FÖRSÄKRINGSKASSAN, MÅLÖ
We visit the new office that inspires

GREY MATTERS
A neuroscientist and a designer tell all

ADVICE AND TIPS
For better office acoustics

THE SUBMARINE HALL
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HONEY

Sound-absorbing wall panels

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My name is Anders Olsson and as of autumn 2016 I am the new CEO at Götessons and A.M. Acoustics. For those of you who haven’t met me, my background is in the design industry, among other things, and for seven years I was CEO of Martela Sweden and Norway. In my new role I will focus on further supporting our design and development teams. We want to get closer to you, our customers, and to continue to surprise with exciting new items that transform an ordinary office into a creative meeting place!

Being from the Nordics, we have a long design tradition to be proud of. Prominent designers have provided us with forms that appeal to the eyes and smart, practical functionality for modern working life. Over the years, acoustics have become another important piece of the functional design puzzle – an aspect of architecture that previously has been overlooked.

In this issue of Akustik, we will highlight a number of striking examples of how to create a good sound environment. We begin with a report from Försäkringskassan, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, which has used large sound-absorbing pictures with different motifs to weave together a story about the space they occupy. For me, the article on the intersection of brain research and interior design also provides lots of inspiration and food for thought.

Anders Olsson
CEO, Götessons and A.M. Acoustics

Tommy Hvitfeldt is a photographer who is always on the hunt for the perfect light. He has been in the profession for 20 years, mainly within the field of customer magazines, and has worked with many exciting people and objects on the other side of the lens. He is based in Bankeryd in Småland, where he also does some of his work from his own photography studio. He enjoys shooting interiors, architecture and panoramas that can be put together to create virtual tours.

Mathias Bergeld started out as a freelance photojournalist in the daily newspaper industry. He lives in Örby, in the southern Västergötland region. He now combines his photography with writing articles and studying Arabic at the University of Gothenburg.
Activity-based working at Telia

After 57 years in Farsta, 2016 saw Telia’s head office change location, giving over 3,000 employees a new workspace in Solna (Arenastaden). A.M. Acoustics had the honour of supplying LOD for this activity-based office. The principle of having no fixed workstations in an open-plan environment demands a lot of the space’s acoustics. A solution normally consists of a mix of measures, among other things in the form of sound absorbers. LOD acoustic bars are an attractive solution when looking for a partition that doesn’t run against the idea of an open office plan.

Find the best acoustics at Matro.nu

Find restaurants with good a sound environment at matro.nu. This is a site for restaurant patrons who appreciate a bit of calm at the table: quiet music (or none at all), good sound insulation, soft surfaces and quiet machines. You can also leave your own tips for restaurants with a good acoustic environment and pleasant atmosphere. Matro came into being when its founders were looking for restaurants where they could eat well, talk and hear what others were saying. This is of course a matter of acoustics, kitchen clatter, coffee grinders and furnishings, but it is also about how willing the restaurant is to turn down the music when asked nicely.

Beautiful ceilings at Kød, Copenhagen

Kød (“Kød” = “meat”) is a rustic restaurant on Admiralgade 25, Copenhagen. While renovating, the restaurant wanted to improve its acoustics yet at the same time retain their interior design – a mix of the modern and the traditional. The old ceiling, which had had its day, was replaced with a newly made ceiling in the same style, involving a grid of ceiling panels. To improve the sound environment, A.M. Acoustics was asked to deliver sound absorbers for the panel framework. The absorbers were made of A.M. Acoustics’ own unique core material EcoSUND, which is well suited for sensitive environments. The material emits no gases from binding agents, sheds no fibres and is completely moisture-resistant – all good things in a restaurant environment.

Test your hearing

Hörseltestaren.se is a speech-in-noise test developed by the Swedish Association of Hard of Hearing People in collaboration with Research Institute Hörselbron. This is a scientifically validated test based on research from Karolinska Institutet. This method is tried and tested and has long been used within the field of hearing care in Sweden and abroad. The hearing test takes only a few minutes to do and gives you an indication of whether your hearing is normal or sub-par: You use a computer or telephone with headphones and enter your age, gender and whether you currently have any difficulty making out speech in noisy sound environments. This is followed by a series of words that become increasingly difficult to make out as the background noise levels are gradually raised.

