



Cain & Cain Abby loudspeakers (borrowed from Ted Smith) driven by René Jaeger's new hybrid amplifier.

July 14th Meeting Recap by Terry Olson

This month's meeting was used to demonstrate several mid to high-efficiency "full-range" speakers. The whole idea of using higher efficiency speakers is sometimes confusing to people that aren't familiar with this genre of audio. Too often, it's assumed that the advocates of this approach belong to some sort of cult, or perhaps, can't afford better speakers. However, the main arguments in favor of these seemingly simple designs, is that often the first watt of an amplifier provides the cleanest, least distorted, output possible. This is especially evident in Single Ended Triode (SET) amplifiers, which

are claimed to possess the sweetest, full-bodied sound of any amplifier. These claims might be deemed a rather self-serving opinion, if it wasn't also shared by such legendary designers as Nelson Pass. The latest designs that Pass has been involved in have been solid state adaptations of Single Ended (Class-A) tube circuits, utilizing very little (or no) negative feed-back. The necessity to have efficient speakers is predicated on the fact that many of the best-sounding amplifiers are also relatively modest in their total output.

The first speakers that we listened to were a pair of Cain & Cain ("Abby")

speakers. These speakers looked great, featuring the level of craftsmanship and finish that the late Terry Cain put into every speaker that he built. The Abby, is basically a "Voigt Pipe". Paul Voigt designed, in the 1930s, what is often termed a Tapered Quarter Wave Tube (TQWT). Far from being simple, a TQWT is an amalgam of complex physics which include Quarter Wave Helmholtz resonator, base reflex and horn-loading. It has only been in recent years that the ability to successfully model TQWT enclosures has been possible, due to the mathematical models of Augsberger and King.



Howard Grim's high efficiency folded horn design.

The Abby featured a Fostex-126, which is basically a four-inch, full-range driver. The sound of the Abby's was very pleasant, polite and allowed the music to be presented without any trace of distortion caused by a crossover.

After a brief intermission, Howard Grim hooked up his self-designed horn speakers. This design is quite unusual and as far as I've been able to determine, constitutes a totally unique approach. Howard was able to figure out a way to mechanically scale a Hyperbolic horn flare to accommodate different sizes of drivers. Just as the ancient Greeks were able to solve problems, that are today usually solved with algebra, this gives added meaning to the old adage of there being "more than one way to skin a cat". A couple of interesting features that Howard has incorporated into his design is the use of a passive radiator on the back of the compression chamber, as well as the ability to use the speaker in a side-firing or down-firing configuration. This allows

