

A.J. van den Hul answers 14 questions posed by Hi-Fi & Music magazine, Russia

Question 1:

Mr. van den Hul, what did you dream about when you were a child? And have you faced something later in your life, that might have made you quit your childhood dreams? If so and if it is appropriate to speak about such things in public, what kind of obstacle it was?

My father learned me that with technical innovations, the life of a lot of people can improve. He was a recording engineer for Decca and Philips, so music was very important in our house. He himself played the church organ, but he was also a great inventor; Ultrasonic cleaning for instance was one of them.

Because of his underground resistance against the Germans in world war II he was put in prison. After the war he returned, but soon got cancer and died in 1948.

So I was left with his dreams and hobby items.

That he died was the biggest obstacle for me. A son needs a father to teach him how the world works. How to deal with problems and to teach him about a better world.

One thing I saw very clearly: He was a very religious man with big faith in God. Even the Germans in the prison camp Neuengamme could not take his faith away. So his belief in God is also mine.

That is the biggest gift my father gave me.

And I am very careful with this gift to never loose it so I can also hand this to my own children. That is more important than money or toys, even where children think different when they are young.

When I made a start with all my father's collector items, it was my dream to in the future have my own production of all audio items you can think about. And this dream came true. Only the big pity is that I have never been able to show my father what happened.

But he knows everything, I am sure.

Question 2:

How did you come to the idea of inventing and producing cables and other high-end audio products?

During my study at the Technical University, I also was an audio reviewer and audio journalist. And during a visit at a phono-cartridge stylus factory, I was invited to explain what really takes place in the interaction between the diamond stylus and the record-groove. And because of this explanation I got a bright idea: A new diamond shape and also a new polishing technique.

After two years hard work, this diamond shape was made and I was able to mount this new stylus in many cartridges. By doing this, I also gathered experience in other repairs like cantilever exchanges, coil repairs, change of suspension rubbers and magnets. And by all this work, especially the repairs and the winding of new coils (by hand), I discovered (by listening) that there were substantial differences in sonic quality. So I went back to the University with the question whether there were any differences to be expected. Their (theoretical) answer was: No! Therefore, I now knew that the differences in the quality of the signal transmission were due to the differences in the production technology of the conductors.

In 1982 I made a first start with the production of conductors as a part of our sales program. Their manufacturing technology was very specific on many subjects. And with the technology developed in 1982 we still work. Many details have been improved in the meantime, but the basics are still there. Even one of our first products dating from 1982, our MC - SILVER is still in our product program and selling well all over the world. Can you imagine? A product designed in 1982 and still selling well in 1999 without any changes.

Question 3:

What makes your products different? Can you please describe some of the most interesting properties of your products? Please be as detailed as possible.

All our products are designed with the best audio signal transmission in mind. That means that we still apply the same high productions standards as manifested in 1982. But the product evaluations are improved a lot. Therefore presently we know much more about the influence of production parameters.

In the meantime we have introduced a special type of carbon called Linear Structured Carbon[®]. A product that on itself, but also in combination with metals, outperforms any traditional metal or metal combination. And recently I have developed a new conductor material with a very special way of manufacturing.

In combination with our Linear Structured Carbon[®] (i.e. used as a so called hybrid conductor) this new conductor material will be the base of our new cable range named "The Fusion Series". The Fusion Series will attract a lot of attention.

Also a lot of extra time is invested in new insulating materials and their production technology.

All insulating materials used in our cables are halogen free. We have totally abandoned PVC. This decision was taken to

save our environment, but the extra reward was also a strong improvement of the audio quality.

Question 4:

We know that you are also producing cables for medical applications. Can you say some words about this and about other fields of your activities less known to the Hi-Fi world?

The main purpose of our constant research is to improve the transmission of extremely low signal levels along electrical conductors. The signals generated by brain cells are very low level so this is a typical field where we can serve medical research. Especially our Linear Structured Carbon[®] fibers are excellent for this research: very thin, very flexible, mechanically very strong and without any electrical boundaries. (See our online paper: "The use of the Van den Hul low noise carbon fibers in brain research").

But I do many things more, like:

- a. Acoustical research to improve recording technology.
- b. Design and manufacture of phono-cartridges.
- c. Repair of any kinds of phono-cartridges.
- d. Constant chemical research to obtain better insulating materials.
- e. A lot of research is done to obtain better conductors.
- f. Recordings are made to produce CDs.
- g. Many listening tests are performed for product evaluations and training my ears.
- h. Even some time is used for thinking on the design of better products.
- i. Regular contacts with the patent office.
- j. Even more regular contacts with our main manufacturers to improve the production technology, and as a direct result also the products.
- k. Regular visits to one or more of the 67 companies around the world that represent our products in their country.
 - l. Attending many shows around the world.
- m. Time is used to write articles for our internet website.
- n. Time is used to write articles like this one.
- o. Time is used to study new technologies, often in co-operation with other companies.
- p. Time must be spent to control our company business-wise.
- q. Time is used to visit life performances of good orchestras.
- r. Also time is used to donate our profits to social systems who ask us for assistance.
- s. And I am responsible for the social contact with 15 families from our church.
- t. And there is my family with my wife and three sons. They also want to see me sometimes.