Even restaurants with lots of hard surfaces can have a good sound environment. Much of this is about quiet machines and a smart mix of sound absorbers.

Kød, a restaurant for meat lovers.
The hunt for perfect sound in the Submarine Hall

Can a gigantic submarine hall be transformed into a pleasant office space for 700 people? Retaining its industrial feel, yet with a sound environment that works? In Kockums’ old premises in Västra hamnen in Malmö the architectural firm Nyquist & Morän has succeeded in doing just that – among other things with the help of enormous prints from A.M. Acoustics.
The clock strikes eleven and something remarkable happens. Employees stream onto the access galleries giving out onto the atrium at the building’s heart and start exercising in groups during their break. Light aerobics on the third floor, and yoga directly above them. The atrium runs across five floors from floor to ceiling, and between the bricks and concrete there should be echoes and din – especially when the aerobics music gets going. But there isn’t. Fact is, in Försäkringskassan’s new offices in Malmö’s old Submarine Hall, an emphasis was placed on – and much creativity went into – creating as good a sound environment as possible, despite the conditions initially being far from favourable. Architect Lisa Morän recalls the first time she stepped into the premises, when the building was still an upper secondary school for building studies. “It was terrible, almost unbearable. I feel sorry for the poor students who had to spend time there. It must have been incredibly exhausting,” she says.

In the Submarine Hall, Försäkringskassan has merged a number of local offices to form one shared office of roughly 700 employees. It is now an activity-based space with a clean desk policy, which means that everyone has a cabinet for their belongings and each day they can sit wherever they want. Employees choose their workstation and environment based on what they will be doing that day. They may perhaps want to sit, quiet and undisturbed, in an enclosed hanging chair in a park-inspired living room environment. Or at a desk on the top floor with a fantastic view of the Öresund. Or in comfy sofas, for an informal meeting with colleagues. Or where our visit today begins – in the foyer, with its steel- and concrete-inspired industrial environment, where one can take in some beautiful sound-absorbing...
prints. The foyer features several near-three-metre-high documentary photographs taken by Sydsvenska Dagbladet during the shipyard’s heyday, where the people appear minute in comparison to the gigantic propellers.

The building, which is a landmark in Västra hamnen, still goes by the name of the Submarine Hall. This was its initial function in the sixties, when it was built as part of Kockum’s shipyard. With the vessels’ new dimensions, bigger premises were required to assemble the diesel and turbine motors. In the eighties, the building was adapted to house the finishing works for Swedish naval submarines. In 2001 it was re-purposed for educational activities, and since then it has housed Malmö University, Folkuniversitetet and an upper secondary school for building studies.

With time, the premises became school-worn and down-at-heel, and they were adapted, re-purposed and extended on a provisional basis. They were a challenge that Nyquist & Morän took on with delight when Försäkringskassan decided to move there.

But the assignment came with a very tight schedule.

“The move-in date had already been decided for May 2016, which left little over a year from when the building plans were finalised to move-in. It took a while to get a real handle of the building – it’s just over 100 metres long, and Försäkringskassan was going to occupy 12,500 square metres. The time pressures were a constant challenge – as was trying to stick to a vision with problems cropping up all the time that had to be resolved straight away. Keeping that common thread running through it all,” says Morän.

The entire place was gutted. All that remained were the external walls, beams, steel columns and toilet areas. The instructions were to maintain the
character of the industrial property and to create within it a functional, activity-based environment. In addition, the interior could not be too sharp; it had to contain softer elements involving greenery and natural materials. At the same time, a functioning sound and light environment had to be introduced.

“So it’s been a challenge and a balancing act, pretty much,” Morän remarks.

She does not hide the fact that sound has been one of the biggest challenges faced.

The building contains visible features that had to be retained, so it was not possible to put sound-insulating false ceilings everywhere. Instead, industrial absorbers have been used, where possible.

“We have had to hunt out square metres,” says Morän, continuing, “We gave the acoustician different CAD models with suggestions. But most often we did not have enough square metres, so we’d have to redo them.”

Some way into the process, Nyquist & Morän realised that it was time to find new creative solutions to give the building the right soundscape.

“When we couldn’t resolve the sound issues using the ceiling, we started looking at the enormous wall surfaces on each level. But it wasn’t like we could just put up boring beige panels. The space calls for a bit of boldness,” says Morän.

