



# Newsletter

March 2025

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## President's Message

By AAVC President John Harvell

We recently had our annual **election of the club officers** and here are the results:

- President: John Harvell won with 64.7% of the vote. (34 of 42 club members voted)
- Vice President: Joe Goswami with one write-in voter
- SC members (see list below) and Treasurer (Michael Kahut)- Unanimously Approved (also Greg Wann and Ravi Velnati added to SC team)
- Secretary position is Open.

Thanks to everyone that voted.

**Finances:** As of 2/28/2025, the club's bank balance is \$6475.08, and 42 members are active. If you haven't updated your membership, please consider doing so now.

**Upcoming Events:** we have many events planned - see Future Meeting section below. Please submit your club activity suggestions to anyone on the club leadership team. We want your help to deliver quality events to you, the club members. The leadership team includes:

- President: John Harvell
- Vice President: Joe Goswami
- Treasurer: Michael Kahut
- Newsletter Editor: Jim Welby

- Steering Committee: Barrett Strong, David Das, David Snyder, Greg Wann, Joe Roberts, Paul Johnson, and Ravi Velnati

## Future Meetings

### March

- **LMC Ruby Theater Design Objectives & Demonstration** - Thursday, March 27, starting at 6:30 p.m. This event will be at the LMC Tempe location at 1705 W. Ruby Dr., Suite #109, Tempe, AZ 85284. Paul from LMC Tempe will discuss the design objectives for the LMC Ruby Theater room and demonstrate that system's capabilities. The other equipment in the store will also be available for demonstration and evaluations.
- **Final Model 5 Hybrid Speaker Demonstration** - Saturday, March 22 from noon to 4:00 p.m. (set up from 10:00 a.m. to noon) at Greg Wann's Audio Shrine at 9838 N. 112th Ave., Sun City, AZ 85351. See David Das' review/preview of the speakers below.

**April - Amplifier Comparison on Final Model 35 Speakers** - Saturday, April 26, from noon to 4:00 p.m. (set up from 10:00 a.m. to noon) at Faith Hall at Faith Lutheran Church 801 E Camelback Rd, Phoenix AZ. We will compare three amps: [Coda Model 8](#) (member Ravi Velnati), [Benchmark AHB2](#) (member Paul Johnson), and [Burmester 911 mk3](#) (member Joe Roberts) via Final Model 35 speakers. The Final Model 35 speakers are so new that they are not on the Final website. Jim Welby and David Das recently had a chance to preview the speakers at Ravi Velnati's house. See the review below. Ravi is the US distributor of Final Audio.

**May - Please identify whether you want to participate in a members equipment swap meet event.** We have already identified 6-7 club members interested/willing to offer up a variety of gear for trade/resale to club membership. Ideally, we will post the equipment on the club's website before the event. A simple system will be set up playing music to help determine the proper functionality of equipment brought to this swap meet. If there is enough interest in membership one month before the event, the steering committee will help facilitate it. Please send your feedback to Paul Johnson at [tachyon2go4u2@gmail.com](mailto:tachyon2go4u2@gmail.com).

**June - Final Speaker Family featuring Maarten Smits on Saturday, June 14, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 PM (10:00 a.m. to noon setup) at Faith Hall (Faith Lutheran Church 801 E Camelback Rd, Phoenix AZ).** Maarten Smits is the founder and innovator of the Final Speaker lineup and will discuss the story behind the development of their electrostatic speaker designs and will be available for a question and answer session. The Final surround system will be set up and demonstrated during this session. See David Das' review/preview of the speakers below.

The club's steering committee is considering several other events. If you have an idea for a club meeting, please share it with the club's president, John Harvell ([jharvell\\_1@cox.net](mailto:jharvell_1@cox.net)), or the Newsletter Editor, Jim Welby ([catchgroove@gmail.com](mailto:catchgroove@gmail.com)).

## Chesky Audio LC1 Bookshelf Monitor Speaker Demo

By David Das

Our club members heard the highly acclaimed [Chesky Audio](#) LC1 Bookshelf Monitor speakers at the Faith Lutheran Church on Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. Member **Joe Goswami** set them up and paired them with an assortment of tube and solid-state power amps, integrated amps, streamers, and DACs. Member **Greg Wann** was kind enough to loan one of his two pairs of LC1 speakers for this event.

These speakers are the brainchild of 18-year-old actor and musician **Lucca Chesky**. He developed the prototype during his 2024 summer research internship at Princeton University's 3D Audio and Applied Acoustics Lab. Lucca is the founder of [Chesky Audio](#) and the LC1 is his first product.

To start the demo, Lucca introduced himself and discussed the inspiration behind this design in a short prerecorded video interview with Joe Goswami. Despite his age, Lucca is not the typical headphone kid. He comes from a family of musicians and his dad is a recording engineer, so Lucca developed an appreciation for speakers vs. cans early on. Lucca was mentored by Princeton Professor [Edgar Choueiri](#), the inventor of BACCH spatial audio, software that creates a three-dimensional soundstage that extends beyond the boundaries of the loudspeakers, providing a captivating and immersive listening experience. As part of Lucca's internship at Princeton, he wanted to leave the program with some tangible product. Given his interest in technology and music, a speaker design was the result. Lucca went through several prototypes before coming up with the LC1. The speaker's cabinet is thermally 3D printed. They are sonically optimized both externally and internally - because of 3D printing technology, Lucca could do things you could never accomplish with conventional construction.

Each speaker has a 6.5" bass/midrange polypropylene cone driver, a wide-dispersion 1" dome tweeter, and dual 8" fluid-coupled woofers that play from 50Hz to 20kHz. The driver selection is proprietary, but Lucca did share that he had assistance from Sandy Gross (the brains behind Polk, Definitive Technology, and GoldenEar Technology and a friend of Lucca's family).



Each speaker measures 8" x 10" x 10" and weighs 18 lbs.

These non-resonant boxes are 3D printed. They do not need any damping material inside. The tessellation surrounding the tweeter controls the diffraction. The sensitivity is on the lower side at 83dB. They benefit from being coupled with a powerful power amp.

