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Rock Music ICON

It's a brand made cool by the likes of Jimi Hendrix, The Who, Led Zeppelin, and AC/DC: Marshall Amplification has played a pivotal role in the evolution of rock music.

Images courtesy of Marshall Amplification

The sound and look of a piece of equipment from Marshall Amplification is recognisable the world over. The British brand, established by Jim Marshall in 1962, has been an icon for more than five decades. It remains a leader in the industry thanks to a core mix of dedication, innovation, and passion.

The CEO Magazine spoke to Managing Director Jon Ellery to find out how Marshall Amplification is still making waves in the music industry after so many years. Jon joined the company in 1993 as the IT Manager and quickly moved his way through the ranks.

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- Jon Ellery

The CEO Magazine: What did you perceive to be your purpose in the organisation when you were appointed to the role of managing director?

Jon: The thing about Marshall Amplification is that it will always be Jim Marshall and what he stood for. It will always be that signature on the front of the product that people are familiar with. People see that logo and just get it—they understand it.

It's a very cool brand and my job is to protect that brand. I am the custodian and the manager of that brand so I have to make sure that everything we do as an organisation never damages it.

What have been the flagship changes that have occurred throughout your time with Marshall Amplification?

Since I was appointed as managing director I've brought on two new brands. The way Marshall Amplification is now structured is that it has a number of branches to it. We have Marshall Amplification, which is our core. I then brought on board Natal, which is a percussion and drum brand, and recently we acquired Eden Bass, which is a well-established American bass brand. One of the other branches of the company is what I call lifestyle product, which is where we license the brand out to third parties and they manufacture things such as >



The sound of a world leader

50 years of rock and roll. Thanks, Marshall.

Celestion is the world's leading manufacturer of loudspeakers for guitar amplification and professional sound reinforcement. But nothing makes us more proud than our 50-year association with Marshall, helping to voice the history of rock and roll.



“Marshall started as a family business so it’s imperative that we keep those core family principles.”

- Jon Ellery

headphones, active loud speakers for mp3 players, and the fridge, which still generates a lot of interest when people first see it.

What have been the biggest challenges Marshall Amplification has faced while increasing its portfolio in an ever competitive market?

The biggest challenge at the moment is confidence in the consumer industry. It’s just a matter of waiting for that confidence to come back. We are a global brand with core sectors that we deal with in America and in Europe. It’s vital to make sure the product we develop is cutting edge and cost effective for the purchaser. We have to make sure the product we develop and design is what the customer wants. It sounds a simple thing to say but it is important and has made Marshall what it is today.

How does the business ensure it distinguishes itself from its competitors?

We have been around for 52 years but are not complacent, and rest assured it is my job to ensure we are going to be around for the next 50 years. What we have is heritage and no amount of money can purchase that. What has always been at the heart of Marshall Amplification is listening to what the customer wants and ensuring that we achieve and exceed their expectations. That’s always been Jim’s ethos from the very day he opened his first shop and produced the very first amplifier.

It’s crucial that we respect the artists that we deal with and we respect the customers that buy our product.

We always know there are other choices for customers out there. The customer that buys a Marshall product is very special to us.

Staff are obviously an integral part of any successful organisation. How do you nurture employees to achieve operational success?

Marshall started as a family business so it’s imperative that we keep those core family principles, to make sure that everybody who works in the company feels they are a part of what we do.

We want to make sure people do their job properly and do their job on time. We always make sure they are rewarded for that. If they need training or if they need anything else then they will get it. As Jim always said to me: “An employee who thinks they know everything is not a good employee because they’ll never learn.”

How does Marshall Amplification develop strong, healthy relationships with its suppliers, forming stable partnerships to aid expansion and growth?

We have a very strong team who make sure that all of our suppliers comply with all the regulations that we need to meet. We pay regular visits to the companies who manufacture outside for us. We train them on how we expect the product to be manufactured and how we expect them to look after their employees.

We have some of our own product manufactured overseas in China and Vietnam. When we started with the company in Vietnam we spent a long time working with them to make sure they followed our quality procedures. We wanted to make sure they understood what we expected from them as a manufacturer and how they should control their factory. We want to be working with a professional and ethical organisation.

If there are ever any issues with supply in any of the chains, we need to know about it very quickly. They need to come to us

with any issues they might have to ensure we don’t get any delay or stop of production within any of our facilities. That’s crucial to us because any delay of a single part can completely stop the production line. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a small screw or whether it’s the most expensive valve—if it’s not there then the production can’t continue.

What we expect from our supply chain is not a missed delivery but a warning that flags up straight away saying there could be a problem coming up. That is something you can only get with a strong relationship. If you wait until tomorrow to tell us you’ve got a problem then it’s too late. I need to know as soon as you know.

How does Marshall Amplification intend to grow and expand over the next few years and what key areas will it focus on?

We’re bringing out a number of new products, firstly in the Marshall Amplification line, which we will be launching next year, and secondly, we’ve just signed a collaboration agreement with a digital company called Softube. We have to retain the heritage of our product, but we also have to look to the future in the digital arena.

My aim is to drive the company along four fronts—we will be driving the company forward with new innovative product within Marshall Amplification, new product with Natal and Eden Bass, and also looking at how we can highlight and expand the lifestyle product arena.

A year and a half ago we brought in a marketing company who had a look at the whole of the brand and what it stood for. We’re making sure everybody follows those guidelines both inside and outside the company. We are really going to be making sure that everything we have within the company is aligned and that everyone understands the new strategy that I’ve set. We want people to understand what Marshall stands for: we love and we live for music. •

Find out more



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“Celestion has supplied guitar loudspeakers to Marshall Amplification since the 1960s. Our close relationship influenced the voice of rock and roll back then, and it’s just as strong today. It’s a privilege to be part of a long-standing, creative partnership with such an iconic company.”

- Nigel Wood, Managing Director, Celestion