They found A.M. Acoustics through Google. As a result, every floor is now decorated with sound-absorbing prints of different designs. And a few lamina blinds here and there. We set off on a guided tour to explore the building’s sound environments with the help of Rikard Milleved and Anders Holmström. They work in Försäkringskassan’s office services department and are probably the people who know the building best of all. Milleved also looks after all of the study visits that come to the Submarine Hall. The first question

We may need to set up more sound absorbers or lamina blinds in the canteen.

Lisa Morän
Nyquist & Morän
The prints are on every floor and also follow different themes. Batteries at the charging stations, food in the canteen – plus images from the Submarine Hall’s history, of course. The gigantic submarine images in one of the corridors have become visitor magnets.
he normally gets is: “Where are the gigantic sound absorbers?”

“They’ve heard about them and want to take a closer look,” he says, guiding us up to the third floor. A total of six prints, each 2.7 m tall and up to 9 m long, hang on the walls looking out onto the atrium, effectively catching the sound travelling upwards.

“A.M. Acoustics had to make up a special one. Print the canvas and roll it out on-site on cut sheets. Otherwise it wouldn’t have been possible,” Morän recounts.

Each floor has a theme. The ground level is the Square, the first floor is the Park, the second the Quay, the third the Library and the fourth the Loft. The names were chosen through an employee competition. These themes are reflected in the interiors and in the names of things like meeting rooms. In addition, each floor is divided into colour zones to break things down. Each level is split into four quadrants, each with its own core, which are decorated with coloured sheets. This makes it easier to find one’s way around.

“This makes it easy for us in the office services department to find people. I might get a call from someone saying they’re sitting ‘in the Park in green’, and then I know exactly where to go,” says Milleved.

Decorating activity-based workspaces in particular always brings up quite specific sound issues, and Morän believes that there are no real universal solutions that can be copied from project to project.

“For many, activity-based working means pulling down walls, moving desks together and setting up a few quiet rooms. But things aren’t that simple. First, you have to see what activities that particular workplace does. It might just be that cell offices are the best option. It’s easy to call something activity-based and make it a bit different to before and throw in a few bean bags, but that really doesn’t work everywhere.”

In this regard, Försäkringskassan’s operations are sprawling, covering all sorts of work styles – from individual conversations with external visitors and focused case handling work that require peace and quiet, to big meetings and project groups. In addition, certain departments deal with tasks with considerable confidentiality requirements. But whatever the activity, the soundscape has worked well in the new premises, Milleved believes. Morän is convinced that, beyond the multitude of smart, sound-absorbing interior details, this is all down to a good process and clearly setting out requirements.

“Försäkringskassan expressly asked for acoustics and sound designs to form part of the process so that it would all work together from the very start. We did all of the calculations before, and the acoustician performed keen sound tests before the move to ensure everything went as planned.” Milleved, who works all over the building every day, agrees.

“The only place where we may need additional measures is the lunchroom,” he says.

We take the lift back down to ground level just as the lunch rush begins.
The employee lunchroom is centrally located and consists of an open canteen with 150 seats and one large, well-arranged kitchen where everyone can warm up meals in microwaves and store their food in fridges and freezers. The place is now full of people, and it is also here that sound levels can be troublesome. Chairs being pulled out on the hard floor, clinking and pinging from the kitchen and the clatter of plates and conversations – all of which in an open space with high ceilings and large glass panels facing the street – can all be disquieting. Besides the obvious felt pads on all furniture, a number of sound-absorbing prints of beautiful image bank motifs of food and mealtimes have also been put up.

“We may need to put more up – we have the wall space for it. But at the same time we don’t want it to be too cluttered in here, so I’m not sure if we’d want them to have images if so. Perhaps lamina blinds instead,” Morän ponders.

Milleved has also noted that a transition to activity-based working in open premises also requires a shift in the people. “Not everyone may have noticed that you need to lower your voice a bit and think about how loudly you are talking when you are no longer sitting in a separate room with a closed door.

But on the other hand, in an activity-based office environment you can choose to go somewhere else, though that of course isn’t the case at lunch.”

