



National Audio Show 2015: September Whittlebury Hall

Crowds of familiar attendees turned up for NAS 2015, not so many to form large queues, but sufficient to keep most demonstration rooms and stands well occupied. The industry trade group Clarity appointed judges to rate the quality of exhibits and demonstrations and *DCS* scored first prize for the second year with a fine demo of their latest versatile CD player, the *Rossini*, driving *D'Agostino* monoblocks and *Wilson Audio Alexias*. While the image height was slightly high (which can be adjusted by micro tuning alignment of the Wilson mid and treble housings), the focus, clarity, dynamics and micro detail were exceptional for this setup.



Some products stood out, thanks as usual to a combination of product performance and skilled setup, the latter plain to hear even in the difficult rooms. The big *Kudos Titan 808* two box floor stander was fielded in two nearby rooms run by expert dealer *Cymbiosis* (Peter Swain), one in full active form, low frequency corrected with *Linn Exact* electronics: *Linn Klimax LP12*, *Linn Klimax DSM*, *Linn Klimax Exaktbox 6*,



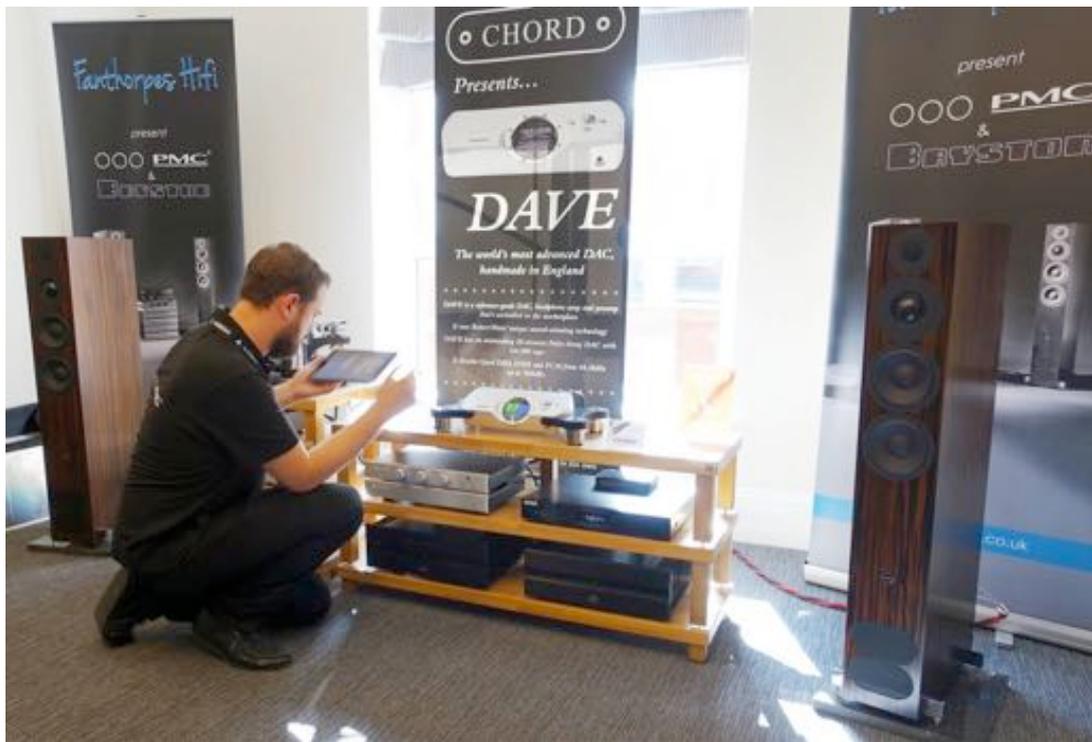
Linn Klimax Solo power amplifiers and Chord cables.

The other *Titan* demo was passive, driven by a *LINN LP 12* source and *Naim* electronics; *Linn LP12 Turntable with Naim Aro and Linn cartridge*, *Naim NDS Network Player inc 2 x 555PS*, *Naim NAC 552/552PS DR*, *Naim NAP500/500PS*, *Naim Super Lumina cables*, *Naim Fraim* supports. They were both very good, the first impressively focused and direct with very taut bass, the second from LP sources more relaxed and flowing, and certainly comparable in overall musicality.



Scansonic MB 2.5 tower speakers

I was very impressed by the moderately priced *Scansonic MB 2.5* tower speakers (via *Decent Audio*) with that top class 'ribbon' tweeter derived from *Raidho* technology, and the pricing is most competitive. They were particularly well set up in the smaller *High End Cable* room. *Raidho* founder/designer Michael Borrensen conceived these new models which form an extensive range of seven designs.



Fairthorpes showing PMC, Bryston and the Chord Electronics Dave DAC



Seen at several demonstration areas was the new *Chord Electronics DAC*, the *DAVE* which includes a digital preamp and headphone amp and a truly advanced digital data processing section.



Headphones formed a sizeable grouping with almost all the high end brands on show over an expanded area.



AKG N90Q

I was taken by the high tech *AKG N90Q* which looks like a normal high end design and is certainly not being given away at £1300, but it has certain redeeming aspects which have prompted our request for review sample, to be assessed by expert Jon Honeyball. This rechargeable powered phone begins with multi-mic advanced noise cancellation, continues to an auto calibration feature which measures the acoustical impedance of the owner's ears over frequency and adjusts the response accordingly. It also includes advanced DSP tone controls to customise the frequency balance and perspective. It has USB and HD audio connectivity with built in high resolution DACs and the sound stage may be tuned through spatial listening controls.