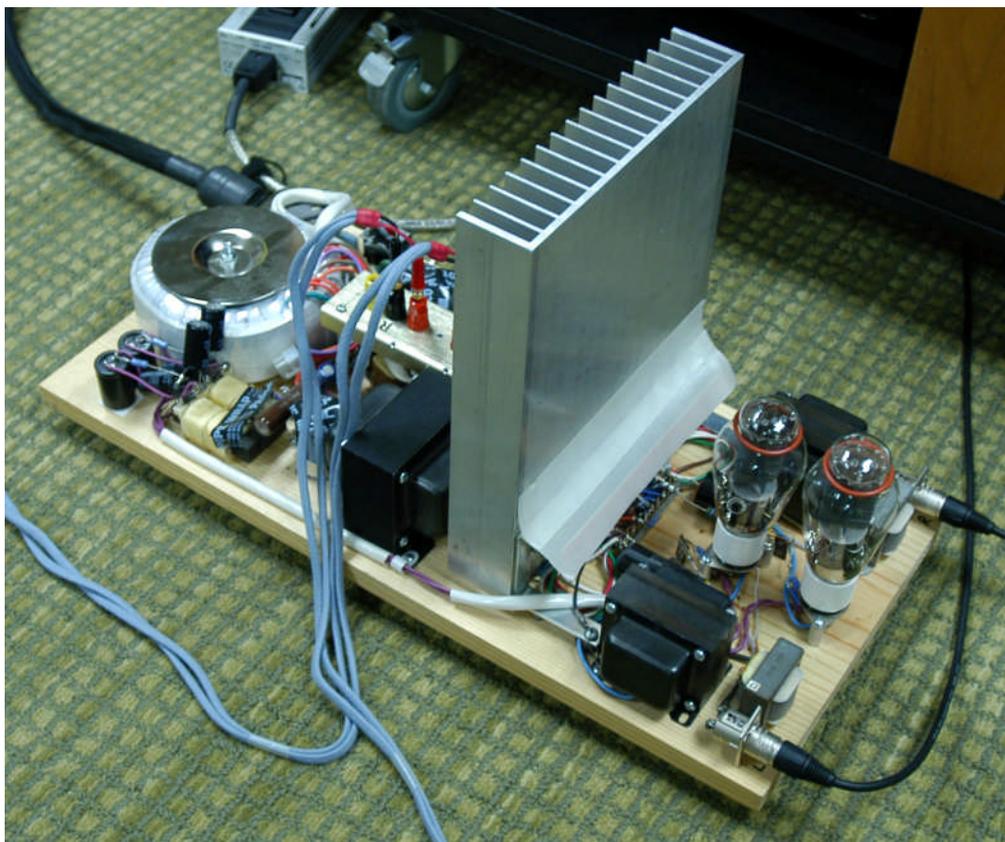
for the ability to use this design in a variety of settings, from a fairly small room to a larger room. We actually experimented with both arrangements and I believe that most of the members preferred the down-firing option. Howard had selected a Fostex eight inch driver that has a sensitivity of around 96dB per watt. The sound of Howard's speakers was quite nice, possessing the dynamics, drive, and impact, that are often associated with larger single-driver horn speakers. During the demo, they were paired to René Yeager's latest amplifier design. This proved to be an absolutely splendid companion for Howard's speakers.

Finally, Clark Blumenstein of Blumenstein Ultra-Fi was introduced. Clark had brought, not only his "Naga" speakers, but powered subwoofers and a wonderful system based primarily of Bottlehead tube gear. The Naga's utilize a Fostex three inch driver along with a cabinet constructed out of Bamboo plywood, which is not only quite attractive, but is claimed to render a sonic advan-

tage. The narrow cabinets (3.5 inches wide) have been heavily influenced by the back loaded horn designs of Japan's Tetsuo Nagaoka. The Naga's design allows the back-wave to be fed into an amazing twelve-foot-long folded channel for a smooth frequency response of 50 Hz to 35 kHz! Clark's pair of powered subwoofers are used to supplement the bass duties and allow for even higher sound-pressure levels. I believe that this is very close to an ideal solution that has gained a great deal of favor among speaker designers in recent years. You may remember that Bud Purvine's system also utilized subwoofers to complement his EnABL'd Fonken speakers, which also yielded excellent results.

Blumenstein Ultra-Fi also builds speakers that utilize the highly-regarded Altec/GPA 212 8A drivers as well as the fabulous (and very expensive) Festrex drivers. All in all, it was an instructive and extremely enjoyable evening.

René Yeager's latest hybrid amplifier design. Tube input/solid state output, that's why you don't normally see huge heat sinks in a tube design. Excellent sound!



Clark Blumenstein from Ultra-Fi describes his Naga single driver loudspeaker, new subwoofer and his custom electronics.

President's Message by John Stone

Despite the new wonders of computers, hi-rez audio, and other technologies to enhance our listening experience, there lurks within all of us, those dirty little audio vices we sometimes indulge ourselves in. When we're feeling carefree and cavalier, we may allow others a glimpse at these "foibles", while most times we are alone in the privacy of our listening rooms, late at night or when the spousal unit is away. Of course what I'm talking about, are the bad recordings and musical misfits that inhabit our music collections.

Certain members of our club, you know who you are, have been known to have an unnatural fondness for zydeco. Other glimpses of foolishness are aired at the annual Christmas party where novelty tracks are brought out for everyone to groan or laugh at. But the real issue here are those decidedly low-rez, scratchy, and/or badly recorded gems that we listen to again and again over the years.

