

the
Colorado Audio Society
NEWSLETTER
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EDITORIAL NOTE: As can be plainly seen, our editorial staff is small indeed. We are asking that CAS members contribute to our newsletter in the following areas:

- Equipment Reviews
- Record Reviews
- Technical Articles
- The Colorado Audio Scene
- Interviews
- Live Music in Colorado
- Stereo and Wife (A Spouse's view)

STEREO AND WIFE: Our "Stereo and Wife" column opts for all views of sound within the home, including: financial aspects, the introduction of technical terms, and personal opinions on choices in music. With a fascinating blend of nature between men and women, the need for discussion (be it good or bad) and involvement are imperative. Both men and women enjoy music, however a balance is necessary, and we hope to help the scale balance on both sides through discussions in this column. Your input will be greatly appreciated. JT

CAS Classified Ads

Beginning in Issue 2 of our newsletter, we will offer free space to our members for classified ads. (Audio equipment only, please). This is more convenient than "Audiomart" since most members will be within driving distance of each other, and better than newspapers since it's free. Call CAS headquarters to place ads.

EDITORIAL

Thinking Ahead.

Why an audio society? What do we have to gain from the effort? Our one basic goal in forming the society and the newsletter is to promote a sense of clarity. Not just sonic clarity, but clarity in our understanding of music reproduction and all its supporting factors. We hope to accomplish this through an open forum of personal discussion and written communication. The field of audio (the high end, that is) is populated with a curious mixture of characters: record producers, techno-addicts, creative geniuses, charlatans, snooty audio reviewers, and many, many enthusiasts who are serious enough about quality music reproduction to invest considerable time and sizeable resources into this pursuit. This organization is devoted to the latter group. The amount of confusion, misinformation, and pure slick salesmanship which abounds within the field of high end audio is truly amazing.

An obvious solution to this problem is to trust our own ears - Of course. We fully agree. But how many people have the opportunity to audition correctly set up audio systems within an intimate setting? Exposure is the problem here. We intend to correct this situation through our meetings at members' homes, and the more the better! The gathering of knowledge is our

Brief Encounters.

THE STAX DA-100M POWER AMPS

Reference System: Rowland Research/Panasonic STA-1 Strain Gauge Cartridge System.

Denon/VPI DP-75/HW-9 Turntable System.

Lustre GST-801 Tonearm.

Rowland Research MCC-1 Preamp/Control Center.

Rowland Research Custom Class A Mono Amps (100 WPC)

Soundlab A-1 Full Range Electrostatic Speakers.

Every so often a piece of equipment will find its way into my reference system for a very short period of time (usually an evening or two), and will lend itself to a comparison with one of my reference components. In this case, a pair of Stax DA-100M mono Class A power amps were inserted into the system for an evening. This is not meant to be a review, per se, as the audition time was limited to a few hours of serious listening. To be totally fair, a piece of equipment should be lived with from 3 months to a year in order to really present an intimate written portrait of the unit. In "Brief Encounters" we will attempt to offer our very brief first impression of the Stax amps. Read my impressions with that in mind.

I felt that the comparison with my Rowland custom Class A amps is a good one, as they're both mono, Class A, and 100 watts. Considering the rather informal air of this review, I was not compelled to rush out and find out all the specs regarding the Stax Amps. This I can say: The amps cost about \$4000. per mono pair — not cheap. The thing that sets them apart is their cooling system. These amps, being Class A, 100 watt units are surprisingly light in weight. Half the weight of my amps. This feat is accomplished due to the lack of massive heat sinks. An ingenious, and I'm sure expensive, cooling system is built into these amps to dissipate the heat from the output devices (themselves reputed to be exotic ring-emitter transistors). Imagine: an air conditioner, complete with sweated copper pipe built into a power amp.

In all fairness, I must submit that my Rowland Research amps are a one-of-a-kind, custom-built product, fabricated from the highest-quality parts, and are in the best tradition of a hand-made product. The amps were built with a vengeance to drive huge amounts of current (though, again, 100 watts) into my Soundlab A-1s, a very difficult load to drive (4 microfarads capacitive load, impedances down to 2 ohms at high frequencies and a 2200 sq. inch diaphragm) Most other amps, even modified-bridged Hafflers, have shown audible strain in driving the A-1's, especially in the frequencies below 500 Hz. The Rowland Research amps drive the A-1's with ease (only 100 watts vs. 400 watts with bridged Hafflers).

The main recordings used in the evaluation were:

"Test Record 1 — Depth of Image" — Opus 3 79—00.

"Hot Styx" — M & K Realtime RI 106.

"Gitarkvartetten Transkriptioner" — Opus 3 78—10.

