

HISTORY OF MARANTZ

Few names in the world of high fidelity audio may claim such an illustrious history as Marantz. In 2003, the company celebrated its 50th anniversary. To understand how the brand has maintained such a unique position in the marketplace – loved by knowledgeable audiophiles and recognized for quality by the man on the street – it is necessary to trace the company's roots back to the dawn of the recorded music industry as we know it today.

THERE IS SOMETHING HAPPENING IN THE BASEMENT

The story picks up in 1948 when Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) introduced the first mono long-playing (LP) records and sparked the public's interest in quality music reproduction. One such music lover was freelance graphic artist and amateur musician Saul Bernard Marantz, a native of New York born in 1911. Unhappy with equipment available at the time, Saul spent many hours in his basement constructing amplifiers to play his cherished collection of LP records.

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In the early days, LP records suffered from inconsistent recording characteristics, a source of concern for Saul, so in 1952 he created what was for the time, a revolutionary pre-amplifier. It was equipped with every equalizer curve necessary to handle the erratic recording characteristics and it immediately struck a chord with his friends. He called it the 'Audio Console', and his wife convinced him to make and sell 100 sets, but within a year the order book backlog had grown to over 400 units!

THE START OF A PRESTIGIOUS LINE

Just as Saul B. Marantz loved LP records, music enthusiasts everywhere were about to start a love affair with his products that would span half a century and is still going strong today. He officially founded the Marantz Company in 1953 and launched the Model 1 Mono Preamplifier (a commercial extension of his Audio Console) a year later. This amplifier contained a very sophisticated phono equalizer that easily met the RIAA

equalizer standards introduced the same year. It also had seven inputs, including one for TV audio thus pre-empting home cinema by about 40 years!

Retailing at \$168 USD, a significant amount at the time, the Model 1 was praised for its amazing music sounds with dynamics that left enthusiasts and critics stunned. With features like a tape monitor switch, a rotary volume potentiometer and a separated power supply, it laid the foundations for Marantz's tradition of quality and innovation above all else.

Today, collectors are prepared to pay substantially more than the original asking price for a good condition Model 1, and its performance is still considered a landmark in music pre-amplification.

Before long, the range started to grow and the Model 2 Power Amplifier was launched in 1956. This masterpiece was years ahead of its contemporary competition, and featured two driving modes. Via a simple selector, it could be switched to pentode mode for 40 watts output power, or to triode operation for 25

output power, or to mode operation for 25 watts. The Model 2 actually inspired one critic to describe its sound as ‘gorgeous’, a word rarely applied to HiFi in the fifties!

In 1957, the Model 3 Mono Two-way Channel Divider and Model 4 Power Supply were added, and a year later saw the launch of the Model 5, a less powerful but more accessible version of the rather expensive Model 2. This year also saw the birth of stereo records, and Marantz launched the Model 6 stereo adapter for use with two Model 1 preamplifiers. More significantly, however, the world also became acquainted with what many consider the most famous Marantz creation of all: the Model 7c Stereo Preamplifier.

SUPERB AUDIO, FANTASTIC AESTHETICS

A direct descendent of the Model 1, the Model 7c went on to become one of the biggest selling high-end audio units of all time (130,000 pieces in all its variations). With mode and balance controls and

independent tone controls for each channel, its fantastic success is undoubtedly linked to superb music quality. But fans of the Model 7 also claim – with some justification – that it also set new standards in aesthetic appeal with its balanced design front panel and subtle light below the Marantz logo. The Model 7 range eventually evolved 10 years later into the 7T, the first ever solid-state preamplifier from Marantz.

At the start of the sixties, Marantz launched its first stereo power amplifier, the 30 watt per channel Model 8. Similar in design to the legendary Models 2 and 5, it had exposed valves and delivered exceptional sound quality. The 1963 Model 9 is a 70-watt mono power amplifier that many connoisseurs claim has no rivals. 1963 was clearly a great year for Marantz as another icon in HiFi history saw the light of day: the Model 10 valve FM tuner featuring a built-in oscilloscope to verify the quality, power and balance of the received signal.

THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN'

Just as the sixties experienced a revolution in popular music, things also began to change at Marantz. The high development costs of the Model 10 led to financial difficulties that eventually forced Saul Marantz to sell his company in 1964 to Superscope Inc. A few years later he resigned. What has become known as the 'Old Marantz' period drew to a close, and with it, the golden years of the valve amplifier. Saul Bernard Marantz passed away in 1997 aged 86, a sad event for audiophiles all over the world.

After acquiring the company, Superscope's President Joseph Tushinsky aimed to expand the business and make Marantz a more general audio manufacturer. He looked to Japanese manufacturers to help him move into the mid-segment, and a trial production run with the Standard Radio Corporation of Japan led to the Model 25 modular stereo in 1966, joined later by lower cost models 22 and 28. Around this time, design and production (except for A-line articles) was

switched from the US to Japan, and Superscope took a 50% participation in Standard Radio Corp. This corporation changed its name to Marantz Japan Inc. in 1975.

Right up until the mid seventies, Marantz continued to produce excellent high-end and mid-range HiFi. But towards the end of the decade, the company found itself struggling in an increasingly competitive marketplace and in 1980, Superscope sold the rights to the Marantz brand, the dealership and all overseas assets (except USA and Canada) to Royal Philips Electronics, the Dutch consumer electronics giant. Confusingly, the Superscope 'Marantz' brand continued to market its own low-cost products in the US and Canada right up until 1992 when Philips also acquired the rights and dealership for North America.

ENTERING THE DIGITAL DOMAIN

The Philips Marantz period heralded a third phase in the company's history, and this one is characterized by the transition from pure

is characterized by the transition from pure analog to digital audio. The first of many class-leading Marantz CD players, the CD-63, appeared on the market in 1982. Philips remained at the helm for 19 years, giving Marantz unique access to pioneering digital audio developments from its parent company. Notable landmarks in the digital domain include the DPM-7 digital processing amplifier in 1985, CDR-1 CD recorder in 1991 and the SA-1 Super Audio CD player in 1999.

If products from the late seventies somewhat diluted the Marantz brand image, the decades that followed restored the company to its former prestigious position in high-end audio separates. Milestones include products such as the PM-6a pre-main amplifier launched in 1981, the PM-16 with current feedback amplifier and the award-winning SC-5 and SM-5 separates of 1994. Innovation was back, and developments like HDAM amplifier module reinforced the image of Marantz. 1995 even saw a revival of valve amplifiers with the project T-1 and replicas of

the original Models 7 and 9.

MARANTZ TODAY

The Philips period ended in 2001 when Marantz Japan Inc. acquired the brand and all overseas sales subsidiaries. Today, Marantz falls under D&M Holdings, a joint holding company set up in 2002 to integrate Marantz and Hi-Fi manufacturer Denon in a strategic union that will strengthen both companies in the current tough economic climate. The company employs more than 1600 people in over fifty countries. It carefully selects its dealers to ensure that the quality of the service they provide matches the quality of the products Marantz produces. A dealer must satisfy strict requirements regarding demonstration facilities and store layout before Marantz products can be sold.

Marantz offers three product ranges. The 'Range Series' is known for offering the most flexible system building options imaginable for every lifestyle. The 'Style Series', with its elegant aesthetic design in the form of the

Eclipse and Compact Eclipse, is aimed at a discerning public who believe in the power of simplicity. And at the very high-end, the 'Premium Series' guarantees HiFi purists the ultimate listening experience. Also sub-categories were developed over the years such as The 'Reference' models, faithfully reproduce pure musical emotion, while the 'Original Special Edition' (SE and later OSE) versions take the performance to a higher plane by specially selecting components and modifying the design for even better sound quality. Finally, the 'Ken Ishiwata Signature' models offer unparalleled quality. Ken Ishiwata, who created SE concept, is a gifted audio designer who believes sound reproduction should touch the listener in a way no other sensation can. His personal signature on a Marantz product is the sign of no-compromise high fidelity.

THE FUTURE

Marantz stepped into the new adventure with D&M Holding Inc. in 2002. This new holding company will be well positioned to benefit

from a rapidly growing AV market as well as an industry wide digital evolution. Both Marantz and DENON are leading branded manufacturers of premium home theatre and AV products. While maintaining the established Marantz and DENON brands both companies will benefit from the economies of scale regarding purchasing power and Research and Development leading to a more competitive positioning in the market.