Sennheiser Equipment used by Ingo Stoll



Ingo Stoll loves listening to people. He refers to himself as an “audiographer” and creates works that he calls “audiographies”, acoustic portraits of people. When he is listening to someone, Stoll lets them talk straight from the heart – and then, in an artistic process, he uses the voice recordings together with music and atmospheric ambience sounds to create uniquely moving audio moments that embody both the voice and the soul of the speaker, enabling others to hear their life stories.

Stoll creates audiographies not only in the very personal framework of family and life stories, but also in an event and corporate context. The tools he uses for this work come from the portfolio of audio specialist Sennheiser. He regularly uses Sennheiser HMD 300 PRO headsets for his recordings. Headsets are a good choice especially for inexperienced speakers, as the distance between their mouth and the microphone always stays the same, thus making sure the output level remains constant. The HMD 300 PRO is extremely comfortable to wear, and its super-cardioid microphone ensures highly detailed recordings. The earcups can be rotated and folded away for space-saving storage and transport.

Stoll describes the headset as having a “psychological tunnel effect”, which results from the speaker being isolated from their surroundings, enabling them to focus on

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the content of the conversation. “This creates a level of closeness that helps me take the person to a place where they are completely immersed in their memories,” the audiographer explains. “A good conversation requires trust and openness, and for our first meeting I nearly always use my HMD 300 PRO headsets, because I value their passive attenuation of external noise and the fact that the cable does not produce any structure-borne noise. After a few minutes, my interview partner has completely forgotten that they are wearing a headset, not least because the viscoelastic earpads are so comfortable.”

“The HMD 300 PRO provides outstanding audio quality and speech intelligibility. With my voice, I can control closeness and distance. When I ask a question that is perhaps very personal, I speak more emphatically and more slowly – thanks to the headset, this works regardless of the actual distance to the other person. In this way, the HMD 300 PRO helps to develop a relationship and creates trust. For stationary applications, Sennheiser headsets are absolutely unbeatable as far as I’m concerned!” ?

As an alternative to his HMD 300 PRO headsets, Stoll uses two Sennheiser MK 4 large-diaphragm microphones with a 1-inch true condenser capsule and a cardioid pick-up pattern. These fine-resolution microphones are often used when more sensitive interview partners feel uncomfortable wearing a headset. The MK 4 are also useful for those who wear a hearing aid. Stoll places the MK 4s on table tripods and records their output signals on his laptop using an audio interface. In stationary settings, he always has a portable audio recorder running as a backup.

Stoll is full of praise for the support provided by Sennheiser: “Before I bought the equipment, I asked Sennheiser about which solutions would be best for me. They gave me all the information I needed, and if I have any questions now, I always get competent advice. After all, I’m not a trained sound engineer. I had to learn about recording technology as part of my job as an audiographer, so getting support like this is extremely helpful for me.”

“The original idea is based on photography – I take photos that you can listen to,” says Stoll, describing his audiographic work. “For me, photography is much more an art than a service. I become part of the works that I create and I am a co-creative factor, not only in the conversations themselves, but above all in the work that follows the conversations. From the many hours of interviews, I create collages, chapter by chapter, made from extracts from the conversations, music and atmospheres from field recordings.”

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“Every audiography is an individual work of art with its very own narrative structure. I create it in a multi-layered process in which I immerse myself in the life of the person I am interviewing. The first phase is a process of exploration, in which I collect the key aspects of the interview and spread them out in a completely analogue way on different-coloured pieces of paper and on large display walls. Little by little, I start to see interrelationships forming, and the titles for the different chapters of the subsequent listening experience start to emerge. I make selections and shape the material into the actual structure of the audiography – it’s an artistic and very subjective process. The work that is ultimately created from this is unique, and in this respect my work has nothing in common with a typical media service.”

At the age of 80, Michael P. Wermelt can look back on a long and varied life. He has been president of the Golfclub Hannover e.V. for 20 years and before his retirement he was director of children’s clothing at a well-known European fashion company. Wermelt is one of those for whom Stoll is creating a personal audiography of his life. The recordings took place at Wermelt’s home in June 2023 to mark his 80th birthday.

“I was quite surprised at first when Ingo Stoll took out the relatively large Sennheiser headsets, because I was expecting him to use something like small in-ear headphones,” says Wermelt, describing the recording process. “But then I immediately understood why these kinds of headphones are so important for

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audiography: you isolate yourself completely from your surroundings and you concentrate entirely on the conversation. The situation, which in itself is already an intimate one, becomes even more intimate as a result. I'm glad that the recordings took place at my home and not in a sound studio, because the ambience is important for the atmosphere."



Michael P. Wermelt

Stoll points out that he can also record interviews outdoors: "For this purpose, I have two Sennheiser AVX wireless systems that operate on DECT frequencies. I've already used these products in many situations, and they work absolutely reliably and without any interference, and I don't have to worry about setting the transmission frequencies either. The batteries also have more than enough capacity and I don't need to replace them even if I'm out walking for several hours with my interview partner. I combine the SK AVX bodypack transmitters with Sennheiser MKE 1-4 condenser lavalier microphones, or sometimes also with a Sennheiser MD 46 reporter's microphone. The MD 46 is not only very rugged, it's also particularly unaffected by wind noise. I record the interviews outdoors on a portable multi-track digital recorder, which I also use as a backup solution in other contexts. By the way, conversations and thoughts that occur when we are moving about are completely different from those in a stationary conversation situation."

Stoll would like to make audiography available to even more people and has therefore founded an "Academy for Audiography" in Hanover, where he wants to

provide people with the tools and skills they need for their future work as an audiographer. “In the meantime, there are audiographers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland,” he adds. “They work on a freelance basis under the brand ‘Ingo Stoll Audiography’. Together, we are pursuing the vision that, one day, people will be able to find an audiographer in any city in the world who will help them to tell their valuable stories and to preserve these stories for the future.”

www.ingostoll-audiografie.de
www.sennheiser.com

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