

Gear Lust a real-life adventure of a Millennia user in search of an STT-1

By Jim Dugger



On Monday evening, I began a short adventure. I became aware of a Millennia Origin STT-1 for sale on eBay, with a seller desperate to close. The terms were simple:

- Close the sale legitimately via eBay.
- Wire-transfer the funds – \$1,800.
- Ships Tuesday.

With all the fraud on eBay going on, the whole wire transfer thing has me pretty nervous. While there's documentation, and the sale was closed through eBay, I would be bereft of options and left with little recourse if this *were* a fraud. So, I call the seller:

"Yeah, I won't take PayPal because it takes four more days for the money to come through."

My guard is really up now. Call me crazy, but blindly sending \$1,800 via wire transfer to someone you don't know seems a little like buying an "I'm an idiot!" sticker for your forehead.

I do my diligence. Serial number checks out with Millennia, and the selling dealer is indeed geographically close to the eBay seller. Millennia even indicates the unit was part of a pair – consistent with the seller's story.

I had already won the eBay auction, so I was able to confirm the seller's phone number and address as consistent with the original purchase. And, oh yes, the seller's bank account and routing and transit number all check out – perfect match between eBay, bank account and public telephone directory. If this guy is a crook, he leaves a trail like a snail.

Still... \$1,800 for the UPS tracking number of a package filled with 30lbs of gravel? Are you nuts? Just because you aren't paranoid does *not* mean they aren't after you!

And yet, the allure of a second Origin for \$1,800 was too tempting to deal with. I'd been thinking about one for a while anyway – I needed a stereo tracking compressor – I could link my Origins. A stereo pair of the lovely M-2b preamp would be wonderful. I love this box! It has a million colors, so long as you are after shades of clean. I also love the fantastic sounding EQ and piece-of-cake-to-make-sound-good compression that tracks so beautifully. And, at \$1,800 it's a full grand less than a new one and \$300 - \$400 less than a typical sale on eBay.

Arrrrrrrgh!

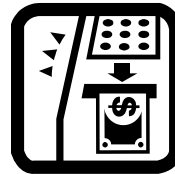
Ring. Ring.

"Hi [seller], this is Jim. I'm really uncomfortable with the wire transfer. Would you mind meeting me at the airport?"

"As in Atlanta-Hartsfield? Aren't you in Dallas?"

"Yea, I know it sounds crazy. But I found a flight. Spare the hurricane; I'll be there at 7:30 tonight."

At this point my desperation to see this through must look like a lonely man at last call talking to the only cute girl in the bar. Now, I know this seems crazy: a last minute flight a good quarter of the way across the United States to pick up a piece of gear. To that I say if you are serious about audio, then you understand! I sell for a living, and that requires a lot of travel. So, I'm only out 25,000 of the miles I've got more of than I can use anyway. And, it only cost me \$30 to redeem them – that's less than the shipping!



So, here it is two o'clock in the afternoon and I need to raise \$1,800 in cash, and do it and get to the airport by 4 p.m. for this flight. Let me let you in on a little secret: just because it's in the bank does NOT mean you can have it. My ATM card, like many, has a \$1,000 a day limit. Now normally this is not an issue, but today it presents a problem and my bank is all too happy to remind me this is an excellent security feature designed for my safety no matter how much I call and beg for a change.

Well, that's half of it.

I travel a lot for business internationally, and so I got American Express Cash access some time ago. It works practically everywhere – I've been in places where the ATM machine was the only evidence of civilization and low and behold cash came out! As it turns out, there's no limit. Because the transfer is done via wire, and not the ATM network, the transaction isn't subject to the normal bank controls. *Solution!* Ah, but there's a catch: transaction cost is \$5 plus 3%. Yikes. I need another grand, and paying \$35 on my own money to get it isn't exactly my idea of a good deal.

Ring. Ring.

"Hi [seller], this is Jim. Do you mind getting a G-note of this in traveler's checks?"

One thing I've learned about Amex – they are resourceful. Leave it to the travel counselor to suggest this idea – and because I've got an Amex card, the checks were free. *Solution!* Now all I have to do is drive to north Dallas, pick up my traveler's checks, get to the airport and get to Atlanta.

Ring. Ring.

"Hey babe – whatcha' wanna do tonight?"

My wife is no fool - she knows this is a hook – but she plays along anyway.

"I thought we could have some wine and eat at home."

"Hey, that sounds great – have a good time! I'm going to Atlanta – but I'll be back late tonight. I'll buy you a beer at Snookie's if you can stay up."

