



Welcome to Hifi Pig's coverage of High-End Munich 2018, there is loads more online of course, but we thought readers would like to have the opportunity to enjoy much of our coverage in a more relaxed kind of way - we were going for a coffee table book feel with the first sixty pages of so being a good read but the following pages are purely about the pictures that we hope will give you a good feel for the show. A huge thanks to all the brilliant people we met and of course the people who put so much effort into making Munich High-End the greatest Hifi show on Earth.

I think it's probably best to hand you over to the organisers, The High End Society and their press release that sums up the facts and figures of the show.

"After four successful exhibition days, the 37th HIGH END in Munich ended on May 13. A total of 530 exhibitors (previous year: 538) from 41 nations and 19,899 visitors (previous year: 21,412) were counted, including 7,557 trade visitors (previous year: 8,002) from throughout the world. This represented a slight decline in visitor numbers compared to the previous year. Quite possibly, it was the almost midsummer-like weather throughout all four days of the exhibition that prompted some potential visitors from the region to go on an excursion rather than to visit a trade fair".

530 exhibitors from 41 countries (- 2%)

19,889 visitors in total (- 7%)

7,557 trade visitors from 78 countries (-6%)

High satisfaction among all participants

"For the trade experts, it was one of the world's most significant events in the audio industry, for the public it was a unique world of experience –this year again, the HIGH END pivoted on these two areas of interest".

"In total, 7,557 trade visitors from 73 countries came to Munich. This represents slightly six percent fewer visitors compared to the HIGH END 2017. The share of international trade visitors was in fact 70 percent. After Germany, the four most heavily represented countries are the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Italy and the Netherlands.

It is the combination of music presentations, the showcase of the most exquisite lines of equipment, workshops and captivating lectures that have made up the HIGH END for decades, attracting dealers, consumers, as well as representatives from the audio

and supplier industry, to the exhibition in Munich.

The Managing Director of the HIGH END SOCIETY, Stefan Dreischärf, expressed his satisfaction on how the exhibition turned out, only the visitor numbers did not quite meet expectations. This was to be expected, however, given the forecast for midsummertemperatures.

The Deputy Chairman of the Board of the HIGH END SOCIETY, Jürgen Timm, gave a positive assessment: "We can look back on four days of in-depth discussions with trade partners, the press and consumers. One of the highlights that comes to mind is the strong interest of consumers in qualitative comparisons between streaming solutions and traditional CD sound reproduction. The HIGH END has once again established itself as 'the place to be', also among the international public, and thus it will be an event not to be missed in 2019 as well."

There is consistent consumer interest in good sound reproduction – specifically, anytime and anywhere. Multi-room and streaming components for use at home and when out and about are booming. At the same time, there also exists a reminiscence for the analogue and haptic world, which means there continues to be strong demand for traditional hi-fi and albums that provide a hands-on experience".

The Chairman, Kurt Hecker, was pleased with the consistently upbeat mood among the exhibitors: "Munich is the rendezvous point for the international audio industry. Only here can visitors and journalists from Germany and abroad gain comprehensive information on the latest developments and innovations and discover first-hand the know-how and excellence in the industry."

SAVE THE DATE!

The next High End Munich will take place from May 9 to 12, 2019 again in the exhibition area of the MOC in Munich.





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PMC Fact Fenestria Launch At High End Munich 2018

So, what happens when you give the designers at PMC, a company known for its monitor speakers and strong links with pro audio, complete freedom to design a new, flagship pair of speakers? Well that's what we were dying to find out as we made our way into the packed press conference in the PMC room at the MOC Munich on Thursday. We were expecting something pretty special as the new speakers were being hyped as PMC's most significant launch since the BB5 in the early 90's.

A three-way, "ultra-high-resolution" passive twin ATL™ loudspeaker, fenestria incorporates all-new, tailor-made drivers, twin Laminair™ vents for improved aerodynamic ATL airflow, plus a newly designed cabinet that houses the treble and mid-range units in an "innovative and elegant reflection-free module".

PMC say that fenestria (meaning, appropriately, window) is, "the loudspeaker that you will never hear". A pretty big claim in anyone's book, so did the fenestria do what we are often looking for in a loudspeaker, and simply open the window and disappear? "fenestria is the perfect example of our holistic design approach," explains Peter Thomas, PMC's owner and chief designer. "Our aim was to make the best passive loudspeaker we could, with an open mind when it came to technologies and materials. We looked at all options to achieve the purest, most transparent sound, and fenestria was the result."

Keith Tonge, being master of the press conference (he tells you briefly what you need to know and then gets some music playing, many could learn from him) filled us in on the technology involved in the speakers that were revealed from behind black curtains. Drawing on airflow technologies usually employed in motor sports and stabilising techniques that generally stop buildings collapsing in earthquake prone countries, and using new kinds of carbon fibre never previously employed in loudspeakers, the fenestrias







fac fenestria HAS ARRIVED

www.pmc-speakers.com/fenestria



are unmistakably PMC, but with something more.

Admittedly, show conditions are not the best to demo speaker capabilities, but the challenge did not seem to bother the fenestrias in the slightest. They had the directness that you'd expect from PMC, I always find that their speakers have an honesty to how they deliver the music. They are incredibly fast with the bass sounding very nimble but with plenty of guts, they also seemed refined but not in an overly polite way, 'well groomed' is probably a good description. They also look very high end with an impeccable finish and the new central 'nest' arrangement (made from a solid billet of aluminium, isolated and decoupled from the rest of the cabinet) adding a new level of detail both in the

sound of the tops and mids and the visual impact of the speakers.

I suppose the fenestrias are a bit of a contradiction. They are not ashamed to show their deep musical roots and heritage but certainly have a touch of class about them...if they were taking you on a night out you would most likely have a really great meal with some well-chosen wines, and then end up shaking your ass in a dark and dingy techno club somewhere until the sun comes up.

And what do these new PMC flagships cost? I'll admit, I was expecting somewhat more than their £45,000 (54,000€). Munich does tend to bring the 'lottery winning' priced gear out but the fenestria seemed pretty reasonable for what you are

getting...especially when you listen to other, much more expensive speakers at the show and conclude that the PMC fenestrias don't just hold their own, they positively, and I'm putting this as politely as I can, 'wee all over' much of the competition.

Technical Details

Fenestria is 1.7m tall and features a 19.5mm Sonomex™ high frequency unit with a neodymium magnet assembly and PMC-designed dispersion grille. The driver is isolated from the midrange unit and nest with a silicone-damped PMC suspension mount, the Auriole™.PMC's midrange driver in fenestria is a wholly new 75mm unit. The four 165mm long-throw piston bass drivers each feature a massive magnet assembly and a flat diaphragm comprising two layers of transverse-weave carbon-fibre, hand made by a specialist motor sport manufacturer, sandwiching a rigid multicellular damped core.

Also shared with the world of auto sport are the Laminair™ vents situated at the end of the twin Advanced Transmission Lines (ATL), PMC's proprietary bass-loading technology. Using principles of aerodynamics used from F1 to Le Mans, the Laminair vent creates a smooth, laminar airflow as it exits the ATL. Housing the ATL and bass units are the heavily braced cabinets, which are acoustically isolated from the drivers in the nest. Such is the high energy produced by the bass drivers and twin ATLs, a more innovative approach was required to preventing unwanted lowfrequency vibrations from passing into the cabinet. Using the same techniques employed in tall buildings to prevent earthquake damage (whereby a high-mass pendulum is added to the structure), the sides of fenestria's cabinet have been engineered to resonate in opposition to the rest of the loudspeaker assembly. The result is the elimination of vibrations before they leave the cabinet - the side panels cancel out all the unwanted energy produced by the drivers. The crossover, situated in the speaker's plinth, is also acoustically isolated from the rest of the cabinet. The plinth also houses the high and low-frequency tuning controls. The PMC Fenestria is available in White silk, Rich walnut, Graphite and Tiger ebony finishes.





MC Step-Up Transformers Phono Amplifiers Pre Amplifiers





Focal Grande Utopia EM Evo And Stella Utopia EM Evo Loudspeakers Launch

French brand, Focal, used High End Munich 2018 to launch its new Grande Utopia EM Evo and Stella Utopia EM Evo loudspeakers. This was another highly popular launch with standing room only for a lot of the world's Hifi press.

There was a strict door policy as we made our way through the Focal and Naim exhibit to the listening booth at the back, luckily there was plenty of French water on hand for the thirsty hoards, as we were very packed in. We were treated to a presentation by the Naim team and also the Focal team before we got to listen to some tunes. I must admit that we really did miss Focals Gérard Chrétien who sadly passed away last year, but his legacy, passion and love of music lives on in the current team.

I have always been impressed by Focal Grande Utopias and I would love to hear the new EM Evo incarnation in a more sympathetic listening environment, you could tell that these were a very impressive loudspeaker and a Hifi Show is more than just a listening session. As always, the biggest Focals had an impeccable stage presence and iconic visual impact, proudly flying the bleu, blanc and rouge flag for the French manufacturer.

Focals large loudspeakers now integrate all the research conducted since Utopia III was launched in 2008. They showcase the brand's innovations, particularly in the midrange: the TMD (Tuned Mass Damping) suspension and the NIC (Neutral Inductance Circuit). The structure of the loudspeaker itself has also been strengthened by the new MRR (Machined Reinforcement Rings) system around the speaker drivers. The crossover has been redesigned and its components modified.

The structure benefits from an increased rigidity thanks to the MRR (Machined



Reinforcement Rings) system. This is composed of solid aluminium parts machined in the mass, positioned between the front speaker and the speaker driver basket. This sandwich technology is used in the form of rings for the 6" and 11" speaker drivers of the Stella Utopia EM Evo, and on the 6" speaker drivers of the Grande Utopia EM Evo. The 13" (Stella Utopia EM Evo) and 15" woofers (Grande Utopia EM Evo) also use segments of solid aluminium. The rigidity of the front speaker is thereby considerably increased in the array area (around the

speaker drivers), while benefiting from the dampening of the very thick MDF woofer.

