

# The Supreme Sound

Many brands call themselves supreme, but when it comes to Audio, MBL would be one of the best at all.

Founded in 1970, this 31-year-old brand is now representing the best quality of sound in only 31 years.

Our reporter visited the MBL manufacturer in Berlin to discover their secret of success.

Text / Steven Liu·Reporter and ·Photograph / Allen LiuInformation / MBL



Special Report  
**MBL**

## I. 360 degree speaker

MBL is not the only brand producing 360-degree speakers, but with the thirty-years know-how by the founder Mr. Wolfgang Meletzky, the brand is capable to make the best omnidirectional

Speakers. After years of experiments and developments, with this football-shaped driver and Radialstrahler technique, MBL' s 360-degree speakers are able to radiate sound omnidirectionally, which means the user may enjoy zero-delay as well as flawless sound in anywhere of the room.



## II. Well-balanced soundstage

How to produce a perfect soundstage has always been one of the biggest challenges of 360-degree speakers. As there are reflection problems and interference between sounds, it' s not an easy task to create an accurate and balanced soundstage of outstanding width and depth, which allows the user to enjoy the same quality of sound wherever he is standing at. But with MBL' s 360-degree speakers, the soundstage would be outstanding no matter what you are listening to an orchestra or Big Band Jazz music.



## Why So Supreme?

This is a commonly asked question when one knows that a set of Radialstrahler mbl 101 X-treme speakers from the reference line of MBL costs almost 10 million TWD. Four reasons will explain why.

## III. Distortion-free

Apart from omnidirectional audio system and the perfection of the soundstage, MBL has also put remarkable effort in reproducing distortion-free sound. Just like the color-tuning system of screens, some people prefer warmer color while others may prefer a clearer display of details. It's all subjective feelings. Therefore, a high-end speakers manufacturer like MBL will only focus on reproducing every single detail of the sound and leave the user to determine the tone of the sound.



## IV. Insistence of quality

MBL started their business by making speakers. When they have already built up their brand and reputation among users, they started making other relevant products like amplifiers and CD/SACD and became a hi-end manufacturer of all kind of audio products including CD/SACD, loudspeaker, D/A converter, pre-amplifier and power amplifier. Just as what they said in the interview with Luxury Watcher on the next page, MBL will on one hand keep developing loudspeaker of the best quality and strengthen their technique in other relating products on the other hand.





# PERFECTION, the only goal of MBL.

What kind of sound can be called ‘perfect’? There is only one answer to MBL: to provide the user with distortion-free sound wherever he is in the house. See below for an interview with the CEO and the Chief Engineer of MBL and you may get a clearer idea of a perfect sound.



### Completed Product Line

MBL’s products are divided into 3 different lines with different price range according to different needs. All lines included pre-amplifier, power amplifier, intergrated amplifier, speaker and player.

### Q1.What are the advantages of MBL’s loudspeaker?

Hermeling: Not only loudspeaker, MBL’s CD/SACD and amplifier are also of highest quality. And we made all these achievement by one attitude: pursuing the best. Because of this attitude towards our product, we’ve invested so much money and effort in R&D.We just don’t compromise. Though the price may seem unfriendly to many consumer, it guaranties the supreme quality of our products, as we require more than customers do! One more thing to mention, we provide lifetime warranty to all our products and we will always be responsible to our customers.

### Q2.How to ensure the quality of your product?

Hermeling: We’ve got ISO 9001, but it’s not enough. Apart from strict requirements to our upstream and downstream firms, we also require our raw material suppliers to provide the best. They sometimes complain that even the best product may be rejected by MBL, as MBL is just ‘unreasonably’ picky, haha! I somehow agree that we are too picky to quality, but that’s the only way to perfection. Besides, we require perfection internally as well. Being flawless is just the basic requirement; we must be perfect!

### Q3.Are all your products 100% made in house? Have you ever considered outsourcing to reduce cost?

In fact, we’ve outsourced some components and manufacturing process to external firms on conditions that these firms do better than MBL! We understand that outsourcing may make the quality control

more difficult, that’s why we would take a long period of time to choose the right cooperating firm. If outsourcing are only aiming at reducing cost and increasing output, sorry, that’s not what we want.

### Q4.How to create loyal customers?

Hermeling: Equipments are always just the devices while music is the ultimate goal. MBL’s role is to provide the customer with the best devices to enjoy music. That may tell the reason why our customers trust in us.

### Q5.Can you share your experience in developing new materials?

Reis: MBL have put great effort in developing new materials. We did so many researches in acoustic studies and the devices’ structure. We even have a database of over 40 kinds of materials. We record the characteristics and specifications of each material and after years of experiments and thousands of failures, we finally found the ideal material that we are using today.