Audio Physic's 30 year anniversary delivered the legendary *Avanti* from 1989, now reborn, and was on show (from *Audio Emotion*), now a full three-way and fitted with the proprietary hyper holographic cone-dome tweeter.

While I am familiar with the strongly represented range of established *Clearaudio* turntables, I was surprised to find another large range of 'made in Germany' examples by *Acoustic Signature* with a brochure with the most amazing product photography. This well presented line turntables and arms comes is supplied by audioemotion.co.uk



One of those impressive *Acoustic Signatures* the *Thunder* at nearly £8,000

Henley put on the usual wide ranging exhibits, with smaller demo areas for specific lines such as Project and Roksan



and Opera to name but a few.



The new *Opera Prima 2015*, a tidy little number.

The *Project* range from Henley continues to expand, now with 14 turntables reaching to the £7,000 Signature. By contrast the Essential II is just £209 with an Ortofon cartridge ready fitted!

ART Audio



On day two *ART Audio* were nicely on form with *Tannoy GRF* rectangular rebuilds fitted with the famous 15inch driver, and sweetly driven by *ART Adagio* triode amplifiers.

VIVID were exhibiting with the latest limited edition of the 3way *OVAL B1d* with integral stand and while the room was a tad over reflective, speed and clarity were evident in the demonstration.



chasingthedragon.co.uk



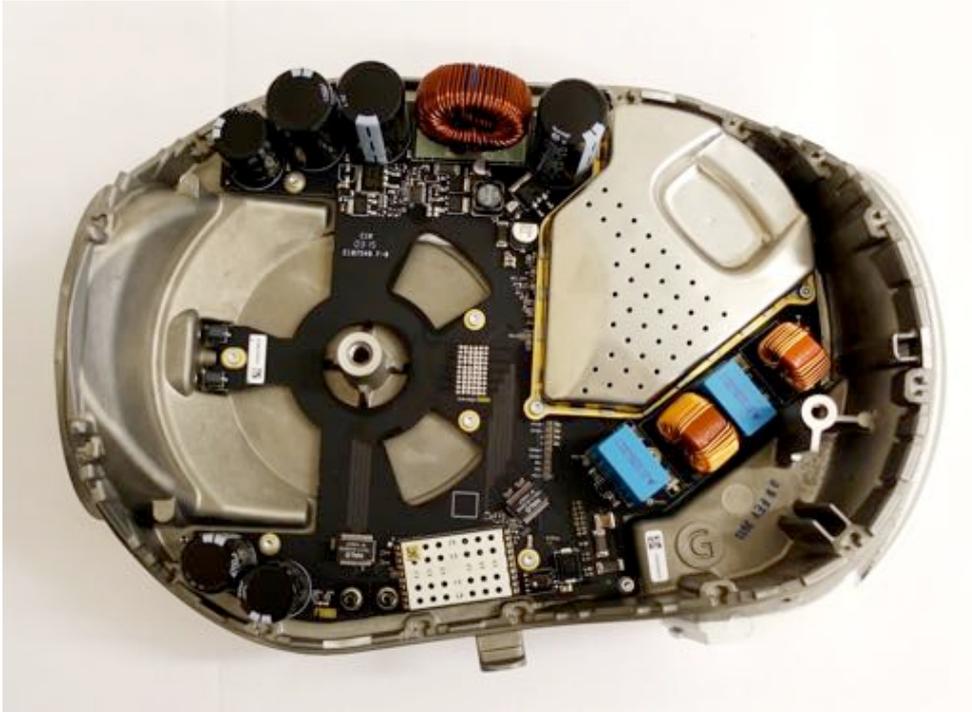
Mike Valentine , *chasingthedragon.co.uk* demonstrated his direct cut and master recordings of the Syd Lawrence Orchestra to packed houses using the new *ART Alnico Reference* loudspeakers which seemed to be happy serving these large audiences at high sound levels. Amplification was by *Soulution*, and the direct cut pressings have now been released (and a very natural sound too).



Mike Valentine on duty



Devialet Phantom: The well known, flat cased chromed amplifiers were absent in favour of a single speaker demonstration of the compact wirelessly connected all-in-one, wireless three-way active *Phantoms*. This pair was solo, in contrast the veritable heap of them playing all at once in the Munich show. I felt the room was too large for them and they were too far from boundaries but they made a gallant effort, the best I have heard from them so far.



A *Devialet Phantom* example was part disassembled, driver sections removed, to show the finely engineered die- castings within this complex high tech design.



Gethain studio monitors, unusual in that they have forward directed bass though clever acoustic shading methods, are partially open back with acoustic resistance loading.



Queen : The launch of "*Queen: The Studio Collection*" at the UK's National Audio Show 2015 was a success, with well packed sessions. Those humongous PMC MB2 XBD-Active studio monitors were used and were too loud for me at the launch session. Miles Showell at Abbey Road Studios produced this collectable piece of rock history.

Russell Kaufman proudly showed his latest and larger *RussellK* creations, perhaps a little star struck. Careful set up was evident in this awkward room resulting in one of the more articulate demos at this show.





Clearaudio with Gamut and Isotek



Audio Note with Tomei triode (211 single ended) amplification sounded lively and sweet and played to packed houses via their AN series loudspeakers.

As usual it is impossible to cover all the exhibits and my apologies to those I could not fit in this time around.

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