The Focal Grande Utopia EM Evo will have a SRP of €180,000 / £159,999 per pair and the Stella Utopia EM Evo €100,000 / £89,999 per pair. All the loudspeakers in the line are now offered with new automotive-inspired finishes: Metallic Blue, Ash Grey and British Racing Green, as well as Black Lacquer and Carrara White.



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Chord Sarum T Speaker Cable Hi-Fi World Dec 2017



New Products From Chord Electronics

Chord Electronics certainly had the world's Hifi Press beating a path to their door at High End Munich this year. Their room was so busy that some had to wait outside, luckily Hifi Pig was in there for a first glimpse of their new products. The full team were there and as always it was a pleasure to see them and great to see the iconic British brand in such high demand at the world's major international Hifi Show.

Chord chose High End 2018 to unveil a brand new analogue amplifier topology design, the company's first for nearly 30 years. The new topology debuts in the British brand's new Choral Etude stereo power amp (expected to be available in autumn 2018 at £3,900). One new product release wasn't enough for Chord and the Etude was joined by the new Hugo TT 2.

The new amplifier design, which has been developed and implemented by Chief Designer, owner and Managing Director John Franks, features a completely new topology for Chord Electronics amplifiers. The Chord Choral Etude has been designed to both complement and exploit the full potential of the company's DAVE DAC, which has a built-in preamp functionality. The amp topology has even faster power delivery than existing Chord Electronics designs, offering, say Chord "unrivalled dynamics, a life-like delivery of transient information, plus effortless control over loudspeaker drive units".

The Choral Etude, which is the latest addition to the company's eight-strong bijou Choral range, (which includes the recently launched BLU MKII FPGA-based upscaling digital transport), combines a high power output with low distortion across the entire audio band, right up to 30kHz. The design is based upon multi-feedback and dual feedforward error-correction amplifier technology that intelligently adjusts and compensates the individual linearity of the 250-watt lateral structure high-power proprietary MOSFETs, (arranged in two banks of four).

The amplifier's power, which is conservatively rated at 150 watts into 4 ohms and 300 watts in bridged mono mode. comes from three proprietary Chord Electronics' ultra-compact switch-mode highfrequency power supplies; one operates the auxiliary rails and the other two feed the high-current active power rails. The power supplies' advanced internal shielding ensures that the signal path is not adversely influenced. The Choral Etude has a a signalto-noise ratio in the order of 108 dBV and a high damping factor of 10,000 across the whole audio band. Chord say the amplifier is extremely fast and able to pass low-level signals up to and beyond 400 kHz. Connections include balanced XLR and unbalanced RCA inputs, plus high-quality gold-plated speaker binding posts offering 6mm spade and 4mm banana connectivity. The amplifier is bridgeable, offering 300 watts into each channel/speaker, all from a compact chassis. As part of the Choral range, the new Choral Etude will share the same aerospace-grade machined aluminium chassis and casework, and will be available in both silver and black finishes, in the autumn priced at £3,900.

Chord Electronics Hugo TT 2, is its nextgeneration Table-Top (TT) DAC/headphone amplifier which is topped only by their flagship DAVE. The device is scheduled for launch in the autumn, priced at c.£3,996.

Chord Electronics told us: "The new Hugo TT 2 is the world's most advanced desktop DAC/headphone amp. It offers unrivalled technical performance and is based upon new Artix 7 FPGA chip which has been uniquely custom-coded by our Digital Design Consultant, Rob Watts. In addition to classleading digital audio processing, the Hugo 2 TT offers enormous power reserves courtesy of a new super-capacitor-based power supply unit, designed to drive even the most difficult headphones, including high-impedance IEMs/CIEMs. There's even enough power to drive efficient compact loudspeakers given suitable cabling".

"The Hugo TT 2 offers five times the processing power of the original Hugo TT (offering a 98,304-tap 16FS WTA 1 filter) and deploys 86x 208MHz DPS cores in parallel to create the WTA filters. The Hugo TT 2 also benefits from an extremely low noise floor of -178dB with no measurable noise floor modulation. The device's highly



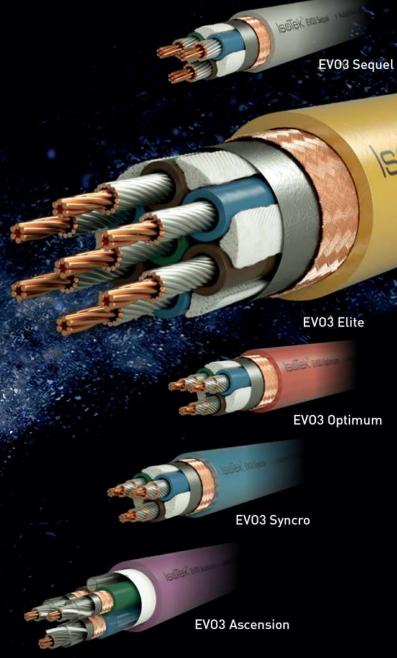




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advanced 12th-order noise-shaper, which uses 10 Pulse Array elements, is much improved over the original with well over 100,000 times more resolution than before, resulting in greater detail resolution and perception of soundstage depth. A high-power discrete output stage with distortion-reducing second-order noise-shaping is integrated into the DAC output amp and filter. The Hugo TT 2 eschews the battery supply used in its predecessor and instead uses six super caps in the power supply unit, capable of delivering huge, linear dynamic currents: peak output currents of 5A and 9.3V RMS".

In addition to its internal upgrades, the Hugo TT 2 also benefits from a number of external improvements. For added versatility, the number of digital inputs has risen to six and includes HD USB-B, 2x optical and 2x coaxial BNC (up from one each on the original) plus extended-range aptX Bluetooth. Three headphone outputs are also included: 2x 6.35mm and one 3.5mm, with simultaneous operation. The casework has been significantly redesigned to include front-panel buttons (Menu, Set and Power) to cycle between and select filtering and crossfeed modes, plus switch inputs and control power. The new design also includes a larger, top-mounted viewing window for the internal circuits, a larger volume control sphere, plus an improved LED display. The device retains its remote control functionality, sharing a handset with Hugo 2. Further outputs include balanced XLR and unbalanced RCA analogue connections, plus dual BNC DX outputs for use with future Chord Electronics' devices. For headphone listening, the Hugo TT 2 retains the digital crossfeed function of the original and offers three operation modes (min to max) from its dedicated control sphere. The system crossfeeds a partial 250 micro-second-delayed and equalised signal from each left and right output to the opposite channel. The Hugo TT 2's digital connectivity suite includes a galvanically isolated HD USB-B connection capable of decoding 768kHz PCM data and DSD 512. The unit's two optical TOSLink inputs are 24-bit/192kHz-capable (with the appropriate source and cabling) and the dual BNC coaxial inputs are 24-bit/768kHzcapable for connection to Chord Electronics' M-Scaler technology as seen in the BLU MKII digital/CD transport.



Shatter Dreams ..

Reference Tonearm | RG-1 Record Player | RG-1 Motor Drive







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Dynaudio's New Confidence Range

According to the internets, Danish people are the happiest nationality in the world, hardly surprising when you look at some of the stunning Hifi brands that come from Denmark...plus Lego, let's not forget Lego.

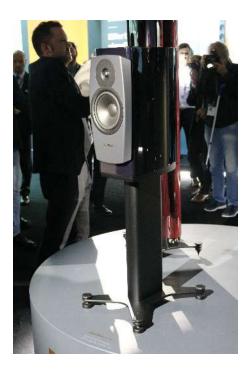
Dynaudio have been making loudspeakers since the 1970s and both their products and their brand image has a strength and style about them that, to me, always inspires confidence. Whatever Hifi Show you visit them at, their room is unmistakably Dynaudio and I always look forward to hearing what new products they have brought to the party.

Their press conference was held in their usual large MOC room in Atrium 3, as ever, all in black to make their products stand out. Appropriately, the new speaker range is called Confidence, which Dynaudio say is their best loudspeaker range yet. Roland Hoffmann presented the new speakers, with the larger model used for the demo, the smaller pairs being revealed on a static display. They look distinctly Dynaudio, stylish and like they mean business, without being too 'show-offy'.

The new Confidence family uses Dynaudio's technologies, including soft-dome tweeters, MSP (Magnesium Silicate Polymer) cones and DDC (Dynaudio Directivity Control) combined with new materials, techniques and designs. The range features brand-new drivers, including the new Esotar3, combined with a precision machined composite baffle, innovative cabinet design and optimised crossover to create, say the Danish brand "the most advanced passive loudspeaker range in Dynaudio history".

Sound-wise, they delivered on point, filling the cavernous room with what seemed like little effort, for me that's the mark of a good loudspeaker, if they don't seem strained or stretched in trying to cope with the music then you are onto something good.

"I've been doing this job for a long time – but for the first time in nearly a decade, listening to the new Confidence genuinely gave new



meaning to the music I thought I knew. It's just extraordinary," says Otto Jørgensen, Dynaudio's product manager.

The range comes very reasonably priced for the quality that you are getting, definitely one for investigation and audition if you are in the market for new loudspeakers..whatever genre of music you listen to.

Of course not forgetting that press people end up with a load of product information, the Danish sense of fun came into play and we went away with a very cute 'build-it-yourself' Confidence 20 Lego model in our press pack...a great way to stand out from the crowd!

There are four models in the new Dynaudio Confidence range.

Confidence 20 (€12,000) is a large two-way standmounter. It has an 18cm longthrow woofer with neodymium magnet and an Esotar3 tweeter. It also comes with a dedicated stand, designed specifically to take advantage of its down-firing bassreflex port.



Confidence 30 (€19,000) is a medium-sized three-way floorstander with DDC technology on board. It uses two 18cm woofers with neodymium magnets, one 15cm midrange (also with a neodymium magnet) and one Esotar3 tweeter with the DDC Lens.

Confidence 50 (€26,000) is a large 3-way floorstander with DDC tech. It has two 18cm woofers with neodymium magnets, two 15cm neodymium midrange drivers and one Esotar3 tweeter with the DDC Lens.

Confidence 60 (€40,000) is an extra-large three-way floor-standing loudspeaker. Its DDC technology uses two 24cm neodymium woofers, two 15cm midrange drivers (also with neodymium magnets), and a single Esotar3 tweeter in conjunction with the DDC Lens.

