Pacific Northwest Audio Society

Bringing Audio Enthusiasts Together Since 1978

Audioletter



Last meeting

Gary Koh donated a used Isotek Sigma to the club, so we were anticipating great sounds.

We hadn't used the club system for several months and when we fired up the system, it just didn't sound good. There was a lack of focus and no center image, hallmarks of a phase problem. The problem existed when sourced from the TT or the SACD player. Gary and I went over the system looking for incorrect wiring and couldn't find any. One of the speaker ing. The speakers tested out fine at the drivers had been replaced since the last meeting and we thought possibly the driver had been wired incorrectly. This didn't seem to make sense as there are two midrange/bass drivers in each cabinet. They would have cancelled each

other in front of the speaker. We turned off the subwoofer and verified that wasn't the problem. Could it be a tube in the I-60? When we were tearing down the system, we changed the speaker cables and power source from the Sigmas back to the Mini Sub.

We were unable to find the problem that evening. Gary took the speakers back to Genesis for testing, I took the I60 home for comparison and Joe took home the TT for a bit of tweak-Genesis warehouse. I took the I-60 home and it seemed to work fine untill I took it to Genesis to drive the clubs speakers. To make a long story short, Gary found an intermittent problem in the amp and replaced the components in the feedback

By Jerry Pomeroy

circuit. The bias voltage is stable now and it sounds really good. It looks like the problem has been resolved. Gary will burn in the I-60 and check the bias again. I regret we spent the evening trying to figure out what was wrong rather than enjoy music.

Some of the music that was played throughout the meeting:

Joe Cocker LP

Jack Johnson Fall Line from the On And On LP

Take five from FIM Super Sounds II CD

Mozart Sinfonia K364 from FIM SSII

"Black Cat CD" Jun Fukamachi, At Steinway (Take 2) FIM/LIM DXD 038

As I grew up my mother taught piano lessons in the house. I got used to hearing a piano up close on a carpeted floor. Consequently I prefer piano recordings that reflect an up close, in your face piano rather than preserving the ambiance of the hall. If you can't handle a big piano you may not like the sound of this disc, if you want to hear the depth and blended sound of a Steinway D Concert Grand this is about as good as it gets on a CD.

This Disc is an Audiophile's dream; the combination of an excellent performance, a phenomenal recording on a high quality disc, this is an excellent execution representing the best CD can be. Hang on because it can get better, it's hard to believe but it does. The 5 songs on this CD were only released on Direct 2 Disc vinyl; there are no tapes to make a CD from. To the general public and most audiophiles this music was un-obtainable. Winston Ma got permission to record the LPs and release the music on high quality CD resolving that issue. The CD sounds so good it is now my reference piano recording, it replaced the recording Dick Hyman Plays Duke Ellington, Reference Recordings RR -50DCD. I will always love the RR as Bosendorfer is my favorite sounding piano.

The Vinyl recording took place at Mike Lavigne's "Barn" in North Bend approximately 26 miles east of Seattle. Unlike LA in Seattle 26 miles puts you far away from city noise, busses and trucks. Any airplanes that fly over are so high they are unheard and noticed less than bobcats roaming the driveway. Could there be a better place for a Rockport Sirius III? The TT is in good company surrounded by some of the best equipment ever collected inside one of the best listening

rooms. May 25, 2008 the room was populated with the who's who of audio (The Dream Team); Recording Engineers Bruce Brown of Puget Sound Studios and John Greenham of John Greenham mastering. Tim Marutani listed as a consultant along with Mike Lavigne and his mentor Winston Ma of First Impressions Music. You can find out more about these people by reading the notes inside the CD.



There are only 5 songs on the album but each is repeated. The odd number tracks; 1, 3, 5, 7 & 9 were recorded using a Van den Hul Colibri XC-HO cartridge, tracks 2, 4, 6, 8 & 10 were recorded utilizing a FIM Black Ebony cartridge. I always wondered how some reviewers could record a cartridge and compare it later, I could tell differences between these. I preferred the sound of the FIM cartridge on my system. The FIM has a fuller bass and seemed to track deeper in the groove so there was less surface noise from the LP. The cartridges sound different and some people will prefer the Colibri. The cool thing about this comparison is I can compare the two cartridges in my house and I can't afford either.

