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ZUM STAUNEN**

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der Studiokonzerte für
echte Räumlichkeit

ACTIVE SPEAKERS

– the superior design



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**ANALOGKLANG
VERBESSERN**

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Phono-Amps als Klangverbesserer



Alles drin

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Saxony's Glory

Geithain's new kid on the block sets about compacting the 901 master pattern to a lounge suitable format. But instead of downsizing and studio sobriety we got a lesson in musicality, audiophile sound the hearty-hertzzy Saxonian way and boundless listening enjoyment ...



Companies who, technically, are masters of their trade often owe their good reputation to a single iconic development. Car buffs will probably think Porsche and their legendary 911. The 901s from ME Geithain enjoy a similar renown among active aficionados and studio cracks: huge studio monitors which for 35 years have asserted themselves emphatically during fieldtests in the league of critical sound engineers as well.

Exclusive delight

The fact that this model has not yet gained the popularity of the above mentioned sports car may also be due to its proportions at the sight of which shocked spouses may threaten with divorce like a female environmentalist when faced with a 6.2 litre engine: a speaker that's half a metre wide and equipped with a 15 3/4 inch woofer has no room in mom's parlour. Period. For years MEG guru Joachim Kiesler and his design manager Markus Schmidt have been reflecting upon how to pack the performance of this legendary speaker into practical formats for daily use. But downsizing, i.e. the downscaling and squeezing of small engines as it is popular with some automobile

manufacturers, was not an option for the two of them.

Torque instead of downsizing

36 years after the introduction of the first 900 model, success was finally heralded from the Leipzig area: by a moderate reduction of the midrange and bass drivers, coupled with an increased efficiency and cone excursion of the latter, they had managed to achieve the performance of the big XL speaker, which was last reviewed in stereoplay issue 05/2015. Like a compact V6 instead of a straight six-cylinder engine, but not a hot-rodded triple turbo lawn mower unit.

Yes, the woofer with its surround the size of a mountainbike tyre still measures 12 inches and is driven by 180 purely A/B-amplified watts. And it needs to be that way, because unlike most colleagues it can't depend on the sound level boosting support from a resonator, e.g. a reflex tube. On the contrary, the sizeable end tube produces even a lower efficiency (see box). Owing to the controlled bass directivity, this ensures a markedly lower room excitation and thus a transient fidelity in the bass that can't be achieved in real rooms with the common bass designs and their spherical radiation patterns.

Controlled forces

Despite its martial appearance this whopper is by no means a subwoofer that's limited to the deepest frequency range. Conversely, the folks at Geithain use the 12-incher up to 650 Hz and achieve a defined sound dispersion in the low-mid range because of the automatically emerging directional effect.

Long live the gap!

Due to the high crossover frequency, the actual 4-inch midrange driver can be pretty small; it sits on a support plate in a coax alignment in front of the woofer. Unlike many colleagues this peewee doesn't work on a sealed enclosure, but in a half-open design on a rear foam ring. Together with the bridge baffle board this works in a way similar to the bass cardioid and is supposed to produce a more transparent midrange with more lifelike timbres – that these are no empty advertising promises like the fuel consumption figures of modern day vehicles, of this we were able to convince ourselves at the measuring lab in the presence of an experimental arrangement devised in Geithain.

The frequency splittings between the drivers are handled by an active analogue crossover that sends only frequencies above 3,000 Hz to the dome tweeter. Following the traditional



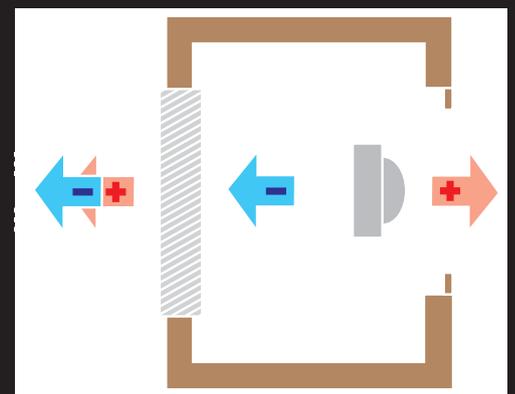
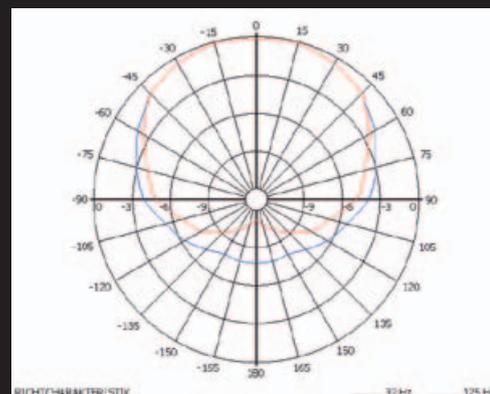
The rear module sits next to the acoustic filter elements for the bass (see below). The three power amps are designed as class A/B units and deliver “analogue” sound instead of massive output figures.