All the speakers in the new Confidence range are available in Midnight high-gloss, Smoke high-gloss, Raven Wood high-gloss, Ruby Wood high-gloss and Blonde Wood finishes.

d150 speakers

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d150 SPEAKER SPECIFICATIONS

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15inch bass driver

Selected drivers allow gentle crossover slope to get the smallest phase shift

Use of single cone for the most natural sound

MADE IN FRANCE



Vivid Audio KAYA Launch

Vivid Audio say that their new KAYA range of loudspeakers is "Vivid in a more accessible format". You get all the same GIYA technology inside a modern and more room friendly enclosure. The bass drivers have their own re-entrant exponential horn absorber, first found in the Laurence Dickie designed B&W Nautilus loudspeaker in the form of a snail's shell.

In the KAYA the horn has been folded up and is inside the cabinet. The mid range and tweeter have their own re-entrant horn absorbers...so, as Vivid say, "the classic Vivid / Nautilus sound but without the curly bits".

Now, I have to admit to being a big fan of the 'curly bits' on the high end Vivid speakers and the classic Nautilus, but I get that by having such a flamboyant design, Vivid may be excluding potential customers who need something a little more understated or 'smaller-room friendly". It is obviously a sensible decision to produce a more accessible range and open up different markets for the brand.

The KAYA was introduced to us in the press conference in a small cabin, and going by the clattering outside there were more people that wanted to get in than were able to...I think the team had underestimated their popularity with the world's Hifi press.

Laurence was as ebullient and passionate as ever, you can positively feel the energy that he puts into his designs, and talking about them! The pair that we heard were the range topping KAYA 90 which I think will retail at around £24,000 a pair. Despite the cabin being very small and very full of people, the KAYA 90s sounded very natural and would definitely fit into most homes (or their smaller siblings would).

I would say much like for the people that aspire to buy couture Dior or Channel, the Vivid Audio KAYA range will satisfy those fans who lust after the more extravagant Vivid models but maybe don't have the budget or space available for them. For Hifi



brands, just as much as Fashion Houses, a diffusion line is a very sensible and lucrative offering to have...Vivid may well be onto something here.

Cardas Audio Bandon, Oregon



Since 1987, Cardas Audio has manufactured premium audio cables and component parts. My father, George Cardas, founded the company to perfect audio cables using ultra-pure materials, innovative Golden Ratio resonance control techniques and uniquely insightful solutions to transmission line problems. The legendary craftsmanship at Cardas reflect his pursuit of perfection.

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IsoTek New Products Launch At Munich High End

IsoTek were launching several new products at the High End Show including the Gemini, Syncro Uni and the Evo3 Nova. Due to another appointment we couldn't spend too much time at the launch but were very well looked after by Fi Hobden and her team, who even provided us with vegan canapés...much appreciated after a long day walking many miles around the show.

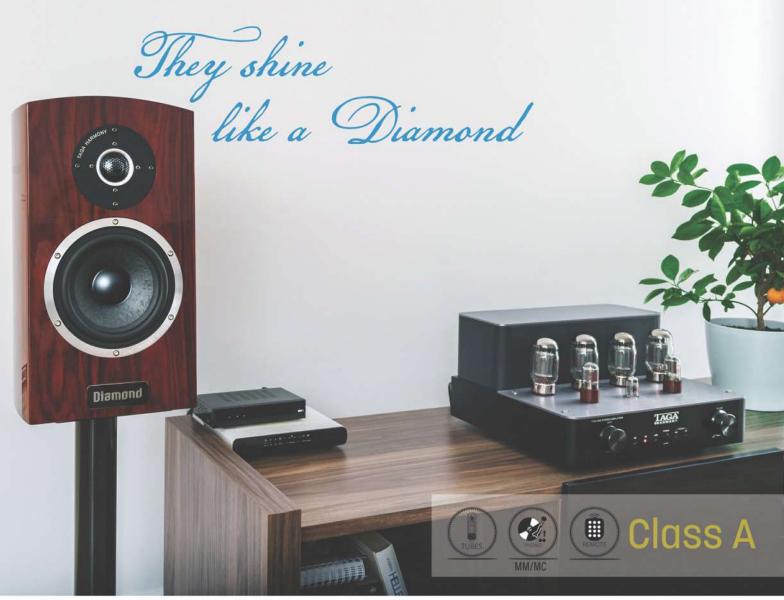
The EVO3 Gemini is a mains conditioning block that benefits from the same filter network as the EVO3 Polaris, reconfigured to feature just two output sockets rated at 10A. The EVO3 Gemini has a delta filter topology ensuring filtration of both Common Mode and Differential Mode mains noise, delivering power to two outlets, each one independently isolated to prevent crosscontamination of mains noise created by connected electronics. 13,500Amps of instantaneous protection is provided, safeguarding valuable equipment via IsoTek's sequential and repeatable protection system. Priced at £249.00 / €295.00 / \$345.00, EVO3 Gemini will be available from July 2018.

The Syncro Uni is an evolution of the EVO3 Syncro which was originally launched in 2014. Housed in a steel and aluminium chassis Syncro Uni incorporates unique DC cancelling electronics that rebalance the mains sine wave on the zero volts line, to reduce/silence transformer hum; the circuit synchronises the mains supply. The Syncro Uni is designed as a 'pre-filter' device and can be used with any power cable and power conditioner. Available from July 2018 priced at £545.00 / €595.00 / \$695.00 (including VAT).

The EVO3 Nova (pictured below) is a newly designed twelve-way full system mains power conditioner comprising of four high-current outlets, featuring IsoTek's Direct-Coupled© technology, a system capable of delivering 3680W of continuous power, for power amplifiers, subwoofers and active loudspeakers. Priced at £5,995.00 / €6,995.00 / \$8,250.00 (including VAT) it will be available from August/September 2018.







Diamond B-60 Loudspeakers & TTA-1000 Vacuum Tube Amplifier



















Wilson Audio TuneTot

Wilson Audio unveiled a very small loudspeaker at this year's High End Munich..we are much more used to seeing and hearing their big offerings (and they were represented in plenty of rooms) so it was quite a contrast to find the TuneTot on display.

The Wilson Audio Tiny Tot (WATT) was a teeny-tiny Wilson loudspeaker, originally designed as a portable tool for monitoring recording, Dave Wilson never intended to sell the WATTs commercially. Among other factors, the attention to detail and expensive materials meant that the asking price for a pair of WATTs would be far more expensive than anything that was on the market at the time.

In the late eighties, when paired with a dedicated woofer module the Wilsons called the Puppy (a Tiny Tots best friend...), the combination of the two went on to become one of the best-selling over \$10k loudspeakers in audio history.

TuneTot is the latest product from the Wilson Special Applications Engineering™ team. It is the smallest and least expensive current Wilson model, fabricated and assembled by the same group of craftsmen who build the WAMM Master Chronosonic, using exactly the same processes and techniques. Its cabinet and driver technology are derived directly from Alexx and Sabrina. Finally, each TuneTot that emerges from Wilson is held to the same manufacturing tolerances as its larger siblings.









www.TagaHarmony.com



GIK Launch Room Acoustics Virtualizer

Hifi Pig caught up with David Shevyn of GIK Europe at Munich High End and chatted about what I think is a great idea for those looking to add room treatment to their listening spaces.

HP: You have recently added the Room Acoustics Virtualizer to your website. Explain to readers what it is.

DS: Thanks, as you are aware we are super excited to be launching our new Acoustics Room Visualizer software and demonstrating it here in Munich. The RAV software in essence allows our customers and potential customers to plan and visualize their room in 3D. It utilizes the latest camera activated programmes to help you easily draw and plan your room. This makes it really easy to provide plans for acoustic advice team, but also to actually see what our acoustic treatment would look like in your room

HP: You mention camera activated programmes how does this work.

DS: There are two elements to the downloadable app. The first is an easier to use 2D room planner. You literally hold the camera above the ground and a marker will appear. You click the marker in the first corner and then follow the room round ensuring you place a marker in each corner (including all the nooks and crannies). This will then produce you a 2D plan with room dimensions. From here you can choose to either see the room in 3D or even walk around the room itself.

The second part of the app allows you to use Augmented reality to actually see GIK Acoustic panels on your camera in your own room. This can either by selecting one of the GIK Acoustics catalogue items, selecting your design and colour and seeing what it would look like via your camera or using the app in 3D mode to move around your room and see how the panel would look

HP: Once you have the plan can you add your own furniture?



DS: Yes, you can, you can select your doors windows, sofa, speakers; there is lots of furniture in the catalogue and then start adding your GIK Acoustic products to see how they would look in your room

HP: Does the software make suggestions based on your room layout as to where it is best to place bass traps and panels etc?

