ROOM ACOUSTICS

THE IN-AKUSTIK EXPERT TIP

Does your music room sound too bright or too dull? You can improve your room acoustics with just a few simple steps. To help you, here are some tips from Joachim Pfeiffer, publisher of the renowned trade magazine "HiFi & Musik Journal".

Joachim Pfeiffer
Publisher of the trade magazine "HiFi & Musik Journal"

Fashionable architecture has to be pleasing to the eye. Attractive, light-filled rooms with stone, wood or ceramic floors are very popular these days. Fitted carpets, three-piece suites and heavy curtains are a thing of the past. A feast for the senses? Yes, but not for all of them. Because sometimes our ears don't like what pleases the eye. Bright, spacious rooms can often sound harsh and bright. In fact, in many homes, poor room acoustics reduce the quality of life. Some people think that's nothing to worry about. But they're wrong. Because our ears are always fully tuned in and have to process the most complex acoustic events unfiltered. In rooms that are overly bright both optically and acoustically, the many reflections make the sound seem to come from everywhere and it can be hard, for example, to understand the person you are talking to or follow an exciting dialogue on television. And not only that – even a high-quality hi-fi system with fantastic speakers will perform far below its intended capacity in poor room conditions. But of course, there's something you can do about that.

ANALYSE YOUR ROOM.

You don't need measuring instruments to do this – the tools you need are the ones you were born with. That's because you can simply use your own voice to sound out a room and judge its acoustic qualities. Is your room too acoustically bright, too dull, or just right? A simple experiment will quickly get you clear results. Pick up the phone and call a good friend. Try to keep speaking at the same volume. First go into a room with stronger echoes, this could be the bathroom, or in apartment buildings usually the stairwell. Do you and your partner notice anything? Of course you do – you're speaking much more quietly now, because of the irritating echoes caused by your own voice. Now go to the other extreme, an overly muffled room. You can also find one in your own home: simply open your wardrobe put your head between the shirts, jumpers and trousers while you talk. You'll notice you're speaking much louder to your friend. This is also uncomfortable. Now go to the room where you like to listen to music. Of course, it sounds different from the muffled wardrobe or the reverberant stairwell, but is the sound really ideal? If you can go out of the room and leave the building, for example into your garden, you'll notice it immediately. If the person you're talking to doesn't notice whether you're speaking out in the open air or at the living room table, then you've reached your acoustic goal. And if not, you there are some simple adjustments you can make without spoiling the appearance of the room. If the room sounds too bright, you can simply put some nice plants in it or use fancy fabrics to decorate glass surfaces such as windows or tables. Plush rugs are another way to ensure pleasant acoustics. If the room sounds too dull, simply get rid of one or two accessories in the room.

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SET UP LOUDSPEAKERS CORRECTLY.

You probably already know that as a listener, you should form an imaginary isosceles triangle with the speakers in front of you. Now we're going to tell you how to optimally set up your loudspeakers in your room, taking account of its specific acoustics. You'll need someone to help you – perhaps the friend you were talking to earlier on the phone. First decide where in the room you would normally like to sit and enjoy listening to the music. Sit down right there. Incidentally, in more elongated rooms it's always better to put the speakers by the long wall so that you're at a shorter distance to them when listening. Now this is where your friend comes in. They stand with their back touching the wall where you are going to put the left speaker, and read out any text you like in a voice at normal volume. You listen. In tiny steps, your friend then moves towards you away from the wall, reading aloud at the same volume. At some point you will hear only your friend and not the echo reflecting from the wall behind them. Mark this spot with an strip of tape. Your friend then continues towards you in tiny steps until you suddenly hear an echo again – this time from the wall behind you. Mark this point with another strip of tape. Repeat the procedure for the position of the right speaker, and not just from front to back, but also from left to right and from right to left.

At the end of this exercise, you'll have four strips of tape marking the "neutral zone" for both speakers. This is the zone where you can place your speakers. The advantage of this method is that it takes into account the individual conditions of the room. If the neutral zones are different on the left and right, you and your friend haven't done anything wrong, because there might be a brick wall on the left and a large glass surface on the right.

Music helps you to optimally angle your speakers. Best of all are recordings with a solo instrument – a spinet or harpsichord, for example, is excellent. Listen to each speaker individually and then minimally change the angle, or even better: get your friend to do it. There will be a point where you will hear the individual tones very precisely. After you have done this, the speakers will be perfectly harmonised for the room they are playing in.

WHO OR WHAT IS IN-AKUSTIK?

We are a manufacturer of high-end cables with the "Made in Germany" label. Our mission is to help high-end audio enthusiasts avoid acoustic quality loss and get the most out of their equipment. We achieve this through our innovative cables with the patented AIR technology, because…

… the cable is the most underestimated part of the system!

Find out why: www.in-akustik.de/en/AIR-Technology