We all have systems that are capable of playing beautiful music, and yet we retain a certain fondness for certain ugly ducklings, that keeps them in our record bins and CD racks. Ok, I admit that I'm no better than anyone else in this department. Case in point: I have two digital recordings of The Who's Live at Leeds. I used to own the better-sounding vinyl, but it was loaned to someone years ago and you know how that goes. When I play this recording, my wife abruptly leaves the room requesting I turn the volume down. She

is not a Who fan in general, and particularly dislikes Townshend's grungy guitar and Daltry's gravelly voice on this album. I enjoy the raw power and incredible energy that the group brings to this performance. Rock and Roll is frequently not clean and tidy. That's more than OK with me, at least some of the time. Don't get me wrong, I thoroughly enjoy offerings by Reference Recordings, FIM, and Chesky for all of their virtues, but some of their lowly second cousins from the wrong side of the tracks also have a home in my collection.

While bad recordings of great performances are common in rock music, they can be found in any genre. Many older recordings are flawed by today's standards merely because of the state of technology at the time of their issue. The first time I heard a recording of a 1950's Maria Callas performance of the aria Casta Diva (from the Bellini opera Norma) it was in an untreated, echo chamber of a room at a new audio dealer. Speakers were mediocre, room was horrible, the record was noisy, and I wasn't anywhere near the sweet spot. None of this mattered. The performance shined through the grit and grime of time and old technology.

Almost as interesting is that some "bad" performances are good, and some "bad" performances are just bad, even performances by the same artist. Case in point: the 2010 release of the Jimi Hendrix Valley of Neptune album. After listening to this CD, I think there's a reason it was released long

after the artist's death. This studio (CD) recording is, in my opinion, poorly recorded and frankly boring. On the other hand, a copy of Hendrix BBC sessions recorded off the radio many years ago, despite its limitations, has me playing air guitar in that London studio. Hard to explain, but you've all been there, so I know you get it. One last confession, since moving to Seattle, my fondness for grunge led me to Tacoma's legendary garage rock band The Sonics. If Patricia Barber is at one end of the audiophile spectrum, The Sonics are probably at the other. How is it that I like them both?

I don't mind sharing some of my guilty pleasures with you, my fellow audiophiles, because I KNOW that, even though you might not share my fondness for Casta Diva or The Who, more than a few of your guilty pleasures would please my ears. If any of you care to share, our next newsletter awaits. But hey, can we lay off the zydeco for at least awhile?

SPECIAL ELECTION NOTICE

Our elected Treasurer, Willy Chang, can't participate in future Executive Committee meetings and is stepping down from the office. We will have a special election at the August 11 meeting. If you would like to be involved in the management of the club, please consider running for the office.

DIY Meet August 27th by Terry Olson

The PNWAS DIY meet is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, August 27th. The club has sponsored "The Puget Sound! DIY Contest" on alternate years with the DIY meet. Basically, this meet is a casual, low-key event that is reminiscent of the "Show-and-Tell" days that we used to have in school. The participants bring various projects that they have built, to demo

and to talk about the various aspects and challenges that went into their projects. These can range from speakers, music servers, preamps, amplifiers, DACs, and even hand-built turntables and tone-arms. Many of the projects show a highly developed level of both craftsmanship and ingenuity. Other than the start time, the actual schedule is...well actually, there is no schedule.

The participants will be using their gear in combination with other participant's projects. We will have display tables and a couple of listening rooms for the Audio Mix and Match sessions.

These events are usually quite interesting and just a lot of relaxed fun.

Meeting at Mike Lavigne's August 11th by John Stone



Our August 11th meeting will be a very special event that will take place in North Bend, WA. Mike Lavigne will be hosting the meeting in his state of the art listening room. This year's event will showcase Mike's new Wave Kinetics NVS turntable (<http://wavekinetics.com/nvs.html>). The turntable will sport the Talea 2 tonearm (<http://www.durand-tonearms.com/Specifications/specifications.html>) with one of several top-shelf cartridges on

hand. Mike's magnificent new turntable replaces the wonderful Rockport Serius III that Mike had last year. Mike will also be rolling the latest Tape Project and other rare offerings on his Studer ¼" A820 reel to reel. Recently added is a ½" A820, and the Ampex ATR-102 (not played at last year's meeting), both of which will be played too.

