



UNIT with Life

Revox's M100 music system is more than just an elegant eye-catcher. There is plenty of sound inside – particularly when it is combined with the Revox G Prestige. And new functions can quickly be snapped onto the outside as required.



by Christine Tantschinez

If a brochure raves on about a 'system for life', you should always be careful; someone might be trying to sell you an obscure real estate fund. Yet, if a company such as Revox is the author of such words, the reader may breathe easy. There has rarely been another enterprise in the history of hi-fi that was more meticulously tweaking the longevity and value of their products. The devices they produce always give you the impression you could take them with you on a trip to outer space. And most probably no-one would be surprised if, after decades in zero gravity, not a single component of the Revox product had come loose.

The music system praised as the 'system for life' in their new company brochure looks like a piece of geometrical art – and it turns out to be a supreme example of Revox's virtues: although it looks rather small and delicate, the M100 weighs a hefty 13 kilograms. The outer

aluminium shell covers a steel casing that is impressive in itself. Of course it was manufactured in the company's own production hall in the Black Forest – or to be more specific, in Villingen – with their own machines, which were, most probably, designed by their own tool-makers.

The location in the Black Forest is a luxury that Revox intentionally allow themselves. Revox AG, the parent company, have their headquarters in Regensdorf in Switzerland, while Revox GmbH are based in Villingen. The Black Forest and Switzerland complement one another brilliantly – the distance between the locations is only a stone's throw away, and both regions are famous for their almost solitary meticulousness in technical matters.

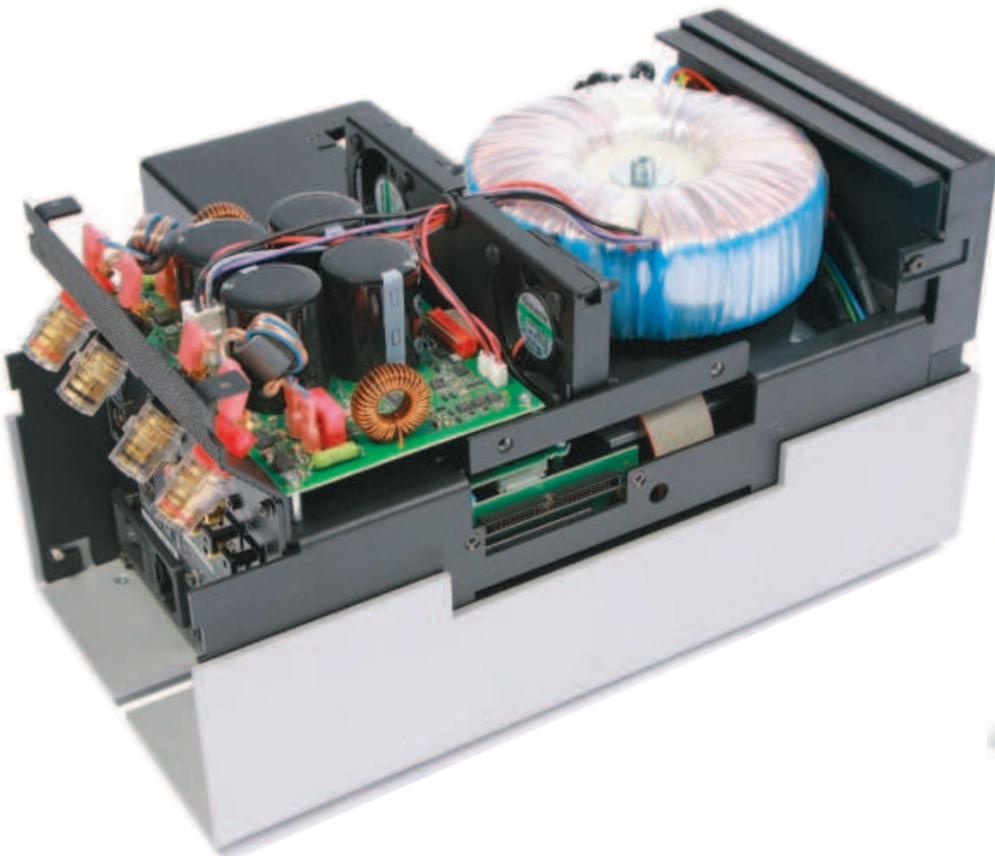
Here, a product is not merely developed – it matures as a good cheese does, in a process that is almost decadently long in the world of consumer electronics. People preferring quick

mainstream solutions should look elsewhere.

