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## Portrait of the Audio Group Denmark

With the audio-crazy Danes in Aalborg

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If (as we hope of course) you are a frequent visitor to our online portal avguide.ch, you will certainly have noticed that Alesca Audio Fidelity, managed by Alessandro Calo, is new to the Swiss market and presents entirely new high-end audio brands in its portfolio for Switzerland. In this article, we would like to familiarize you with Audio Group Denmark, comprised of three Danish brands - Aavik, Børresen and Ansuz and bring all three of them closer to you with the following report. Upon the invitation of Ansuz Acoustics, our editor flew to Aalborg and had a behind-the-scenes glimpse of this interesting and up-and-coming high-end audio manufacturer.



**The audio-crazy Danes of Aalborg**

“The early bird catches the worm” or the plane to Aalborg or first to Amsterdam. The journey via Amsterdam to Aalborg in Denmark was completely uneventful and the first thing that caught my eye during the quiet landing approach was the flatness of Denmark. Also, the many waterways that dotted the land’s surface caught the attention of these Swiss eyes and soon I stood in the small local airport of Aalborg, the fourth largest Danish city.

The reception by Lars Kristian Kristensen, CEO and co-owner of Ansuz Acoustics, and the European Sales Manager, Morten Thyrrerstrup, was warm, relaxed, and almost familiar. The short drive from the airport took us across the impressive Fjord Bridge because most of Aalborg with its 210,000 inhabitants, including Ansuz headquarters, is located on the other side of the fjord. Lars informed me that my transfer would also serve as a city tour.

It would have been another 10 minute-drive, if Lars had not stopped in front of a restaurant. And there we were, all three of us, sitting in a typically traditional, time-honored Smorgasbord-style restaurant. Of course, I immediately got the full culinary Scandinavian program. For all non-Scandinavian connoisseurs: Smorgasbord is the Scandinavian sandwich version, in which cold or warm fish comes on the bread, which you can hardly see underneath the fish. So, this is not for fish despisers!

## **Company tour**

Then we drove straight to the company headquarters, which is located quite modestly and discreetly in an SME business park. Lars Kristensen parked his car directly in front of the entrance, and when he opened the main door, we were immediately standing in the central "management office", where the management including CFO Kent Sorensen works. So, there is no stuffy, formal carpeted floor, instead the typical Scandinavian minimalist approach.

The company currently employs 32 people, plus freelancers who manufacture electrical parts at home. Right next to the management office was the cable production. Lars proudly and energetically guided me through his company, showing me the production processes, including the cold chamber and the silver foundry. Then he introduced me to the employees, who came across very friendly and authentic. The two-story business premises were a bit labyrinthine and so I got lost a few times, but the friendly Danes always helpfully guided me along.

As it should be in a high-end audio company, there were various listening rooms, which, of course, differed massively in size and equipment. Ansuz Acoustics also has a photo studio. There, the in-house photo and video professional, Jonas, provides high-quality photo and video material. But the crowning glory was the pub - and not, as you might have thought, the big showroom. Yes, you heard me right, I was proudly shown the new pub integrated into the company building. Didn't I already mention that the Danes have a relaxed relationship with alcohol? As I then learned over a drink, the Danes have now discovered wine drinking and the ubiquitous beer seems to have lost pole position. Gin, however, is the big hit in the pub. Skål!



Speaking of Formula 1 and pole position, Lars Kristensen emphasized several times that they feel and act like a Formula 1 company. Only the best in all aspects is good enough and the development would have neither an end nor mental limits. The financial budget knows limits, of course, but everything - really, everything - is always questioned, and they are extremely open to trying out new things.

His sparring partner and co-founder, Michael Børresen, is the technical mastermind behind Ansuz Acoustics. The dream team complements each other perfectly! On the second day, an interview with Michael was planned, and a surprise guest was also announced. Now, even I was getting a little nervous, but as I was able to experience, with the informal Danish approach, any nervousness is completely superfluous. After the extensive company tour by the CEO himself, I was left in the hands of European Sales Manager, Morten Thyrrstrup, who took me to the first of four listening rooms, where there was a blind test to start things off.



## Ansuz products

Ansuz was the first of the three brands to enter the high-end stage 8 years ago. Michael Børresen and Lars Kristensen, both belonging to the management at the Danish loudspeaker manufacturer Raidho Acoustics and old friends, wanted to do their own thing and dropped out due to the sale of Raidho to Dantax and other reasons. So Ansuz products became their first baby.

