

Lifelong Entrepreneur and Innovator Continues to Seek New Challenges

An Interview with Tom DeVesto

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Photo 1: Tom DeVesto, an entrepreneur, audio designer, and visionary with more than 40 years' experience pioneering high-end audio products founded Como Audio in 2016.

SHANNON BECKER: Tell us a little about your background, and the companies you founded.

TOM DEVESTO: I have spent the last 40 years designing and introducing quality consumer electronics brands for consumers worldwide. Music is and will always be in my DNA. I went to Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, N.C., in the late 1960s when the Vietnam War was in full swing. I was a Political Science/English major and served in the Navy. Rock and roll was shaping the music world and I started building sound systems that ended up touring with rock bands at concerts and bluegrass festivals.

My most recent company is Como Audio, which I founded in 2016. Prior to that I launched several companies and brands at Advent, Kloss Video, Cambridge SoundWorks, and Tivoli Audio. I consider myself to be an entrepreneur, audio

designer, and visionary with a history of innovative, never-before tried marketing, manufacturing, and sales principles. I introduced the concept of selling factory-direct to the consumer with Cambridge SoundWorks and created a website (www.hifi.com) well in advance of the Amazon days. At the time, the skeptics said that you couldn't sell stereo equipment direct to the consumer since they had to listen to it in-store before purchasing. I knew then that stereo systems sound differently at home than they do in a store's listening room. So we made it so easy to purchase and return, if necessary, offering a 100% consumer satisfaction guarantee. We had audio techs available to customers to help them set up their systems, and reviewed room layouts for best sound positioning. We even sent our audio technicians to customers' homes to install car stereos and speakers. Customers no longer had to drop their cars off at auto shops.

This method of selling soon became the industry standard. Cambridge SoundWorks was sold to Creative Labs of Singapore and I went on to form Tivoli Audio with another unique concept for listening to music.

This time I re-introduced the concept of AM/FM radio as a form of home audio entertainment and the concept caught on. The equipment I designed with Hall of Fame audio engineer Henry Kloss featured analog knobs for fine tuning so that the most hard-to-tune-in stations could be easily found. The initial radio, aptly called Model One, was introduced in furniture-grade woods and four color ways at a retail cost of \$99. At the time, no one was listening to the radio except for maybe at a backyard ball game and certainly no one was looking for a high-end, home décor table model with a retro look. The sound, design, colors, and wood finishes were the selling points and the Model One, which began as a single product on the web (tivialaudio.com), evolved into millions of sales worldwide across 50 countries. A small country like Norway sold more than 700,000 Tivoli radios while I was CEO at the company. I ran the company for 15 years, introduced several award-winning products and Tivoli became a highly desirable iconic brand.

Tivoli Audio was sold to a private equity group in 2015 and after a one-year, non-compete, I founded my current company, Como Audio, in 2016.

Como Audio was founded with one singular goal in mind—and that is to make all of the music content accessible on one device, simply with the press of a button. I set out to make listening



Photo 2: Solo is a hi-fi audio system that let you access all of your music content with the press of a button.

to music from an iPhone, Spotify, Bluetooth, the Internet, or FM Radio easier with the multi-room, hi-fi audio systems that let you access all of your music content with the press of a button. With Solo and Duetto, there is no need for an app or remote control to listen to music from all content sources. So with a minimal amount of space and advanced technology, Solo and Duetto make accessing music content easy and simple. No longer will telephone calls have to be interrupted because music is playing from a phone. Because today music is everywhere, with Solo and Duetto, the music is accessible at any time and in any room.

Solo has a custom digital signal processor (DSP) with a digital amplifier for its great sound (see **Photo 2**). It comes with six pre-sets for your favorite music sources, a 2.8" color display for



Photo 3: Amico, the newest high-fidelity design from Como Audio, was brought to market with all of the same features as the Solo in a portable, battery-powered, and lightweight system featuring great sound with eight hours of playback.



Photo 4: Musica, shown here in Hickory, looks as good as it sounds and comes in Italian-designed, furniture-grade finishes with retro anodized or painted metal knobs and control panel.

Artist/Song meta data and available album art, four-layer voice coil, 3" woofer, and 60-W RMS amplifier with 3/4" tweeter, dual independent alarms, Internet Radio accessing 20,000 stations including Podcasts, multi-room capable, Bluetooth with aptX, is Google Cast/Amazon Dot-ready, NFC, DLNA, four high-res inputs, DAB/DAB+ available for outside North America, and has an optical input to connect audio from a TV. Solo will wirelessly stream music from your computer and comes with a remote control unit, as well as free iOS and Android "Como Control" app. Solo comes in



Photo 5: Tom DeVesto's first product was the Novabeam Model Two for Kloss Video, a company owned by audio inventor Henry Kloss.

furniture-grade wood finishes, as well as a high-gloss lacquer white. Duetto has everything that Solo has except it comes in a slightly larger model with a 3.2 color display for Meta data, with more drivers to fill a larger room with greater sound. Each product will receive updates through the Internet.