Also; the Equi=tech 10WQ (10kva) isolation transformer that was waiting for installation at the time of last year's meeting is now installed.

But wait, there's more. In case you thought that digital was being ignored, Mike will also have a new level of hirez digital he will play; 24/384kHz PCM, regular DSD and 6.1 MHz DSD (2XdSD) thru USB from a Mac Mini controlled by an i-Pad. This is possible with a software upgrade to Mike's Playback Design MPS-5. Jonathan Tinn from Playback Designs will also be in attendance to answer any questions that you may have.

Of course, as Mike will tell you, the room's THE thing. Professionally designed and tweaked by Mike, the room sounds great and looks great

too. DarTZeel amplification, Evolution Acoustics MM3 speakers, huge music collection...the list is long and distinguished.

Since last year's meeting there have been a few significant changes in room performance that will be discussed.

To facilitate planning for this event, all members must RSVP. Instructions on how to RSVP and will be contained in a later email. Directions will be provided to members who RSVP. Remember, do NOT go to the regular meeting place on Mercer Island on August 11th. We'll see you in North Bend.

For those who care to arrive early, music will begin around 6pm. And particularly if you want to listen to media you bring, try to be there early, as we will have mostly planned choices during the meeting time. The meeting will start at our regular time of 7:30pm, but give yourself plenty of travel time; you won't want to miss a minute of the music.

Drinks and snacks will be provided.

Equipment Proposal Vote by John Stone

Armed with a healthy treasury and "burdened" with some aging equipment, the club's Executive Committee, composed of elected officers and committee members, has recommended that some of our equipment be upgraded and sold. Last month, we were able to find a buyer for the club's older and no-longer-used Conrad Johnson PV-12 preamp. At the August meeting, general membership will be voting on two proposals to upgrade equipment.

Proposal 1. New Digital Playback

To allot \$2000 for the purchase of a new digital playback system. There are

a number of options in this area, including standalone disc players with USB input (Example: Oppo BDP-95), Music Players (Example: Bryston BDP-1; DAC also required), and full-function computer/server (many options; DAC also required). All of these options have their own advantages and disadvantages. If approved, the Executive Committee will oversee a search/evaluation effort which will result in a specific equipment proposal. For those of you interested in participating in this project, or in the evaluation/selection of other pieces of gear for the club, please speak to one of the club's officers or send me an email

(john@audiosociety.org).

Once a new digital playback system is chosen, it will likely be the end of the road for the club's excellent-sounding, but slow-loading, Sony SCD-777es CD/SACD player.

Proposal 2. Speaker Upgrade

To upgrade the club's existing Genesis G7.1f loudspeakers to the latest version G7.2f for \$1200. This includes replacing the tweeters and widwoofers with the latest units. This is a significant improvement.

The DarkField by Joe Pittman

Some believe that simply raising cables above the floor will improve sound quality and I am one of them. The idea is that cables on the floor or carpeting are affected by electrostatic fields and vibration. The negative effects are a reduction in clarity or masking of detail. This can be especially noticeable in the winter when the air is dry and increases electrostatic field. Rub your feet on the floor and touch a door knob... zap!

In my previous life as an Industrial Engineering consultant, I've designed many industrial facilities. They included semi-conductor manufacturing and clean rooms which required ESD (electrostatic discharge) certification; the reduction of dangerous electrostatic discharges which can damage sensitive solid state devices. Usually the entire floor was designed to prevent and dissipate the floors electrostatic field. This usually involved the installation of special floor tiles that were grounded at many points, minimizing the distance/

size of fields relative to the ground point. The tiles were also coated on a frequent basis with a special conductive wax.

