

50 Years of Optimism

Günther Seitz and Christoph Kraus answered journalists' questions on the occasion of Canton's 50th birthday.

Michael Lang



ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Founder Günther Seitz (l.) and CEO Christoph Kraus are optimistic about the future.

When you started Canton in 1972, you had plenty of competitors, yet your speakers quickly established themselves on the market. Was it just their sound?

Günther Seitz: We were fortunate that our co-founder Ottfried Sandig was also responsible for training retailers for the DHFI at the time. He worked with our speakers there and the name Canton quickly became known among loudspeaker dealers.

The sales figures then climbed rapidly; in 1973 we were already at 24,000, in the following year 57,000 and in 1976 already 110,000 loudspeakers were produced and sold by us.

How did you originally come up with the name Canton?

GS: I learned Latin in school and combined „Cantare“ – to sing – with the German word „Ton“ [sound] to create Canton.

How did the term „Taurus Sound“ come to be, a label that has been attached to Canton speakers for many years?

GS: That was an invention by the press. It originated from the listening room of a magazine, which was way too heavily damped;

to make it sound good there, we had to add bass and treble. Such listening rooms don't exist anymore – and neither does the „Taurus Sound“.

How did the start of the company here in the economically underdeveloped Taurus region in Germany look like in terms of employees and organization?

GS: It was quite adventurous as far as taking orders was concerned. There were only three telephone lines in the whole town, and our neighbor gave us his line up until 5 pm. Whoever called later than that got a chance to talk to him... At that time, our employees were driven to the company and back home in eight VW buses; two of those buses are still in use today, because not all employees own a car.

How many loudspeakers are built nowadays?

GS: We manufacture 400 to 500 speakers per day, with a tendency towards more expensive products.

Have you ever considered dropping everything and just selling the company?

GS: No, never. We regularly receive offers for takeovers, but we always reject them. We view it as our responsibility to preserve jobs here and not to go for the quick money. Besides, that would have left me bored [laughs]. My wish is that the company stays in the family and the jobs stay in the area. The „family“ feeling is very important to us.

CK: What is especially important to us: our good relationship with all employees. The team has become younger in recent years, but we can always draw on the knowledge of almost all retired colleagues when needed. An invaluable wealth of experience and knowledge that is thus available to us.

How do you attract young staff, and where do you source new employees from?

CK: We train the next generation of employees ourselves. For example, our head of development Frank Göbl joined us as an intern in 1993 – and has been a permanent member of the company since 1997. A lucky shot! Of

course, we compete with Frankfurt and its suburbs, but many people no longer want to spend hours driving to and from work. We profit from this; however, we of course also have to pay the same salaries as our competitors.

How do you, as a family-owned, medium-sized company, succeed in keeping up with the big players?

CK: Since we don't have an investor, we have to carefully allocate and invest the money we earn. We have to be cleverer and faster than larger, financially stronger companies in order to survive in the long term. And often also be a trendsetter.

How does the daily routine in the executive department look like?

CK: I see it as a good challenge after the bank job I used to have. I haven't regretted the change a day, even though Covid-19 and the war present us with new challenges almost every day. Fortunately, Günther Seitz is always by my side as a mentor. His knowledge and experience are an incredible advantage for me.

How many employees does Canton have?

CK: 70 people work here at the headquarters and around 60 to 70 in-house employees in the Czech Republic.

When did you start producing in the Czech Republic, and what was the reason for building a new factory 400 kilometers away?

GS: Around the year 2000, the space here was no longer sufficient. Through the relationship with a supplier, we were able to acquire a 17,000 square meter plot of land and built facilities there with a total area of around 6,000 square meters.

How are the costs of production there?

CK: In the Czech Republic, wages are lower than here, but even there we have managed to establish the „Family Spirit“; one reason for this is our managing director, who comes from there, speaks the language of the people and knows their mindset. Therefore the quality is good as well!

Where will Canton be in ten years?

CK: The „Smart“ series hints at the direction, but fortunately we manage both worlds – classic passive hi-fi speakers as well as

active and wireless models – and this market is growing.

Will Canton still work together with retailers in ten years?

CK: Definitely; we believe in strong specialized retailers; but, they have to open up; just a store will not be enough in the long run; the customer decides where to buy; so the dealer needs an online shop to complement it. In addition, of course, we support our retailers through advertising campaigns and our social media activities.

What about the „Canton Direct“ products?

