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Everything different

There are people who set out on a journey whose destination they don't know. Jonathan Weiss, founder of Oswalds Mill Audio, OMA for short, is one such person, even if his current status makes this seem almost improbable. This is his story, the story of his second company Fleetwood Sound Company

and the story of a special loudspeaker.



Beginnings

Like all exceptional entrepreneurs, Jonathan Weiss is a person with clear convictions and enormous energy. He likes to perform, and you can find lots of videos featuring him on the internet. But first let's take a look at his beginnings as an audio entrepreneur, because this path was really not mapped out in advance. Weiss was a filmmaker, making documentaries and fiction. By the end of 1997, he had founded



This is the mill that gave its name to Oswalds Mill Audio, OMA for short, in its current splendor from the outside

He had just finished his first feature film and was, as he smugly remarks, completely broke. And just then he was offered a mill in Pennsylvania. Within minutes, he realized that he had to have it and found a way to finance the adventure. More than 20 years later, he still hasn't quite finished renovating it, but that's normal with projects like this. And about two months later, he met his future wife and partner, photographer Cynthia van Elk, at the Rotterdam Film Festival.

OMA and audio

The mill was expanded step by step. Weiss rented it out as a location for advertising campaigns by Victoria's Secret and Ralph Lauren to finance the project. There was still no sign of audio. It was only when he was living with Cynthia in Amsterdam in the early 2000s that one of her friends gave him an old Philips tube amplifier. Cynthia says: "I know that he has always been attracted to good sound. An experience working in a movie theater in LA when he was 14 shaped his idea of ideal sound reproduction. While Jonathan was cleaning the seating area in the movie theater, the projectionist turned up Blondie's "Call Me". He has never forgotten this loud, yet completely clear and undistorted reproduction from old movie theater speakers."



The Fleetwood DeVille speaker in all black on a black cast iron base with a Scandinavian design core



Music

Moby
Reprise

Friedrich Liechtenstein Trio
Beautiful boat from Klang

Matti Ollikainen Trio
Analogue Adventures

Taj Mahal & Ry Cooder
Get on board

Art Farmer / Jim Hall
Big Blues

Nik Bärtsch's Mobile
Continuum



Another poem. The highly individual design is available in an extremely wide range of versions. Guaranteed to help everyone



Samples of torrefied Pennsylvania ash. This method is intended to ensure that the solid wood no longer works and "sounds" better

Now his passion for sound was really ignited and the worldwide collecting and learning began. RCA, the company that shaped early cinema sound alongside Western Electric, used to be based just an hour away from the mill. Weiss found retired RCA engineers like A.J. May and Hans Dietze and began: "...a long process of understanding how these kinds of sound systems were designed and operated, all the way back to the beginnings of sound in movies. These engineers quickly explained to me that some of RCA's earliest speakers and amplifiers were also their best." This paved the way for him to collect very rare, early equipment that hardly anyone had the space for - he did, thanks to the mill.

Flavor

Weiss began to organize meetings, so-called "tube tastings", with collectors and developers from all over the world. Suddenly Thomas Schick, Frank Schröder and the famous horn designer Bill Woods from Canada appeared at the mill. In the pictures of these meetings you can see a Jonathan who not only has extremely good taste in audio or design, but also in food and cooking, which he did with passion and class for his visitors. Here I would like to let Cynthia have her say once again: "In the mid-90s, Jonathan

also a travel cooking program with the title "The Global Kitchen" came to life. At a time when cooking shows only took place in TV studio kitchens and long before the series with Anthony Bourdain became a hit."

Commerce?

When Weiss went to his first audio show, the Rocky Mountain Audio Fest 2005, he said he had never read a hi-fi magazine and had never owned a commercial hi-fi product. As he walked through the rooms, he was



A DeVille can also look like this, for example. Nobly refined with a color from the rich palette of Farrow & Ball

Attachment

Record player:

- Oracle Delphi MK VII, Oracle Reference 1 tonearm, Etsuro Urushi Cobalt Blue cartridge

MC transformer:

- Consolidated Audio 1:20 Nano / silver / low impedance

Phono amplifier:

- Engström M-Phono

Preamplifier:

- ModWright LS99

Power amplifier:

- ModWright KWA 99

Cabling:

- IKIGAI Audio and Sternklang

In the foundry, which produces the metals for various OMA and Fleetwood products, the spirit of industrialization is still very much alive

For a company that is off the mainstream these are extremely large production capacities,

that are second to none. He looks out of the window at the Fleetwood Metal Body Co. of the Cadillac Fleetwood models. This fits the profile of Weiss, who is a very tradition-conscious but also modern-thinking entrepreneur. I am a big fan

fencers from the fact that a developer must appear in his products and he does this with a great deal of passion and history. Both companies are independent because they are successful and also because Weiss rents out his studio loft in Brooklyn as well as the mill and the Fleetwood production facilities to companies such as Apple and Facebook for their advertising films. Everything that OMA or Fleetwood stems from his creative drive and the need to produce audio with style and history into life.



Could you make up your mind? One or the other of these speakers looks good enough to eat. The fact that they also sound so good makes them even better. more attractive



A stylized image that reflects the craftsmanship still frequently found in the area. Here during the assembly of the very tasty Fleetwood rack

He was shocked by the poor sound and the high prices. This was certainly not his path, but by quasi-divine providence, his mill had taken him to the cradle of America's industrial revolution. He discovered remaining craft businesses and befriended their owners and began to process slate, (cast) iron and wood from the neighboring forests. The "commercial" starting signal for OMA Audio was given by the famous photographer Anton Corbijn, who needed a new facility in 2006 / 2007 and commissioned Jonathan with it. Today, the mill with its collection of vintage audio serves as a reference for the development of new OMA products.