The Submarine Hall has recently been nominated for Lokalnytt’s competition Sweden’s Most Attractive Office 2016. And it has served as inspiration for others, Milleved tells us – something that has given him new work tasks. “I’m something of a consultant for our other offices and other agencies that are preparing to transform their offices into activity-based spaces. They want to take inspiration from us to fix the problems that can arise in the transition to activity-based working – such as the sound environment – and I can help out there with our experiences of the Submarine Hall.”

Nyquist & Morän Arkitekter AB was founded in spring 2013 by Eva Nyquist and Lisa Morän. Together they have gained much experience of everything from sketches to complete planning. They work closely with a number of big property owners and larger companies and are often involved in assignments from the first sketch to move-in.

Lisa Morän is an architect SAR/MSA and has previously worked with Horisont and IKEA, among others.

Eva Nyquist is an architect SAR/MSA and has previously worked with Horisont and SKAPA, among others.
MEETUP AT WORK
THE KEY TO HEALTHIER EMPLOYEES

HALF A HUT – A perfect small sound absorbing house for shorter informal meetings in open space areas and in offices with activity based solutions. Half a Hut is the latest addition to "The Hut Collection" designed by Workspace and manufactured by Gotessons.
Nordic Art Signature Series

In co-operation with Götebssons, A.M. Acoustics is now launching six artists that have been selected to appear in the Nordic Art Signature Series. The works will be available in a limited, numbered run of prints for added exclusivity, and will be delivered printed and framed on sound-absorbing boards from Götebssons or A.M. Acoustics. The format will depend on the artwork’s form.

COLOURIST
VIKTORIA HALLENİUS
A young, contemporary Gothenburg colourist! Hallenius’s art comes from the strong pull of beauty, as well as the beauty of the earth and of nature. Hallenius paints in acrylics and oils.

FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHER
ANDERS SÅLLSTRÖM
Sålström, born in 1968, was raised in Halmstad and is an established photographer working in advertising and fine art. Sålström is self-taught and has moved into fine art photography via news and advertising photography.

COLLAGE IN OILS
JEANETTE VON KUSTOS
Von Kustos is a Gothenburg-born artist who spends a lot of time in Provence and Mallorca. She paints abstract motifs with prominent faces, eyes and bodies in acrylics/oils.

PHOTO-REALIST WATERCOLOURS
CALLE POSSE
A watercolour master with both feet firmly in Borås. Posse’s watercolour technique is primarily based on dry-on-dry or dry-on-wet painting to have more control over the details.

A MARINE MASTER
NIKLAS AMUNDSON
Amundson was the official artist on the maiden voyage of the East Indiaman Göteborg from Sweden to China. His love of the sea is reflected in the painting he is passionate about.

FIGURATIVE WITH CONTRASTS
GÖKHAN TANATAR
Tanatar is a devoted painter of figurative art. His style is unique and distinct, making his art easily identifiable. Anything superfluous is cleared and the colours are turned up a notch.
Items on display in the showroom include HANG ON seating from Götessons, as well as NIVÅ wall absorber panels with visible core material in grey and the sound-absorbing world map TELL-US with its characteristic 3D effect.
Eight brands have come together for a shared exhibition in Malmö’s Svarta Huset – an entire floor dedicated to products and smart office solutions. A.M. Acoustics and Göteoss are two of the eight brands in the M8 Group.

The others are Johansson, Kurage, Vescom, Sono Sverige, Cirkle Agenturer and Nya Inrednings Montage.

This is not just an exhibition; it is also a meeting and work space where products and solutions get to prove themselves in real life. It features office spaces, conference and meeting rooms, a kitchen and canteen as well as a welcoming lounge with everything from products promoting order around the desk to curtains, wallpapers, tables, chairs, lounge furniture, school furniture, sound absorbers, sofas and lighting. Come and test the environments and furnishings!

New showroom in Malmö shows off the best of eight

PHOTOS Tommy Hvitfeldt

Pictured are LOD acoustic lamina bars, which partition spaces whilst retaining transparency. In the foreground are the ergonomic OFFICE BALLZ seat and, to the left, two SMS-BOX samples – so-called after their functions ("sit, meet, store"). All are from A.M. Acoustics and Göteoss.
06 TRICKS FOR A CALMER SPACE

Poor acoustics hamper wellbeing and efficiency. With the right measures, your open-plan office can be transformed into an oasis of calm.

