

In Grateful Memory: Henry Kloss

June 17, 2002 - Earlier this year, one of the giants of sound, Henry Kloss, 72, passed away. Kloss had a hand in founding acoustics companies KLH Research and Development Corp., Advent, Acoustic Research, and Cambridge Soundworks. But more impressive than the companies he founded are the numerous products he invented, including the first high-fidelity FM table radio, high-fidelity cassette deck and big-screen color TV for the home (see table below).

Kloss exemplified the stereotypical image of the brilliant, quirky inventor. "Henry was immune to fashion," says Tom Hannaher, vice president of merchandise at Cambridge Soundworks and a longtime friend, citing Kloss sartorial touches like using a paper clip to anchor his tie and wearing shirts far beyond their lifetimes.

Like many creative geniuses, Kloss was a reluctant entrepreneur: "He never really wanted to start companies," Hannaher says, but the big companies that he pitched his ideas to failed to share his vision.

Kloss's impact on the acoustics industry cannot be understated. "Before Henry, all good-sounding stereo systems had speakers the size of refrigerators," Hannaher says.

His acoustic suspension speaker, the AR-1, was the first small loudspeaker that could produce low bass. Kloss's KLH Model Eight FM table radio was the first device of its size that could reproduce music accurately and lock into a station without interference from other signals or stations. The KLH Model Eleven was the mother of all stereo systems. "It was the first three-piece stereo," Hannaher says. "Every boom box, every shelf system, every stereo with detachable speakers is an offshoot of the Model Eleven."

Kloss gave millions of people the gift of music. That's a rich legacy.

The Kloss Legacy

1952: First acoustic suspension speaker: The AR-1

1960: First high-fidelity FM table radio: The KLH Model Eight

1961: First high-fidelity transportable stereo system: The KLH Model Eleven

1968: First tape recorder with Dolby B noise reduction: The KLH Model 40

1971: First high-fidelity cassette deck: The Advent 200/201

1972: First big screen color TV for home use: The Advent VideoBeam 1000

1988: First dual-subwoofer/satellite speaker system: Ensemble

1994: First affordable high-performance multimedia speaker system: SoundWorks

1998: First table radio with built-in powered subwoofer: Model 88

Source: Cambridge Soundworks