One year later "Amico," the newest high-fidelity design was brought to market with all of the same features as the Solo in a portable, battery-powered, and lightweight system featuring great sound with eight hours of playback (see **Photo 3**). Also newly introduced is "Musica" accessing music content from Internet radio, Spotify Connect, Tidal, Deezer, Napster, and Amazon Music, FM RDS, Bluetooth with aptX and features AAC (Advanced Audio Coding) for better sound quality, and NFC for pairing devices. Musica also streams CDs to other Como Audio products throughout the home. Musica looks as good as it sounds and comes in Italian-designed, furniture-grade finishes of Hickory, Walnut, Piano Black, and Piano White with retro anodized or painted metal knobs and control panel (see **Photo 4**).

SHANNON: You have a lot of titles—Designer, Innovator, Audio Expert, Manufacturer and Founder—which one do you find most gratifying?

TOM: I enjoyed designing products that fill a void in the marketplace. In all of my companies, I was instrumental in introducing new concepts to the marketplace for listening to great music. At Cambridge SoundWorks I encouraged the consumer to purchase stereo equipment direct from the manufacturer and set up the components in their homes. At Tivoli Audio, I introduced the consumer to a retro form of home entertainment in the table radio. And at Como Audio, I encouraged consumers to enjoy all of their music content from one design that was easy to operate with buttons and not apps. In other words, phones should be used for making phone calls and sending messages and not listening to music as a source it is not designed for.

SHANNON: Can you please discuss your design process and how it has evolved over the years.

TOM: The design process always starts with me asking what would I like to see in a music system and what is trending now. The concept for the new Como Audio products were based on what I called "passing the guest room" test. Everyone I knew

had a Sonos speaker in their home to listen to music. I wasn't that enamored with the sound quality, but more importantly if there were guests staying at my home in the guest room, they could not listen to music without the Sonos app. I think music should be accessible at any time and from any room in the house, so it started me thinking how I could approach this void in the marketplace. That is how I came up with Solo and Duetto—the all-in-one music systems that can turn on and off with the press of a button. No music lover wants to listen to music through a smartphone or other device, nor do they want to rely on apps to play their music.

My overall goal has always been and will continue to be listening to great sounding music on devices that are simple and easy to use that also look as good as they sound. I brought audio to a home décor market by making products that rely on good design principles as well as the latest in audio technology. My design team is based in Como, Italy, and they are instrumental in selecting finishes and colors that are beautiful for any home décor.

SHANNON: What was your first audio project? Is it still in use?

TOM: My prior companies and the brands that they launched are still popular today and continue to be sold to customers worldwide. My first product was the Novabeam Model Two for Kloss Video, a company owned by audio inventor Henry Kloss. The Novabeam was the first projection TV that created a home theater experience on a big screen (see **Photo 5**).

SHANNON: You recently received one of the 2017 Consumer Technology Association (CTA) Innovative Entrepreneur Awards. What did the award signify to you?

TOM: The Consumer Technology Association (CTA) awarded me "Small Business Executive of the Year" at its sixth annual Innovation Entrepreneur Awards. I was thankful to the CTA for this significant honor as a lifelong entrepreneur and innovator to the consumer electronics industry. This has been my life's work and it is an honor to be recognized by the CTA and its distinguished panel of judges.

SHANNON: What's next for Como Audio and Tom DeVesto?

TOM: Como Audio will continue to bring innovative products to market that make listening to music a joy and appeal to all music lovers. I like to think about what is missing in the marketplace and fill that void with the next great product. We cross over all demographics from teens to seniors and all musical listening tastes, but we always try to be the next product that everyone else will copy and say "why didn't we think of that."

As for me, in addition to designing products for the audio marketplace, my passion also lies with listening to great music, boating, and spending time with my family. 

hypex NCxxxMP series

overview

The NCxxxMP amplifier module incorporates a low power standby power supply (meets 2013 ERP Lot 6 D.S.M requirements), a highly efficient switch mode power supply and a high-performance Class D amplifier in one compact and easily applicable power brick.



NC122MP



NC250MP



NC252MP



NC500MP



NC502MP

Mini-Module NC100MP
The NC100MP is a dedicated booster-amplifier which fits the NCxxxMP series.



Highlights

- High efficiency
- Universal mains operation
- Flat, fully load-independent frequency response
- Low output impedance
- Very low, frequency independent THD
- Very low noise

Features

- One or two channel amplifier
- SW standby SHPS
- Advanced over current protection
- External controlled operation
- Auto-switching (115/230V)
- Low weight
- Compact

Applications

- Monitor loudspeakers for recording and mastering studios
- Audiophile power amplifiers for professional and consumer use
- Public address systems
- Active loudspeakers