1 Get some help from above

Perhaps the most common measure is to install a sound-absorbing sub-ceiling that insulates sound efficiently through its large surface area. For those of you who are bored of standard white ceilings, A.M. Acoustics’s NIVÅ ceiling panels are tailored to fit grid systems and play on traditional ceiling forms. Available in white, black or grey and with or without a fabric dressing.

2 Add some sound

In modern buildings, glass partitions can be so effective at eliminating external sounds that fans and colleagues’ conversations can be perceived as disruptive. One method of countering this is to introduce a calming background noise that masks it. You can also experiment with sound effects – such as rainforest sounds in the entrance, or a print room that sounds like the beach by Vinga Lighthouse.

3 Choose the right screens

In an open-plan office, different screens offer the chance to split up a space. Make sure not to box in the workstations, but don’t choose screens that are too small either. Desk screens should be at least 60 cm high and floor screens at least 150 cm high. Why not try Götessons’ THE RISING, which allows you to easily adjust their height? When you want to be social simply lower the screen, and when you want to be alone raise it.
Give your eyes a break and switch off

Sometimes you need to switch off your eyes and brain for a little while. In its upright position Götestons’ OFFICE NAP is a puffy armchair, but when on its side it makes the perfect place for a quick catnap. Comes with inner sack and outer covering in a selection of fabrics.

Decorate your walls

Sound absorbers on the walls don’t need to be boring beige sound-absorbing slabs. Decorate with fabric-coated absorbents that match your furniture and other textiles. Alternatively, why not bring in some functionality – like with this COLLAGE sound-absorbing notice board from A.M. Acoustics? Available in several frame and surface colours.

Phone policy

An open-plan office requires mutual understanding about reasonable electronic settings. Is it alright to enable the clicking sounds on a tablet? Should computer speakers be switched on? Are ACDC songs suitable ringtones? The office can also be equipped with specific phone boxes for longer phone calls.
Each day we are exposed to a multitude of sounds – at work as well as in the home. Machines, the drone of computers, people talking, cars, trains, children’s yells – the list goes on. Certain sounds pass us by unnoticed, whereas others are perceived as pleasant and some feel disturbing. Most people are aware that loud noises can cause hearing impairments, but can other sounds affect our health?
In Sweden there are currently around 1.4 million people with hearing impairments. Such damage can be down to a range of factors. These may be genetic, environmental or age-related, or arise through illness. With regard to sound, the environment is crucial. High-level impulse sounds (such as pistol shots) or loud noises can result in hearing damage or tinnitus. This damage can be either permanent or temporary. It is due to changes to the inner ear’s hair cells. However, noise, which the Swedish Work Environment Authority defines as undesired sound, can also affect our health in ways other than hearing damage.

Interior designer Isabelle Sjövall runs the company Grey Matters together with doctor and brain researcher Katarina Gospic. Their goal is to integrate research around the brain and how people function with interior design, to create places where people feel good and perform optimally. Sjövall and Gospic’s collaboration started after a conversation about their respective work, and resulted in the book Neurodesign. This title is a concept that runs through their project. They believe that several factors affect how we feel and perform in the environment we find ourselves in — these can be the choice of colour, light, symmetry and sound. All of these factors can either improve or hamper wellbeing and productivity. In other words, poor acoustics and sound environments can have negative consequences. For Sjövall and Gospic, a poor sound environment meant many loud noises, which distract and, in the long run, negatively affect people’s ability to concentrate.

“Sitting in a noisy office space can worsen performance by 66 per cent. A noisy commercial environment can worsen sales. A good sound environment promotes health, wellbeing and performance,” Gospic explains.

According to an article in Medicinsk Vetenskap, 25 per cent of people feel that they are disturbed by noise in the workplace, which can lead to increased stress and irritation but also physical problems. The latter is something that Sjövall and Gospic also discuss.

“A noisy and loud environment can increase the risk of heart attacks,” Gospic recounts.

The existence of a link between cardiovascular disease and noise has been proven by Professor Göran Pershagen at Karolinska Institutet. In his research, he has noted a link between flight noise and high blood pressure. Other research has shown that if we are exposed to a noise level of over 60 decibels on average per day, our risk of cardiovascular disease increases. Besides the above risks, undesired sound can also result in stress, sleep difficulties and fatigue.

