



Newsletter

August 2024

President's Message

By AAVC President John Harvell

The club has taken a breather during August (the dog days of summer) to catch our breath, and the steering committee is preparing a strong program for the rest of the year. We will do a better job of delivering interesting programs if we get input from you, the club members. So, please offer up your suggestions and make club events more exciting and enjoyable for everyone. It's a pleasure getting out, seeing you all during the year, and sharing experiences playing in the audio/video world.

I look forward to regular interactions with each of you at future events.

Past and Future Meetings

The Arizona Audio Video Club (AAVC) has hosted several meetings in 2024, including:

- In January, we had a member music night—see the list at the end of the Newsletter for a list of music played at the event.
- In February, we had a DIY night - see the March Newsletter for a summary of that meeting.
- We had a face-off in March between analog (vinyl) and digital.
- In April, we had a DAC shootout - see May Newsletter for a summary of that meeting.
- In May, David Snyder presented on room correction, which involves measuring a room's audio quality and correcting it for better sonics.
- We did not have a club meeting in June, but several members hosted "listen to my system" sessions in their homes. If you hosted or attended one of these sessions, please get in touch with Newsletter editor Jim Welby (catchgroove@gmail.com) to share information and photos from those sessions so we can include a report about them in future Newsletters.
- In July, LMC Entertainment in Tempe hosted an amplifier comparison.

We have some great meetings planned, including:



On October 10, we will tour **Dan D'Agostino's** factory in Cave Creek. Per Dan's website: "No name is more closely associated with high-end audio amplifiers than that of Dan D'Agostino. During his career of more than 35 years, D'Agostino pioneered countless advances in the design of amplifiers, preamplifiers, CD players, and surround-sound processors. He is known as

the audio industry's most passionate promoter of high-quality, high-powered amplification.”



Date to be announced: We have a commitment from speaker designer **Andrew Jones** to speak to the AAVC. He is currently Head of Speaker Design at MoFi Electronics. His resume includes VP of Engineering at ELAC America, Director of Speaker Engineering at Pioneer Electronics, Chief Engineer at Infinity Systems Inc., and Chief Engineer at KEF Electronics Ltd.

Plans are also in the works for a swap meet, a membership listening session, and meetings hosted by local audio retailers. Member Barrett Strong will demo a tool he developed for locating a sweet spot in a listening space.

There is a weekly audiophile chat for club members via Zoom every Friday at 7:00 PM Arizona time (use this [link](#) to access the club website, which also contains a link to the Zoom meeting).

Member's Corner

The Long and Winding Road - Living with Audiophilia

Chapter One: Clueless

By AAVC Member Barrett Strong

We moved to Northville, Michigan, when I was 8, and I no longer had to share a room with my older brother, John. That Christmas, he got the tennis racket he wanted, and I got my first stereo - a futuristic molded white plastic record player with detachable 4" speakers.

