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Bose Corporation

Bose Corporation / booz/ is a privately held American corporation, based in Framingham, Massachusetts, that designs, develops and sells audio equipment. Founded in 1964 by Amar Bose, the company sells its products throughout the world. Forbes estimates that in the 2016 financial year, Bose received revenue of US\$3.8 billion^[3] and employed approximately 2,400 people.^[4]

Bose is best known for its home audio systems and speakers,^[5] noise cancelling headphones,^[5] professional audio systems^[6] and automobile sound systems.^[7] The company has also conducted research into suspension technologies for cars^[8] and heavy-duty trucks^[9] and into the subject of cold fusion.^[10] Bose has a reputation for being particularly protective of its patents, trademarks, and brands.

A majority of Bose Corporation's non-voting shares were given by Amar Bose in 2011 to his alma mater and former employer, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They receive cash dividends, but are prohibited from selling the shares and are unable to participate in the management and governance of the company.

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Bose Corporation

Туре	Private
Industry	Consumer electronics
Founded	1964
Founder	Amar Bose ^[1]
Headquarters	Framingham, Massachusetts, U.S.
Key people	Philip W. Hess, President/CEO
Products	Loudspeakers, headphones, audio equipment, car audio, Professional audio
Revenue	▲ US\$ 3.8 billion (2016) ^[2]
Number of employees	2,400 (2016) ^[2]
Website	www.bose.com (htt p://www.bose.com)

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History

Formation

The company was founded in 1964^[11] by <u>Amar Bose</u>. Eight years earlier, Bose, then a graduate student at MIT, had purchased a stereo system and was disappointed with its performance. This led him to research the importance of reverberant (indirect) sound on perceived audio quality.^[12]

Early years

Bose began extensive research aimed at clarifying factors that he saw as fundamental weaknesses plaguing high-end audio systems. The principal weaknesses, in his view, were that overall, the electronics and speaker failed to account for the spatial properties of the radiated sound in typical listening spaces (homes and apartments) and the implications of spatiality for psychoacoustics, i.e. the listener's head as a sonic diffraction object as part of the system. Eight years later, he started the company, charging it with a mission to achieve "Better Sound Through Research", now the company slogan.

In an interview in 2007 Bose talked about an early review that kept the company alive.

"One magazine in the United States, <u>High Fidelity</u>, a really credible magazine, had one reviewer named Norman Eisenburg who really knew his music. In those days I used to take the loudspeaker to the reviewer. I packed my son and loudspeaker in the car and went off. I put this little thing on top of the big speakers he had, turned it on, and within five minutes he said: 'I don't care if this is made of green cheese, it's the best sound, most accurate sound, I've ever heard.' He came out with a review titled 'Surround and Conquer'. [13] He was not known to do things like that. Everybody in the press knew he knew music, and it resulted in rave reviews one after another, and we were able to survive."

Research history

Bose's first loudspeaker product, the model 2201,^[15] dispersed 22 small mid-range speakers over an eighth of a sphere. It was designed to be located in the corner of a room, using reflections off the walls to increase the apparent size of the room. An electronic equalizer was used to flatten the frequency spectrum of this system. The results of listening tests were disappointing.^[15]

After this research, Bose came to the conclusion that imperfect knowledge of psychoacoustics limited the ability to adequately characterize quantitatively any two arbitrary sounds that are perceived differently, and to adequately characterize and quantify all aspects of perceived quality. He believed that <u>distortion</u> was overrated as a factor in perceived quality in the complex sounds that comprised music. Similarly, he did not find measurable relevance to perceived quality in other easily measured parameters of loudspeakers and electronics, and therefore did not publish those specifications for Bose products. The ultimate test, Bose insisted, was the listener's perception of audible quality (or lack of it) and his or her own preferences.^{[16][17]} This reluctance to publish information was due to Bose's rejection of these measurements in favour of "more meaningful measurement and evaluation procedures".^[18]

