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## The Current Situation with SACD and DVD-Audio

by Andreas Spreer

The other day the editor of a major musical magazine asked me how great the interest in DVD-Audio is in our experience, because most of the questions readers sent to his magazine were about SACDs as sound carriers. He did not receive nearly as many specific questions about DVD-Audio. Here at TACET our experience has been exactly the opposite. On our website where we present our surround activities there is far more correspondence about DVD-Audio than about SACD, for the simple reason that more of our customers demand DVD-Audio than SACD. And yet we offer both types of disc, and place the same importance on each. Also, I would like to stress here that I think the SACD is an excellent sound carrier. Of course it's up to the audiophile customer to choose what they want. We offer everything (including CDs and LPs). I would merely like to explain here why we do so much for DVD-Audio – and do it successfully!

First here are a few facts you will probably find helpful:

1. The difference in sound between the two formats is virtually non-existent, or at least only audible to the chosen few. Why can I say this with such confidence? Because as a producer and *Tonmeister* (master sound engineer) I am constantly being confronted with the difference between the original and the stored, or recorded, sound. Every few minutes during a recording, the recording technician checks the recording in progress, and in doing so switches back and forth between the sound “before the transformation” (i.e. the original) and “after” (i.e. quantised – or digitised – sound). There are two possibilities at this point:

- a) The recording engineer hears a difference, in one direction or the other, “better” or “worse”. If so, there is something wrong with the recording process: it should sound exactly identical to the original, and not “better”.
- b) He or she (and others in the recording team) cannot hear any difference: in this case the recording process is as good as possible.

To put it another way: SACDs sound great; and of course DVD-Audio does too.

2. Almost all SACDs can be played on any normal CD player, in stereo. They then sound like any ordinary CD. Almost all DVD-Audios can be played on a normal DVD video player, in surround or stereo.

3. The maximum playing time of a DVD-Audio can be more than five hours; for a (hybrid) SACD the maximum playing time is just under 80 minutes.
4. Anyone who owns a surround system ("home movie") can play DVD-Video on it (and therefore DVD-Audio too). But certainly not every owner of surround equipment can use it to play SACDs.
5. Only a small proportion of SACD listeners are owners of a surround set; this is why they do not experience the revolutionary progress which has been made with TACET surround recordings (SACD and DVD-Audio).
6. There are enough music systems which can play DVD-Audio, however, and that is sure to be the case in the long term.
7. The developers of the SACD have now distanced themselves from the SACD system because it is not well represented on the mass market.

Why is the hybrid SACD relatively popular? I think there are two reasons: it is compatible with the normal CD (which is only available in stereo); and the marketing strategy of the major manufacturers was successful for SACDs. We cannot be sure if SACDs will carry on being marketed for much longer, although it would be good if they were. For DVD-Audio the situation is quite different. In a few years' time it could become a universally sold sound carrier, for the simple reason that the hardware (a 5.1 surround system with DVD player or home movie) is already to be found in millions of homes, just waiting to be fed pure music as well as just video recordings!

And now about us, TACET:

We developed TACET REAL SURROUND SOUND in 1999, followed by MOVING REAL SURROUND SOUND in 2002. What we started with TACET REAL SURROUND SOUND has since become a highly popular new listening experience, with all the musical instruments grouped around the listener. Many listeners of MOVING REAL SURROUND SOUND are not quite at that stage: here the musical instruments are constantly on the move around the listener. This new listening experience is so exciting and new, and provides the performance with so many new impulses, that many a listener needs a time to get used to the new possibilities and the experience. We can confidently say, however, that the mere acoustic experience of MOVING REAL SURROUND SOUND is quite uplifting and intoxicating for any listener.

This is the reason why we have used the extra-long playing time provided by DVD-Audio to put both versions onto one disc: TACET REAL SURROUND SOUND and – as an added bonus - MOVING REAL SURROUND SOUND. Established quality and revolutionary innovation, both on one disc! That way anyone can choose themselves how far they wish to dip into surround sound. On an SACD there is not the capacity to make this possible, unless we were to sacrifice the MOVING REAL SURROUND SOUND: that would be a retrogressive step our fans would never forgive us for.

So the question has always been: TACET provides a concept, unique worldwide, for creatively

using surround sound; for this reason we cannot allow ourselves any half-hearted compromises with "a bit of surround". If you are interested in surround sound, TACET is the number one address. If the playing time permits, we make the music available on SACD. If the programme is longer than 80 minutes, only DVD-Audio is possible. For those who are only interested in stereo, TACET offers excellent products, in both technical and artistic terms, and just as meticulously produced, in the form of "good old" CDs and LPs.

And finally a brief word of advice: if you are planning to buy a player, I strongly recommend you choose a combined player which will play all the different formats.

Further information:

[www.tacet.de](http://www.tacet.de)

[www.tacet.de/main/faqd.htm](http://www.tacet.de/main/faqd.htm)

[www.sa-cd.net/showtitle/3789](http://www.sa-cd.net/showtitle/3789)

[www.sa-cd.net/showreviews/4612](http://www.sa-cd.net/showreviews/4612)

Translation: Jenny Poole-Hardt