We hooked up the Stax amps and listened. Beginning at the bottom end, I must say that the low bass was deficient, at least as compared with the Rowland amps. I suspect that the Stax amps might provoke better bass in less demanding speakers; but then again, I wonder. The Stax amps, to be more specific, neither provided the proper weight in the low bass, nor much definition in the midbass range. Moving up the scale, the midrange response was very good, though not excellent. The amps provided the correct amount of body to the sound (by this, I mean the meat to the bones, the chest behind the throat, etc., etc.). Many amps do poorly in this regard - especially driving the A—1's. The midrange character was very respectable - smooth, sweet, and properly liquid.

Moving up the spectrum, the highs are the sweetest I've ever heard. But there's a catch: these seductive highs are just too sweet to be real. Later on in the evening upon focusing my attention on the highs, my opinion changed regarding this sweet-sounding coloration. They lack the proper extension and hardness that normally accompanies accurate high frequency reproduction. Don't misunderstand: highs can be sweet in live music, but not all the time and with every instrument, which is what these amps present. The imaging was very good, with all instruments specifically placed within the soundfield. The Stax amps could not do, though, what the Rowland amps can: Portray a convincing sense of space and air around the individual images.

All in all, the Stax amps are very good performers, though the \$4000. price tag is high, with air conditioning or not. AT

Stereo and Wife

One of the largest problems we have in our audio marriage is placement of speakers in our home, and constant experimenting by moving everything once a month. Our largest donkeybrooks are usually where the speakers are not going to be. Walking into a room and seeing the backs of monster speakers does not live up to a decorator's expectations. However, imaging is very important in producing that orchestra in your room.

As most of us can't afford speaker rooms and people rooms, the compromise is on. I have returned home on occasion to find comforters, rugs, and many other materials hanging by the ceiling. This then allowed me to invent several new and delightful designing ideas I never would have thought possible. The purchase of rugs (large, of course), and furniture (in which audio equipment can be stored) usually appeals to both partners.

My husband has invested in a new rear wave absorber called ISONEXtm. This material is 4" deep and resembles foam rubber. It is designed in a contemporary sculptured pattern, and comes in assorted colors. In short, it is beautiful. The sculptured pattern of this foam rubber-type material is actually carved in, giving a very lifelike and elegant stature behind the speakers. SONEX comes in 4' x 4' panels, so frames must be made to fit the panels into. We purchased some inexpensive pine, spray painted them black - voila! A very tasteful piece of furniture.

The "wonder foam" (as I call it), has eliminated the use of our dead bodies and mummies hanging from the ceiling. But the best aspect is the way the speakers can now fit against the SONEX and the SONEX can snuggle up against the wall. This eliminates the speakers from having to be in the middle of the room "so they can breathe, Jennifer."

The wires to speakers, amps, and preamps are now against the wall, unseen; whereas, they used to be in the middle of the room under that marvelous 3" duct tape, available in the assorted color of gaunt gray.

SONEX is expensive, however no more expensive than any accessories purchased for your system (records excluded).

I strongly suggest you look into this "wonder foam." Until then, happy rearranging. -JT

P.S. If you would like more information on SONEX, feel free to contact me.

Record Reviews.

Ragtime Razzmatazz
Mark P. Wetch, Pianist
Wilson Audio Specialties

This is one of those rare recordings which really makes it all worth it. What this disc really proves is that a small record company with a good recording machine, two good microphones, and a pair of good ears can just totally swamp the everyday offerings of such prodigious giants as RCA, Columbia, Phillips, etc., etc.

I'm totally mystified that these corporate giants never come one step closer to providing the kind of quality sound which Dave Wilson accomplishes without digital recorders, CX, or any other new "breakthroughs" one would be led to believe have been occurring. As is typical with this type of quality recording, only two microphones were used, thus preserving the authentic stereo image.

The music on this recording is simply wonderful. The record is comprised of a selection of ragtime tunes played on a wonderful sounding instrument which was modified to provide the tonality of the original ragtime piano. Mark Wetch's performance of these tunes is splendid. Another rarity: here is an audiophile specialty disc with some really fine musicianship on it.

The sonics on this record rate with the best I've ever heard. The piano is fairly close-miked, with the Schoeps Omnis placed over the shoulders of the pianist. This particular setup presents a close-up image of the total width of the piano extending between the speakers (bass notes to the left, treble notes to the right). The image is very precise, with resolution of the hammers striking the strings at their own specific point in the soundfield.

In contrast to the hard, clanging sound heard on most piano recordings, this disc presents a piano sound which is sweet, resonant, and depicting of the sound of the real thing. The focus of the image, the definition displayed, and the bass extension are excellent.