Bose conducted further research into psychoacoustics that eventually clarified the importance of a dominance of reflected sound arriving at the head of the listener, a listening condition that is characteristic of live performances. This led to a speaker design that aimed eight identical mid-range drivers (with electronic equalization) at the wall behind the speaker, and a ninth driver towards the listener. The purpose of this design was to achieve a dominance of reflected over direct sound in home listening spaces. The pentagonal design used in the Model 901 was, and remains, unconventional compared with most systems, where mid-range and high-frequency speakers directly face the listener.^[19]

The Model 901 premiered in 1968 and was an immediate commercial success, and Bose Corporation grew rapidly during the 1970s. The Bose 901 has been in continuous production since 1968, second only to the <u>Klipsch</u> Klipschorn speaker in longevity of continuous production.^[20]

Presidents

- 1. William (Bill) Zackowitz (1964-66)
- 2. Charles "Chuck" Hieken (1966-69)
- 3. Frank E. Ferguson (1969–76)
- 4. Amar G. Bose (1976-80)
- 5. Sherwin Greenblatt (1980–2000)^[15]
- 6. John Coleman (2000-05)
- 7. Bob Maresca (2005-)

Stock donation to MIT

The late founder <u>Amar Bose</u> was the company chairman and the primary stockholder until he donated the majority of the firm's non-voting shares to his former employer and alma mater, the <u>Massachusetts Institute of Technology</u>, in 2011. An annual cash dividend is paid out to "advance the research and education mission of MIT". However, the conditions of receiving the shares stated that MIT was not allowed to sell them, nor was MIT permitted to participate in the company's management and governance.^{[21][22][23]}

Succession

Founder and company chairman Amar G. Bose died in July 2013 in his home in <u>Wayland</u>, <u>Massachusetts</u> at the age of 83.^[24] He was succeeded as Chairman of the Board by Bob Maresca.

Stores

In 1993 Bose opened its first store in <u>Kittery, Maine</u>. Since then, Bose has opened 190 stores in the U.S. and numerous locations worldwide. In Britain there are eleven standard Bose retail stores, including one on <u>Regent Street</u> and seven so called 'factory outlets'.^[25]

Facilities

The company's corporate headquarters complex is known as "The Mountain", and located in Framingham, Massachusetts. The company runs facilities in Framingham, Westborough and Stow (all in Massachusetts^[26]).

Bose products are generally manufactured in one of four plants. Bose Corporation owns two of the factories – in Framingham and Tijuana, Mexico.

Two other manufacturing and development operations, employing approximately 3,500 people, are located in San Luis Río Colorado, Mexico (opened in 1990) and Batu Kawan, Malaysia (opened in 2013). They produce selected headphones, wireless speakers, home-theatre systems and professional audio products. The Batu Kawan facility also serves as a distribution hub for Bose's Asia-Pacific and Middle East business. [27] In June 2016, it was announced that these facilities would be purchased by contract manufacturer Flextronics (now Flex), which will take over current and planned Bose production in the two factories. [28]

In 2015, two facilities in <u>Columbia</u>, <u>South Carolina</u> and <u>Carrickmacross</u>, <u>Ireland</u>, were closed (with the loss of 300 and 140 jobs respectively), as part of a "global streamlining of Bose's supply chain. Bose used the Columbia facility, which opened in 1993, for



Bose retail store in Century City

distribution and repair, sub-manufacturing and regional manufacturing, and final assembly for some headsets. The Carrickmacross factory, which began operations in 1978, did final assembly for some home theatre systems, Wave radios, and other regional manufacturing.^[29]

Specialized products

Car audio

In 1983 Bose introduced the industry's first custom-engineered, factory-installed sound systems in the 1983 Cadillac Seville, Cadillac Eldorado, Buick Riviera and Oldsmobile Toronado. [30] In these early systems, Bose customized each installation by building the speaker enclosure and adjusting the frequency response for each vehicle. Bose produces a range of speakers and audio products for automotive use. At the 2007 auto show in Geneva, Switzerland, Bose launched a new media system—incorporating stereo, navigation, and hands free calling—with the Ferrari 612 Scaglietti. [31][32][33][34] In 2007, the Bose media system won the International Telematics Award for the "Best Storage Solution for In-Car Environment". [35]