CK: This separation is deliberate; we do not want to create competition with specialist dealers, but rather to bind customers to Canton who do not want to visit retail stores. We still sell much more through our 800 to 1,000 specialist dealers than we do online and make around 70% of our sales domestically in Germany.

Where do you see potential for growth at Canton?

CK: We see opportunities for growth abroad. Music is heard all over the world, and we want to be part of that, even if some of the markets are small. You have to find the right partner. In addition, we will continuously expand our already very successful activities in the area of custom installation.

Are active versions of your flagship models also planned?

CK: We never run out of ideas, but unfortunately implementation sometimes takes a while: the development time per speaker is about 1.5 years from the idea to shipping; and supply is still a challenge. The fan who spends a lot of money still wants to combine freely, for him passive speakers remain the first choice. Personally, I handle it differently; a pair of speakers and a cable is enough for me. And this is a market that is developing well, which is why we are watching it with great interest.

Are headphones interesting for Canton?

CK: If we want to offer headphones in the 400 to 600 euro range, that costs a lot of money. We have to check carefully beforehand whether it's worth it for us. At the moment, however, other things are prioritized. ■

We believe in strong specialized retailers, but they need an online shop



Anniversary Highlight

In 1979, Canton's Ergo speakers were a milestone for the then young company. Perfectly shaped and excellent in sound, it also became a timeless bestseller and a living classic. This speaker still performs marvelously, even today. Especially when it is upgraded with Reference K technology for the company's anniversary.

Tom Frantzen

The first floorstanding loudspeakers in the company's history came at a height of around a meter, which seems perfect for the modern living room of the 2020s as well. In the „GS Edition“ – a tribute to company founder Günther Seitz –, available in black oak or light oak, this visually quite distinctive speaker is strictly limited to 50 pairs. Thus, it undoubtedly will become a coveted collector's item and – yes – an absolute fan favorite.

7,000 euros per pair is the price of this gem. For all its history, Canton is by no means copying itself here, a bit at most.

Modern Reincarnation

Obviously, we went down into our archives. And indeed, I was able to find an early review of an active Ergo model, albeit from the competition; namely in the test yearbook HiFi Stereophonie 82/83. The speaker was described as a „relatively slim, beautifully shaped and impeccably manufactured three-way active speaker ... capable of producing a remarkably voluminous, not discolored and transparent sound image“ and put into the highest league.

Exactly at that time I was thirteen years old and looking for speakers. I also had the Canton GLE 70 in mind, which is related to the Ergo. But that's just a side-note.

Judging by the looks and in terms of dimensions, you might think that you're standing in front of an edition of the original Ergo series. In fact, however, it quickly becomes clear at second glance that this is one of the most modern and also one of the best Canton speakers of all time. Among other things, this is due to the exclusive driver assembly. The tungsten-ceramic technology of the



The Wave surround – here in the Reference – ensures higher excursion, more guiding and symmetry, the stiffness grows with the excursion.

The anniversary Ergo is a true Canton with incredible dynamics and feeling in a tuning suitable for long-term listening



HIGHEST HONORS

The really good 25mm tweeter started its Canton career as an aluminum cone and has matured into a ceramic driver by now.

Reference K series was indeed the basis, but with further refinements in detail and made more exclusive.

One of the changes: the membranes intended for the Ergo GS are allowed to remain longer in the process bath during the already very complex and time-consuming manufacturing process. Aluminum is turned into ceramic via oxidation in this procedure.

The exceptional drivers are acoustically refined by tungsten particles like the Reference drivers, but also colored black by means of further additives. In the Canton portfolio, these drivers are available exclusively in the GS Edition, at least for now.

Of course, the latest reincarnation of the Ergo includes virtually all breakthroughs of Canton R&D – and that’s quite a lot. For example the advanced, generously sized design of the drivers, including the powerful motors. The extremely stable and stiffened housing with its characteristic stand, which almost „anchors“ the housing to the floor is also certainly worth mentioning.

Furthermore, the durable and perfectly guiding „Wave surrounds“, developed in-house, are employed here, as are the double membranes. These are part of the 20cm ceramic woofers, which basically come from the Canton Reference 3K.

Together with the particularly clever membrane geometry of the ceramic midrange driver for low-resonance and stiff movement, this all comes very close to the ideal of the „perfectly oscillating piston“. The basis for this 20cm driver comes from the Reference 8K, i.e. the flagship.



