

Open letter to Joel Davis of JD Events

Dear Joel,

Hi-Fi Shows have long been an important and familiar part of the audio landscape, as important to manufacturers and magazines as they are to consumers. But the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic has clearly altered that landscape out of all recognition.

Large segments of the US (and World) population are enduring limitations on travel and social interaction. Governments and city administrations are banning audiences from sports and cultural events, with many major festivals and conferences that were scheduled between now and the end of the year already choosing to cancel. Public willingness to travel or attend live events is dramatically reduced, and the health risks of doing so are well documented.

Unfortunately the conclusion is as inescapable as it is serious. With no widespread testing or vaccine in sight, there will be no quick return to normal. According to economics experts, the economy is nowhere near re-opening, and we are all looking down the gun barrel of a recession.

The postponement of AXPONA from April to August this year partially recognizes this reality, but we do not believe it truly reflects the gravity of the situation faced by your exhibitors. Any suggestion that the industry want and broadly support the idea of a show in August is also wide of the mark.

Far from supporting your exhibitors, clinging to the prospect of holding AXPONA in August is actually making their situation worse. Facing the almost total loss of at least three-months' revenue, the resultant drain on available cash and the additional costs of re-starting supply and production, many companies are facing a critical cash-flow crisis.

Even once business re-starts, consumer confidence is likely to be crippling low, directly impacting revenue for the rest of the year. The risks of social interaction and communication, as well as the substantial additional costs, make attending any show in an effort to stimulate sales a very real threat to both exhibitor and business health.

Visitors (and please remember that many audiophiles are in the most vulnerable demographic groups) will have similar health concerns, especially as regards the risks of travelling to and attending such an event, with the small rooms and crowded nature. Press will be similarly inhibited, and the prospects of a positive visitor experience, decent levels of attendance, or coverage are clearly minimal.

The whole world is facing a health and economic crisis – and the audio industry is no different. Supporting the industry that AXPONA serves means helping hard-pressed companies by cancelling the show and releasing the money they paid in advance for an event that will not now happen.

Under the circumstances we feel that it is no longer reasonable or responsible for JD Events to try to use the promise of a postponed AXPONA show to withhold exhibitors' (in many cases desperately needed) funds, and we urge you to follow the lead of other events and announce the cancellation of the show immediately.

Even if you do not cancel, the fact that you simply cannot deliver the show as originally sold (in terms of attendance or coverage) means that all exhibitors should be offered the option of withdrawal and an immediate refund.

We are confident that this would be as widely welcomed as it would be appreciated, a genuinely positive step towards preserving your exhibitors and the possibility of next year's event.

Yours Sincerely,

Jolanta Conti, Basis Audio
Florian Cossy, CH Precision
Don Better, Don Better Audio
Sandy Gross, GoldenEar
Jeff Rowland, Jeff Rowland Group
EveAnna Manley, Manley Labs
Paul McGowan, PS Audio
Charlie Schnyder, Stereo Haven
William E. Low, The Quest Group (dba AudioQuest and GoldenEar)
David Komatz, Dick Diamond, Kerry St James, YG Acoustics

Elliot Goldman, Bending Wave USA
Irv Gross, Constellation Audio
Scot Markwell, Elite AV Distribution
Alvin Lloyd, Grand Prix Audio
Peter Mackay, Magico
Leland Leard, Music Hall
Jean-Pascal Panchard, Stenheim
Luke Manley and Bea Lam, VTL
Todd Sutherland, Vivid Audio
Lily Luo, XLO International