

LONDON HI-FI SHOW AND AUDIO/VIDEO EXPO PRESS RELEASE

September 26th through 28th was the prestigious London Hi-Fi and A/V show. There were several things on both the audio and A/V sides of the show which delivered on the anticipated great interest.

On the Video and Home Entertainment front, the three most impressive demonstrations I saw were the **KEF** suite, a firm whose roots are well grounded in traditional audio. Their A/V show was sending rumbles around the room with a beautifully integrated surround sound replete with the “extra” (the “.1” in 5.1 & 7.1 modes) channel for Low Frequency Effects (LFE) which was doing such a spectacular job with the audio that I didn’t write down who was providing the video! ... However, I believe it was the typically outstanding **Pioneer Home Entertainment Group**. The other standout in Home Entertainment was the **Pioneer** suite of rooms. Their newest video products are truly spectacular looking and for the first time in my memory, their audio side is beginning to show signs of actually “catching-up” with it’s video brethren, demonstrating high quality and quite attractive speakers designed to blend into a visually and aurally seamless presence which would be equally at home regardless of anyone’s tastes and décor. There was definitely something for everyone. Crossing the line from pure audio with their outstanding **PMC OB-1 speakers**, driven by the excellent **Bryston** electronics, **PMC/Bryston** also put on a technological marvel in truly amazing, fully state of the art surround sound demonstration. Their **PMC** speakers (which are not yet well known in the U.S), combined with the **Bryston** electronics from Canada to provide a masterpiece showing of what CAN BE achieved in the home these days.

Moving to the audio front there were three rooms and several individual products worth noting. **Chapter Audio** introduced their much-anticipated **Chapter Two Amplifier**, pairing it with the already world-class **Chapter Preface Pre-Amp**. In conjunction with the **Talk Audio 3.1** CD player, the **RIVES Audio PARC**; and alternating between the **Tannoy Dimension TD-10** and **Talon Audio Hawk** speakers this was arguably the finest sound at the show. Watch these pages for the first United States review of this Amp/Pre-Amp combination. These compact units are also as visually appealing as anything else on the market. Some of the other standouts, some of which are already in review in future issues included the **Amphion Krypton** speaker with the **Rogue Audio Zeus amplifier** and **Magnum 99 pre-amp**, playing a sweet and musically natural sound. Another highlight, the **Zingali Overture 4** loudspeakers were also reproducing wonderful tunes without any special bombast or fanfare. The **Zingalis** had me wondering if there was a subwoofer hidden somewhere! Both rooms showed great music and even better aesthetics. The **Zingalis** in particular are a wood-craftsmen’s delight, although the **Amphion** is neck and neck!! **NEAT Acoustics** was showing off their newest top speaker (what else?...the “**Ultimatum**”!!) with more spectacular sound. Another product which really got my attention was the **Audio Valve** line of electronics from Germany. When these are reviewed I will get into specific details, but suffice to say that they are extraordinary within their league. In some respects, **Audio Valve** raises the bar for all electronics manufacturers. Lastly on my “must review” is **Overkill Audio** and their “**Ovation**” speaker. This room was drawing crowds in from the hallways and even from other rooms! The speaker looks as if it is made from solid, “pearlescent” dark blue Italian marble, and uses a revolutionary driver array which I will describe in detail when these are reviewed here shortly. The sound and looks of these speakers is simply awesome! They were being driven by the **Spectron** digital amplifier, which is in such high demand that I won’t be able to get one here for a review until December. Additionally, all electronics were supported by the wonderful **Stillpoints**, made here in the U.S, and which I use under all my components. Another standout product (which I am coincidentally already using as the reference CD player for the forthcoming electronics reviews) was being used in a lot of rooms. When so many different manufacturers choose the same source component from the vast array available to them, then that alone tells you there is something special happening there. The newest version of the **Electrocompaniet EMC 1UP** was all over the show. What better testimony?

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Virgin Atlantic Airways (www.virginatlantic.com) for their patience with changing schedules and also for their usual outstanding service from the travel coordinators, ticketing personnel, flight staff and ground crew. My opinion has always been that Virgin Air is THE way to fly when available, and their hospitality only served to strengthen that feeling.

The next A/V report will be from the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in January.

Cheers to all!

Joe Shanaphy
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That’s Life!