



## Tonomat: Fast Rise, Sudden Fall.



**Panoramic 200: Thumb-wheel instead of telephone dial.**

**Foto: Herstellerwerbung / JukePress Archiv**

Three men in a boat. That's how it started at NSM (Issue Spring 2018), and it was the same with Tonomat. The initial spark for the founding of the company was the same, two returnees from war, and a third party with technical savvy. Manufactured until 1963 Tonomat music machines provided a great sound. With solid technology

and partly dreamy Silver Age design. made first in Offenbach, then in New Lenzburg. The telephone dial was used to select the tunes and this became the trademark of the machines, there were 120 Workers at Tonomat, the export was in high figures. Along with the British trading partner Norman Ditchburn -

they celebrated rising sales and profits. But then the success story of the company collapsed abruptly., with the takeover by the American Canteen Group. This was the beginning of the end of a German jukebox dream. Felix de Cuveland, tells us how it all happened, here in the magazine, from page 3.

# The Tonomat Story

## Vorsitzender Werner Mersch im Kommentar

### So seh´ ich das...



Do you know what is a good thing? It is the enthusiasm for this club life, I am the same, like 360 others in our Music Box Association e.V. .. it is with grace that we can think, say and shout, how we feel about the current situations. We do not need to worry about any critics it's because of us we are Self-sufficient, independent, free, self-responsible, So, Loved rightfully. To achieve such status has taken a long time though. Everyone works here with little or no payment. And we do it without Question for our unique Publication. "The jukebox - The magazine". Here it is! we provide articles on

on the subjects of Jukebox Information and entertainment like no other magazine in Europe and beyond. This club is financed exclusively via the input of its members. It is important to the board that the Membership fee is as low as possible. Despite considerable increase in our overheads there was never a change in price since the euro introduction. We were able to add extra costs through permanent members financing the club growth. So, we want to continue the same way. Call all your Juke box friends and get them to become a member in the music box club e.V.

The community strengthens. Through reports, increases in machine values and foresight we become passionate and market knowledge is fed back to us. Believe me: the whole thing is only really starting now. The appreciation of antiques, is becoming bigger and bigger, You can now see numerous Reports in the newspapers magazines and also on TV for instance Tv programs like "Bares fur Rare's " they promote this trend in collecting. Our classic jukebox plays the king's role in this trend. This "hardware" is immortal.

Gruß Werner!



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© Petra & Jupp - Willi Reutter  
Otto-Burrmeister-Allee 9  
D - 45657 Recklinghausen  
Tel.: 02361 / 9040591  
Fax: 02361 / 9040592  
musikbox-plusplus@online.de

Reporter:

Felix de Cuveland  
Michelsbergstraße 10  
53332 Bornheim  
Tel.: 02222 / 4930  
f.decuveland@gmx.de

**Veröffentlichung nur mit  
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1. Vorsitzender:

Werner Mersch  
Fürstenstraße 42  
D - 48565 Steinfurt  
Tel.: 02552 / 61524  
Fax: 02552 / 62310  
mail@jukebox-mersch.de

2. Vorsitzender:

Paul Reutter  
Otto-Burrmeister-Allee 11  
D - 45657 Recklinghausen  
Tel.: 02361 / 183863  
paul.reutter@online.de

Schatzmeisterin:

Petra Reutter

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### 3. The Tonomat Story



Silver Age design with Telephone dial technology, The Teleramic 200.

Foto: Herstellerwerbung

## The growth of the company with the telephone dial

Von Felix de Cuveland

Jazz! Swing! Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong! The sound of Freedom after the hard years of war. Casual sounds of the late 40s with the older Germans mostly encounter rejection, but the youth are excited. For example, Norbert Acker and Walter Triefenbach. music and records help to the two become friends.