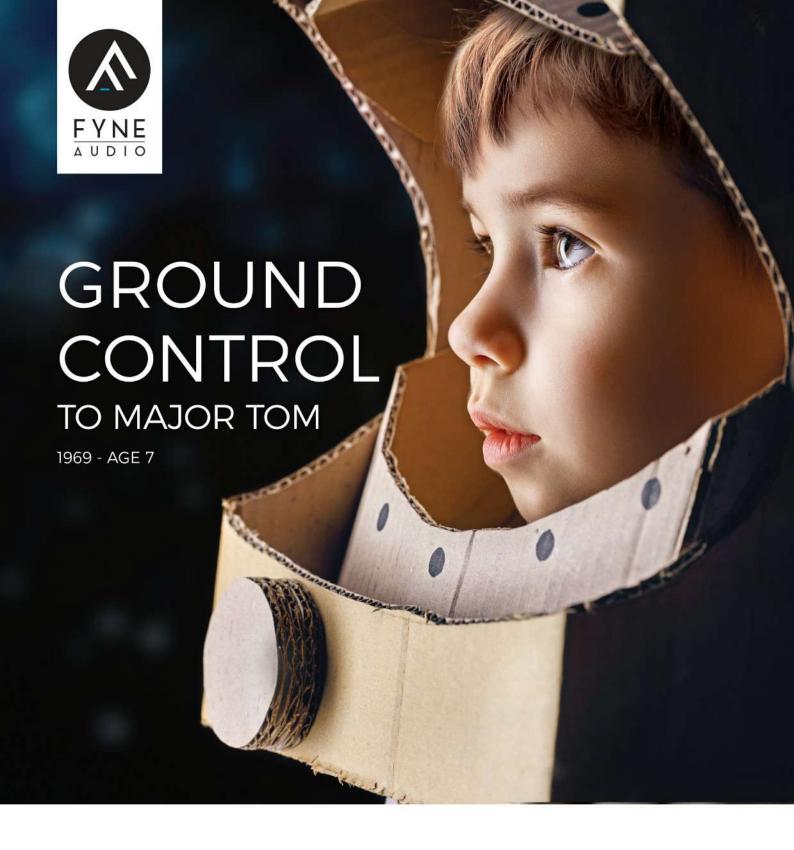
DS: We have been asked this a few times. Unfortunately, not, although this is developing software so who knows what the future holds, one thing for sure you are going to see regular updates form us with this software in the next few months. However, we already have two other fantastic ways to get help with your room. You can complete our acoustic free advice form online, and send us the plan you have been working on and one of our acoustic advisors will get back to you within 24 hours to start working with you on your room. The software is interactive so can be passed back and forth. You can test your room yourself, using the fantastic free Room EQ Wizard software and a USB Mic. This gives us detailed acoustic analysis of your room to really help our advisors give you the balanced, clear sounds you are looking for.

HP: You mentioned there will be further updates in the future. Any hint to what these might hold?

DS: Currently we are working on attaching our prices to all the panels you place in your room so that it can help with budgeting and also produce a final list for quotation purposes

HP: Many Thanks, what is next for GIK Acoustics; last year you launched the Impression Series for the home market any other plans on the horizon?

DS: yes, we are shortly to launch our brandnew art panel service. The existing service has been in place for a while but our new service is again going to use the latest software to enable you to choose from over 1 million free images on our website or to upload your own art onto the website and see how it would look on a panel or a sequence of panels. The process will walk you right through the system from choosing your art to the signing off to print process. Just like with the Impression Series we want to bring acoustic panels into the home environment that can also be a work of art as well as helping to make your room sound better.



At FYNE AUDIO we don't build time machines - but we do make loudspeakers so detailed and natural, they will take you right back. Just like it did for Tom, listening to his favourite Bowie track.

Find out more at www.fyneaudio.com/TakeMeRightBack







Fink Team Launch Borg Speakers

I was very lucky to make it over to Munich this year in what is undoubtedly the best show in the calendar. More than ever there were more new manufacturers as well as the traditional names we have heard over the years. Fink Audio are one of the newer names in the street, though their work is probably more well-known than they would let you know. This is a company best known for acoustic evaluation, involved in the creation of loudspeakers for other brands, who hire them because of their expertise. experience and excellent in-house simulation and measurement facilities. Whilst loudspeaker brands might not admit to using their skills, Fink also create speakers under their own name, notably the MW 4 speaker a year ago.

Fink is led by Karl-Heinz Fink, a team who have just developed a more affordable loudspeaker than the WM-4, though at a cost of €24,000 a pair in standard finishes still put it still at the higher end of the market. The 2018 Munich show had loudspeakers at a great range of prices, shapes and sizes, some of which were over a hundred thousand Euros, making this a reasonable price for what lies inside. The coffin-looking loudspeaker from the Fink Team is called the 'Borg'. Whilst the tennis player with the same name might still be able to lob a few aces, Fink also hope this, based on the WM-4, will also be a top shot and net them reviews and sales. That speaker, with a large bass, two mids and tweeter at €65,000 was introduced at HIGH END 2017 in Munich last year as a successor to their WM-2 and WM-3.

The 52kg Borg uses a large 10.25" bass/mid paper cone, though it is 4 ¾" smaller than in the WM-4, and an AMT (air motion transformer) 25µm pleated Kapton diaphragm for the top frequencies as in the earlier model. The two drivers have a crossover frequency of 1600Hz, outside of that critical 3kHz area essential for vocals and violins to sound natural. Listening to the speaker in the press-day it was easy to hear that the crossover is very carefully designed and showed no peaks or troughs, creating a



very pleasant and human sound-stage. Fink felt that smaller 2-way systems sound anaemic after hearing a '10 incher', and certainly this was a powerful performer, and with a slow roll off from mid to high. Karl Heinz Fink was eager to show off this new loudspeaker to those at the press show. There are a lot of similarities with the bass driver used in the WM-4; a low hysteresis surround, and a large three-inch voice coil. The ability to control sound and with ample power handling from the light stiff paper cone could well find its way into recording studios where the sound engineer might not be quite so gentle as the average semidetached house owner wanting to stay friends with their neighbour. The bass/mid includes an aluminium shorting ring on the centre pole and a die-cast aluminium chassis which is fully vented for low air speed, as is the voice coil former, both reducing distortion and compression and operating at a very low thermal compression.

The tweeter is an Air Motion Transformer (AMT) operating according to the principles developed by its inventor Oskar Heil. This was developed and manufactured in-house

by Mundorf with the assistance of the Fink Team. As in the WM-4 it has a strong 25µm-thick pleated Kapton diaphragm with 50µm aluminium strips. This material was chosen as it has extremely good internal damping, resulting in particularly low distortion. A special etching process was developed to produce it and the design configuration optimised through extensive in-house listening. Frequency response exceeds 30,000Hz, and its almost constant impedance not only creates a flatter response but also means a simplified crossover design, also essential for accurate sound.

Many will know that I am not actually a fan of complicated 18dB/24dB/octave 3rd/4th order crossover designs, and the crossover here is 4th order acoustic Linkwitz-Riley with a time delay addition between LF and HF, which worked really well for this skeptical reviewer. As the bass /mid is so large a lower crossover point is likely to be needed and the Borg has a lower than average crossover frequency of 1600Hz, requiring a larger AMT driver with a 6464mm2 surface area as ideal.



THE NEW DIVA XL, THE MUNICH HIGH-END SHOW'S DIVA?

One more time the AudioNec's room met the enthusiasm of worldwide audiophiles and most of them claimed the Diva XL, the finest loudspeaker ever made.



ΙT SOUNDS LIKEA REVOLUTION



Even with a great crossover, including Mundorf resistors the chances are that your room will not be perfect and the Fink Team were aware that theirs (and any, for that matter) loudspeaker will need some assistance. Hence the aim was to produce a loudspeaker able to integrate with its surroundings, and therefore the unit has four clever switches at the rear to alter elements to maximise the sound in your listening room. Firstly there is a three position control to allows a degree of adaptation to suit different amplifier damping factors The first setting is the standard setting for transistor amplifiers with good damping factor. The second is used with amplifiers having a lower damping factor, such as older amplifiers and in rooms that have low frequency problems. The third setting is for use with tube amplifiers.

The other three controls at the rear of each speaker work as tone controls; the mid +/-control operating between 300-2,000Hz allows the position of the virtual stage can be changed from back behind the speakers to closer to the listener. It can also compensate for more, or less, lively rooms.

The Presence control at 2.5kHz can be changed to adapt to characteristics in the source, cable and amplification. The "+" setting is ideal for softer setups, with the opposite for brighter sounding systems.

Finally, the High +/- control changes the tweeter levels to balance the duo.

Coupled with all this is a cleverly designed port unit, which was shown for all to see in the press release. One big problem in porting is resonance at low frequency and they have reduced this with a damping material. If you understand how pipes in cathedral organs work you will know they have their own specific resonance frequency. I remember in my youth improving the porting in my Spendor BC1 by replacing the "hole" with a cut-up paint roller; that hairy damping material on the outside of the tube really did control the bass!

As well as possible resonances from the port, loudspeaker cabinets themselves have structural resonances which can very audible. FinkTeam take this aspect of loudspeaker performance very seriously, aiming to reduce colouration and time smear



resulting in an improved stereo image focus, and ultimately low or null listener fatigue.

That coffin-shape has been a feature of their design in the past and important part of their design philosophy. Fink claim to reduce the the resonance amplitude to below audibility. They achieve this using a multilayer construction that combines multi-thickness MDF panels with a damping layer whose internal friction converts vibration into heat. That conservation of energy law I grew up learning in science lessons at school says that 'nothing can be created or destroyed only transferred or transformed', hence it is converted into heat. In creating the ideal cabinet, the FinkTeam developed algorithms to help ensure ideal material thicknesses to achieve the best results, but they noted even with the cabinet opening to mount the mid/bass driver there was still some unwanted vibration, and whilst almost invisible to the touch test it was obvious under the laser scanner. So, a solid metal ring behind the driver mounting solved this problem and hence increase the signal to noise ratio. Those cabinets are made in house.

As well as hearing the speakers at the show, we were honoured to have Marantz Europe's brand ambassador, the flamboyantly dressed Ken Ishiwata, to join in the review to discuss his love of the company's loudspeakers.] Indeed, he heard an early prototype (it was known internally as 'the washing machine', hence the initials "WM" on their earlier incarnations) and asked them to create a properly finished version that he could use to demonstrate his electronic designs, which became the WM-3. For me the highlight of this well delivered press review was ken's unexpected arrival, and the demonstrations illustrated not only a flat and natural response (only slightly marred by a peak of standing waves from where I was sitting at around 120Hz from the room) but also very low distortion allowing instruments to sing to their full and with excellent decay. Their saviour might well be the ability to position for the speaker where you want them to be in your room, tweaking it all from the controls on the rear.

Janine Elliot



OPTIMISED FOR PERFORMANCE BY LENGTH

After testing 15 different lengths of cable we found that 1.7 metre power cable sounds better than any other length.

STREAM POWER CABLE

"I was totally blown away with how they improved these systems in terms of detail, ambience and timing.

The improvement was not subtle, more akin to a 'top flight' upgrade!"

SH, Bulgaria

"This is the best Black Rhodium cable I've heard in the last few years from the outfit and is one of the best power cables you can buy at the price point" theaudiophileman.com

"It's an excellent cable and amongst the best at its price-point!" Hi-Fi World

"This mains cable is for me one of the best products in the Black Rhodium line up" Hi-Fi Pig

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With top of the range quality at middle range prices, upgrade your whole system with Stream.

