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**Report—A visit to...
LoftSonic Showroom
Cologne-Wahn**



Karl-Heinz Theis invited us into his realm. The setup in the large LoftSonic showroom may not be visible, but with its power it should carry a warning sign.

INVISIBLE ELEMENTAL FORCE

An invisible system blending unobtrusively into its surroundings and easily keeping up with full-blown high-end systems? Until now, this was a pipe dream. But one visit to LoftSonic's showroom could change that (hitherto perfectly justified) attitude.



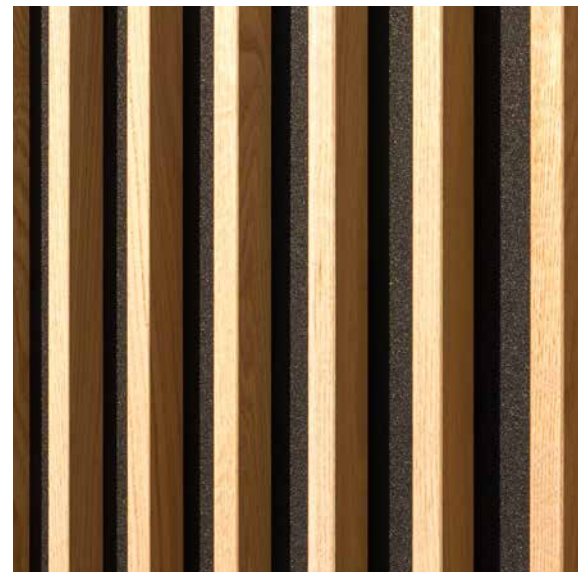
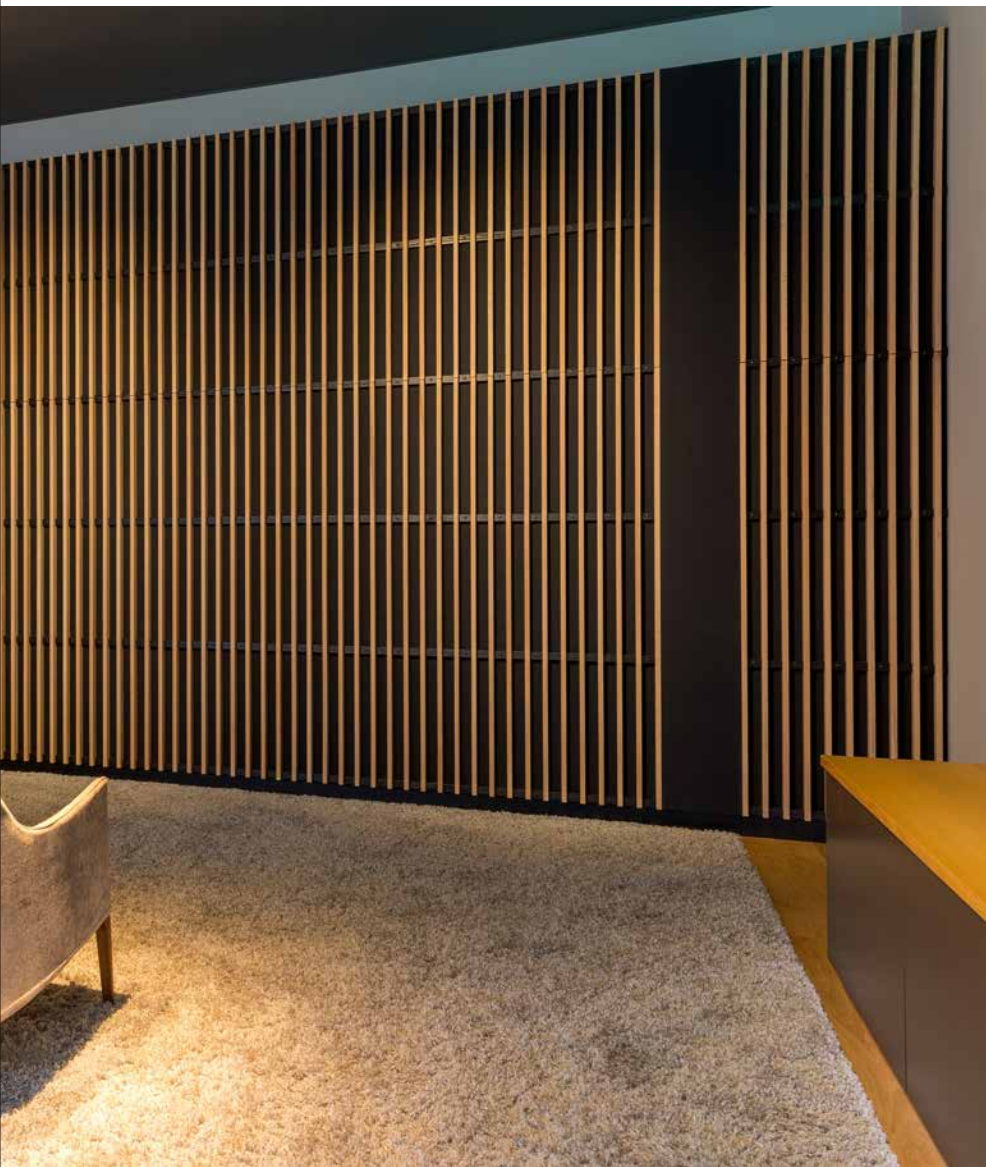
_____ I always suspected that this moment would come: I am sitting in an armchair in a daze, staring at a wall of sonic force, my jaw on the floor. Admittedly, it is a gorgeous wall. Wooden ribs stretch vertically along its entire length, the morning light from behind casts fascinating shadows on the black fabric. Some of it camouflages absorbent acoustic modules, while some of it forms openings for sound. The scene could have been pulled from a pattern catalog for modern living.

