

A new cinema experience with Sennheiser

Wedemark/Hamburg, May 21/22, 2014 – Sennheiser wants to make culture accessible to everyone. That is why the audio specialist presented its new CinemaConnect streaming solution at a sneak preview event. The system allows cinemas to offer audio description and assistive listening via a smartphone app.

Almost 32 percent of Europeans with hearing difficulties regularly forgo going to cultural events – in Germany the proportion is about one in five. That was the result of a representative survey conducted in Germany, France, Britain, Spain and Sweden for Sennheiser. Germany alone is home to 5.7 million people with restricted hearing, and 47 percent of them are under 60. Although the inclusion of people with disabilities has been an important social issue for a number of years, about 12 percent of those surveyed think that they receive too little help when they visit the opera, theater or cinema.

New, holistic solutions for inclusion

With CinemaConnect, Sennheiser presents a technology that means people with restricted vision and hearing no longer need to miss out on the cinema experience. When they go to the movies, they can use a smartphone app to log on to a dedicated WLAN network and thereby access additional audio tracks with audio descriptions or for those with restricted hearing. They are streamed to the users' smartphones live and in real time, so that they can use the services to experience the film with headphones.

However, CinemaConnect is more than a purely technical solution; it is designed to be a holistic concept for inclusion. For example, the app helps users find cinemas and films that offer the streaming technology. It also has a location-finder function based on an extensive database, which is currently being developed by Sennheiser and will be available beginning in fall 2014. The handy search function will also be available via a new website: www.culture-inclusive.com. The platform is also home to a new online community with a focus on culture and inclusion. The initial version of the community already exists in the form of a blog – it will be expanded constantly.

Focus on usability

It took more than three years to develop CinemaConnect, and the process emphasized making the system simple and easy to use. Sennheiser worked directly with user groups to ensure that the system meets their needs. "For people with

restricted vision, it is essential that the app is not too complex so that they can operate it easily," explains Dr. Jürgen Trinkus, Chairman of Andersicht e.V., who was involved in the development of the app. "I am blind and have been working in the field of inclusive design for some time. The development of Sennheiser CinemaConnect emphasized easy operation and top usability from the beginning."

The decision to allow users to access audio descriptions and assistive listening via their own smartphone was made very consciously in the concept stage. That choice was based on feedback from those affected, which has since been confirmed by the Ipsos survey. It found that a large proportion of those affected – in Germany the proportion is 21.4 percent – avoid making an issue of their disability, which means they rarely or never ask for help. Because CinemaConnect allows you to use your own smartphone, the system is very inconspicuous and can be used without drawing attention to yourself.

CinemaConnect was unveiled to the public at the Abaton movie theater in Hamburg in May 2014. The Abaton is the first cinema to install the system – initially for testing purposes, because the product is still in the final stages of development. CinemaConnect will be available beginning in fall 2014 and will include free Apple iOS and Android apps. Sennheiser is also working on further developments to the system: For example, subtitles for the deaf are planned at a later stage. The streaming of audio in different languages will also be possible in the future.

Long-term investment in streaming technology and inclusion

"We have been conducting research in the field of audiology for over 40 years in order to develop innovative products. New solutions based on streaming technologies are an important long-term area of our business," notes Daniel Sennheiser. "That is why we recently founded Sennheiser Streaming Technologies GmbH."

Managing Director of the new subsidiary Jörn Erkau explains: "Our aim with CinemaConnect is to make cultural events accessible to everyone. In the coming years, we will continue drive the development of innovative technologies – and not just in the field of inclusion. That is why CinemaConnect is an important first step for us."

Sennheiser has been working in the fields of audiology and assistive listening since the early 1970s. The audio specialist has had a significant effect on technical developments in these areas.

About Sennheiser

The Sennheiser Group, with its headquarters in Wedemark near Hanover, Germany, is one of the world's leading manufacturers of microphones, headphones and wireless transmission systems. In 2012 the family company, which was founded in 1945, achieved a turnover of around 584 million euros. Sennheiser employs more than 2,300 people worldwide, and has manufacturing plants in Germany, Ireland and the USA. The company is represented worldwide by subsidiaries in France, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, Germany, Denmark (Nordic), Russia, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Japan, China, Australia and New Zealand, Canada, Mexico and the USA, as well as by long-term trading partners in many other countries. Also part of the Sennheiser Group are Georg Neumann GmbH, Berlin (studio microphones and monitor loudspeakers), and the joint venture Sennheiser Communications A/S (headsets for PCs, offices and call centres).

You can find all the latest information on Sennheiser Streaming Technologies GmbH by visiting the websites at www.sennheiser-connect.com and www.culture-inclusice.com.

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