Upgrade the system with 1 x Stream cable

- ✓ More ambience, detail and improved timing.
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- Huge sound stage, inky black background, increased ambience, clarity, detail, bass control and dynamics.
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High End Munich 2018 – Newcomers

Every year the High End Society has a 'Newcomers' stand where they give exhibition space to a few, very lucky, new companies and products. We always take a great interest in this area as it really shows the future of the industry. Several success stories have come out of the Newcomers stand at High End Munich over the years, among them PureAudioProject, Westminster Labs and b.audio, to name just a few.

Here are the High End Newcomers 2018...we hope to be seeing much more of them very soon, hopefully exhibiting again at High End Munich 2019!

Little Zoe



Little Zoe from Greece were showcasing their first valve amplifier. The amp, shown in Jaguar white, was definitely very attractive and looked like it meant business. The standard configuration of the amp includes Lundahl output transformers and Mundorf Silver Oil signal capacitors. It has a solid, non-resonant, fibred resin chassis to dampen noises in the mass of the body.





Little Zoe hope to begin shipping their amplifier around the end of September 2018, retail price will be 14,000€ and it can be supplied in various custom colour car paint finishes. However, they have a pre-order offer on the first 20 amps in black or white at 9,000€ until the end of September.



Ecosystem



TuneTot is not merely Wilson Audio's latest offering in the category of state-of-the-art small loudspeakers, but one element within an ecosystem populated with custom, a la carte tools and accessories designed to maximize TuneTot's performance and cosmetic beauty in a wide variety of applications. TuneTot was designed from the ground up to thrive in acoustically hostile environments.

For example, the ISOBase (pictured) is an optional accessory that provides the ideal solution for desktop, bookshelf, or credenza installations. It is the fruit of months of research and development into the arcane factors that cause undesirable interactions between TuneTot and more resonant mounting surfaces, such as those constructed of MDF, glass, aluminum, or hardwood.

Not content with designing another "high-end" compact loudspeaker, Wilson's Special Applications Engineering team has redefined what is possible in installations not naturally conducive to serious music reproduction. TuneTot brings to these environments the musical authenticity and emotional connection emblematic of Wilson's bigger floorstanding loudspeakers.

Watch the TuneTot story in a new video at wilsonaudio.com. Click on the YouTube icon.





ONKK



ONKK are a British turntable manufacturer set up by Paul Beckett in 2015. The company has a long term focus, having tooled all the manufactured components and developed a proprietary motion control and slot-less direct drive system. Their turntable is also very out of the ordinary and contemporary in it's design.

On show was their flagship Cue DD turntable, which is the culmination of five years' research and development. Cast in Aluminium and finished in bright red it was very eye-catching and Paul said that he had already had a lot of interest, particularly from the Chinese market.













LIVING VOICE

VOX OLYMPIAN



When performance really matters only the best will do. The Vox Olympian loudspeaker system is our finest and most natural design – a constellation of exotic materials, technologies and techniques.

Exactingly executed by the world's finest cabinetmakers, made using the finest woods and according to laws of nature and classical proportions. The Vox Olympian is a loudspeaker like no other.





Audiodinamica

We met Gianluca from Audiodinamica of Italy, who were showing their very petite, but solid, and very colourful BeCube electronics. Currently in development, the BeCubes will be launching in September/October 2018 on Kickstarter.

Their BeCube Power is the power supply for the BeCube DAC, BeCube Line amp and BeCube Phono. Together they will build a fresh and modern looking system.





Wing Acoustics

Mike and Dave Palmer, two brothers from New Zealand, claim that they are the inventors of the world's first zero-resonance speakers.

Their Acoustic Wing drivers, which they were showing for both home audio loudspeakers and headphones looked completely different to anything we had seen before and they generate sound by moving in a rigid action.

Fascinating to see a different approach to driver design and one to watch to see where they go with this in the future.





Discover Nomadic Audio Speakase





Massive Hi-Fi speaker for travelers

Forbes

"One of the 5 best hot products for 2018"

"...Speakase packs the power of large-scale quality speakers into a water-resistant, lightweight, shockabsorbent suitcase, turning any terminal and hotel room into a VIP event."



"As a standalone unit the sound quality is excellent, clear, airy, with a good punch of clean bass... popping the unit into its suitcase brings it totally alive. It sounds like a proper hifi... to me this is a no brainer."



"The Noamdic Audio is two things in one.
...It's an APTX Hi-End portable Bluetooth speaker
for travelling audiophiles... dock the speaker in the
Speakase / carry-on suitcase and the acoustic box
turns into a massively powerful big box speaker."

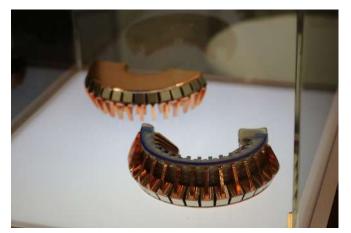
GADGET REVIEW

"...since the speaker is removable, it is also TSA friendly when you are flying. It's a great idea for anyone who loves music enough to take the best sound possible with them while traveling."





Arya Audio Labs





Based in Southampton, UK and founded by Arthur Marker, Arya Audio Labs were showing prototypes of their very interesting looking Airblade Driver.

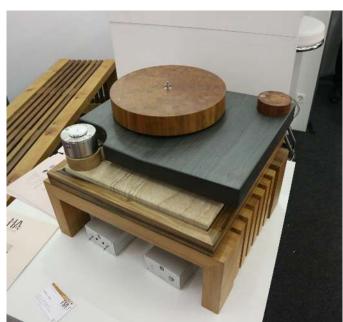
Rather than using a heavy diaphragm with separate voice coil, the AirBlade transducer incorporates light-weight ring-shaped foil elements arranged in layers with conductive Aluminium traces directly bonded to it. When an electrical signal is applied, opposite layers of the diaphragm either move towards or away from each other depending on the direction of the signal thus moving air and creating sound.

They also had their Revopod damping foot on display.

Holz-Akustik

Unfortunately there was no one available to speak to us, from German brand Holz-Akustik, when we visited the Newcomers stand. They make what looks like some very nice, wooden Hifi Racks and stands.







When science, engineering and emotion meet.





High End Munich 2018 - Women In Hifi



Hello from High End Munich 2018. The show is going brilliantly so far, very busy and some fantastic exhibits. We have a tradition that has been established over the last few years at the show, our Women In Hifi Facebook group take a little time to get together and meet up for a chat in the relaxed surroundings of the MOC beer garden.

As you know we recently brought you the Women In Hifi edition of our monthly magazine, just to prove that, yes, we are here, we know our stuff and we love our Hifi.

Of course, not all of the women in the group can get away from their exhibits to make it to the meet-up, but this year over twenty of us did, from all around the world. And judging by the crowds of visitors, there are plenty of women who love Hifi attending the show too!

There will be plenty of coverage following soon from the Hifi Pig Team in Munich, we

are having a ball and have already snoofled out some Audio gems for you!

If you are woman who is into Hifi or works in the industry then do please join us on Facebook!





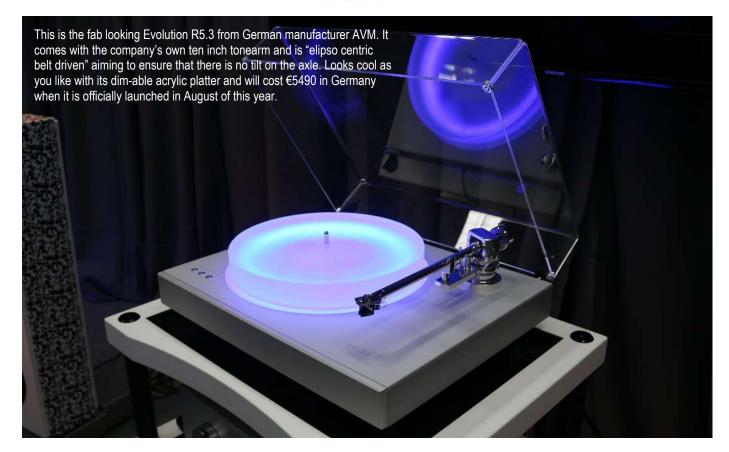


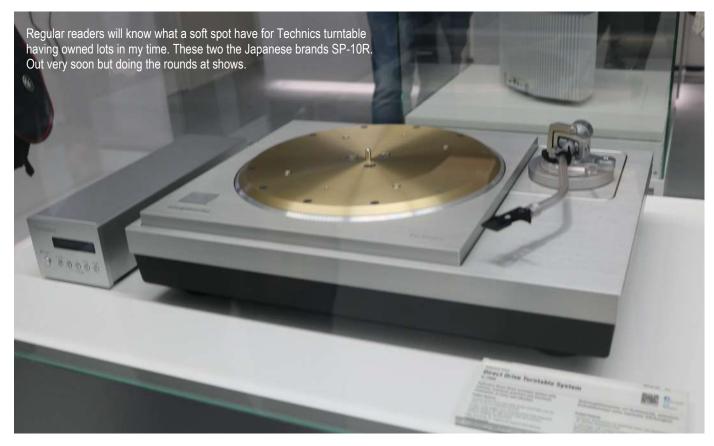
Decks And The City – Turntables At Munich High-End 2018

Turntables were absolutely everywhere at this year's Munich High-End and so here are some of the ones that stood out on our travels around the show...with a handful from Audio-Deluxe thrown in for good measure. We have no way of seeing everything at the shoa nd know we will have missed a good proportion but hope you enjoy all these lovely turntables.