Over the years I have experimented with many cable elevator designs which were made from, ceramic, wood, plastic, brass, silk, and ERS. NONE of my designs were very effective. More of a hassle than a practical improvement.

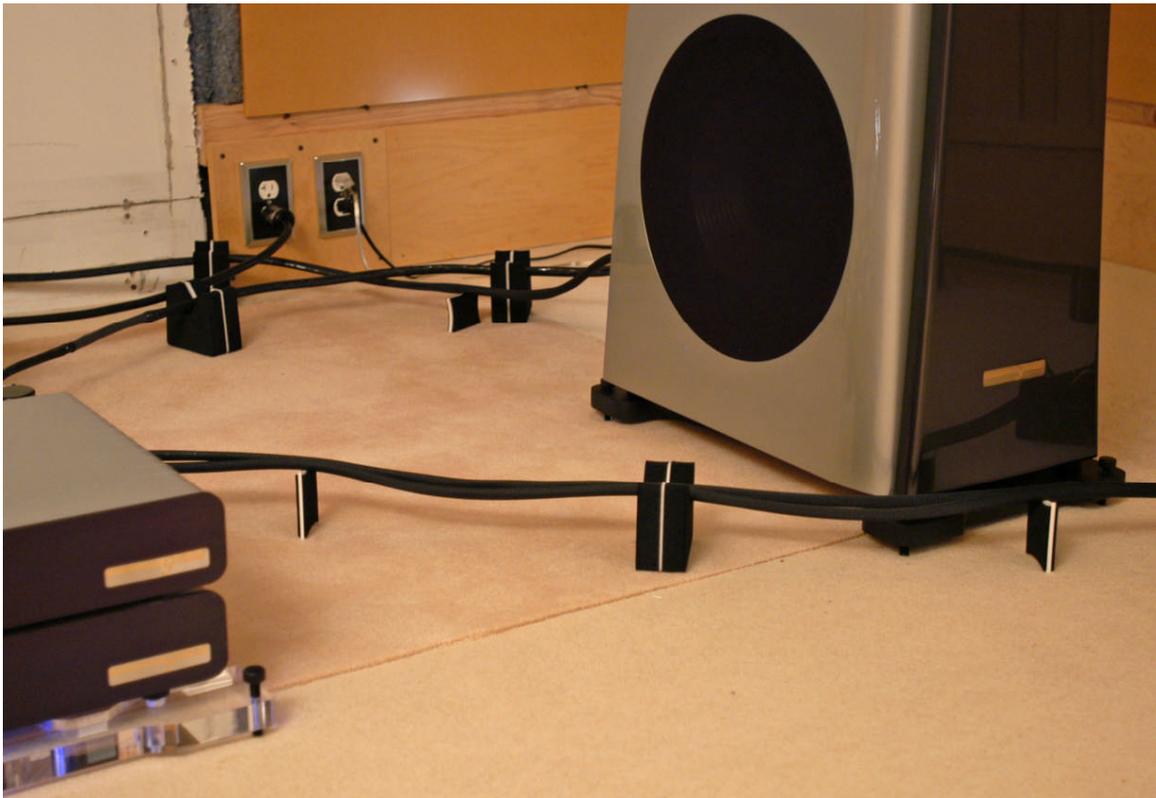
Which brings me to Shunyata's DarkField Cable Elevator. When these came out, I read that what distinguishes these cable elevators from all the others is a unique design feature. All other cable elevators are designed to be insulators (like all of my previous designs). But what happens is that the elevated cables, being insulated from the floor, can accumulate a large electrostatic field. But with no way to dissipate the field, the built-up static field adversely impacts sound quality, probably making the sound worse. Cable elevators that only insulate aren't effective and possibly counterproductive in my opinion.

The unique and patented approach of the DarkField elevators is to neutralize the static field by the special foam layers utilized in its construction. When I think about it, this is the design goal of special ESD floors. Good science.

I found the installation of these in two of my reference systems to be a noticeable improvement. Shunyata also recommended their Mini cable elevators also. The Mini elevators can be used in place of the more expensive elevator when used between the larger elevators. The Mini elevators can also be used between cables behind equipment racks for similar effect I am told. I plan to get more of the Mini's to try this out.