BLACK BEAUTY

The hightech midrange driver shows the top technology of Canton in terms of membrane geometry and blackened tungsten ceramic.

Proven Long-Time Favorite

Canton fans will probably be most familiar with the tried and tested 25mm dome tweeter. It began its life several generations ago as an aluminum model and was constantly improved until it became a ceramic top driver, and today it is hard to imagine a premium Canton without it. Another feature that is typical for the speakers from Weilrod.

The crossover is sophisticated and superbly equipped to assign the drivers their

perfectly staked „claim“, i.e. their respective ideal operating range. The upper section of the Ergo is reserved for the mid and high ranges and is completely separated. In addition, the angled baffle ensures an optimized dispersion, which even aims slightly upwards. It comes in the original standing desk design from 1979, which, by the way, goes back to the then very famous design professor Fischer. The soundstage that can also be perceived above the speakers – with localization of the voice of the respective protagonist at the ideal height of about 1.80 meters – might also have its origin there.

By the way: The very slight time delay correction, which was desired back then and achieved via the angle of the upper part of the housing, is omitted nowadays. As in other Canton speakers, the modern midrange driver and tweeter have swapped places for the purpose of optimizing the radiation behavior and interaction in the crossover area. The group delay is therefore also rather a task of the crossover. Even the high-class inner wiring stems from the



The connection terminal is also of very high quality. It stems from WBT’s „NextGen“ line and accepts spade or banana plugs and loose wires.



50 years and not about to quiet down: The Ergo GS Edition is limited to 50 pairs. Canton says that's really it!

Reference line, the terminal employs the latest WBT NextGen connectors. Excellent and expensive.

Bass Department

The lower, particularly generously designed part is its own bass reflex enclosure and is supposed to optimally support the two 20cm drivers and descend deep into the lowest bass regions. Unfortunately, our measurement reference to 1 kilohertz only depicts this unsatisfactorily. The membrane areas add up adequately to one larger woofer, but work faster. Canton specifies a transmission range of 20 to 40,000 Hertz. Below that, nothing works intentionally; no instrument reaches these frequencies anyway, i.e. no music transmission takes place anymore. This section is thus elegantly closed off, so to speak.

Canton's DC technology reliably prevents nonsensical and energy-wasting diaphragm movements in the infrasonic range, the home of rumble and interference coming from warped records. It is thus acting as a kind of electroacoustic subsonic filter in the speaker itself. Particularly vinyl record and possibly also tape fans might be very happy about this, especially since it objectively tightens and stabilizes the bass foundation



In black, one could almost think that the well thought-through base is made of plastic at first glance; but it is high-quality MDF.

and, according to Canton, also achieves an overall optimization.

In the midrange, the driver's natural acoustic roll-off of 12 dB/octave and the second-order crossover together form a quasi 24 dB filter. In the higher frequency range, -6 dB/octave plus 18 dB filter likewise, and in the bass a resulting filter of up to sixth order is achieved by the bandpass effect. All in all, the Link-Riley characteristic results in an extremely favorable transfer function in terms of radiation and group delay.

A Typical Canton

And can you hear that? Of course you can! As always, the Canton speakers are very dynamic, crisp and lively, which reliably reveals the signature of head developer Frank Göbl. The Ergo GS, belonging to the highest tier of the portfolio, naturally not only scores in terms of attack, temperament and maximum level, but also in the audiophile virtues of balance, fine resolution, spatiality and absence of fatigue. Indeed, we do not miss any transparency, despite the fact that the Ergo, just like the other modern models, undoubtedly performs a bit more restrained and pleasant than speakers from decades



FINISH

In all honesty, I prefer the Ergo „in wood“ compared to „black“ – even though this finish is of course also made from real wood.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

**Various Artists:
Canton Reference
Check No.1**



At this point, Canton's own top-reference-recording of course has to be mentioned. Listening tip: Carolin No.

**AC/DC:
Highway To Hell**



There can't be a Canton review without AC/DC. Listening tip: Highway To Hell.

ago, especially in the high frequencies. This could possibly also be credited to the really admirable ceramic dome tweeter, which is also responsible for the pronounced spaciousness and level of detail.

In medias res

The performance of the retro-modern Canton is absolutely captivating. The bass, for instance, creaks, is well-contoured and fast, yet voluminous and very pleasantly rounded. In our STEREO listening room, its physical power was tangible, as it reaches astonishingly deep for a speaker of this still for many „reasonable size“ and literally makes everything shake – if it is supposed to, anyway. And with AC/DC it certainly is, without a doubt.