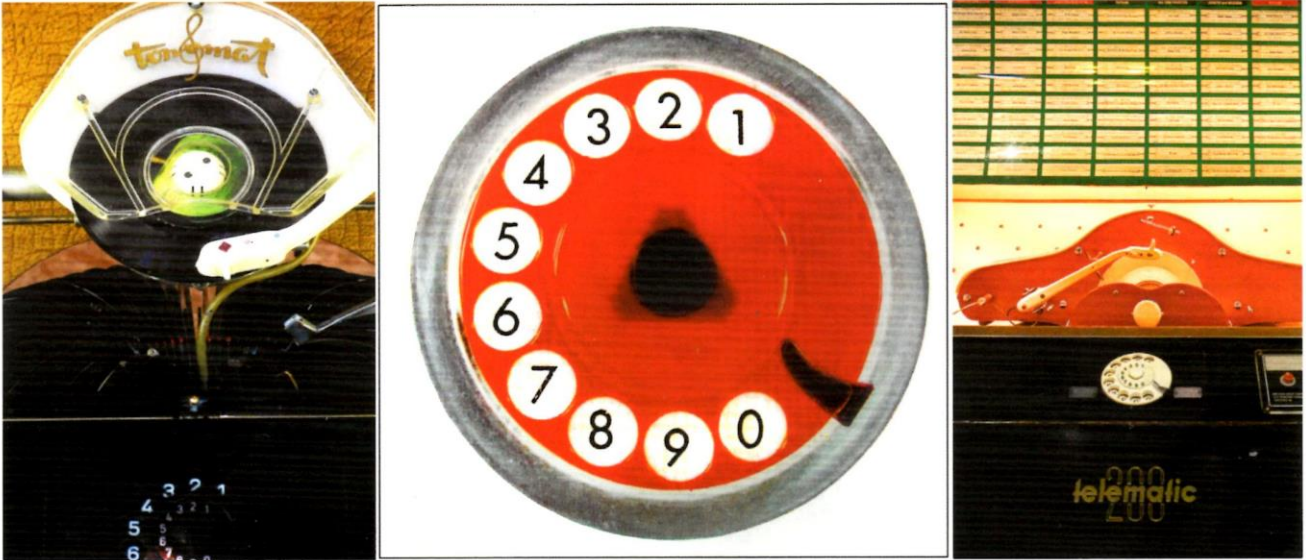
In Offenbach on Hesse after the misery of post-war years they start looking to see how they could make money using the growing popularity of music.

#### **After an apprenticeship in the Army**

After the apprenticeship that taught them technical skills during the war, they now want to grab this opportunity, with their bare hands They tinker, and design and develop a record

player turntable for the home market and apply for a patent. But the sales of this new turntable are not good. And they realise that they need a better idea, Acker, the imaginative mechanic and Triefenbach, the salesman and accountant? abandon the turntable project. They decide to go BIGGER, they design a complete JUKEBOX, and build just one Prototype machine, but it is better and cheaper than the AMI Jukebox machines that are currently available from the USA.

## 4. The Tonomat Story



The dial became the unofficial Tonomat trademark. Especially the decorative red dial. the Teleramic 200 (middle). Left: the Telematic 100, right the Telematic 200. Fotos: Felix de Cuveland

Insane? We will see. They account for every penny three times, each screw has to pay for itself. Where will we get those Materials, what can we manufacture ourselves, who can supply parts? The Attic space in Triefenbach's house in Offenbach becomes the workshop. Days and Nights of tweaking and tinkering getting the machine just right. In the spring of 1952, Acker and Triefenbach decide to get a third man on board: he is an electro-mechanic and skilled draftsman Alfred Diefenhardt. he is also a saxophone and Clarinet player, and a big fan of the Benny Goodman band – this fits in with the team's musical vision.

### Presentation in the cafe

In February 1953, they hold the first public presentation of the V102 Jukebox. it has 102 titles, uses 78s Shellac records. The young entrepreneurs gather in -



The "original model", and after several modifications becomes the production model V102. Photo: Manufacturer

the popular Offenbacher Cafe "Weisker." The machine has simple Wooden case with peep-hole for the disk and a number wheel, describes the reporter from the "Offenbach-Post " his first-Impression was-

That Jukeboxes are at this time something very new to Germany. Now yes, the simple cabinet design of the Prototype does not tear one away from the stool. But more importantly than the exterior is the impressive engineering and mechanical perfection. "The belief of experts present was that the machine would fail, but the machine played for a long time without faltering" marvels the "Offenbach Post". The audience is very excited.

### Hole in the hat?

"We almost looked forward to a hole in the hat," Triefenbach remembers later. In the evening he worked in another Company as an accountant: "I was working hard at my second job, then quite unexpectedly I was told I had a phone call. On the phone was a Mr. Neuberg of the company Helmut Rehbock, Automatic imports of Hamburg. The company liked our idea and were very interested.

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Helmut Roebuck is a large German distributor and importer of automatic machines. They held a meeting appointment and offered to distribute the jukebox. Tonomat is now second to Wiegandt the other German jukebox manufacturer in the market. But the Wiegandt model only offers 40 titles, the Tonomat machine offers 102, more than double. The design of the Tonomat box is under active leadership of Diefenhardt, its revised, but keeps the German Contemporary styling of the early 50s with the wooden cabinet, and good styling, But without a telephone dial. The attic is now too small for full production, they need larger rooms. They find a workshop in Mühlheim near Offenbach. the sale of a machine pays for the deposit for the new premises and the start on the road to success.



