

**HARTLEY PEAVEY interview for Guitariste.com**



***Guitariste.com had the opportunity to talk with Hartley Peavey, the founder of the brand that bears his name since 1965, to discover with him the latest news from Peavey Electronics and Trace Elliot. If everyone knows the Classic 30 and the Bandit 112, how many know that Peavey holds more than 180 patents? Innovation and culture of the difference are at the heart of the simple goal that Hartley set for himself 53 years ago : to be the best !***

*Interviewed by Judicaël Tribillac*

**As you probably know, our website is called Guitariste.com so if you don't mind, we are going to stick to guitar and bass product related questions for that interview. So what's new on that side for Peavey in 2018 ?**

Peavey has always tried to innovate and bring to the marketplace new and exciting products as opposed to doing what many of our major competitors continue to do....reissues. The very fact that they continue to reintroduce their older products is very "telling" and illustrates a lack of innovation and/or creativity. In Peavey's 53-year history, we have never done a reissue....Why? Simply because, each year, our equipment gets better and we have never found it necessary to reissue our old products because our new ones are much better. Those companies that can't seem to depart from their older paths apparently depend on endless reintroductions of their older equipment.

**I have seen videos of the new MAX® bass amplifier series presented at Summer NAMM '18 with angled baffles. Is this angle only applicable to bass amps? When can we expect them to reach the shops in France?**

Our new MAX® bass amplifiers were introduced at Summer NAMM, and are significantly different than our older bass amps and very different in look and performance from our competitors'. Our continuing quest to be the best REQUIRES us to constantly reinvent our equipment as well as ourselves. Production of our new MAX® bass amplifiers began last month (October) and you can expect to see these in the French market late in the first quarter of 2019.



[See the video](#)

**Can you explain what the Peavey Learning Center is all about? Is it only for beginners or will any guitar player find something new to learn there?**

The Peavey Learning Center is our effort to provide guitar lessons to the basic and intermediate level guitarists. With the growth of instruction and information on the internet, we felt like we should provide lessons on the web for those wishing to begin playing or for those already playing to improve their playing skills. These online guitar lessons are provided free of charge and is our effort to expand the guitar marketplace by providing a "path" to better playing for the beginning and intermediate guitarists. Check it out at <https://learn.peavey.com>

**Hartley, I know you pride yourself on being different and to constantly come up with new products, which led Peavey as a company to earn more than 180 patents. Do you know how many of these are guitar related? Are there any particular innovations or inventions that you had big hopes for that didn't transform into commercial successes or the opposite, or even one that surprised you? If you had to pick just 1 or 2, which ones better illustrate the Peavey legacy?**

When I started the company back in 1965 (53 years ago), I had a simple goal....."to be the best". Obviously, one cannot be the best without being DIFFERENT! ..... Peavey IS a very different company than our competitors, having received probably more patents than most of our competitors combined. Patents must be earned by combining new and different ideas, not from doing reissues. While my company has enjoyed a considerable number of successes, we have also had a few failures.

Peavey introduced to the world the best sounding drum kit ever, using our patented radial bridge construction, having no lugs or other resonance dampening attachments.... but of course, they looked different, but that was necessary in order to produce the world's best sounding acoustic drums. Unfortunately, our drums were not successful because we discovered that drummers wanted conventional appearance and not a different look that was necessary in order to produce the best sounds.

In the late 80s, Peavey introduced a revolutionary software upgradeable range of synthesizers. This effort had limited commercial success because our idea was to offer the marketplace a software upgradeable synth and sell the sounds and software upgrades. Unfortunately, in spite of our new direction, it was not a commercial success, although, it probably should have been.



Luckily, these two relatively unsuccessful ventures were far overshadowed by the many successful products and innovations our company has brought to the marketplace for more than 5 decades under the SAME ownership and management.

