

ET AL., MAKERS

Maker Monday An aspire Exclusive Interview With Michael Chalfin

APRIL 13, 2026 BY ASPIRE DESIGN AND HOME



Michael Chalfin is President of [Samuelson Furniture](#) and [Sound by Samuelson](#), bringing more than 20 years of leadership experience within the family-owned company. Known for his thoughtful, disciplined approach to leadership, Michael is guided by preparation, clarity, and a deep understanding of outcomes, with a balance of calculated risk and informed decision-making. Founded in 1935, Samuelson Furniture is the only fourth-generation, family-owned company solely dedicated to the hospitality, senior living, and residential markets, designing and manufacturing high-end casegoods and

seating for four and five-star projects. Since joining the company, Michael has embraced the belief that long-standing businesses must continually evolve. The company's evolution, from hand-carved reproduction furniture to a trusted partner for premium hospitality and innovative custom solutions for senior living environments and consumer markets, reflects a leadership philosophy that recognizes reinvention as essential to longevity. Learn more about how Michael brings technology and luxury into everyday pieces of furniture in today's Maker Monday.



The Muriel Reclining Sound Chair is equal parts lounge chair and statement piece.

Andrew Joseph: Can you describe your design philosophy in three words?

Michael Chalfin: I prefer 4; Keep it simple, stupid.

AJ: How do you approach a new design project?

MC: It's about starting with the right questions: "What are the challenges; what are we solving for?" Aesthetic choices have to meet a need when it comes to furniture, especially with chairs. It's an intimate interaction between the human body and a piece of seating! So, comfort and design aesthetics need to be woven together, and that takes time and perseverance.

AJ: Can you tell us about a specific moment in your career that made you feel accomplished?

MC: Obtaining our first utility patent. As a furniture manufacturer, it is common to receive a design patent for a product you have spent time and care on. Receiving a utility patent, however, is another level of justification, reconfirming that what you have created is special.



In this Austin hotel, custom elements like the extended headboard and window-hugging banquette give the room a sense of flow and purpose.

AJ: How do you approach designing for different types of clients?

MC: Similar to approaching a design project, it's about problem-solving. Each client subset will have its own wants, needs, and opinions about what works for them, from an aesthetic perspective as well as a functional one. So when you're designing and creating, the factors are always independent, and our job is to listen before we execute.

AJ: How do you stay up to date on the latest technology in design?

MC: We do, and we don't. In a world where everything seems to be AI-driven, taking the blood, sweat, and tears out of the process can numb the entire scene. We don't live in that world, and we're not so interested in what the next company is doing or creating. It's like racing; but mentality, you never turn your head to the side.

I'm a big car guy, and I am inspired by the automotive world. It's a process; it takes testing, tuning, blowing it up, fixing it, and doing it again. Toyota has an unbelievable manufacturing process that incorporates key processes that enable everyone on the floor, from the managers to the sweepers, to stop the production line if they see something out of place or out of order. It's a tremendous part of why they are bulletproof. There is the same opportunity across the shop floor to have control from a quality perspective, and that's something we've reinforced at Samuelson. We try to balance the tech with human touch and thought. We use tech where we need to and don't where we don't!



With its sculptural profile and subtle LED-lit base, the Immersion Sound Chair brings a sense of warmth while creating a quiet, cocoon-like listening experience.

AJ: What is your favorite type of furniture to design?

MC: Seating, because it's the hardest piece of furniture to make. As I mentioned before, there is an intimate interaction that takes place between seating and the body. The placement of an arm, the curve of that arm, and how your body rests on it. The shape you feel when gliding your hand over it. It's all very sensual, and whether you realize it or not, you are subconsciously noticing these small nuances and details.

AJ: What is your favorite aspect of your job?

MC: Having the opportunity to get covered in sawdust! What I'm getting at is that my favorite part is being hands-on. Whether that is design, engineering, stress testing, problem solving, etc. Being involved at the factory level, having input and impact there, is an amazing feeling. Getting to do that alongside my family is the absolute ultimate high!

AJ: Can you describe a project that you're particularly proud of?

MC: The creation and development of our Sound by Samuelson chair is one of my favorites. Our sound chairs have blurred the line between furniture and tech in an absolutely beautiful way. We have patented a chair that essentially becomes an immersive speaker, changing the way individuals hear, enjoy TV, or relax with music or meditation. We are helping people and raising the design aesthetic while doing so.

Like what you see? Get it first with a [subscription](#) to aspire design and home magazine.

TAGS: [MAKER MONDAY](#), [MICHAEL CHALFIN](#), [SAMUELSON FURNITURE](#), [SOUND BY SAMUELSON](#)