

ARIZONA Audio Video Club

August 2020

Mailing Address:

AAVC C/O Joe Goswami, Treasurer
4425 N. 78th Street, Apt. 205B, Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Website: <https://azavclub.com/>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AZAVClub>

Phone (623) 238-6884 (leave Message or send Text)

Email Info@AZAVClub.org

YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DT_nKeWE0S4 (not quite loaded yet)

Club Officers

President: Paul Righello

Secretary/Treasurer: Joe Goswami

Newsletter Editor: Roy Cook , David Hjortland

SC Members: Jeff Kalina, Bob Olivere, Ben Taylor, Darcy Righello, Tom Harvell

Photographer/Videographer: Ben Taylor, Thomas Parker-Swenson



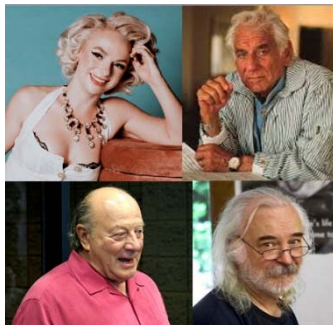
President's Message



Last Month's Meeting



Member Articles



Sundry Stuff



Dealer Area



Humor

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Paul Righello

Hi AZAV Club,

I hope everyone is doing well. I cannot wait for fall and the lovely weather it brings us; enough with the record heat already!

We have some *cool* events lined up for the remainder the year starting with a standmount shootout on September 23rd at 7pm at Faith Lutheran Church on Camelback (801 E. Camelback Rd, Phoenix, AZ 85014).

The lineup is developing but thus far we will have the following speakers present:

- Kef LS50s
- NHT Classic 3s
- Ohm Walsh Satellites
- Joseph Audio Pulsars
- LSA 10 Signatures

This event should be a good bit of fun and just like our member music night, masks and social distancing will be in effect. Moving on to October, we again will be having an in-person event with a live performance by guitarist Chris Dorsy. For those that cannot make it, our very own sound engineer Ben Taylor will be recording the event. We will find a way to post the recording to our webpage for those that wish to listen to it.

In addition to these live events, we are continuing to schedule virtual ones with industry luminaries so please keep an eye on your inbox for those as well.

Again, I hope everyone is safe and in good health. Take care and have a wonderful week.

Best,

Paul

MEMBER ARTICLES

Michael Kahut

Speaker Comparison

Location: Echo Audio; Portland, Oregon

Speakers Auditioned:

- Vienna Acoustics Strauss
- Aerial Acoustics Model 8 (with the 8B crossover modification)

Location: Echo Audio; Portland Oregon

Auditioning speakers can be a time consuming, slightly confusing, endeavor. If you have to go from store to store looking for comparable speakers, by the time you get to each set you may find you've forgotten everything you've heard.

I was fortunate that the audition was in the same room at the same location, that being Echo Audio in Portland, Oregon. I was also afforded the opportunity to use exactly the same gear for auditioning both pair of speakers.

Sending the electrons to each pair of speakers was a Vincent SV-236MK hybrid amplifier and a very nice Cary CD-306 transport. The Cary may be a bit dated but was ahead of its time considering the formats it supports and is equipped with a very highly regarded Burr-Brown DSD1792U 24-bit, 192-kHz Audio D/A converter. I was concerned that the Vincent was a bit under-powered for the test, given the power specifications of the speakers, but I did not plan on seriously pushing the gear to ear bleeding sound levels. I was certain it would be sufficient to demonstrate the sonic differences between the two speakers.

I fired up the system and inserted my first disc, Rob Wasserman's "*Duets*" and fast forwarded to Jennifer Warnes and her rendition of "*Ballad of a Runaway Horse*". This is an exquisite piece with subtle harmonies, a definitive bassline and the sweet clarity of Jennifer's voice, all mixed to perfection. The quality is so good that the track is used to perform what is known as the "Sumiko Master Set", a step-by-step speaker placement process. All-in-all, a wonderful track and if you can find the CD, it's worth getting simply for that one song. (Available as a single download from 7Digital for \$1.79 – <https://us.7digital.com/artist/rob-wasserman/release/duets> -- Ed.)