The first eight tracks on the CD are from the Soundphile Cutting Series direct disc Jun Fukamachi At Steinway (Take 2). Tracks 1 & 2 Fukamachi presents his version of Chopin: Nocturne in E Flat Major. Tracks 3 & 4 Just Driving You Crazy; is a left hand driving rhythm Tracks 5 & 6 Ran-Man; features Jun

striking the piano strings with a

Tracks 7 & 8 Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only the Piano Player; the "Boogie Woogie" piano style piano seems to be what Jun lives for.

Day Tripper of John Lennon and Paul McCartney fame is performed by the Tokyo Strings Ensemble and constitutes tracks 9 & 10. As a Beatle fan I fell in love with this the first time I heard it. The Super Strings LP is also direct to disc. All the songs on the LP are Beatle songs, why this track was chosen I am not sure, I would like to find a copy of the LP so I can hear all of them.

There is no lack of liner notes in quality or quantity; this is the typical FIM standard. Notes include a page from Winston about his dream of producing this CD and how it came to be. Bruce Brown explains DXD and Mike Lavigne talks about the experience and equipment enabling the extraction of data from the grooves. Specifications of the cartridges, album credits with original jacket notes including explanations of how the microphones were placed in relationship to the Steinway make interesting reading, I almost forgot there are some great photos, take notice of Mike's and of Winston's listening rooms; No doubt these are some of the finest sounding rooms in existence. In short if you don't have the LPs the FIM CD is a must. The performances are excellent, the audio Ouality is mind-boggling and there are no sleeper tracks or tracks you will want to skip on this disc.

I hope Winston has great success with this CD in bringing music to the many who just couldn't enjoy it before because of the limited nature of direct disc. Wouldn't it be great if FIM could secure the rights to make a few more CDs from direct disc LPs. The first that comes to mind is the M&K Realtime For Duke RT-101 another M&K is Earl "Fatha" Hines RT-105 and a classic

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would be Crystal Clear Records Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops plays Capriccio Italien CCS-7003.

If you are familiar with FIM disc you know of the extreme care that is put into these disc Winston is now offering a Ultimate Disc (UD) version and a second master (UDM) of some of his disc in limited quantities if you were at the meeting when Winston Demonstrated these you know how good they sound. Thanks Winston for sharing this music with the masses.

Tech Stuff & Misc info

HDMI 1.4 specifications will be available by the end of June. The digital cable/transmission system standard will transmit up to 4 time the resolution of 1080p, 3D images; both in 1080p and Ethernet sharing from one device to another. The spec also has a micro connector that is half the size of the current connector for use in devices such as camcorders and digital cameras. An environmentally sealed connector for automotive applications will also be added to enable distribution of HD video in cars.

Zillow.com the real estate value website is adding a new feature called "Dueling Digs". The new feature allows you to upload a photo of your home theater, sit back and see how people vote. This may lead to increased property value for people who made the investment into a home theater.

eMusic.com is a subscription music download service. The service has been \$12 a month for up to 30 MP3 songs, that is only 40 cents a song and well below other popular services. The company has reached an agreement with Sony allowing downloads of music from their catalog that is over two years old; includ-

ing Michael Jackson, Bruce Springsteen and Billy Joel. eMusic is also in talks with Warner Music. Expect a price increase as the major labels are picked up.