Ansuz, (F), is the fourth rune of the old Norse runic alphabet and means something like "wisdom". The products perfectly reflect their name. Ansuz products form the basis and are the important links for Aavik electronics and Børresen speakers. Ansuz is truly uncompromising in terms of power supply, audio switches, cables, and the rest of the accessories, and operates a modular system that is self-contained, coherent, and logical.

All three brands guarantee that any additional customer investment in the more advanced versions of their individual product series is really clearly audible and immediately convincing. During the first demo, even with electronics products from a Swedish high-end manufacturer, I was able to convince myself from the start of this "Ansuz Electronics Law" that this is no empty marketing claptrap. I was accordingly enthusiastic. It is no voodoo. In clearly comprehensible steps one could climb the sound ladder step by step. It goes without saying that every higher step has its high-end surcharge.



**The power supply - the most important component according to Ansuz Acoustics**

Beginning with the first cable from the wall socket and on the subsequent power strip or power bar, it is obvious that, for Ansz Acoustics, this is where the foundation of a high-end system is laid. Filters, transformers, etc. are frowned upon, however, and all added electronic elements are connected in parallel to the signal. I was then absolutely fascinated with the statement that the wall cable in the four-meter version sounds better than the one with two meters. One-meter cables are generally only emergency solutions, and this is true for all cables, but especially important for power cables.

This sounds like voodoo at first, but several tests absolutely proved this law to me. Why this is exactly so, even the Ansz people can only guess. One possible explanation is that all signals travel in waves and the waves smooth out faster with longer cables - analogous to a longer swimming pool. This finding is contrary to another long-held theory that cables should be as short as possible.

Further, the crazy Danes from Aalborg put a lot of emphasis on connecting the main amplifier to the central ground power jack and the rest of the components around it. The grounding power jack serves as the electronic meeting point for all devices, so to speak.

Brand new, the Danes at Ansz Acoustics have launched the "Sortz". These are high-tech terminating plugs for open input and output jacks to audibly reduce interfering noise that enters any audio component through open jacks or through the ground connection. I was also able to convince myself of its effectiveness live. And again, the more "Sortz" = the more music!



## **The technological principles behind all kind of Ansuz Acoustics devices**

- Inductance as low as possible - allows the fastest possible signal processing
- Resonance dissipation with the aid of the Ansuz Darkz device feet and, if possible, minimum damping
- Capacitance as low as possible
- Grounding – very important, mechanical and electrical, preferably star-shaped
- Material - testing and optimizing are a must - every material has a "sound" - if necessary, in cooperation with Aarhus University.
- Aluminum: avoid as material, if possible, only where necessary - hysteresis alarm!
- Titanium: very good resonance behavior, difficult and expensive to process
- Copper: useful in amplifier construction selectively
- Silver: low inductance/capacitance, fundamentally superior to copper in terms of sound quality
- Chromium steel: in the upper midfield in terms of sound, good to process
- Zirconium: the superstar, unfortunately even more expensive than titanium / procurement is difficult

On the subject of zirconium, I have to share a true story from Lars. The purchase of zirconium, a heavy metal that looks like steel, did not go off without a hitch. Apparently, the Danish State Security Agency came along with a four-page questionnaire and wanted Ansuz Acoustics to document the exact purpose of the special, exotic metal.

The fact is that zirconium is used for cooling uranium rods in nuclear power plants due to its special properties. But the audio-crazy Danes merely wanted to optimize music playback with zirconium, so to speak, but they have probably put a frown on the faces of the security authorities. Well, the crazy Danes finally got the approval for the material - with the restriction that they only get 96-percent zirconium. Only operating nuclear power plant operators receive the 100 percent pure version of the precious metal.

If, while reading this article, you have so far thought that the Ansuz people might feel a little slighted over the adjective "crazy," let me assure you that CEO Lars Kristensen uses that word himself in what feels like every fifth sentence. So, self-reflection still works just fine. "Crazy" simply means that the crazy Danes are looking for solutions outside the mainstream, which is absolutely a positive trait in our context!

## **Aavik Electronics**

Aavik electronic devices have been on the market for six years. Aavik is probably the best-known brand of the Danish triumvirate. 'Aavik' is a local term for the Aalborg Fjord Bay. The Aavik technology is based on a D-Class module from Pascal that has been specially modified for Aavik. We have already tested the I-180 integrated amplifier and the D-180/S-180 DAC/streamer combo here at [avguide.ch](http://avguide.ch).

