

Hifi Pig Magazine

High End Munich 2015

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Special Publication



In association with



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Hifi Pig
Magazine

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High End Thoughts

Some may say that High End has got just too big for its own good, but where else in the world can you see such a massive collection of audio in one place.

Without a doubt Munich High End is the biggest, and some would argue the best audio show in the world at the moment. Of course there are bigger shows overall (CES) but none that are so dedicated to the playback of two channel audio (*in the main*) as Munich.

Praise must go out in spades to the High End Society that organise the show each year. Their communication before and during the show is second to none. The organisation during the show is also exemplary with every one of the people employed at the MOC knowing what they should be doing and able to advise visitors to the show, invariably in several languages, about whatever they need.

This year was hectic as ever, more so in fact than previous years, with an increase in both visitor numbers and exhibitors, and as such getting to spend a decent amount of quality time in any room was very difficult. The trade day is a great idea, but perhaps I'd like to see that extended another day...but then Munich isn't and shouldn't be just about press and trade...it should be about the enthusiasts that come from all over the world to pay witness to the spectacle that is High End Munich.



Some may say that High End has got just too big for its own good, but where else in the world can you see such a massive collection of audio in one place. I for one hope to see it grow because the size of the show is simply a reflection of the importance of audio in the lives of everyday folk. There is constant talk in the industry of a contracting market and things not being what they were in the golden years of the 80s, but given the enthusiasm and sheer numbers of people at High End, I'd suggest that quality reproduction of music in the home is still very important to a good number of people...and it's growing. There is evidence that the way people want to interact with music, and the kit they play it on, is changing though. This year there were an increasing number of "music centres" or systems that are

designed to go together. Perhaps the vast majority of people just want a good sound in a convenient and easy to use product, without the need to mess about with valves, wires and whatnot. If it gets people listening to more music in their homes, this can only be a good thing.

One of the things I like about High End is the fact that it is accessible to all. You see families attending and enjoying the show. There's live music, there's cars...and there's the beer garden! Who wouldn't want to go if they were within reasonable travelling distance. The infrastructure is all there too...coaches ferry people from hotels to the MOC and back again, the underground network is good and the taxis aren't overly priced. All in all Munich pretty soon becomes a no-brainer and I reckon some of the shows in the UK could learn a thing or two from High End. Add to all this the fact that Munich is a safe and relatively clean city and High End all adds up to a "I may as well make a long weekend of it" kind of deal.

With a name like High End you'd assume that everything was uber-expensive and full of equipment only accessible to the very wealthy, but you'd be surprised. There is a good deal of very affordable stuff about and people are buying it by the bucket load. Headfi was a major event this year and there was everything from headphones and players costing upwards of £2500 to more humble media players and cans. This sector of the market astounds me and surely the bubble must burst sooner or later, though judging by the interest around portable audio this isn't likely to be any time soon.

Of course many of us go to High End to see and listen to products that are simply beyond our reach to have in the home, but all the exhibitors (*apart from one this year*) were welcoming and willing to play a variety of music to anyone who came in their room. Exhibitors at Munich seem to have realised that appearance or attire are no markers for the wealth of someone and that every person may be that next big



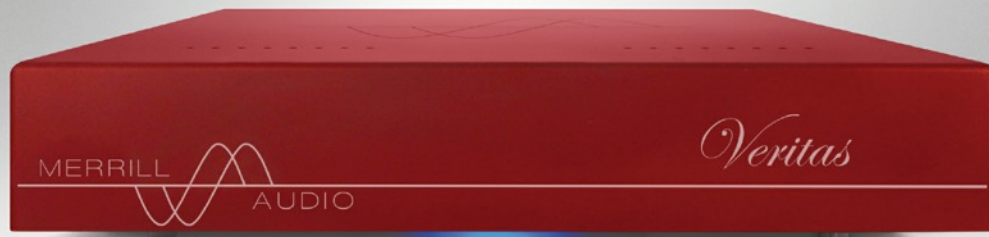
customer...listen up and learn some exhibitors at UK shows. Interact with your audience and get on with the job in hand. Only in one of the rooms, and no I'm not going to name them, did I experience anything that wasn't first a first class example of customer interaction.

This years show was a huge success for Hifi Pig with us barely able to move from one exhibit to the next without being collared and asked to come and look at someone else's stand and so if we missed you or didn't have as much time as we'd have liked to have spent with you then we apologise...perhaps next year.

See you next year...
Stu

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The Newcomers To High End

The Newcomers stand at High end Munich is a great idea we reckon here at Hifi Pig. It gives new companies the opportunity to showcase their new and often innovative products to a massive audience...and the best thing is High End don't charge for it...which is nice.

This year was a great year for the High End Newcomers with some very interesting and novel concepts on show. Sadly, given time constraints our time with the Newcomers was pretty limited but we did manage to speak to most of this year's exhibitors. Read on.

First up was **Benjamin Meyer zur Capellen** who had a very interesting looking diffuser on show. "My aim is to produce acoustic elements to fit in living rooms without making compromises in the acoustic performance" says Benjamin.

The diffusers are one dimensional QRD-diffusers, based on the mathematical works Schröder in the 60s, fitted in a new design and are made of foam.

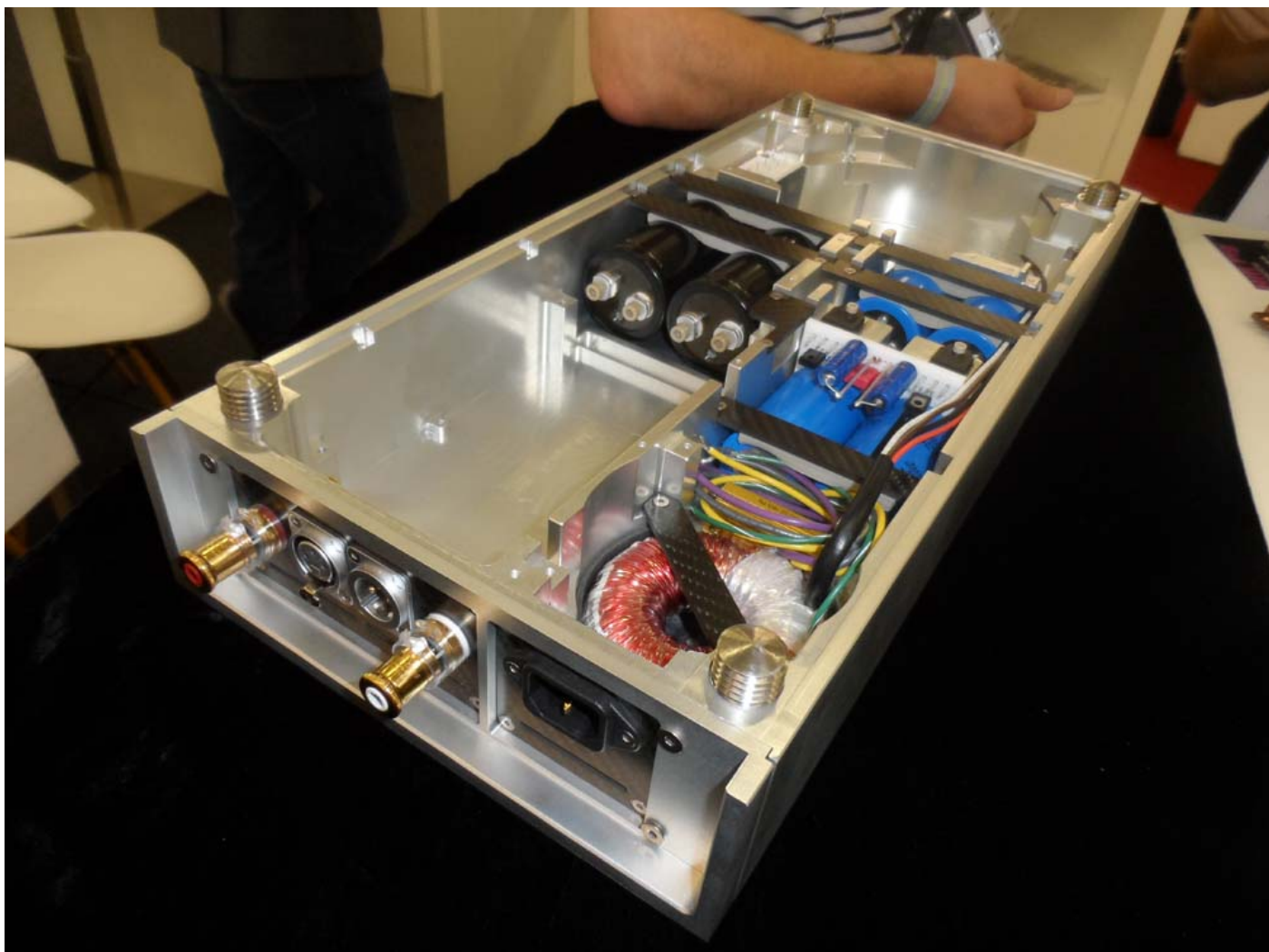
"In a few weeks I will be able to offer bass traps as well, I hope two different kinds, a Helmholtz-Absorber which are very effective at a narrow bandwidth to absorb standing waves and a bass trap with a broader bandwidth to calm the room in the low end" continued Benjamin.

All wooden elements are built from ply wood or MDF and will be delivered painted or paint ready. All



elements are offered in standard sizes, but the sizes are variable and can be fitted to the customers demand.