They can only be purchased directly from the manufacturer at [\\$498 each](#). Greg Wann was gracious enough to offer an in-home demo of these speakers to anyone interested in trying them out. Please contact **Greg Wann** at [mastercaster1@cox.net](mailto:mastercaster1@cox.net) if you wish to try them.

Greg was delighted to purchase four of these speakers from Lucca and can't wait to share their outstanding attributes with all our club members.

One would be hard pressed to find a better sounding, better designed bookshelf speaker at this price point.

## **Fuse it or Lose it?**

By Barrett Strong



After reading the recent University study that found that cannabis increased participants' enjoyment of music, I faked surprise and thought it would be fun to do a little experiment. There's a saying that the three most cost-effective system improvements are speaker placement, alcohol, and weed. What does this have to do with fuses? We'll get there.

I've got my speaker placement fairly locked in, and my two or three serious listening sessions a week are typically preceded by some dried flower in a vaporizer and an

adult beverage. I've been doing that for so long that it's ingrained in me that the last two are improving the experience. My sessions are pure bliss 99% of the time, so why mess with what works?

But being analytical and loving comparisons, I went about a progressive comparison. I listened to a few of my most well-known demo tracks, noting various aspects of the auditory and emotional experience. Next I vaporized about 1/10 gram of cannabis and listened to the same tracks. I could not "hear" better technically - the soundstage, dynamics, and tonality sounded identical. What I did note, however, was my emotional response to the same input. The soundstage seemed more exciting. I felt more affected by the dynamics. The tonality wasn't just natural, I experienced mild synesthesia. The cello wasn't just a sound, but the warmth of the worn wood finish and the delicate snow of rosin floating in a low angled sunbeam as it illuminated the cellist before coming to rest on the cool stone floor of a church. Did I smell incense or was a trace of candle wax in the air?

After the last track I added alcohol, starting with one shot. Within minutes I felt an effect of relaxation which was pleasant but perhaps took away some of the nervous excitement the cannabis had produced. Maybe an even trade off. Listening to the tracks took about 30 minutes, which was perfect. I did a second shot and listened again. The pleasure had shifted slightly from the primarily cerebral to the physical as well. The alcohol now took away the aches and pains, which are often a distraction for me and allowed me more access to the experience. It was a great blend; this is all I usually drink for a listening session. But science is science, so I took another shot. I waited and went through my track selection. At this point things started to get less focused. Some of the precision was gone. The location of the instruments was less defined. My mind even wandered off the music. The urge to turn it up became stronger. My inhibitions were gone. It was time to jam! It was pretty clear my experiment was complete. The sweet spot for me was a bit of cannabis and two shots.

I turned it up. A minute into the next song I realized the soundstage had collapsed completely. It sounded dead flat. I put on my soundstage reference track - Roger Waters "The Ballad of Bill Hubbard" and the magic was gone entirely. Could it be that the tipping point was so dramatic? That my brain was so anesthetized it couldn't do the math to create the soundstage anymore? This was a huge finding! I got up and walked around a bit, pacing in disbelief. Walking right by the left speaker, I realized the tweeter was silent. I had blown its fuse. I shut down and replaced the fuse. Everything was fine when I fired back up, so much for my huge finding. It was a lot of fun, but I ended the experiment pretty much confirming my expectations.

William Blake once said "*The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom...you never know what is enough until you know what is more than enough.*" My little semi-scientific experiment reinforced to me that there is obvious wisdom in both not drinking too much or turning it up too much, but finding out exactly what is too much is another thing altogether. The crux of the biscuit. Each person is different and I am in no way

promoting either alcohol or cannabis. I know what works for me, but what you do in the comfort and safety of your home is your business.

Which finally leads us back to fuses. I told you we would get there. The next few days while doing research online about getting some more back-ups I got sucked into the fuse bypass debate. Everyone who replaces their fuses with solid silver, etc., raves about the dramatic improvement in the high end. They are voiding the warranty and risking melting their tweeters, but they say it's worth it. It did seem to make sense – that tiny fuse wire in the signal path would seem a weak link. Of course, people are very prone to bias in expectations as well. I decided to do another experiment, looking for some more wisdom. I built a simple lever mounted to the back of each speaker, allowing me to switch between the stock fuse and bridging the gap with about 200 fine strands of copper. I simply pulled on a set of cords while I listened to my test tracks. To be safe, I kept the volume a few clicks below what had blown the fuse earlier.

The first picture shows the bridge in the open position—fused speaker.



The second picture shows the copper bridge attached to the stick pressed onto the fuse. Fuse bypassed.



I wanted to hear an improvement, but I couldn't. I went back and forth repeatedly. Nothing. I put in some 1.5 amp fuses, which should have been even worse, but I still couldn't tell. I even tried mixing up the cords and closing my eyes so I wouldn't know which option I was listening to. I could hear no difference. Maybe my system doesn't resolve enough for it to make a difference. Maybe my hearing is not good enough for it to make a difference. Whatever the reason, I took the levers off and ordered some backup fuses and called it a day. On one hand, I was hoping the sound would have improved – the little silver fuse bypass is only \$40.

On the other hand, I felt good about being honest with myself and overcoming expectation bias. Another experiment, another baby step toward at least one type of wisdom. Take the low hanging fruit when you can. No bypasses for me. My sessions are pure bliss 99% of the time so why mess with what works?