Question 5:

You have such great and diverse experience. So, as a businessman in the Hi-Fi field, can you please describe the essence of what you have been learning from meetings with your colleagues around the world? Maybe you would be so generous to share your thoughts with the emerging generation of people who decided to dedicate their lives to producing Hi-Fi.

- a. What has mostly amazed me is that a lot of my colleagues never visit any life performances, so their ideas about good sound are all very different compared to reality.
- b. I was very surprised to learn that journalists can be "bought" by audio companies to produce excellent product tests instead of speaking the truth.
- c. Highly qualified technicians don't care at all for the quality of the cables they use in their systems. Especially in recording studios you meet those "experts" who tell you that all cables sound the same.
- d. Good sound is not only a matter of the mathematics used in the design of equipment. What you hear at the end of the audio chain should be equal to what you got used to when you enjoyed a live performance.
- e. Space and dimensions are very important when you evaluate the reproduction quality of a sound system. It is not just the frequency range that counts.
- f. Sound technicians in many cases are emotionally very poorly developed. They think straightforward and are mentally somewhat blocked in many emotional situations.
- g. Sound engineers and also audio freaks hardly care for their environment. They may suggest you that they feel responsible, but I have hardly ever seen any commitment.
- h. A lot of audio freaks are only impressed by the cosmetics or brand name of audio equipment. A personal evaluation of the reproduction quality is hardly ever made.
- i. A very big group of audio lovers only buy equipment and never build any themselves. So what is your hobby?

Question 6:

What kind of technologies or approaches to your opinion will be driving the development of home entertainment in the future?

Regarding emotion: the movie-industries in Hollywood and not what we are able to produce here in Europe. Our cultural

treasures for certain are better, but we lost from Hollywood. So in the future we are "blessed" with sex, blood, a lot of killing and material damage, fear and loss of human respect. This is what we are forced to accept today thanks to technical patent monopolies of companies outside Europe incl. Russia.

When we care for our environment (especially with an open eye on the future of our children) then we must even be more careful with our emotional values. Otherwise we leave our children ecologically spoken a better world but filled with dirty minds.

The same answer for the technical developments; Europe is too small to have its own standards because our "software" industries have no power. With strong software (i.e. what people like to buy) there automatically is control over the hardware technology.

Soundwise I am an analog lover, but with ever improving digital technology (and prices) the quality is becoming acceptable to good. And with the DVD (24 bit/96 kHz) and Super Audio CD (DSD) audio formats I can live because the resolution is so good that it is about equal to the best of analog.

Question 7:

Just from the first glance at some of your products, even at the packages, not to mention the know-how behind the products, one can easily understand how much you think about ecology. Can we discuss this problem in the light of the modern technological progress?

For already 9 years ecology has been a hot item in our company. Any decision we take is also evaluated on the ecological impacts. Like our brochures and the ink we use for printing. Or the material used for packing our cable reels. Or the change from plastic reels to wooden reels to transport our cables. Also our cable insulation material (about 7000 kilograms per year) is totally environment friendly. And don't forget the application of carbon in many of our products. The result of all this ecological thinking is that we save our environment, and what is more important for consumers today: the sound quality is clearly better. So it was the good decision, even where the cost of ecological design is higher. We are investing now in a cleaner world for our children.

Question 8:

And the second question on the topic: What is there in your products that contributes to technical safety? In other words, what is your method of producing technologically intense but ecologically safe products?

Technical safety e.g. stands for insulation material that can not easily be damaged or conductors that can not break. With our latest developments in insulation we have reached two aims: No electrical dipoles and no coupled or free halogens. With our conductors we have the strongest in the world; Our very conductive Linear Structured Carbon[®] fibers (which by the way are different from reinforcement fibers) are mechanically extremely stable and very strong, but also the sonic results are among the best world-wide. And from an ecological point of view: the durability is for ever. So it was worth all the work and research time.

Question 9:

The whole Hi-Fi world considers you to be an extremely effective businessman. So, in your business life, how would you define the famous slogan "First things First"? What would you mean by that? Or, maybe you have your own key to success?

I don't consider our business operations as very effective, mainly because we don't put a lot of effort in sales and marketing training. With other words, our company makes sales, we don't count our profits nor do we suggest our representing companies how much profit they can make. Our business is exclusively based on the appreciation of the quality of our products. The rest comes automatically. So the result of our business is thanks to all quality aspects that we have brought together: like our products and all the information we hand out on the internet (www.vandenhul.com). A lot of people think that it is special when they meet me personally. I don't consider myself as someone special. For me, life is as normal as for anyone else. Maybe I have intensified my hobby a bit so I can hand out some more experience. And that we can share experience on itself is already nice.