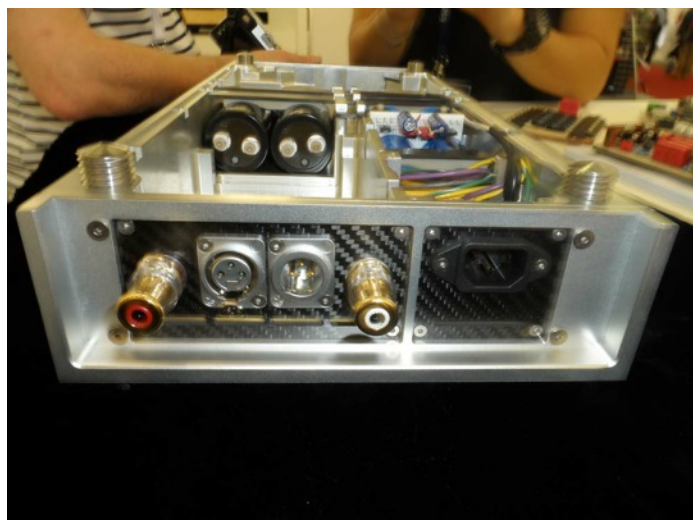
Then we had a beautiful looking amplifier made by Angus Leung of **Westminster Labs**. The Unum amp is meticulously put together and uses very highly specced components throughout. Unum comes in two flavours, the Unum and the Unum Edition. Both are monobloc amplifiers with the standard Unum giving 120 W into 8 Ohms, 240 into 4 Ohms and 480 into 2



Ohms whilst the edition version gives 125 W into 8 Ohms and doubles up all the way to 500W at 2 Ohms.

The Unum from Westminster Labs is a real tour-de-force in understated design both on the inside and the outside. Carbon fibre is used extensively for its low resonance and to reject unwanted interference whilst Titanium screws are used throughout. The massive and beautifully machined brass grounding spikes screw into the body of the amp to minimise vibrations transmitted to the amp from the surrounding environment.

Unum does not use printed circuit boards as Angus believes that they offer an “impure electric transmission route” and so has developed a process where all the components in the amps are held on a machined engineered plastic chassis. “The amps’ components are directly connected and soldered with each other



without intermediate disturbance to give a much more pure and cleaner transmission of signals and power” says Angus. “All this has required us to develop a new soldering procedure that demands a new level of care, devotion and detail” he continues.



Sonic Concept is a new **British** based hi-fi design and manufacturing company and presented its initial range of loudspeaker and electronics products under the **Modern British Audio Company** brand. There are two models of loudspeaker and the company's first amplifier... a 150W dual mono design.

Managing director Darren Hollands founded the business in May 2014 by purchasing the assets of erstwhile loudspeaker manufacturer, O'hEocha. The small team of people, comprising an acoustics engineer, prototyping and production staff and admin, is dedicated to taking the existing and well-respected designs of O'hEocha to the next level. The plan is to produce loudspeakers with truly high fidelity qualities that present a stunning aesthetic, making them desirable to both audiophiles and design conscious consumers. Both the standmount and the floorstander certainly looked the part on the High End Newcomers stand.

Hollands' mission is to build up a substantial audio business at the company's Manston, Kent, facility; with design and manufacturing all taking place at its UK base and as many components as possible being sourced from UK businesses.

"I've been a music loving engineer for many years. Having taking the decision to leave the world of employment, I am now able to turn my attention to my real passion and build a new British based hi-fi company." comments Hollands. "We are a close-knit team of people all focused on making the best performing and fabricated products we can and bringing them to the attention of the traditional audiophile market, but also to those people who want a piece of desirable modern equipment in their homes. I don't believe in the mantra that form must follow function, as this

often results in great sounding but unattractive hi-fi. It is perfectly possible for the two states to happily coexist and this is our philosophy behind the creation of our products under the Modern British Audio Company brand.”

Physical Emotions had on display what can only be described as a behemoth of a turntable. Speaking to the German designer it was clear that his main aim in designing this truly massive vinyl spinner was to build himself the very best turntable he could imagine. We liked his attitude a great deal and it is evidence that the enthusiast-audiophile/engineer is still very much in evidence and thriving.

The Physical Emotions weighs in at an impressive 125 Kg with the concept throughout the design being that energy passes from less massive to massive.

I'd have loved to have been able to take a listen to this at High End Munich....perhaps next year!

German company **X-Odos** were next on the High End's Newcomer's stand with their XO | one, a music server that they say is easy to install and operate. The server has only one button and only the connections that the company feel it really needs. It has an SSD drive onboard and rips and catalogues your CD collection automatically...slide the CD in...done. Back up if your precious files is to an external and optional HDD.



The use of XO | one is completely intuitive and you use either an iPad® or iPhone® to operate and surf your tunes. It will play high-res files up to 24bit/192kHz and you can upload files directly from HIGHRESAUDIO®.

SSB Audio had a very interesting and good sounding little Analogue to Digital Converter (ADC) on dem-





onstration called the Adicon. The ADICON offers one line and one phono input (MM as standard and MC as an option), one line and one headphone output, two digital outputs, six sampling rates and a level meter (SPPM) to adjust the sensitivity of each source individually. Optical TOSLINK & coaxial RCA-Out for the digital audio signal and analogue line outputs provided by two RCA jacks and DIN connector.

There's USB port for direct connection to your Mac/PC as option and a headphone jack on the front pane for the built in headphone amplifier.

Cost is just shy of 1500 Euros.

Greek company **Porfyra Audio** had on display a good looking and well specced pure class A amplifier that puts out 20W a channel (*top right*). Having been a user of an 18 W a side Class A monster for the last couple of years, this is a product that really appeals to me and hopefully we'll get to have a listen to it at some point soon.

Rounding off the Newcomers at High End Munich was a new turntable from **WE Audio Systems** which is made in the Black Forest in Germany. On the couple of occasions we tried to speak to the people on this stand the



designer wasn't available but we will bring you news as soon as we are able.

Hifi Pig would like to wish all the newcomers to High End Munich all the very best for the future of all their enterprises!



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High End Highlights

There is just so much to see and hear at Munich High End that in the end it all becomes a bit of a blur and so, rather than trying to cover absolutely every room and make a comment I wanted to pick out a few of the exhibitors at High End that stood out for me (In no particular order!) and some that have perhaps previously really impressed and this year didn't quite do it for me. Of course in the show environment nothing is going to be perfect and the rooms are far from perfect, though consistently better than the vast majority of rooms at shows in hotels.

Here's part 1 of many...

Sound Galleries in Monaco.



This was in one of the little cabin affairs in one of the downstairs halls and you could have easily missed it. However, once you got inside you were presented with a nice pair of Avantgarde Duos paired with Audiopax electronics and Tellurium Q cables along with DACs from Antelope and Lampizator. I went back to this room a good few times, the last time one of the chaps in there extolling the virtues of Windows 10 over previous versions....it was better. Geoffrey from Sound Galleries should be commended on getting such natural and unforced sound in this space.

Also in the room was acoustic paneling from GIK in the UK. 2 X tri traps in each of the corners for the low end control. On the side walls 3 X 242's to deal with the first reflection points and ensure that



stereo imaging was maintained. On the back wall was thick bass trapping to help with the room modes and stop the back wall cancellations.

Lawrence Audio

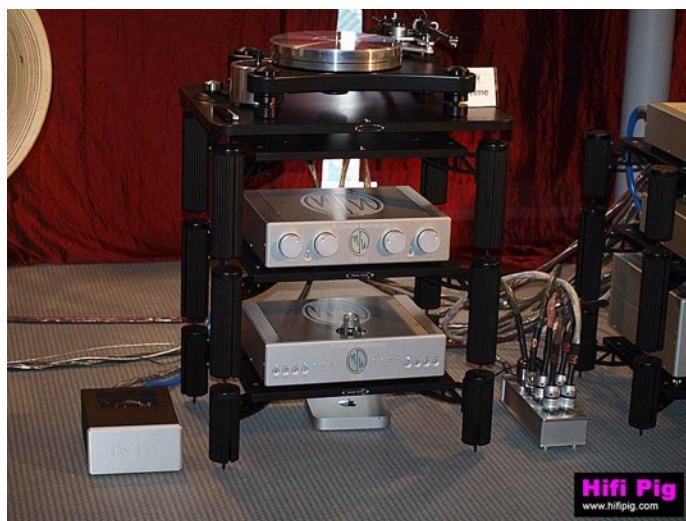
For whatever reason it was, this room was deserted apart from the guys exhibiting but you guys missed a treat with these loudspeakers being beautifully made and making an equally beautiful sound.



Tune Audio, ModWright, VPI and Skogrand

The big Animas have lost the sub that looks like a woodburning stove in this set up and have partnered with Modwright electronics and Skogrand cables (right). Dynamics, scale and sheer musicality were the order of the day in this room. You need a big room to accomodate the whole caboodle but if you have it then this is one set up to consider. This was the first time we'd met Knut from Skogrand in person and what a lovely guy he is...not a hint of pillage in him at all, despite his Viking heritage. We also got to meet the lovely Mat from American turntable manufacturer VPI whose turntables look a LOT better in the flesh than my lousy photography skills show - image shows the VPI Prime.