LP Sales: 2005 & 2006 vinyl sales were dropping. Down. In the year of 2007 vinyl sales were up 36%, 2008 sales were up 89% from the year before. CD sales are down and LP sales are increasing during an economic downturn. Some recent entrees into vinyl sales: Best Buy is selling over 5,000 new LPs titles online (only a few titles in store). Amazon has added a listing for Vinyl under "music"; new and used are available via 3rd party sellers. The top selling LPs in 2008 were: Rainbows (Radiohead-25,800), Abbev Road (Beatles-16.500) and Chinese Democracy (Guns & Roses-13,600)

Samsung Organic Light Emitting Diode (OLED) displays are coming. The company offered no release date (estimated release was 2008) or price for the new technology 14 & 31" screens. Sony is marketing an 11" OLED TV/Display with a resolution of 960x540 (1/4 of a 1080 display); Samsung's 31" will be the first 1080 OLED display. This technology is currently available in some cell phones and cars stereos (smaller displays). The advantage of this technology is one million to one contrast, only 3/8" thick and capable of light levels so high they can be viewed in daylight with viewing angles of 178 degrees.

Audio Aficionado is a new High End Audio/Video forum, visit them at http://www.audioaficionado.org/

Future Club Meetings:

June 11th Tube Rolling: If you have heard of people changing tubes and claiming it transformed the sound. you will be able to compare some of these changes. We will have multiple

I60s biased the same with different tubes in them. Most of the tubes used are readily available (as tubes go) but a couple of 12AX7 in my I60 qualify as tube un-obtainium. Joe Pittman has agreed to bring his RIP-NAS server for easy music comparisons as we change amplifiers and tubes. Don't forget to bring music you want to share with other members, we should be able to play allot this meeting.

July 7th Bruce Brown will talk about building a music server. If there is interest and members are willing to pay for there own servers we may take this subject to the Genesis workbench on a Saturday and build several at one time.

August 13th Turntables: There are several things we can do from listening to different phono stages, comparing mats etc. We will discus this briefly at the upcoming meeting and see what you are interested in doing.

September 10th we will examine tweaks; this always generates some interesting discussions.

Oct 8th we are trying to schedule a famous audio personality to speak at this meeting. The guest speaker might get moved to another month but at least you know the subject for several months ahead.

November 12th is the always-enjoyed video evening. It has taken 3 years but there is finally a good selection of music available on BluRay in resolutions up to 24/192 come and see what is new in at home concerts, don't miss this.

Dec 10th Annual raffle, more info later.

Oppo BDP-83 BluRay Player Review

If you have been reading AVS Forum, Wide Screen Review or any number of Video magazines over the last 3 years, you have probably heard of Oppo. Stereophile did a review on the 970HD DVD player. The \$149 player is very well respected. The company's products have been reviewed by many and have cleaned up in the video product awards for the last 3 years. Oppo fans, like myself, have been awaiting outputs. There are also Ethernet and a value oriented high performance Blu-Ray Player (BDP) since the format came out. After a year, the BDP-83 is available or will be shortly. By signing up on the companies website months ago. I was able to secure a pre-release model for \$500.

If you haven't been watching the developing market for this "new technology" you may not realize that BDPs are available for just under \$200 with a few companies like Denon, Marantz, Pioneer and Sony with players above \$1200. I believe the Goldman BDP is still available for the paltry sum of \$17,000. According to the company website, the MSRP of the Oppo BDP -83 is \$600, however they are marked down \$100 for the prerelease sales. There is some speculation that when it is released, it may be \$499. Oppo markets direct to consumer so the cost of building this player is probably on par with players retailing for 50-100% higher cost sold through dealers. Below are my first impressions of the new Oppo.

I have now purchased and received 4 new Oppo DVD players and this new BDP. The first thing you notice when opening the box is how well the packaging is designed. The player resides in a black carrying case with the company name displayed on the top. The accessories are packaged in a black cardboard box. The manual and a Blu-Ray calibration disc are in a zip-lock bag. The manual is well laid out and does a good job of defining the terms used in the menu. I checked the manual

for any shipping screws or the like that should be removed prior to initial powering of the unit, but there weren't any. I plugged in the player, powered it up, loaded a CD to start burning it in.

