Response from Usher Audio June 17, 2009

AudioXpress contributing editor Stephen Mowry, has been threatening Usher Audio over the past 10 months regarding the composition of Usher's Be drivers. Mr. Mowry threatened Usher with the "widespread" release of his article, "The Whole Truth about Beryllium Diaphragms," unless his demands were met:

"If you fail to reply to me in a reasonable manner, then I will do the following.

1. Work with Brush Wellman and FOCAL; they will purchase Be-718's and perform physical tests on the "Beryllium" tweeter diaphragm.

2. Publish the results within a discussion article on Beryllium and the Loudspeaker Industry and utilize the Internet to distribute the results."

Mr. Mowry's latest demand/deadline: *"Contact me for a quick solution to your PROBLEM on Monday, 8 June 2009 at +6676 378051."*

Mr. Mowry's e-mail tone wafts of papal syndrome. Answer to me or else!

We are posting Mr. Mowry's article (on the Usher Web site) so you can decide what his motivation is. We have also catalogued all of Mr. Mowry's e-mail threats from the past 10 months and will supply the entire exchange on request. Per the quote above, Mr. Mowry implies that he is working in conjunction with Focal / JM Labs and Brush Wellman, a U.S. maker of beryllium products, (we have not verified this) in his quest to eradicate "fake beryllium" speaker drivers from the world market. Mr. Mowry has been very thorough in describing all the positive aspects of pure beryllium and why it's the best speaker driver material currently available. Mr. Mowry's article reads like an infomercial for beryllium and evidently, like ShamWow, beryllium needs a paid spokesman to deliver the "truth."

On the other hand, Mr. Mowry is so intent on the materials aspect of speaker drivers that he seems to have left out some very important aspects of speaker driver performance; specifically, speaker/driver measurements and listening evaluation. Not once does Mr. Mowry offer any laboratory measurement comparisons of Usher's Be line speakers and Be driver-equipped speakers from Focal / JM Labs or any other brand. Isn't the ultimate performance of the speaker what really matters? In addition, Mr. Mowry cites materials tests of a "fake beryllium" driver, but those tests were not performed on a driver specifically manufactured for Usher. The remainder of Mr. Mowry's "truth" article is based on hearsay, a mysterious "source" and inference: pretty flimsy stuff from a seasoned speaker designer with Bose cube speakers at the heart of his Hi-Fi credentials. Now there's some irony!

The following are the facts:

1. Usher's original Be driver material was supplied by a major Taiwanese supplier. Upon being notified by Mr. Mowry of possibly suspect materials being offered by this supplier, Usher had several samples of the original Be driver material tested by an independent materials content lab. The results, as disclosed earlier in our "News" section, showed a smaller beryllium content than their supplier's claim. Testing confirmed that the original Be driver is composed of titanium and a smaller portion of beryllium than claimed.

The following are the facts: (Continued)

2. Usher's main concern in this matter is the ultimate performance of their speakers. Therefore, Usher also re-tested the acoustic performance of the original Be drivers and found it to be superb and to easily meet Usher's minimum criteria for the Dancer Series. In short, there was no performance deficiency in any of the Usher Be models. Usher Dancer speaker models, along with the original Be drivers, have received rave reviews by nearly every relevant audio publication in the U.S. and abroad, including Stereophile and The Absolute Sound. In fact, the Dancer Be-718 was probably the most scrutinized stand mount speaker on the U.S market during 2007-2008. All independent party laboratory measurements were superb including complete testing done by Stereophile's John Atkinson and the National Research Council of Canada. Their test results are are available online at the following addresses:

   (http://www.soundstagenetwork.com/measurements/speakers/usheraudio_be718/)
   (http://www.stereophile.com/standloudspeakers/508ush/index4.html)

   Bottom line: measured speaker performance cannot be faked and is not an issue here. Mr. Mowry's so called "beryllium placebo" effect does not apply.

3. Despite superb test results, and due to what's been described by Usher as "broken trust," Usher elected to drop their original supplier and try driver material from another supplier. Usher is currently working on a "pure beryllium" driver, but has run into several issues regarding the performance of the new drivers. Specifically, there is ringing present in some regions of the driver bandwidth. Mr. Tsai, Usher's CEO, (not "Usher's transducer engineer," as Mr. Mowry incorrectly describes him) tells us that as soon as the kinks are tuned out we will be receiving the new drivers. However, we are skeptical about any performance increase. We are concerned with the "ringing " issue and have heard complaints from several of our dealers regarding this same issue with other Be drivers from brands we won't name. Upon arrival of the new drivers, Usher customers will have the option of trading in their original drivers at no cost. We'll keep you posted.

4. Converse to Mr. Mowry's opinion cost was not a factor in Usher's original driver supplier choice. The cost difference between beryllium driver diaphragms provided by Brush Wellman versus Usher's original source is negligible, especially in speakers starting at $2795/pair. (Focal/JM Lab Micro Utopias retail for $7500.00/pair as opposed to the Usher Be-718s, which compete in the same class but are priced much lower at $2795/pair. That's a fairly significant difference, but not because of the beryllium driver.) Usher chose their original supplier based on measured performance of the materials supplied and location logistics. Usher had no reason to doubt the content validity of their original supplier's materials. This particular company has been in business for many years and supplies drivers to some of the largest and best-known speaker manufacturers in the world, including some of the companies offering purportedly "legitimate" Be drivers, as mentioned by Mr. Mowry.

5. Usher has obtained one of the "pure" or "legitimate" Be drivers offered by one of the manufacturers Mr. Mowry endorses, and had it tested for material content. The result: it turned out the diaphragm contained less than 14% Beryllium. Our point: it would appear that even the diaphragms Mr. Mowry suggests are made of pure Beryllium are, in fact, alloys of one sort or another.

6. Mr. Mowry's claim that "You (Usher) have gone to great lengths to misrepresent your products" is pure bunk. Besides cost/performance, what motivation would Usher have to use "fake beryllium?" Conversely, our question to Mr. Mowry is this: What's your motivation? And, who's paying you for your time? Could it be an angry competitor that continues to lose market share in the U.S.?