

# Shiny New Digs

Relocating to a roomier facility, updating equipment and organizing the work area can take your shop to the next level.

By Paul Clinton



JML Audio of St. Louis moved into a new shop in February that more than quadrupled its space.

As long as Joshua Landau has been in business, he's made it a priority to reinvest in JML Audio of St. Louis.

When Landau ran the business out of the family home he was raised in, he built a specific showroom and demo room with a professional look.

He spent resources on tools and training for employees, while competitors signed leases for retail space.

"That's the biggest difference, because we could consistently invest in tooling and training when the other guys were investing in overhead," said Landau, president of the sole-proprietorship. "Education is really an ever evol-

ving thing. We're not learning on their trucks, vans or boats."

Landau and the facility's technicians worked out of his residence, where his mother was within earshot of the subwoofer demonstrations.

Landau takes pride in the professional veneer of the business' former location, but with more work than he could properly manage in 900 square feet of space, Landau returned to his formula. Invest in the business.

"This is crazy," Landau said about the busy work flow.

"There are too many cooks in the kitchen. We need to get a bigger kitchen."

In February, JML Audio of St.

Louis moved into a 3,800-square-foot retail space in Fenton, Mo., a 25-minute drive from the Gateway Arch.

Landau designed the space to fit his team's needs.

Black checkered-tile flooring was laid down in the installation bay. Along one side, red tiles were used to demarcate a customer walkway.

The showroom and demo room were added to the second floor, allowing for consultations away from the work area.

With a spacious installation area, Landau set up four bays with separate droplights, air and plug-ins, and added two fabrication rooms (one for steel work, the other for MDF, carbon fiber,



The shop's new installation bay and work area (pictured, left) offers plenty of work space for state-of-the-art tools and storage of a variety of fabrication templates. The shop had outgrown a cramped former work area (pictured, right) in a residence.



fiberglass and plastic).

The prior facility had one installation bay.

A tall wall allows the fabricators to store more than 500 templates used to build speaker boxes, enclosures and other trim work. And they're within easy reach.

As part of the step-up move, Landau invested a cluster of tools that would make Tim Allen blush.

A Clearview Cyclone Max collects and filters dust with its eight-inch inlet, so customer vehicles are spic and span. A SawStop table saw (with a five-

horsepower upgrade and 52-inch fence option) is considered one of the most accurate cutters on the market. And the blade includes a sensor that stops it within milliseconds of cutting flesh. Landau also invested in a C.R. Onsrud 500 SS inverted pin router.

To tune the new audio systems, Landau bought a real time analyzer that allows the technicians to finely tune systems and identify high- or low-pass frequencies of factory stereos. An oscilloscope helps the technicians set up the amplifiers.

The facility impresses new clients, as well as familiar ones, Landau said.

"Now that we have a real place, we get even more credibility with our already established clients who have seen us grow and love the place," Landau said. "Our new clients say this is not like any car shop we've been to. This is more like a studio. It doesn't have a bunch of product banners. Our biggest thing at the end of the day is us. We sell us."

Does he have any advice for other dealers looking to step up

to new, expanded digs?

"You don't want to be essentially working for the landlord," he warned. "We wanted to be sure that before we picked a facility that the amount of demand we had would take care of the facility."

Landau is still working with city and county agencies to secure approval of architectural drawings and other planning documents.

He expects to complete the build-out of his facility with a showroom and demo room later in the year. ⚡



## Demo Days Come To Georgia

**M**arc Vickers parlayed his win at Pioneer Electronics' Sound Build-Off into a showroom display that wows customers. Following his shop's win at the 2008 edition of the spring event in San Diego, the owner of Sound Sensations in Marietta, Ga., brought the winning vehicle back to his shop. Vickers' win was based on his installation of Pioneer Premium products into a 1998 Mercedes CLK. Pioneer awarded the shop \$10,000 and a four-foot silver trophy.

For the event, the manufacturer provided Premier amps, speakers, subwoofers and other products to 20 hand-picked retailers who competed installing the products into a vehicle that was judged by members of the International Auto Sound Challenge Association (IASCA).

For the Mercedes, Vickers' team secured the equipment with tamper-proof screws and machine inserts. The car was sound-deadened with more than 288 square feet of material and features amps with custom machined slots for cooling and LED lighting, surface-mounted remote controls, custom-made illuminated door locks and a subwoofer enclosure that can switch from ported box to sealed box with the touch of a button.

Once back in Georgia, Vickers converted an installation bay that was adjacent to the showroom and used for long-term jobs into a display space for the vehicle and Pioneer products. He stocks 30 products from the Premier line.

Vickers credited the manufacturer with the investment to showcase its products in specialist shops.

"We take people down there and show them Pioneer Premier," Vickers said about the showroom. "When all the dust clears, they're left with a full blown Pioneer demo vehicle. They're got a very nice display at my store."

Vickers placed third with the Mercedes at the 2007 Pioneer event, which he says has enlivened his shop with a new sense of purpose.

The demo vehicle has also brought additional business to Vickers, who said he often receives e-mails from customers who have seen pictures of it on the Internet. Clients with German automobiles often ask for a similar install, he said.

"We've got guys coming into the store who say they saw the car on the Internet," Vickers said. "They want to come in and check it out."