Next up was Emmylou Harris and some tracks from her "*Luxury Liner*" album including "*Making Believe*", "*She*" and "*Tulsa Queen*". Emmylou's band at the time was one of the best out there. The breadth, variation and depth of their sound was truly amazing and they were the perfect backdrop to Emmylou's unique vocal style.

Lastly, I broke out the rock and roll, playing several tracks from Chickenfoot's debut CD, appropriately named "*Chickenfoot*". The group consists of vocalist Sammy Hagar (ex-Van Halen and Montrose member), bassist Michael Anthony (also an ex-Van Halen member), guitarist Joe Satriani, and drummer Chad Smith of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. An eclectic bunch to be certain, however, some good music came from this group including the raucous "*Oh Yeah*", the thump of "*Get It Up*" and the softer but edgy "*Learning to Fall*". Rumor has it that a third album may be in the works.

The first pair of speakers used in the audition were the Vienna Acoustics Strauss units. A high-performance, large scale floor-standing loudspeaker, the Strauss casts an imposing figure.

The 7" dual midrange drivers are configured so that the upper unit handles the complete mid-band, while the lower driver blends in as the frequency decreases. Lastly, the side mounted 10" woofer is dedicated to producing ultra-low frequencies.

Sensitivity is a respectable 91dB and the recommended amplifier input power range is a versatile 50-400 watts, with the speakers requiring 4 ohms. Providing a wide frequency range of 27Hz to 30kHz, these speakers could very well prove to deliver a full sonic experience.

The pair I auditioned obviously had been well cared for with no obvious damage to the fabric covers, cabinets, cones or bases. One small nick on the back side of the cabinet above the wire connectors was all I could find during a close inspection.

The Strauss' are a big speaker compared to my Vienna Acoustic Mozart pair, but visually very similar sporting the same beech colored cabinet and the arrangement of the tweeter and dual midrange drivers in the face. The biggest visual differences are the side mounted 10" woofer, the one inch wider face, 5 inch deeper cabinet and an overall height difference of 8 inches.

So how did the Strauss pair do? In a word, "Respectable".

The detail, depth of sound field, and imaging were good but did not knock me over. The speakers never exhibited the spatial imaging that makes a good pair of speakers disappear, leaving you alone with the music. I was always aware of the fact that there was a big pair of speakers in front of me.

They tended to be harsh at the upper frequencies and seemed to lose detail; sounding as if they were having their own sonic war, colliding and competing for space at the tweeter and immediately in front of the speaker. It was as if the smooth electron pipe ended with a perforated nozzle that scattered the notes, creating incoherent and often harsh streams of sound. Suffice to say the Vienna's became fatiguing pretty quickly.

Basically I was listening to a larger version of the speakers I currently own which in the final analysis was not much of an improvement.

I considered that the amp might be letting the side down but this wasn't the time to swap amps and invalidate the comparison. Rather I decided to stick to my guns, and the gear, and move on with the audition.

I moved on to the Aerial Acoustics Model 8 speakers, another set of large floor standing speakers.

The Danish-built cabinets are produced in perfect mirror-imaged pairs using the finest veneers finished to a very high standard. In addition, the veneers are book-matched for symmetry on each side which lend to the striking and tasteful appearance. The pair I auditioned was enclosed in rich Santos rosewood, a \$500 per speaker upgrade when compared to the standard black ash finish. Also included were substantial bases and an adjustable spike kit.

The Aerials are a smidgen larger than the Strauss speakers coming in at just a bit over 1 inch wider and 3 inches deeper. Be that as it may, they would loom over my Mozarts but in a very good way.

Boasting a frequency range of 28Hz to 22kHz and a sensitivity of 86dB, they compare well with their competition but come with a completely different set of material specifications. Starting at the bottom, the 8's feature a +10"-diameter woofer incorporating a 2" voice-coil and a large magnet in a 61-liter rear-ported box tuned to 19Hz. The large midrange driver is a 7.1" multi-fiber paper cone unit. The tweeters, a custom built 1" titanium dome design, were sourced from the MB Quart company.