Grand with cardioids: the bass that won't overpower listening rooms

The “small” 921K also features the typical bass cardioid to produce a focused low-end sound dispersion while conventional speakers mostly have a spherical sound dispersion. Yet the cabinet has only room for one rear vent

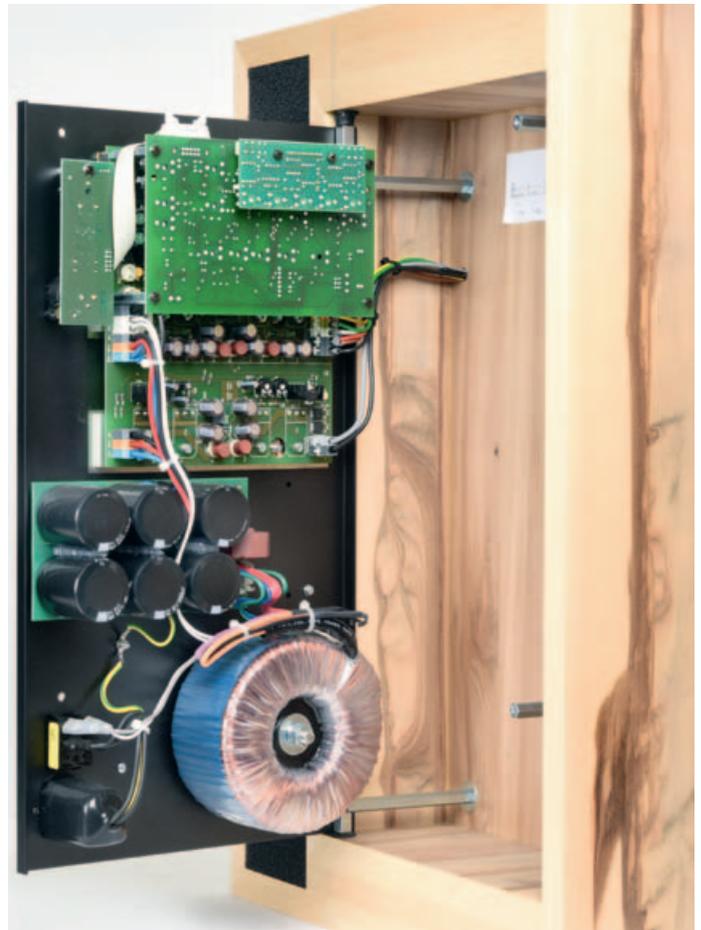
which delays mainly frequencies between 30 and 90 Hz through filter elements and achieves a backward attenuation of those frequencies by up to 11 dBs. In that frequency range this is also the most effective solution because typical rooms

show low-end emphases and resonances here. The partial suppression of the room results in a better bass, and even a near-wall placement will not cause dreaded boominess.





The midrange driver is mounted on axis with the 12-inch high-excursion woofer that relies on an XXL magnet and a solid die-cast basket. The metal support plate also carries the 1-inch tweeter.