According to the Public Health Agency of Sweden, noise is the environmental disturbance that affects most people in Sweden today. The agency reports that over two million people are subjected to noise levels exceeding the current
guidelines around their homes. In a 2007 article in Svenska Dagbladet, Evy Öhrström, Associate Professor at the University of Gothenburg, suggests that over 840,000 people are also affected by harmful noise within their homes. Additional problem areas that have been defined are the school and pre-school environments, where high sound levels can, among other things, have a negative effect on learning, concentration and people’s ability to remember. This affect is further exacerbated if one has reading and writing difficulties from previously.

How our health is affected by noise varies. According to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, many factors are significant here; the quality of the sound (i.e. strength and frequency), the type of sound, the time of day during which the sound is heard, what we are doing when we are exposed to it, the attitude we have towards the noise and the environment we find ourselves in.

For example, take a person going to a concert with loud music. They would probably not class the sound as being negative or undesired. On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that a person living in the property above who is trying to sleep may be negatively affected by the sound and perceive it as undesirable and a disturbance. The same sound, experienced in two different environments and situations, results in different perceptions.

So what is a good sound environment, and what can we do to optimise it? According to Sjövall and Gospic, this consists of few, quiet sounds. Absolute silence is good if it truly is silent, but this can be problematic as the slightest noise will cause a disturbance. Creating a good sound environment in an office, for example, requires several components.

“People can set up rules for how they should work. For example, having mobiles on silent. Isabelle Sjövall designer

Isabelle Sjövall, interior designer

Katarina Gospic, doctor and researcher

People can set up rules for how they should work. For example, having mobiles on silent. Isabelle Sjövall designer

Grey Matters is a company run by Isabelle Sjövall and Katarina Gospic. By combining the latest in brain research and interior design, they aim to create spaces that increase productivity as well as promote health and wellbeing. The company’s two founders have also authored the book Neurodesign.

Isabelle Sjövall is an interior designer who studied at the design university Accademia Italiana in Florence and the Stockholm School of Economics. She also runs her own interior design firm, Stargo, where she specialises in private homes and concept design.

Katarina Gospic is a doctor and researcher with a doctorate in physiology from Karolinska Institutet. She has written a number of books and also runs the consultancy firm Brainbow Labs.
Do you want to change your workplace from open space to private in less than 10 seconds?

We have the solution, see video at gotessons.com
TOPIC: PADEL
The fastest-growing sport
Having completely exploded in Argentina and Spain, Padel is now spreading to the Nordic countries.

**PADEL TENNIS** is Spain’s second biggest sport and many are wondering whether it might do the same in Sweden. Courts are currently being built like never before and, given the Nordic climate, the majority of these are indoors. Padel is a very simple sport, best described as a form of mini tennis inspired by squash. The court is 10 metres wide and 20 metres long, surrounded by three-metre-high glass walls that can be used during points. The middle of the court is split by a net and Padel is always played in doubles.

Two people who have no doubts about the sport’s greatness are Jörgen Persson and Johan Götesson, who we meet after a match at the newly built Halmstad Padel Center. We ask Persson about how one goes about building the perfect racket hall.

“For me, Padel is a social sport – for example, you only play in doubles. So it’s good to have nice social areas like these here at HPC. Plus there are those things that feel more important when you get past 20 – like good light and acoustics. You feel more sensitive and get much more tired in halls that have echoes and loud noise,” says Persson.

So, Jörgen, how did the match go?

“I suppose I have to be honest and admit that Johan and his partner Henrik won this match against me and Johan’s cousin Pär.”

“Winning against an old world champion is no big deal, but winning against my 11-years-younger cousin is something I’ll enjoy,” concludes Götesson with a big smile.
We talk to Andreas Hultfeldt at A.M. Acoustics about improving the sound environment in racket halls. Hultfeldt has extensive experience of challenging projects – not only in office and school environments, but also in concert halls and arenas.

Padel tennis comes from countries with considerably warmer outdoor climates. So it’s no surprise that in Sweden the sport is often played indoors, especially in winter. What should people be thinking about when it comes to new builds or re-equipping existing halls?

“When the sport is put in open halls there are naturally problems with high sound levels. The ball strikes can really make a bang, and then there’s the screech of rubber shoes, or (unprintable) words that players shout when is frustrated at a miss,” Hultfeldt says.