CAD, Trilogy and Boenicke

We know Computer Audio Design really well and have always been impressed with their DAC (and we have the new CAT transport here for review at the moment) but partnered with the Trilogy electronics and the diminutive Boenicke loudspeakers the sound comes alive. I mentioned these little speakers last year and I'm again amazed at the sound that comes from such a diminutive package. Surely a



strong contender for those looking for an unobtrusive and yet big sounding loudspeaker.

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Hi-fi and Home Entertainment Re-Imagined



German Physiks

Sadly we missed the live music but I do like the sound that these omnidirectional speakers make. Whilst they may look somewhat "different" it can't be denied that they certainly do the business sonically and no matter where you position yourself in the room you do seem to get a decent presentation of the stereo image. Janine has reviewed these for Hifi Pig, but I'm dying to give them a bash in our living room.



Avid and Eggleston Works

Avid are perhaps known for their turntables and phonostages, but this year the star of their room had to be the new monoblocs and preamplifier on show. They are big in stature and equally big on sound...though I'd have liked to have had the opportunity to give them a proper workout and crank them up a little but alas time constraints dictated otherwise!!



Jo Sound

Joe (*right*) from JoSound must be one of the nicest folks in audio at the moment and that's saying something as we know LOADS of really nice people who make doing what we do such a pleasure.



This year Joe was presenting his new Horus loudspeakers along with Arte Forme valve amplification and O2A cables by the lovely Anna Popova. The new speakers have done away with the previous models' Voxativ drivers in favour of a new series of drivers with this model being AER MK1 from AER Loudspeakers in Stuttgart. Despite being smaller than JoSounds other speakers the new Horus (26 000 EUROS) does deliver on sound and we were pretty impressed with the system as a whole. However, later in the show when we went in to pick up one of our cables we'd used for the earlier dem' we heard something completely new....more dynamic, more bass and a more refined treble element. All that had changed in the system was the preamplifier and with the Bespoke Audio amp in place the system just came alive. Our current test track is Daft Punk's "Contact" and there's some systems that fail to cope with the frequency extremes but this one did admirably. The speakers and amps are currently in our living room and a full report will follow in due course.

Silbatone

You can't really fail but be impressed with Silbatone's offering. The sheer scale and size of the speakers they bring to Munich is just utterly mental and this year was no exception. Unfortunately we didn't get to hear the main system and despite the oohs



and ahs from some quarters I was left a little disappointed with the smaller set up. We didn't have time to go back sadly as I'm sure the mahoosive horns would have impressed as they have before. Krat-fwerk on the Silbatone system a couple of years ago is still one of my best moments in hifi ever!



Townshend Audio



Max Townshend is a well known figure in the Hifi world and has been for decades and I remember well the first Rock turntable, now in Rock 7 guise but still sporting the well known trough and paddle arrangement. This year they had a small booth playing, amongst other things the Rock 7 turntable but it was the little dem' that Max did for us outside for his Splendid Isolation platforms that really impressed. Basically Max had two seismographs attached to two speakers. One speaker was on the Splendid Isolation platform and the other wasn't. Now the speaker on the platform was free to sway about a good deal and it does look a bit unwieldy, but walking away from both speakers Max stamped his foot (on a massive concrete floor at ground level) and the results on the screens were dramatic. Huge spikes on the seismograph for the speaker on the floor and nothing at all on the screen for the speaker on the stand. One may argue that this is a bit over dramatic but the results certainly speak for themselves!

[Watch the video.](#)

Orpheus



This was another standout room for me and could have easily been my pick of the bunch. Powerful and yet restrained and one that will please many.

Musical Stones



Time to be impressed again and this time by loudspeakers that are hewn from a single piece of granite. The first thing I do when a pair of speakers come in for review is the "tap test" - a hefty knuckle rap in the top of the cabs to see how resonant they are. Musical stones are dead as a dead thing... nothing!

The sound in the room was focused and unforced and the drivers they use are clearly of a high quality. Their top of the range model is made from the same marble as the marble used for Michael Angelo's David which we thought was pretty cool stuff!

JoSound



(Pictured right to left Norman Yang, Pierre Lagrange, Giulio Cesare Ricci, Anna Popova and Joe Jouhal)

Horus landed in Munich for the HighEnd 2015 and sang like a song bird.

We had the honour of a visit from Maestro Giulio Cesare Ricci of Fonè Records and after listening to some of his own recordings this is what he had to say:

"You know, I made these recordings. This is just as I remember them, Nothing else"

Such high praise was down to the quality of all the components in the system and the hard work of the room team in setting it up well.

So we would like to thank AER (drive units), O2A (cables,) Arte Forma (amplifiers,) Fonica (turntable), Abbingdon Music Research (CD and DAC) and The Bespoke Audio Company (passive preamp).

A huge thanks to all those kind visitors who took the time to listen to our products.

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Daudio

This was an interesting room and an interesting speaker too. The little speaker you see in the picture is born out of a DIY design that has been carefully redesigned to appeal to a wider audience. The mid driver is in an open baffle configuration as is the suspended ribbon tweeter. There's an upward firing bass driver and whilst all this is in a very small speaker it seemed to be pretty nice on the jazz that was playing in the room when we arrived. Open baffles do something really nice to the sound and make for an open and organic sound and that's what you have here, albeit in a far from DIY form. The loudspeakers come with optional amplifiers and player which all in all make for a very good looking and good sounding system.

Lautsprecher und Mehr



I'm often wary of loudspeakers that are weird and wonderful shapes and so when we walked into this



particular room I was prepared to be overwhelmingly underwhelmed...but how wrong could I have been!

I like two channel done with two speakers but here you had the main speakers and then several subs (the round things on the floor). Sound was impressive and detailed with real bass whoomf. The chap doing the dem' then switched over to the second set of speakers that employ a ribbon tweeter (we like ribbon tweeters) and he was using just one sub. OK, this is more like it. Much more my idea of audio with a more coherent and all round sound. I really enjoyed this room and it was a strong contender as one of the best sounding rooms with the second set of speakers and just one sub in place.

This is a system that will certainly appeal to a lot of people who want interesting looking equipment without sacrificing that wow factor...then others will no doubt hate the looks of these!!

I didn't ask the price but I imagine this little lot will not come cheap!

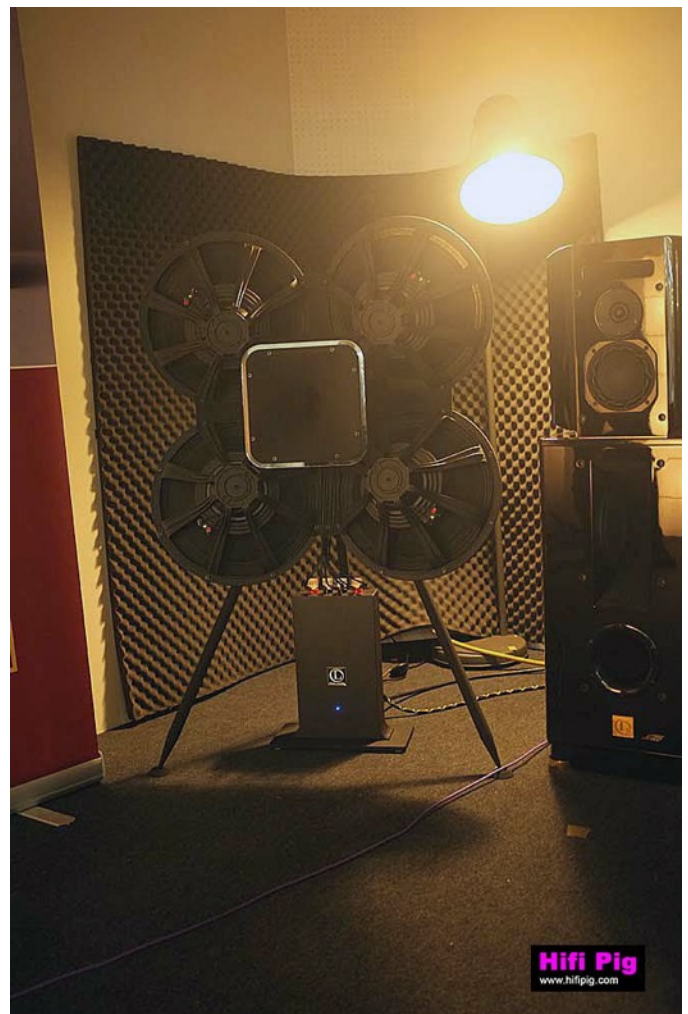
Moon and Martin Logan

I've always been a bit of a fan of both these brands and wasn't disappointed with the room at High end Munich. There's natural synergy going on here that works really well to produce a really enjoyable listen. Plenty of air and yet still power aplenty!



Onda Ligera

Now here was one weird looking pair of speakers that looked like some kind of odd partnering between an open baffle loudspeaker and an insect. The sound wasn't too shabby though and despite their looks I really enjoyed this room for its powerful bottom end and very nice mids. Not sure I could live with something so visually "challenging though"...though they do produce some more conventional looking loudspeakers.



Leema

Leema's room was nice and chilled and boy do those little Xen loudspeakers work well. expect a review of these loudspeakers and the Elements CD player in the very near future on Hifi Pig.



Portento Audio

Sadly this was only a stand but what lovely people and making products that look exceptionally well put together and at prices that seemed very reasonable to me.



Custom Design

From the North East of England Custom Design make lovely looking hifi furniture that is all designed and built in the North East.



Some Follow

others

Leedh!