Thus, the M100 also took a long time to mature and the result is amazing even at first glance. The elegant cube fits perfectly into every uptown living space and has an almost unbeatable WAF – meaning 'Wife Acceptance Factor'. The black glass front certainly knows how to impress: initially, the curious beholder is presented with nothing but their own mirror image, even at a closer look. Mysteriously, there seem to be no controls at all. Only on closer inspection does the M100 reveal its user interface – in a kind of mystic glow. The keys and display sit on the four millimetre glass pane, perfectly camouflaged until a proximity sensor makes the front light up elegantly in a greeting gesture. It reminds you of Star Trek or Space Odyssey: a whiff of science fiction in your own living room.

Around the monochrome display there are touch-sensitive keys, the function

Below: This wouldn't be a true Revox system if it didn't support the in-house M-Link communications bus. Communication with existing (or future) Revox devices is guaranteed. Left: Opening the casing reveals a no less beautiful interior with a bulky toroidal transformer and symmetric signal routing. The PWM switching power amplifiers are located on a separate board in the basement.



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Markus Halbig, sales manager Revox

„The focus is definitely on two-channel playback. This should be as perfect as possible.“

of which changes according to the source in each case. A recession within the glass panel, which is also touch-sensitive, works as a volume control and offers a uniquely gentle way of controlling the level with one finger-tip. Only the display cannot be controlled by the tip of the finger. These latest touch screen gadgets were rather low on the agenda during the long development time. Yet, anybody preferring navigation by finger can gladly use their own iPhone or iPad for doing so instead of the included remote-control. All you need is the Revox App

(which is free of charge) from the iTunes Store, and the control interface Re:connect M202. Equipped in this way, you only need the internal communications bus M-Link and an ethernet cable to control the M100 via network and thus also via Apple Player. In addition, the system can process commands from KNX automated home control systems – after all, Revox has been cooperating with two of the leading companies in this field, Gira und Feller, since 2004.

Apart from the installed sources – tuner, CD and DVD – there are two additional analogue and four digital audio inputs available. Blu-ray Disc playback was deliberately omitted. 'Firstly, a Blu-ray drive would have taken up too much space within the unit', explains Markus Halbig, sales manager of Revox GmbH, 'and secondly, our focus is clearly on perfect audio playback.' Nevertheless, analogue video outputs and an HDMI interface found their place on the back panel of the M100. The developers didn't want to let the excellent DVD capabilities of the combination drive go to waste. And it was a success: the PAL images are flawlessly interpolated to HD format.

Of course, there are many tools for achieving the aim of a perfect two-channel playback. The signal processor, for instance, knows the frequency responses of all the common Revox speakers. If you're lucky and have a lovely pair of G Prestige available – as I do – you'll quickly find the suitable equalization graph in the amp menu of the >



The Tower of Revox functions in all directions of the compass. A sophisticated support structure allows up to four modules to be connected. With colour and material, anything is possible. An online configurator, to be found at www.revox.de, simplifies the selection. Wood decor (above) or even gold leaf embellishment are possible options.

M100. The boundary areas are also taken into consideration. Three positioning variants – free, corner and wall – can be preset to adapt the bass activities of the speakers. It is also possible to completely relieve the main speakers of burdensome bass work. Then, any signal below 100 kHz will then be directed straight towards the externally connected woofer.

Despite its very slim silhouette, the Prestige G can single-handedly supply

the required bass drive with its four 4" bass speakers. The set-up is complemented by one 4" midrange speaker and a textile tweeter of 30 millimetres.

Controlled by DSP, the interaction between the speakers and the M100 works splendidly. I'm leaning back while the small device plays up magnificently. Totally relaxed, with a very fine resolution that never sounds artificial or cold. The concise voice of Bill Callahan creaks superbly, the disco bass drum of

New York DJ icons Hercules And Love Affair booms bone dry, the web of acoustic guitars spun by Sun Kil Moon can grow into a space that is not gigantic but stable. And how does it sound without the help of DSP? The comparison is a bit unfair, as initially the active equalisation raises the level by some decibels. Yet, if you adjust the volume difference, the Prestige G sounds audibly fine and delicate; not entirely as detailed and stable within the room, but due to this

Left: With genuine glass and a painted MDF casing, the column speaker Prestige G is a real eyecatcher. Below: the interior of the multimedia module with the big BridgeCo chip that has already proven its value in the network module of the Revox M51.