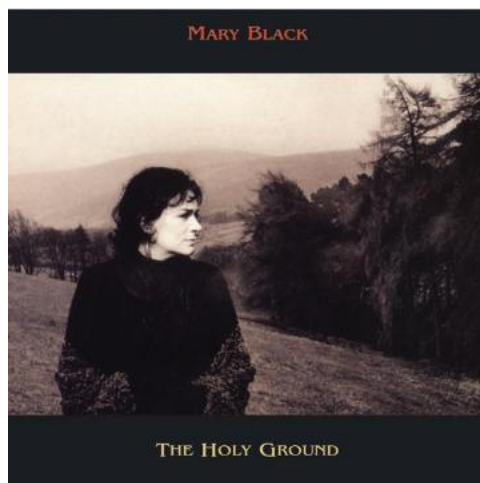
## Dave's Record Reviews

*Championing worthy albums from the past that should not be forgotten...*

By Dave HjortlandFor the AZ Audio Club

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### Mary Black – **The Holy Ground** (LP & CD, Giffhorse/Dara, 1993)



A few members of our club may well be aware of at least some of the music of Mary Black. I wrote a very brief review of her 1983 eponymous debut solo album for the Club newsletter in March '22. That album was well received by critics and the Irish public and served to launch the career of this woman who soon came to be regarded as an Irish national treasure. I didn't care much for it, though, as it consisted mostly of the dreary traditional folk ballads that the Irish seem fond of. Not, as they would say, my cuppa. But this, on the other hand...

**The Holy Ground** was Black's sixth album, and it went platinum in Ireland on the day

of its release. She had really hit her musical stride with her previous two albums, **No Frontiers** (1989) and especially **Babes In the Wood** (1991), both of which are wonderful in their own ways and are probably better known on this side of the pond than **The Holy Ground**. I suggest that the argument could be made – heck, I’ll make it – that these three albums form the pinnacle, the apex of her body of work. That is *not* to say that her other albums (her catalog currently consists of 14 albums, or 25 counting various collections and special re-issues) do not contain worthy material – they certainly do.

This album is deliberately crafted, the songs are thoughtful, meaningful, and carefully chosen. The excellent and varied backing instruments and vocals are supportive but never intrusive. Black’s magnificent, clear, passionate vocals are always the centerpiece of the music. Her arranger and producer is the talented Declan Sinnott, who also sings harmony and provides some of the backing instrumentation on most of the songs. He partnered with Black for, I believe, six of her albums, including the aforementioned **No Frontiers** and **Babes in the Wood**.

This is a superb album with many fine and rewarding cuts on it. I can’t discuss them all here, but should mention some. The opening cut, “*Summer Sent You*” is a winner right off the bat. A joyful, uplifting song that gently rocks and flows and draws you in, impressing with its composition, its craft and feeling, its expression of love. “*Out of all its goodness, summer sent you!*” It ends with a “*whoop*” that – whether it is or not – you’d swear is spontaneous. It’s followed by “*One Way Donkey Ride*,” a humble title for an almost anthemic Sandy Denny song that calls out the choices one makes in life, and calls upon God to, “*bless the poor ones on that one way donkey ride.*”

Black does two songs titled “*Holy Ground*” on this album. The first is a traditional Irish song, sparsely accompanied, allowing the focus to be her voice fully expressing the sentiment of the longing and love the singer has for her sailor who goes out to sea. The second version is also sparsely accompanied but is lighter in tone, as the singer tells of how she grew up on holy ground but sailed off to find adventure, finding it “*with a dark-haired boy and wild horses, with hummingbirds and roses there in old Mexico.*”

“*Flesh and Bone*” is a gorgeous number. Mary asks that, “*If we leave here today, we could be a thousand miles away,*” and “*...walk with me, talk with me, tell me your stories, I’ll do my best to understand you.*” Well – it’s a wonderful song. Another highlight is “*Treasure Island*,” an up-tempo song that considers the difficulties of love, comparing it to, “*a stream running up a mountain, it’s a wave rolling out from a shore.*”

But my favorite song on the album, is “*Dockland.*” Quick story: I hadn’t been much aware of Mary before a friend of mine played this album for me back in the day (probably ‘94). I was liking it a lot, but when this song came up I was just... enthralled. I quickly began to explore her other work, and have been a Mary Black fan ever since. Anyway – I’d like to quote the whole song, but will settle for:

*“Reminiscence is weighing me down with a vengeance, tide water so deep I think I’m going to drown. But in the wink of an eye I am rising above the affliction... I’m gone out of Dockland without a care in the world.”*

There is some excellent, tasty sax throughout, and it closes with some memorable sax work as well.

The album finishes with “*Poison Words*,” for which Mary is accompanied by a string quartet. It’s... beautifully sung and a fitting close to a wonderful album, though I confess that it is a bit too much Irish melancholia for my taste.

Befitting something of a “classic” album (at least in Ireland) ***The Holy Ground*** has seen a few different reissues. The CD is the most common, available cheaply from Discogs and, doubtless, elsewhere. There is a 2014 LP release from Pure Pleasure which, analog guy that I am, I would ordinarily not hesitate to recommend in preference to the CD. *However*, I have both, and listening to both as I wrote this review, I thought the CD seemed a bit... and I hate to say this! – just a *tad* more dynamic and open sounding. The LP’s sound is more... refined by comparison.

Also recommended are **No Frontiers** and (especially) **Babes in the Wood**. Mary Black’s catalog is available on streaming services.

## Final Electrostatic Speakers Preview

By David Das

**Editor’s note:** *Given that the club will have several opportunities to audition the FINAL electrostatic speaker line:*

- *March 22, at Greg Wann’s place (Model 5)*
- *At the April meeting at the church (M35)*
- *Maarten Smits (founder and innovator at FINAL) will be a speaker at our June meeting*

*David Das and I (Jim Welby) recently previewed some FINAL models at Ravi Velnati’s home.*

I got a chance to listen to FINAL Model 35 electrostatic speakers at Ravi Velnati’s home in Ahwatukee foothills. These speakers will be used as part of our April club meeting.



These tall and slender majestic panels weigh just 66 lbs each. Next to them, you see a pair of twin-powered sealed subs custom designed by Eric Alexander of Tekton. They act as a line array consisting of seven 10" woofers in each column that matches the height of the electrostatic panels.

I was curious to find how well this combination could handle the extreme synth bass pounding of the track *"Make Us Stronger"* by Ghost Rider that some of us heard being played on the Wilson Audio WAMM paired with the Subsonic subs at the LMC Scottsdale showroom.

The Tekton subs had enough bass slam and punch to satisfy any die-hard rock fan. The line-array arrangement uniformly pressurized the large living space no matter where you sat while adding extra weight to the sound from the electrostatic panels.