“Then we have the acoustics challenge presented by halls with stands for spectators, but – as in any situation – it’s about creating a unit: you need to be able to hear both the audience and the players,” he continues.

Hultfeldt takes us through a number of measures to consider that are applicable to all sports halls – be this a racket sport or otherwise.

**ENTRANCE AND LOUNGE**

Many entrances can feel bare, with noise echoing around. Small measures can create a cosy area to hang out in before and after playing, something that’s good for that club feeling! I normally recommend focusing on defining one space using furniture and rugs. If the walls are fitted with acoustic panels and the ceiling has sound absorbers that creates a comfortable space for the players.

**CURTAINS AND BALL STOPS**

As many racket halls have so-called “ball stops” set up in the form of big curtains, you can take the opportunity to use these to hide simple sound absorbers. This is perhaps the simplest and cheapest place to start. The curtains hang down to the ground and are around three metres in height, which means that they are at the same height as the sound coming from the players.

**THE HALL’S CEILING**

These places can also look at the ceiling itself (see Täby sports hall on the next page), but if the hall has already been built then a cheaper option can be to install suspended absorbers that dampen the sound. This is particularly relevant for padel tennis, which is challenging in terms of acoustics as the game is played in “glass cages”.

**SPONSORS’ PANELS**

Many clubs install banners with sponsors’ logos in their halls. One idea can be to print the sponsors’ message on sound-absorbing panels instead. Today you can get very high-quality panels, so if you want to use photographs that is also possible.

**WALLS**

With perforated walls, such as perforated metal sheets, it is possible to integrate sound absorbers behind the wall panels. However, this is of course assuming that this is done during the actual building process. Even if you don’t have a budget for replacing existing walls, there are a number of other solutions. One is to use wall absorber panels fitted with wire grids that can take a beating from balls, clubs and tackles.

**PUBLIC SPACES**

I feel that sports spectators should really be heard! This creates an atmospheric setting for all competitive events. In certain halls, you may even want to enhance and direct the sound using reflective surfaces. But if there are fewer spectators, a single cheer is more likely to sound pretty lonely. An efficient way of handling sound that spreads along the ceiling is to use vertically hanging sound absorbers. Spectators are often sitting on stands, so ceiling absorbers work well here.
Täby Racketcenter, ceiling: LÄTT clamp absorbents from A.M. Acoustics. LÄTT is a popular product for environments where it is hard to install new ceilings due to ventilation or other installations. With LÄTT these can be left untouched. LÄTT, here in black acoustic nonwoven.

Täby Racketcenter, walls: STARK sports absorbent from A.M. Acoustics. STARK improves sound absorption and has a tough wire grid that protects it from ball hits.
Swedish faces

Kristian Huselius

Huselius was one of the better-known players in the tournament, as his track record as an ice-hockey player with ten seasons and over 600 matches in the NHL is well known. Huselius is also a passionate padel player and has built his own court by his house. “I’m totally hooked on padel, which is fast, fun and easy to get into – you can start playing straight away,” says Huselius, who made it through to the quarter finals in the elite group(!).

Sofia Arvidsson

Sofia debuted on the WTA tour in tennis in 2000 and played professionally until 2016. “Some friends invited me to play padel and it was so fun and liberating, like there was no pressure,” recalls Arvidsson, who despite her easy-going approach to the sport is now on Sweden’s national padel team. “When you become passionate about something you can quite easily end up being good at it,” Arvidsson explains.

Johan Götesson

Johan Götesson was also among the competitors – and not only because Götessons and A.M. Acoustics sponsored the event. Johan plays padel himself and takes part in a variety of competitions. “We have developed a lot of contacts within the sport and helped many racket halls to improve their sound through different acoustics solutions, so the decision to sponsor Sweden’s biggest tournament was easy,” says Johan.
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Healthier play at Ronald McDonald House

TEXT AND PHOTO Mathias Bergeld
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE AREA of Gothenburg in which Östra Sjukhuset is situated, there is a house that stands out from the other buildings. Its white facade and red tile roof contain a Ronald McDonald House. Every year around 600 families pass through its doors from throughout Sweden, and occasionally from other Nordic countries. These families all have one thing in common: they have seriously ill children who have needed care at Queen Silvia’s Children’s Hospital.

