

## Audio-Hungary and Qualiton, Building a Future on Quality, World-Class Products

May 9, 2018 Jack Leave a comment



When engineers at Audio-Hungary were trying to get the measurements for their amplifiers as perfect as possible, Laszlo Fabian, Executive Director, decided to train the ears of the engineers by exposing them to natural sound via live symphony concerts. That's the kind of bold and different thinking that has led the company's Qualiton® brand of tube amplifiers, preamplifiers and step-up transformers to quickly gain recognition in the high-end audiophile market, particularly in Europe.

By the way, after the concert, the engineers agreed that designing amplifiers isn't just about measurements, it's also about listening to how they sound playing music. Since we like to attend live concerts whenever possible and use them as a reference point when reviewing audio components, we could identify with this story. And, Jack agreed that the engineers and Fabian had gotten the measurements right when he reviewed the Qualiton® A20i amp last fall. You can read that review [here](#).



We met Mark Sossa, owner of Well Pleased AV, the US distributor for Qualiton® at RMAF last fall, and he arranged for us to interview Laszlo and his son, Andras, at AXPOA 2018. We began our conversation with them by finding out a little about this father and son team and how they got into audio. Laszlo is a physicist, and he owns the largest private telecommunications company in Eastern Hungary, but audio has always been a passion for both him and his son. He provides the financial backing for Audio-Hungary today and leads product design. Andras is responsible for day-to-day operations.

We wanted to know more about their company, so we asked them to tell us their story. They said that analog nearly died, at least in Europe, in the 1990's, but they saw an opportunity in 2014 to help bring it back by purchasing a nearly bankrupt manufacturing company. "We noticed that people would like to go back to the past, and analog is much better than digital," Andras said. "There is a procedure to playing an LP, and holding it to put it on feels good."



Laszlo Fabian, Executive Director

The company they bought, which is now Audio-Hungary LLC, has a long and fascinating history that Laszlo and Andras shared with us. Think Eastern Europe, the Communist bloc, the Cold War and the Iron Curtain; that's where the story begins. Audio-Hungary, located in Nyiregyhaza Eastern Hungary, dates back to the 1940's when it started as Rafilm National Radio-and-Film. Over the years, the name changed to the Audio Voice-and-Film Technical Co. in 1951; BEAG (Budapest Electroacoustic Factory) in 1960; and Univox Ltd. in 1990 when the Iron Curtain fell and the company was privatized. Through these many changes, the company was the largest manufacturer in Eastern Europe for industrial amplification and public address systems. In 1980, BEAG provided the sound system for the summer Olympics in Moscow.

While Laszlo purchased the company in 2014, he didn't immediately change the brand name. A year later, they introduced their first product, the Univox APX 200 power amplifier, which was somewhat of a tribute to BEAG's widely acclaimed APX 100. So, from the beginning, it was clear that while Audio-Hungary was moving forward with new products, there were some important things they were bringing with them from the company's history.

So what have they kept? Most notable perhaps, they've kept the 1,000 square meter factory that's located in Nyiregyhaza. There's a very good video tour of this factory on YouTube that provides an impressive introduction to the company and their manufacturing processes. You can [watch it here](#).



They've also kept, or maybe it's more accurate to say, revived, the brand name, Qualiton®, which was a brand for the BEAG company years ago. Some of you may have heard of Qualiton Records, which was a sister company and has long been a popular brand name in Europe.

"We have kept the older workers," Andras says. "We have younger engineers who come to us as their first job out of school, and they haven't built audio products previously. The older workers have knowledge and experience, and they can help the young people who have fresh knowledge. Together they can make better products."

Along with the experienced engineers, the company also has an extensive library of books, schematics and technical information on starting to build vacuum tube audio products. All of their amplifiers are vacuum tubed, including their phono preamp and their new 2 by 15 watt, single-ended monoblocks that they have just started to manufacture.

If you are a fan of vacuum tubes from Eastern Europe, you should know that Audio-Hungary thinks they may have the largest supply of vintage ECC83 TUNGSRAM tubes in the world with more than 10,000 pieces. "It's quite a good legendary tube, and this is our heritage," Andras said.