The unit comes with analog output jacks for composite and component video, a set of 7.1 channel RCA outputs and a dedicated stereo set of RCA jacks. The player has HDMI, Coax and Toslink digital USB jacks on the back for BD-Live. There is no card slot on the unit nor is there a USB slot on the front. The display and buttons on the front give you all pertinent info and access to operate the unit. The Set up menu is very goodc coupled with an excellent better, but that was over 8 months manual. Terms and features are well described with enough technical info a qualified set up technician looks for. One of the bright spots is the remote control. It is well laid out with several different size buttons allowing access to important fea-BD is available from the RC. The selected format is displayed on the front panel of the player so you can switch audio without having to turn on the player's on-screen display. A bright idea that most manufactures have moved away from is backlighting the remote. Seems the current design thought is package the cheapest remote possible so consumers will be frustrated and buy an aftermarket remote. I was pleased that Oppo is bucking the trend. The remote is so well designed, the only thing I would change would be the addition of a motion sensor so the backlight would turn on when you picked it up instead of after you press a command button.

I consider myself to be an audiophile trained in the dark arts of video imaging, so when I buy a four and three quarter inch disc player, I am concerned about how the audio sounds. I have been buying concert BluRay discs since they started releasing them. Most of them have

high rez 2 channel that was used for a CD. I have found these are generally the best sounding audio tracks on the disc. Rather than use a digital audio processor, I prefer to use the analog output on the player into the pre-amp of my analog 2-channel system. Based on the limited time I have had the Oppo, I found the audio quality of the 24/48 BD tracks ample. I think the CD playback is a bit anemic, but I am comparing it to my Exemplar CD player that is over ten times the cost. Another feature on the Oppo is *Pure Audio*. This shuts off the video circuit and display on the front of the player. Last year I had a pioneer BDP-05 with the Wolfson DAC. I think it sounded ago. The Oppo doesn't claim to be a universal player (it doesn't play HD-DVDs) however it played all the CDs, SACDs, DADs and DVD-Audio discs I could throw in it. Gary Koh had some CD-Rs that wouldn't play, but others he made played fine. tures. Selecting the audio format on a I am not sure why some were incompatible with the BDP-083. We didn't confirm the reason for this so I will leave it unknown for now.

> Video imaging has lots of caveats in my system. Lets start with the fact I have a Panasonic AE900 that has a native resolution of 720p. Commercial DVDs have a resolution of 480 and BluRays are 1080, so every image you see on this projector has been scaled to 720. The Oppo uses an Anchor Bay (DVDO) scaling engine. It is exceptionally good. On my system a "good" DVD scaled from 480 to 720 looks almost as good as a BluRay scaled from 1080 to 720. The scaler in the Oppo is also capable of scaling images if you utilize an animographic lens. The player also has a setting to send raw video data out to a separate processor for scaling.

The images from DVDs look exceptional. On my system this is the best the DVDs have ever

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looked. The caveat on this is the Pioneer BDP-05 doesn't output 720P so I had to send 1080i to my projector and let the projector de-interlace the image and scale it from 1080 to 720. The BD images are stellar, color rendition appears to be very good without tweaking. The player has adjustment for brightness, contrast color/tint etc so you can match another source that may be skewed.

Currently I don't have an A/ V receiver /processor so I dropped the player off at Joe's and let him evaluates the audio utilizing the HDMI output, he liked it and felt it was as good or very close to the audio from of his Lexicon DVD player. He felt the color and image detail was better than his Lexicon. He liked it enough he bought one for himself. To wrap everything up I think this is a killer player for \$500, it offers a host of setup options for HDMI audio output such as PCM or Bitstream. It is a very well designed product, one of the best I have seen that is affordable in a long time. I would like to get a Pioneer BDP-09 and still might but at 4 times the cost, I will probably upgrade to a 1080 projector first. I hope to borrow a Pioneer BDP-09 for the November meeting to work with the Oppo reducing load time during the program.

Last Word/Rant

High-Rez Industry by Bruce Brown

Before heading out to the Computer Audiophile Symposium at the end of the month, we've been extremely busy here at the studio providing high-rez material to numerous Audiophile labels for their download customers. Mostly what we've been doing is taking the DSD information directly from SACD's and converting the files to PCM, either at 88.2 or 176.4

Some of the other digital transfers have been from master

tapes, dating back many decades. We've got the best job in the world. During the transfers, we listen to some of the greatest music ever recorded. Most of the music is classical, but recently we did the Robert Plant/Alison Krauss album and the Grammy winning album by Ry Cooder and Vishwa Bhatt "A Meeting By the River". Quite an eclectic selection, for sure!

