



The Golden Ear

Newsletter of the *Chicago Audio Society*

September 1999

Meeting Notice

Sunday, September 19th - 2:00pm

Jud Barber - Joule Electra

Bobby Palkovic - Merlin Music Systems

If you attended the Hi-Fi '99 show and heard the Merlin VSM speakers driven by Joule Electra electronics and with the **Walker Audio** turntable and accessories, you have some idea of what these components can do to reproduce the original musical event. We are privileged to have two *very* highly esteemed people in the high end visiting us, and you owe it to yourself to hear what they have to say and why their gear is so special. And if somehow you missed them at the show, you are in for an exceptional treat. This is a meeting not to be missed!

Please bring some good music (on LP or CD) which you enjoy and wish to play, and feel free to say a few words about what you bring.

Last minute notice: We have just learned that Bobby Palkovic will be unable to visit us this month due to having much needed back surgery a few days prior (he has endured significant pain). Bobby has offered to visit us at a later date, and we look forward to it. Meanwhile, you can expect some fine sounds from the system we'll have at the meeting, anyway!

Last Month

Joe Fratus and **Ric Cummins** visited us, representing **Art Audio** and **Rosinante**. Art Audio is

representing **David Gill Audio Design**, while Rosinante's Dark Matter material is used in the **Argent** Room Lens (and in the Gill DAC). **Todd Laudeman** of **Argent** was unable to attend.

We listened to the Rosinante Gabrielle speakers (\$14K), driven by the Art Audio Jota power amplifier (\$7395), with a Paller Specialty Audio Design TAG Model One Signature preamplifier (approx. \$17K). The David Gill Elise DAC (\$6000) was connected to an Accuphase 65V CD player (\$6395) used as a transport. Rosinante Dark Matter platforms (\$500 ea.) were under several of the components, and cabling and Room Lenses were by Argent, except for the Paller interconnects between preamp and amp. Top Gun power cords (\$495 ea.) and a pair of Super Power Blocks (\$795 ea.) by Custom Power Cord Co. were used, as well as a RixRax Hoodoo equipment rack (\$4K).

The Jota, like all Art Audio amplifiers, is a single ended triode design, and it uses the KR Enterprises VV 32B output tubes, delivering 20 watts per channel. A version of the Jota using the VV 52BX output tubes and delivering 24 watts per channel is available for \$8095.

After the break we hooked up the prototype of the Milagro amplifier (Joe says *milagro* is Spanish for "miracle"), a design based upon the Diavolo circuitry, putting out 13 watts/channel. However, the Milagro goes well beyond the Diavolo, with all dual mono construction except for the power switch and the power transformer, and with silver wiring throughout. Estimated retail price is a mere \$12,000.

The Milagro, although with a lower output power rating than the Jota, was an improvement over the very

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We meet on the third Sunday of each month at 2pm at The Dance Building, 1330 Webford Ave., Des Plaines IL, nonmembers are welcome (\$5 fee, may be applied to \$30 annual dues, prorata). CAS is a volunteer, registered nonprofit organization of audiophiles and music lovers. Our constitution and bylaws are available on our website at <http://www.xnet.com/~bpwalsh/bylaws.htm> or in printed form upon request.

good sounding Jota--it had more musical ease, air, and bloom.

The Argent Room Lenses are designed to attenuate room resonances and to focus the sound. They cost about \$1200 for a set of three, and their theory is best described in the literature.

Ric Cummins explained that the speaker enclosures are designed to put resonances out of phase with each other so they cancel, theoretically far more effective than constrained layer damping and other approaches. They are nonresonant, and the molding of the Dark Matter material, which appears to be a composite of epoxy and perhaps other materials, allows the shape of the enclosure to be tailored for proper tuning and nonparallel surfaces. The unusual yet attractive looking enclosures are thought by some to resemble bowling pins, abstract sculptures, or penguins. The Gabrielle, big brother of the Evolution, uses a 7" driver, and 8" driver, and a tweeter, in an MTM arrangement. There is a port at the bottom rear of the enclosure.

The Gill DAC and Accuphase player made for an interesting combination (the Gill's sports car styling is attractive, too). The ultra high end TAG preamp has been presented at two previous meetings. Thanks to Pat Choy of Perfect Pitch Audio.

We look forward to seeing Ric, Joe, and the rest of the gang in Las Vegas. Good tunes, good times.

Here is the playlist (all CD):

Hugh Masekela, *Hope*, Worldly Music, Triloka Records 444 477 203 2.

Entangled Devotions, Naum Starkman, piano, Russian Symphony Orchestra, Beethoven "Emperor" Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat Minor, Op. 73, Pope Music PM 1004-2.

Irish Folk Songs, Robert Shaw Chorale, "Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye", RCA 60139-2-RG.

