

WHO IS WHO

IN HIGH FIDELITY



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ACOUSTICPLAN / CLAUD JÄCKLE

Messwerte im Abseits *Sideline Measurements*

Claus Jäckle, Gründer und Mastermind von Acoustic-Plan, denkt gerne quer, mag es eigensinnig und ist zudem in der Lage, seine Ansichten sehr sympathisch und plausibel zu kommunizieren.

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es bedarf einer gehörigen Portion Idealismus und Eigenwilligkeit, einen Verstärker so weit jenseits des Mainstreams ins Produktportfolio aufzunehmen.

Betriebswirtschaftler der alten Schule mögen die Hände über dem Kopf zusammenschlagen, wenn Claus Jäckle konstatiert: „Ich habe kein Interesse, mit der Firma überaus groß zu werden. Ich will immer nah an der Sache sein, ich mag den Kundenkontakt.“ Zudem ist es ihm am liebsten, wenn seine verkauften Produkte einfach laufen und laufen. Das klappt auch so gut wie in allen Fällen, Reparaturen werden nur selten fällig, höchstens mal ein Röhrentausch, aber das gehört zum Wartungsaufwand. Die Zuverlässigkeit seiner Produkte verschafft Jäckle Zeit, um an Neuentwicklungen zu tüfteln. Dabei verlässt er sich nicht auf Messwerte, in letzter Konsequenz muss

immer das Ohr den Ausschlag geben. Das Risiko, mit dieser Arbeitsweise als etwas verschoben zu gelten, nimmt er gerne in Kauf.

Es tut dem Erfolg von AcousticPlan keinen Abbruch, ganz im Gegenteil, die Firma ist neben dem Kernmarkt Europa längst auch im wichtigen US-Markt angekommen. Gut, dass bei der Namensfindung damals schon internationale Verständlichkeit berücksichtigt wurde. Wenn es allerdings um die Fertigung geht, hat AcousticPlan sehr starken regionalen Bezug. Zugekaufte Teile wie Gehäusematerial oder Platinen werden in unmittelbarer Umgebung in Baden-Württemberg gefertigt, vom Weltmarkt aus betrachtet also vor der eigenen Haustür. An jene klopfen übrigens gerne mal (potenzielle) Kunden, um sich die Fertigung anzusehen. Jäckle ist davon aber nicht genervt, sondern schätzt diese Kontakte.

„Von einem Verstärker wie dem Aruna 300B schaffe ich höchstens drei im Monat.“ | *“I make a maximum of three amplifiers like the Aruna 300B a month.”*

Bald können dort auch neue Produkte in Augenschein genommen und vor allem gehört werden. Claus Jäckle sinnt über zwei weitere Röhrenverstärker nach, die auf historischen Western-Electric-Schaltungen basieren. Sogar ein Class-D-Verstärker befindet sich in Planung, womit sich Jäckle allerdings Zeit lässt, denn gerade für eine Manufaktur ist das im Digitalsektor recht hohe Innovationstempo kaum zu halten. Schließlich soll am Ende eine eigene Entwicklung stehen und nicht nur eine neue Anordnung zugekaufter Baugruppen.

Bleibt bei so viel Idealismus und Einsatz für die Firma noch Zeit für Privatleben? Klar. Dazu gehört selbstredend Musik, bevorzugt klassische Konzerte. Die Auswahl fällt je nach Stimmungslage romantisch oder auch „anstrengend“ aus. Ab und zu gesellen sich etwas Jazz und alte Gassenhauer der Pop- und Rock-Kultur dazu. Es gibt sogar Tage, an denen keine Musik auf dem Programm steht, sondern Segeln oder Tauchen. Mit AcousticPlan hat sich Claus Jäckle eine exklusive Nische geschaffen, die seinen klanglichen Idealen und seinen Vorstellungen von Qualität und Handarbeit gerecht wird. Im Zentrum steht die Musik, Messwerte hingegen verbannt er zeitweilig ins Abseits, wenn sie der Sache im Weg sind.

Sideline Measurements

WHILE CLAUD JÄCKLE, FOUNDER OF AND MASTERMIND BEHIND ACOUSTICPLAN, IS A REAL LATERAL THINKER AND LIKES THINGS DONE HIS WAY, HE'S ALSO ABLE TO BRING HIS VIEWS ACROSS IN A FRIENDLY AND EFFECTIVE MANNER.

Even if high fidelity means ensuring that playback is as close as possible to the original live-recorded performance, Claus Jäckle is well aware that achieving an absolutely perfect reproduction is and will remain illusive. There are too many parameters at play that can affect the outcome: Where exactly was the imaginary listener and/or the microphone during the recording in the concert hall or the studio? Or were there presumably several microphones? It is clear that the set-up at home cannot be arranged in such a way that it perfectly mirrors the original setting. Claus Jäckle's self-professed aim with AcousticPlan is therefore rather to reproduce the sound in a way that listeners at home sitting in front of their stereo systems will feel the same sensations wash over them as they would if they were at the concert itself—regardless of acoustics both here and there.

