

PETER SUCHY

b.1945

Analog DNA

by Jonathan Valin



Peter Suchy and his team developed Clearaudio's first moving-coil cartridges in 1980. The patented fully symmetrical design and the choice of a boron cantilever were pioneering approaches, which guide others to this day. Forty years later (2018 is Clearaudio's fortieth anniversary), the Clearaudio range now also includes turntables, tonearms, phonostages, preamplifiers, Class A power amplifiers, connectors, cables, and audio racks plus a wide range of accessories (such as record cleaners) for maximum listening pleasure. The company has also embraced music production and now creates Clearaudio's own audiophile recordings and lovingly supervised re-releases of legendary classical discs once produced for Deutsche Grammophon.

Suchy started Clearaudio on his own. A Czech nuclear engineer, he migrated to the former Federal Republic of Germany during the "Prague Spring" in 1968 to work at Siemens on the development of nuclear reactors for ships. In 1978, like so many other high-end greats before him, he decided to make a career out of his hobby—the reproduction of music—using his scientific background and his musical skills (he was a guitarist, and by reports a good one, with a Czech rock band) in equal measure. Initially, Suchy started off designing phase-corrected loudspeakers (named Delta and Sigma), before moving to the opposite end of the reproduction chain and introducing his first moving-coil pickup.

Over the decades, Suchy has guided Clearaudio through good times and bad. Even in the 1990s and 2000s, when analog was anything but "hot," he kept faith with the LP. "It was horse sense," he has said about why he continued to rely on the vinyl record and its players during the commercially darkest times. "No matter how good an analog-to-digital converter is and how good the re-conversion may be, it doesn't

work out congruently." The patriarch of what has become a family enterprise (with his sons Robert and Patrick and his daughter Veronika now running the business day-to-day), Suchy promises: "Clearaudio will stay analog. It's in our DNA. And looking at my grandchildren I'm not afraid of the future, either."

An engineer who has never been content with the status quo and who still engages in ongoing research to drive continuous innovation, Suchy is a man who starts with the optimum and redesigns it until it reaches new levels of perfection and sets new standards. He represents the avant-garde of audio technology and has the ability to bring his extraordinary ideas to life. With a passionate and specialized staff, the highest quality materials, skillful workmanship, uncompromisingly accurate design, ingenious production technology, and lovely facilities in Erlangen, Germany, a center of science, Suchy's Clearaudio continues to research future technologies for ever greater acoustic quality.

For his landmark achievements in cartridges, turntables, and tonearm design—and his lifelong

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commitment to playback excellence—Peter Suchy is hereby inducted into *The Absolute Sound's* High-End Hall of Fame.

A Brief Interview with Peter Suchy

Peter, you started professional life as a nuclear engineer. How did you end up building cartridges, tonearms, and turntables for a living? What led you to make the switch?

In 1978, I decided to make a career out of my musical hobby, more accurately the reproduction of music. It helped me that, as an engineer, I was not burdened by any typical amateur blocks. I was always seeking solutions that were mechanically, electrically, or magnetically different from comparable designs. Forty years ago, in 1978, we originally started with loudspeakers. They were called the Delta and the Sigma and they were quite successful. It was not until 1980 that we added pick-up cartridges. Looking at it retrospectively, it was both a gamble and good foresight. The real motivation, however, was to achieve music reproduction of the highest fidelity.

Your Goldfinger cartridge really set the standard for moving coils in the high-end era. How is the Goldfinger different from what came before it? And how has it



changed since you first engineered and marketed it?

From the beginning, in 1980, my original patented symmetrical MC design was about balance—electrical, magnetic, and mechanical. The cartridge is unique in many regards including its use of independent coils for each channel—not both stereo channels on a single armature. My original design used four magnets, not a single magnet with pole pieces. Unlike the typical suspension tie wire, I designed a fulcrum-balanced suspension. For the next 20 years, I focused on new housing designs and materials, finer-profile stylus shapes including Trygon, Trygon 2, and finally HD diamond. In 2001, we incorporated independent 24-karat gold wire for the coils in our balanced generator. The original Goldfinger in 2003, housed in a 14-karat gold body, was

my first design doubling the number of magnets to eight, giving a more homogenous flux field. With the introduction of our Statement turntable in 2005, we were now able to hear deeper into the grooves and the music. This new insight allowed me to design the Goldfinger Statement with 16 precisely matched neodymium magnets, still unique today.

Your Statement turntable is, indeed, a statement. Tell us how you developed it, what innovations were involved, and why, for instance, you use a tangential tonearm on your top-line 'table rather than a pivoted 'arm?

I am very proud of my sons Robert and Patrick as they were instrumental in developing the Statement as a crowning achievement of Clearaudio symmetrical design. Creating a non-contact magnetic-drive system

combined with a magnetically levitated platter bearing brought the noise floor down, revealing micro-dynamics and greatly increasing dynamic range. The oversized platter with integral peripheral ring was another advancement, but with this high rotational mass we needed to address stability. The Statement's gyroscopic bearing, pendulum counterbalance, and massive stand all work in concert to isolate the Goldfinger stylus in the groove.

Throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, analog was a lot less popular than it is today. Did you give any thought to building digital components during the lean times? And if not, what is it about analog that has kept your commercial and personal interest for four decades, through thick and thin?

I never had any thoughts of jumping on the digital bandwagon. As the demand for CDs was growing, we brought out a few of our recordings on CD. However, we released substantially more LPs and still do this today. That doesn't mean that we disregard "digital," but we do not see the need to market digital products under the Clearaudio brand. No matter how good an analog-to-digital converter is and how good the re-conversion may be, it doesn't work out congruently. We will stay analog. It's in our DNA.