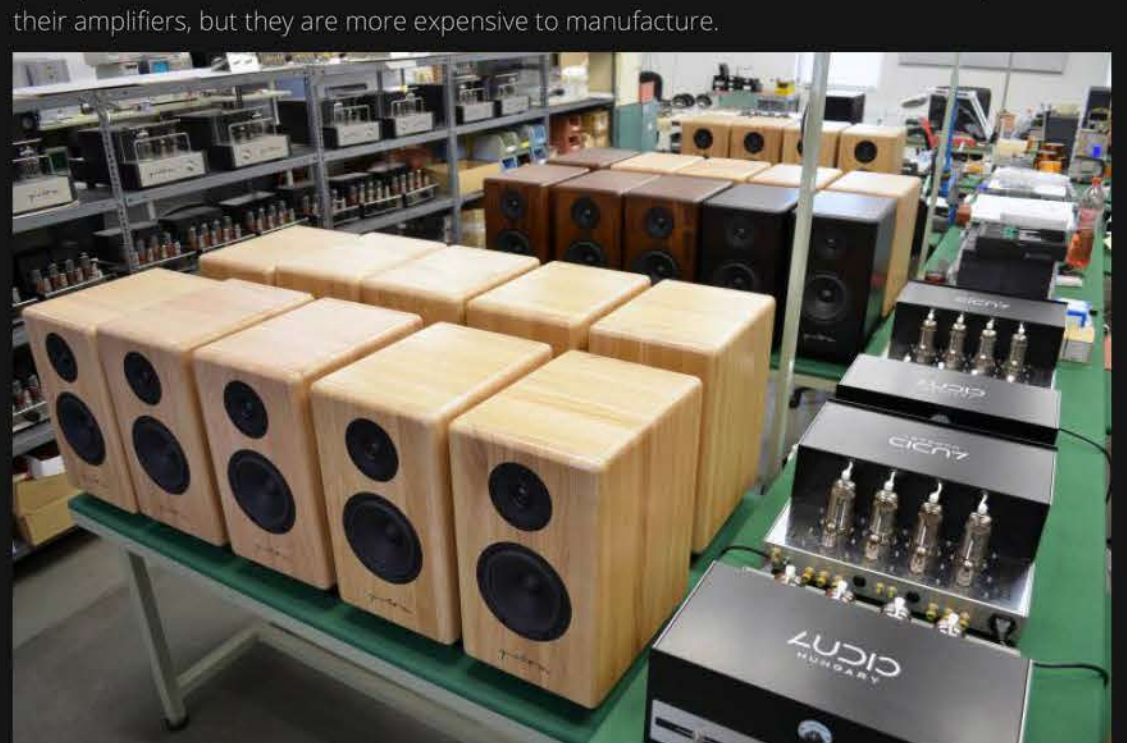


They make their own torroid and linear transformers in-house. "If we make them with another company it takes weeks," Andras said. Also, they couldn't find a company that could meet their strict quality standards. "Quality in what we make is always the same because we could meet it. We are making more and more things for ourselves because of the quality, and we have to invest more and more money to keep the good quality." They also inherited a large supply of copper wire when they bought the company, which is handy for winding Mc Step-up transformers.



Another thing we were curious about was how they decide what to make and set their prices? Andras said that they looked at the market and tried to determine a gap they thought they could fill with something that was unique to differentiate their products. "In the beginning, we were thinking about making cheaper products, but we realized that we don't want to challenge the cheap market," Andras said. "The design of our products is much higher quality. Probably 99% of the products from some factories would not make it through the quality control at our factory."

While they don't want to set the prices too high, they believe their customers will realize the quality and find their prices to be reasonable. Their new monoblocks will be more expensive than their amplifiers, but they are more expensive to manufacture.



Jack wanted to know what speakers they use to listen to their amps, and we learned that they have built their own speakers. In fact that's the next product launch on the horizon for Qualiton® as the speakers have just finished the first production run and should be available later this year.

"We have lots of plans for the future, a headphone amp, maybe next year. We have so much experience. Our engineers love to work on new products, new things," Andras says. For now, their challenge is to continue to attract people that a relative new company in Europe has world-class products at reasonable prices. "We have to make the retailers trust us and realize there is some background behind our company. We will not fail. The train is going forward, and you you don't want to miss it."

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