

Coming March 13th: ..Loudspeakers under \$3,000 per pair....

# Audioletter

A PUBLICATION OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST AUDIO SOCIETY • MARCH 2008

FEBRUARY 14th MEETING RECAP Text and Photos by Bruce Brown

**O**n February 19<sup>th</sup> of this year, Toshiba announced that it has undertaken a thorough review of its strategy of HD-DVD and has decided it will no longer develop, manufacture and market HD-DVD players and recorders. Toshiba said they will continue to provide full product support and after-sales service for all owners

of Toshiba HD-DVD products... but for how long?

After this announcement I searched the local paper and it seemed all the local hi-fi dealers were having a fire sale on HD-DVD players. Some of these were outright bargains. I saw players going for under \$100 PLUS 6 HD-DVD movies. Toshiba states that over 600,000 players and 300,000 X-box 360 HD-DVD drives were sold in the U.S with over 1 million sold worldwide. Guess that's the price you pay for jumping on the bandwagon too soon. I guess a lot of us did that when SACD/DVD-A formats were released. Though SACD still seems to be kicking around, DVD-A is dying a slow agonizing death. I'm slowly building up a clientele that wants the ultimate fidelity of DSD, though most seem to be tire-kickers. They're intrigued about the medium, but still don't quite grasp the concept that it will cost them big bucks in the

end to get DSD files encoded to SACD. Tascam and Korg and brought DSD to the masses with their relatively cheap hard disc recorders. Early adopters have lauded the richness of detail in their recordings, but other than archiving, the only thing they can do with their DSD recorded files is either down-sample them to PCM, or take them

Last month's meeting of the Pacific Northwest Audio Society brought us a great demonstration of what Sony's Blu-ray is capable of. There are still a few bugs to work out though. Seems the hardware interface is being out-paced by the software. To get the best that Blu-ray has to offer, you need all the stars to line up in sync and hope that you

have bought the correct "category" of cables, projector/TV, processors and players. If one thing is not right, you might as well

be watching a standard DVD. HDMI cables started out with ver. 1.0 and now are up to 1.3b category II or something like that. Sometimes it makes my head hurt and I thought I was a geek at all this new technology. I bought a Plextor Blu-ray burner, but ran into hurdles because I couldn't find any blank media. With a firmware update almost weekly, it's sketchy at best. Now Plextor support is shaky and the future of the company is in limbo. It's kinda' like watching a HD broadcast and all the commercials are standard definition letter-box. But, once the standards are in place, watch out!

I want to thank Jerry, our video guru, for bringing us an engaging and sometimes hilarious glimpse of what the new king of DVD is all about. ■

## HD-DVD Goes Down!



to a DSD-capable studio where they can assemble their 2-track recordings into some semblance of a song.

Will DVD-A go the way of HD-DVD? Only time will tell. Toshiba concedes that bowing out early will make way for Sony's Blu-ray to flourish and grow even stronger.

# TITLE TRACK

By Jerry Pomeroy



## 2008 Elections

A constitutional requirement for the club is to elect officers at the March general meeting. You can nominate yourself for the position of President, Vice President or Treasurer. I have enjoyed serving as president for the last 5 years. Due to time constraints related to remodeling my house I feel it is time to pass the torch to the next president. I won't be seeking an office this year but will continue to write articles and help in the club however I can. I put a brief description of the elected officer responsibilities in the Feb newsletter. Our editor Joe Pittman has ever-increasing demands on his time since he has started his own business and would like to pass the editor position on as well. An elected officers term begins at the June Meeting. There are lots of opportunities for you to help build the club as an officer, committee member, editor or writer in the newsletter. One of the greatest opportunities is telling others about the club. Most of the members joined the club because someone introduced them to it. A member told me of the club when I was at a local audio dealer, I went to the next meeting and have been hooked ever since. If you have any questions about these positions feel free to ask any of the officers or Joe for more details.