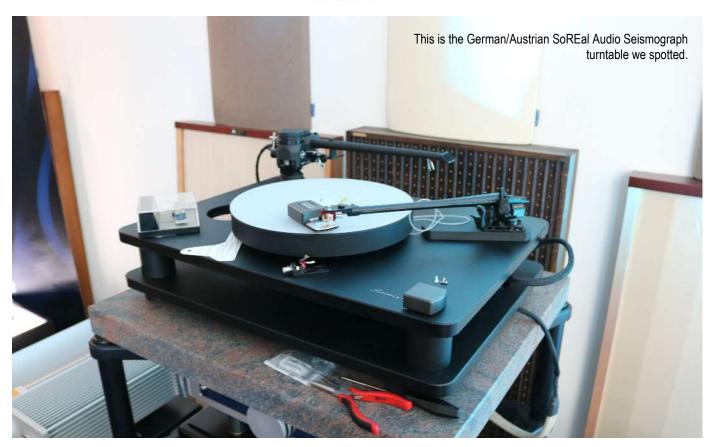




























Danish company Bergmann.











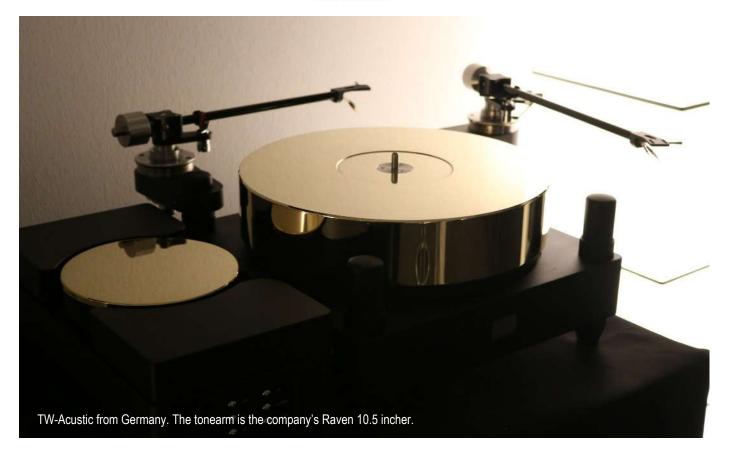
































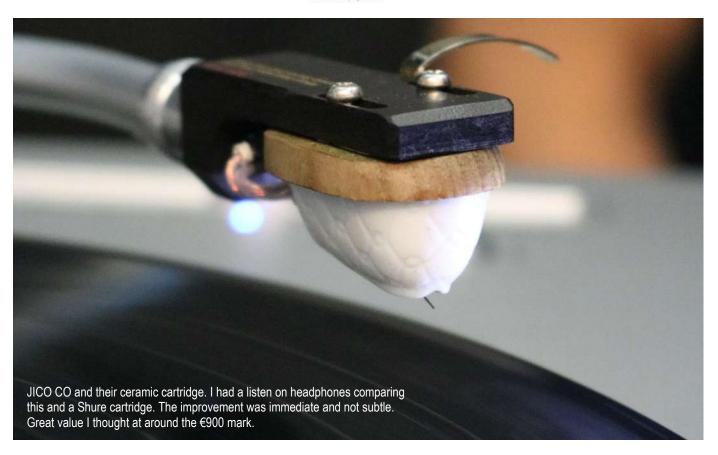










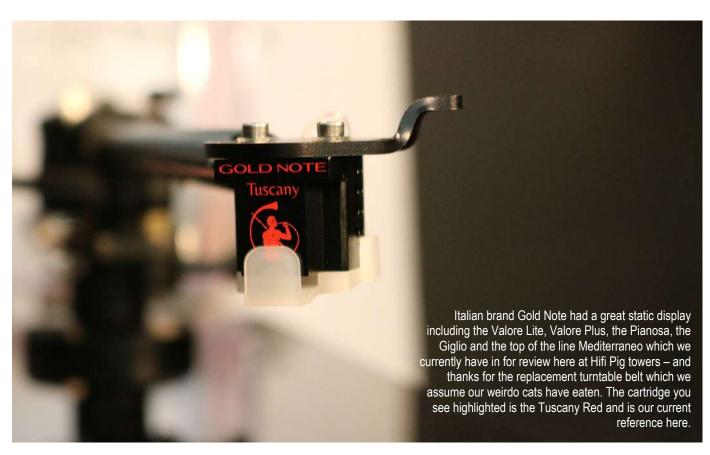
























































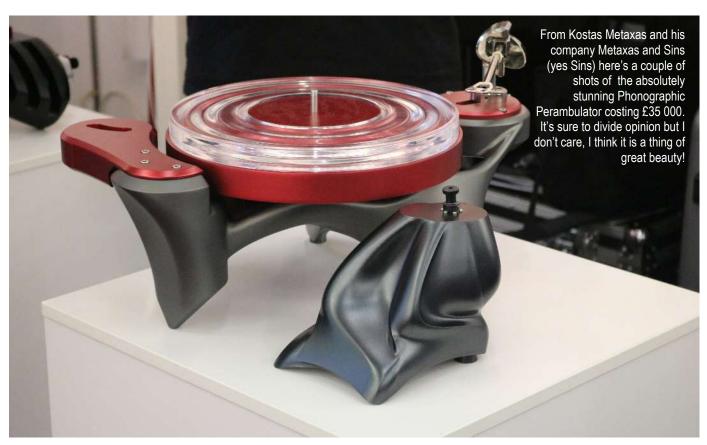
































The Sovereign turntable and Conqueror arm from Origin Live. The Sovereign costs £5700 with the arm £2705 which, in my opinion is great value given the level of engineering that goes into these products. We currently use the Resolution turntable and Zephyr tonearm and you can read the review here...they won our Outstanding Product Award.

However, Mark from Origin Live was keen to tell us about the second turntable you see in the photo below, The Gini, Analogue Drive AD-1. This is essentially an Origin Live turntable but interesting uses a pair of belts to turn the platter. Very interesting

















Bird's Eye View Of High End Munich 2018 With Linette Smith

Every year we say the same thing, 'surely the High End Show can't get any bigger?', but every year it does! It is now at the point when no human can actually cover every inch of the show...we have tried our very best but I think Super-human powers would be needed for that! However, being very organised and attacking it with military precision meant that we got to see most rooms and exhibits with the aim of bringing you the most comprehensive and interesting coverage of the show...we even managed to get over to the HifiDeluxe show too and bring you CanJam Munich coverage.

So, here are a few of the things that personally caught my eyes and ears at the show...there was the sublime, the beautiful, the

technically very clever...and of course the crazy stuff without which Munich, well it just wouldn't be Munich!

Most Flamboyant Designs

Munich is a show where you get to see and hear all the rare flora and fauna of the Hifi universe, the halls and rooms are packed with rare beauties that are not often seen anywhere else. Kostas Metaxas and his Metaxas & Sins brand are probably one of the most exotic Hifi brands there is. His products are stunning and actually sound amazing too. He had a static stand at Munich, but I am sure that you will agree he makes some of the most visually amazing gear that you will see at a show.











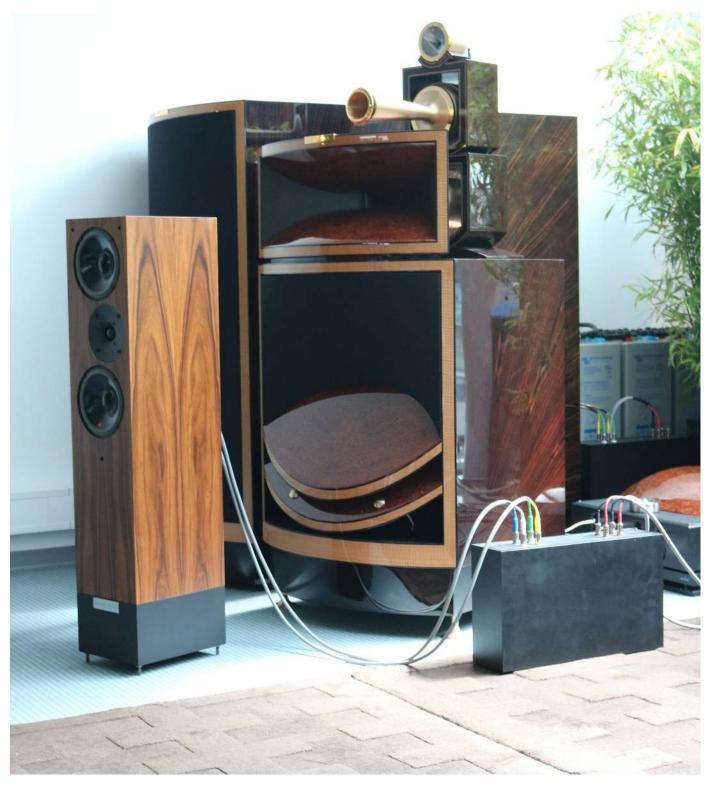




Most Unexpected Sounds

Sometimes, you may have heard a particular Hifi brand and formed a conclusion about it, which may be good or bad, but then when a brand challenges your preconceptions...well that's a good thing!

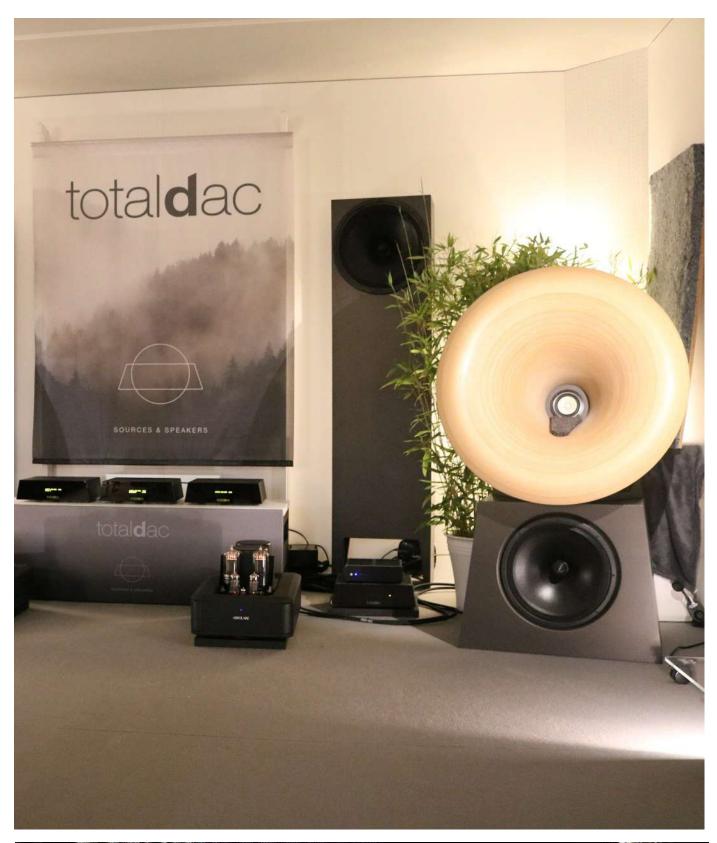
Living Voice are one of our favourite exhibitors, their big Vox Olympian and Palladian systems are something else, especially when paired with the likes of Kondo that their distribution company, Definitive Audio, also carries. This year we went into the first of their two rooms and it sounded incredible...then we realised that it was their more conventional OBX speakers, with off-board crossovers, that were playing. The sound was stunning and made you realise that you don't actually have to be a lottery winner to get that bit of Living Voice magic.