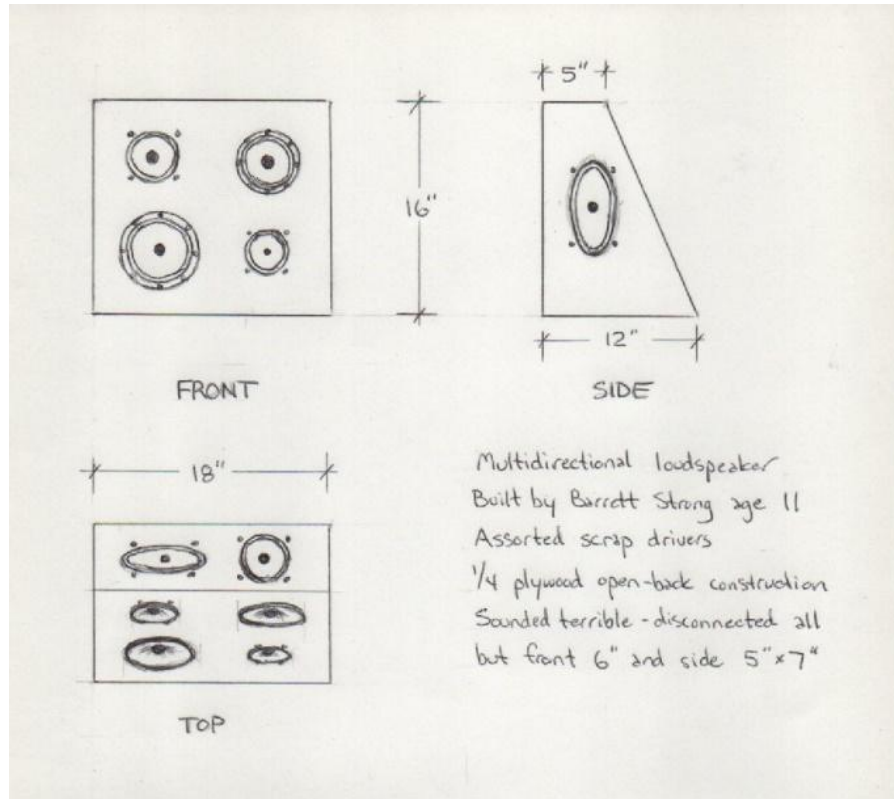


Life was good. I played “Maybelline” by Chuck Berry over and over on a 45 that skipped so badly that I taped pennies on the tone arm to keep it down. It didn’t matter— I was hooked.

It sounded terrible compared to my Dad’s Kenwood Receiver and Advent speakers. After an episode in which I showed my babysitting Grandmother how you could make fireworks by touching the bare ends of a cut

lamp cord together, I was not allowed to touch his system.

It didn't take long before I was upgrading in a way my budget would allow. At that point, I was a veteran trash picker and had collected seven raw drivers from old TVs and radios, ranging from a 3" round to what seemed to me a monster 5" x 7". No two speakers were alike.



Approximate dimensions from memory - no pictures remain.

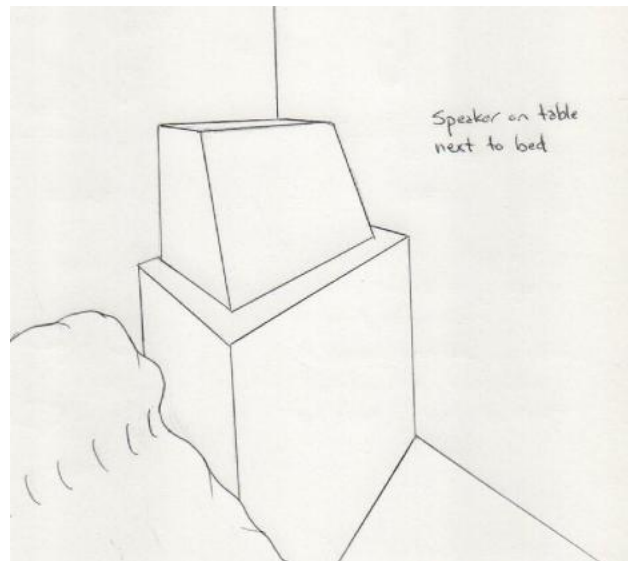
I used some 1/4" plywood reinforced on the inside corners with blocks of wood that my Dad let me have and built a single open-backed multidirectional speaker that sat on the tall table next to my bed. I angled the front and put speakers on the top to "fill the room with sound."

I wired it all together, connected it to the record player, and put on my first real album, **School's Out** by Alice Cooper.

It sounded unbelievably bad. It was like listening through a pillow. I had no knowledge of wiring in series or parallel, much less impedance, but I knew something needed to be fixed. I tried each speaker individually, picked the best two, and wired only those. Viola! Cooper filled the room, and I was now capable of volume levels capable of drawing parental ire—the strutting bass line of "Blue Turk." The rain sounds of "Alma Mater." The lonesome western harmonica that morphed into a topless bar grind followed by powerful horns and then a wailing

whammy guitar and percussive drum line that was the album's literal "Grande Finale" was unlike anything on the radio, and I couldn't get enough.

Cooper was joined by Pink Floyd's **Wish You Were Here** and then The Eagles **Hotel California**. All on a truly garbage turntable and a homemade speaker. They all sounded amazing to me.