We listen our way through a small CD tower; and a lot of fun is being had! Yello with „Oh Yeah“, for example, blasts us with spatial effects, the most delicate sounds and ultra-deep bass in unique arrangements via the Canton; Adele enchants us live at the Royal Albert Hall with temperamental interjections and a cover song of Bonnie Raitt that could easily become a new favorite song via the Ergo: „I Can't Make You Love Me. Stunning!

At the same time, the massive 34 kilogram column from the Taunus region controls not only the loud parts masterfully, but also the delicate and subtle tones. The



Inner qualities: Removing the driver with its solid basket and strong double magnet drive reveals the crossover.

pianissimi as well as the well-staggered sounds of a large orchestra in classical music. In the opinion of the venerable HiFi Stereophonie magazine from back in the day, the old Ergo seemed as if made for this. Even if the Maestro Carlo Maria Giulini could not have known these loudspeakers: he would have liked them, as they suit his temperament.

Looking into the Future

According to Frank Göbl, the details of the Ergo's modernization are supposed to become trend-setters for future developments. We are looking forward to that, and not only because of the black speaker drivers.

The Ergo GS Edition is more than „just“ a tribute to its ancestor. In this form, it is a modern, very powerful and exemplary universal speaker. One that, with its unmistakable retro look, would not in any way have to hide from its Reference siblings or other audiophile to high-end speakers from the competition. Quite the contrary. Here's to the next 50 years! ■



Membrane geometry, material, drive, centering and suspension determine the quality of a speaker driver in large parts.

Canton Ergo GS Edition

Price: around €7,000 (black oak or light oak)

Dimensions: 40 x 103 x 40 cm (WxHxD)

Warranty: 5 Years

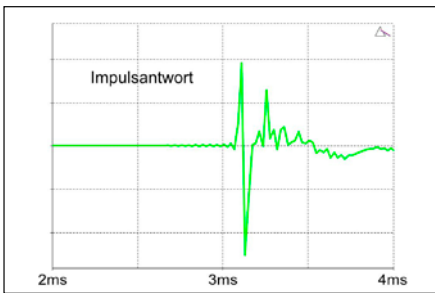
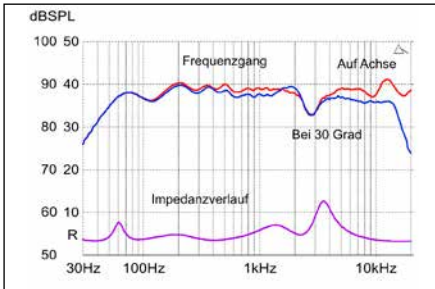
Contact: Canton

Phone: +49 6083 2870

www.canton.de

Anniversary speakers in retro real wood housing limited to 50 pairs. Very dynamic and robust as well as well-balanced and audiophile performance with Canton-typical enormous level capabilities, impressively spacious and finely detailed.

Measurement Results



| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Rated impedance at DC | 4 ohms |
| Minimum impedance | 3,49 ohms at 37 Hz |
| Maximum impedance | 12,76 ohms at 3364 Hz |
| Sound pressure characteristic (2,83 V/m) | 89 dB SPL |
| Power for 94 dB SPL | 6,22 W |
| Lower cut-off frequency (-3dB SPL) | 50 Hz |
| Distortion factor at 63/3k/10k Hz | 0,35/0,12/0,16 % |

Lab Comment

Except for a dip at about 2900 Hertz, linear frequency response without significant abaxial drop. Quite high efficiency relative to 1 kHz, 50 hertz low frequency response (-3 dB), significantly lower in reality. Good impedance, good impulse response shows resonances, very low distortion.

Features

Three-way design with bass reflex support, stand, metal protection grille, real wood cabinet in black oak or light oak

| STEREO®-TEST | |
|-------------------|-----|
| SOUND LEVEL | 90% |
| PRICE/PERFORMANCE | |
| ★★★★☆ | |
| EXCELLENT | |

A classic enters the modern era. The anniversary mission has succeeded. Congratulations!

TEST DEVICES

Turntable:

Clearaudio Ovation

CD Player:

T+A MP 2000R

Integrated Amp:

Audionet WATT

Loudspeakers:

DALI Epicon 6

Cables:

AudioQuest, HMS, Supra