The Fleetwood Sound

Company 2016 / 17 Weiss realized that he needed a larger production facility for OMA that was not far from the mill. He found buildings in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania, that were exactly what he had in mind, totaling almost 4,000 square meters.



Blanks for any number of DeVille speakers. The production capacities are enormous for a factory like this



On the way to the finished product. In the background you can see one of the three Fleetwood / OMA halls



The cover of the bass-midrange speaker is also special and of course not off the shelf. With a product like this, you are buying something really stylish

The DeVille SQ

The DeVille speakers are the first product from the Fleetwood Sound Company. The model for this is the legendary RCA LC1(A) monitor from the equally legendary Harry Olson, about which Weiss says: "It's right." You may be familiar with its chassis with the camel humps on the membrane and a butterfly membrane in the middle. The monitor was used for many famous recordings by Elvis or as a monitor in classical music. With its wide baffle as the starting point for the design of the Fleetwood DeVille loudspeaker, it was of course not copied, as both the drivers and the entire cabinet design are completely different. There are no straight walls to avoid standing waves. For the standard version, only the overhanging top and bottom panels and the conical tweeter horn are made of specially treated solid wood, which I will come to later. The rest is made of multiplex. The wood is treated by hand with organic wax and oil at least three times with longer drying phases. It is these many small steps that create a manufactured product that incorporates a great deal of knowledge, craftsmanship and love. You can feel, see and hear this. Bill Woods, now deceased, is responsible for the 15 cm thick, conical horn with a patented phase plug as well as many other aspects of the development. The specially shaped phase plug distributes the high frequencies and prevents reflections and cancellations in the horn.

Special Quality (SQ)

In contrast to the standard version, the entire body of the SQ version is made of local ash, which is torrefied in the same way as the wooden horn. Torrefaction is an exciting process in which the solid wood is "baked" in an oven in the absence of air at controlled temperatures between 250 and 300 degrees in order to get the water out of it so that it no longer works. The wood does not burn as it is baked in the oven in the absence of oxygen. "baked". Incidentally, this is also how the woods for the famous Martin guitars from the expensive Authentic series are made - just one valley over. The standard crossover is equipped with a silver-coated circuit board and good components. The SQ has a gold-coated crossover board, is equipped with thick copper conductors and comes with significantly more expensive and higher quality capacitors and coils, all of which are built for Weiss. In addition, their wiring is made of silver and gold Solid Core and the phase plug is made of plated bronze - in the standard model it is made of iron. Common to both models is the double reflex outlet at the bottom of the housing and the back made of hard paper, a low-resonance material used by many interesting audio designers such as Frank Schröder or Reinhard Thöress. The 1-inch compression driver takes care of frequencies up to 2 kHz before the 20 mm bass-midrange driver takes over. A special stiffening board is located between the two drivers, which also holds the long bass reflex tubes in place.

Fleetwood Sound DeVille SQ

- **Price:** from 27,500 euros (stand from approx. 950 euros)
- **Distribution:** Fleetwood Sound Company
- **Principle:** 2-way bass reflex
- **Equipment:** 1 inch pressure chamber driver; 20 cm bass-midrange driver with paper cone and neodymium magnet
- **Impedance:** 8 OHm
- **Sensitivity:** 94 db / 1 W / 1 m
- **Weight:** approx. 16 kg

- **Warranty:** 2 years
- **H x W x D:** approx. 610 x 460 x 250 mm

HIFI
Loudspeaker
Test yearbook 2024

Fleetwood
Sound Company
DeVille SQ

Conclusion

With the Fleetwood Sound DeVille SQ loudspeakers, audio meets lifestyle, passion meets engineering, history meets the present. The result is a modern classic that is second to none.

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and not just with small line-ups or uncritical music. The SQs can easily cube Moby's legendary album "Reprise" into the 50 square meter room, similar to what I experienced at the Munich High-End. Nothing is missing, on the contrary. I hear more details than usual on a very rich bass foundation. With Nik Bärtsch's Mobile group, I experience space and detail to the point of dropping. On "Continuum", the interlaced grooves with their wonderful percussive variety increase the tension further and further through many repetitions. The percussion and (contra) bass clarinet sound extremely crisp, the strings fine and silky. That's what I mean by monitor qualities: this loudspeaker is not friendly or soundtracked, it delivers what the recording provides. This also applies to the magical atmosphere on "Schönes Boot aus Klang" by the Friedrich Liechtenstein Trio, which it perfectly illudes. The sounds that Liechtenstein produces burst like soap bubbles in front of my ears. But even large drums or symphony orchestras can be confidently reproduced by this still compact speaker in a large room. If I had a studio, this would be my monitor.

Christian Bayer



Stylish in every respect. The elegantly embossed reverse side is made of hard paper, an almost forgotten material with outstanding properties

Both chassis come from the professional sector of a traditional Italian manufacturer, carefully selected by Weiss. But only the special horn, the cabinet design and the elaborate crossover can create a loudspeaker like this.

Sound / Epilogue

I'm not a big fan of superlatives, but I agree with Jonathan Weiss when he says that this could well be the last speaker you need in your life. Especially if you love and use tube amplifiers, even at lower power levels. The sound of these DeVille SQ speakers is incredibly neutral, which surprised me. Was I expecting the sonic equivalent of spongy American road cruisers? But wait, did my JBL L-150A sound "American"? No, so let's not go there. For Weiss, his DeVilles are the modern equivalent of the aforementioned RCA LC1 monitor anyway, although I can imagine that they sound more neutral than that. The ver-

The most important thing is that they can fill a large space despite their small size



The view of Jonathan Weiss' personal listening room in the mill. Of course, nothing here is off-the-peg or for sale. But don't worry, Weiss always finds a way