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Grimm

I've seen Grimm speakers a lot at the various shows in Europe and what never fails to baffle me is the amount of toe in these speakers are always given... it just doesn't look like it should work. However, on each and every occasion I've heard these speakers I've been impressed with their imaging and clarity of sound.



Ear Yoshino

Ok, these were a bit of a pig to photograph given their lovely finish but they do look great in the flesh and the sound in this room was one of the best of the show for me.



Leedh

I make no excuse for my liking of these unusual French loudspeakers - they really do not look like they should work at all but they really do. Today they were partnered with a pair of Devialet amps and sounded pretty awesome.

Possibly as revealing a speaker as you can find.



Tannoy

This was a lovely room in which to sit and while away the time for a half hour or so. The team that put this room together managed to pull off a very reasonable sound, along with a really nice ambience that was conducive to sitting and listening to tunes rather than trying to analyse everything.



Burmester

This has to be perhaps the most bling item of audio I've ever seen but I can see it being popular with many. Sadly we didn't get a chance to hear this compact and stylish (beauty is in the eye caveat in place) system.



Living Voice



Went in this room a couple of times and to be honest you can't help but be impressed with the Vox Olympian. Not only is this speaker system a tour de force in fit and finish but it also sounds absolutely tremendous helped along by the Kondo amplification. I'd love to hear music more to my taste being played but the sheer scale and impact of the sound is awesome whatever is playing. One of my top five speakers on my bucket list!

KEF and Arcam

Always a favourite room for the sheer enthusiasm of the people in it and this year was no exception. The Blade 2 loudspeakers playing when we went in are a tad smaller than their bigger brothers but you would hardly notice it. Also on show were headphones, in

ears etc. These companies "get" that not everyone is looking for high-end products and produce kit across the price ranges, with something to suit all pockets.



Totem

Bang for buck these speakers have to be up there with the best. Diminutive and yet powerful and accurate sound.



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WHAT YOU FEEL
THEY DON'T SEE
WHAT YOU SEE
THEY DON'T HEAR
WHAT YOU HEAR
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Live Music With Lyn Stanley

Lyn has taken the Hifi world by storm. Her beautiful voice and high quality jazz recordings lend themselves to being played on high end hifi systems

One of the great things about High End Munich is the fact that it is a meeting place and hub for the whole Hifi world.

People that you know from facebook suddenly appear in the flesh and before you know it that 'meet in the beer garden at 12' has become a gathering worthy of the United Nations!

This year it was particularly nice to meet so many of our American friends ...loads of them had made the journey over to Europe for the show (I think they probably heard that we have better beer than they do!) and it was fantastic to catch up with them all.....in fact it was truly awesome!

We are waiting for the lift (sorry, elevator, my American





The room is completely packed with eager fans and absolutely boiling hot.....Lyn, being an utter professional, still manages to look stunningly cool, calm and collected.

Now, with the show being as it is, our plans to be there early for the 4pm show don't happen and we only just manage to squeeze in a bit late.

I say squeeze because the room is completely packed with eager fans and absolutely boiling hot.....Lyn, being an utter professional, still manages to look stunningly cool, calm and collected.

Lyn treats us to a demonstration of her live voice against the vinyl version of 'Fever' from her 'Lost in Romance' album.

The performance is seamless, with all the lush richness of her voice coming through whether we are listening to her live or recorded.....it just goes to show how good music can sound if the recording, production, pressing and the equipment it is played back on is right.

Lyn literally purrs her way through the track (no wonder our 'Jazz Cat' loves her so much) and it is with sadness that we can only stay for a short time as we have to make our way to a meeting.

I like Lyn a lot. She is a strong woman who knows how she wants her music to sound; she takes control of every part of the recording and performance process and owns her music.

She captivates the audience and has them eating out of her handI can't wait to hear her perform live again, but in the meantime, myself, my husband and Lyn's biggest fan, Clio the 'Jazz Cat' can enjoy her music on vinyl in the comfort of our own home....and it will sound just like she is there with us.

friends) on the top floor of the High End Show.

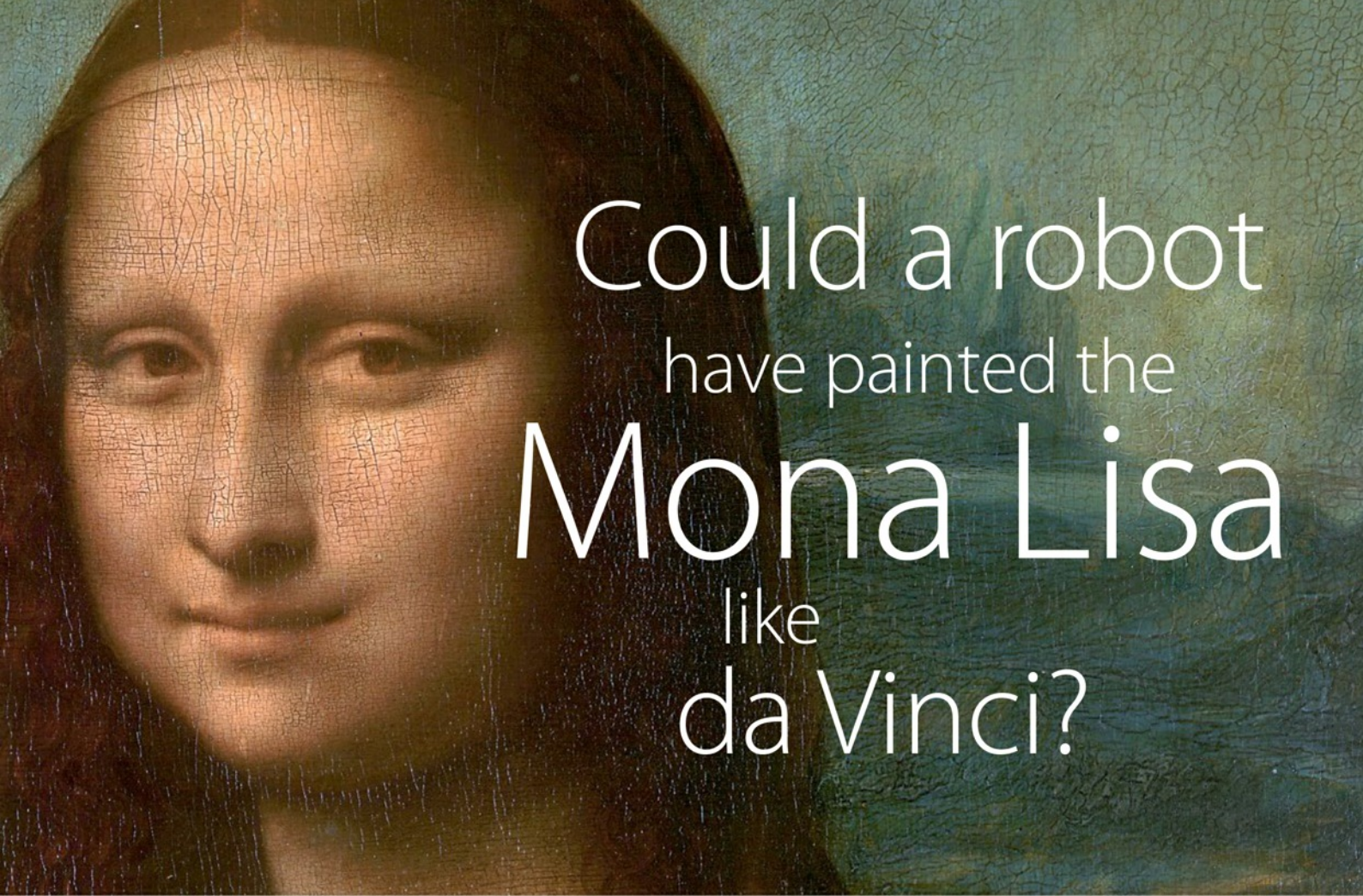
The doors open to reveal a blond vision of loveliness, a lady I have never met in person before shouts 'Lin!' I shout 'Lyn!' and we hug each other like old friends....much to the bewilderment of several nearby Germans who can't quite work out why the blond and the pink haired ladies are so excited.

Lyn and I had hoped to meet last year but it never happened so we were determined to get together this year.

Lyn has taken the Hifi world by storm. Her beautiful voice and high quality jazz recordings lend themselves to being played on high end hifi systems....so naturally she has quickly become one of the artists of choice for show exhibitors.

This year Lyn is also performing twice a day in the Purist Audio Design room.

I am partial to a bit of jazz (well, you can't listen to techno all the time) and I love to hear quality live music...so I know we are in for a treat.



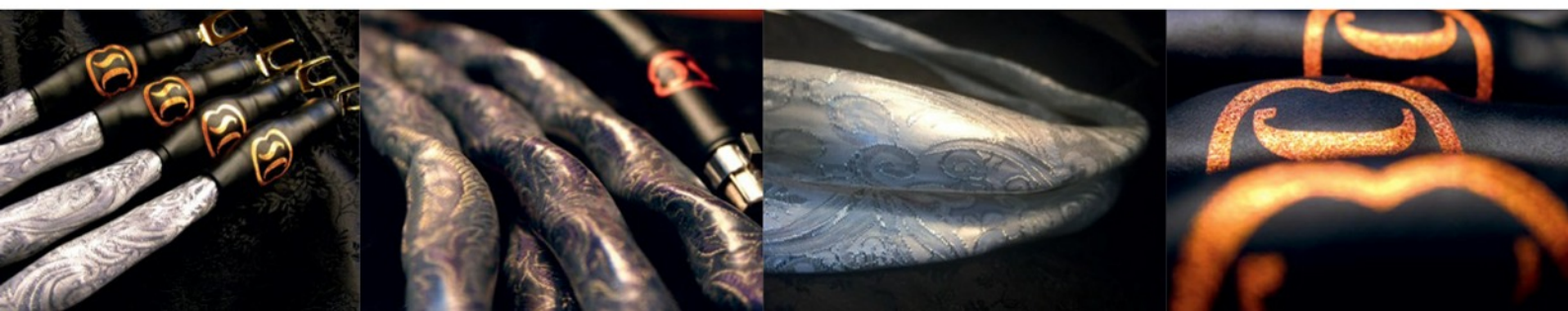
Could a robot have painted the Mona Lisa like da Vinci?