Recently I came across something odd, to say the least. I was doing some DSD transfers and noticed there was no information above 20k. I checked all my equipment and then compared the Red Book layer. It was exactly the same information. More digging and a call to the label, we found out that since the original performance was recorded in 44.1, they just upsampled the same performance to DSD. For some reason I think this is pretty lame. Think of all the SACD's that this label has sold, and every one of the SACD's is just the Red Book layer upsampled. WTF????? The more I kept digging, the more I was finding that this method was accepted throughout the industry. The label in question felt that 24/44.1 WAS hi-rez. I look and read on the forum SA-CD.net, how so many people felt the SACD layer was SOOOOOOO much better than the Red Book layer. If they only knew. Have I opened up a big conspiracy theory? Have the labels been fooling us all along? Are we audiophile that gullible to think that one recording is better than the other if we THINK it was a higher resolution? O'kay... more investigating to do. Some of the labels we've done are PentaTone, MDG, Water Lilly, Harmonia Mundi, Chandos, CSO and Naxos. I'm not going to name names, but I want to give everyone out there a head's up. If you don't know what the source is, or the label doesn't reveal how the

recording was captured, buyer beware.

I will be holding center court next month showing everyone everything you wanted to know about building and operating a music server. Let me say first that most of the material will be for PC. Since you can by a pre-configured MAC and use iTunes, anyone going in that direction, it's a no-brainer. Not for the faint of heart would be a MAC running the new Amarra software by Sonic Studio. It's pretty pricey, but people in the know say it's the bee's knees. The thing that confuses most people is the configuration. Something buried deep inside a software program can pretty much make or break your listening enjoyment. Just think at the amazement of everyone that was using their USB DAC's and finding out without a much needed driver and firmware upgrade, you're not listening past 48k. All of the 24/96 downloads that you just purchased were for naught.

There has been a lot of talk about why don't label's offer downloads outside the good 'ol US of A. Well it hast to do with Artist Royalties and VAT charges. Most of the artists sign contracts with the labels that state specific restrictions on distribution of their material. This limits the label from offering the downloads to anyone other than where there contract was first garnered. Simple as that.

New Film Project:

About 2 months ago I was contacted by a gentleman named Scott. He said he had a film project and he wanted us to do the sound design/remixing/ADR. I invited him over to the studio and during our chat I was thinking, "This guy would make a great voice-over artist".

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Now... did anyone ever listen to the local station 93.7 KBSG Oldies? The Definitive Home Theater Event on station is no more and "Scott" lost his job. Scott turned out to be "Fast Lane Phillips" the morning DJ! Also brother of Kent Phillips of Kent and Allen, Star 101.5! Go figure.

Well this is a film shot in documentary style like "The Blair Witch Project" The whole premise of the film is these twenty-somethings torment this girl at college. They bury her alive! They build a box with cameras, speakers, light and air. It all goes awry in the end. The composer that will score the movie is Emmy winning composer Steve Allen. The movie will premier July 11th and after that will be shopped to Hollywood....

DAMN I LOVE THIS JOB!!!

Events:

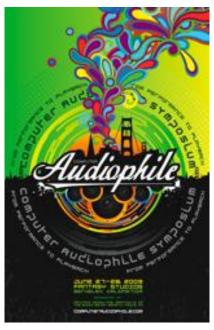
Wednesday June 24th 5-10PM & Thursday June 25th 5-9PM. This will be the 17th year for this fun filled event at the Bellevue store. The event showcases the latest technology from many manufactures. This is an event you don't want to miss, Please RSVP http:// www.definitive.com

Sept 13th, Record, CD, Memorabilia meet, sponsored by Neptune Records, the event is at Croatian Cultural Center, 3250 Commercial Dr, Vancouver B.C. For more info call 604-324-1229

Oct 18th, Northwest Record & CD Show, 10-4PM. \$3 admission to the event held at Seattle Center.