## March Meeting

The March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting we will have several different sets of speak-

ers all under \$3,000 to plug into the club system. If you have a set that qualifies for this feel free to bring them in., I you bring in a satellite/sub system you will need to bring in your own subwoofer, no fair hooking up the clubs sub woofer to your speakers. You can bring in your own speaker cables or use the clubs, that isn't part of the \$3K price limit. If you built the speakers or they are of a small production run you must be willing to build another set in the next month or sell them to someone for under 3K. If you have any questions let me know. Bring Music, I will pick a short bit of music to play on each set of speakers so augment this with the best sounding stuff you have found.

## April Meeting

Upcoming for the April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting Dr Bottlehead will be with us from The Tape Project. These reel-to-reel tapes are painstakingly made directly from the master tapes, they are as close to the source as you can get. This is a rare opportunity to get this close to the studio masters so the sound quality should be very impres-

sive. This will be a good meeting to invite others so expect more people than usual, you may want to arrive a bit early.

## VSAC

Don't forget Vacuum State Art Conference and Show, May 24-26 Vancouver, WA. There are lots of things happening at the show including concerts from Jacqui Naylor and John Standefer. They will have one of my favorites the Craftsman display full of hand built equipment that will make a machinist envious, this stuff is as cool looking as it gets. There will be many conferences and just allot of fun for us seriously addicted to music, there is available space for exhibitors.

See the web site for more details and registration.

<http://www.vvac2008.com>

3 day Pass \$165

**Early bird registration \$135 till March 15.**

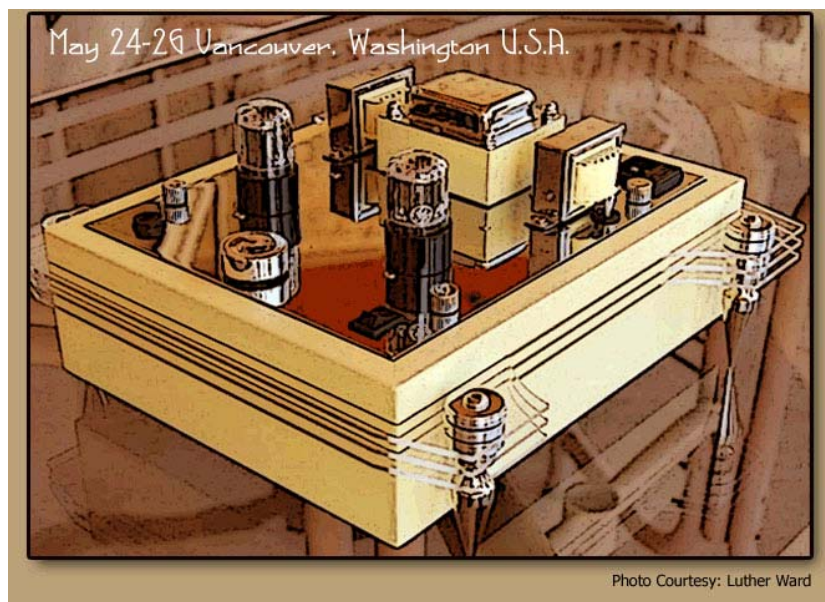


Photo Courtesy: Luther Ward

# Tech Stuff

by Jerry Pomeroy

## **Toshiba Pulls the plug on HD-DVD**

Feb 19 the company announced they would stop production of the HD format at the end of March. There are some good deals to be had on players and HD-DVD software. The Toshiba HD-DVD players use silicon Optix processing so they make very good Scaling DVD players. Some movie distribution companies have still not announced when they will start releasing on Blu-ray but most have said they will.

## **HD-DVD trade-in**

Although Circuit City didn't announce it rumor has it that if you bought a HD-DVD player from them in the last month you can trade it in for credit toward a new BD player, Trade-in only on players, no disc. Check at a store.

## **BD price drop**

No-one has announced a price drop for Blu-ray players since Toshiba has cancelled it's competing format but industry analyst (very vague) predict BD prices to drop because of competition between manufactures of specialized chipsets for the players. We could see \$200 players by this Christmas.