I've been using the Aavik I-180 as my reference amplifier since the review, but I'm aware that even more is possible with the I-280 or the top model, I-580, which was also proven to me live in another test session. In addition, Aavik recently presented the two new top-

combination preamplifiers C-280/580 and the power amplifiers P-280/580. Nevertheless, for me the Aavik I-180 is the "Best Buy", not to say almost too cheap.

All Aavik amplifiers, by the way, deliver 300 watts into 8 ohms or 600 watts into 4 ohms, making them ready for virtually any speaker challenge. True to the Rolls-Royce performance claim: "Enough at any time".



Aavik explicitly uses noise-canceling technology in its devices with the help of manually produced tesla coils and dither circuits to keep the noise floor as low as possible. The more expensive the devices, the more of these devices are built in and the lower the noise level becomes.

Switches and relays are not found in the Aavik amplifiers, light circuits - called LDR (Light Dependent Resistor) take over this task and are extremely quiet thanks to the switchless principle.



### **The Aavik technology in a nutshell:**

- Modified UMAC™ class D module from Pascal without the usual digital "hardships".
- Tesla coils and dither circuitry for maximum noise poverty
- Sound-optimized NBCM package material made from a composite, molded for this purpose with as few edges and corners as possible
- Use of LDR switches instead of the usual relays and mechanical switches.

Various sessions in Ansz Acoustics listening rooms clearly and reproducibly demonstrated the result of the above design philosophy. The deeper the noise floor, the greater the dynamics and the better the music peeled out. It's a trip into the depths of music recording, so to speak. Away from all the usual high-end clichés, the voice, the instruments - the essence of the music, so to speak - came more and more to the fore.

The feet began to bob, the ears fluttered with joy, and goosebumps spread! Lars Kristensen kept on lifting the sound with Ansz devices and I could feel his mischievous grin on the back of my neck. The Børresen speakers, powered by Aavik electronics and supplied with Ansz accessories, were able to show what they were capable of. Which brings us to the third brand.

## **Børresen Acoustics**

I was already honored to test the Børresen-02 speakers - pronounced "boersen" - and so it was all the more exciting to hear the different models in their home territory. The lower priced Z-line is topped by the more expensive and exclusive O-line. All speakers are 2- or 2.5-way designs. Basically, the Danes find that three- or even more-way constructions have too many disadvantages (phase, crossover, etc.).

There is a cryo version of each of the Z models, i.e., most parts are subjected to the cold process at up to -196 degrees, in-house! I was able to see the process for myself in the cold chamber. It was impressive to see how many parts of the speaker are subjected to the cold process. Only the diaphragms are not allowed into the cold bath. A later listening test with the Z03 Cryo then clearly showed the sonic superiority of the Cryo version.

The Cryo surcharge of about 20% can even be considered comparatively favorable in view of the effort and the sonic gain. The cryo-treated speaker resolves even better, seems a bit more lively, and is superior to the untreated model in all disciplines. It also confirmed for me the reason why Børresen Acoustics sells more cryo-treated than non-cryo-treated speakers.

For the Børresen O-series, the silver option adds a big precious metal shovel. The surcharge for the silver version is another good 60%. Silver fits perfectly into the philosophy: the lowest possible inductance and a low capacitance of all components of the Danish high-end forge. By the way, I was allowed to be very close to the casting process of silver rings for the chassis. Real craftsmanship, not for amateurs. The heat development during the melting and casting process is enormous and I was impressed accordingly!

### **The Børresen loudspeaker principles are as follows**

- Use as little iron as possible in the drivers (hysteresis, low impedance).
- Silver is superior to copper in terms of sound and lowers the inductance by another 8 percent. The top model 05 contains an incredible 6 kg of silver per speaker!
- The cold or cryo treatment improves the electrical conductivity and lowers the inductance even further.
- The ribbon tweeter with 0.01-gram mass is superior to any other conventional dome design in speed and precision.
- The titanium voice coil material is superior to copper or aluminum in every way.
- Ansuz Darkz feet additionally optimize the resonance behavior of the Børresen speakers significantly.

A final, crowning sound check conducted for me by the CEO Lars in the large listening room (I, for me personally, have named this room Valhalla), then demonstrated to me the power of the complete A-A-B system. The top speakers Børresen 05 in the top version (so silver & Cryo) showed impressively what is possible. Small Ansuz Darkz tuning resonators were additionally selectively placed on the Aavik amplifier cabinets and increased the sonic level of this top system in small, but still comprehensible steps into almost surreal or just incomprehensible sonic realism, which was already better than a live concert. And I was sitting in the front row - great cinema. Mange Tak to Lars and the whole Ansuz team!