I've learned one key to a successful life involving pro audio is an understanding spouse. I'm not sure why she's understanding – perhaps she feels like my drooling over 28 pounds of steel, aluminum, glass, plastic and silicon is better than any other alternative – but she is, and I'm very thankful for it. I shudder to think about what would happen to some of my friends if they squandered an evening chasing a new set of golf clubs, for example.

I make my flight – just barely. But, I'm on, comfortable, and enjoy a magazine on the ride there. And, oh yes, design a nice one-space rack panel with a switch so it's easy to link and unlink the dynamics processing of the units. At touchdown, I call the seller.

"Hey, it's Jim again. Meet you at south baggage claim, carousel 4?"

Having been to the Atlanta airport more times than I can count, it's like a 2nd home. If there were just one truth in life, that truth would be the Atlanta airport and Delta Air Lines. If Satan contracted with Delta to carry the dammed, I can promise you the flight to hell would not be direct, but instead stop in Atlanta. "Flight 666 to the center of the Earth departs...."

"Uh, sure sounds good. I'd better get going – I didn't expect you hear yet. I'm only about 15 minutes from the airport. See you there."

45 minutes pass.

I call the seller's cell phone and get voice mail.

Now, at this point I'm thinking "well, at least he didn't get my \$1,800." After all, it could have been a fraud all along, and the seller, realizing he wasn't going to take me, was at least going to give me the trouble of a wasted evening. Sitting on an airplane for 3+ hours round-trip for no good reason isn't exactly my idea of a good time. And, airport food sucks.

Ring.

I jump on the phone.

"Jim! Sorry, man. You won't believe this. First, my cell battery died. Then, for some reason Sprint cut off my cell service – took me 20 minutes to unwind that. Now I'm stuck in traffic, but I'll be there shortly."

And, to think I was wondering what I'd do with my one and one-half hour layover before the flight home.

When the seller did arrive at baggage claim, he wasn't hard to identify. A very nice guy, indeed, it turns out. But, just how many people at the baggage claim in Atlanta have dreadlocks and are carrying a LARGE white Millennium Media box? The box is indeed an STT-1, and a nice one at that. Everything looks kosher. We settle the transaction. The seller had questions about what I do and why I'm buying the unit, but I had to promise him I'd just send him an e-mail. I've now got 25 minutes before my plane departs, and it's leaving terminal D.

For those of you unfamiliar with Atlanta-Hartsfield, the airport is shaped like a giant capital letter "I", except there's a whole bunch of horizontal cross sections. Those cross sections are the terminals, and the vertical part of the 'I' is an underground walkway and subway. The terminals are, in order, ticketing/baggage, T, A, B, C, D, E. So, from baggage claim I faced security and a 4-terminal train ride plus my gate was D-35, second from the absolute end of the D concourse. In short, about as far away as possible.



Surprisingly, pre-9/11 security didn't even link with a large box in a steel chassis filled with wires and tubes went through the X-ray. I grabbed the box and began dashing for the escalator to the subway. A short train ride later, I'm dashing up the escalator to terminal D and down the hallway to my gate.

I've got 12 minutes, and given the weather in Atlanta there are surely stand-bys for my flight and I don't want my seat given away! Imagine, a 5-10, 165 lb guy clutching a huge white cardboard box weighing 30 pounds that he can barely see over, dashing through a crowded airport terminal.

I get to my gate – 8 minutes to spare. Oh no... they close the flights 10 minutes prior! My seat, it's probably gone. I'll be waiting until 11:45p for the next flight, and then be on stand-by myself. I might be stuck in Atlanta! With no laptop, I've got no way to do my sales calls in the morning. What will I tell my boss?

"Mr. Dugger, the plane has been delayed. We are bringing another aircraft in from the hangar, so your flight is running about 45 minutes behind schedule."



But the board clearly reads 'on time'. You mean I ran that last half-mile with this thing on my chest for nothing? Mother F..... Water, I need water! Let me add one more truth to this world: If our country were run by the airlines the national motto would be "Hurry up and wait!"

Well, time to read the user's guide! An otherwise uneventful flight home followed by a bacon cheeseburger at Snookie's led to a good night's sleep.

Though possible, Atlanta is a pretty long trip to try and complete in an evening! I woke up this morning and put the new box through its paces – all sounds good and seems to work well. Ahhhhhh.

And, that's how I spent yesterday afternoon.