



*I Don't
Drive
Stock*

photos by Joe Pittman

January 12th Meeting Recap by John Stone

The January meeting demo'd two new disc players, new cabling, a new server, a new DAC, a new equipment stand, and of course, some new hi-rez music. How's that for kicking off the New Year. Really folks, besides providing high quality entertainment, the club is in the process of significantly upgrading its equipment to provide system flexibility and overall better sound. While all of the equipment used, save the speakers and amp, was on loan, if you liked what you heard, it could become a permanent fixture in our future meetings.

First Comparison: Stock Oppo BDP-95 versus Exemplar-Modified Oppo BDP-95 (Expo 95). Music Streaming from USB Thumb drives:

Track	Title	Artist	Album	Format
1	"Even Evans"	Allen Smith Quartet	BluePort Jazz Sampler	16/44.1 flac file
2	"Lovin' In My Baby's Eyes"	Eric Bibb	Friends	16/44.1 flac file
3	"Mozart: Piano Concerto #21 in C K.467 "finale"	Eugene Istomin (piano) / Seattle Symphony Orchestra	HRx Sampler 2011	24/176.4 wav file
4	"That's Right"	Jesse Cook	Vertigo	16/44.1 flac file
5	"You're Driving Me Crazy / Moten Swing"	Dick Hyman and Swing All-Stars	HRx Sampler 2011	24/176.4 wav file
6	"C Jam Blues"	Duke Ellington	Blues in Orbit	SACD

The club's speakers and integrated amp were used. All components were connected to the club's IsoTek SIGMAS power conditioner. Relatively inexpensive interconnects and power cords fabricated by Joe Pittman using Belden wire and OYAIDE plugs were used to connect the stock Oppo. Relatively expensive interconnects and power cords were used to connect the Expo 95. The difference in cabling was a deliberate attempt to magnify potential differences between the two Oppo players.

Each track was played in its entirety, with Joe repeatedly switching back and forth between players using the source switch on the club's integrated amp. Members were only aware that Player #1 or #2 was playing at any given time. After all of the tracks were played, members were asked to vote on which player they preferred. Some members had a preference (either #1 or #2) and some members did not have a preference. All agreed that whatever differences were present, were very subtle.

During this comparison, I flip-flopped preferences. I started out preferring #1, but as time went on, I then began to prefer #2, and continued to prefer #2 for the duration of the comparison. I thought that both players were very close in their presentation.

When Joe revealed the identity of each player, I was surprised to learn that I actually preferred the less-expensive

player (the stock Oppo). My surprise was based in part on my previous listening experience at Joe's place, where members of the Executive Committee had a meeting rehearsal and planning session. At this earlier session, with a completely different playback chain, in a much smaller room, I preferred the Expo 95. In the end, both players provided excellent sound.

I previously mentioned the cables that were used. Our deliberate attempt to bias the competition in favor of the more-expensive player was largely ineffective. This speaks well of both the native abilities of the stock Oppo, as well as to the high value proposition of the less expensive cables. Also being used for this meeting was a custom acrylic stereo stand manufactured and sold by Joe (www.kosmic.us/kosmic-equipment-stand.html). Both the stand and the cables, not to mention both players, contributed to the excellent sound enjoyed by all who attended.