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Bird's Eye View – From Big Horns to Compact Loudspeakers, Lin Gives Her Thoughts

Someone had to do it, didn't they? So Realhorns did.

This was probably one of the most photographed exhibits at the show and begs the question 'How did they get it in here?' Answer: Carefully!



Avantgarde Acoustic could probably be subtitled 'Lords of the Horn' if that didn't sound really quite rude.



It was great to see the team including Holger and his wife Beate, Peter and of course the wonderful Armin.



They have made some changes to the workings of their range of loudspeakers and the Duo's that they were using in their room looked and sounded stunning, with the electronics in matching cherry lipstick red it was a sight and sound to behold.

They were also in evidence in some of the other rooms that sounded amazing, including in the Fono Acoustica room and Sound Galleries who were featuring the new Silver Diamond cable from Tellurium Q and some rather tasty Audiopax amplifiers.

But even the Horn Lords (does that sound less rude?) have produced a more lifestyle friendly system.....the Zero1 is still stunning and apparently sells faster than they can make them.

Big, crazy horns were the order of the day from **Vienna Physix** in the form of these rather fetching orange Diva Grandezza's ... I recall the white pair in their booth sounded good too but for the life of me I don't recall what they were playing, so it was probably plinky plonky stuff or classical.



If you want really big horns then you have to visit **Silbatone's** roomalways something crazy and Western Electrically in there!



Another must visit on the horn tour has to be **Living Voice** in the **Definitive Audio** roompaired once again with Kondo the room looked and sounded beautiful.



Focal are known for their large range of loudspeakers, they cater for just about every budget with their French made designs.



Their Grand Utopia speaker is huge (I know, not a horn) and one of those designs that is instantly recognisable, but their design signature is still there in the two models of the new Sopra range that was introduced at this year's High End Munich.

The new speakers do not compromise on quality but the more compact design makes them much more liveable with in a smaller home.

Yamamura Crawley are probably top of the list of 'Loudspeakers that I want to hear in a room next year'. An interesting pairing of mahoosive horns and a couple of carbon fibre omnidirectional speakers.....interesting!



ed amazing whenever we have heard them but this year, paired with Modwright electronics, Skogrand cables and a VPI turntable they were very special...yes they are big, but why not if you have the room!



My Audio Art had an interesting booth....in a 'where's the Hifi?' moment we realised that they have speakers fitted into customisable art panelsand the sound was great, which I was surprised about....I could see these doing well in the home and commercial environment, shops, restaurants etc (*top right*).

They don't come much bigger or hornier than the **Tune Audio Anima** loudspeakers, they have sound-



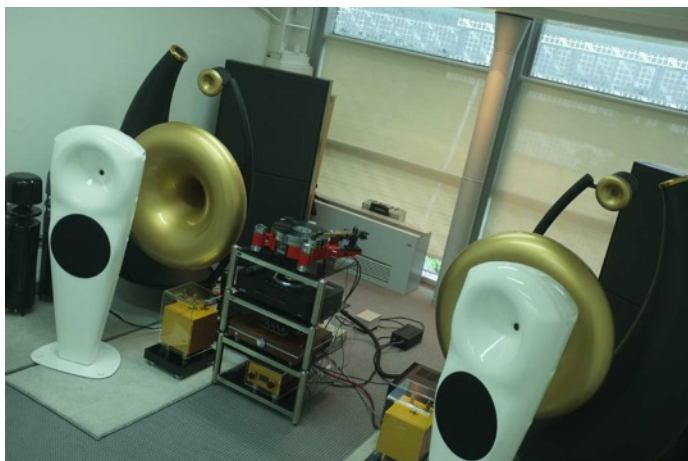
Even **Wilson** have also gone more compact with the European release of Sabrina, their new speaker, you can read more about her in [our report from the launch event here](#).



So whichever way you want to swing, from the biggest horns to the most compact modern speaker, there was something for everyone's taste at the High End Munich Show this year!

Lin

We are big fans of **hORNS** from Poland.....we have their Mummy speakers at home, and I always marvel at how they can get so much horn into one of the MOC's smaller rooms AND make it sound great.....must be some kind of witchcraft!



Sonus Faber launched their compact beauties just before the show, the new Chameleon range of speakers (*Top Right*) are customisable with their colourful range of beautiful leather coverings and would grace any home.

If you want stylish and compact then I guess you don't need to look much further than the **Devialet** Phantom, we were impressed by the demo at their press event and the Phantom certainly adds weight to their statement a couple of years ago that 'one day, everyone will own a Devialet'.





MC Step-Up Transformers
Phono Amplifiers
Pre Amplifiers



Hifi Pig's Favourite Exhibitor at High End Munich 2015

We had decided that we wanted to give an award at the Hifi Shows that we attend throughout the year.

We gave it a lot of thought, would we give several awards at each show, for sound, room presentation, friendliness of the exhibitors? Would we each give an award in a his 'n' hers fashion?

In the end we decided to combine all the elements into one award and that award would be for Hifi Pig's Favourite Exhibitor at each particular show.

We knew it would be a very difficult choice, particularly at High End Munich where there are so many brands, exhibitors and choice of music being playedso maybe I should start with what is not going to make you our favourite exhibitor at a show.

We have said this before, but I am astounded at the number of exhibitors that were not playing music when we went into rooms...come on people, you have just spent thousands to exhibit at the greatest Hifi show on the planet and you aren't playing music?!

I know there will be pauses as equipment is changed round or the chairs moved to listen to a second system, that isn't a problem, I'm talking about people just not bothering to play anything and not offering a reasonable explanation as to why it is silent.

And while we are on the subject, have a variety of music available, fair enough you may not want the audience fiddling with your kit to play their own tunes, but at least have a range of different genres for them to flick through.

We listen to a lot of electronic music, it is something we love so we want to hear if a system can play techno, house etc.

Quite a few people who were playing 'plinky plonky' Jazz or classical were asked if they had anything electronic ... some gave us blank looks, some just a dismissive 'no' but some people

immediately said 'of course, what do you want to hear?'.

The **Orpheus** room was a great example of this, the young guys running the room stopped the classical and put on some Deadmau5 ...saying that they enjoyed being asked to play something different.



Josound always have a wide selection of music available, Daft Punk in that room sounded excellent.



Devialet is a good example, what better way to demonstrate a modern, more lifestyle friendly product like the Phantom than to play more modern music?



KEF is another good one, you can guarantee to hear all sorts of stuff in their room and I also enjoyed the rock that was playing when we visited **Tannoy**so come on people who think your audience just wants 'audiophile' music, they don't!

Being generally unwelcoming to people visiting your room or stand is not going to get you a gold star. I don't just want to visit rooms where they spot that you are press and then are super nice to you....I like to see a room where the exhibitors welcome everybody equally and take the time to answer their questions and provide a good demo.

Most people, thankfully, do get that this is important, the rooms and stands that do well are not just the best sounding/looking, but they will be fronted by proper human beings who are still enthusiastic after four days of hardcore hifi show....having all of the people who are working on your stand sitting down and glaring at everyone does not make for a good welcome.



The guys from **Entotem** looked like they were having a great show. Fresh from winning the Clarity Alliance Innovation award at the Bristol show for

their magic box of tricks, Plato, they looked as upbeat and motivated on the last day as they did on the first, and great to see a lot of international interest in this cool new British product.



Another black mark has to be just basically throwing all your kit into a room and not bothering with how it looks.....a bit of thought and decent lighting can make a big difference to the ambience of the room and setting things out nicely will make that stand that cost you thousands attract the eye of every passer by. I think **Clearaudio** really gave a great lesson in 'stop and look at me' with their stand this year, amazing looking turntables AND a motorbike.

I also really liked the **Vovox** cable stand with the cable knitting ladyI imagine that you all stopped to look and work out if she really was knitting the cable, good gimmick!



So, who did we pick as our favourite at High End Munich 2015?

There were several contenders, based on the criteria of being great sounding, great looking, fresh and innovative and welcoming.

Other than those already mentioned I have to say how much we liked **Daudio**, **Kryon Audio**, **Sound Galleries Monaco**, **Lawrence Audio**, **Musical Stones**, **Avid** and **Egglesstone works**, **LEEDH**, **Avantgarde Acoustic**, **CAD** and **Boenicke**, **Lautsprecher und Mehr**, **Wiener Lautsprecher Manufaktur**, **Viola** with **Ocean Way**, **Tune Audio** with **VPI** and **Skogrand** ...and there were others, but we managed to whittle it down.

Our favourite Exhibitor at High End Munich 2015 was.....drumroll please....