As the Model 8's are rated up to 300 watts at 8 ohms, I was still worried about the test results given the rating of the amplifier in use for this listening session. However, I must give credit where credit is due. The Vincent never wavered in its mission to provide usable power. Obviously I'd have the opportunity to give the speakers a full 300 watts plus some headroom just to extract their best performance if and when they were paired with my McIntosh MC-501 monoblock amplifiers.

And what about their performance? In a word, Outstanding!

Regardless of the music's demands or the power available, the detail, depth and spatial imaging of the Aerial speakers is beyond reproach.

They truly do disappear and never intrude on your listening pleasure. Even at higher dB levels, the reproduction of each voice and instrument is distinct and well defined. The 8's reproduced the sound of Emmylou's voice as if she were standing right in front of me with the band just a few steps behind and to both sides of her. The most amazing aspect of these speakers is the high levels of transparency and clarity they exhibit, some of the best I have ever heard. They render every detail of the music in a very natural and pleasing manner.

The Aerial 8's were able to produce a bigger, deeper and wider soundstage than the Strauss speakers despite what the specifications would indicate. the 8's produced tight and well defined bass whereas the Strauss seemed to be straining to reach those lower levels and they sounded a bit smothered as a result. The 8's layering and center fill was rock solid with a presence that brings you in and invites you to listen for hours on end.

I could not find, nor hear, one flaw with the Aerial Acoustic 8's sonic performance during the test.

I was so impressed with the used but well-loved pair I found that I put a deposit on them and they now grace my listening area providing what I am sure will be years of musical enjoyment.

Michael



Dave Hjortland – PS Audio Stellar Review



PS Audio is a 46-year-old mid to high-end audio firm based in Boulder, Colorado. Its head and co-founder, Paul McGowan, is something of an internet presence (try searching on his name on YouTube) holding forth on a number of often interesting

audio-related topics. The company is known for producing high-quality audio gear for relatively reasonable prices.

Last Fall PS Audio announced that they were going factory direct sale only, discontinuing selling through their dealer network. While this may result in some slight inconvenience to interested audiophiles, they are doing it right, offering same-day, paid shipping, a 30-day no-questions-asked return policy, and even a trade-in program for old, non-PS Audio gear.

In the January issue of *Stereophile* Michael Fremer reviewed the new PS Audio Stellar phono preamp. Fremer praised the unit for its value for the dollar, being extremely pleasant to listen to, and concluded with, "I recommend a listen to the Stellar to *anyone* in the market for a new phono preamp, regardless of price." (I refer you to that review for a far more thorough and professional review than I can provide: <https://www.stereophile.com/content/ps-audio-stellar-phono-phono-preamplifier>.)

Its primary designer, Darren Myers, was good enough to do a Zoom interview with our club last May 6th, and links for it are on the club's website. It is worth the time spent viewing. I found Myers' comments on the development of the Stellar Phono Preamp to be especially interesting.

I needed a phono preamp, and with the provisions of their direct sale program I figured I couldn't go wrong. Long story short, I didn't.

I ordered by phone, was impressed with the staff I spoke with, and the Stellar arrived promptly afterward. Out of the box my first impressions were favorable. It is unexpectedly hefty for its size, weighing in at 21.5 lbs. Fit and finish are very good. The Owner's Manual is well-written, informative, and quite complete. The unit handles both MM and MC carts, and switching between the two could allow the user to run two tonearms or two turntables. Dials on the rear allow for custom loading of MC carts. Inputs are RCA-type, outputs are RCA or balanced. A good after-market power cord is recommended, which I found to be very worthwhile in my systems. I also use vibration-damping footers under the unit.

In his review, analogue champion Fremer mentions concerns about the unit's sensitivity to grounding, ultralow capacitance cable, and RF and other types of interference. A prospective buyer should be aware of these concerns, but I have to say that I encountered no issues like that whatsoever. I use mid-grade Nordost cabling, plugged it in, and after spending a short while getting to know the unit and its remote, was good to go. The unit does take a little getting used to. All controls (except the main power switch and MC loading dials on the rear) are managed through its remote, however, and one quickly gets comfortable with it.