## **BD vs HD downloads**

The Blu-ray group definitely out marketed the HD-DVD group and BD is the next gen optical disc, PCs are available with BD drives just as Movies are available by internet download; iTunes, Amazon and others offer HD Video downloads. As downloads become more prevalent expect to see DRM issues be-

come more prevalent. Kalidescape maker of video server systems announced they plan to market a BD drive system, this should exercise the DRM copy access code of BD that as of yet hasn't been released by the BD group. I definitely see video servers in the future, how the file gets into the server without violating DRM laws and offers security enough for film distribution companies to subscribe remains to be seen. So the HD format war isn't over but the playing field narrows. Proponents of the Internet are claiming physical disc are a dead format, I remember statements like that when the CD came out.

## **Netflix Rentals**

The company announced they will transition to only one HD format Blu-ray, no details as to timeline were given in their initial press release. Rumor in Redmond that Microsoft and Netflix are about to join in some type of agreement.

## **Wal-Mart**

Has started selling Digital to Analog TV converters for \$49.87, price is before the \$40 fed coupon is applied.

## **Vizio 50" PlasmaVP504F**

MSRP \$1700 set to arrive in June will use Silicon Optix's HQV scaling/processor.

## **Samsung LED LCD**

Displays available, Samsung isn't the first to use LEDs instead of Fluorescent backlighting for LCD displays, NEC put out a 20" computer monitor a few years back for \$6K. The 40" Sam is under \$3K. Sam sets

are also available 46", 57" and a 21" computer monitor. These displays produce an incredible image, I expect most LCDs to use LED backlights by 2010.

## **Pioneer Plasma**

The Company announced in late Feb they will outsource plasma panel production to Matsushita and Hitachi for displays 42" and smaller. Pioneer plasma panels have been cutting edge for years, expect the outsourced displays to lag the larger flagships about a year to safeguard proprietary developments.

## **Best Buy**

They opened a Beijing office in 2006 to find locations for stores and sources of inventory, they closed the office at the end of February announcing they have no plans to open a store in China in the near future. ■

# DefinitiveAudio

## MMIII

This is the 3rd year Definitive Audio hosted this music centric event, all the systems this year were 2 channel. I figured I would arrive early and have time to grab a bite to eat but when I drove down Roosevelt Ave and saw the line of people waiting to get in I decided to forgo my stomach and start the audio feast.

I was able to visit 5 display rooms and chat with many friends before heading off for my night job at a large aerospace manufacturing facility in Renton. One of the rooms had a Sooloos music server system and Peachtree Audio Decco integrated amp/DAC and speakers. I think systems designed to optimize music from digital sources such as MP3 will constitute a growing market that will be very competitive over the next few years. Chris Bowder; VP of B&W also displayed a set of the new Signature Diamond 2-way speakers, powered by Classe' electronics.

Magnapan displayed a home theater system utilizing 10" wide panels MMG-W with motorized wall mounts that swizzle the panels so they were angled to the wall. They used a panel on each side of the display two generate a phantom center channel, it worked quite well. They also had a Maggie sub woofer that was made from a larger panel disguised as an end table.

I have heard the Wilson X2s before but this was impressive, they were driven by Ayre electronics and of course a SME30 table, this was

impressive. I hadn't seen Ayre since the late 90s when I was looking for an amplifier. If get a chance to see and listen to the new Ayre Acoustic products you should, the best way to describe their new products would probably be calling them audio art. Besides sounding great the equipment looks so sleek it would make Robocop drool and Transformers re-examine functionality, speed and effects of dispersing energy.

This isn't just a bolted together case with circuit boards on spacers. Milled from a solid block of aluminum the bottom plate unbolts to reveal the interior with milled steps for everything from the transformers to the wires. The product that most excited me was the Ayre KX-R pre-amp, weighing in at a 41lbs. You have got to love the volume control and associated display. Since this was a proto type the labels for inputs and outputs lacked refinement but the feel and sound of the stepped volume control was music to my ears. Ayre also displayed the P-5XE phono stage, MX-R 300 watt Mono block Amplifiers and a larger set of mono blocks that were powering the Wilson X2s.