I listened to several other tracks with the subs turned off. The M35 has the classic sound of a well-built electrostatic panel. It excels at offering the highest degree of resolution, purity, and transparency throughout its frequency range of 29Hz to 20kHz and above.

Since there are no crossovers, the sound remains coherent throughout the frequency spectrum. There was no need to add the subs for standard music material, but switching on the subs did expand the soundstage quite a bit.

Ravi streamed music from Tidal and Qobuz. His hard drive had an extensive collection of DSD tracks that sounded fabulous. I played some of my test tracks on his Oppo UPD-205 player, which you see sitting on the top shelf.



The M35 panels were powered by the CODA amp. For most of our music listening, it operated in pure Class A mode. The preamp was an EMM Labs/Mietner Design SWM3

sporting four sets of 6-channel inputs that could be remotely switched. It is considered as one of the finest.

What impressed me right away was the imperceptibly low noise floor. The entire system was dead quiet. I could not hear even the faintest of hisses with my ears an inch away from the panels at idle. The moment the music came on, it filled the entire living room with glorious music that did not confine you to a narrow sweet spot.

After listening to the \$2M Wilson Audio/dCS Varese/Dan D'Agostino setup at LMC, these \$23,000/pair FINAL M35 speakers appear to steal a deal.

The FINAL speakers are so affordable in the US because you can buy them directly from club member Ravi, the sole US Distributor of this brand. There is no dealer markup.

FINAL speakers are much more expensive in Europe, where the customer is charged a dealer markup plus a 20% VAT surcharge.

Ravi let me listen to the Hybrid Model 5 electrostatics.



Compared to the tall M35 panels, the Model 5 is much smaller and narrower. It can be easily moved out of the way and repositioned. Each panel weighs 44 lbs and stands 54" tall. Each panel is attached to a subwoofer unit.



The sound characteristic of the Model 5 Hybrid was very different from the M35. The Model 5 presented a lighter, clearer sound and would be ideal in an intimate setting.

I can see why these \$5,500/pair electrostatic speakers are the top-selling final speakers in Europe. They strike the right balance between aesthetics, performance, and affordability.

**Jim Welby Comments** - I auditioned the FINAL speakers at Ravi's house and agree with David's review. A couple of additional observations:

- I have limited experience with electrostatic speakers and planar speakers in general. However, after auditioning John Harvell's MartinLogan and now Ravi's FINAL line, I am impressed by the accuracy and delicacy of this style of speaker.
- The Hybrid Model 5 sounded great, but they were significantly overshadowed by the M35s (especially when the M35s were augmented by the subs). But this is

how it should be. The M35s are larger and more expensive—they should dominate their little bother.

- I consider myself a humble audiophile (AKA cheap), more mid-fi than hi-fi, but the FINAL line is a good value. They are expensive by my standards, but they are as good, if not better, than speakers that cost multiples more. I would consider the M35s given their price (\$5,500 a pair).

## Member Playlist

By Paul Johnson

This month's list is a "deep dive" into artists you might not be familiar with. I would enjoy hearing about and listening to your music recommendations. Some of the artists recommended for a live performance might never tour here again. Every day above ground is a good one.

- Cowboy Junkies – Trinity Sessions, Pale Sun Crescent Moon, Open, Trinity Sessions Revisited, Such
- Ferocious Beauty, The Nomad Series (1,2,3), Ghosts
- Mark Knopfler – The Ragpicker's Dream, Sailing To Philadelphia, Neck And Neck, Get Lucky, All The
- Roadrunning / Live (w / Emmylou Harris) (If They Ever Tour Again, Don't Miss This Concert)
- Neil Young (Greendale, Ragged Glory, This Note's For You, Psychedelic Pill, Harvest, Harvest Moon,
- Everybody knows..., Rust Never Sleeps, After The Gold Rush (If He Tour's Here Again, Please Don't
- Miss That Performance)
- Talking Heads – Stop Making Sense (Remastered) – 77 (Remastered, Box set) The Name Of The Band
- Is Talking Heads (Their Entire Discography, It's All Good)
- David Byrne – American Dream – Blu Ray Audio And Video Release (The Touring And Home Base
- (NYC) Live Concerts Were Amazing)
- Sparks – (Probably Every Other Artist On This List Considers Them As One Of Their Favorite Artists)
- I Attended One Of Their Performances On Broadway, It Was Worth The Trip (Think Trent Reznor And
- Liberace) Watch One Of Their Videos.
- Peter Gabriel – I/0 (Blu Ray Audio And 4K Video) Everything He Has Released Is Worth Listening To
- Gillian Welch – Hell Among The Yearlings – Time (The Revelator) – The Harrow And The Harvest
- John Trudell – Blue Indians – Johnny Damas And Me – AKA Graffiti Man
- Aloe Blacc – Good Things – Lift Your Spirit – Stand Together
- Fountains Of Wayne – Out Of State Plates – Welcome Interstate Managers
- Jackson Browne – Time The Conqueror – Late For The Sky – Downhill From Everywhere
- Lera Lynn – Plays Well With Others
- Gil Scott Heron – Tales Of.. Live – The Revolution Will Not Be Televised – From South Africa To South
- Carolina – Small Talk At 125 th & Lenox – I'm New Here – We're New Here