This recording is at the State of the Art. Buy, beg, borrow or steal it. -AT

Coming in Newsletter #2.

Jeff Rowland should be finishing up his do-it-yourself regulation modification for the Hafler DH-200. (Jeff knows this amp almost as well as he knows his own products.) The State of the Art of tubes: We hope to borrow a Conrad-Johnson MV-75 tube amp. The Accuphase cartridge (is it as "devastating" as HP of TheAbsoluteSound says?) Hopefully, lots more record reviews, more equipment reviews, and more members.

CAS Component Audition Service.

So very often we read about intriguing audio products in various journals that pique our interest and curiosity. Perhaps we're anticipating a new purchase or maybe an upgrade (a major feat in today's economy). We travel to the nearest audio dealers in the hope that maybe they stock the item in question, or at least have some information concerning this item. If you've shared my experiences, it becomes readily apparent that little or no information is available through dealers regarding items they don't carry. Most audio salesmen (with a few exceptions) will either plead ignorance, or they will volunteer inaccurate information regarding the product (probably in an effort to sell you a similar item which they stock). And let's face it: Very few audio salesmen are audiophiles. So where does one audition components? I can say that my knowledge of high-end audio has increased geometrically through my acquaintances with other enthusiasts compared to what I hear at the local sound salon.

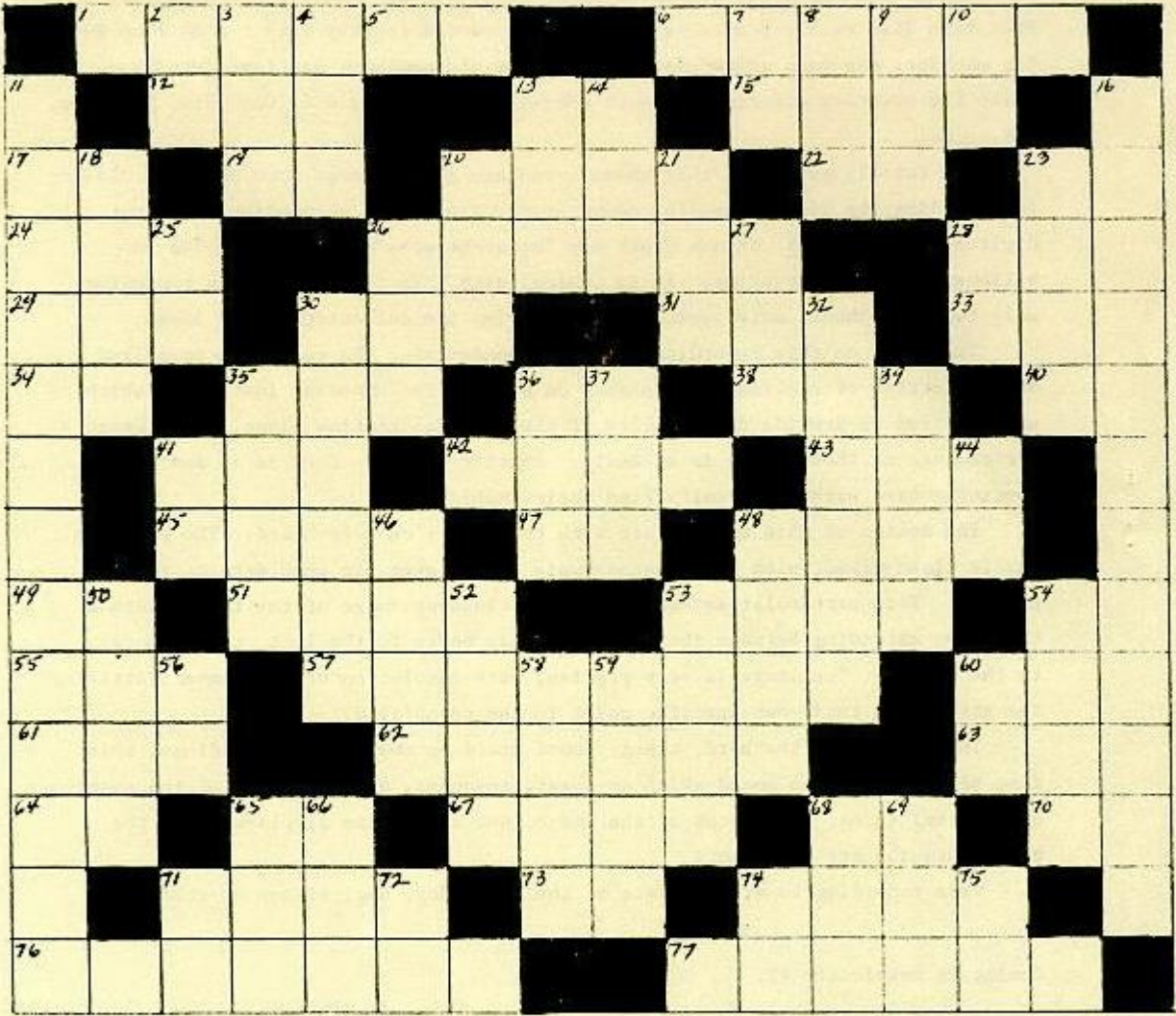
Thus, the CAS Component Audition Service:

- 1) CAS members will have the opportunity to audition (with the host member's consent) equipment which we will list in the CAS Newsletter.
- 2) The last page of this newsletter will contain a questionnaire asking members to list their equipment. In the next issue we will compile a list of all the equipment denoted in these questionnaires. The equipment only will be listed — not the owner (for security reasons)
- 3) Any member, after reading the listings, may call CAS headquarters and request an audition. We will, in turn, call the owner of the equipment and ask if he (or she) would host an audition to the requesting member. We would then call the member back and put them in touch with the owner after getting their permission.
- 4) All information will remain confidential, and only CAS members will be referred to equipment owners.

A Note to our Membership.

Our current membership is quite small, so we are enclosing an extra copy of Newsletter 1 to all our members. Please pass it along to a prospective member as a complimentary copy, though none of the member benefits may be had without formal application to CAS.

AUDIO CROSSTALK



CAS CROSSWORD

Across:

- 1) Hafler's old outfit.
- 6) Amp-driver.
- 12) Audiophile's most vital component.
- 13) _____ Labs.
- 15) 62 across.
- 17) Scale note.
- 19) Battery power. (Abbr)
- 20) Amplification.
- 22) Type of meditation (Abbr)
- 23) Private testing facility.
- 24) Pseudo-classical rock group.
- 26) An always-avoided cost.
- 28) Half a pair.
- 29) Raw driver co.
- 30) Magnetic resistance (Abbr).
- 31) Guitarist _____ Paul.
- 33) Impedance-current-capacitance.
- 34) "Ode _____ A Nightingale".
- 35) Visual Indicator (Abbr).
- 36) Unrectified voltage (Abbr).
- 38) Neither _____.
- 40) Disc-spinner (Abbr).
- 41) General Electric Co. (Abbr).
- 42) Recording Medium.
- 43) Conductor Marriner, familiarly.
- 45) Scent.
- 47) Gets first billing in "Audio" classifieds.
- 48) Untruths.
- 49) TDK Tape.
- 51) Shure test records.
- 53) Guitar strummer.
- 54) Noted audio designer's initials.
- 55) A dynamic distortion.
- 57) Power generators.
- 60) Owns Lyric Audio.
- 61) Wonder.
- 62) One of Holst's Planets.
- 63) Time in Denver.
- 64) Transactional Analysis (Abbr).
- 65) Engineering degree.
- 67) Binding _____.
- 68) Gibson _____ guitar.
- 70) Chip manufacturer (Abbr).
- 71) _____ width
- 73) Mfg. of D to D discs.
- 74) Blue _____.
- 76) Transistor configuration.
- 77) Classic turntable.

Down:

- 2) Stereophile's _____ editor.
- 3) 3020 manufacturer.
- 4) Prominent tube-amp manufacturer (Abbr).
- 7) Beveridge preamp designer's initials.
- 8) Consume food.
- 9) Ittok or Goldmund.
- 10) Science degree.
- 11) Low-mass speaker driver
- 13) _____ Stevens.
- 14) Miss Farrow.
- 16) Power supply filter cap.
- 18) _____ Sax.
- 20) Silica _____.
- 21) Zip.
- 23) Single component.
- 25) _____ Audio (preamp mfg.)
- 26) Positive wire color.
- 27) "Audio Horizons" editor.
- 28) "West of _____."
- 30) Disc.
- 32) Sound qualities.
- 35) Sound room acoustic set-up (Abbr)
- 36) 47 across.
- 37) Licensed accountant.
- 39) Exude.
- 41) Stop and _____.
- 44) Against (Abbr).
- 46) Cosmic _____ (PL).
- 48) Legal claim.
- 50) Jap. cassette deck mfg.
- 52) Transient _____.
- 53) Opening on some box speakers.
- 54) Antenna support structure.
- 56) Myself.
- 58) Where an electron originates.
- 59) Oxen
- 60) Speaker mfg.
- 65) Fleetwood _____.
- 66) Avant Garde, Brian _____.
- 68) Ampzilla relative.
- 69) Tube _____.
- 71) Hype (Abbr).
- 72) Direct drive (Abbr).
- 74) Modus operandi (Abbr).
- 75) Compass point.