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SoundKaos

Hifi Pig's Favourite Exhibitor at High End Munich 2015

We picked these guys for not only having great sounding and beautifully made loudspeakers (that are also a little bit different to the norm) but also putting a lot of effort into their exhibition space.

They have a purpose built cabin for the exhibition that makes their space feel fresh and modern, and very comfortable.

I like the use of glass so people can see what is going on inside, and feel drawn in to listen, rather than feeling shut out, there is a real 'open door' policy.

They are very welcoming, not just with press people but with everybody.

These are warm hearted people who just want you to be able to listen to great music in their amazing room.

Whether you look like you can afford to buy their speakers or not you get the same lovely welcome into their Swiss cabin.

Soundkaos, Hifi Pig loves you!

High End Memories From Soundkaos

By Harry Seale / Soundkaos

We are extremely proud and passionate about our brand and products. Over the course of the High End show, the feedback received in regard to our flagship product,



namely the revolutionary Wave 40 has made 6 years of research, development and the pursuit of continuous improvement a worthwhile endeavour. We are eternally grateful for the kind comments and warmhearted reviews, it makes what we do extremely rewarding...We just can't believe that we are lucky enough to be able to pursue our hobby and call it a job at the same time!

Highlights of the show from Soundkaos staff included the discovery of Plan B3's "Ain't No Sunshine" cover, which after repeated playback, had to be limited for our visitors sanity to a maximum of 10 airings per day, equally spaced! Not once did we manage to achieve under 12 plays, but that really is all we can say at this time as disciplinary action is still ongoing!!!

Other staff picks included a sound demonstration with a group of young local German music production students whereby we really put the Wave 40's and D12 sub through their paces, experimenting

with different genres, nuances and combinations, it was an interesting experience to say the least!

On Sunday, we were awarded with the title of Hifi Pig's Favourite Exhibitor, which came as a complete surprise. We feel honored, humbled and incredibly thankful, that moment will stay with us forever, it even reduced us to tears!

Time to get a grip...And back to the music! Our room and the feel was one of a relaxed and cool nature, predominantly focusing on the Jazz genre with undertones of modern funk and electronica prominent throughout the course of the weekend.

Saddened by the passing of BB King on Friday, we put on a tribute Saturday morning that was fun for all, remembering the late great who will undoubtedly live on through his music.

Another highlight was witnessing Michael Hollesen of Klutz Design doing the Waltz around our room with the bosses wife, Mrs Gateley! Mr Gateley was AWOL so is (or should I say was) unaware of said proceedings until now!

Lastly, we remember a very special teenage boy who visited us late on Saturday with his carer and touched our hearts with his love for music. We felt privileged to give him a show a half, belting out request after request!

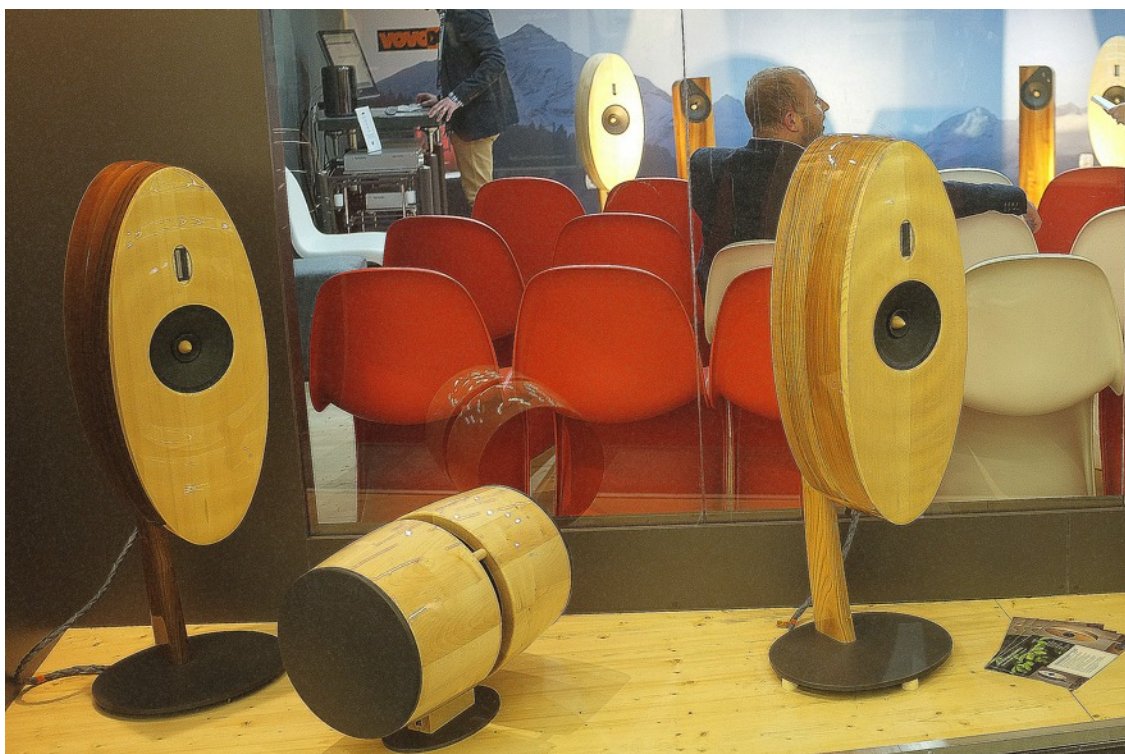
The list of fond memories really is endless so we shall wrap it up by saying once more, thank you to all the Kaos fans for making High End 2015 such a special and memorable event for us. See you all in 2016!

Hifi Pig asked Michael Hollesen of Soundkaos to give us an example of what he thinks sets them apart from other exhibitors and why they think we chose them as our favourite exhibitor

This morning two young listeners - around 15 year old both of them - came in to listen.... and ended up staying much longer than they probably had expected.

We played through a few of our numbers of our "not so commonly heard at hifi-shows" playlist. We asked them what they wanted to listen to... Just seeing their faces as we actually paid them some attention and then gave them the opportunity to choose. Their first reply was "but this is way out of our league", as if the price of the speakers, and their young age and inability to buy the setup had anything to do with it. When they were told they

really could chose whatever, they wished for electronica. When we expertly asked if Infected Mushroom, Trentemoller, Royksopp or James Blake would do, they lit up.... And then we played "the Wilhem Scream" by James Blake for them and they just sat their in utter disbelief - and happiness....



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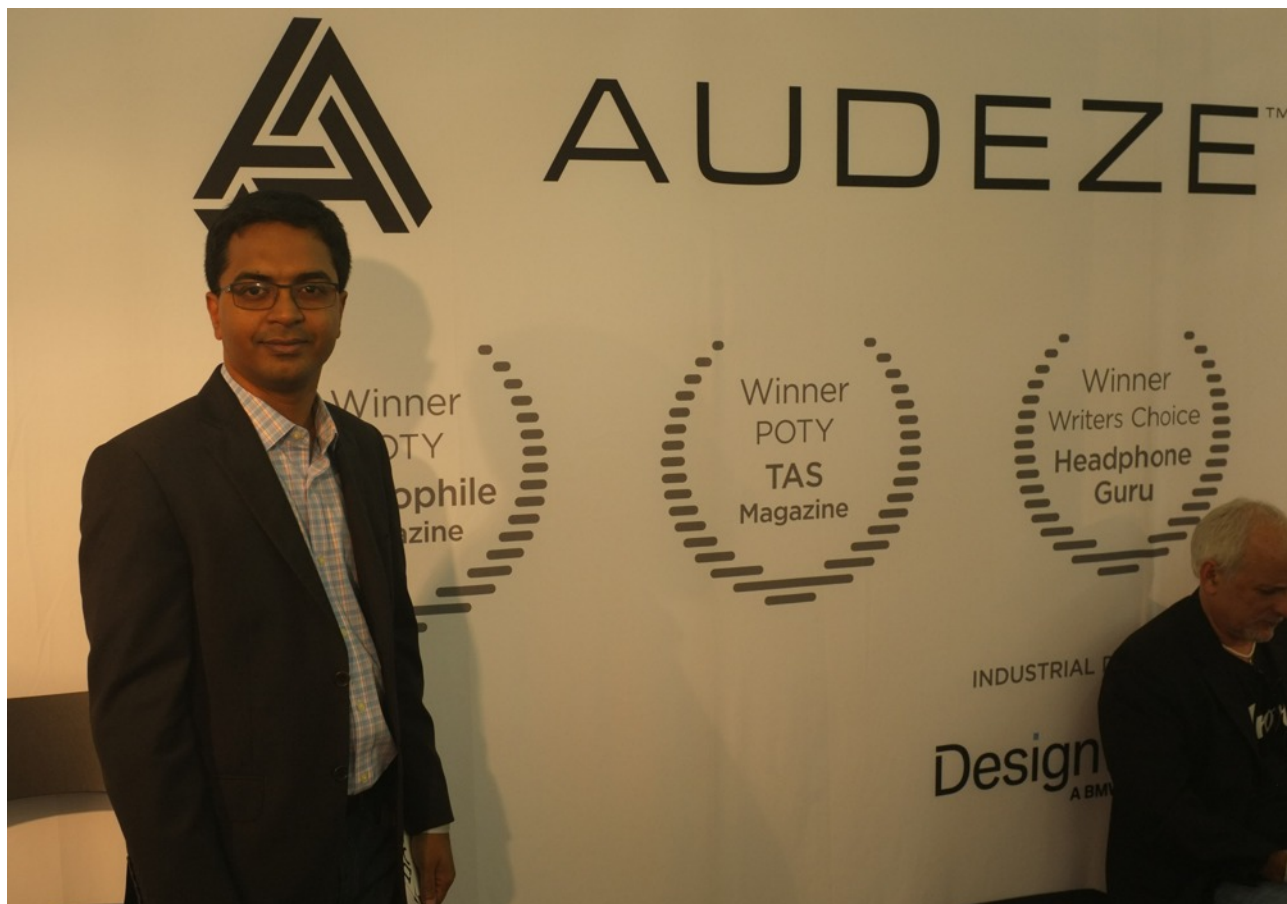
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46







The last years, LAB12 demonstrates a constant and impressive growth. High End Show in Munich was a great opportunity to find out what are the latest ideas of LAB12 team but also to take a fresh look on the improved versions of their older models.

