everything emanates from. Certain ceremonies take place in the back of the church, the choir can come from the front or the rear, things like that."

After nearly 20 years as a sound contractor, with 90 percent of business coming from houses of worship, there is no end in sight to the success of Monte Brothers—last year, the company made \$3 million in revenue. With a staff of 14, Minozzi and Pelepako continue to look to the future. "I think you're going to have a turnaround with younger companies coming up and older companies kind of fading away because they don't want to spend the money," Minozzi said. "Then you'll have companies like ours where there are younger people that have been in the company 10 or 15 years, and eventually we're going to want to play more golf and they're going to do more work. Somebody's always going to be at the helm carrying that tradition."

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