There was no one single defining moment in Claus Jäckle's life that sparked this love affair with all things high-fidelity. He was already enthusiastic about technology as a child and developed an interest for music, in particular classical music, at the age of 12. He acquired a profound understanding of audio reproduction when he later trained to be an electronics technician, but even as a youngster he was already getting his hands dirty: He made his first amplifier at the age of 14, his first loudspeakers at the age of 15, and at the age of 16 he made a replica of the Klipschorn floorstanding speaker. In hindsight, it's obvious that he was destined for a career in the industry. However, he didn't turn professional until he was 30, after he had realized that there was nothing on the market that came close to what he

Über all dem steht das hehre Klangideal, die emotionale Konzerterfahrung ins Wohnzimmer zu transportieren und dort die originären Proportionen adäquat abzubilden. | *But reigning supreme over everything else is the noble acoustic goal of bringing the emotional concert experience right into the living room of the listener and adequately reproducing the original proportions there.*

from the outset, but business was slow in Europe and Germany. Claus Jäckle even views things with a bit Swabian pragmatism. After all, he has never been interested in achieving growth at all costs and has never gone all-out on marketing his products. Self-promotion has never been his strong suit and, truth be told, he'd much rather delegate those sorts of tasks to someone else. When he talks about the difficulties involved in building up a sales and distribution network, you can see it written all over his face that he finds tube-related key figures much more exciting than business management. However, the very core of what makes AcousticPlan the company it is today is not just a love of technology: "What really interested me in the first place was music and then the technology that went with it."

An equally convincing and consistent focus, paired with pragmatism and composure and even at times a touch of spiritual clarity. Fittingly, the AcousticPlan products have names with Indian origins such as Sitar, Raga and Sarod, perhaps because Claus Jäckle lived and worked near Kolkata for three years. Something else that sets AcousticPlan apart is a tendency not to shy away from pursuing exotic concepts. For example, you won't find anything like the MagAmp, which is a magnetically integrated amplifier designed in accordance with the Lundahl principle. After a new generation took over the reins at the well-established transformer manufacturer Lundahl, Lundahl Junior no longer wanted to continue the MagAmp and instead wanted to focus on the core business of transformers. That's when the German distributor Auditorium 23 approached Claus Jäckle and the rest

  	
Laut oder leise? Leise.	Volume up or down? Down.
Analog oder Digital? Analog.	Analog or digital? Analog.
Röhre oder Transistor? Röhre.	Tube or transistor? Tube.
Schallplatte oder Download? Schallplatte.	Vinyl or download? Vinyl.
Waldlauf oder Fitnessstudio? Waldlauf.	Cross-country run or gym? Cross-country run.
Trend oder Tradition? Tradition.	Trends or tradition? Tradition.
Tee oder Kaffee? Kaffee.	Tea or coffee? Coffee.
Salat oder Steak? Steak.	Salad or steak? Steak.
Wein oder Bier? Weder noch.	Wine or beer? Neither.
Berge oder Meer? Meer.	Mountains or the sea? The sea.
Buch oder Bildschirm? Buch.	Book or screen? Book.
Jazzclub oder Opernhaus? Opernhaus.	Jazz club or opera house? Opera house.
Bach oder Beatles? Bach.	Bach or Beatles? Bach.
Wagner oder Wacken? Wagner.	Wagner or Wacken? Wagner.
Standby oder Stecker ziehen? Stecker ziehen.	Stand-by or plug out? Plug out.

is history. Jäckle finds the technology involved completely timeless and unrivaled. The principle of magnetic amplification was actually prominent before tubes. The MagAmp perfectly sums up the

flamboyant small-scale manufacturer, since it takes a serious amount of idealism and originality to add an amplifier to your product portfolio that is so different from the mainstream.

Old-school business economists may put their head in their hands when Claus Jäckle says: "I have no interest in growing the company exponentially. I want to stay true to the products with a hands-on approach and I like having personal contact with the customers." He also prefers to ensure that the products he sells continue to run indefinitely. And that is actually how things work out in almost all cases. Repairs are rarely needed. A tube might need to be replaced from time to time at the very most, but that's all part and parcel of maintenance. The fact that Jäckle's products are so reliable affords him enough time to tinker with new, innovative products. And when he does, he never relies on measurements because, at the end of the day, it's his ears that determine a product's fate. This quirky and eccentric approach to work is not without its risks, but they are risks he's willing to take.

And in fact, this approach has never done AcousticPlan any harm. Quite the opposite. In addition to its core European market, the company has been established in the all-important US market for quite some time now. It's a blessing that the company name is understandable to an international audience. However, when it comes to the manufacturing process, AcousticPlan has a very strong connection to the local region. The components that are brought in, such as housing materials and circuit boards, are manufactured nearby in Baden-Württemberg, so from a global

market perspective, it's all basically in the company's backyard. Many (potential) customers knock at the door, wanting to have a peek at the production process. But this doesn't bother Jäckle in the slightest. In fact, he enjoys the contact. There people will soon be able to ogle at and of course listen to some new products. Claus Jäckle is pondering over two more tube amplifiers, which are based on historical Western Electric circuits. There is even a Class D amplifier in the pipeline, but Jäckle is taking his time with this one, since the super-fast pace of innovation in the digital sector is especially hard for a small-scale producer like him to keep up with. Ultimately, the end result should be a new, in-house development and not just a new configuration of components brought in from outside.

With all this individualism and commitment to the company, is there any time left for a private life? Of course. Obviously at the top of the list is music, especially classical concerts. The choice of either romantic or "strenuous" depends on his mood at the time. Occasionally, he might enjoy a bit of jazz and old popular rock and pop songs. There are even days when he doesn't listen to any music—but that's only when he's off sailing and diving. Claus Jäckle has carved himself out an exclusive niche with AcousticPlan, reflecting what he considers to be ideal sound, top quality and proper craftsmanship. The music is at the heart of it all. Measurements, on the other hand, are temporarily marginalized if they begin to cloud his vision. ■

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AcousticPlan

„Was mich interessiert hat, war in erster Linie Musik und danach erst die Technik dafür.“ | *“What really interested me in the first place was music and then the technology that went with it.”*

„Ich hab' angefangen ohne einen blassen Schimmer von Marketing oder Vertriebsstruktur und ohne funktionierendes Händlernetz, ich hatte keine Kontakte.“ | *“When I started, I didn't have the slightest idea about marketing or sales structures and I had no functioning network of dealers — I had zero contacts.”*