Foto: Felix de Cuveland

TONOMAT "V102"



8./1953

Werkzeichnung der V102.

They demonstrated the new machine at the Frankfurter Autumn fair. First Orders come rushing in. customers notice that the V102 has the best and fastest record changing mechanics of any machine at the current time. They note it has solid Mechanics, and a cheaper price, these are very good purchase arguments. Especially when the boxes cost only 3.000 Marks and are so much cheaper than American models.

Soon the growing young entrepreneurs are at the top of their game, more employees are required and hired. One of the new engineers is En Vin Benz, a nice, smooth man, a good mechanical engineer and passionate tennis player, During the war, he was involved with heavy aircraft at the Africa Corps. Benz acquires the job of producing Detailed drawings of the jukebox and purchasing plans.

## 6. The Tonomat Story



Walter Triefenbach, Norbert Acker and Geoffrey Norman Ditchburn with their women (from left).

The heart of the V102 consists of a horizontal record carousel and a vertical removal unit with two record grippers - the right for the A sides, the left for the B sides. With horizontal storage the carousel has many advantages. Erwin Benz in an Interview said "the records had to no longer be turned around to play, also replacing the records was a lot easier." surprisingly a "very similar" mechanism appears a year later on the Wurlitzer 1700 and all their follow-up models.

### The Company Grows

Despite demand, the Company profit initially is still small. 12,000 DM in the Year 1953. But in 1954 it was already 180,000 DM. the number of employees rises from 10 to 25

West Germany is living an economic miracle. The rooms in Mühlheim are now too small. Tonomat must move premises again to a former clothes shop- in Neulsenburg.

### Bergmann and Wiegandt

But the local competition is not sleeping. Bergmann in Hamburg, brings out the Symphony 40, and Wiegandt Berlin is already building his second Box, the Diplomat A with 120 Vinyl Singles. And in Bingen, the successful slot machine manufacturer NSM (Rotamint) also decides to produce Jukeboxes. In West Germany, by the end of 1954, there are about 3,000 jukeboxes, but only one-tenth comes from German manufacturers.



Alfred Diefenhardt with Saxophone. The Tonomat founders were music lovers. Photos: Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt

There is still room for improvement of German sales.

### Hotly beloved dial

Acker, Triefenbach and Diefenhardt carefully looked at

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international development of other new machines meant they had to improve. They concluded from this that they needed a more modern machine. The result was, that a new model was developed around a telephone. Its Name the Telematic 100. With telephone dial instead of keys and thumb wheels... A sophisticated solution that Tonomat Fans loved, it becomes the unofficial trademark of Tonomat.

### Better Design

With long, slightly curved Lines and a luminous front with ever changing colour effects, the Telematic shows itself be more vibrant than the original V102. Not as shiny as the elegance of American Silver Age boxes with their street car design, and chrome fittings, but a big improvement on the original V102. Tonomat did not use its own designer. Says Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt, daughter of Alfred Diefenhardt: "The Design ideas came from different people, there was no fixed meetings, projects and conferences. It was all developed spontaneously in daily conversations" shared ideas and conversations were the basis on which Alfred Diefenhardt and Erwin Benz made the designs.

### Powerful. Dynamic.

The new 50-Vinyl-Single Box enchants the audience, also because of her great sound.



**In the evening we visited Blackpool. Here with Ditchburn Music Maker Box, a Telematic 200. Photo: Diefenhardt-Schmitt**

In the autumn 2008 edition our magazine Heiko Lorisich once described: "most USA-jukeboxes sound is often too middle-heavy, something that becomes quickly obtrusive at home. A Tonomat offers a warm, dynamic, powerful Sound. "The speakers have first-class amplifiers from Klein and Hummel, the pickup system is from Elac. This made the T100 the best-selling Tonomat machine in Jukebox history.

### On Course for Growth

The network of Tonomat Distributors grew, from England to the south of France, with representatives in America and Saudi Arabia. they opened an assembly plant In Austria.

The young company founded a customer service office in Munich, and a sales office and in Vienna. An export department is also set up.