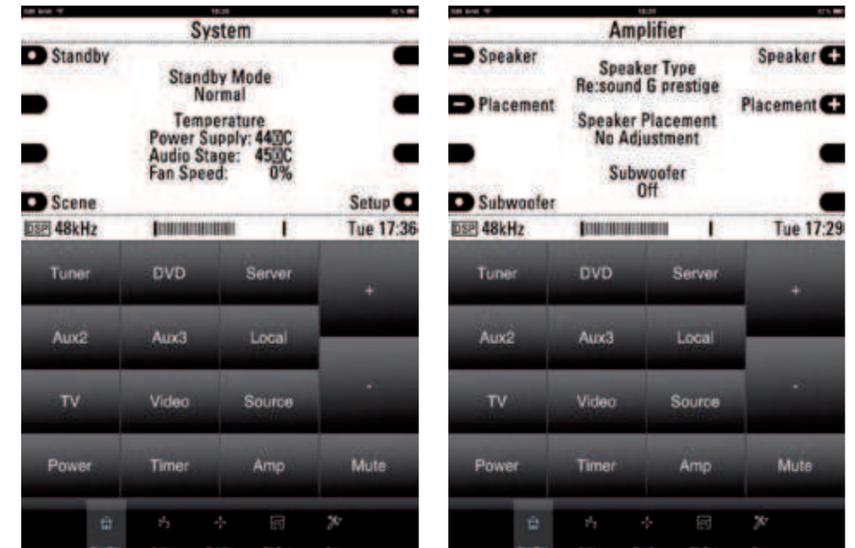


a little softer in the S sounds. Strings display a bit more natural warmth, voices lose a touch of their supremacy. In the end it remains a matter of taste, whether you use DSP or not; all in all, the system displays such a freshness and light-heartedness with every kind of music that it is a sheer pleasure to listen to. It is rarely the case that you experience such a constantly high level from string quartets to high-quality electronic compositions.

To provide such consistency, the amplifying electronics of the M100 have to be robust. The responsible person for Revox's self-developed switching amplifiers is Jürgen Lindemann – exactly the same Lindemann who, together with his brother Norbert, has been famous for their superb high-end electronics. Obviously he does things in style in Class D power amplifiers as well: The measurement diagrams show the amp part to be a little power pack, handling even bitchy speakers and low impedances. In addition, adaptive soft clipping dependably avoids heart-stopping overdrive situations.

So, is this the system for life? For the time being it is, in any case. Yet, what if, in one or two or even ten years, you want something more after all? More functions; more sources; provide for more rooms? The Revox developers' answer to these questions is as simple as it is ingenious: the system can grow with its tasks! Literally. On special support structures, up to four modules with new functionalities can be added – just as easy as docking your iPod for loading.

The selection includes special modules for connecting with existing Revox multi-room systems and for communicating with devices such as the Audio Server M37. For me as a self-confessed networker, the multimedia module is definitely the most exciting item. Apart from an USB interface for external memory, ethernet connection and a plug for the WLAN aerial, there is indeed the obligatory iPod docking option. It is not digital in fact, but instead, uses a special serial cable. The Apple player can easily be controlled from the M100, and there is a nice side-effect too: an up-to- >



The optional adapter Re:Connect M202 allows easy control of the M100 by iPhone, iPad or Windows-Phone, or alternatively by PC or Mac. All functions including the display are simply mirrored. The amplifier menu with a selection of equalisation functions for the connected speakers can be found on the top right-hand side.



date multitasking iPod Touch could virtually control itself via the Revox App.

The network client within the network module handles internet radio and communication with UPnP servers, managing the digital music library either on the computer or on a network hard disk. Even larger collections with several thousand titles can be briskly scanned via the display of the M100 – by scrolling page-wise through the list view. As for formats, the module supports all the necessary ones from AAC to Flac to WAV – except gapless mode, which is essential for gapless playback of continuously recorded albums such as symphonies or DJ sets. Yet, high-resolution music files with 96 kHz and 24 bits are highly welcome.

