Announcing L. A. Scoring Strings

By Peter Lawrence Alexander / March 2, 2009

Despite a deeply troubled economy, Andrew Keresztes and his Los Angeles Scoring Strings demonstrates that entrepreneurship is still alive.

The news is not good from California. IOU's are being sent out instead of tax refunds. Home values are sheering down. Unemployment is way up. California sales tax is up and it's the highest in the nation. Good paying writing gigs are getting harder to find. As one composer said to me the other day, "It's tough out there."

Yet, at a time when people are feeling scared and new business start-ups aren't too plentiful, unless you're unemployed and having launched by default a new consulting firm, the spark of entrepreneurship is still alive in California as composer Andrew Keresztes plows forward with the development and soon-to-be released L.A. Scoring Strings.

Sample library developers don't usually catch the PR eye of Governor Schwarzenegger's office, especially lone wolves cloistered in a back room programming the computer for all it's worth, unless, of course, you're Apple and what you're doing will create a dozen or so jobs. Then you get noticed. And you might even get a cigar.

With Andrew Keresztes it's probably not likely that the Governator will notice, much less part with one of those imported stogies of his. Nonetheless, the work Andrew's doing is still a light in the forest, a flicker that entrepreneurship isn't dead yet, that Yankee ingenuity is alive and well, that one man working alone by vision, grit and determination *can* make a constructive, positive difference if he decides, too. And, by golly, that just might happen.

Programming alone in his studio, he is the alchemist seeking to turn dust into gold. For composers the world over, the results of such alchemy would be a string library that can really do divisi writing, which is the technique of breaking strings into smaller groups to play more vertical harmony. It's the sound behind Frank Sinatra, Nat "King" Cole, Tony Bennett. It's the sound perfected by Henry Mancini and deftly deployed by Wagner and French composers like Debussy and Ravel to create lush rich backgrounds, foregrounds, and spectacular effects and sounds that present time sample libraries can't do. Oh wait, they can do them, but it makes your electronic strings sound like an organ. So a composer is compelled to have lots of sample libraries and lots of patience to manage the editing skills required to recreate these textures electronically.

For a composer having a string library that can really do divisi is like finding the Holy Grail and then drinking wine from it. That's because it means that sample technology will finally enable a composer without access to an orchestra to reveal what he or she is *really* capable of writing. It's also Flight because it's going from the Sopwith Camel on Tuesday morning to the F22 Raptor on Tuesday evening, sometime after sundown. *Liftoff! And the clock has started!*

Like *A1 Sauce* for a steak, yeah, it's that important. For a composer.

At the Winter NAMM 2009 show in Anaheim, California, Andrew had lots of people watching his demonstrations. His enthusiasm was infectious. And when intimidated by challenging comments, he just intimidated right back, but nicely. And with a smile.

As it should be.

Like Thomas Edison, he just keeps experimenting until he gets it right. Professional inventors call this process *trial and success*.

And as the very first demo written by Colin O'Malley shows, Andrew's getting there.
As daunting a challenge as this has been, the next steps will be equally daunting. Like Edison, Andrew Keresztes will have to go from inventor/programmer to businessman, from the man in the labs to the man in the front office.

For Thomas Edison the company created to market his inventions was called General Electric. Like Edison, forming the company to market LASS will be the next step and an important one to watch.

Once the programming is completed, Andrew will write a horse of a check to Native Instruments, since he already announced that LASS will be housed in a Kontakt player.

He'll now have to really pull out the calculator and start making tough decisions.

LASS will be too big to be a download. So it will have to be "printed" on a DVD. "Will that be 500, Herr Andrew, or a 1000?" Neither answer is cheap.

How will he sell it? Direct? That would make sense since a bulk of his customer base is within a 25-mile radius of his front door. Packaging? Will he need it? What's the manufacturing cost? And how much for how many? And when the packaging arrives, who's going to assemble it?

"Oh, Honey!"

And when the orders come in, who's going to pack and ship it?

"Sugar Pie Honeybunch!"

And if he lives in an incorporated area, what will the neighbors say when those UPS trucks begin the daily amble down the street where he lives?

"Say, Neighbor, I can't remember the last time I took you to dinner at RuthChris' Steakhouse? How's your calendar?"

And then there will be the requests from international customers to ship the disks in such a way that they don't have to pay VAT along with wanting super cheap shipping.

"Hello? Is this *Wing and a Prayer International Shipping*?"

Then comes customer service. The #1 customer service problem of all time is installation followed by the traditional, "It ain't workin' on me system, MATE! Watcha gonna do about it?" Here, he will have to set up tech support and determine his role. There will be Logic users who can't get "it" to work right multitimbrally.

There will be the irate customer who will complain on EVERY forum. Except the *Food Channel*.

Right now, Andrew has the only string demo I've ever seen that's only had one criticism! But then, he hasn't announced the price yet. And that will be the sticking point and the decision that separates him from just being one-of-the-guys, to a suit. A New Suit.

Everyone wants it at a low price. Make that a low ball price. He's already announced that it won't be any higher than $1500. He genuinely doesn't know what the final price will be because right now the goal between writing assignments is to just finish the thing. When that's done, then he'll pull out the calculator from which point he'll have to start the cost accounting process and finally determine whether he will do all sales directly, or if he'll sell through a small selection of dealers, or if he'll sell through a distributor, especially outside the U.S. Now he'll have to calc in the exchange rates. Every decision made for selling through retail outlets and distributors means a higher list cost.

At this decision making level, delegation creates pricing complexity. Andrew will have to charge enough to pay himself back for both time and paying out NI. Above that, he has to build an organization which is time consuming. I know because I've been doing it since my son was 3. He's now 27.

This is the hard part that all composers who enter the fraternity of being entrepreneurs who sell products to other composers end up facing. The only ones who understand are his competitors, and it's unlikely that any one of them will be offering to take Andrew out for a beer just to see how he's doing or to loan a listening ear.

It would be different if Andrew was offering *The 10 Kazoos in 25 Different Mic Positions*. But he's not. He's offering what every composer wants and that no company has yet delivered to market.

This is why future demos will be important. They'll have to demonstrate just how divisi within the same library you can go. If *div a 2* within each section can be achieved within LASS, a new standard will be set. The bar will have been raised.

Move over, Ravel.

This article was previously published at SonicControl.tv