

## Sound Service new exclusive Useful Arts Distributor



Useful Arts Audio was founded by Peter Swann, developer and current Company President, together with his former bandmate Ben Stiller. Although Ben Stiller is probably better known to many as an actor, according to Peter Swann, he is also a very talented producer whose work ethic is characterized by a hands-on mentality and who brings his sense of aesthetics to every detail of his productions.

As a studio owner, Peter's experience was that no matter how much money he spent on equipment, he never got the sonic results he was looking for. So he developed his first product, the SFP-60 microphone preamplifier. The SFP-60 is a discrete, Class-A, two-channel tube mic preamp with a unique \*color\* control. First introduced at AES in 2018, the SFP-30 mono variant has even been nominated for the prestigious TEC Award in 2020.

Useful Arts was founded to provide the engineer/producer with tools to create a modern sound that doesn't disappoint the listener - not to offer just another "vintage" clone. Vintage gear was definitely an inspiration, but the goal was to go beyond that. Thus, the design of the SFP-60 came about well before the Useful Arts company existed. It wasn't until Peter Swann had convinced himself and others that engineering theory could really deliver something different, special and ... "useful", before he founded the company. The goal was to contribute something special to music, not just have an audio company.

The name Useful Arts is derived from an entry in the U.S. Constitution that refers to "Useful Arts" in the sense of technical invention. In the Victorian era, it was also an antonym of performing arts and fine arts.

### Hornet - 1-Channel Preamp



The idea behind the Hornet is simple: give people an affordable, portable preamp/DI that can go toe to toe with any of the \$1000+ preamps on the market. After years of development, it's here. An ultra low-noise front end that gives signal the creamy thickness, bite and power that built-in pres on interfaces just don't deliver like dedicated preamps. Need an even thicker, more powerful sound? Just dial in the Color control, and the personality of the signal is enhanced without the need for compression or EQ. The Hornet features discrete gain cell topology, a custom Cinemag input transformer, and JFET DI. Even at 60 dB of gain, it's insanely quiet. The Hornet is tiny, but don't let that fool you - it's perfectly capable of serving as the front end of choice even in the best studios.

- Mic Pre/DI with variable harmonic distortion
- Up to 60dB of gain
- Custom Cinemag input transformer
- Variable harmonic content
- Discrete transistors

- Built-in phantom power 48V
- JFET Active DI
- Dual output for recording/stage
- Hand-built in the USA

### Swarm - 4-Channel Preamp



First came the Hornet - an affordable, handheld preamp/DI that sounds as good or better than many of the solid state preamps on the market. Discrete transistors and transformers on both the input and output – combined with the Useful Arts exclusive color control – give the Hornet a positively huge sound. Now, make room for the Swarm – a single rackspace unit, hand-built in the USA, with four independent Mic/DI channels that takes the Hornet to a whole new level. Sonically, the Swarm delivers the same huge sound as the Hornet, but its rackmount form factor makes room for extra features including a high pass filter, 22dB pad and phase control. Like the Hornet, the Swarm features discrete gain cell topology, a custom Cinemag input transformer, and a JFET DI. Dial in the Color control, and the personality of your microphone or instrument is enhanced and thickened without the need for compression or EQ.

- 4 independent Hornet preamps in a single 1U rackmount chassis
- Color control saturates your signal and sweetens harmonics
- Additional features include highpass filter, 22dB pad for loud sources, and polarity reverse switch
- Cinemag input transformer and JFET DI boast a warm, hi-fi sound
- 48V phantom power for powering condenser mics, active ribbon mics, and mic boosters

### SFP-60 - 2-Channel Class A Tube Microphone Preamp



The SFP-60 is a two-channel, full-featured all-tube mic pre designed to make microphone signals pop in a mix without the need for other enhancement. We view the microphone and the preamplifier as a single unit – the signals coming out of a microphone are useless by themselves, and we only know what the microphone is doing after the signal is presented by the preamp. It seems a shame to use a great



microphone and never hear the majesty of its sound, so we designed the SFP-60.

- Each gain stage is single-ended, inherently Class-A.
- Audio Magnetics (Input and Output Transformers, Plate Inductor) custom wound by Cinemag
- Front DI/Instrument Input
- Front panel switches for input selection, 48V Phantom Power, Phase Reverse, Input Pad, High Pass Filter
- Absolutely no audio signal passes through these switches. Instead, the front panel switches control sealed, gold-plated relays
- The three tube gain stages are consisting of 1 EF806 and 1 ECC82 per channel
- Unique "Color" control knob adds harmonic distortion and up to 10 dB of gain
- Detented input and output level attenuators for easy repetition of settings
- Construction is fully modular, with gold plated connectors used throughout the audio path

#### **SFP-30 - 1-Channel Class A Tube Microphone Preamp**



The concept behind the SFP-30 is simple: Take the exact audio and power circuitry from the SFP-60, put a single channel into a tabletop format, and make it less than half the price of the SFP-60. Done. Everything about the SFP-30 signal path is identical to the SFP-60, except that the SFP-30 lacks the DI input. Other than that, you can now get the finest, most flexible tube preamp available — with the legendary variable second harmonics from the SFP-60.