The presentation that intrigued me most wasn't because of the sound system but the person speaking, Ivor Tiefenbrun of Linn. He did a Tune-Dem (process of comparing a tune utilizing a mental acoustical image) comparing 16/44 to 24/96 from a Klimax DS. Some of the great analogies Ivor gave were; listening is like walking up stairs, the spacing of the

first step sets the pace for the following. The one that got me to listen and purchase a LP12 thirty years was Ivor's signature statement "if a turntable only goes round and round a speaker only goes in and out". After all these years I was able to express my thanks for designing and building one of the best products I have ever owned. I have upgraded the LP12 many times and consider it the most loved piece of audio gear I have ever owned.





Ayre's new mono block amps and new preamp are milled from solid aluminum. Very nice.





Dave Wilson, Wilson Audio Specialties, demonstrated the new Series 2 Alexandria speakers.



Ivor Tiefenbrun, Linn, demonstrated the new DS (Network DAC) and also did his classic "Tune Dem".





B&W demonstrated their new Signature speaker.



Transparent Audio demonstrated their new cables series.



Magnapan's new wall mounted speakers and subwoofers utilize their planar magnetic dipolar panel technology.



Sooloos music server system



## Coming Attractions

### March 13, 2008

PNWAS Meeting  
Loudspeakers under \$3,000.00 per pair will be compared..

### March 15, 2008

Nuts About HiFi in Silverdale is hosting a presentation by Dominic Baker from France. Dominic is the creative mind behind Focal's Utopia speakers. The presentation is Saturday, March 15 at 4:00 pm. There will also be wine tasting. See [www.nutsabouthifi.com](http://www.nutsabouthifi.com) for more info.

### April 10, 2008

PNWAS Meeting  
Dr Bottlehead will tell us about The Tape

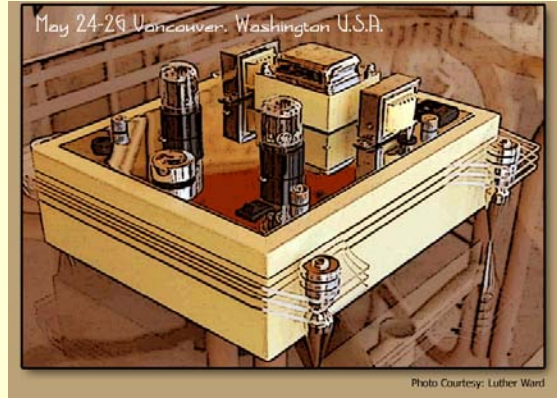
Project. These reel-to-reel tapes are painstakingly made directly from the master tapes, they are as close to the source as you can get.

This is a rare opportunity to get this close to the studio masters so the sound quality should be very impressive.

### May 24-26, 2008

**VSAC**  
Looks like VSAC (Vacuum State of the Art Convention) is back! It will still be in the Northwest but it may not be in Silverdale. There isn't a web site yet but we

will post more details as they become available.



## Classified Ads

Ads are free to members and will run for three consecutive issues unless renewed. Please limit ads to make, model, short description, condition, MSRP, asking price, contact information.

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I have been remodeling my Theater/listening room and have some things for sale and will pass on a even better deal to any club member. I have 60" x 80" wall mounted Stewart Studio Tech 1.30 screen. The studio tech 1.30 was developed for Joe Kane as a color neutral reference screen to evaluate projectors on, it still is the standard in the industry and Joe Kanes favorite screen for evaluation. This is 1.33:1 aspect ratio screen not a 1.78:1 widescreen. The screen material is in excellent condition, the frame has a rub spot in the black felt. The screen is still on the wall but have all the original packaging. \$325 non club members. I have a matched set of Target B series five shelf steel equipment racks, current model is HF-570 MSRP of \$399 each. These are very solid the shelf frames are welded to the corner post with carpet spikes on the bottom and black wooden shelves. These are in good shape with a few abrasion marks but none go through the black powder coating. None member price \$300 for the set. I also have a Target Pro turntable wall shelf, this has a 22 x 24" shelf, it has never been installed \$100 non member price. Denon DVD-3910 with silver finish, like new aprox 100 hours on it, I was going to modify this but bought another exemplar already modified so it has been setting in the box. This is a highly rated DVD player with very good scaling and audio DACs, Non members \$550.