### Q6. What is the future developing plan of MBL?

Hermeling: First of all we will work hard on our products as what MBL usually do. Though the former CEO has brought MBL into audio fanciers’s group, there are still quite a number of people who are not familiar with this brand. So what I want to do most is to promote this brand within 10 years. Besides, I hope not only loudspeaker, but also MBL’s other products like players and amplifiers will also become more well-known among audio fanciers.

Reis: We insist not to produce mainstream products as MBL is aiming to be the best of the best in this industry, and our target customers are always those who require the best quality of sound.

### Q7.The Chief Engineer in an audio product company is as important as the helmsman on boat. Can you tell us about your background?

Reis: My life is full of music. I am interested in sound since I was a kid. I studied acoustic in university and have been the guitarist as well as the record producer of two bands. And I am an audio fancier of course. I graduated 28 years ago and then was the first time I saw the MBL 360-degree speaker. I just can’t help but fall in love with it! Since then I got into MBL until today!

### Q8.Why are the engineers at MBL so different from others?

Reis: I think the most important thing is we are all open-minded. Of

course we all received conscientious scientific training and we are all obsessed with theory. But I have to admit that, we can’t make things only based on science and theory. Sound is something alive and you just cannot explain it with something dead. You have to listen to it and feel it, or your products may not be able to produce sound that is full of vitality.

### Q9.What is the most-wanted product of MBL?

Hermeling: MBL has 3 different product lines (Classic Line, Noble Line, Reference Line), which are designed based on customers’ different needs. So it’s hard to tell exactly which product is better. But personally I’d perfer white products as it shows the beauty of plain and simple.

### Q10.How would audio devices look like 20 years later?

Hermeling and Reis: (pointed at 101X-treme) Like this! (Laughter)



### Christian Hermeling, CEO of MBL

Hermeling bought MBL and became the CEO in ’07. Wolfgang, the founder of the brand, takes the role as brand ambassador to promote the brand. “I bought MBL as I agreed with the core value of MBL, therefore the developing direction will remain unchanged,” said Hermeling.

### Jürgen Reis, Chief Engineer of MBL

Worked in MBL for 28 years, Reis’s life is full of music. Apart from being the guitarist as well as record producer of two bands in university, he is also an audio fancier. “It is like having a sweet dream for 28 years!” said Reis.

### Improvement in Materia

The base driver with beige frame is the 30 years ago version while the black frame one is the latest aluminium version with the best performance ever. As you may see, they look more or less the same, but there was a great change in material.



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#### Top installation skill

The technician is now installing this cambered carbonfabric piece into a tweeter. Any tiny installation mistake may affect the performance of sound.



All products, from development, production, installation to testing, are produced in full conscientious.



#### Complicated Milling Machine

The latest complicated milling machine in the manufactory of MB is able to cut out 3D objects, which is much more timesaving.

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#### Hand Polishing

All the cabinets are polished and grinded by hand. Though it may be time-consuming, it guarantees the highest quality.



#### Die-cast aluminium frame

The frame of the bass driver is made of aluminum. And technicians have to check every frame carefully.



#### Output testing

It's necessary to test the output sound with computer, as all audio devices are sensitive to electronic and vibration interference.



#### Cutting and details modifying

Not every component is suitable to be cut by the milling machine; therefore, some components have to be cut manually.



#### The last step: quality control

The technician is checking the cabinet. Different from other electronic devices, lightness is not the trend of audio devices as a large, heavy cabinet may enhance the resonance.



# FOR ALL ‘PICKY’ EARS



**X-shape supporting structure**  
The X-shape supporting structure ensures the stability of the speaker.



**Active subwoofer**  
Including two 12-inch aluminum drivers and a 300W active subwoofer, which provide a smooth bass sound.



**Aluminium bass driver**  
After years of experiments, the engineers in MBL found that Aluminium is the best material to be used on drivers.



**Carbonfiber tweeter and midrange**  
Tweeter and midrange were using carbonfiber to ensure the well-balanced soundstage.

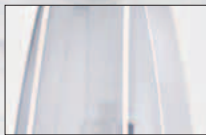
**101 X-treme**  
101 X-treme contains four omni-directional mirror imaged speaker arrays with a single bass tower and integral amplifier. The latest Radialstrahler technique provides you with 360-degree flawless sound.

The highest Requirement creates the best performance.  
That's what we can see from the Reference Line of MBL.



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**101E MKII**  
Just like the 101X-treme, the 101E MKII is using the Radialstrahler technique to achieve the 360-degree omnidirectional sound radiation.



**Namella**  
The newly designed namella allow the sound penetrate perfectly form the speaker.



**Bass Driver**  
The bass driver in the 101E MKII has stronger structures to prevent being bended.



**Subwoofer**  
This newly designed subwoofer provides better performance in resonance.



**Lower height**  
The height has been lowered in the 101E MKII to make a more thrilling sound.