

THE **hi-fi** SHOW

HIFICRITIC REPORTS on the Second *Hi Fi News* Show, Windsor,
November 1-2: 2014



Windsor, November 1-2: 2014: **THE hi-fi SHOW** from
Hi Fi News

Held at the Beaumont event and conference centre just by Runnymede, over a scattering of rooms over two floors, there are also some larger rooms capable of coping with audiences of 20 or more. This is a high end show, especially for the larger UK distributors whose diverse ranges are near impossible to showcase in the usual hotel bedrooms. Thus Symmetry, Absolute Sounds, NAIM, PMC and KOG Audio for example enjoyed use of the larger spaces and showed genuine high end systems to good effect. Some of the larger UK brands also came in style including Musical Fidelity. Altogether there were more than 80 brands represented, from AKG to WireWorld over some 40 rooms.

Absolute Sounds

Absolute Sounds played to packed houses in their main rooms with extended queuing to get in. Those new **Audio Research** Classic series preamp **GS3** (including phono stage and headphone amplifier) and **GS150** power amplifiers,

which were seen in dummy form at Munich earlier in the year, were now completed and drove the latest **Wilson Audio** Sasha 2
(reviewed HIFICRITIC Vol 8 No 2), the demo hosted by that redoubtable recording engineer Peter McGrath, using some of his original HD material.



Peter McGrath presenting using some of his recordings, supported by A/S founder Ricardo Franassovici

Crisp transients and excellent depth and ambience characterised this high end installation. An integrated stereo version of the **GS150** is also promised. As the name suggests these amplifiers uses the noted **KT150** output tetrodes
In their second room I checked out the **Sonus Faber Olympica 3** at one end, showing off its fabled dynamic range and subtle delivery, seemingly improbable from such a slim and finely finished profile. Here, the new USA made **Krell** integrated amplifier, the **Vanguard**, also made its mark, ably driving these **Sonus Fabers** to improbably high sound levels.



At the other end of the room the beautifully lacquered **Crystal Cable Minissimos** now heard here in production guise were playing with those slim chromiumed **Devialet** amplifiers. The aim here is for **Crystal** to provide in a smaller scale some of the performance of the larger reference level **Crystal** speakers. The SAM speaker matching system was not officially available for this costly miniature reference speaker. **Crystal** founder Gabi Rijnveld had nevertheless persuaded **Devialet** to show an early version of **SAM** (the loudspeaker specific characterising software) prototype for the **Minissimo** in technical presentation by **Hi Fi News** editor Paul Miller at this show.



Crystal Minissimo (which is much heavier than it looks!)

In **Absolute Sounds** third room, this the largest, that relatively compact **Magico** floorstander, the **S3** (HIFICRITIC Vo18 No3), was driven by the latest **Constellation** amplification, sounding particularly fine replaying a Mozart piano concerto to a substantial and notably spellbound audience.



Ricardo (left) demonstrating the **Magico S3** driven by **Constellation** amplification



The handsome new **Copland DA150 DAC** and headphone preamplifier here is mock up form.



EAT. Another new, nicely engineered turntable, the **C-Sharp**, this time with carbon fibre and an **EAT** aluminium alloy and carbon fibre arm, available from **Absolute Sounds**. **EAT** headed by Jozefina Lightenegger, is also responsible for those custom thermionic valves.

KOG Audio



Avalon Transcendent loudspeakers were playing with **VTL** amplification and **DCS** digital replay in the **KOG** Audio room.

Entreq ground noise suppression was much in evidence, those natural wood and heavy enclosures requiring their own stand when used in these numbers.



KOG also showed the established **Estelon XA** three-way to good effect together with the massive **Vitus** monoblocks. **KOG's** Mark Standbridge shows off this loudspeaker's unusual and curvaceous proportions. Here the sound was delicately defined with well focused stereo imaging.

NAIM presented the **Statement NAC S1** pre and double **NAP S1** monoblock power amplifiers driving the top of the line **Focal Grande Utopia BE EM**, the one with the regulated and adjustable bass electromagnet power supply.