Bose Car Audio

Some automotive manufacturers that have used in the past or currently use Bose car audio products are: <u>Acura, Alfa Romeo, Audi, Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Ferrari, Fiat, GMC, Holden, Honda, Infiniti, Mazda, Maybach, Mercedes-Benz, Nissan, Oldsmobile, Opel, Pontiac, Porsche, Renault, Rolls Royce, and Volkswagen.</u>

Noise cancelling headphones

Bose makes <u>noise-cancelling headphones</u> that have been lauded for their performance.^[36] Bose makes noise-canceling aviation headsets, which have been used in the <u>Space Shuttle</u> to help prevent astronaut hearing damage.^[37]

Smartphone application

A <u>smartphone</u> application called "Bose Connect" is promoted to users of the company's noise-cancelling headphones. The application has a <u>privacy policy</u> that states that it does not collect personally identifying information. A 2017 lawsuit against Bose alleges that the application monitors what kind of audio the user plays on their phone. The complainant says that people who play religious devotional music, or <u>podcasts</u> on politics or sexual topics, can be tracked according to their religion, political beliefs or sexual orientation. [38][39]



Bose QuietComfort 25 Acoustic Noise Cancelling Headphones

Automotive suspension system

Bose conducts research into using electromagnetic motors in place of conventional (hydraulic or air) automotive suspension systems.

The system was due for release in 2009, [40][41] but there are no vehicles in production using the system.

This research is based on two-state, non-linear power processing and conditioning. In 2004, Bose unveiled a prototype application of the technology^[42] after more than 20 years of research. The system uses electromagnetic linear motors to raise or lower the wheels of an automobile in response to uneven bumps or potholes on the road.^[43] Within milliseconds, the wheels are raised when approaching a bump, or extended into a pothole, thus keeping the vehicle more level. This technology uses similar principles to noise cancelling technology for speakers and earphones. The unevenness of the road is sensed, and processed much like a sound wave. A canceling wave is generated, which is applied to the wheels through the linear motors.^[23] In a French interview, Bose even showed off the car jumping over an obstacle.^[44] Bose said that the system is "high cost" and heavy, even after many years and \$100 million of development.^{[45][46]}

Seat suspension system for truck drivers

Bose applied its research in suspension systems to the problem of fatigue, back pain and physical stress experienced by truck drivers.^[47] In 2010, Bose introduced Bose Ride,^[48] an active system that reduces road-induced vibration in the driver's seat. Bose claimed as much as a 90% reduction in driver's seat vibration.^[49]

Professional audio systems

Bose Professional designs and manufactures audio components for AV system integrators and consultants that specify and install sound systems for commercial and portable settings such as stadiums, houses of worship, performing arts theaters, auditoriums, retail stores, restaurants, and meeting rooms. Though Bose commercial audio equipment has not been approved for use in studios or movie theaters that carry <u>THX</u> certification (due to never applying),^[50] the division accounts for about 60% of Bose's annual revenue.^[51] In 1988, Bose became the first company to pay for the title of official Olympics sound system supplier, providing audio equipment for the <u>Winter Olympics</u> in Calgary, and again four years later in Albertville, France, the latter installed and maintained by company subsidiary Bose France.^{[52][53]}

Electroforce

In 2004 Bose acquired company assets related to the development, manufacture and sales of materials testing equipment, founding the ElectroForce Systems Group,^[54] which provides materials testing and durability simulation instruments to research institutions, universities, medical device companies and engineering organizations worldwide.

Military applications

Bose has contracts with the U.S. military^{[55][56]} and NASA.^[57]

Home audio & video products

With respect to sales in the U.S. for <u>home audio</u> retail home theater systems (speaker and receiver combination systems) and portable audio sales, Bose was respectively ranked first and third in 2012.^[58] Unlike "high-end" home theater systems that use separate components,^[59] Bose multimedia TV systems combine the processing and amplification into a single unit.