In an office just in front of the entrance works Anna-Karin Norrman, operations manager of Gothenburg’s Ronald McDonald House for the past nine years. She explains that the most important role of the house is providing families with something that resembles a home – a breathing space from the tough times that many whose children are being treated at the hospital face. A treatment that can last anything from a few weeks to several months.

“We want to create as normal a home environment as possible. This is a replacement for a home – it’s neither a hotel nor a hostel, it’s really something of its own. It’s common for families who come back – if they have children who need ongoing care – to say that this has been a second home to them, and if we get to be that, that’s a good thing,” says Norrman.

The house, which opened in 1999, is one of a total of five in Sweden. The construction of the houses is 100 per cent funded by donations. Much of that comes from the Ronald McDonald Children’s Fund, but a number of other companies and organisations also contribute. Once the houses are complete they are taken over by a local, non-profit trust, which owns and runs them. The basic costs are covered by a fee per room, which is paid by the county council. Everything else is funded by other means.

“If we want to make our playrooms nice, invite guests in for house dinners or set up other activities then we work solely with fundraising or sponsors – it isn’t paid for with council money. It’s a fantastic co-operation between public and private, which isn’t so common,” recounts Norrman. There is a strong desire among private citizens and companies to help out. Besides straight donations, this may take the form of volunteering to bake buns or offering services or products as a company. One example of the latter is A.M. Acoustics’s donation of sound absorbers for the playroom and conference rooms.

“It was a mother who got in contact with A.M. Acoustics. She has lived here with her family on a few occasions. There was a big group in the playroom and it was very loud. She said to me that she had got in touch with a company and asked if that was all right. I thought it was great of her to take the initiative.”

There is a real need for good acoustics that help to create a calm environment. It is common for one parent to sleep here while the other spends the night with the child at the hospital. The child may be hooked up to an alarm or have machines all around them that make a lot of noise, which can mean it is hard to sleep properly. This makes it important that the environment in the house allows them to relax during the day, too. The house has previously used textiles such as rugs and curtains – as well as a rule to never wear shoes inside – to create a good sound environment. This was the first time they had worked actively with dedicated products for acoustics.

Anna-Karin Norrman, operations manager of Gothenburg’s Ronald McDonald House.

The playroom is decorated with a special version of A.M. Acoustics’s 3D with designs for children.
“We had never actually worked with sound absorbers before, but it made a huge difference up here (in the playroom), I must say. I think you can feel, sitting here now, that it is a very insulated environment. It feels very nice, sound-wise.”

The playroom is mainly used by the siblings of children being cared for in the hospital, and it is a place where they can run around and play however they want. According to Norrman, it is really beneficial to have the healthy siblings in the home, as they always live in the here and now. This helps to create a home environment, an everyday life – something Norrman mentions as important and one of the organisation’s goals on several occasions. This is a service that both guests and the adjacent hospital are satisfied with. She attributes a large part of the house’s popularity to its residents.

“That’s what I would probably say is the main point of this house, no matter how well we manage it or how good the staff are. What’s most meaningful are actually the people living here, as they are the only ones who understand what the others are going through.”

The plan is for there to be space for more families by summer 2017. By then 13 new rooms will be ready, hopefully resolving the current lack of spaces. Having to say no to families is one of the hardest parts of the job, according to Norrman. Something she hopes she will have to do less once the expansion is complete. The need for acoustics solutions in the new building has already been discussed, and Norrman has been in contact with A.M. Acoustics to find out if they can create a good sound environment in the new canteen.

“We will have pretty high ceilings in the canteen on the first floor of the new house, so we will probably have to think about whether we should install sound absorbers and the like there.”

For those working at the Ronald McDonald House, a whole lot of work remains to be done before the new house can be officially opened and offer more places to families that need them. According to Norrman, there is a great desire among private citizens as well as companies to help out. She also hopes that this collaboration will give something back to both. Personally, she is in no doubt that the house makes a difference for those living there.

“I have the privilege of going to work and knowing that I’m actually doing good every day in a concrete way; that people really appreciate what we do, and that we make a difference for those living here.”

There is a strong desire among private citizens and companies to help out. Besides straight donations, this may take the form of volunteering to bake buns or offering services or products as a company, recounts Anna-Karin Norrman.
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