Systematic. ME Geithain equips the 921K with a low-leakage toroidal transformer for the compact class-A/B power amps and has given them a private chamber in the solid wood.

analogue example, three MOSFET amplifier channels in class A/B technology take individual care then of the three drivers. The crew waived both a digital crossover and complex room calibration functions. In most cases the 921K's particular sound dispersion renders a calibration unnecessary, as Schmidt tells us, and for a wideband acoustic high-frequency adjustment plus a sensitive multiband bass tuning the electronics module holds a number of infinitely variable controls. On a side note, signals enter the speaker via professional analogue XLR sockets exclusively. Concessions to home audiophiles are merely granted when it comes to choosing a real wood surface and also for the optio-

nally available matching stand. Of course, buyers can also go without the recessed handles flush-mounted on the side walls and the lateral rigging plates to help give the boxy ME Geithain more suitable look for lounges. At the stereoplay test room the

ME Geithain has found a way to domesticate the iconic 901, thereby creating a professional tool with groove.

two handles proved to be useful when setting up these pro speakers which, together with the built-in amplifiers, tip the scales at 39.5 kg [87.2 lbs] each and should ideally be hauled around and lifted onto the solid aluminium tube stands by one man on either side. This recommen-

dable accessory offers a firm foothold and even looks really good in connection with the real wood veneers. Those who must heave their 921Ks alone might find weight saving a good idea. Which is possible by ordering the ME Geithain in the 921K1

version with an external and, incidentally, upright 19-inch rackmount amp module. This does not only reduce the cabinet depth of the active speaker. It also splits the high mass on two enclosures and thus significantly cuts down the weight of the active 3-way speaker to 26.5 kg

[58.5 lbs]. If that isn't a drastic reference to the great efforts that went into the 3-channel amplifier! The standard amp in class-D technology alone weighs in at 11 kg [24.3 lbs], the high-end version equipped with MOSFETs even one kilo more.

With Peter Gabriel's "Growing up" the Kiesler lesson in loudspeaker building began. If the gathered editors and reviewers had started the listening check with sacred music, they would have had to rename the piece to "The Revelation of Joachim". No other loudspeaker of this size category had ever released so mighty and under all circumstances precise fusillades of deep bass gunfire. For passive speakers – and even for active

ones with a sealed cabinet – this precision, combined with such a consistently articulate and boom-free balancedness in the bass, will probably remain out of reach forever.

Lots of air, plenty of flair

Moreover, the 921K presented an outstandingly plastical voice with an unusually large amount of elemental air between the instruments. There was no trace of artificialness in the recording, the timbres seemed to possess that hint of warmth and silkiness in the highs so popular among audiophiles.

Was there still any evidence of the cliché of a plain studio monitor? With regards to the amazing attention to detail, the natural ambience and the relaxed calm in the sound image – yes. But contrary to the generally accepted prejudices, this went hand in hand with playful-silky, wonderfully defined mid-range and treble range dynamics, a fortiori an absolutely compelling, grooving bass which got every music theorist hit the virtual dancefloor in the listening studio, however unathletic they may be.

This was the actual surprise. For insiders it was a foregone conclusion that with orchestral works like Ravel's extremely nuanced, perfectly timed "Bolero" the civil offshoot of the Saxonian flagship would display an acoustic fireworks with finely chiselled violins and a huge, dry tympano. After all, not by accident does the MDR use control monitors made in Geithain. In view of their studio nature it must by no means be regarded as a matter of fact that a comparable level of enthusiasm would also occur with dry recorded pop marked by electronic beats like "Chlorine" by the



In front of the woofer is the support plate for the high-mid section. Geithain's skill is reflected in the enclosureless midrange driver which is damped by a half-open foam ring.

Twenty One Pilots. Owing to its extremely deep and nonetheless tight bass range the East German can do "disco" remarkably well.

However, it would be a little decadent to hire such a thoroughbred professional like the 921K for such an easy delight. You don't necessarily have to put on heavy stuff like the "Toccatina And Fugue In D Minor BWV565" played on a giant church organ to appreciate the authority, spaciousness and airiness of the loudspeaker. Easy listening music with analogue sounds like "The Typewriter" by the Eastman-Rochester "Pops" Orchestra will already

do. The author got especially high on rock with acoustic grooves such as "Biko" by Peter Gabriel with the sonorous drums of the live version. A Germanised concert recording of the stereoplay Audiophile Cover Songs 3 featuring Janis Joplin's "Mercedes Benz" revealed some mains hum from the PA (normally barely audible) and applause bursting in a realistic way from laterally outside the stereo base in the room. This was so overwhelmingly authentic and loaded with emotions that it made you urgently want to join in with the applause. Hats off!