I have heard French brand Totaldac's products plenty of times. They were over in the Hifi Deluxe in one of my favourite systems, featuring Soulsonic speakers and Tellurium Q cables there, but where they came into their own was in the MOC. This year there were less of the smaller cabins in the halls, with some much bigger ones that

gave a much, much better listening experience. Totaldac DAC, servers, preamp and USB filters along with Absolare monoblocks and Totaldac horn loudspeaker system. The sound was beautiful, airy and unexpected, I look forward to hearing it again!







The Designated Driver

It can't have escaped you that there is a certain brand of driver that is being featured in some very, very high end loudspeakers. Accuton drivers, whether ceramic or diamond, were in many loudspeakers that we heard at the show. I'll stick my neck out here, with the right cabinet design these drivers just sing, and they were doing a great job in various exhibits at the show...just a few examples below. Now, this doesn't mean that you can just take any cabinet and whack some Accuton drivers in and be guaranteed a great speaker...but when everything is in place you do seem to get some magic happening.

Lawrence Audio - there is something about this brand's speakers, a gloriously airy and natural sound, particularly good in one of the larger cabins.



Volya - on static display but we have been lucky enough to review these speakers, simply stunning.



Estelon - the newest incarnation of their Extreme loudspeakers, they always sound amazing and are not afraid to break the mould of what a loudspeaker should look like.





Best Demo At The Show

There is an art to Hifi demonstration. Some people want to talk at you for hours and never actually play you any music, some try and tell you what you are going to hear rather than let you make your own mind up...both of these approaches tend to annoy me rather than engage me, and I imagine it is the same for most show goers. The Chord Company are a shining example of how to do a dem correctly, and I've experienced their dems at many shows and always been impressed by their no-nonsense approach, I didn't experience their demonstrations at this year's show but I imagine it was on point as usual. The Best Demo Award at this year's High End Show has to go to Innuos. They kept it simple, using active Kii loudspeakers. Play the music on one unit. stop, plug in the other unit. Play it again. Simple but effective and the difference that we heard between the Zenith SE and the flagship ZENith Statement music servers was instantly apparent. The SE version sounded excellent, but the clarity from the Statement was just another level. Well done Team Innuos!





A Room With A View

Making your room at a show welcoming and maybe a little quirky is a god way to stand out. In the past we have loved Gato and their 'lounge with an open fireplace' vibe, SoundKaos and their Swiss wood cabin and the funky designs of the KEF room. This year

special mentions have to go to Dali with their Industrial Shabby chic' room.



Manger Audio always deserve a mention with their room being coordinated, calm and cool, featuring Ella Scheu's (pictured) turntables and Mola Mola electronics too...plus they were playing a really crazy instrumental version of the Red Hot Chilli Pepper's 'Can't Stop'.



Avantgarde Acoustic's room was stunning. I love how they theme their room each year around the horn colour, this year it was understated in soft gold with moody seascapes. You can't fail to impress me with Trios (these were the luxury edition) and basshorns and they have to be on my 'I want it now!' list too. Plus the team all looked very cool dressed in cream with their little Avantgarde Acoustic gold badges.





Most In Demand

We brought you all the info from the Chord Electronics press conference which was so packed that they had to ask people to move outside because the MOC team said there were too many people in the room. I managed, by the power of sharp elbows and being generally pushy, to get fairly near the front but this was my view from part way though my manoeuvres. We were really, really pleased to see the Chord team in such high demand!



Best Press Pack

The press get given lot of info about new products at the show, this generally means that you will never buy another USB stick in your life, the savvy brands know that a stick with all the info or a link to the online press pack is a lot better than trying to weigh you down with reams of paper. It is quite difficult though for a brand to give you something to make them stand out. In the past we have received, among other things, mugs, CDs and LPs, gift bags containing bath towels and headphones (from a German distributor) and chocolate pliers (brilliant and delicious) from The Chord Co. This year we were given some rather potent 'Audiophile' Quince brandy from Serbia, infused with silver, from the lovely Miroslav at Way Cables.



But the top Press pack award has to go to Dynaudio. After attending their launch of the new Confidence range, we were given a Lego kit to build our own C20 standmount loudspeaker!



Best Music Choice

There seemed to be a lot of opera being played at the show this year...not my most favourite of genres, it has to be said. Some systems did sound spectacular but there was plenty that just sounded like caterwauling (well to my ears anyway). By the time Saturday afternoon rolled around and our time to visit the Hifi Deluxe show I was really looking forward to something different to listen to. We popped into the first of the Fyne Audio rooms where they were playing something classical....'Do you have anything with a bit more of a beat?' we asked 'Why, of course!'. We were treated to some Infected Mushroom and then when we went into the next room with the larger high end loudspeakers, the CD was sent with us. Very impressed with both the more conventional floorstanders and the bigger speakers, they handled the energetic and bass-heavy music with aplomb...and good on the Fyne guys for not being afraid to chuck on something a bit out of the ordinary!





The Crazy Stuff That Makes Munich, Munich!

Let's face it, if there wasn't some really crazy stuff at the show then we would all be more than a little bit disappointed, we expect the way-out, the wacky and the kind of stuff that we probably would never dream of buying. High End Munich 2018 did deliver us some crazy stuff!

It's usually an AV room that boasts that they have 'The Biggest Subs In The World' and boy can you usually hear them! The actual biggest sub was by Ascendo and was (perhaps thankfully) silent...we couldn't decide if it was a gimmick or not!



Remember when you were a kid and we were promised all kinds of things in the future, like hover boards and watches we could speak into and teleporting. Some of those things have become reality, along with the Mag Lev Audio levitating turntable. No, we didn't witness it playing, but we saw it hover!

More enormous speakers, this time from Goebel High End (man in kilt for size comparison only, he was nothing to do with the actual speakers). We did hear these and the sound was rather nice, but boy, they were huuuuuge!



To go with all the big speakers, Dan D'agostino gave us a massive amplifier. Every inch a D'agaostino amp with the signature copper heatsinks and glowing front dial, the Relentless monoblocks weigh in at 220kg each and cost £275,000 a pair. Not one to drop on your toe!







Ok, so then there was this...we were pondering whether it was some kind of toilet, but it is actually a totally bonkers CD player from (I think) Omega Audio Concepts. It was at the Hifi Deluxe show and the room sounded great. Full marks to the manufacturer for ignoring any advice that it may be a 'little too much'. Crazy Hifi at its best.



Two people told me I had to hear these speakers from Bayz Audio. One was Geoff from TQ and one was Sarajan from 6Moons. They were over at the Hifi Deluxe and looked like nothing I had seen before a kind of carbon fibre 'C' shape with omnidirectional drivers...they sounded great and I would have loved to find out more but the guy in the room was too occupied with his phone to engage with us, a real shame.

Even more carbon fibre back over at the MOC this time from Chinese high end brand, ESD Acoustic. A massive 800,000+ USD\$ full horn system with all the electronics and crossovers in what looked like handcrafted Chinese furniture, squeezed into a very hot fishbowl type cabin. I was prepared for this to be all kinds of wrong, but on Sunday afternoon it was incredible, and the team were totally lovely. The sensitivity of the speakers was something like 120 db. Would love to hear this in a really big room though.





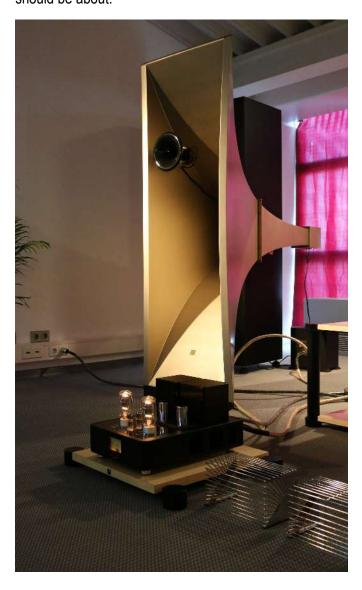






Most Emotional Experience

Our connection with music should be emotional, it should move you in some way whether that's to make you smile, laugh or cry...if it touches you then it's good. To me, the mark of great Hifi is if it just gives you that connection to the music. Hands down the most emotional connection that we...and many others felt, was in the Tune Audio room. Partnered with Traformatic Audio and Skogrand Cables, the huge Tune Avaton horns that Manolis Proestakis makes sounded sublime. The music that they played was performed by Manolis's wife, recorded just before they set of for the show. It was a piece by Chopin and, even though I am not a fan of classical, the piano playing was so emotional and moving, it was just beautiful, it brought tears to our eyes. Great job by the whole team involved with this room..this is what Hifi should be about.











The I Want It Now' Systems And Products

I am a very happy camper when it comes to our Hifi, it sounds amazing, I am really content with it, love everything about it....but, of course, like anyone that loves our crazy hobby there are loads of systems and products that I hear and see at shows that just make me go 'I want it!'...obviously when a lottery win and a huge house with several listening rooms becomes reality then I can indulge this fantasy, until then it's great to dream!

Joseph Audio - this room was just amazing. Jeff had managed to get his Reel 2 Reel rig through customs to the show. He was playing his Perspective loudspeakers, one model down from his Pearls that we have heard before. They were partnered with the most gorgeous lipstick red Alluxity amplifiers and Purist Audio design cables. fabulous sound, looked great and Jeff is a lovely guy.