That setup lasted for about three years. I graduated from my paper route and got a job washing dishes at Eddie's Tin Fu Restaurant. I had no girlfriends or hobbies that cost money, so I could save much of my pay each week. Money was piling up, and now I had a budget!

Next Newsletter - Chapter Two: Tech Hi-Fi Dreams Lost to Good Intentions



Audiophiles Anonymous

Record Reviews - Best New Music - A Mid-Year Report

by AAVC Member Jim Welby

One of my hobbies is writing a music blog. It mainly involves record reviews. In addition to the blog, I post short reviews and links to the blog on Instagram (@catchgroove) and FaceBook (Jim Welby). Here is a recent post on new music that has resonated with me in 2024. Links are to the full review on my blog.

So far this year, I have been underwhelmed by new releases and have spent more time listening to old music versus new. That being said, there are still some excellent 2024 releases to tout. The following list is in no particular order.

Billie Eilish - HIT ME HARD AND SOFT - Billie is 22 years old and can no longer be considered a wunderkind. On her third album, she has released her best. After saying that this list is in no particular order, I will contradict myself and say I have placed the album first as I think it is the best on this list. In my original [blog post](#), I was excited enough to say: "I will stake my measly music-head reputation on the line and say that the new Billie Eilish album is a pop masterpiece and one of the year's best new albums. I am not saying that it will have any significant cultural impact or that anyone other than her hardcore fans will care about this album in a month; just that it is excellent, and I want everyone my age to hear it." Some time has passed, and I stand by my original statement.

Cat Power - Cat Power Sings Dylan: The 1966 Royal Albert Hall Concert - In my [original blog post](#), I said: "The arrangements are faithful to the Dylan originals, yet Cat Power's unique vocals make the material her own. Hearing her interpret these songs opens up new meanings and nuances."

Kacey Musgraves - Deeper Well - In my [original blog post](#), I wrote: "This album will burnish Kacey's reputation as a singer-songwriter and recording artist. The songwriting is simple and direct, and the music/arrangements perfectly augment the lyrics. **Golden Hour** was a huge step forward, moving Kacey from an up-and-coming country star to a brilliant pop singer-songwriter. **Deeper Well** is evidence that **Golden Hour** was not a fluke and Kacey is for real."

The Black Crowes, Happiness Bastards - The Brothers Robinson got back together to celebrate and financially exploit their debut album. That went well enough that they were inspired to record an album of quality new material. I also saw them on tour, and the new material mixes well with their greatest hits. Here is my [full review](#).

Maggie Rogers - Don't Forget Me - When this came out, I **wrote**: “**On Don't Forget Me**, Rogers has found the Maggie Rogers sound: a soft rock guitar-forward production and an updated version of a '70s singer-songwriter vibe. There is a quiet confidence in Rogers; she sounds comfortable as a pop star.”

Kamasi Washington - Fearless Movement - In my **blog post** about this album and the tour supporting it, I wrote: “**Fearless Movement** is my new favorite Kamasi Washington album. At 86 minutes, it is a relatively short Kamasi album, which helps - it is more digestible. I like how it more deliberately incorporates Kamasi and the **WCGD**'s hip-hop influences. Witnessing this material live has only enhanced my appreciation of the album.”

Kenny Garrett & Savoy—Who Killed AI—Earlier this year, I wrote: “The ghost of Miles Davis hangs over this album both in the sound (late-period Miles) and in the experimentation (combining electronics and jazz). Garrett and Svoy's concept of a Miles-inspired combination of jazz sax with electronica works is inspired—it sounds fresh but also honors the past.”

Vampire Weekend - Only God Was Above Us - I like this album, but it did not pass the “if I like it, I will buy it on vinyl” test. Maybe that will change later this summer when I see them live. In **my review**, I said: “Overall, this is an excellent album. It is not significantly different from the rest of their catalog, but it distills what they do best. This would be a great introduction to the band.”

Pearl Jam - Dark Matter - The band continues with a nice late-career renaissance (they have been around for nearly 35 years). 2020's **Gigaton** was excellent, and **Dark Matter** is even better. It might be too pop for hardcore fans, but I think it sounds great. It also did not pass my “if I like it, I will buy it on vinyl” test.

Maggie Rose—No One Gets Out Alive—If you like Linda Ronstadt from the 1970s, you will like this album.