The Sampler, "Birdland" by Acoustic Mania (from *Talking Hands*, Naim CD 020), Naim CD 023.

Music For Advent II, The Schola Cantorum of St. Peter's in the Loop, Chicago, "O Quickly Come, Great Judge of All" and "O Heavenly Word, Eternal Light", J. Michael Thompson, Director. The Order of St. Benedict, Colledgeville MN 56321.

Pat Metheny Group, *Imaginary Day*, title track, Warner Bros. 9 46821-2.

Richard Danielpour, *Concerto for Orchestra*, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Sony Classical SK62822.

Mary-Chapin Carpenter, *Come On Come On*, "Not Too Much to Ask", Columbia CK 48881.

Taraf de Haidouks, *Turceasca*, Romanian gypsy music, Nonesuch 79554-2.

Petula Clark, *Love Songs*, "I Couldn't Live Without Your Love", Pickwick PWK 080.

Herbie Hancock, *Gershwin's World*, "Summertime" featuring Joni Mitchell, Verve 314 557 797-2.

Contemporary Concert Band Music, Danish Concert Band, Joseph Horowitz, "Concerto Classico", Rondo RCD 8340.

Mancini's Greatest Hits, Erich Kunzel cond. Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, "Arctic Whale Hunt" from *The White Dawn*, Telarc CD-80183.

Tuck Andress, *Reckless Precision*, "(Somewhere) Over the Rainbow", Windham Hill WD-0124.

Rickie Lee Jones, *Pop Pop*, "Bye Bye Blackbird", Geffen GEFD-24426.

Traut/Rodby, *The Duo Life*, "Trout Stream", Columbia CK 46037.

Vince Gill, *When Love Finds You*, "Whenever You Come Around", MCA MCAD-11047.

Makin' Whoopee (Tribute to the King Cole Trio), King/Bluiett Trio, "Route 66", Mapleshade 04832.

Lars Erstrand Quartet, *Dream Dancing*, "Sweet Georgia Brown", Opus 3 CD 9101.

Classical Music and Recordings

by Len Cronin

Well, hopefully this will be the first regular column about classical LP's & CD's.

If you have not given the Naxos label a try, a good place to start would be the Georg Tintner's transversal of the Bruckner symphonies. So far Naxos has released Nos. 0,2,4,5,6,7,& 8. I highly recommend Nos. 4, 7, & 8. Symphony No. 4 is a great place to begin because of its combination of performance and sound. If your taste runs towards 20th century music

that is slightly off the beaten path but is still accessible, try giving the orchestral music of Arnold Bax a try. Naxos has so far released his first & second symphonies along with several of his tone poems.

It might be fun to hear if there is any music that you might like to hear. So if there is any audiophile material you might like to hear, let us know and we'll see if it's available.

Also the annual Mammoth Music Mart will be taking place in late September. If you have never attended the event it really is a lot of fun with the proceeds going to ALS research.

The Music Mart is sponsored by the Les Turner Foundation, and they may be contacted at (847) 679-3311 for details.

We thank Len for sharing his knowledge and views for publication here and invite comments as well as articles about other genres of music. Jazz, rock, folk, anyone?

Next Month

October 17th - Tact Audio. Hear their Millennium digital amplifier/DAC's ability to reveal detail and learn about the Room Correction System. It should be informative and interesting.

Industry News

As reported on our website, a few things of note:

Egglestonworks has filed for bankruptcy protection (Chapter 11).

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dCS, makers of the expensive Elgar 24/96 DAC and known in professional circles for studio digital processors, have announced the Purcell Upsampler for home use. Used with any 24/96 capable DAC, it is said to be able to convert the 16 bit/44 kHz data stream from conventional CDs to 24 bit/96 kHz. It retails for \$4995 and can be used in combination with a dCS Elgar DAC which has been upgraded to 24/192 to upsample CDs to 24 bit/192 kHz.

Burr-Brown announced its first Direct Stream Digital (DSD) audio digital-to-analog converter, designed under consultation with Sony for use in Super Audio CD (SACD) players, professional DSD processors, and DSD mixing consoles. The DSD1700 single-channel DAC is claimed to have up to 100 kHz frequency range and signal-to-noise ratio of over 110 dB and will be available to equipment manufacturers later this year.

Tweak

Here is a no-cost one to try, suggested by Lloyd Walker of Walker Audio and recommended by Marty DeWulf in the latest issue of *Bound For Sound*. You might think we've gone off the deep end; your mileage may vary, etc.

Try reversing the polarity (in other words, turn them around) of the fuses in your equipment. People claim to hear a difference, a worthwhile improvement (or none, if your fuses are already correctly oriented). Marty writes that Audio Research orients the fuses in their equipment for optimal sound (if that adds credibility to this idea). Try it--what have you got to lose? And while you're in there, clean your fuses and fuse holders, using a good quality contact cleaner.