Rocky Mountain Audio Fest in Denver will be held Friday October 2nd thru Sunday the 4th, 2009

2010 CES in Las Vegas will be Thursday January 7th thru Sunday the 10th



Computer Audiophile Symposium June 27-28 Berkeley, CA

Computer Audiophile is proud to announce the inaugural Computer Audiophile Symposium to take place at world-renowned Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California. Never before has an event demonstrated this complete musical chain. Experience everything from a live acoustic performance to a high resolution digital recording to the state of the art in computer-based playback. Witness legendary Recording Engineer and product innovator Prof. Keith O. Johnson capture this live performance. Industry leaders including Mastering Engineer Paul Stubblebine, Reference Recording's Marcia Martin, Sonic Studio's Jonathan Reichbach, Berkelev Audio Design's Michael "Pflash" Pflaumer, and representatives from Meridian-Sooloos will illustrate every step in the chain from performance to playback. In addition to these well recognized panelists, Matan Arazi will debut a groundbreaking music server and his approach to developing this all-out assault on computer based-playback. The major purpose of this Symposium will be focussed on clearing up confusion and explaining high quality computer-based playback in the home. Chris Connaker, Founder of Computer Audiophile and accomplished Information Technology professional, will discuss and demonstrate a wide array of music server technologies.

The Computer Audiophile Symposium will consist of two identical sessions the weekend of June 27th & 28th, 2009. Food and Beverages will be served at both sessions. Each session will be at least four hours in length (breaks included). Parking is available in the Fantasy Studios lot at no additional cost. There are a very limited number of tickets available for each session as this is a very intimate setting. The sessions will both be held in Studio A with the live recordings to take place in Stu-

Cost of session is \$279

Classified Ads

Ads are free to members and will run for three con- Northwest Sinfonietta secutive issues unless renewed. Please limit ads to make, model, short description, condition, MSRP, asking price, contact information.

Lvnx Studio Two-B PCI Soundcard, 2 in—6 out. Great for HTPC or Music server. Pulled from working PC from our studio. AD/DA up to 200kHz! Includes box and cables. Read more about it here: http://www.lynxstudio.com/product_detail.asp? i=12#

Asking \$450

Pass Labs XA-160 monoblocs Used in my mastering room for the past 2 years. Local pick-up preferred. Can be seen on Audiogon. Price: \$8000

Please contact Bruce @425-369-1392

Club discounts

The Northwest Sinfonietta (a classical chamber orchestra) provides discounts to members of our club for performances of the 2007-2008 season. The regular single ticket price of \$38 will be only \$20 per person per performance at the door (or by phone or mail). Just tell them or note on your order that you are a member of the PNWAS. Information and order forms are also available at their website: www.nwsinfonietta.org.

Kosmic

www.kosmic.us Contact Joe Pittman 206-878-3833

Pro Sound and Vision

Contact George H. Pro 425-889-9499, 425-445-3308 (cell)

Revolution Power

Www.revolutionpower.com Contact: Ken Garza

Visitors Welcome!

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

PNWAS Mission Statement

- To bring together 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

- Provide a forum for meeting other audiophiles and exchanging information on musical recordings and audio equipment.
- Demonstrate and compare equipment and recordings.
- Give members opportunities to become familiar with the techniques of audio manufacturing,

- testing, repair, recording, broadcasting, etc.
- Explore related avenues as the membership deems appropriate.

Club website

www.audiosociety.org

E-mail

info@audiosociety.org

U.S. Mail

Pacific Northwest Audio Society, P.O. Box 435, Mercer Island, WA 98040

Annual dues

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

Executive Committee

President: Andrew Kosobutsky AndrewK@audiosociety.org Vice-President: Bruce Brown BruceB@audiosociety.org Treasurer: Gary Koh

GaryK@audiosociety.org Editor: Bruce Brown BruceB@audiosociety.org

Action Committee Chairs:

Equipment: 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 or 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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