We have interviewed the Ansuz mastermind, Michael Børresen and the mysterious Mr. X and will publish the interview also exclusively here on avguide.ch in the next few days.

Thank you again, Lars and Morten, for your insights, your passion, and hospitality!

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# Audio Group Denmark Inside

## Interview with Michael Børresen & Friends

Find out more about the three Danish audio brands - Aavik, Ansuz, and Børresen! Learn about why the audio crazy team around Michael Børresen does everything a bit differently and what he had to do with bicycles. Have fun reading!

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Michael Børresen, the Mastermind behind the Danish products Ansuz, Aavik, and of course Børresen.

During our visit to the Danish high-end producer, Audio Group Denmark, we had the opportunity to interview co-founder and technical mastermind, Michael Børresen. The fact that another Danish audio icon, namely the founder of Gryphon Audio, Flemming Rasmussen, was also present at the interview, surprised our interviewer and so the two-way conversation turned into a three-way conversation.

Flemming Rasmussen handed his company over into other hands three years ago and found a new challenge at Audio Group Denmark after a time out. Michael and Flemming share a passion for fly fishing, by the way, and so somehow during the long fishing days the topic of high-end audio came up – naturally, after all. At Audio Group Denmark, Flemming is free to bring his ideas to the table and work with Michael to reach new heights. Towards the end of the interview, CEO Lars Kristensen also joined us, and it even became quite philosophical in between!



The modest headquarters in the outskirts of Aalborg.

**avguide.ch** In the 1990s, at the beginning of your professional career, you were involved in the construction of the well-known triathlon bike brand Principia! This is not known to everyone and rather unusual. How did you go from bikes to speakers?

**Michael Børresen:** I started building speakers when I was still in secondary school. The reason was that I always liked music and was interested in technology. Then a fire happened in a well-known Danish chassis company. Bad luck for the company, good luck for my father, who had a carpentry shop. He and his colleague bought the still-working chassis from the insurance company at a low price. So, I started to tinker with the bought-up stock and learned to operate the machines in my father's workshop and so it happened that I had a new loudspeaker project almost every week. In my years ahead at the University of Aarhus I had never stopped building loudspeakers - even during the triathlon history.

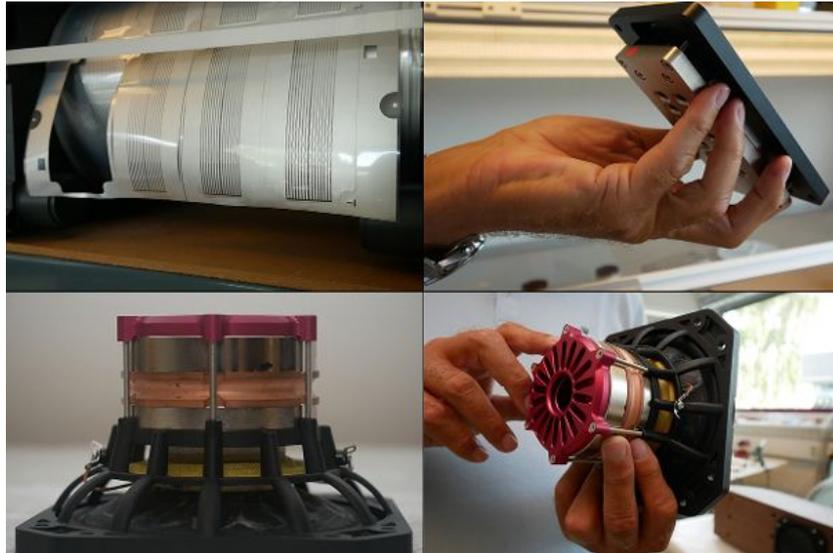
At Aarhus University I started experiments with making flat-panel radiators - Apogee were my models - and I also tried my hand at air-bearing turntables. The university in Aarhus, with all its technical possibilities, was an ideal environment for my studies. After university, I started working in a real job in the industry but continued to build loudspeakers. My challenge was to make a commercially producible full-range ribbon loudspeaker that did not have design disadvantages (fire dangerous, voltage loss of the foils, etc.). The 90's brought many technical advances in materials and more exotic metals were suddenly available. As a result of my efforts, the ribbon tweeter was created in 1998, which I initially made myself as homework and learned a lot in the process. By the way, it worked really well from the beginning. In 2001, I founded the company, Raidho, together with Lars, and we installed this tweeter in all our loudspeakers. The Raidho company was running successfully until the US financial crisis happened in 2008. An investor, experienced financial problems and the US market collapsed completely. The bank wanted collateral and so the company Dantax came into play. We remained the directors for a short time, but when Dantax wanted to take over the operational management, we dropped out. During our Raidho time, we had already been working on Ansuz and Aavik products, which we sort of took with us. It took a few more years until we had the Børresen loudspeakers ready for the market, because we wanted to make everything from scratch, even the ribbon tweeter.



