

Bach Cello Suites - Starker playing, unaccompanied. This is about the most haunting experience of nearly having a cello in your home you can imagine.

Dvorak Cello Concerto - Piatigorski / Munch Boston Symphony Orchestra. Not quite the stellar recording of the first recommendation, but it is a wonderful rendition and captures the entire symphony beautifully.

Patricia Barber - Nightclub. Particularly the MFSL 45 RPM version. It is live and there are typical background noises of a small nightclub--glasses clinking. It's very realistic almost like you are there in the nightclub.

Patricia Barber - Modern Cool on Mobile Fidelity. The 45 RPM version is fabulous. The bass on Post Modern Blues are really incredible. A great system will delineate this distinctly from the vocals beautifully without allowing the bass to muddy up the vocals. Her albums are fantastic and clearly display her virtuosity, but I don't feel the albums display the virtuosity of her accompanying musicians--they are incredible and a live performance will prove it.

Harry Belafonte - Sings the Blues. Probably my favorite male vocal. The rasp of his voice with just enough depth is terrific--but sometimes a difficult test for speakers. Classic 45 RPM single sided is really fantastic. Almost like he is in the room with you. I particularly like the first cut on the album.

The Tony Bennett / Bill Evans Album. The 45 RPM Analog Productions re-issue is fabulous. Piano and vocals--the audiophile dream (or nightmare)

Andy Bey - Tuesdays in Chinatown (CD warlock album). Another very deep and raspy vocal--really pushes those lower vocal octaves.

Burmeister Test CD 3 - Poem of Chinese Drums. This is incredible Kodo drums. I recently played this for a professional drummer whom we designed a listening room/HT and a rehearsal room for. He couldn't believe the dynamics. Very tight drums and very dynamic. Great attacks. There should be no over extended or bloated bass sounds here.

Ray Brown - Soular Energy. The bass is a bit over emphasized and sounds larger than life and perhaps too forward, but the imaging of it in front of the other instruments is very believable.

Calamus - the Splendour of Al-Andalus. This was possibly the first M*A recording I bought and am still amazed at how well it captures the detail of each instrument. With just a 2 channel mobile digital setup Todd Garfinkle has done a remarkable job.

Neko Case – Fox Confessor Brings the Flood 2006, Anti, www.nekocase.com

You probably already have this one, but I don't want you to think Indie Rock is a boy's club! Neko Case, queen of reverb, marks her career with this giant release. Some say, but that's "country music!" Phooey. Country music is highly distinguishable by its 'made in Nashville' stamp. Favorite track? "John saw that number," but they're all interesting songs. Check out the hilarious interview with Neko and the rock critics on "[Sound Opinions](#)"

Eva Cassidy - Live at Blues Alley. Her album songbird may be a better "female vocal" album, but Live at Blues alley is such a great live recording. Really full without much compression gives you a wonderful live venue presentation of the entire music.

Ray Charles and Count Basie - Ray Sings Basie Swings. Pure Audiophile vinyl. Well you can't beat the cast and it is a terrific re-issue.

Holly Cole - Romantically Helpless. The groove note recording is amazing. The lower octaves contrasted by Holly's voice give her such an uncanny presence particularly on "One Trick Pony".

Harry Connick Jr. - Here's a concert that I wasn't even that excited about going to. His albums are okay and in my opinion not that exceptional. His on stage performance is exceptional. He has the charisma of Harry Belafonte on stage (another great concert) with the energy of a 20 year old.

Nicolai Dunger – Soul Rush 2001, 2002, Lakeshore Records, www.myspace.com/nicolaidunger

When a Swedish soccer star leaves the sports arena to create music, one would not expect to be chilled to the bone by his sensitive tone and vulnerable sound. This album is my favorite, but I highly recommend any effort by this artist. The track, "Dr. Zhivago's Train," incorporates such lush sounds you'd think you were in the movie.

Eduardo Eguez, the Lute Music of Johann Sebastian Bach volume II on M*A recordings. Single instrument, but an incredible sense of space around it.

Eto Ema also on M*A recordings. A brilliant versions of the Goldberg Variations. Far better than any of the Gould recordings in my opinion.

John Faddis and the Chicago Jazz Ensemble - Here is a combination of great acoustics and a true master. I saw them with Billy Taylor (and was fortunate enough to meet Dr. Taylor after the show), but even without Billy Taylor these guys were great--go see them. The sad part about this concert was the small hall was less than half full. To me that's a crime that such great talent is not appreciated in a large city like Chicago.

FIM - Treasures of an ancient Pacific. Winston MA has captured every bit of clarity on these fine recordings. I particularly like the traditional Asian recordings for their clarity without glare, such as track 11. This has quite a nice soundstage as well.

Peter Gabriel "Security" - Classic Records re-issue. This is an excellent artistic and well recorded album. As usually Classic Records has done a great job with their re-issue. The end of "Lay Your Hands" is a great dynamic test.

Mike Garson - Oxnard Sessions volume 1 and 2. Reference Recordings and outstanding sonically and performance wise.

Gomez – How We Operate 2006, ATO Records, www.gomeztheband.com Okay, this one is a bit of a stretch. It edges on the pop side of things, but I'd simply buy it for two singles on it, "Girl-shaped love drug," and "See the world." British-based Gomez, recently signed to Dave Matthew's ATO records, have been making music since 1998, but this album somehow feels like a debut.

David Grisman and Tony Rice - Tone Poems I actually had a friend, not an audiophile friend, that borrowed this disc from me and selected his next guitar based on the tonal qualities of it off this disc. Need I say more?

Lugman Hamza - with this voice. Another Groove Note record--and just as great. Very smooth and refined voice.