Norah Jones - Visions - In **my review**, I wrote: “Norah has advanced on several fronts. I assume the pandemic gave her a chance to woodshed. Her vocals are the most adventurous and satisfying in her catalog, and her guitar playing now rivals her piano. Her songwriting is strong. The arrangements are loose but serve the songs.”

Wilco - Hot Sun Cool Shroud EP - This is a last-minute entry as it was released on 6/28/24. This six-track EP (18 minutes) is a collection of leftovers from Wilco's last album, 2023's **Cousin**. They were demos finished by Jeff Tweedy and engineer Tom Schick. I loved **Cousin**, and these are quality leftovers.

Some albums I initially liked but have not stood the test of time:

- **Beyonce—COWBOY CARTER**—I was blown away when I first listened to this album. I had not critically listened to a Beyonce album until this one. I wrote a [long blog post](#) about it, but I have not returned to it.
- **Taylor Swift - The Tortured Poets Department** - Simple problem here - it is just too much volume. I recently made a playlist of the TTPD songs she added to her latest leg of The Eras Tour, which was much more digestible. It reminded me that there are some excellent songs on this album. My review is [here](#).
- **The Smile - Wall Of Eyes** - I completely forgot about this album until I reviewed my blog and Instagram posts. It did not blow me away like the debut did. I **originally wrote**: “My assumption is that Radiohead is on indefinite hiatus, and so The Smile is likely the closest we will get to fresh Radiohead. The Smile is a satisfying substitute. As for the lyrical content, I have rarely paid attention to Radiohead’s lyrical content, and I am not about to start now with The Smile. Enjoying the soundscape roll over me is all I need.”

And one more thing—I just finished Ann Powers’s outstanding new book on Joni Mitchell (**Traveling: On the Path of Joni Mitchell**). Rather than writing a typical biography, Powers takes a music critic’s approach. She also takes an autobiographical approach by sharing her relationship with Joni’s music. After five decades of listening to Joni, I gained new insights reading this book.

If you want to publish a record review in the newsletter, don't hesitate to contact the editor (catchgroove@gmail.com).



List of music played at January 2024 club meeting:

- Jason Isbell - Like a Hurricane (Live)
- Anne Bisson - From the Beginning
- Masayoshi Soken - Dance of the Fireflies
- Steely Dan - Black Cow
- Khruangbin- People Everywhere
- John Coltrane - My Favorite Things
- Rush - Anthem
- Rodrigo y Gabriela - Take Five
- Felt - Destination
- Lee Ritenour - Three Latin American Dances
- Brandi Disterheft - On Broadway
- The Who - Overture
- Robbie Robertson - Still Standing
- Bobby Caldwell - Stuck on You
- Charlie Hunter - Riverboat

Newsletter Content

We are always looking for Newsletter content. Encouraged content would be record reviews, equipment reviews, audiophile “memoirs” (for example, Barrett’s recall of his first stereo in this Newsletter), audio adventures (report from an audio show, for example), and anything else you might think might appeal to club members. If you want help with content, we can interview and write the content for you. Don't hesitate to contact Jim Welby at catchgroove@gmail.com if you have content ideas.

Leonardo Da Vinci And Mona Lisa 1504.
Photographed by Keith Richards



Dealers Corner

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

Equipment Dealers:

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

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

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

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

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

Woolson Audio -- <https://www.woolsonaudio.com/> (new address – 4411 S 40th Street, Phoenix)

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

Mythic Home Theater – <https://mythicsls.com/>

Vinyl:

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

Repair Work:

James Koch
james@highendrepair.com

Audio Doctor
<http://www.audiodoctor.biz/>
602-741-0730

Jeff's Professional Audio Repair, Also Car Stereo work
602-274-0794
jparepair@yahoo.com

Re-foaming Speaker Surround Service:
Michael Mitchell 480-749-7003
mmiller43228@yahoo.com

Turntable Set-up and record cleaning:
Richard Jensen
ANALOG resource
602 717 2399 | worksbau@gmail.com

Future Dream Home...



Arizona Audio Visual Club Newsletter
Jim Welby (@catchgroove.com), editor