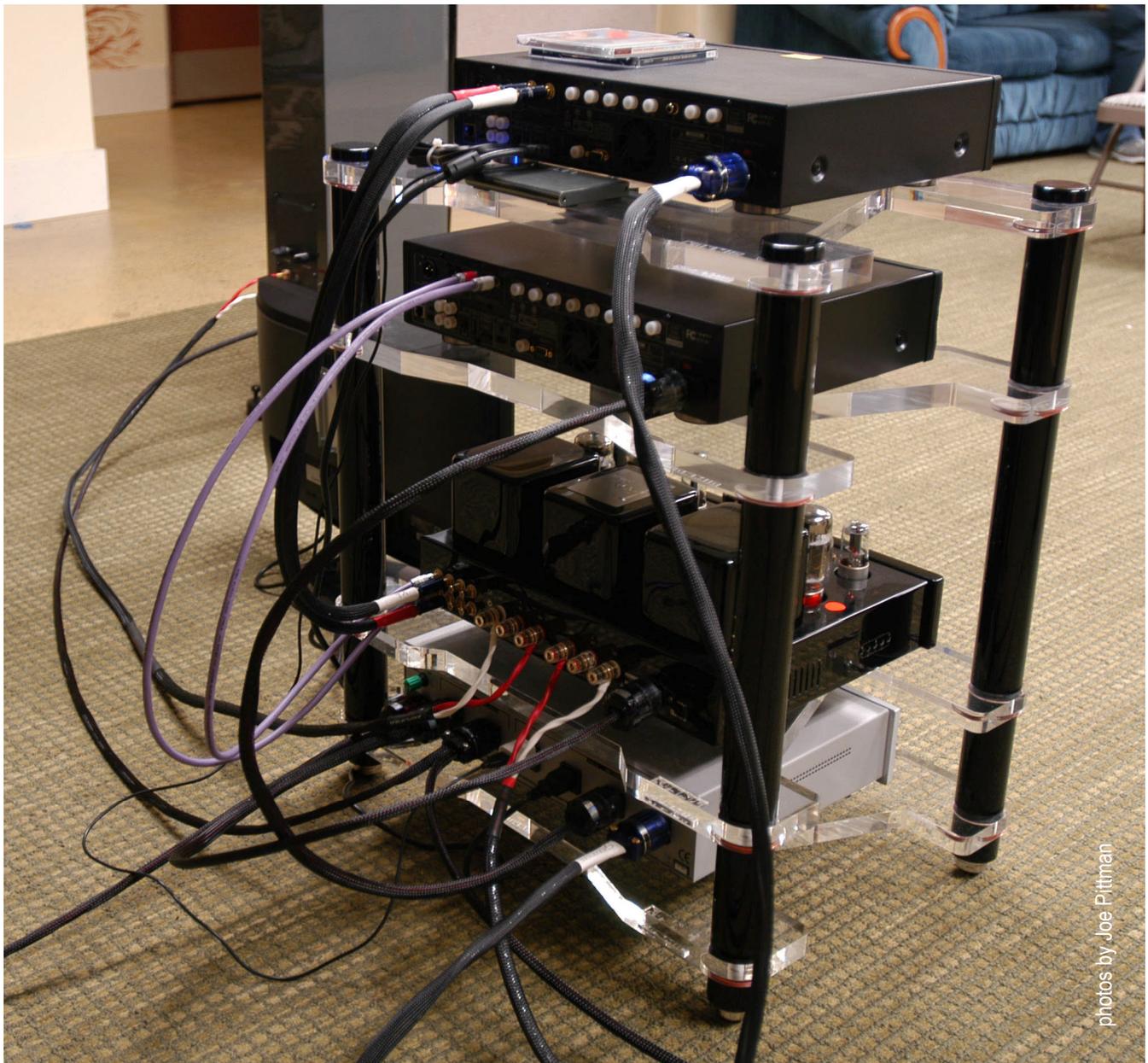
For the Second Comparison after the break, switching limitations prevented us from doing a blind comparison of these two playback systems, so we listened to each track in its entirety on one player before switching to the other. In what was really not much of a competition, the Eximus DP1 DAC, sourced from the Absolute Fidelity server, was a much more refined and musical playback system than was the stock Oppo. Where the Oppo is the

Swiss army knife and value leader of the group, able to play every format, on disc or music file (as well provide video), there is a case to be made for a dedicated music server and a separate high-quality DAC for playback of all but SACD. The DAC/server combination is more expensive, and involves more setup complexity, but, based on what we heard in January, is more musically rewarding.

Special thanks to Joe Pittman for supplying the Server/DAC, all of the cabling, and the gorgeous-looking and great sounding equipment stand. Thanks also go out to members Torben Goodhope and Jerry Pomeroy for supplying the stock Oppo BDP-95 and the Exemplar 95 respectively.

Second Comparison: Stock Oppo BDP-95 versus Absolute Fidelity Server (Generation 6)/Foobar2000/USB interface/April Music Eximus DP1 DAC. Music streaming from eSATA Solid State Drive to the Oppo and from a SD Card on the Server to the DP1. (Music files provided by Bruce Brown; all tracks available or available soon (Harvest) from HD Tracks)

Track	Title	Artist	Album	Format
1	"Susie Q"	Creedence Clearwater Revival	Chronicle: 20 Greatest Hits	24/96 wav file
2	"Both Sides Now"	Joni Mitchell	Both Sides Now	24/96 wav file
3	"Old Man"	Neil Young	Harvest	24/192 wav file



photos by Joe Pittman

Joe Pittman Comments:
 Only an audiophile would show a picture of equipment cables. But for those who are interested, much of the ability of the system is limited by the cabling and equipment stand. In most systems in my opinion, the interface cables (component interconnects, speaker cables and power cables) and the equipment stand are bottlenecks to performance. The potential of the system is not realized due to the bottlenecks. I

supplied all of the cables for the demonstration, and all of them were selected to provide the best performance for the price. Following is a summary of the cable used for the stock Oppo BDP-95:

- ◆ Wall outlet-to-IsoTek Sigmas power filter was my KOSMIC power cable using Belden cable 3m to 20 amp IEC,
- ◆ Sigmas-to-Genesis G7.1f ServoSub amps was my KOSMIC custom power cable using one Furutech Rhodium plug to two 2m Belden cables
- ◆ Sigmas-to-Genesis I60 and BDP-95 were my KOSMIC power cable using Belden cable
- ◆ Interconnect from BDP-95-to-I60 was the Oyaide PA-02 TR 1m (purple cable)
- ◆ Speaker cables were the latest generation Absolute Fidelity Loudspeaker Interface Cables 2m (\$3,000 MSRP)

February 9th Meeting Announcement

by John Stone

Our February meeting is a very special event which will feature presentations and discussion with two Pacific Northwest audio manufacturers. Coming up from Amboy (Vancouver) WA, **Dan Wright**, from ModWright Instruments, will be bringing his KWI 200 integrated amp with integral DAC, LS 100 tube linestage (also with DAC), a KWA 150SE SS Power amp (a very special piece - ed), and likely a tube-modified Oppo BDP-95.

From Ferndale (Bellingham) WA, **Lou Hinkley** from Daedalus Audio, will be bringing his Athena speakers. These speakers are characterized by their ability to remain clear as well as natural, with a wide range of music and at all volume levels. In addition, their high (96 db) efficiency makes them amp-friendly, and it doesn't hurt that they're beautiful to look at. Both manufacturers encourage members to bring their favorite demo discs to the meeting. These same manufacturers partnered at the 2011 Rocky Mountain Audio Festival to produce great music for visitors to their rooms.



Coming Attractions

February 9 PNWAS Meeting

Dan Wright from ModWright will demonstrate his latest electronics.

March 8 PNWAS Meeting

Steve McCormack from SMC Audio will demonstrate his new VRE-1c preamp.

April 12 PNWAS Meeting

Kara Chaffee with DeHavilland from Vancouver, WA will demonstrate her 50A triode push-pull amps.

March 8th Meeting Topic by Gary Koh

Many members still remember the magical evening of music we had more than two years ago when Steve McCormack presented his Virtual Reality Engine-1 preamp to the club and pretty much blew everyone away. By the end of the meeting, some members were proposing to spend entire treasury of the club to buy the VRE-1 from Steve! Good thing that cooler

heads prevailed..... but we still long for that magical moment again.

Here's the chance. Steve is bringing his latest version, the VRE-1C for yet another presentation. This is the first time ever that a remote-controlled version of a preamp sounds better than the manual version using a stepped, discrete-resistor attenuator. Steve will tell

us how he managed to do it at the March 8th meeting.

In case you don't know who Steve McCormack is, he was the founder of McCormack Audio (since sold to Conrad Johnson), recorded and engineered some of the most sought after Direct Disc LPs ever made with M&K Real Time, founded the Mod Squad, and invented Tiptoes.

NEWS by Joe Pittman

[Digital music revenue up in 2011, while overall sales decline](#)

The International Federation for the Phonographic Industry reports that worldwide sales of music declined 3% in 2011, to \$16.2 billion from 2010's \$16.7 billion. Digital music revenue, however, posted an 8% gain last year, to \$5.2 billion. Music industry executives expressed optimism about the future of selling music, while still warning about the dangers of piracy.

Classified Ads

Plinius SA-201 power amplifier. Class AB, 225 watts/channel into 8 ohms; 1½ years old; silver chassis; original boxes, manual and Plinius gloves; has dual speaker posts for bi-wiring; includes 6 Hi-Fi Tuning Fuses installed – a \$280 value; shipping weight 75 lbs. See

dagogo.com review by Ed Momkus in the Sept. 2008 issue. New retail \$6495, asking \$3,200. Contact Ed at 425 829-1313.

Disclaimer: The Pacific Northwest Audio Society does not endorse nor is liable for any advertisement in any way. Everyone is cautioned to proceed at their own risk.

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-philes 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

John.W.Stone4@boeing.com

Vice-President: Darin Forkenbrock

forkenbrock@gmail.com

Secretary/Treasurer: Bruce Brown

pugetsoundstudios@yahoo.com

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.

Disclaimer

Opinions in this Audioletter are those of their authors; the Pacific Northwest Audio Society itself does not endorse or criticize products. Copyright 2011 by the Pacific Northwest Audio Society except as noted; all rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without the written permission of the

**Pacific Northwest
Audio Society**

Bringing Audio Enthusiasts Together Since 1978

PO Box 435, Mercer Island, WA 98040