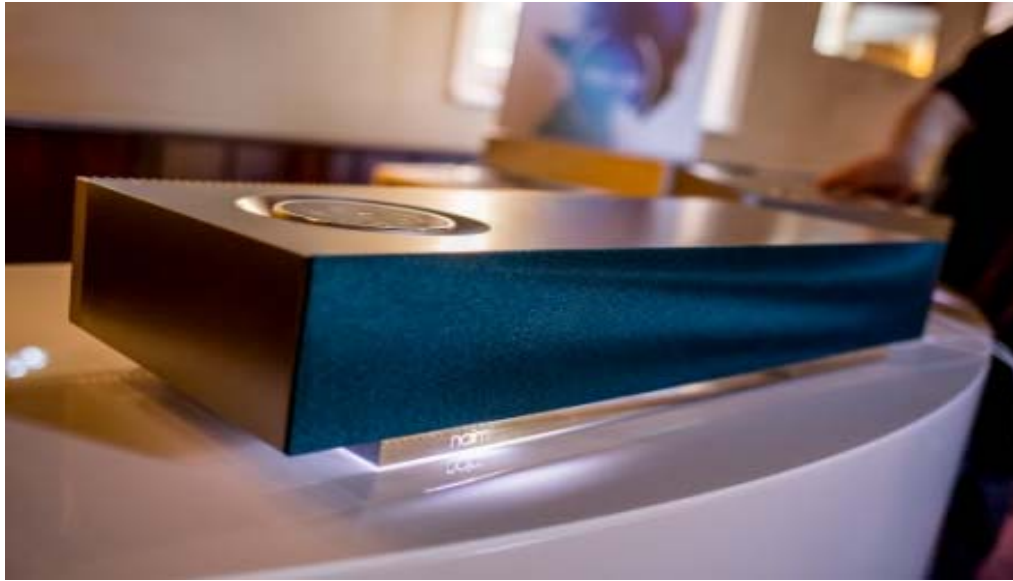


NAIM Statement NAC S1 pre and double NAP S1



Focal Grande Utopia BE EM

Certainly one of the better sounding rooms at the show these massive speakers will comfortably deliver with these powerful electronics while the adjustable bass tuning helped get the sound right on the day



NAIM's MUSO all in one speaker systems were to be found at the bar,
Or rather one the bars at this extensive venue.

(BTW the NAIM pix from Dominik, with thanks, mine had mysteriously evaporated!)



Symmetry announced the return of **Audio Alchemy**, of budget DAC fame decades ago, and principal and designer **Peter Madnick** (above) was sharing his show attention between the costly, upmarket and well regarded **Constellations** where he is also a co-designer, and his rather less expensive product lines from the newly relaunched **Audio Alchemy** brand. The components seen behind Peter are priced in the £1,500 range.



Nigel Crump of **Symmetry** aided by loan **Dynaudio Consonance** flagship loudspeakers, begins his presentation, also noting that he now supplies the classic moving coil Japanese cartridge brand, **Kiseki**.

Chord Electronics



Chord founder **John Franks** was using the **KEF Blade** for his presentation of those superbly finished alloy audio components, here working with his new matching satin alloy rack.



PMC were alternating dems of the well regarded **fact.12** and also the lower cost **20.26** to notable success, while the alternative analogue replay was close the highest level from **Vertere**. Amplification was by **Bryston**.



The elegantly arranged **Hi Fi News** room featured **Brodmann** loudspeakers and hosted talks by Hi Fi News authors including **Keith Howard**.



The diminutive Japanese made **Kiso Acoustic** mini monitor with an ebony treble horn and an 'active' enclosure in thin-wall, musical instrument grade timber. This was ably driven by **Trilogy** electronics, these two brands handled by **Symmetry**.



Musical Fidelity provided a relaxed and informative sound with their latest pre- power amplification driving the established **B&W 800** series loudspeakers.



Quite a number of high end headphones were exhibited often with DAC and headphone amplifier combinations such as **GEEKOUT**.



Melco is a new name to the audio server market but has an established origin with the well known **Buffalo** drives. Ironically the little known Japanese firm of Melco created the internationally popular **Buffalo** HDD drive range. These new Melco products are audiophile orientated audio music vault components with intelligent programming and sensible user interfaces. There is a solid state memory version where the usual read/write programming for data purposes has been rewritten for higher audio quality. Industry stalwart **Alan Ainslie** manages this range in the UK for Melco bringing to bear his broad experience in this field.