Question 10:

We can not, of course, avoid questions about music. A famous American Jazzman, Keith Jarrett, says: "Music is the sonic motion of intention. With words, sound can be divorced from meaning by taking away the physical quality of speech. But music's meaning is in its physical quality: its sound". Can you comment on this passage?

In any language singing and music together is a combination of arts which in many cases has a higher emotional value compared to solo singing or music without any human voice.

Also pure music leaves the door of the mind open to think or dream whatever comes up at that moment.

That in itself can already be very inspiring for the mind. Music must not always have a verbal or even moral message.

Music is like water: It cleans and inspires without a specific taste.

Question 11:

Have you ever thought of establishing your own audiophile recording studio? Or, do you have such plans?

I have my own recording facilities and use them very regularly.

Recently we have released 5 audiophile CDs which have been recorded with the most honest intentions. Using 2 wide-band omnidirectional microphones and all cables made from our carbon conductors. Earnest 2 track stereo recordings at 24 bit resolution and 96 kHz sample rate. It comes close to pure analog but still misses the last refinement. We plan to release more recordings in the future, just to serve the art of making music.

Question 12:

What does music mean in your life and what are your own musical preferences?

Music means everything in my life. I can not live without.

Where I go I must always have a music source with me or around me. So when I make a trip abroad I always have a portable world receiver with me. Also during my work I always listen to music.

The main purpose of my work is to improve the quality of recording and reproduction of music in any detail. The start was made by my father who had the same intention. The technologies are much better today thus the results are also better, but the level of emotional involvement is exactly the same. Thanks to my study and all the opportunities I got in my life, it was possible to invent and produce some products which supported the audio industry and the audio hobbyist. So everyone with interest in my ideas and products got a bit of the experience I have collected in more than 50 years of audio involvement.

My own musical preferences are the music of older composers like Vivaldi, Locatelli, Bach, Haydn, Handel, Mozart and Mahler. For the more recent composers like Brahms, Bruckner and Shostakovich I also have great appreciation.

I have a big collection (mostly on records) of all the Masses composed by ancient to current composers. Especially all the piano works composed by Chopin and the songs composed by Schubert are like diamonds for me.

Question 13:

To conclude, may we ask you this kind of question: What do you like most in your life?

To help young people to find their direction in this very complicated world. It has nothing to do with music, but it gives me the highest satisfaction. It means a lot of emotional listening and clearing up of what is important and not so important. Also the satisfaction that after some thinking and experiments a better result is achieved in recording and reproduction. And to give a sustaining hand to people in trouble, like a trip I make every year to Belarus with multi-vitamins and toys. The smiling faces and happiness also make me a happy person.

I know that when you are able to hand out again what you have collected in your life, it is the only way to feel really happy. What someone is able to collect is mainly thanks to his own talents. So a pure form of communism.

Question 14:

We are now at the turn of the century. What is your message to the Russian reader, generally, and in relation to your field of activities? Maybe some personal remarks?

The way your society works is very different to ours. So having an idea how things really fit together in your country is not easy for me, but I will do my best:

1. A society can only work well and live in balance when all members have equal options.
2. Respect human rights in religion and in personal integrity.
3. Always be honest in words and in action.
4. Sharing respect makes a person more happy than collecting property.
5. Be very careful with your environment. It is a gift to life. So don't spoil your place.
6. Music is more than entertainment. Music is also an emotional relief.
7. A good sound system is put together to improve one's emotional sensitivity. Not for the number of knobs or the value of all components.
8. Use hometheatre to improve the quality of the whole family and not to destroy the last hope on a better world.
9. Computers are good assistants for people but they are not able to speak the absolute truth. They reproduce what you have told them to do. So get your decisions back in a nicer packed format.
10. When there is a lot to complain about, do things better yourself. Your own life is not your child's fault. So don't make the same mistakes again.
11. When you are the sunshine in your environment, others will smile.
12. I like to wish your readers a good balance between the demands of every day and your emotional reaction on these facts of life. Praying always helps, drinking never.

Signed: A.J. van den Hul.

While A.J. van den Hul B.V. provides the information contained in this document to anyone, we retain (joint) copyright and/or publication rights on all text and graphic images. This means that:

You MAY NOT: Modify or re-use the text and graphics, distribute the text and graphics to others, or "mirror" this document's information on another server without the written permission of A.J. van den Hul B.V.

You MAY: Store the document on your own computer for your own personal use, print copies of the information for your own personal use, and refer to it in your own documents or on your website.

A.J. van den Hul B.V. reserves all other rights and is not to be held liable for the contents of this document.

www.vandenhul.com