Mickey Hart "Dafos" - out of print LP on Reference Recordings. I wish they would re-issue this. It's a fabulous album and not only has great macro dynamics but also micro dynamics that are startling. If you can get the vinyl version, it's 45 rpm and stellar. The CD is very good, but not up to the vinyl recording.

Fred Hersch - Fred Hersch Trio plays. Many great jazz artists, such as Coltrane, Davis, Monk, Rollins. Recorded by Chesky, excellent all around.

Yuri Horingin Trio - Walking on the Moon on the Star Tracks album. While not really a percussion piece, the rim shots on the snare are fantastic.

James Newton Howard and Friends direct to disc on Sheffield. Just a really great recording all around for rock/dance style percussion.

Janis Ian "Tattoo" I like this because if the bass is wrong it will affect the timber of her voice when it kicks in. If the bass is right, her voice will remain steady. I wasn't sure if I was watching an all time great folk artist or was at the local comedy club. I saw her a couple of times most recently in a small venue (170 people) in Iowa. Her humor is second only to her artistic skills--and she is attentive to good sound quality which made it that much better for me.

Jacintha - Here's to Ben. Incredible Voice and just beautifully recorded. A good solid central image.

Westminster Choir - Like as a Hart. Recorded on Chesky label, this is a great choral recording. It has such a great sense of space. The long decay times in the church are wonderfully represented here. You almost feel as though you are in the cathedral.

Sara K. - Water Falls on the Stockfish label. Terrific live album. The acoustic guitar and her voice are beautifully recorded. Really fabulous the whole recording and the imaging of her voice and the guitar are terrific.

Lang Lang - Easily the best classical pianist I've ever seen--and I've seen a lot. He played Rachmoninov's piano concerto number 3, and made it look easy. If you close your eyes with him playing you will swear there are at least 2 pianists--no way one can do what he does.

Led Zeppelin II - Moby Dick. This has got to be one of the all time best rock drum recordings of all time. Less compression than was commonly used in that day. The drums are clear and alive, and what's more incredible, there were only 4 mics used. How do I know? Well, it was recorded by Rives Audio's Christopher Huston! Can you imagine being there for that recording---wow!

Lori Lieberman - Home of Whispers on Pope Music. Girl writing a letter is my favorite.

Masters of Guitar - Narada. I usually don't care for compilations, but this one is not to be missed. Wonderful recordings of all types of guitars and genres.

Jay McShann - What a Wonderful World. Groove Note. A medium tone and raspy voice. Not a refined vocal at all, more emotion in really feeling the song.

Brad Mehldau - Live in Tokyo. In many respects similar to the Keith Jarrett recording.

Amanda McBroom - Growing up in Hollywood Town. The Rose is just wonderful. Her vocal clarity is astounding.

Max Roach - Unfortunately, though most of his albums are poorly recorded. The best I own is a Japanese pressing of "As Long as you are Livin'", and even that one I find to be moderate as best. I've seen him in concert and this is someone that has truly become almost a part of his instrument. He plays effortlessly.

Rebecca Pidgeon - the Raven on Chesky. Another just great folk type recording. Chesky has always made great recordings but this one is particularly clear.

John Rutter - Requiem on Reference Recordings. Pie Jesu vocal is stunning. You get a clear sense of the size of the venue--large and cavernous.

Saint Saens Symphony No 3 - Classic Records Re-issue (45 RPM). While not the ultimate in dynamics the power of the organ contrasted with the more delicate instruments of the symphony is really an incredible test of the realism that a system can produce with both large scale (organ) and small scale instruments are playing simultaneously. You will find playing this on different systems yields dramatically different results.

Martin Simpson and Wu Man - Music for a Motherless Child. A guitar and a pipa with just amazing clarity that you feel as though you could reach out and touch the strings. A truly remarkable recording. Definition and clarity of each string of each instrument and wonderful separation between the two.

South San Gabriel – The Carlton Chronicles: Not Until the Operation's Through, 2005, Misra Records, www.centro-matic.com/south-san-gabriel Well, this record offers the ear some interesting sounds. Half concept album, half straight-forward alt-rock, the Carlton Chronicles wind a mysterious tale told from an escaped housecat's perspective. Odd? Yes. But completely encompassing and a creative endeavor by the band Centromatic, who created an alter-ego in South San Gabriel.

Three Blind Mice, the Famous Sound of the Three Blind Mice on XRCD. Terrific jazz and great spatial imaging.

Pete Townsend "White City" The intro to Face the Face can just about knock someone out of their seat. I have a good pressing of this album but look forward to a stellar re-issue someday.

Jennifer Warnes "Way Down Deep" Very low bass notes and extended. These will excite almost any room mode. If you can play this track cleanly without overload, you're off to a very good start.

Eberhard Weber "Concerto for Bass" A couple of minutes into this piece there are sections where he takes very long bowing while moving up in frequency. It's incredibly uniform. It's a great way to detect blending of a subwoofer into a system. If it's not set up right--you'll hear it here.

Wilco – Sky Blue Sky 2007, Nonesuch, www.wilcoworld.net I got tingles on the first listen. The warm, often described as mellow, sound of this album compliments the intimate nature of many of the songs' lyrics. Tweedy's voice is clearer and much more musical than on previous releases in my opinion, (my 3 year old loves singing the song 'What Light.") It's the band's first studio album with guitarist Nels Cline and multi-instrumentalist Pat Sansone, and you'd assume they've been playing together since high-school.

Cassandra Wilson - Dance to the Drums Again. While not a stellar recording it is excellent and the depth of the drums is really incredible.