### Grace Kelly gives the impetus

Even in the tiny state of Monaco, Tonomat was to become familiar. The "Billboard", the magazine of the American machine industry, noted that when Prince Rainier married Film Actress Grace Kelly. they did a tour through the USA, the royal couple stopped at a snack bar during their journey to take a break. And whilst listening to the music playing, The Princess questioned Why is there no jukeboxes in Monaco? "Why don't we have something like this.?"

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"Music machines are a huge Business in America," The princess said, the reaction of Prince Rainier is not known. But very soon after the return of the Royal couple to Monaco the machine factory "Electronique Et Mechanique de Monaco " was opened to manufacture a Jukebox, it supplied Local restaurants and inns with a Jukebox called "Black Magic" Purchase price: under 1,000 dollars. The inner workings of this machine were not produced in Monaco but came from Germany: of course, inside the machine was the Telematic 100 from Tonomat.

### Telematic with Music Maker

Now an Englishman enters the stage: Mr Geoffrey Norman Ditchburn. Known to most as "Norman" will get the Tonomat export really rolling. His automatic Phonograph company in Lytham UK buys the Telematic 100 boxes and brings them to the British market under the label "Music Maker"

### Belly Dancer

At the spring trade fair in Frankfurt in 1957, Tonomat introduced the "Telematic 200", also called "the belly dancer". The first German box with 200 selections. The reason for the nickname is the curvy shaped body. this fascinated the buyers but Erwin Benz says: the "Popzähler" (popularity counter). Sold the machine" You could see right away which record didn't get played much.



1957 konnte Tonomat seinen Werksneubau in Neu-Isenburg, Rathenaustraße, beziehen. Die Firma wurde zu einem der größten Arbeitgeber der Stadt.  
Foto: Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt

Of course, it was quickly removed. Again, the workshop premises becomes too small.

### Brand new factory

In the autumn of 1957, a letter from Tonomat is sent to customers, friends and business partners, it states "We would like to invite You to the occasion of the inauguration of our newly established factory in Neu-Isenburg, Athenaustraße," The factory represents a brand new, building complex, 10,000 square meters. Above the main entrance in large letters the company name TONOMAT is proudly displayed.

### Hazy Osterwald is heating up

It will be a boisterous, rushing night on this November 30, 1957. Cocktails, buffet, raffle. On stage, the music is played by the Hazyster Forest Sextet. Jazz, hits, evergreens. Over 100 people work in the new factory, in peak times about 120. The company develops-

into one of the biggest employers in Neu-Isenburg. But the atmosphere remains very family orientated. Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt: says "There were no big hierarchies. Everyone knew each other on the same level, everyone was called by their first name, or nicknames. My father Alfred was called Ala. "

No one at Tonomat has any idea that the dramatic end will soon come. Norman Ditchburn becomes honorary director, the export figures shoot through the roof, the company profit exceeds those in 1958, over a million marks, a large order from Norman Ditchburn over 1,000 boxes! Tonomat thanks and names Norman as "honorary director" at an industry gathering in Blackpool, UK. A lot of fun says Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt: "The Ditchburn people, they were really exciting. They had their headquarters in Lytham near Blackpool UK and it was a kind of-



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-little English Las Vegas, a player city. during the day everyone worked hard in the evening everyone had fun in the many ballrooms."

### Husemann Collapses

In 1959 the company Husemann, the German general importer for Wurlitzer boxes from the USA collapsed. a serious industry crisis. Tonomat uses this to its advantage, with a High profile they presented the Panoramic 200. A Brilliant, New, chic, a hitherto sought-after stereo model that incorporates all elements of the Silver Age style, united with Ice cream coloured paintwork, there was a version with turquoise-green or Salmon pink, incorporating a panoramic window (hence the name of the box) Only one thing that is missing is the beloved phone dial. Instead, a wheel is fitted. It was not clear until today why? Jukebox expert Daniel Reuß and Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt disagree with each other, she says that the telephone dialling technique was too vulnerable. "You just wanted to offer something different," says Diefenhardt-Schmitt.

### You like talking on the phone

But Reuß says "The telephone technology used came from DeTeWe, a large manufacturer and was very robust. "So, customers missed the Dial" so. Lo and behold - with the next model, the Teleramic 200, the designers return to the dial again. this slightly amused the Neu-Isenburgers.



**Tonomat assembly shop in Neu-Isenburg. Easily recognizable: The horizontal right panel carousel and the boxes. Foto: Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt**

The Advertising back in the day even used the Telephone dial as a feature with slogans like "One likes to call today so much." The name Teleramic - was composed of Panoramic and telephone dial.