**Are you still hands on with the engineers developing products or can you explain how your role has evolved over the years? Do you still play guitar? What's your set up like?**

I am very much involved in our product development and rarely does a product leave our factories without considerable input and involvement by me. Although I thought at one time I was a guitar player, the sad truth is that playing guitar is not my real talent. I have been involved for so many years with various technologies that my lousy guitar playing is overshadowed by my involvement in electronics and loudspeaker technology. Incidentally, Peavey is one of the few companies in the world that makes its own loudspeakers. Like all of our other products, Peavey's Black Widow® and Scorpion® loudspeakers are very different from those of our competition.

**Last year, you released the HP2 guitars, bringing back one of the most famous Peavey designs over the years and in my opinion one of the most comfortable necks I have ever played. It was obviously originally attached to a famous guitar player. Can you explain the process of building a signature guitar or amplifier if you prefer? Is it 100% what the artist needs/wants or do you always try to provide a little extra to seduce more potential customers?**

In 2017, we reintroduced a guitar that Jim DeCola designed for a famous guitarist. This was a direct result of a request from all over the world. This was really not a reissue since the guitar was made on the exact same tooling and computer software used previously. It is the same guitar, sans the famous name. Building a

signature guitar or amplifier for a famous artist is an intricate process. Unfortunately, our language is inadequate when describing "tonality" and the process usually involves "tweaking" the designs to produce the desired tonality, playability, appearance, etc.



We have been successful in working with many famous artists over the years in both amplification and guitars/basses. Unlike most of our amplifier competition, Peavey does NOT have a "SIGNATURE" sound. Each of our amplifier products is designed to suit the individual artist we are working with or a particular genre. By focusing our efforts, we have optimized the tonality and performance essentially to maximize the performance of the artist or genre as opposed to having a "generalized" sound, as do many of our competitors. Because of our many years of experience, and our deep understanding of technology, we are often able to significantly enhance the performance beyond what the artists ask for.

Our latest signature amplifier that we did in conjunction with Misha Mansoor is possibly one of the most sophisticated tube amps ever offered to the public.

This amplifier, the Invective™, offers unmatched clean and distortion modes as well as a large number of innovative features not available elsewhere.



**With Trace Elliot®, you've released the ELF, a tiny portable head and the Transit™ bass and acoustic preamps. You also have the mini heads on the Peavey line-up, which I believe are a huge success. Do you see a shift from big, loud and heavy stacks towards more portable and flexible solutions? Or do you think both can happily coexist?**

As most people are aware, sound reinforcement systems are far better today than in the past. With the significant performance of these sound systems, huge amplifiers are often not necessary and as a result, many players seek smaller and more portable equipment. While there's definitely a trend among players to lightweight gear, there are still quite a number of professionals that enjoy "interaction" with their amplifiers, and generally this requires larger speaker systems.



Technology has allowed us to make lightweight electronics that are very powerful and new magnet materials have allowed us to make high performance loudspeakers with about a 50% reduction in weight. The truth is that we see considerable expansion at both ends of the market both for large and powerful amps such as the invective mentioned above as well as for small and lightweight amplifiers like the ELF from our Trace Elliot® division. The ELF was our effort to product the world's smallest powerful pro amplifier 200 W for 0,73 kg.

**Have you noticed any differences in the evolution of the markets in Europe compared to the US? In terms of growth (or maybe lack of) or specific products being successful on one side and not on the other one?**

There have always been significant differences in the US and the European markets. Powered speakers evolved in Europe considerably before they became popular in the US. With the demand for even more performance from sound reinforcement and musical instrument amplifiers, we have seen significant changes in both the US and the European marketplace, wherein the difference between the equipment and performance on both sides of the Atlantic seemed to be converging into what might be called a worldwide standard.

I would like to thank our dealers, distributors and customers worldwide for their support through the years. Many of the features and functions of our equipment were suggested by our customers and we have been able to incorporate their suggestions into our gear over the decades. We listen because we care.....hopefully it shows. It has been an honor for me to have been involved with Peavey for more than 53 years (I built my first amp in 1957).



I am happy to say that after all these years I am still here every day. What has kept my interest is that every day I get to learn something, and that added up the total involvement in the company has allowed both me and my company to evolve and develop far more than we ever dreamed and I'm happy to say that the process is still going on.



[See the video](#)