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### BF-1 - Tube Instrument Preamp and DI Box



The BF-1 is an all-purpose interface for any instrument with a pickup that enhances clarity, detail, audibility and dynamics whether used between the instrument and amp, the instrument and a PA or recording device or all of these at the same time. Whatever you plug into it just sounds better. This isn't because the BF-1 changes the sound of the instrument – it's because it preserves it in a way that the input stage of an amplifier or a console simply can't. Once you feed your amp, console or

converters a strong representation of what's actually coming out of your instrument, you'll be amazed at how good it really sounds. (It's been sounding this good all along, but now you can finally hear it!) So let's get nerdy. The BF-1 was built for musicians who care about the sound of their instruments. It's meant to be used by musicians with a minimum of fuss in any environment. Just plug the instrument in, plug the BF-1 into the amp, and be amazed.

- Input impedance of 20 million ohms
- Class A tube preamp
- 2-band equalizer
- Output gain control
- Lo Gain or Hi Gain operation
- Pure mode for hi-fi line-level output
- Front-panel Input and Thru jacks
- Rear-panel balanced XLR and unbalanced 1/4" jacks

### BF-S - Studio Tube Instrument Preamp and DI Box



The concept behind the BF-S is simple. We took the audio circuitry of the BF-1 and coupled it with the linear power supply from the SFP-60. The result? Astounding clarity, headroom and noise specs that only come with the nearly-noiseless high voltage that a linear power supply can deliver. Which one is right for you? Both have identical feature sets and audio circuitry, except the BF-S adds a ground lift for its XLR output. The BF-1 features a switching power supply, which is light, compact and convenient (no changes needed to adapt to any line voltage in any country). It's also convenient for live use and will fit in most guitar cases. With its compact size, the BF-1 has a noise floor of about 60 dB.

With its heavy-duty linear power supply, the BF-S has a noise floor of better than 70 dB – almost unheard of for tube gear. With this power supply, the BF-S is flat from

15Hz to 80 KHz (-2db)! -

- Linear power supply from the flagship SFP-60 mic preamp for amazing clarity, headroom, and low noise
- Input impedance of 20 million ohms
- Class A tube preamp
- 2-band equalizer
- Output gain control
- Lo Gain or Hi Gain operation
- Pure mode for hi-fi line-level output
- Front-panel In and Thru jacks
- Balanced XLR and unbalanced 1/4" jacks

### Useful Arts Mission Statement

Useful Arts was born out of an aesthetic quest for vibrant, living sound straight from the source - not merely a technically clean sound that needs enhancement after enhancement to speak in a mix. Back in the days when the U-47 was a commonly-used "standard" microphone, there were no "standard" preamps - studios used hand-built consoles with custom tube preamps designed to capture the personality of the recording. In the same way, our hand-built products are designed to enhance dynamics and perceived tonal richness, not simply to make a small signal electrically bigger.

Useful Arts are hand-building Class A tube gear in the United States for recording professionals and musicians. They don't build "clones" of classic gear - their designs are created from the ground up and thoroughly optimized to achieve specific sonic goals. They use circuit topologies inspired by some of the most treasured gear made during the 40s, 50s and 60s, coupled with modern design techniques to ensure reliability, compatability and feature sets that meet the needs of the digital age. This approach requires expensive, bulky and heavy components, but as a small company we don't have to cut corners to meet the rigid cost constraints of mass-produced brands. (We don't make washing machines or cell phones, nor do we report to those who do). Their engineering mandate is to create the best-sounding equipment possible, not to figure out how to get acceptable sound at a retail price point. The result is gear that captures the sound of microphones and instruments not only with clarity, but with beauty.

There is plenty of usable gear out there that will give reliable performance with amazing specs. So who needs yet another option? People who want their recordings and live performances to sound intimate and powerful without the need for further processing. Plugins can do incredible things, but they can't create raw data that isn't there. Our devices ensure that every nuance and every transient is translated in a way that excites the ear.

[www.sound-service.eu](http://www.sound-service.eu)  
[www.usefulartsaudio.com](http://www.usefulartsaudio.com)