### Dark clouds at the horizon

In April 1959 - at first unnoticed - dark clouds start to pass over Tonomat Unexpectedly, John Haddock the director of the American

Canteen Automatics. Visits Tonomat, He is accompanied by the sales boss of the USA Jukebox manufacturer AMi, which Canteen had just bought. Haddock has an offer for Acker, Triefenbach and Diefenhardt and asked them to sell their company to Canteen Automatics so they have Tonomat in their portfolio to conquer the huge European slot machine market.

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Canteen lures the partners of Tonomat to sell the business with an offer of a lot of money. as an additional treat they promise the three to be able to stay in the company as CEOs. The three are optimistic and hope their company under American leadership continues to develop and expand. After several months of negotiations, the time has come: signing the contract. for four million DM, now Tonomat changes hands, and now under the Canteen Automatics ownership.

### Short honeymoon

In the beginning is the mood still good. Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt says "When the big money came, my father bought a Cadillac. A great car, I miss it today, He drove wonderfully, sometimes: You did not realize that you were in it. "Sometimes the other two Tonomat founders would sit in the Cadillac. It was Custom-made with automatic controls, the interior was creamy white with red seats, with blue, and pink paintwork. But the honeymoon and fun times with Canteen does not last very long.

### Tonomat is converted

Soon the family feeling in the factory will fly away replaced with emptiness. With shocking clarity many employees realize Canteen has little interest in Tonomat's own brand of Jukeboxes. Production is to be massively increased. But not with Tonomat Jukeboxes.



Silver-Age-Ikone Panoramic 200 - mit Stellrad statt Wählscheibe.  
Foto: Felix de Cuveland

Tonomat is turned into an assembly plant for food and beverage vending machines.

And the jukeboxes?

Yes, they still assemble Jukeboxes but now, practically gone is the Tonomat name.

Workers in the factory halls are now assembling AMi Jukeboxes in addition to a few Tonomat machines, Daniel Reuss can confirm that, he says "I have one at home an AMi Continental, and on the nameplate it states that it was manufactured in Neusenburg "

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It's not just the vending machines that destroy the production structure in the Tonomat factory. But it also destroys the pride of the workers and the family atmosphere fell by the wayside. The group management has little knowledge of German and European markets and ignores all advice given. Walter Triefenbach in an interview said "I thought, they would value my experience and my advice. But this was not so."

### Electronic 160 stereo

People start to leave Tonomat for other jobs. "The sale to Canteen was our worst mistake," say the company founders. Triefenbach bails out and takes over the management of the Nordwestdeutsche Automaten Sales GmbH in Bremen. It was announced in February 1963

Alfred Diefenhardt and Norbert Acker, also depart the company just ten years after their presentation of the first Tonomat box. Although the company are struggling Canteen-Tonomat brings out the last Tonomat jukebox in 1964, the Electronic 160 Stereo. Rectangular shape, in a console style, but then they stop the production of jukeboxes. Reuß says "The Electronic 160 Stereo There were two variants. it was technically very expensive to produce, and had to be constantly modified. The company has trouble with it right from the very start.

Norman Acker continues ...



**End of jukebox production in Neu-Isenburg: the CA Electronic 160**  
**Photo: Manufacturer advertising / Juke Press Archive**

Finally, Canteens attempt to dominate using over confidence and ignorance of the difference between American / European ways of working. The operation in Neu-Isenburg was shut down. Is that the end of Tonomat? Not quite yet, because there is still Norman Ditchburn. The man, who bought 1,000 Telematic 200 boxes He still had them in Great Britain for a long time', some still in storage.

"Norman Ditchburn ... Loved these machines," writes Arthur Phillips, Ditchburn's chief audio engineer, in the Jukebox World archive of Hildegard and Oliver Stamann. In 1967 Instead of scrapping machines that the public thought looked outdated Norman took the 11-year-old mechanisms from the old T200 and put them in new cabinets and put them back into operation as new machines.

So again, the T200 under the Name Music-Maker returns to the UK market with considerable Sales success. A late revival for a great jukebox, Arthur Phillips - said that the T200 "one was the best in the world. "

We thank Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt, Hildegard and Oliver Stamann and Daniel Reuß for the support in our research.

Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt is working on a detailed Chronicle of the company Tonomat (Available in German Language only). you can order direct from her for the price of 20€. Contact:

[diefenhardt@outlook.de](mailto:diefenhardt@outlook.de)

Rita Diefenhardt-Schmitt  
Ulmenweg8 65520  
Bad Camberg.

Also available from the online shop at [www.jukebox-world.de](http://www.jukebox-world.de)