

# TURNING PASSION INTO A PROFESSIONALISM

In Hannover, it's best not to admit that you were born in Braunschweig, its historic enemy city – unless you are a personality like Karl Tessmar. The successful entrepreneur came to the Lower Saxonian capital at the age of 7, started his own business at the age of 29 as an authorised dealer for AEG products and ended up with half a dozen companies in the field of switchboard construction, control and regulation technology, technical building equipment, heating, and air conditioning for large companies, which he ran together with his wife Rita. The money they gained from these various enterprises offered Tessmar the opportunity to make a childhood dream come true: building his own recording studio.

As a teenager he loved playing with tape recorders and even managed to achieve some level of quality. The studio he imagined would have been unaffordable at that time, with the price of a mixing console reaching up to 100,000 DM and beyond. When computer technology started to impact music production, his dream came within reach and he started dubbing films with one of his buddies. What started as a hobby soon became a professional recording studio in the basement of his house, where he recorded a number of tracks for a friend playing saxophone, piano and guitar, using the violins from the computer. The thought of expanding beyond friends made him consider moving his hobby out of his home and he decided to build a recording studio from the scratch.

“At first we were looking for a small plot of land but we could only find a large one,” Tessmar remembers. “I asked myself: What is the goal of all this? What could Hannover use? And since I did not need to make a living out of the studio, and did not want to offer sound recordings for the lowest price I opted for a large room and excellent acoustics for orchestras.” His technical background and curiosity for new technologies was particularly helpful in this enterprise: “I knew lots of technicians for heating, electrics, and architects. The only person missing was the acoustician. I was lucky to find Christopher Wasserberg from Munich who had already built three studios before, and I relied on his suggestions,” Tessmar explains and adds laughing: “The only thing that I could not rely on was the schedule.”

It was worth waiting for the result: an acoustically adjustable recording studio, with a host of special features, great optics and full camera equipment for recording and streaming sessions. Another business contact, Sennheiser, helped to optimize the sound. “Their lab people actually carry out tests at our site now, because we sound better than their studios,” says Tessmar. The studio has served as a space to experience new technologies, allowing orchestras to play together from a distance. “This involves a lot of technology and it is not possible to market it quickly. But we are paving the way.” It's the same for another revolutionary technology: 3D audio. “We attach great importance to transferring the acoustics of the room into the recording,” he says. “This has led to interest from major labels, but more recordings need to be released first.”

## 13. CITY OF MUSIC-TALK

**WITH:** Karl Tessmar  
General Manager  
Tonstudio Tessmar

**WEB:** [www.tonstudio-tessmar.de](http://www.tonstudio-tessmar.de)

**Date:** 9 March 2022  
**Where:** Staatsoper Hannover



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The quality of the recording is crucial for Tessmar: “If you have very good musicians the musical quality has to be there, and then we try to get the best out of it.” And good musicians are queuing to play in the 180 m<sup>2</sup> studio with 8 m ceiling height. It’s all down to a special strategy: the Friends of the Hannover University for Music, Drama, and Media offer 8 students a special scholarship of 2 recording hours per month, which serves as a trial offer. “We get very little money for that, but it’s not important,” Tessmar says. “If the artists are satisfied, they come back and pay for the recordings themselves.” And they even bring their own sound engineers, spreading the reputation of Tonstudio Tessmar all over the world.

Supported only by his wife, a technician and a sound engineer, Tessmar still manages his studio effectively, working across the whole Hannover classical music scene: “I never used to like classical music but I’ve got used to it now.” Just as well because he has a vision of the future of classical recordings in 3D-audio: “Our whole archive is 3D-capable, and we want to continue in this direction, bringing young people back to listening good

quality music again – as a supplement, not as a substitute for concerts.” The studio has served as a concert venue many times and Tessmar’s next idea is to make the music in his studio and transmit it directly in 3D to the customer. The only thing preventing this now is the lack of 3D-capable playback devices.

The new technology could be interesting for the gaming industry as well. But with technology changing faster and faster, how can Tessmar stay up to date? “I’ve always done new things and I used to be even more daring in the past,” he says. “Maybe you don’t impact the mass market, but if you reach a certain segment, that’s quite nice. In Germany we have both the demand and the money.” Although he would like the studio to be profitable, his next goal is to make it financially self-sustaining. “Our sound engineer has a commercial training and is very good at what he does. He will take over in 10 years.” And then? Then Tessmar will probably start something new ...

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