- Lee Fields & The Expressions – It Rains Love – Special Night – Sentimental Fool
- Black Pumas – Black Pumas – Chronicles Of A Diamond – Live From Brooklyn Paramount
- Los Lobos – Kiko – Good Morning Atzlan – The Neighborhood – The Town And The City
- Tragically Hip – Up To Here – Fully Completely – Phantom Power – Live Between Us
- Sam Baker – Mercy – Say Grace – Cotton – Land Of Doubt
- Jeffrey Foucault – Miles From The Lightning – Horse Latitudes – The Universal Fire
- Randy Bachmann – Every Story Tells A Picture
- 10cc – Mirror Mirror – Deceptive Bends – Meanwhile – Live And Let Live – Bloody Tourists
- Kevin Godley & Lol Creme (The song-smiths of 10cc) – Parts of the Process -- (Box set of their complete discography, CD)
- Gram Gouldman – Modesty Forbids – Love And Work
- Kraftwerk – Remixes (Their Entire Discography) A Blu Ray Audio / Vinyl Picture Disc of Autobahn was released 3-7-2025 (The First Release Of Their Entire Discography) They Are On Tour, Performing A 50 th Anniversary Concert At The Orpheum Theatre On 4-14-2025 (Please Don't Miss This Performance, It Might Be Their Last Tour In The USA)
- Ranky Tanky – Good Time – Red Balloon
- The Suffers – The Suffers – It Starts With Love..
- Bill Lloyd – Set To Pop – Paparazzi – Back To Even – Reset 2014
- The Wood Brothers – Ways Not To Lose – Sky High – Live At The Barn
- Townes Van Zandt – High, Low And In Between – Our Mother The Mountain – The Nashville Sessions
- Steve Forbert – Alive On Arrival – Streets Of This Town
- Lucero – Lucero – That Much Farther West – Women & Work – All A Man Should Do
- Ben Nichols / Rick Steff – Lucero Unplugged (Qobuz)
- Ben Nichols – The Last Pale Light In The West
- Benjamin Gibbard – Former Lives
- Death Cab For Cutie – We have The Facts And We're Voting Yes – Something About Airplanes – Asphalt Meadows
- The Paladins – Let's Buzz – Palvoline # 7 – Slippin' In
- Ben Harper – Fight For Your Mind – Both Sides Of The Gun – Lifeline (w / The Innocent Criminals)
- Jessie Malin – Sunset Kids – The Fine Art Of Self Destruction – New York Before The War – Silver
- Patron Saints (A Benefit For)
- Billy Goodrum – Weightless
- Danny Gatton – 88 Elmira Street – Redneck Jazz Explosion – Crusin' Deuces – Relentless
- Rachael And Vilray – Rachael And Vilray – I Love A Love Song
- Lake Street Dive – Lake Street Dive – Bad Self Portraits – Good Together
- Gram Parsons – Grievous Angel – Sweetheart Of The Rodeo – GP

- Larkin Poe – Bloom – Blood Harmony – Paint The Roses
- Hermanos Gutiérrez – Sonido Cósmico – El Bueno Y El Malo – Hijos Del Sol
- The Mavericks – The Mavericks – Music For All occasions – Plays The Hits – Moon And Stars
- Raul Malo – Today – An Evening With.. – Quarantunes
- David Lynch – Blue Bob – Thought Gang – Cellophane Memories (2024) – Twin Peaks Archive – Ghost
- Of Love – Twin Peaks... The Return (Various Artists)
- Dean Hurley – Anthology Resource Vol 1 & 2 – The Mystic
- Buddy and Julie Miller – Written In Chalk – In The Throes – Buddy Miller’s Majestic Strings
- Don Dixon – Romeo At Julliard – Romantic Depressive
- Triumvirat – Spartacus – Illusions On A Double Dimple
- Tom Waits – Blue Valentine – Nighthawks At The Diner – Frank’s Wild Years – Heart Of Saturday Night
- Amos Lee – Live At Red Rocks – Mission Bell – Dreamland
- Dean Owens – Sinner’s Shrine – El Tiradito – Ghosts
- Gin Blossoms – New Miserable Experience – Dusted
- Sidewinders – Auntie’ Ramos’s Pool hall – Witchdoctor – Sidewinders Sessions
- Sand Rubies – Sand Rubies – Return Of The Living Dead – Goodbye, Live At Alte Malzerei
- Chris Burroughs – West of Texas – Trade Of Chains
- Giant Sand – Chore Of Enhancement – Is All Over The Map – proVISIONS
- Rainier Ptacek – The Texas Tapes (ZZ Top Is The Backup Band) – Worried Spirits – The Inner Flame
- Howe Gelb – Sno’ Angel Like You – Snarl Some Piano – Melted Wires
- Crack The Sky – S/T – Live At The Riechter Theater – Tribes – Animal Notes – Safety In Numbers
- Duke Tomatoe And His Band – I Like My Job – Dr. Duke – Big Bang
- Pat MacDonald – Sleeps With His Guitar – Begging Her Graces
- Barbara Kooyman – Undercover (The Songs Of Timbuk 3)
- Timbuk 3 – Greetings From – Eden Alley – Big Shot In The Dark – Espace Ornano
- The War And Treaty – Healing Tide – Hearts Town – Lovers Game
- Wise Monkey Orchestra – They Live – Robot Reality – It’s Alive
- Martha And The Muffins – Metro Music – Trance And Dance – Danseparc – M+M
- Dead Can Dance – Dionysus – A Passage in Time – Into the Labyrinth
- Cigar Store Indians – Cigar Store Indians – Guest List – Built Of Stone
- The Morells – The Morells – Think About It
- The Skeletons – In The Flesh – Waiting – Nothing to Lose
- Saffire The Uppity Blues Women – The Uppity Blues Women – Hot Flash – Live And Uppity
- Gaye Adegbalola – Bitter Sweet Blues – Gaye Without Shame
- Orchestra Mendoza – Cuandero – Vamos A Guarachar! – La Caminaradora
- Either / Orchestra – Dial E for.. – The Half Life Of Desire – Across The Omniverse – More Beautiful
- Than Death
- The Comet Is Coming – Channel The Spirits – Hyper-Dimensional Beam – Death To The Planet
- Theon Cross – Fyah – Intra-I
- Jon Batiste – We Are – Hollywood Africans – Beethoven Blues
- Shabaka Hutchings – African Culture – Perceive It’s Beauty, Acknowledge It’s Grace