At this point in time I've put a good number of audio miles on the Stellar and have used/experienced it in two very different systems (in my Minnesota home and in Sun City). I have used it playing a variety of popular, jazz, and classical discs. (I won't bore you with a detailed rundown of each one and its virtues.) Sound is layered and all there. Instruments and voices are well-defined and placed nicely in space, which is to say that soundstage and depth are presented very well and not over-emphasized. The sound goes "outside the box" when the recording permits it. The critical midrange frequencies especially are nuanced, transparent, and very "solid." The upper and lower ranges are extended and all there as well, though perhaps not quite as tactile as the midrange.

Listening is indeed pleasant through the Stellar. In the owner's manual, designer Myers says that the circuits, "were designed to be innately transparent and present the music with correct tonal balance," and that the unit, "always presents the music in the correct light." This seems rather lofty rhetoric, especially as he also states that he developed the sound "After hundreds of hours of listening with many different cartridges and systems," in other words, using his own ears and preferences, which strikes me as being a rather subjective process. If there was only one ideal, "absolute sound," we would not have hundreds of companies producing gear that appeals to different audiophiles with different tastes.

That said, I found the sound of my two systems with the Stellar in place to be extremely pleasing. The unit was impressive without being overbearing or emphasizing any particular range of frequencies (though, see comments about the midrange above). It is engaging from turn on to shut down, and never fails to draw you into your music.

With only one possible exception (in my experience) you will not obtain better sound anywhere near this price point. That one *possible* exception is the Parasound JC3+. It comes in for \$500 more than the Stellar, but is a John Curl design that has been one of the lowest-price active phono preamps in the Stereophile Class A ranking for the last few years. I owned its predecessor, the JC3, for a couple years, and just before acquiring the Stellar I had a 3+ in my system on loan for a few days. It is hard to fault, presenting a top-to-bottom balanced, detailed, and engaging sound. Compared to the Stellar, its presentation seemed a bit drier and therefore a bit less involving, though some audiophiles might well consider this to be more "accurate."

The Stellar is obviously not the last word in phono preamps. Would I trade my Stellar for a new Boulder 2108, 2-box unit with an eye-watering MSRP of \$52,000 (and cover feature of the August **Stereophile**)? Of course, in a heartbeat. For audiophiles with far greater budgets than most of us, other options that approach or surpass the sound and abilities of the Stellar abound, BUT rivals start becoming available around \$10-12,000, and definite step ups in sound run higher than that. For my part, I think the Stellar is going to be in my system for a good long time.

I fearlessly predict that the Stellar Phono Pre will attain a Class A ranking from Stereophile next time its "Recommended Components" listings are published. I must absolutely concur with Fremer's comments about the Stellar's performance, and urge anyone who is thinking of a phono pre to seriously consider it. Its price is \$2500 – not chump change by any means, but for what it is and the sound quality it provides, it has to be considered one of audio's major bargains.

LAST MONTH'S MEETING RECAP

Roy Cook

No physical meeting last month; the two outstanding zoom meetings can be tracked in the Club's website.

DEALER'S AREA

Dealers Corner

Jeff Kalina

As always we want to recognize and thank all the local retailers who support our club so graciously

DEALERS:

Acoustic Designs Group -- <https://www.adgroupaz.com/>

Dedicated Audio -- <https://www.dedicatedaudio.com/>

USA Tube Audio -- <https://www.usatubeaudio.com/>

LMC Entertainment -- <https://www.lmche.com/>

Woolson Audio -- <https://www.woolsonaudio.com/>

Arizona HiFi -- <http://tubeaudio.com/>

Audio Video Excellence -- <https://www.audiovideoexcellence.com/index.html>

Big Ear Stereo -- <https://bigearstereo.com/>

VINYL:

Record High in Phoenix -- <https://www.facebook.com/Record-High-in-Phoenix-225931417539924/>

In Groove Records -- <https://www.theingroove.com/>

REPAIR WORK:

James Koch

james@highendrepair.com

Audio Doctor

<http://www.audiodoctor.biz/>

SUNDRY STUFF

I thought for sure somebody would ask who the attractive blonde is on the front page in Sundry Stuff.
Does anyone know?

