

OC METRO

THE BUSINESS LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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5 NEW WAYS
TO USE
YOUTUBE

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HAVE WE
GOT A CAR
FOR YOU



Fitness
Bring your
workout home



Welcome Home

WHAT BUILDERS
ARE OFFERING TO GET
YOU BACK IN THE DOOR

ENTREPRENEUR

A bass hit

The guru of home theater turns a hobby into a home run.

His “digs” could hardly be more nondescript: a unit at the rear of a run-of-the-mill light-industrial complex in east Anaheim. Behind this unassuming façade, however, works a legendary figure, albeit one you’ve probably never heard of.

In home-audio circles, he’s the undisputed Ace of Bass. Dr. Poh Ser Hsu has managed to turn a hobby into a thriving business. Hsu (pronounced either “Sue” or “She”) is president of Hsu Research, and, until very recently, has primarily designed high-quality subwoofers for stereo and multi-channel home-theater applications. For the uninitiated, a subwoofer is a speaker that churns out music’s lowest frequencies. Hsu offers a wide range of product, from the STF-1 (\$249) to the turbocharged VTF-3 HO (\$999). The former is adequate for bass on a budget in small rooms, while the latter is capable of setting off distant seismographs.

The unimposing, soft-spoken Hsu, a native of Singapore, developed an interest in audio at the age of 5 (“my brother was playing with it,” he recalls). Destined to become a civil engineer in his native land, he came to the U.S. at age 20 to get his doctorate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. But after he joined the Boston Audio Society, and discovered that



“I had the opportunity to start a business doing something I love.”

—Dr. Poh Ser Hsu

other audio devotees enjoyed his designs, his fate was ultimately sealed.

Hsu’s soon-to-be wife was living in Cerritos, and he eventually started his speaker-building business there in 1991. He’s been in Anaheim for about six years. Initially, the speakers were sold almost exclu-

sively to two-channel stereo listeners, but now the vast majority of his customers have full home-theater systems.

“It was my hobby,” he said. “I had the opportunity to start a business doing something I love. That’s always the American Dream.”

Overhead has been kept to a minimum, he said. And the business – now with five employees – has thrived with little conventional marketing and advertising. Satisfied customers are Hsu’s best advertisement – his products are much-discussed on Internet audiophile forums.

His biggest business challenge? Designing products that are high in performance “but easy to manufacture so that costs can be kept low.” Thus, Hsu’s wares are made in China, and sold exclusively via mail order. But, unlike companies where you can only chat online with techs if customers have questions or concerns, they can communicate directly with Hsu himself. Walk-in demos are invited.

Late last year, Hsu branched out a bit and is now selling the HB-1, a diminutive bookshelf speaker system for a scant \$125 each. The HB-1s come in a carton

that says it all – the speaker’s voicing features “fine tuning by Dr. Hsu to sound good to his ears.” It’s difficult to imagine a better endorsement. **OCM**

—STEVE EDDY

Poh Ser Hsu

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