

Harman's AKG Acoustics celebrates 65th anniversary

Harman's AKG proudly celebrates its 65th company anniversary in June, 2012. Founded in 1947 by two Viennese, physicist Dr. Rudolph Görike and engineer Ernst Pless, Akustische und Kino-Geräte Gesellschaft mbH, shortened to AKG in 1965, is among the world's leading manufacturers of high-quality headphones, microphones and wireless systems for professional users. Since 1993, AKG has been a part of Harman, distributing its premium products in more than 140 countries.

When founded, AKG's core business was to equip cinemas with loudspeakers, film projectors, and light meters. Görike built the loudspeakers and projectors with a team of five employees in a small rented basement. Pless supplied the cinemas with the finished products in exchange, more often than not, for food or cigarettes, rather than currency. In years following, the product range became more tailored to markets in high demand, such as car horns, door intercoms, carbon capsules for telephones, second headsets for phones, and cushion speakers. Radio stations, theaters, jazz clubs, and cabarets used the first homemade AKG microphones within the first year of the company's conception.

AKG's first patents included the moving coil technology and principle of mass loaded membranes, which allowed users to extend frequency ranges, reaching low notes and offering warmth and volume to previously hollow and shrill-sounding mics.

AKG achieved an international breakthrough with the development of its first dynamic microphone, the D12. The mic conquered radio and television stations, setting the standard for voice transmission for the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1955, the company established a subsidiary in Germany. At the time, the reputable producers of recording devices, Philips, Grundig, Uher, Loewe, Opta, Nordmende, and Telefunken, etc., obtained



AKG's first company building in Vienna



AKG's first dynamic mic, the D12

their microphones from AKG. The majority of AKG's customers were based in Germany and the supplier in Austria. By the end of the 1950s, AKG had built an international network of distribution partners.

In the late 1960s, AKG successfully entered the Far East and Latin America markets. As TV was steadily replacing cinema as the source for information and entertainment, AKG decided to fade out cinema devices and concentrate on the construction of mobile electroacoustic devices. A new market had been created through AKG's production of portable reverberators, which proved to be a great success, making AKG the world's first supplier in the product segment. AKG's C414 made its debut in the 1960s, which continues to be the standard mic in the recording industry, decades later.

AKG established the construction of high-quality pickups for record players in the 1970s, but withdrew from that segment with the introduction of the compact disc and the start of the digital age. During the late 1970s, digital technology became a large part of the product portfolio of AKG. The company equipped the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow with the TDU 7000 time-delay unit, which handled up to eight audio signals, simultaneously running input and output.

1989 brought the AKG K1000 headphone system for hi-fi purists and professional applications in the recording studio. In 1993, Harman International Inc. acquired AKG and 76 percent of its shares. The following year, Görike passed away and Harman acquired the remaining 24 percent. That same year, AKG moved to its current headquarters in Vienna's 23rd district. For the first time in the company's history, all of its departments were accommodated under one roof. To reduce costs and remain competitive in a harsh environment, in subsequent years AKG shifted parts of its productions to locations with lower wage costs. With sights on perfection, the entire product development and the production of sensitive products are today still carried out at the Viennese location in Lemböckgasse.

In 2008, AKG was awarded the Austrian export prize for foreign trade. Cooperation with stars from the music business, such as Quincy Jones, underlines the ambitions of AKG to always present products with the highest sound quality and level of perfection to its customers. In 2010 AKG received the most important award in the firm's history — the Technical Grammy award.