Raidho with Chord Electronics - This was a match made in heaven. The new Raidho TD 4.8 loudspeakers were stunning and the use of a full set of Chord's electronics including DAVE just worked a treat. This was a big, serious, high end Danish/British combo...but the sound was fun and energetic, a pleasure to listen to.



PMC - I covered the launch of the PMC fact fenestria loudspeakers earlier, but despite being something we heard early on in the show, their sound stuck with me. That's a sign, yep, I would love a pair.



Voxativ - 'Born in Berlin' is their strapline and Voxativ sum up all that is good about German Hifi. Holger and his team make uber-cool gear. Right from their drivers that are seen as some of the best in the world to the speakers and the electronics...those big circular control knobs on the amps just sing simplicity in design. And they don't just look good, consistently one of the best sounding rooms at Munich, year on year. Born in Berlin and Masters of Munich...what's not to

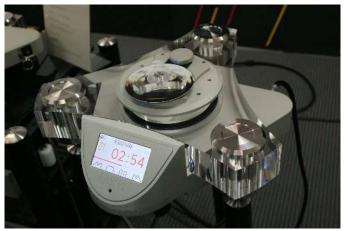




Audionec - over to France for some very high end, very large loudspeakers. Audionec were another brand taking advantage of the new, larger cabins in the halls. Partnered with another french brand, Jadis, their Diva XL speakers were really special. Yes, you would need pots of cash and a huge listening room to have them at home, but they sounded wonderful and unforced...they were definitely flying the french high end flag!

Metronome Technologie Kalista - Keeping it French and high end I was impressed by the new Kalista DremPlay One CD player Billed as being 'more affordable' than a DreamPlay Cd and separate Kalista DAC it still retails at just shy of £32,000. The system featured many other components from their range, including their own speakers and it was really a masterclass in pure sounding French elegance, like French couture, stylish, effortless and very expensive.











Munich High End With Janine Elliot

I love Hifi shows and have attended the major and minor shows around the world since the 1970's, but one show has always eluded me, until this year that is. It was time to pluck up my courage and German language O'level skills to make my way to Munich for the show that everyone is talking about these days. Whilst some major shows around the world have either closed-down, and others can't decide whether to move to Birmingham or somewhere else, this show stays firmly rooted to the southern German town. And, like a scene from 28 Weeks Later, hundreds and hundreds of determined audio-infected humans marched from all directions with great determination into the venue holding the annual event. It was hard to believe that so many people had such a passion for audio let alone would traverse so many countries to all join-together with one simple wish to see and hear the best in audio, for Hifi is truly still alive and well

Whilst homegrown images of lederhosen, great German beer and even Alpen horns were never far from view, this was a gathering of the best of the best from all parts of the world, showing that we all can live and connect with each other. Brexit just seemed irrelevant during this entente-cordiale, and it surprised me just how many manufacturers are out there claiming to have the best in amplification, loudspeakers, DACs or whatever. I might have only been there for three days, but I still had no time to listen, let alone even to view, to everything that was there on show. Whilst Germany might be embarrassed to owning up to inventing MP3 this was no compressed exhibition and covering 29,000 metres in this Bavarian town is the show the organisers (The High-End Society) should be very proud of.

DIENVENUE GREND

WAS THE MUSICAL THE MUSIC

As well as the majors showing their latest products, some brilliantly delivered on the press day, there were some amazing products on display that took my interest and warrant my report. One of the first visits I made was to the PMC room showing off the new £45k Fact Fenestria loudspeaker. A gigantic array of four 6.5" long-throw piston drivers set as a pair of two with their own transmission line from each pair, hence two ports at top and bottom of the speaker. Coupled with this 75mm mid and 19.5mm soft dome tweeter this was better that I had heard PMCs before, and I have been listening to PMC since Peter Thomas's initial foray into transmission line speakers in BBC engineering before leaving the Corporation – as other notables have done – to start up his own loudspeaker manufacturing company. 'Fenestria' means "window" and this new loudspeaker from PMC is a completely new design philosophy including crossover and cabinet, the latter sharing its design with the tuned mass pendulums as used in tall buildings to prevent damage from earthquake.

There were a number of very large loudspeaker designs (and even massive full-length woofers!) at the show with some reaching over €100,000, even from lesser-known brands. This speaker at £45k, was one of the best at any price, though I doubt I shall be able physically to get the 80kg units into my home for review. Due for release in September, so time for me to do some body building.





Whilst PMC had their flagship speaker on show, so also did the Fink team with a new "more affordable" loudspeaker; their coffin-shaped 'Borg'. Whilst the tennis player with the same name might still be able to lob a few aces, Fink also hope this, based on the WM-4, will be a top shot. This speaker uses a 10.25" bass/mid paper cone and an AMT (air motion transformer) 25µm pleated Kapton diaphragm, the two speakers having a crossover frequency of 1600Hz, outside of that critical 3k area essential for vocals and violins to sound natural. Each loudspeaker has four switches on the rear to tailor precisely to your imperfect listening environment. Available at €24,000, Borg is considerably cheaper than their previous WM-4. Appearing at their press review was Marantz Europe's brand ambassador, the flamboyantly dressed Ken Ishiwata, one of the most influential figures in today's hi-end audio industry. He was there to discuss his love of the company's loudspeakers. Indeed, he heard an early prototype (it was known internally as 'the washing machine', hence the initials "WM" on their earlier incarnations) and asked Fink to create a properly finished version which he could use to demonstrate his electronic designs, and which became the WM-3.



Whilst there were hundreds if different speakers in Munich, some of the best to be heard were old designs, and reincarnations of them, such as the BBC LS5/8s courtesy of Graham Audio in Tim de Paravicini's room. He was busily entertaining with his modified reel to reel and playing previously unheard Elvis in rehearsal. Epic! With visitors bringing in their own reel-to-reel recordings to play, perhaps I should have brought in a copy master of my previously unheard latest album. Perhaps next year.



Indeed, reel to reels were a big feature of the show with a number of old Studer and Revox machines being demo'd, and more exciting for me, two new machines being shown off. The first was a traditional looking bullet-proof style, the Ballfinger M063H, available in several guises from playback only and recording options, though at £26,000 is not for the wallet-shy audiophile. Ballfinger is the first manufacturer of new analogue reel-to-reels in the digital age and using modular architecture so that components can be replaced, modified or added, including the option of belt or direct drive.







The other manufacturer I was keen to visit was unlike any reel to reel I had seen before, and a pure work of art worth having whatever the price. The GQT Portable Recording Device Number 1, from Kostas Metaxas is actually based on a Stellavox machine; known as the poorman's Nagra, but no less a machine. Stellavox, now permit Australian born Kostas to use their mechanisms in this work of art, with Kostas replacing the heads on the Stellavox SM8, turning it into work of art, available in any colour and CCIR or NAB. This portable unit might not be quite as portable as, to quote Kostas, a "bog standard conservative" tape recorder, but I would be proud to show this off more than any of my own 15 bog standard reel to reels in my collection. Metaxas and Sins (M&S) was set up in 1981, and he constantly produces artistic designs that are functional; from beautiful looking loudspeakers to their Phonographic Perambulator Number 1 (looks too good to call it a turntable) and futuristic headphone amplifier in the shape of a skull (the Marquis Memento Mori). It was great to see them all in real life, and his stand was one of the many that I was eager to visit in my short stay in Germany.





To quote everything at the show would be impossible, but there were a few others worthy of mention. Firstly with SME now having acquired the Garrard audio brand, and Loricraft, the service agent for repairing antique 301's and 401's, I hoped they would show an original or SME-modified idler-driven 301, but they were more interested in showing off their new £14,950 Synergy turntable. This represents the first time they have offered an integrated turntable option, combining a new turntable design, the Series IV arm, Ortofon MC Windfeld Ti cartridge and Nagra-designed phonostage. All is connected with Crystal cable mono crystal silver wire, all of which has been factory configured ready to start playing.



Another turntable I just had to visit was the new £2385 turntable from the Well Tempered Lab. This design deploys a coloured golf ball (yes, available in any colour) suspended in a viscous fluid at the pivot point of the arm, removing the need for traditional uni-pivot or knife-edge designs. This allows perfect damping with the arm being suspended on a wire in the silicone fluid and being twisted provides the anti skating. Such a simple idea that one could imagine having been put together in a school science lesson, but it works!







Of course there were many headphones on show. I love Meze headphones having reviewed and owning their 99 Classic. Antonio Meze, lead designer and founder of Meze Audio was proud to show me their Empyrean - the first Isodynamic Hybrid Array Headphone made in collaborated with Rinaro Isodynamics, Antonio telling me this was the first dual shaped voice coil array. The flat two-sided magnet driver is egg shaped, covering all of the area open to your ears on this over-ear design, and with a carefully shaped element with highs and mids operated at the lower end of the "egg" carefully positioned opposite your ear, and bass spreading around the rest of the surface area. I was very impressed with what I heard, and at 35Ω and 100dB/1mW works well with less powerful head amps and DAPs, unlike most Planar designs. Antonio told me this exciting product was "born from passion, curiosity and innovation", and it is certainly a step up from their much cheaper 99. This open planar magnetic headphone will be available in the Summer of 2018 at around 3000 Euros. They also had on demo their new Rai Penta

CD was still alive and well at this show, with Japanese company CEC taking my interest with their novel belt driven transports. With sales of records, CDs and reel to reels on offer this was an exciting time, if only my case had room to fit more inside. Reel to reels were just too big and heavy for me, though one company really excited me; Italian company Hemiolia Records had a collection of Studer reel

to reels on show to playback their exciting series of Italian operatic tenor Luciano Pavarotti's live concerts, which the great singer had had recorded and then took them home after the concerts he performed. Hemiolia asked the wife of Pavarotti if they could take the masters, restore and reproduce them in a beautifully packaged collection of metal-spool tapes. As well as 1/4 "tapes Hemiolia have also launched a series of Master Cassette recordings. Yes, cassettes are back again, made using Studer A810 and A721 machines. Yes, it was just like visiting the 1970's again. All I needed now was a few cassette tape machines on sale and to be wearing flares.























