

Who, What, Where and Why? The story of Lejonklou HiFi

Who is Fredrik Lejonklou?

Fredrik Lejonklou is the originator, designer and final inspector of all Lejonklou HiFi products. Fredrik has been involved in electronic design and service for decades. He studied electronics at Uppsala University, the oldest university in Sweden and a top research university. Interestingly, while there he also studied physiotherapy and is a licensed physiotherapist, as he wanted to remain balanced with ongoing interests in technology and physiology.

Fredrik has held positions involving sales, installation and service in both the computer industry and at one of the premier home audio dealers in Sweden. While at the latter he was able to enjoy his passion for well-reproduced music and to help others to achieve the same. He developed a truly fine ear, always concentrating on items of musical importance rather than just sonic impressiveness, and became one of the most skilled at getting the best out of his customers' systems. In the course of this he developed advanced techniques of doing such seemingly simple things like soldering together interconnects and speaker cables. Here he investigated the musical effects of different solder and even different soldering temperatures on the resultant performance for the cables. His solder and custom made cables continue to be popular items throughout Europe.

In this process he started to feel there was too much concentration in the home audio industry on chasing the money from the richest customers and making ever more expensive components with great emphasis on appearance and too little on musical quality. An example of this led to his first products. Fredrik felt that some modestly priced Moving Magnet (MM) cartridges, particularly the Linn Adikt, were underrated by the audio press and dealers alike due to the, sometimes falsely, perceived superiority and cachet of Moving Coils (MCs). Because of this it seemed that nobody was really putting much energy into making phono stages that would get the most out of MM cartridges using the best parts and construction practices. Instead they seemed to spend their energy on more expensive MC phono stages where MM cartridges were more of an afterthought or not catered to at all. This led to the Slipsik, now in version 5.1, which has been hailed in reviews as possibly the best MM only phono stage available and has been very popular with those wanting the most musical sound from the more accessible MM cartridges. After his success with the award-winning Slipsik and its smaller brother Kinki, Fredrik expanded his goals determined to create home audio reproduction components of the highest musical quality attainable, and to do it at realistic prices.

What is Lejonklou HiFi?

Lejonklou HiFi is the company Fredrik Lejonklou created where he could design, manufacture and deliver honest hi-fi to music lovers who enjoy quality music reproduction in the home. While "Honest HiFi" is Lejonklou's motto it is more than that – it is Fredrik's passion. Honest hi-fi means many things that are exemplified in Lejonklou HiFi products. It means that Fredrik will never use the most fashionable or

most expensive RCA connector, speaker connector, capacitor, fuse, wire, resistor, etc. because they are fashionable, expensive or popular. He will not manufacture a “watch-like” case of fancy machined aluminum and/or other metals with egregious knobs, dials, lights and buttons. Instead he carefully researches the actual quality of every single part and device to determine the most musical items to incorporate in his designs and the proper direction for their installation. And he will experiment with virtually every possible parameter, involving hundreds or even thousands of listening tests to create the most musical products. How far does Fredrik go in the pursuit of the most musical components? How about auditioning thirty-something metal washers that go under the screws that hold the circuit boards in his amps in place? Yes, there were audible, musical differences as there were in which direction of the washer faced up and how much torque was used to fasten them down. Indeed, Lejonklou HiFi Sagatun preamps and Tundra power amps have a label inside listing the proper torques to be used for the most musical performance of all the fasteners including those to hold on the outer casework (and yes, they do have a musical impact). This is just one example of the extent Fredrik goes to in order to bring you the most musical equipment. Here’s another one: every Lejonklou Sagatun and Tundra is run in and Fredrik adjusts the internal power supplies by ear to the optimum musical setting as an average setting isn’t deemed good enough. And every unit is then compared to the original manufacturing prototype, which it must equal or exceed to be packed for shipping.

But honest hi-fi means more than just using the best parts and casework, in the best manner for musical quality, without spending thousands extra for “jewel-like” appearance. It also means Fredrik eschews the standard industry procedure of coming out with new models every year or two in order to get new reviews and keep the company name in the public eye. Many a product from other companies has received a “face-lift” and model number/name change, with little or no change in the performance of the component, in order to be seen as creating something “new”. This procedure has been used at times even by some of the most respected names in the industry. This is not the way of Lejonklou HiFi. Instead Fredrik attempts, wherever possible and practical, to make his components upgradeable. Like any great designer, Fredrik discovers new ideas as he works on a new product and many times those ideas are applicable to other designs. So as time and energy allows, these ideas are tried and, where they provide a real musical improvement, they are implemented into current production and are made available as an upgrade for existing units. This way your Lejonklou HiFi product is protected from becoming obsolescent. The Slipsik 5.1 phono stage, one of his original products and the Tundra 1.2 stereo power amplifier are two examples of protecting customer’s investment with upgrades to latest specification available for a modest fee based on the actual cost of parts and labor.

Finally, to Fredrik honest hi-fi also means honest pricing. It will be no secret to anyone who has watched the prices of the most expensive hi-fi equipment become ever more stratospheric that the days of pricing audio components based on the actual cost of manufacture are long gone for many companies, even by many of those who previously used that reasonable method. After all do you really believe that it actually costs \$30,000 in parts and labor to make that \$150,000 power amplifier or speaker pair? Or that it costs

\$4000 in parts and labor to make a \$20,000 phono cartridge? It used to be the general rule that the cost of parts and labor to make a component would typically be about 20% of the retail price with the balance of the price going to cover other costs such as warranty service, R&D, packaging, shipping, advertising, etc. and reasonable profit for the manufacturer, distributor and dealer. However, this has all too often been replaced, especially for what are supposed to be the top performing products, with pricing based on “perceived value”. What is perceived value? Simply it means: “What can we make the public believe this item is worth?” “If we price this at twice what we normally would will we sell more because people will think it is worth more?” “If we give it the look of a fine Swiss watch will we be able to sell it to those more interested in “Audiophile Jewelry” than musical quality and therefore assure our success.” This really is how much home audio equipment is now designed and priced – not based on how much it is actually worth, either musically or physically, but on how much they feel they can get away with selling it for.

This is not the Lejonklou HiFi way. Lejonklou products are priced based solely on the cost of manufacture and a fair and reasonable profit for those involved in selling it: Lejonklou HiFi and its distributors and dealers. This is why Fredrik can’t say what a new unit will sell for before the design is finished and the first units built. There is no specifically targeted price. Only once the design is finalized and production samples are made will Fredrik have the actual production costs to price it. You can be assured that it will be as reasonable as possible.

Where is Lejonklou HiFi?

Lejonklou HiFi is based in Uppsala, Sweden. The majority of the parts for the products are also manufactured in Sweden. After they are inspected, tested and sorted by Fredrik they are sent for assembly in nearby Estonia (an EU country). This is done very precisely to Fredrik’s instructions. (The construction manual for the Tundra runs 35 pages!) Then they return to Sweden for QC, final calibration and performance testing by Fredrik.

Why Lejonklou HiFi?

Because Lejonklou HiFi is honest hi-fi. Honest construction using the best parts without an extra penny spent that doesn’t go towards the highest attainable musical performance. Honest design with longevity and upgradeability designed in from the beginning. Honest pricing based on the actual cost of production. Hi-fi solely made to give you the highest levels of musical reproduction with unprecedented levels of performance for the money in simply but beautifully constructed components designed for long life and affordable upgradeability.

In Fredrik’s words: “Our Mission with every product is to beat everything in its price range. Nothing else shall give you more musical enjoyment!”

Lejonklou HiFi “It’s All About The Music”