[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

**Avguide.ch:** What did you do differently than with the previous brand?

**Michael Børresen:** In the chassis, for example, we removed all the iron, which no one had done before. Among other things, the voice coil is a flux generator and iron give the voice coil a higher inductance, which again gives more resonance and resistance. Also, we use or experiment with more uncommon metals and materials than virtually all other manufacturers do. So, as you can see, we have a totally different approach to all sound engineering issues!



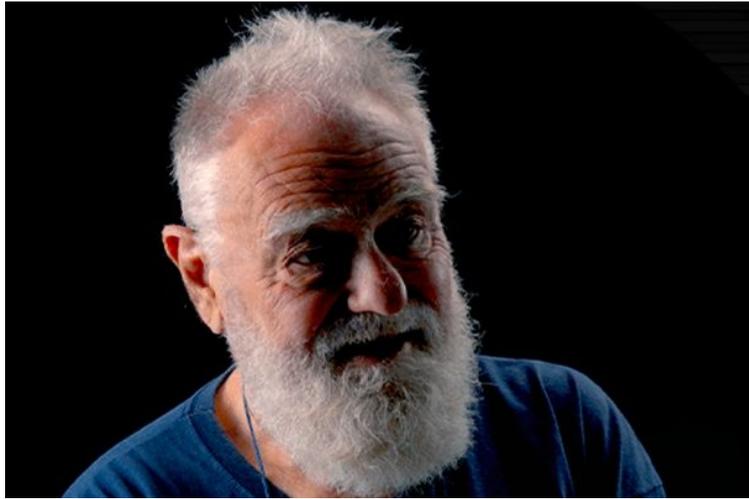
Below the ironless midrange/tweeter, above left the ribbon without chassis, above right the finished ribbon tweeter.

**Avguide.ch:** You have three brands under one roof. Critics might argue that if one brand doesn't perform, it's easier to get rid of it. What do you say to this?

**Michael Børresen:** I can say this: If we were to sell all three brands under one brand, "Audio Group Denmark", it would dilute our products. Ansuz is our foundation, in the technical and development context. Aavik and Børresen are descendants of Ansuz, so to speak. Lars and I have both worked for Nordost Kabel. Lars' reputation is based on his cable know-how, my reputation comes from building loudspeakers, and Flemming's reputation comes from his amplifiers. Each of our three brands has its own godfather, so to speak! We don't see ourselves as one of those companies that appears quickly and then disappears again just as quickly. We clearly see ourselves as a company that thinks and operates for the long term. In addition, we have a very robust financial structure and do not want to let any individual brand go.

We are also attractive to our dealers because we give them a choice. They can start with one brand and later add one or two more brands. In many cases, the dealer automatically becomes curious about the other brands and, if satisfied, expands the assortment, and eventually carries our entire range. The 3-brand strategy is technically more difficult and also more complex and expensive to operate, and we must have our focus permanently on all three brands in tandem.

Another reason for our three-brand strategy is that in our high-end business, there are three, possibly four, business areas anyway, namely cables and accessories, electronics, loudspeakers, and possibly vinyl. So, a high-end store must take care of these three business areas anyway, but with vinyl it has to take care of a maximum of four. In addition, many one-brand manufacturers usually have weaker areas, which they almost inevitably neglect. All this being said, you can understand that for us, a three-brand strategy simply makes the most sense!



The founder of Gryphon Audio, Flemming Rasmussen, is now joining the Denmark Audio Group.

## New ways - new technologies

**Avguide.ch:** Your three brands are not only three "marketing brands", but you also apply many of the technologies in all three product categories.

**Michael Børresen:** I brought the noise reduction technology with me from my former engineering job in the high-tech industry, working for satellite and maritime communications. These technologies are used by the technical leaders in communications and so I learned about Tesla coils and dithering circuits. I brought them to the current company, and we have refined and developed them.

**Avguide.ch:** In my research for the Aavik reviews, I was already researching these technologies and realized that no one else was using these signal-to-noise technologies in the audio industry.