Stefan Schickedanz ■

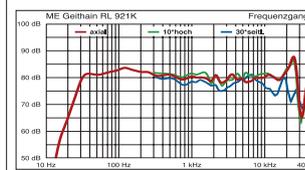
ME Geithain 921K

from 11.140 Euro

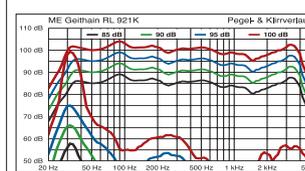
Distributor: ME Geithain
Phone: 034341 / 3110
www.me-geithain.de

Dimensions (WxHxD): 15.0 x 21.6 x 14.6 in.
Weight: 87.2 lbs.

Measured values



Frequency response and impedance curve
Balanced with minimal upper bass emphasis only in the lab, very deep



Level & distortion charts 85-100 dBs SPL
Above 50 Hz perfectly clean, increasing distortions only in the very lowest usable range

Lower limit frequency -3/-6 dB 30/26 Hz
Maximum SPL 98 dBs
Power consumption (Standby/On) -/28 W
Wireless system -
Coding -
Equalizer -
Inputs analog RCA/XLR -/•
Inputs digital USB/coax./opt. -/-/-
Remote control/app -/-

Practice and compatibility

Room acoustics and placement

Angle in towards listening spot, 2 to 3 metres of speaker clearance

Listening distance 1 m [progress bar] 5 m
Wall clearance 0 m [progress bar] 1,5 m
Reverb time 0,2 s [progress bar] 0,8 s

Evaluation

Naturalness	15
Fine details	14
High-level dynamics	9
Bass quality	14
Imaging	14

Phenomenally realistic with ultra precise, substantial bass, but conveys audiophile emotionality as well. Holographic stage, incredibly wide with live recordings. Considering all sound criteria the best loudspeaker for the lounge that we know of.

Measured values	Field test	Value
9	9	8

stereoplay test verdict

Sound absolute top class 66
0 [progress bar] 10 20 30 40 50 60 70

Overall score 92 points
Price/performance outstanding

ME Geithain's basic research

Double experiment

Legendary speaker man Joachim Kiesler (left), in the business for 60 years, did not only bring in a new speaker, but together with development manager Markus Schmidt (right) also an experiment that was installed in the anechoic room of the editing house's private test lab. During the listening check with speech and singing voice one could evaluate the difference between a half-open and a sealed midrange driver housing, regardless of room effects and the (precisely corrected) frequency response. The cardioid version sounded more airy, transparent and with more facets in the vocal timbres. No wonder that the 921k caused the editors to jump with enthusiasm. me-geithain.de



The ME Geithain 921k came, played and blew us away. It owes its clarity to a caseless mid-range driver.

Stereoplay Rank und Names
(abstract)

ACTIVE SPEAKERS

Absolute top class	sound	points	pairprice	issue
ME Geithain 921K	66	92	11.140	5/20
ME Geithain ME 801K1	65	89	23.000	3/17
ME Geithain ME 901K1	63	88	12.740	1/15
ME Geithain RL 930K	61	86	8.000	7/13
Genelec 8260 A	61	87	8.460	7/11
Genelec 8361 A	61	83	9.800	5/20
Genelec 8351	60	85	6.660	3/15
Manger MSMc 1	60	82	9.680	10/10
ME Geithain RL 940	59	80	5.300	4/09
Genelec 8341	59	81	5.900	6/18
Marion Bullfrog (Koax-Horn, EO + Endstufe extern)	59	82	6.600	7/13
Progressive Audio Extreme I Aktiv	59	79	7.000	1/15
Elac Navis ARB-51	58	82	2.000	6/19
Genelec S360	58	81	4.060	2/19
Nubert nuPro A-600	57	81	1.970	4/17
Canton Smart Vento 3	57	82	2.300	2/19
KS Digital A-100	57	76	2.400	6/19
KS Digital C88	57	78	2.850	2/18
Dynaudio Focus 200 XD	57	81	4.950	6/15
Nubert nuPro X-4000	56	80	1.550	2/19
KEF LS50 Wireless (drahtlos)	56	80	2.300	5/17
Elac Air-X 403 (optional drahtlos)	56	76	2.900	1/14
Genelec 8331	56	77	4.600	6/18



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