- Morphine – Good – Like Swimming – Cure For Pain – Bootleg Detroit
- Hypnosonics – Someone Stole My Shoes – Drums Were Beating – It’s Not Like That Anymore
- Dulaney / Durant --
- Bart Budwig – Another Burn On The AstroTurf – The Moon And Other Things
- Jerry Joseph And The Jack Mormons – Mouthful Of Copper – Tick – The Beautiful Madness
- Clive Gregson And Christine Collister – Love Is A Strange Motel – A Change In The Weather – Mischief
- Buckingham / Nicks – Buckingham / Nicks (Japanese Release, 21 tracks on CD)
- Buckingham / McVie – Buckingham / McVie
- Cunningham / Bird – Cunningham / Bird (cover album of Buckingham / Nicks)
- Fleetwood Mac – The Alternative Fleetwood Mac (Rhino RSD release, The First 6 Buckingham / Nicks
- Albums, Box Set, CD. Very Different Versions Of The Releases You Know)
- Trout Fishing In America – Trout Fishing In America – Truth Is Stranger Than Fishing
- Craig Finn – A History Of Rentals – We All Want The Same Things – I Need A New War
- The Hold Steady – Stay Positive – Boys and Girls in America
- Iron And Wine (Sam Beam) – Who Can See Forever – Our Endless Numbered Days – Beast Epic
- Jessie Sykes And The Sweet Hereafter – Reckless Burning – The Tempest – Marble Son
- Gurf Morlix – Last Exit To Happyland – Eatin’ At Me – Toad of Titicaca
- Steve Earle – Guitar Town – Washington Square Serenade – I Hear My Train A Comin’
- Heaven Must Have Sent You – Holland, Dozier And Holland (The Song-Smiths of Motown, Box Set)
- Dan Penn – Do Right Man – Nobody’s Fool – Living on Mercy
- Spooner Oldham – Moments From This Theatre – The Muscle Shoals Sessions
- Shemekia Copeland – America’s Child – Done Come Too Far – Talking to Strangers
- Gasoline Lollipops – Nightmarks – All the Misery Money Can Buy – Resurrection
- The Third Mind – The Third Mind -- Live Mind (Dave Alvin, Jessie Sykes, Victor Krummenacher)
- Dave Alvin – Blackjack David – The King Of California – Blue Boulevard
- Dred Scott Trio – Dred Scott Rides Again – Rides Alone – Time For The Hard Stuff – Live At The
- Rockwood Music Hall
- Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio – Cold As Weiss – Close But No Cigar – Live at KEXP! – Live In Loveland
- David Hidalgo / Louie Perez – Long Walk Home
- David Hidalgo – Greetings From East LA (w / Dig Infinity) – Three Skulls And The Truth
- Latin Playboys – Latin Playboys – Dos
- Caesar Rosas – Soul Disguise
- Ray Lamontagne – Trouble – Til The Sun Turns Dark – God Willin’ And The Creek Don’t Rise
- Chris Stapleton – Traveller – From A Room (1&2) – Higher
- Sturgill Simpson – Metamodern Sounds In Country Music – A Sailors Guide To Earth – Johnny Blue

- Skies
- The Jompson Brothers --The Jompson Brothers (Chris Stapeleton's First Band)
- Richard Shindell – Sparrows Point – Not Far Now – Careless
- Ride – Clouds In The Mirror – This Is Not A Safe Place – Going Blank Again – Interplay
- The Smile – Wall of Eyes – Cutouts – Europe Live
- Joan Armatrading – Joan Armatrading – Me, Myself, I – Live: All The Way From America – Live At
- Asylum Chapel
- Radiohead – The Bends – OK Computer – Kid A Mnesia
- Thom Yorke – Atoms for Peace – The Eraser – Suspiria
- St. Vincent – Daddy's Home – All Born Screaming –
- Joy Oladakon – In Defense Of My Own Happiness – Observations From A Crowded Room
- Jeff Wayne – Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of The War of the Worlds
- Barteas Strange – Horror
- Joey DeFrancesco – Organic Vibes – The DeFrancesco Brothers – The Baddest B3 Burner in The
- Business
- Tom Cochrane – Songs Of A Wandering Spirit – Victory Day – Mad Mad World
- The Tragically Hip – Up To Here – Fully Completely – Phantom Power – We Are The Same
- Ahmad Jamal – Emerald City Nights – Live At The Penthouse – (1963-1968)
- Nick Lowe – Indoor Safari – Dig My Mood – Jesus Of Cool
- Ryan Adams – Heartbreaker – Easy Tiger – Live At Carnegie Hall (Complete – Qobuz)
- Matthew Sweet – Girlfriend – 100% Fun – Sunshine Lies – Catspaw
- The Claypool Lennon Delirium – South Of Reality – Monolith Of Phobos – Lime And Limpid Green
- Slaid Cleaves – Everything You Love Will Be Taken Away – Still Fighting The War – Together Through
- The Dark
- Waylon Payne – The Drifter – Walk The Line – Crazy

Next Month; Jazz, Classical and Soundtrack Titles. Same music time, same music channel.

## **LMC dCS Varese Launch Event**

Review by David Das

I was one of the lucky ones to attend the dCS Varese Launch Event hosted by LMC Home Entertainment, Scottsdale, on February 20th, 2025. The attendees at this event got an opportunity to experience the pinnacle of 2-channel audio engineering utilizing the very best speakers, power amps, and streamers/dacs that money can buy.

The star of the show was the [dCS Varese](#) streamer/dac. This elegantly crafted 5-box stack served as the front end feeding a pair of massive Dan D'Agostino [Relentless Epic 1600](#) power amps connected to a pair of visually stunning Wilson Audio [WAMM Master Chronosonic](#) speakers.



A pair of Wilson Audio [Subsonic Subwoofers](#) allowed this system to play flat down to 10Hz with deep impactful, tightly controlled bass.

The [Varese Music System](#) is the flagship product of dCS Audio. It comprises of 5 separate boxes that house the User Interface, Master Clock, two Mono DACs and the Core.



What makes the dCS products so unique and impressive is their implementation of differential Ring DACs. Here is a [technical explanation](#) of how they work.

For a simpler overview, read Robert Harley's [explanation of Ring DACs](#). You see the User Interface box on the top shelf. The other 4 dCS boxes are stacked on the right. Resting on the floor are the 2 Dan D'Agostino Relentless monoblocks weighing 570 lbs each.



The User Interface box has a large touch screen. It can be controlled remotely via Bluetooth.