Elac showed their **WS 1645**, a diminutive and remarkably effective miniature wall mount speaker, the 4inch bass-mid driver fitted with their latest diamond embossed, composite cone technology. High sound levels were clearly possible with vibrant clarity. Treble was by the established Elac folded ribbon.

The **Elac** floor standing speaker accompanying this demo was shown with their unique 4Pi plus omnidirectional ribbon tweeter, originally developed by **Van Den Hul**. This may be used as a go faster accessory with any loudspeaker, to improve the sense of high frequency 'air' in the room. The little wall mount can be seen behind.



T+A Electronics



The impressive **T+A** lineup, here driving **Dynaudio Consonance** speakers. The **T+A** line is now distributed by Dynaudio UK



This system could play very loud, and at a visitor request at one point, rather too loudly for me as I beat a hasty exit.

Decent Audio were showing the **Magneplanars** , the **MG3.7i** three way with true ribbon treble, and with the **Kronos Sparta** contra-rotating platter turntable seen at Munich. Electronics were by **Audio Analogue**.



Max **Townshend** had a sound room demonstrating his established three-way loudspeakers fitted with ribbon mid and treble units, and as expected, located on those characteristic damped, low frequency decoupling mounts. It was a difficult room but the sound was nonetheless impressive, with convincing bass grunt and slam.



Puresound were exhibiting their respected and well priced valve electronics here demonstrated with massive punch and dynamics thanks to the adoption for this show of the substantial three-way **Ucello** horn speakers from **Simon Meares**, simonmearesaudio.com. These are hand finished in natural wood with integral horns. With an Eminence 15inch horn loaded bass driver, the low frequency dynamics were simply first class and the massive 105dB/W sensitivity allowed the **Puresound** electronics to rip. Support came from the noted **Aurasound Vida** phono pre and an **Audio Note** cartridge and step-up.



Micromega MY range is now handled by Abbas Hussain at Nue World and a complete line of electronics has now appeared with matching compact loudspeakers available in custom finishes including quilted leather. He is also WireWorld UK. These complement the original MYDAC



CAD



CAD , Computer Audio Design were now showing their latest one-piece audio drive the **CAT**, incorporating all they have learned from optimising computer music replay, especially in conjunction with their noted, purist, NOS DAC. Pleasing, detailed sounds were evident in a difficult room acoustic, also featuring **Wilson Audio Duette Series 2** loudspeakers.

<p>Brand List for Exhibits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • Constellation Audio • Copland • Creaktiv Systems • Crystal Cable • D'Agostino Master Systems • darTZeel • dCS • Devialet • Dynaudio UK • EAT • ELAC • Estelon • exaSound Audio Design • Focal • Furutech • GamuT Audio • Graham Nalty • Harman/Kardon • HiFiMan • Hi-Fi Racks • iFI Audio • in-akustik • Isol-8 • IsoTek • Jadis • JansZen • JBL • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J C Verdier • Jeff Rowland Design Group • Kate Koeppel Designs • KLE Innovations • Koetsu • Krell Industries • Kronos Audio Product • Light Harmonic • Longdog Audio • Lyra • Magico • Magnepan Inc • Mains Cables R Us • Mark Levinson • MartinLogan • Metronome • Micromega • Ming Da Valve Audio UK • Modwright Instruments • Music On Vinyl • Musical Fidelity • Nagaoka • Naim Audio • oBravo • Oppo • Oyaide Electric Ltd • Paradigm • PMC • Prima Luna • Primare • PS Audio • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PureSound • Revel • Schiit Audio • Seismic Isolation • Sieveking Sound • Signal Projects • Simon Mears Audio • Sonus faber • Stax • Stereolab • Stillpoints • STST • Sumiko • Synergistic Research • System Audio • T+A • TAD • TechDAS • Tellurium-Q • Theme One Records • Townshend Audio • Transfiguration • Transparent Audio • Trilogy Audio Systems • Trinnov Audio • Tri-Planar • Tune Audio • Usher Audio • Van Damme Cables • Vandersteen Audio • Vinyl Passion • Vitus Audio • VTL • Wilson Audio • WireWorld • Wisdom Audio 	
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