

Taking the 'stethoscope' approach MicroSeismic CEO Peter Duncan gears up for international growth

MicroSeismic Inc. CEO Peter Duncan is only 60, and so he spread the news that he would be honored with a lifetime achievement award from the Geophysical Society of Houston to his colleagues with some cheeky angst.

"I indicated the reports of my demise are greatly exaggerated," he quipped.

The Houston association has for the past 10 years honored a long-time member with a two-day seminar that focuses on the person's area of expertise. The event honoring Duncan was held during this month's IHS CERAWeek in Houston, an annual gathering of energy industry leaders that Duncan just happened to miss for the first time in years.

Duncan spoke to *HBJ* about the evolution of the microseismic work that drillers use in the pursuit of unconventional hydrocarbons.

MicroSeismic has been growing quickly since it emerged 10 years ago, showing almost 365 percent growth since 2009 and ranking No. 7 on the *HBJ* 2011 Fast Tech 50. What's made the company stand out?

We had a vision to do passive microseismic monitoring differently, using equipment deployed on the surface. The near-term or im-

mediate advantage over downhole equipment is that you don't need a monitor well, a well which, once it's drilled, the producers don't want to use as a science experiment. They don't want a bunch of pointy-headed geophysicists stuffing things down the hole.

Putting the equipment on the surface and then listening to the things going on in the subsurface is a hands-off approach. Passive seismic is to conventional seismic as a stethoscope is to an ultrasound. We just listen.

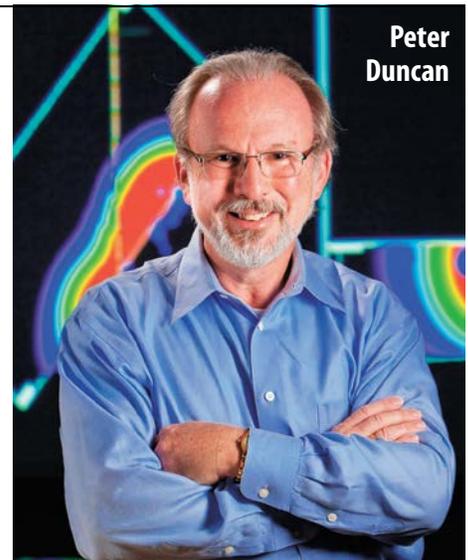


How has this technology translated into greater efficiencies in oil and gas drilling?

The most obvious application is for hydraulic fracturing monitoring. Mapping the sounds created during fracking allows us to help the producers produce better frack jobs and more efficient drilling programs.

What have been your biggest challenges?

The biggest challenge is always getting new technology accepted in the oil field. And then there is finding people to do the work. Of course, we live in a very cyclical business, and for one six-month period, it's hard getting people



Peter
Duncan

for the field. Then, for the next six months, we get all sorts of field workers. I've been in this business a long time, and you learn you have to be Zen about it.

What trends are you seeing now?

One of the trends we're beginning to see in our little corner of the industry is shale plays begin to open up around the world. We are experiencing a five-fold increase in international business in the first three months of this year. Internationally, everybody has decided to pursue shale. We're in China, South America, Argentina, Brazil, England, we're about to work in Poland, and we've just got our first contract in Australia. It's everywhere.