Meanwhile, the DarkField cableelevators are inexpensive, about \$300 for a set of 12 and the Mini's are \$100 for a set of 12.

Ps: I don't sell these so you should be able to get them from your local Shunyata dealer or online from e-tailers like Music Direct.



Coming Attractions

August 11 PNWAS Meeting
Road Trip to Mike Lavigne's.

August 27 DIY MEET
Our biennial DIY Meet on Saturday.
Everyone is welcome!

September 8 PNWAS Meeting
Music only. Everybody bring their
own music and say a few words
about it.

October 13 PNWAS Meeting
Amplifier comparisons.



October 14-16 RMAF 2011
Hi Ho Hi Ho it's off to Denver we go!

November 10 PNWAS Meeting
It's dark outside, time for our annual
home theater event. This time it is a
road trip to Madrona Digital. They
will host the meeting in their new,
state of the art theater.

December 15 PNWAS Meeting
Annual Christmas music competi-
tion.

January 12 PNWAS Meeting
Comparison of two digital playback
units. Our first shoot-out for select-
ing our new system.

February 15 PNWAS Meeting
Comparison of two digital playback
units. Our second, and last shoot-
out for final selection.

Local Music



Tuesday August 9th 7.30 pm. We are delighted to be pre-
sented The Greg Williamson Quartet featuring Greg on
Drums, Alex Nikolaev on Sax, John Hansen on the Steinway,
Jon Hamar on Bass, with Guest Vocalist Kelly Eisenhour
making her debut at the Club.

Venue for our concerts Sherman Clay 1000 Bellevue Way.
Tickets \$13 Adults, Students 18 and under \$8.
Bring your CD's for exchange, or buy from the box @\$5.
Enquiries: 425-828-9104 or 425-454-0633.
Tickets: \$13 Adults, Students 18 and under \$8.
Everyone is welcome. Please join us.

Best regards,
Cooksie Kramer

Contact Us:
Lionel Kramer, 10135 NE 64th Str, Kirkland, WA 98033
lionel.kramer@comcast.net
See www.eastsidejazzclub.com



Kelly Eisenhour

Classified Ads

RPG Skyline diffuser approx
2'x2'x7", 20 each available in excel-
lent condition (no damage) and are
sold in pairs only. Retail price is
\$419 per pair plus \$40 shipping,
street prices as low as \$350/pair
including shipping. My sell price is
\$150 per pair, but you must pick-up
at my place. I don't want to ship
them. If you are interested in all 20,
total price would be \$1200. Contact
Joe Pittman, 206-878-3833 or email
joe@kosmic.us



Bruce Brown has two amplifier
stands available. He used them with
his Pass Labs amps and the stands
are approximately 19" x 20". Please
contact Bruce if you are interested.
His email is:
pugetsoundstudios@yahoo.com

Visitors Welcome!

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

PNWAS Mission Statement

- ◆ To bring people with a common interest in 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 audio-phililes and exchanging information on musical recordings and audio equipment.
2. Demonstrate and compare 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 member-

ship deems appropriate.

Club Website

www.audiosociety.org

E-mail

info@audiosociety.org

US Mail

Pacific Northwest Audio Society, PO Box 435, Mercer Island, WA 98040

Annual Dues

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

Elected Officers

President: John Stone

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Vice-President: Darin Forkenbrock

forkenbrock@gmail.com

Secretary/Treasurer: Willy Chang

chang98@comcast.net

Committee Chairs

Editor: Joe Pittman

joe@kosmic.us

Equipment: Terry Olson

CornyGuy@aol.com

Music: Vacant– Volunteers?

Refreshment: Vacant– Volunteers?

Editorial

Editorial submissions are welcome.

Content must be audio-related or of general interest to the club in plain text or Word document format without automation (macros and scripts). 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.

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**Pacific Northwest
Audio Society**

Bringing Audio Enthusiasts Together Since 1978

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