The [Varese System](#) can be operated from the convenience of your listening chair with a simple circular hand held remote.



Here is a close up view of the dCS stack. Each box is connected via a single ACTUS Cable made up of six twisted pairs of copper cable carrying all the signals. We got to examine a sample.



These are the majestic Wilson Audio WAMM Master Chronosonic speakers in Cranberry Pearl.



They are the late David Wilson's ultimate statement design and are considered to be the finest transducers in the world. Only 70 pairs were ever made. LMC Home Entertainment in Scottsdale is the only showroom in the world where you can audition a demo pair.

Each speaker weighs 900 lbs and stands 84 inches tall. The ported bass enclosure at the bottom houses a 12.5" woofer and a 10.5" woofer.

The 5 upper elements contain two 7" lower midrange drivers and two 4" upper midrange drivers flanking a 1" silk dome tweeter in the middle. Each of these 5 elements can be individually angled to throw a razor sharp focus at the listening position. In addition there is a 1" silk dome rear firing tweeter for adding ambience.

You can learn more from the glowing reviews on [Stereophile](#) and [Absolute Sound](#).

They were priced at \$685,000 a pair when first released in 2016. They play flat down to 23Hz.

A pair of Wilson Audio Subsonic subs comprising of three 12" woofers each were used to extend the low end bass response down to 10Hz.



Each sub weighs 505 lbs and measures 65" high x 18" wide x 27" deep. Each was powered by a Dan D'Agostino [Progression M550](#) Mono Power Amp.



Here is how the Wilson Audio WAMM + Subsonic system looks from the side.



Here is a close up of the Dan D'Agostino Relentless 1600 mono block driving each WAMM.



**David Steven**, Managing Director of dCS began the demo with a brief [history](#) of their company and their unique Ring DAC design that propelled them into becoming the finest in the industry.

He played three tracks to showcase the strengths of the Varese Music System.

- Roadhouses & Automobiles – Chris Jones & Steve Baker
- Queen Mary – Francine Thirteen
- Man in the Long Black Coat – Bob Dylan

From the very first note it became clear what is so special about dCS. I felt I was listening to a high-end analog rig. It was liquid smooth. It had the warmth and fluidity of a reel to reel master tape but without the tape hiss. There was no trace of any digital harshness. This was unlike any digital front end I had heard before.

I could have closed my eyes and fooled myself into believing I was listening to a high-end turntable. It had all the attributes that make analog gear stand out in providing realism and musicality.

I requested David Steven to play the synth-heavy bass track “*Make us Stronger*” by Ghost Rider. This was a revelation. I have heard this audiophile torture test track on many high-end setups, but this was the best presentation. The pulsating hypnotic bass line had the power, precision, and impact that hit you in the chest.

What was magical was how the dCS Varese System tamed the extreme edgy synth overtones on this track and removed all digital glare that otherwise tends to hurt your ears when played through lesser systems.

This system had breathtaking resolution, delicacy, and smoothness while exhibiting limitless dynamics when called for. The 3D imaging was wide, deep, and precise from the sweet spot where all the WAMM elements were carefully focused and time-aligned.

Out of all 2-channel high-end setups I have heard at previous audiophile events and dealer showrooms, nothing matches the synergy of this Wilson Audio/dCS /Dan D’Agostino pairing. This was a match made in heaven. This encapsulates the pinnacle of audio engineering.

If an audiophile with adequate resources and the space wants to enjoy the very best, this is it. Your search ends here.

Such extreme performance comes at a price. Here is a breakdown of this \$2M system.

- dCS Varese Music System with Master Clock and I/O Module = [\\$276,500](#)
- Dan D’Agostino Relentless Epic 1600 Mono Amps (x2) = [\\$699,000](#)
- Dan D’Agostino Progression M550 Mono Amps (x2) = [\\$95,000](#)
- Wilson Audio WAMM Master Chronosonic Speakers + 2 Subsonic subs = [\\$944,000](#)

Grand Total = **\$2,014,500**

Mike Ware is the founder and owner of LMC Home Entertainment. He is the world’s number one Wilson Audio Dealer. He carries the entire product line of Wilson Audio

speakers, Dan D'Agostino amps and dCS music systems. This is the only showroom in the world where one could demo this combination.

I was curious to find if any other system in Mike's 9,000 sqft showroom could come close to this ultimate reference setup.

I walked over to their Sonus Faber Demo room featuring the [Sonus Faber Suprema](#).



This \$750,000 flagship model got rave reviews from [Absolute Sound](#), [Audioholics](#) and [SoundStage](#).

These speakers were paired to an identical dCS Varese Music System. However, the power amps were all Burmester.





I listened through many of the same demo tracks and a few more that several attendees requested.

- Fanfare for the Common Man – Minnesota Orchestra & Eiji Que
- Hanuman – Rodrigo y Gabriella
- You Want It Darker – Leonard Cohen
- Hey Laura – Gregory Porter
- The Three Trumpeteers – Nicholas Payton
- Big Bad John – Geoff Castellucci
- Sista – Rachelle Ferrell
- Spanish Joint – D'Angelo
- Bungee Jump – Captain Hook & Astrix
- The Awakening Pt. 1 – The Reddings
- Sittin' On The Dock of the Bay (Live) – Sara Bareilles
- Ship of Fools – Robert Plant
- Somehow It's Been a Rough Day – Ai Kuwabara, Steve Gadd & Will Lee
- Homeless (featuring Paul Simon) – Ladysmith Black Mambazo
- Que Sera, Sera – Hidden Citizens
- Keith Don't Go – Nils Lofgren

After an extended listening session, I felt the bass from the Sonus Faber Suprema system was not as tight, defined and controlled as the WAMM system. It could not match the impact, precision, and speed. The overall presentation was on the warmer side. Some may prefer this for its euphonic qualities.

Next, I visited the [Wilson Audio Chronosonic XVX](#) room. The front end being used was the dCS [Vivaldi Apex](#) system, which is a step down from the Varese system.



**Daryl Wilson** introduced the Chronosonic XVX in October 2019 with the objective to capture the essence of his dad's magnum opus, the WAMM Master Chronosonic but at a lower price point.