**Michael Børresen:** We all know that all electronic components create "signal dirt." If you got a call in your car via mobile 15 years ago, you heard the call signal "tik, tik, tik" before your mobile device even started ringing. Those signals are still here, but today, they are overlaid with an electronic blanket or "white noise". We are bombarded by these electronic signals today: Wi-Fi, LED lights, mobile phone signals, household appliances, etc. All of these are generating electrical signal dirt that "pollutes" the high-end system. The question is what we do with this signal dirt and where do these signals go in the first place? I believe that our systems do a good job of protecting the signal itself, but the grounding is usually very poor and if we could ground all signals, the entire sound quality would be much better. In addition, we have streamers and routers that are connected to the Internet, which themselves are not grounded at all, and the signal itself circulates around somewhere. This means that all the cables in a system become big antennas that become signal receivers for this signal dirt and feed it back into the system. Every time we can block that signal dirt, we get better clarity, which is very easy to recognize.

**Flemming Rasmussen:** Dither technology is based on the human brain's ability to extrapolate whole, complete pieces of information from pieces of information. It's very good at forgiving, at thinking nicely, so to speak. With a few keywords, the human brain generates whole sentences and stories. I did an experiment with a text, left out about 30% of all letters and you could still read the text. A good example from our industry are all the data-reduced formats such as MP3, which enables our brain to fill in the missing information on its own! Or you read a book on the train and despite maybe a bumpy ride, you can read it without loss of information. The price will be that you will get a

headache because the brain must add the missing information, which is exhausting. The same is true when listening to music, as soon as our brain gets fragmented information, it must add it, so to speak.



Host Morten Thyrestруп, Sales Manager Europe.

**Michael Børresen:** The subconscious process of the brain is constantly constructing complete information which requires cognitive effort from the brain which is tiring. So, if a speaker generates a false signal, for example, that becomes exhausting for the brain.

**Flemming Rasmussen:** If you have a product that has a shortcoming, that is easier for our brain to accept than if the product generates a fault.

**avguide.ch:** Humans generally look for patterns they know, no matter where!

**Michael Børresen:** That is correct. For this reason, we have chosen, for example, NBCM (Natural Base Composite Material) as our cabinet material for our electronics instead of aluminum, because humans know this natural NBCM pattern and therefore, they find it pleasant. Hardly any musical instrument is made of aluminum. Why? Aluminum has only one resonance tone; you hear it no matter at what frequency. Aluminum always sounds like aluminum! Electronics is a big microphone and transmits all resonances of the cabinet, everywhere. As soon as you replace the "unnatural" material with a more "natural" material, it sounds subjectively more transparent, because the irritation of the resonating, unnatural material is gone. We generally consider aluminum to be an unsuitable material for high-end devices and speakers anyway. Honestly, it must be said that aluminum is very easy to manufacture, and it looks visually very noble, very quickly. Aluminum has one big advantage and that is thermal heat dissipation. Even we can't do without it completely, but we avoid aluminum as much as possible. If we use it, it must also always be attached to a naturally resonating material.

**avguide.ch:** In the Aavik I-180 amplifier that I saw yesterday, the internal parts of the chassis are made of aluminum.

**Michael Børresen:** That's right, in the I-180 and I-280 the inner frame is aluminum, but in the top-of-the-line I-580 we use copper, which resonates better. That's why the I-580 sounds even better than the I-280, and also because of the increased use of noise-cancelling devices.



Here clearly visible, the inner copper chassis, and around it, the composite housing. Inside, among other things, the dither circuits and the Tesla coils of the top model Aavik I-580.

**avguide.ch:** Yesterday, I was surprised at the Darkz Resonator sound, comparing by the different sound signatures of the various metals, including stainless steel. This material is used by various manufacturers as a chassis material and sounded pretty good to my ears.

**Michael Børresen:** Yes, stainless steel has a relatively good sound, but zirconium sounds even better. However, it is even more expensive - much more expensive - laughs! In addition, we can further influence the sound with different coatings on the resonators. This is the same reason why a Stradivarius violin sounds better than all the others! He certainly used a special wood, good dimensions, special varnishes, applied in different layers, and not the same amount of varnishes everywhere, because he knew more how it should resonate and, thus, sound.

We have an Italian friend here in Aalborg who was involved in a serious car accident, and he was in a coma for a long time. Since he woke up, he has gained a new ability: He can "see" sound waves moving in space in his mind's eye. He has now equipped our listening rooms with resonators and absorbers based on his perceptions. He claps his hands and listens to where the sound waves bounce off the walls. He listens to the acoustic peaks and then balances them out with resonators or absorbers, creating the acoustically perfect listening room. We know it works because when our employees need a quiet, comfortable environment, they retreat to one of our listening rooms whenever possible, so they have an acoustically comfortable environment.