Music and speaker systems

- SoundLink
- SoundDock
- Computer speakers
- Headphones
- Wave systems



The Bose SoundLink Mini uses Bluetooth to play audio from cell phones and other portable devices

Home entertainment systems

- 5.1 systems
- 2.1 systems
- Surround sound speakers

Technical specifications

Amar Bose believed that traditional measures of audio equipment are not relevant to perceived audio quality and therefore did not publish the specifications for Bose products, claiming that the ultimate test was the listener's perception of audio quality according to the listener's preferences. [14][60] In 1968, Bose presented a paper to the Audio Engineering Society titled "On the Design, Measurement and Evaluation of Loudspeakers". In this paper, he rejected numerical test data in favor of "more meaningful measurement and evaluation procedures". [60] This is still the company's philosophy. Many other audio product manufacturers publish numerical test data of their equipment, but Bose does not. [17]

Reception

In some non-audio related publications, Bose has been cited as a producer of "high-end audio" products.^[61] Commenting on Bose's "high-end" market positioning among audiophiles (people concerned with the best possible sound), a <u>PC Magazine</u> product reviewer stated "not only is Bose equipment's sound quality not up to audiophile standards, but one could buy something that does meet these stringent requirements for the same price or, often, for less."^[62] Bose has not been certified by THX for its home entertainment products^[63] even though its more expensive home theater products compete at prices where THX certification is common. Also unlike other competing products, Bose does not provide technical specifications such as frequency response, audio crossover, and acoustic impedance for its products.

Some other views include:

- Bose's flagship 901 speaker system was criticized by <u>Stereophile</u> magazine in 1979.^[64] In its review, the magazine stated that the system was unexceptional and unlikely to appeal to perfectionists with a developed taste in precise imaging, detail, and timbre; and that these shortcomings were an excessive price to pay for the improvement in impact and ambiance generated by the large proportion of reflected sound [to on-axis sound]. However, the author also stated that the system produced a more realistic resemblance of natural ambiance than any other speaker system. A more recent positive review by TONE Audio found that the 901 was better than expected and a good value at the \$1,400 price. Of note, the speakers could not be found at local retailers and had to be special ordered.^[65]
- A 2005 market study published by <u>Forrester Research</u> reported that Bose's brand name was among several computer and consumer electronics brands most trusted by US consumers including Dell and Hewlett-Packard. [66]
- A 2007 review in <u>Audioholics</u> online magazine reiterated that Bose was very expensive for its performance. Of the Bose Lifestyle V20 Home Theater System the reviewer wrote, "The Bose system is very expensive at nearly \$2,000 and the sound quality isn't really any better than many other surround systems costing a third of the price... the smaller [bass] cones cannot reproduce lower tactile [sic] frequencies." The review included an interview with a Best Buy sales manager who suggested from his experience that, despite his directing customers to a better-sounding and less expensive alternative, some customers insisted on Bose. [67]
- A July 2012 review by NBC News of the \$5,000 46" Bose TV noted that the video screen, produced by Samsung, resembled most closely a \$750 flat panel television, and that the technology used was not up to par with other screens in the same category. The review then questioned the value of the additional \$4,250 cost for the Bose TV, suggesting there were compelling audio alternatives for less than 1/5th the price difference. The same system received a positive review by PC Magazine that cited the user interface and sound quality in an unobtrusive design. [69]
- In July 2013, <u>iLounge</u> wrote about the Bose Soundlink Mini, a small remote speaker competing against inexpensive, low-end audio devices, that "Audio quality is SoundLink Mini's real trump card over Jambox and most—not all—of its competitors... SoundLink Mini delivers much deeper bass and cleaner mid-bass at all volumes, suffering from noticeable distortion solely at the top of its volume scale."