The well-known DAC1 SE was there in a superb Matt Metallic-Grey color singing with its warm, "vinyl-like" voice. The OTL headphone amp HPA was active and filling our Headphones with its rich sound. PRE1 (active valve pre-amp) was presented improved with IR remote control while Mighty (single ended power amp), True (passive pre-amp) and Knack (power cable) were also there nice and shiny.

The highlights of the LAB12 booth however were the three new models. See below some brief information about these new models or visit www.lab12.gr to get the full picture.

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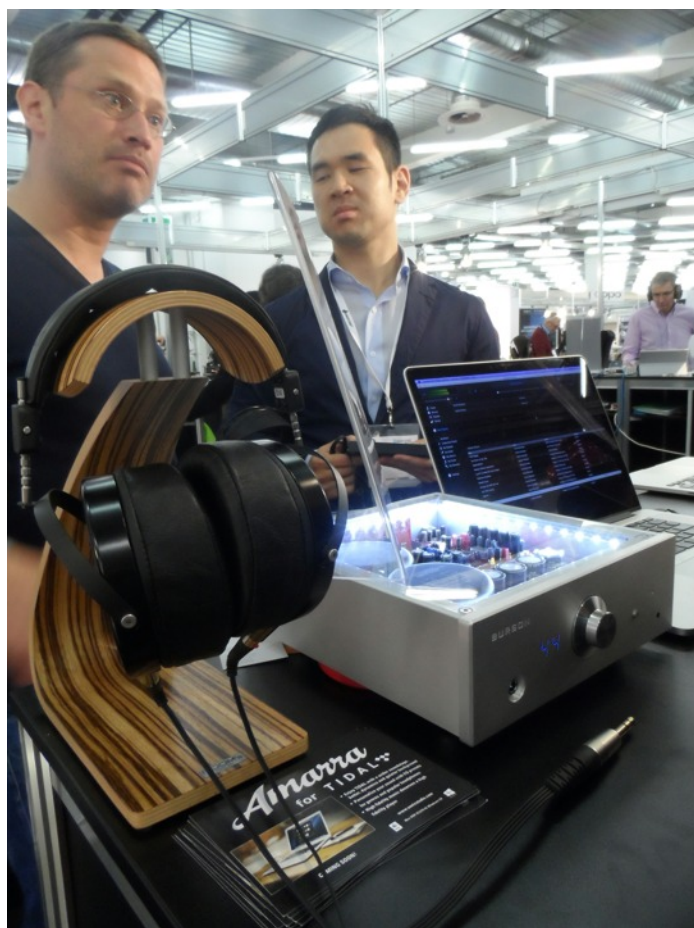
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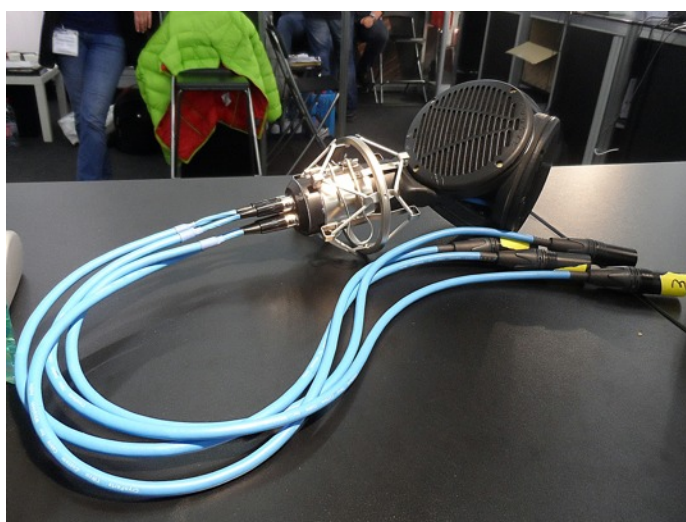
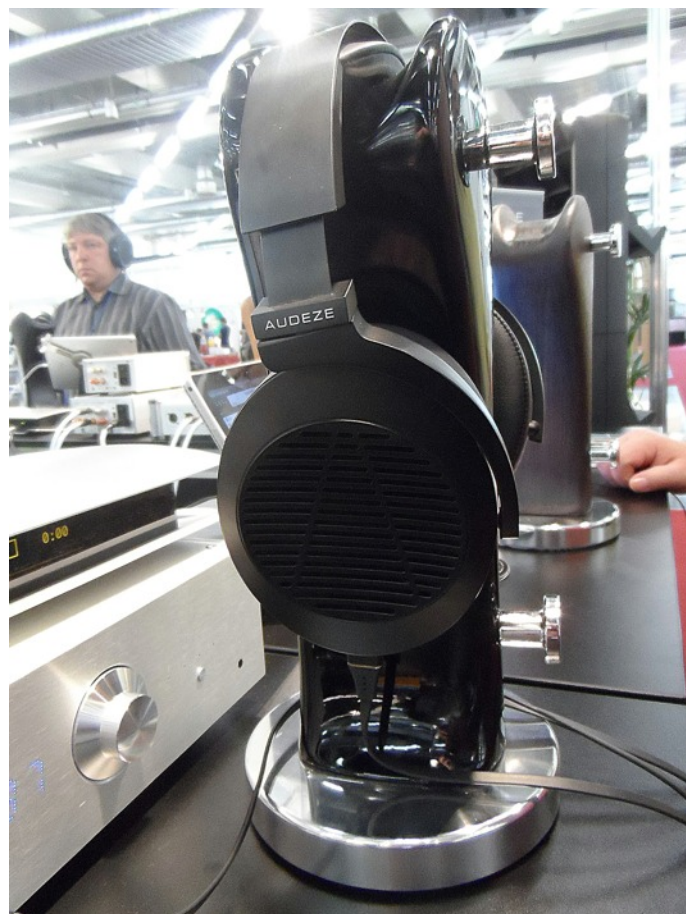
Headfi At High End

As the Head Fi market is still snowballing its way into becoming a huge force to be reckoned with, I thought it appropriate to bring you some of our thoughts and pictures of what was on offer at the show this year.

Audeze (I am gradually learning to pronounce the name correctly) had their full range of high end cans on display.



I was lucky enough to receive their closed back EL-8 model for review just before we left for Munich, so I have already had a chance to listen to them and am very impressed by them still retaining their 'Audeze-ness' at a much lower price point than their bigger siblings and by the fact that they are lighter to wear too. Audeze's President, Sankar, gave us a demonstration of how the magnets work in the EL-8 which enables them to make them a lighter headphone than their predecessors.



Audeze are also branching out into making microphones and we saw a prototype, which bore a striking resemblance to a 'squiddy' from the Matrix films ...watch this space for more to come from Audeze!

Stu had a listen to some new, wireless headphones from **Pendulumic**, the Stance S1+, which he was pretty impressed with. We also got to see their Tach T1 which will launch later this year and I imagine we will be reviewing.



FiiO and **Astel&Kern** were exhibiting with their range of music players and **Questyle** had a nifty looking Hi res DAP which I managed to snap but not get a listen to.



Most excitingly we got to have a play with the incredibly sleek looking and great sounding new player from **AR** (Acoustic Research) which will be winging

its way to Hifi Pig Towers very soon.....I am looking forward to it already! No pics I'm afraid but we did have a listen to the unit and it sounded really great. It has a touch screen, runs Android and so, for me felt immediately intuitive and easy to use.

The award for the most enthusiastic greeting has to go to Lawrence Lau at **Dared** who spotted us and shouted 'Hifi Pig, I LOVE Hifi Pig!!!'.



He had some very nice tubes on his stand including on his new **MARS** integrated amp/DAC....when we left him he was proudly sporting his Hifi Pig sticker.

King's Audio had a delightful looking little head-phone amp which had some serious weight to it and came in a rainbow of colours...it was rather like a



modern hip flask, nice design!

I stopped by the **Sennheiser** stand to congratulate them on their IE 800 IEMs that I reviewed recently, the gentleman I spoke to was rather chuffed at my feedback...I didn't catch his name but he appeared to be one of the Sennheiser big wigs...he said he had a pair too and loved them!



Daft Punk I was getting a detailed sound with plenty (but not overdone) oomph in the bass department....I'm looking forward to a longer play with them.

In the **Denon** room their headphones were being displayed on some glowing heads...which looked rather fetching in pink.



I had heard quite a bit about the new headphones from **AudioQuest**, the Nighthawks.

At around £500 (I think) UK retail these are firmly pitching themselves at the affordable side of the high end headphone market, and I think they will be very successful.