One of the sound-optimized demo rooms at Anszu Acoustics. I named this one "Valhalla" for myself, sorry for that Lars ...

## High-End-Audio in Denmark

**avguide.ch:** Why are there so many high-end audio companies in Denmark?

**Flemming Rasmussen:** One of the reasons is probably the large and well-known loudspeaker industry, which is disproportionate in relation to the size of the country. Denmark was already a leader in furniture manufacturing in the 50s to 70s until other manufacturers like Ikea became dominant and Danish furniture makers had to look for alternatives. Loudspeaker cabinets were thus an obvious alternative and so they started working for many high-end loudspeaker manufacturers, including foreign companies like Sonus Faber, B&W, and others. They had the know-how, the machines.

**Michael Børresen:** Denmark has concentrated a huge know-how capital with Scan-Speak, SEAS, and Dynaudio. For example, the Peerless and Vifa companies sprang from the Scan-Speak manufacturer. Then began the great sell-off of Danish companies to the Far East, especially to China. Even Dynaudio is now owned by Chinese investors. Nevertheless, High End Audio is still in the Danish DNA! We are a part of it, including Gryphon Audio, Peak Consult, and some others.

Simplified, you could say that it started with the furniture industry, leading to loudspeaker cabinets, which in turn, stimulated the manufacturing of drivers in Denmark. This development then stimulated the production of audio electronics, which eventually resulted in the production of cables and accessories.

**Michael Børresen:** By the way, you simply cannot talk about Denmark's audio industry without mentioning Bang & Olufsen. B&O is still the largest manufacturer of high-end loudspeakers in the world, selling DKK 1 billion / CHF worth of loudspeakers every year, or about 125 million.

B&O has made some interesting and very important technical advancements. They invented the loudspeaker frequency crossover, which we use today – in a modified version, of course. They also designed the 3-way crossover that Flemming used in his Gryphon speakers. B&O has a huge, and for our industry, important technical heritage and absolutely deserves our respect. That they are no longer recognized as such in the high-end today, due to their strategy, is another story. Regardless, B&O generates as much revenue as all "high-end companies" combined and virtually all wealthy people know B&O. But the mass of people doesn't even know our "high-end" brands.

**avguide.ch:** What do you see as the trends in our high-end business?

**Michael Børresen:** All the format wars are over. Streaming from the digital global jukeboxes (Qobuz, Tidal, and others) has taken hold. Analog remains as a trend. The boundaries between digital and analog amplifier technologies are visibly blurring. We see ourselves as a trendsetter here. We are planning more interesting designs and want to become even more of a trendsetter.

**avguide.ch:** How did you come to distribute your products with Alesca Audio in Switzerland?

**Michael Børresen:** Alesca Audio came to us. They wanted to buy Ansuz audio switches and that's how the whole story started.



These Ansuz audio switches are also used in the Alesca showroom.

**avguide.ch:** How do you see the DACH market?

**Michael Børresen:** We have learned to approach each market respectfully. We have to listen very carefully, know and respect the needs and personal sensitivities. We also know that certain markets are new to us and therefore take time, and we know that the purchasing power in Switzerland is high and therefore ideal for our high-end products. We also hope that Alesca Audio will get the attention for our products with the help of avguide.ch.

**avguide.ch:** What is the strongest market of Audio Group Denmark?

**Michael Børresen:** During the recent crisis, the European market has generally grown strongly, Asia has grown only slightly, while the US market is currently stagnant for us. We will have to be more involved in the US market to make it grow. To be successful, we must go to the distributors and dealers, but the distributors and dealers also must be active as well - it's a give and take.

**Flemming Rasmussen:** The Swiss market does have a lot of buying power, but I think there's a fundamental misunderstanding about buying power. It's not really about purchasing power at all, but the fact is that most people with purchasing power practically only know B&O, maybe Bose, and then nothing else.

**Lars Kristensen:** Correct, in addition, there is a huge and big shadow competition - namely we compete not only within the industry, but we also compete with the car industry, vacation travel, jewelry, and other luxury goods.



Lars Kristensen, the co-owner and CEO, in the great sounding demo room "Valhalla".

