

Anssi Hyvönen, Amphion Loudspeakers

Alan Sircom

Amphion Loudspeakers Ltd. was established in 1998. From its early beginnings, Amphion always designed and built loudspeakers that are commonly characterised as being honest and accurate sound reproduction devices, which is perhaps why the brand quickly developed a following in pro audio as well as domestic circles.

The brand started with three like-minded young audio professionals deciding to establish a loudspeaker brand with a solid technical foundation. One of those three was Anssi Hyvönen, who took over sole operation of Amphion in 2007, and the brand continues to go from strength to strength.

After years of operating in Helsinki, Finland, Amphion relocated its factory to middle of the country, and today all products are assembled by hand in the company's factory in Kuopio, in the Finnish municipality of Northern Savonia.

We spoke with Anssi Hyvönen, charismatic chief of Amphion about the brand, its technology, and its future.

AS: What are the unique elements that define Amphion, from a sonic, technology and company standing

AH: It seems that we have had an effect on the industry, which goes way past our company size. We are using waveguides to improve driver integration and speaker / room interaction. As quite a few other things we started with, later they have been adapted by other manufacturers as



well. In addition to being a forerunner with waveguides, we have been followed on use of passive radiators and the concept of active bass extension towers. It feels like a norm now, but maybe it could be also mentioned that we re-introduced a white speaker into the market in 2005 – it was not in any manner first white speaker in the world, but one needs to go back a few decades to find the previous one.

Philosophically we are very different from most of the hi-fi companies, who strive to achieve a certain sound to their products. Just as a great sound engineer stays in the side lines and allows the artist to shine, we try to get out of the way. We feel that our job is to open a large clean window to music, disappear and allow the listener to experience the music in a totally pure and touching manner. Due to advanced acoustic design all our products from the most economical to the top model have pinpoint imaging, phase coherence and highest level of transparency and resolution.

On a commercial side it should be reassuring for the customer to know that we are debt free and privately owned so we can take the long-term approach on things and are not pressured to look for double digit growth which external investors tend to push for. This longevity – just as with passive speakers – is the key.

The company operates in both the pro and domestic fields. Why? Which one takes precedence?

Even if we started from home audio, the target was always honesty, which makes operating on both markets quite natural for us. As mentioned, our goal has always been to open a large, clean window into music, instead of putting our twist on it as so many hi-fi companies do. Designing speakers that work well in wide range of acoustics is equally beneficial in hi-fi as well as pro. Even before creating speakers for studios for example the clarity of Argon3s has been appreciated by a few studio owners. One should remember that the line has never been clear anyway. The most widely used speaker in the studios by a large margin is Yamaha NS-10. This iconic white coned passive speaker was originally designed for the home market in mind.

Operating on both sides of mastering gives us indispensable asset to our development toolkit, as it eliminates guess work, which hi-fi-only manufacturers must build their sonic philosophy on. Our reference point is simply how the recording sounds in the mastering or mixing room. This is the tone and feel we are supposed



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» to reproduce. As we get to hear our reference songs in the environment they have been made, the decision making process for example on final voicing becomes precise and not effected by guesswork and personal priorities.

What surprised you about Amphion's reception?

The success of professional line has been a great source of motivation and it has given us renewed inspiration to try find ways to educate the audiophiles on importance of room

– speaker interaction, imaging, phase coherence and correct energy transfer. I must admit that it gives great personal satisfaction to hear the work of our customers and know that we are part of a chain, which provides joy to hundreds of millions of people all over the world. The beauty of modern streaming based world is that if one wants to experience this beauty in an honest and undiluted manner one can create a stereophonic entry point and enjoy this in one's own living room with high level of convenience for very fair amount of money.

What is your most successful line in pro and domestic?

Argons have always been our most popular product line, and they have been traditionally synonyms of the Amphion sound. They have formed the backbone throughout our 24 year history and continue to be important part of the business despite the successful introduction of the studio range. The pro sales are pretty even, but if we must single out one product that would be Two18, which is used by a surprisingly number of the world's best sound engineers.



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» Some die hard hi-fi customers see pro involvement as a negative, but we see this greatly benefits the hi-fi customer also. These gains are not restricted to R&D, where advances made in pro tend to trickle down to home products also. The most interesting thing to me is being able really hear and feel the detail and nuances of the recording in an touching and intimate manner – for example Beck, Beyonce, Bjork, Billie Eilish and Bad Bunny are some of the Billboard acts that are made by our customers. In a similar manner lot of diehard amateur photographers like to use prime lenses, those audiophiles who want to hear what the mastering

engineer hears, use our studio speakers in their home systems.

What do most people use alongside Amphion?

The gear varies widely. The nice thing about pushing the acoustical design is that we can keep our products very simple electrically, which makes them transparent and free of their own sonic character. This makes it possible to finetune the voicing of the entire system towards one's own preferences. Tube lovers get the rich harmonic texture, D-class aficionados the tight, tuneful bass, the cable swappers can really hear the effect of the silver coating in a cable etc. etc. Many

manufacturers including hardware and software developers in both hi-fi and professional fields, are using our products in R&D for this very reason.

What do you think hi-fi enthusiasts get wrong?

My 40 year journey into the magic of sound consists of numerous shows, system setups and studio visits. The following questions are something that I come across quite often are:

- Should I only shop for bargains?
- Is bigger and more expensive automatically better?
- Is tweaking viable before getting the basics right?



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- » • Can component and material level change be expected to produce a clear performance increase if the fundamentals of the product or system design are not sound?
- Is the relationship between the speaker and the room, along with importance of speaker placement and room acoustics sufficiently understood?
- Why is DSP often seen as the ultimate cure, even if better results could be gained by improving things acoustically in order to keeping the DSP based corrections minimal and frequency band based?

What do you think people get wrong about Amphion?

Initial fireworks tend to get noticed, and the more subdued presentation – even when correct – may feel boring in direct comparison. It is clear that emphasizing bass frequencies and highest treble sells speakers, especially if evaluation is done via AB-ing in an acoustically damped showroom.

The qualities that one could live with for years to come tend not to get noticed to the same degree first. Therefore one should always evaluate a new speaker for sufficient time in the space it will be used. Often one needs to live with a few different types of products before understanding and appreciating the subtle, more refined approach.

Is the still company expanding? How?

Combined growth rate during the last two years has been 60%. We moved into a new facility in the beginning of this year, which will give us good foundation for the future. The 19,000 square foot facility, which includes an increase in manufacturing and stock space, purpose-designed R&D room, and demo areas for the home and studio lines of monitoring. It feels great to inform our customers that delivery for standard products will be immediate, as doubling of space has already allowed us to increase our raw material and ready-made stocks radically.

What's next?

We are big believers that a well-designed passive speaker continue to make great sense for the customer, even if it might not be the sexiest in terms of marketing. Achieving similar longevity and system flexibility via other approaches in order to maximizing product lifespan is next to impossible. As laws of acoustics will not change and innovative acoustical engineering will be valid regardless of what may happen on the digital signal processing side.

We continue on our chosen path and try to find ways to spread the Amphion message towards music lovers in similar manner as we have managed to communicate it towards pro community. +

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