He brought a static display to the 2019 Rocky Mountain Audio Fest in Denver and I got to meet him and his mom Cheryl and learn all about his first design product as the new CEO and Chief Designer at Wilson Audio.

I learned why Daryl designed the XVX to be 6'2" tall. He wanted them to match his height!

I was touched by Daryl and Cheryl's warmth and hospitality. They are down to earth, friendly, and approachable. Wilson Audio has the best customer support in the industry.



So how does the Chronosonic XVX compare to the WAMM Master Chronosonic?

Both speakers were augmented with a pair of Wilson Audio Subsonic subs to get the bass response down to 10Hz.

The XVX System was powered by 4 Burmester power amps.



The dCS Vivaldi Apex system is much more affordable at [\\$46,500](#) compared to the Varese system. It includes a DAC, Upsampler, Master Clock and CD/SACD Transport.

I listened to several of the same demo tracks. The presentation felt like a slightly scaled down version of the WAMM/dCS Varese/Dan D'Agostino combo. The width and depth of the soundstage felt a little smaller. The resolution, smoothness, micro-dynamics were all there but just felt short of the absolute transparency and overall scale of the presentation in the cost-no-object setup.

Considering how close the performance of this XVX/Vivaldi setup approaches the WAMM/Varese setup at a fraction of the cost, this makes it a bargain, the smarter choice.

The qualities of the smaller and more affordable XVX speakers were highly praised by [Stereophile](#) and [Absolute Sound](#). Michael Fremer bought a personal pair.

The XVX works better in smaller spaces, whereas the WAMM needs a much larger space to breathe.

Besides the Varese and Vivaldi, dCS has three more products in their DAC/Streamer lineup.

- dCS Rosini APEX Player [\\$36,800](#)
- dCS Bartok [\\$20,950](#)
- dCS Lina [\\$13,650](#)

The dCS Rosini APEX is an integrated player that includes the Ring DAC, Streamer and CD Transport.



It was paired with the Wilson Audio [ALEXX V](#) speakers.



They were driven by a pair of Burmester power amps.



The most affordable DAC that dCS makes is the [LINA Network DAC](#).

Although priced at only \$13,650, this Network Streaming DAC shares the same DNA as its more expensive siblings. It enjoys the trickle down benefits of the R&D that went behind the Varese and Vivaldi DACs.

As with any dCS DACs, there is no need to add a preamp. They handle the entire front end of your setup. All you need to do is feed this detailed, natural sounding analog output to your power amp and enjoy a crisp, clear, transparent playback with an expansive soundstage from your speakers.

A LINA Network DAC and Master Clock were used to demo a pair of smaller Wilson's driven by a pair of Burmester amps.



I thought they sounded really good for the price. [Stereophile](#) and [AV Forums](#) ran extensive reviews on this product.

Amongst the attendees I met a gentleman named **Kazuya Ohtake**. I was surprised to learn that Mr. Ohtake flew in from Japan to document this event. He told me that this was the only showroom in the world where one could audition the dCS Varese Music System in conjunction with the Wilson Audio WAMM/Subsonic speaker system powered by the Dan D'Agostino Relentless Epic 1600 mono amps.

His next stop was to meet Dan D'Agostino at his Cake Creek factory during this trip. He would be attending the AXPONA Show in April 11-13, 2025.

Kazuya is a professional reviewer who attends all the HiFi audio shows all over the world.

This is his website.

<https://www.avcat.jp/next/>

Kazuya was kind enough to share with me the Camera and Audio Recording gear he was using. This information may be helpful to anyone who intends on taking professional quality videos and photos at such audio events.

**Camera:**

[Sony a7C II](#) Full Frame Mirrorless Camera (\$2198)

**Lens:**

[Sony FE PZ 16-35mm f/4 G](#) Lens (\$1098)

This combination makes it the lightest full frame mirrorless wide angle camera that is compact and perfect for travelling.

**Microphone:**

[Audio-Technica BP4025](#) Stereo Mic (\$649)

**XLR Audio Adapter:**

[Sony XLR-K3M](#) XLR Audio Adapter Kit (\$548)

As club members we are fortunate to have access to Mike Ware's LMC showroom in Scottsdale and Paul Henningsen's LMC showroom in Tempe along with John Aker's showroom at Cinematic Home A/V. These are the places to experience the pinnacle of audio and video technology.

Of all the audio events in the past, this one was the most memorable and educational. We got to experience what is possible in building a \$2M system comprising the best of dCS, Dan D'Agostino and Wilson Audio.

After our ears got trained on this reference sound, we got to compare the sonic sacrifices one encounters as you go down the product line. The individual sweet spot will be dictated by ones budget.

While the WAMM system was an absolute knockout in terms of raw performance, the XVX system followed very close at a fraction of the cost. The latter will emerge as the real world winner.

## 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>

Cinematic Home AV <https://www.cinematichomeav.com/>

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

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

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

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

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

### Vinyl/CDs:

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

They also sell audio equipment per the store's website.

Zia Records <https://www.ziarecords.com/> Zia has several stores throughout The Valley.

Stinkweeds <https://www.stinkweeds.com/>

**Repair Work:** The editor recently contacted these repair providers to confirm they are still in business. As of the newsletter's publication, he has not heard back from all the companies.

James Koch - confirmed James is still in business

[james@highendrepair.com](mailto:james@highendrepair.com)

480-398-7362

Audio Doctor - active website

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

602-741-0730

Jeff's Professional Audio Repair [602-274-0794](tel:602-274-0794) - Also, Car Stereo work was emailed on 9/9/24 [jparepair@yahoo.com](mailto:jparepair@yahoo.com)

Re-foaming Speaker Surround Service:  
Michael Mitchell 480-749-7003  
[mmiller43228@yahoo.com](mailto:mmiller43228@yahoo.com) emailed on 9/9/24

Turntable Set-up and record cleaning:  
Richard Jensen confirmed still in business  
[602 717 2399](tel:6027172399) | [worksbau@gmail.com](mailto:worksbau@gmail.com)