**Flemming Rasmussen:** Our industry has been trying to get into this luxury market for a long time, but just buying expensive ads in these publications is unfortunately not enough. This process of

*considering high-end merchandise* as an option again in these circles, and then actually buying it, takes staying power and huge budgets! Only a few have the necessary capital to tackle this and thus secure a ticket into the luxury market.

**Lars Kristensen:** That's where I see B&O's strength. They know that when a potential customer comes into the store, they don't ask how much money they want to spend. They ask how big the screen should be, two or multi-channel, how many kids, every kid's room needs a screen, etc. etc. It's a brilliantly successful concept that even Bose has partially adapted.

But back to the shadow competition. When I see how, in Berlin in the Ferrari store, this luxury car is presented, and when I then see how certain high-end retailers present expensive goods in inappropriate, unrepresentative surroundings, then we still have a lot of room for improvement!

**Avguide.ch:** Alesca Audio Fidelity certainly goes different ways here!



Aavik electronics, Ansuz accessories and cables connected to Børresen speakers in the Alesca Audio Fidelity showroom in Fehrltorf.

**Michael Børresen:** Yes, we see it clearly and hope that he will be successful! It is indeed a chance - let's keep our fingers crossed for him.

**avguide.ch:** What is your opinion about active speakers?

**Michael Børresen:** There is one place where active speakers have their technical strength, and that is in the bass! If you can get around the inductance/resistance in the crossover in an active speaker, you can achieve better controlled bass. But when it goes to the tweeter and midrange, the phase shift happens due to the active crossover with correction loops and that's where we think the homogeneity is missing.

**avguide.ch:** Will we never see tubes in your electronics?

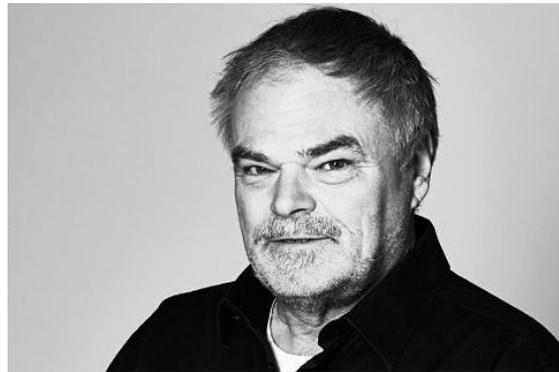
**Michael Børresen:** Not per se! Tubes in a preamp or phono stage are great amplifier parts. They are really very linear, and a triode is the most linear amplifier element ever, but not without a price. Tubes have strong microphonics, plus many metals resonate with different sound patterns, plus glass. So, tubes would be very good as amplifier elements, but pretty bad in terms of resonances and a low noise floor.

**avguide.ch:** Are vinyl source devices - i.e., turntables an issue? I saw a Swiss turntable (Thales) in one of the demo rooms.

**Michael Børresen:** Yes, vinyl is a very serious topic, and we already have Aavik phono preamplifiers in our range. By the way, Micha Huber (the inventor of the Thales tonearm) is a friend of ours, and we are thinking about co-producing a cartridge. We know quite a bit about turntables, so they are definitely one of our upcoming topics. It's also a lot about resonances, and turntables have the most resonances ever.

We may say that we are very creative but our challenge in each case is that the final products must also be affordable! With our ideas, demands, and the realization, the final price usually grows as well and therefore we want to offer more affordable products for beginners in the future.

Next year will be another exciting year and we will be able to present, among other things, the first results of our collaboration with Flemming at the upcoming High End in Munich.



Frits Sorensen, Sales Manager with heart and soul and great know-how.

**avguide.ch:** How do you want to make High End music playback attractive to the younger audience?

**Michael Børresen:** We think that happens partly automatically. As a single person, you listen to music through your headphones, and as soon as a partner and/or children come along, then you want to enjoy music together, which you can't do through headphones.

**Flemming Rasmussen:** Alone, once people of the "Earbuds" generation get a better pair of headphones, they realize how much better the music sounds and (hopefully) evolve towards good quality music playback.



Emil, Lars Kristensen's son, is already actively involved and knows how to get the younger generation excited about high-end audio.

**avguide.ch:** Michael, last question: What is it like to produce and sell speakers with your own name?

**Michael Børresen:** Well, it's very great, of course, but it's also a responsibility our customers, namely, to offer them the really best, technically feasible!

**Michael, Lars, Flemming** – Thank you very much for this exciting interview!

Online link:

<https://www.avguide.ch/magazin/interview-mit-michael-Børresen-and-friends-audio-group-denmark-inside>

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