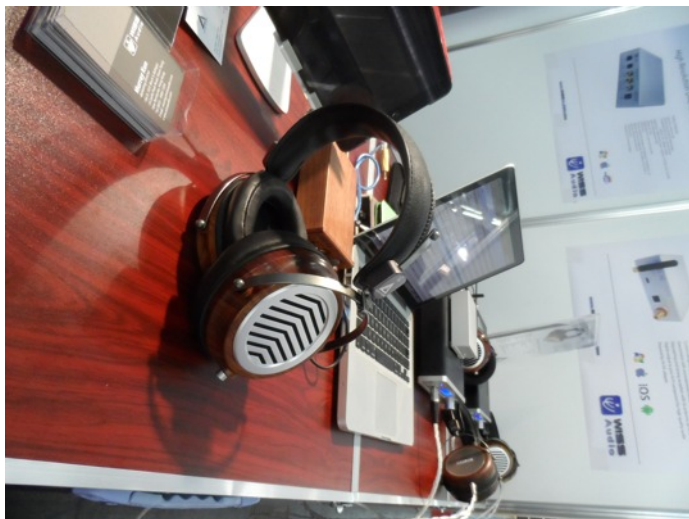


I really fancied trying the **Oppo** PM3 headphones as I love the PM1, but unfortunately we were rushing to another meeting and I didn't get chance.



The Nighthawk cans are very comfortable, look very well made and are not too heavy....they also sound very good, from the quick listen that I had to some

Another I would have loved to try were the new planar magnetic headphones from new company, **Lyrus Audio** who launched them at High End Munich 2015planar magnetic seems to be the way a lot of manufacturers are starting to go and they seem to be becoming more affordable too.



We had chance for a good listen to some of the new headphones from **Final**, these guys were a friendly bunch and it was nice to meet Final Audio president Mitsuru Hosoo at the stand.



When I have tried their headphones before I found that they sounded amazing but the fit just wasn't right on my ears...this seems to have now been addressed and I found the ones I listened to exceptionally well sounding and comfortable...result! More on these from us soon.

We always like to drop by and visit Norbert Lehmann of **Lehmann Audio**, he is a really lovely guy and this year we got to meet his equally lovely wife, Ulrika, over a glass of wine.



Ulrika is heading up Headphone Gallery, a new venture for Lehmann Audio who are designing and producing a very stylish and nifty headphone stand that keeps your headphones and cables neat and tidy whilst displaying them as a work of art. What with the rise of the high end headphone and people often having a selection of several pairs, these are bound to be a success...I'm particularly looking forward to seeing some of the special finishes of acrylic glass they are planning on using for future models.



The new electronic product from Lehmann Audio was their Linear D which is an all singing and all

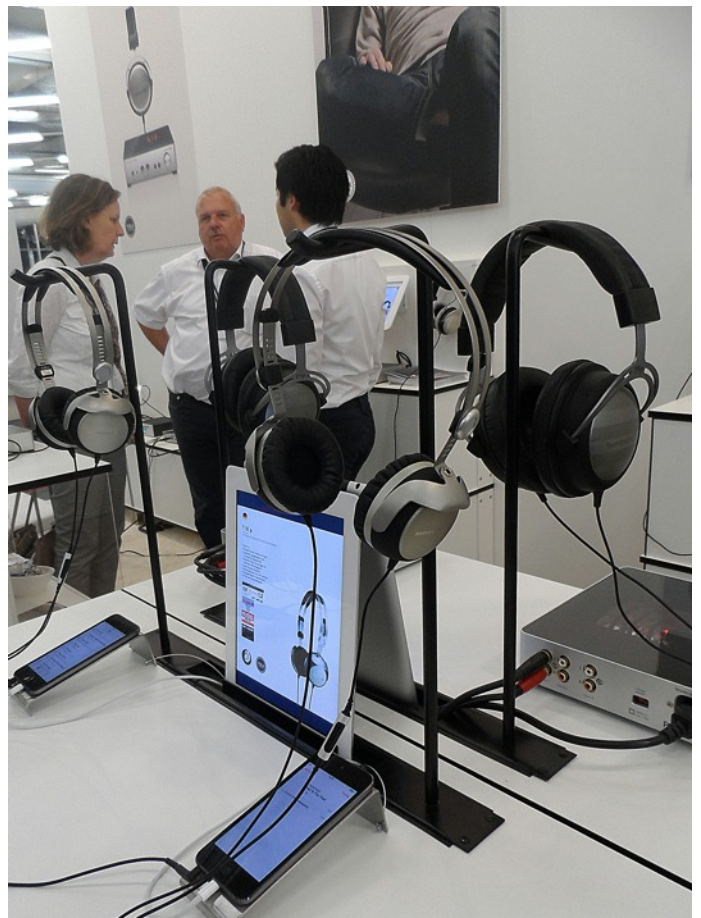
dancing Preamplifier, headphone amp and DAC which automatically selects what input is being used (so no faffing with switches) and is surprisingly modestly priced.

KEF can always be relied upon to come up with something cool, so I was pleased to find some of their new M400 on ear headphones to plug into my FiiO X5 for a listen.



I usually prefer over ears to on ears but these were seriously light and comfy but also looked and felt very good quality. They come in a range of classy colours and deliver a clean defined sound...I listened to some Chase and Status on them and they did not disappoint when the bass kicked in, I imagine these will sell like hot cakes!

There were many others that I caught pics of but didn't get a chance (unfortunately to investigate further) to name a few: **Ultrasone, Beyer Dynamic, Audio Technica, Grado, Unison Research, Lin-nenberg, Stax**just proving the point that however long you spend at the show you always miss something....still, what better excuse to go back again next year!





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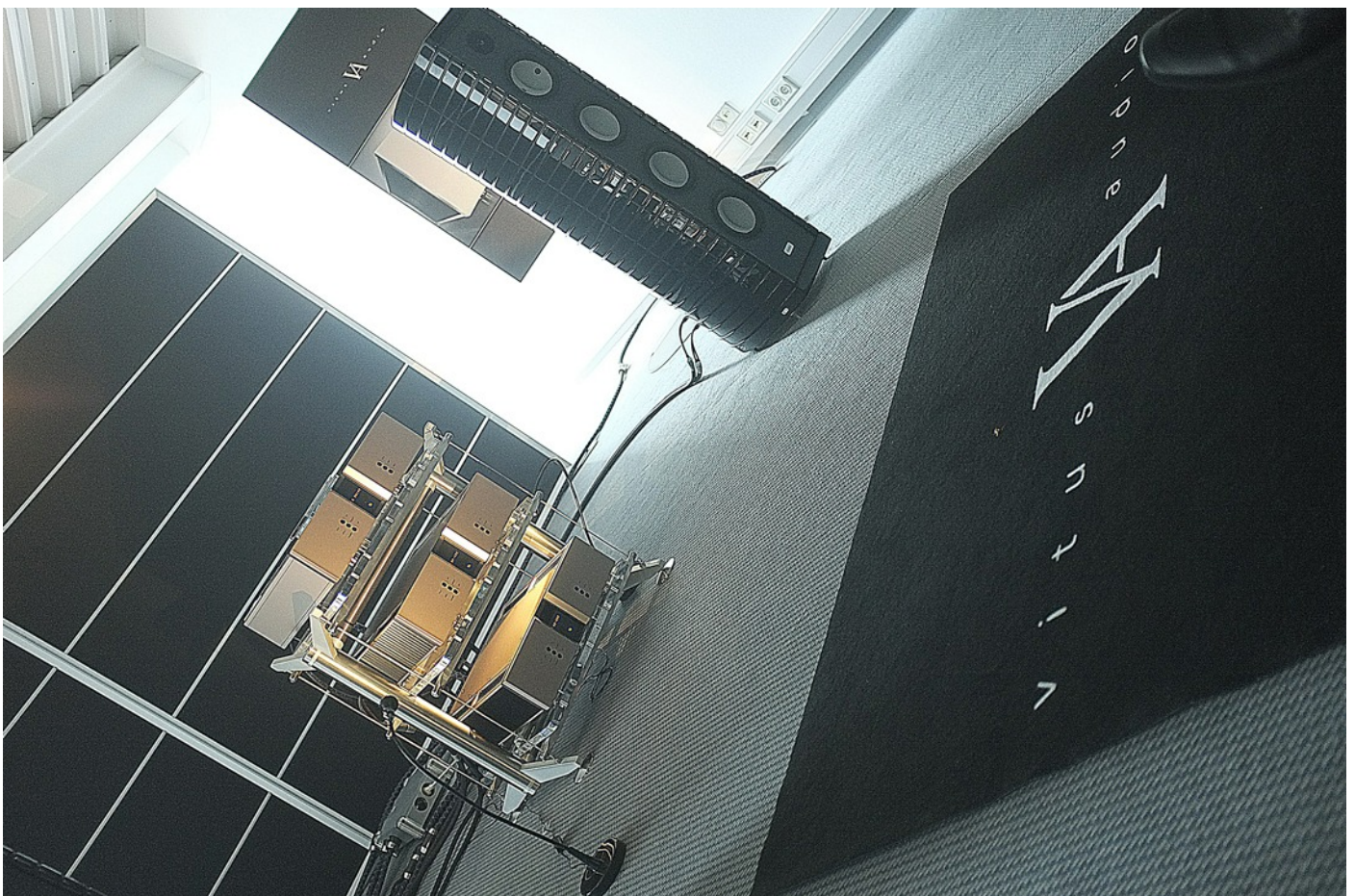




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