The development of the M100 has taken a long time, but the result is a sustainable concept of modular upgrading. A system full of life. For life. <

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M100 Basis

Guarantee period: 2 years
Dimensions WxHxD (cm): 18 x 37 x 34
Weight: 13 kg
Finish: Silver, Black and many more, customizable

**Floorstanding speaker
Prestige G**

Guarantee period: 5 Jahre
Dimensions: 14 x 126 x 27
Weight: 22 kg



Test-CD
Bill Callahan:
Apocalypse

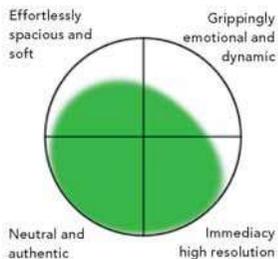
A voice that gives you goose bumps, moods ranging from melancholy to gloomy, acoustic opulence interchanging with creaking guitars; sometimes verging on the uncomfortable, yet always excellent.



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Member of the AUDIO editorial staff since 2004; now assistant chief editor; before starting her traineeship she studied Media & IT in Furtwangen – just around the corner from Revox. She owes her affection for technical matters to her big brother and his hi-fi and computer collection.

AUDIOphile Character



AUDIOphile Potential

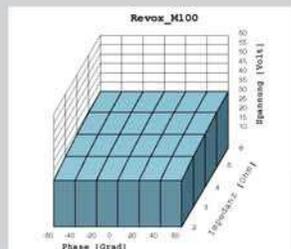


Recommendation

A system that proves its value acoustic-wise even in a difficult living environment, thanks to DSP. It is suitable for any genre, from acoustic arrangements to classical and electronic music.

Revox M100

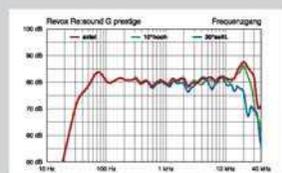
Current-voltage steadiness



3D representation of the maximum output voltage in dependence of resistance and phase rotation; the switching output stages are very powerful and don't have any problems with load changes; this means they can also work with difficult speakers; measurement of harmonic distortion (not pictured) in the M100 also shows solid values.

Revox Prestige G

Frequency response



Even without frequency-response equalisation via DSP, the Prestige G plays very homogeneously. The radiating pattern is also exemplary. In practice, however, a slight orientation towards the listening position might be favourable. Not pictured: Measurement of level and distortion behaviour with increasing distortion around 200 Hz. No speaker for excessive party operation.

Revox Humana

With a tape machine and a well-known man begins the history of a legendary hi-fi brand that is – fortunately – nowhere near its end today...

The voice out of the box was the beginning of a success story. When Willi Studer was looking for a suitable name for his newly developed tape recorders in 1948, he decided on ReVox – the returning voice (i.e. re-emerging from the box). Since then, products by the name of Revox became famous – and made many hi-fi fans happy: tape recorders such as the T26, for instance, the first product sold under the Revox brand, or the B77, setting new, legendary standards with its technology and optimised ease of use. Then there were record players, stereo power amplifiers and, later, integrated amplifiers; not to forget cassette tape recorders and, from the eighties onwards, a new generation of devices gaining importance: CD players. Recording studios also used Revox Studer: An album by the Beatles not totally unknown, 'Sgt. Pepper's' was recorded on just such a tape recording machine.

For decades, the entire production was an in-house business, from development to manufacturing right down to the final stage of marketing. The strict limitation of foreign labourers in Switzerland

resulted in the foundation of new production plants in the Black Forest during the sixties – in addition to the Swiss headquarters in Regensburg. In 1990 Willi Studer sold his enterprise to a financial investor who, in turn, sold it four years later. The company was subsequently split up: the US corporation Harman secured Studer with their professional recording machines, while Revox was privatised. Since 1996 Christoph Frey has been in charge of the company as a CEO. Many of the components that used to be developed and manufactured in-house, are now being purchased from specialists, preferably from the region surrounding the headquarters in Villingen. Nevertheless, all the Revox products continue to be designed in Villingen and Regensburg, manufactured and tested in Villingen, so they are 'made in Germany'. By the way: Anybody operating a Revox tape recorder is entitled to have it maintained and repaired at the Villingen factory: Revox's factory service still has more than 10,000 spare parts in store for almost any product ever produced under the Revox brand. <



Machines that made history (top to bottom): tangential record player B291 (1986), Evolution system (1990), tape recorder B77 (1977), and cassette tape recorder B710 (1981-1984).