Legal action

Bose has been described by audio industry professionals as a litigious company. [71][72][73][74] In 1981, Bose unsuccessfully sued the magazine <u>Consumer Reports</u> for libel. <u>Consumer Reports</u> reported in a review that the sound from the system that they reviewed "tended to wander about the room." Initially, the Federal District Court found that <u>Consumer Reports</u> "had published the false statement with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of its truth or falsity" when it changed what the original reviewer wrote about the speakers in his pre-publication draft, that the sound tended to wander "along the wall." The Court of Appeals then reversed the trial court's ruling on liability, and the United States Supreme Court affirmed in a 6–3 vote in the case <u>Bose Corp. v. Consumers Union of United States, Inc.</u>, finding that the statement was made without <u>actual malice</u>, and therefore there was no libel. [75][76][77] In an interview decades later Bose said "We had 37 people at the time. I gathered them in one room and said, 'If we don't do anything, it will probably kill us. But if we do something, we have no credibility since we're just a small company and we can't do anything against this.' I said I think we oughtta do something. I wanted a vote. It was unanimous in favor of taking action. Little did we know it would take 14 years to go through the legal process." [14]

Bose sued <u>Thiel Audio</u> in the early 1990s to stop the audiophile loudspeaker maker from using ".2" (point two) at the end of its product model "CS2.2". To comply with Bose's trademark of ".2" associated with the Bose Model 2.2 product, Thiel changed their model name to "CS2 2", substituting a space for the decimal point. Bose did not trademark ".3" so in 1997 when Thiel introduced the next model in the series, they named it the "Thiel 2.3", advertising the return of the decimal point. Solution point.

In 1996, Bose sued two subsidiaries of <u>Harman International Industries</u>—<u>JBL</u> and <u>Infinity Systems</u>—for violating a Bose patent on elliptical <u>tuning ports</u> on some loudspeaker products.^[72] In 2000, the court determined that Harman was to cease using elliptical ports in its products, and Harman was to pay Bose \$5.7 million in court costs.^[72] Harman stopped using the disputed port design but appealed the financial decision. At the end of 2002, the earlier judgment was upheld but by this time Bose's court expenses had risen to \$8 million, all to be paid by Harman.^[78]

Bose was successful in blocking QSC Audio Products from trademarking the term "PowerWave" in connection with a certain QSC amplifier technology. In 2002, a court decided that the "Wave" trademark was worthy of greater protection because it was well-known on its own, even beyond its association with Bose.^[81]

In 2003, Bose sued the non-profit electronics trade organization CEDIA for use of the "Electronic Lifestyles" trademark, [71] which CEDIA had been using since 1997. Bose argued that the trademark interfered with its own "Lifestyle" trademark. [82] Bose had previously sued to protect its "Lifestyle" trademark beginning in 1996 with a success against Motorola and continuing with settlements against New England Stereo, Lifestyle Technologies, Optoma and AMX. [83] In May 2007, CEDIA won the lawsuit after the court determined Bose to be guilty of laches (unreasonable delays), and that Bose's assertions of fraud and likelihood of confusion were without merit. [84] CEDIA was criticized for spending nearly \$1 million of its member's money on the lawsuit, and Bose was criticized for "unsportsmanlike action against its own trade association", according to Julie Jacobson of CE Pro magazine. [83]

In July 2014, Bose sued <u>Beats Electronics</u> for <u>patent infringement</u>, alleging that its "Studio" headphones line incorporated Bose noise cancellation technology. Bose and <u>Apple</u> had collaborated on the SoundDock for <u>iPod</u> music players in 2004, then in May 2014 Beats was bought by Apple, bringing Bose and Apple into direct competition in the headphones market. Bose headphones were once the foremost brand offered in Apple stores, but Beats headphones outnumbered Bose headphones in Apple stores at the time of the lawsuit, and Beats had captured 60% of the market while Bose held 25%. In October 2014, Bose dropped the lawsuit, as Bose and Beats settled out of court without revealing the terms. Apple removed all Bose products from its Apple stores a few days after the lawsuit was settled, but two months later Bose products were returned to shelves.

In April 2017 Bose was sued alleging a privacy violation with regard to the mobile phone apps delivered by Bose to control bluetooth Bose headphones.^[93]

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