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*Fast  
Forward*

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/INNOVATION FOR DESIGNERS/

Nº 2

HARMONISING  
SOUND &  
INTERIOR DESIGN



Words: *Richard Newlove*

*How does technology fit with interior design?  
Is it possible to have harmony between the two?  
We investigate an emerging trend that might  
have at least some of the answers.*



Even within tough economic times, more and more of us everyday are opting to use modern digital entertainment systems in the form of iPods, iPhones, iPads and a myriad of other multimedia devices. Such devices are often very personal to individuals, and, like the way we decorate our homes, the content reflects the personality of its owner. Accessible 24 hours a day, they are with us on the move, at work, at play and when we are settled comfortably at home.

These devices often become an extension of the even more complex home entertainment systems

available to us in the form of hard disc recorders, media enabled PC's, and video & audio servers with the potential to store huge quantities of entertainment material and then distribute selected items around the home to any given room at the touch of a button - an instant and convenient source of information, education or relaxation, experienced alone or whilst entertaining. All that technology, however, requires two things: often a video screen but always a sound source of one sort or another.

A lot of the reference designs and interiors we see in magazines and

at exhibitions, be it residential or commercial, ignore this increasingly important aspect of living, as in most cases it involves potentially unsightly grilles in the walls or ceilings - something frequently the source of discord between designer and engineer towards the end of projects.

Whilst the styling of standalone conventional cone speakers has vastly improved in recent years, they are still very much a visual object and one which inevitable requires wires. However, a new audio technique has appeared over the last fifteen years which reproduces sound in such a way that the technology responsible can be disguised as another everyday object or even embedded completely within walls, ceilings or cabinetry, making it completely invisible in application.

Because of its sheer unobtrusiveness, getting knowledge of this product category to the market is challenging. Whilst it has been reliably utilised for ten years, to date, mainly only those in the know have so far accessed what is a stunning concept.

The basis of the technology is itself far from new. In essence it goes back to first principles, working in exactly the same way as a natural musical instrument such as the guitar or piano. It creates tiny unseen vibrations across the large surface area which is the body of the instrument, or in this case, the thin, light weight, flat loudspeaker, which today utilises all manner of modern aerospace composite materials, rather than the wooden structures we are familiar with.



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