Jerry Pomeroy 253-350-3916  
[enhancedsystems@earthlink.net](mailto:enhancedsystems@earthlink.net)

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Echo Buster's Room Treatment

1 pr. Absorption Panels 18x48 List \$390, Sell \$185  
1 pr. Absorption Panels 24x48 List \$470, Sell \$225  
1 pr. Diffusion Panels 18x48 List \$530, Sell \$250  
All in excellent condition. No other improvement compares with the bargain of treating your room. Buy these and I'll help you plan it out.

Dick Mueller - [dickm@HomeloanNW.com](mailto:dickm@HomeloanNW.com)  
425-450-4070

## Club Discounts

### Northwest Sinfonietta

The Northwest Sinfonietta (classical chamber orchestra) provides discounts to members of our club for performances of the 2007-2008 season. The regular single ticket price of \$38 will be only \$20 per person per performance at the door (or by phone or mail). Just tell them or note on your order that you are a member of the Pacific Northwest Audio Society. Information and order forms are also available at their website: [www.nwsinfonietta.org](http://www.nwsinfonietta.org).

### First Impression Music

[www.firstimpression.com](http://www.firstimpression.com)  
order through club president Jerry Pomeroy.

### KOSMIC

[www.kosmic.us](http://www.kosmic.us)  
Contact Joe Pittman  
206-878-3833

### Pro Sound and Vision

Contact George H. Pro  
425-889-9499  
425-445-3308 (cell)



### Visitors Welcome!

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at 4545 Island Crest Way, Mercer Island, WA 98040.

### PNWAS Mission Statement

- > To bring together people with a common interest in hearing music reproduced at its best, for their mutual edification and pleasure.
- > To facilitate the exchange and dissemination of accurate data concerning audio equipment and musical recordings.
- > To promote, sponsor, and cultivate the highest quality reproduction of music in the home.
- > To encourage maintenance of high standards in the performance, recording and transmission of music.

### PNWAS Objectives

1. Provide a forum for meeting other audiophiles and exchanging information on musical recordings and audio equipment.
2. Demonstrate and compare such equipment and recordings.

3. Give members opportunities to become familiar with the techniques of audio manufacturing, testing, repair, recording, broadcasting, etc.

4. Explore related avenues as the membership deems appropriate.

### Club website

[www.audiosociety.org](http://www.audiosociety.org)

### E-mail

[info@audiosociety.org](mailto:info@audiosociety.org)

### U.S. Mail

Pacific Northwest Audio Society, P.O. Box 435, Mercer Island, WA 98040

### Annual dues

\$60 due each January. New members pay a prorated \$5 per month for remainder of year.

### Executive Committee

President: Jerry Pomeroy 253-350-3916

Vice-President: Bruce Brown

Treasurer: Andrew Kosobutsky

Editor: Joe Pittman

Equipment Committee Chair: Dick Mueller

Music Committee Chair: Renan Jeffereis

Volunteer: Leo Hrechanyk

### Editorial

Editorial submissions are welcome.

Content must be audio-related or of general interest to the club. We reserve the right to edit for style, content, and length.

Editorial deadline: two weeks before meeting date.

Publishing any editorial material is contingent upon the approval of the Executive Committee.

Editor: Joe Pittman 206-878-3833  
email: [joe@audiosociety.org](mailto:joe@audiosociety.org)

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**Pacific Northwest  
Audio Society**

Bringing Audio Enthusiasts Together Since 1978

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