Karl-Heinz Theis anticipated my amazement. Under the LoftSonic label, he manufactures in-wall loudspeakers and devises invisible systems. Discreetly integrating hi-fi systems usually involves compromise. But Theis did not want to accept that quite so easily. He strives to create in-wall systems with the

“sound signature” of full-blown high-end chains. I’ll be honest: Others have lured me in with this promise before. And, admittedly, many of these concepts also work quite satisfactorily. In conference rooms, restaurants or bathrooms and dining rooms—they do a good enough job. But they simply cannot replace a Hi-Fi chain. Accordingly skeptical, I followed the call to Cologne-Wahn, where LoftSonic runs this fascinating showroom in close proximity to the airport.

The first surprise was the company’s breadth of offerings. LoftSonic does not offer a fixed system, but manufactures different loudspeaker concepts depending on the customer’s needs, environment and demands. The smallest system follows familiar patterns: centered in the showroom is a three-meter-wide wall in which panel speakers are installed. To

demonstrate LoftSonic’s capabilities, Theis has covered the transducers with marble slabs, and the inevitable DSP smooths the frequencies. Sonically, the “system” presents itself as surprisingly balanced and linear, although the known compromises inevitably rear their head: Rather than a defined stage, the system produces an essentially flat sound cloud, although the panorama distribution of the individual sound events is clearly discernible. Shortly thereafter, we listen to system number two, which takes my breath for the first time. Theis and his team have installed panel speakers around a large TV, whose sound surfaces are invisible but not covered. When I hold my hand to the wall during playback, my fingers dance from the excursion of the diaphragms. The EQ—also required here—is noticeably more subtle, and has positively



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effects the system's grip on the width, depth and plasticity of the stage. However, in my memory another factor predominates: The six flat diaphragms are supported by several subwoofers. Thus the system achieves a diaphragm area of over one square meter, which also presents itself in "power" and energy. The system impulses—still regarding the "golden mean" here—are impressive. Karl-Heinz Theis then leads me into the pressure chamber described at the beginning. The hidden facility can be fed from various sources. In addition to a media server, controlled in style via Roon, there is a 1210-Technics, which can be sunk into the wall on a drawer. We sit down, and Theis starts the playback of a lush orchestral work. Moments later, we are in the center of a concert hall, listening to creamy strings, bright brass and kettledrums whose

thick rumble trembles everything around us. However, the spectacle is so balanced, natural and vivid that I don't feel the need to turn down the volume for a second. Afterwards, I grab the iPad and start Fleetwood Mac's "The Chain". Always the same tune, you may accuse me, but the track starts with one of the most plastic kick drums I know. This is exactly what I want to hear now. To make a long story short: The impulses are fundamental, downright brutal—and yet everything sits exactly where it should.

Noticeably joyful at my near fainting, Karl-Heinz Theis later explains the secret of the super system: instead of the smaller flat diaphragms, he utilizes his latest specialty for the upper league. The "true" line source full-range drivers measure over two meters tall and

boast sensational power handling in addition to their outstanding diaphragm area. Each of the two DSP-equalized active lines is driven in conjunction with the associated subwoofers with an output of 6400 watts. This explains those impulses and stability that nearly swept the glasses off my face.

With that, I realized we had to deal with the LoftSonic concept in more detail. Karl-Heinz Theis invited me to visit his partner, the Hifi-Profis in Frankfurt. There you can admire the enormous floor-standing speakers without any disguise. But until then, a little patience is still required. Our impressions will follow in the next issue... ■

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