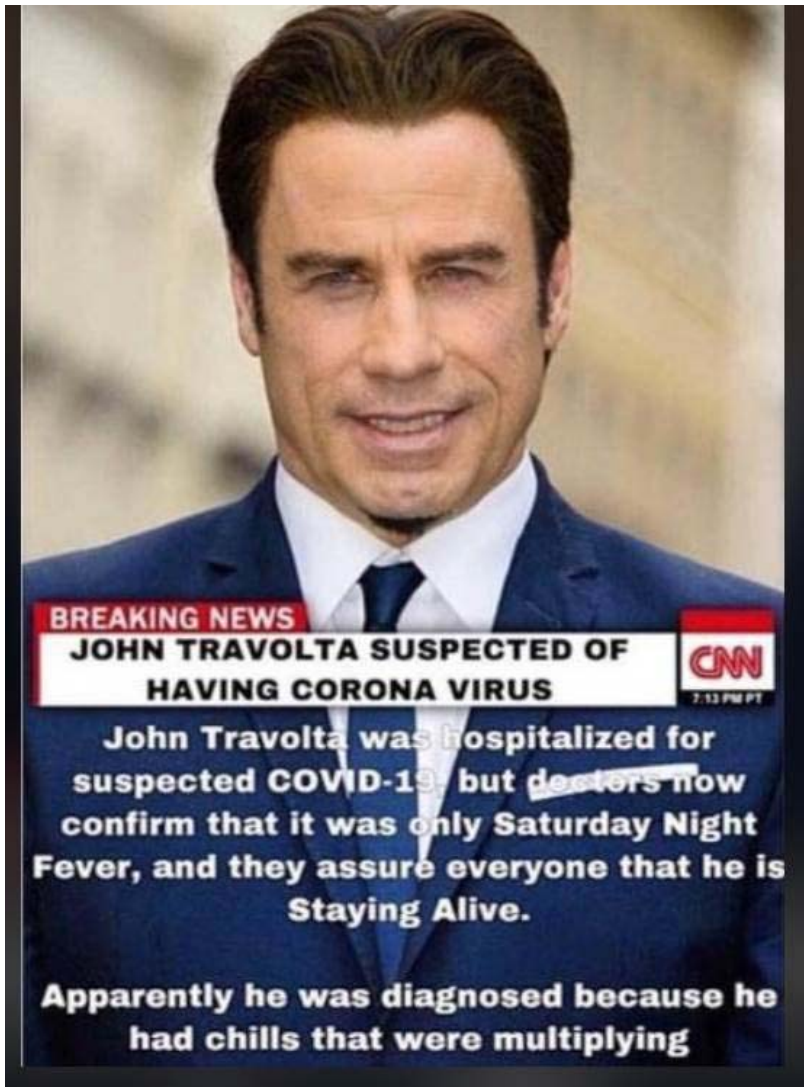
HUMOR

Roy Cook goes out and finds this silly stuff.

Ever wonder where we got the word “avocado.” It looks like a Spanish word, but it wasn’t. It turns out to be something of a long story. The original word used in English was indeed the Spanish word for the fruit, “*aguacate*.” However, since the Spanish word in the 16th century for “lawyer” was “*avocado*” (now it’s “*abogado*”), English speakers got the words mixed up and started saying “avocado” instead of “aguacate” The kicker is that the Spanish word “*aguacate*” comes from the Aztec Náhuatl word “*ahuacatl*,” which means “testicle.” This refers to the shape of the fruit...But wait ...There is more!



Not only does the word "avocado" come from the ancient Aztec word for "testicle," but the word "guacamole" quite literally translates to "testicle sauce."



I went to the grocery store and they now have a parking spot for Fat guys that like to grill. That's so considerate.

Picked up a hitch-hiker. Seemed like a nice guy.

After a few miles, he asked me if I wasn't afraid that he might be a serial killer?

I told him that the odds of two serial killers being in the same car were extremely unlikely



