

# A Digital Shot Heard 'Round The World



photos by Joe Pittman



## April 14th Meeting Recap by Joe Pittman

Many members commented that the April meeting was one of the best meetings ever. We were fortunate to have Jules Bloomenthal give us a slide-show presentation of the background and history of the Soundstream digital recorder. He brought the original commercial unit (which he now owns) that was used to make the first recording (it was on static display) and he played example recordings (on the

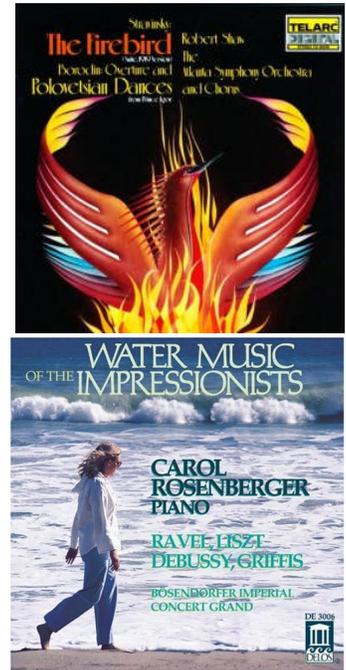
club's system) throughout the presentation (see play list).

Unfortunately, the presentation was so comprehensive, I can't go over it all here (I was too busy listening and not taking notes anyway). But highlights included the hard science involved with the original design by Dr. Thomas Stockham, Jr., the early years of Soundstream (1971-1979), the famous Telarc recording of the 1812 Overture using real canons, and how Soundstream's

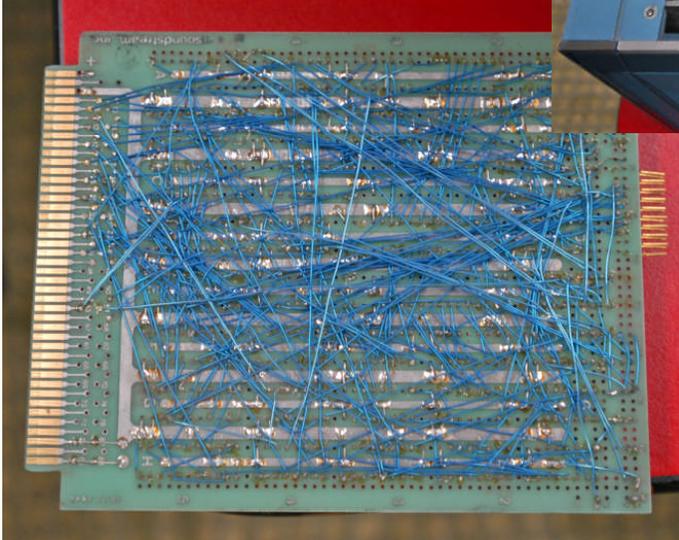
digital recorder changed the audiophile world.

The sample music was outstanding, with some of the members, immediately hunting for the recordings on the internet after the meeting (a new competitive event?)

Jules mentioned that he's writing a book about Soundstream. So I hope it comes out some day, it would be a great read. Thanks Jules for the outstanding presentation!



Jules Bloomenthal kick's off the meeting with the fascinating background and history of the creation of the first commercial digital recorder.



## Play List

	Year Recorded	Title	Artist/Composer	Album/Comments
1	1971	Vesti la Giubba	Enrico Caruso	Original recorded 1907, restored 1971, University of Utah archives
2	1971	Vesti la Giubba	Enrico Caruso	vocoded 1971, University of Utah archives
3	1972	Conversation 342-16	President Richard Nixon, the Oval Office	The Nixon Archives
4	1976	Poor, Poor Pitiful Me	Linda Ronstadt	Elektra Records B00002GVQ, track 7
5	1976	The Mother of Us All, overture	Santa Fe Opera	New World Records 288, track 1
6	1977	Bach: Toccata and Fugue	Virgil Fox	Bainbridge Records, BCD8104, track 1
7	1978	There'll be Some Changes Made	Diahann Carroll	Bainbridge Records, BCD6101, track 2
8	1978	Holst: First Suite in E-Flat, mvt. 3	Cleveland Symphonic Winds	Telarc Records CD-80038, track 3
9	1978	1812 Overture	Cincinnati Orchestra	Telarc Records CD-80041, track 1
10	1979	Bartok: Concerto for Orchestra, mvt. 5	Philadelphia Orchestra	RCA Records BVCC38059, track 5
11	1980	Saint-Saens: Symphony 3, mvt. 2	Philadelphia Orchestra	Telarc Records Cd-80051, track 2
12	1979	Cage: First Construction (in Metal)	Don Knaack Ensemble	Tomato Records 2696172, track 1
13	1979	Debussy: La Cathedrale Engloutie	Carol Rosenberger	Delos Records CD3006, track 5
14	1979	Korngold	Kings Row, National Philharmonic	Varese Sarabande VCD47203, track 1
15	1979	Tusk	Fleetwood Mac	Warner Brothers 3350-2, track 19
16	1979	Stravinsky: the Firebird Suite	Atlanta Symphony	Telarc Records CD-80039, track 1, or Telarc Records SACD-60039, tracks 1-6



**Note:**

The present company called Soundstream (which, at [www.soundstream.com](http://www.soundstream.com), bills itself as "the leader in mobile audio engineering and performance for the past 20 years") has absolutely nothing to do with the company Soundstream that Jules described at the PNWAS meeting. The company he worked for ceased to exist in 1985. As part of its demise, its name was sold.

Notable attendees at the meeting from left to right:

**Dr. Harry Lee**, a fellow graduate student of Dr. Stockham's at M.I.T. and an early innovator of CAD (computer aided design)

**Jules Bloomenthal**, packaged the four-channel recorder and helped develop Soundstream's recording services

**Bruce Rothaar**, While a graduate student in Electrical Engineering at the University of Utah, Bruce worked at Soundstream and was the principal design engineer for the four-channel recorder shown

**Jim Russell**, Jim is a physicist who joined Soundstream in 1980; he brought with him technology for a home player that Soundstream prototyped in 1981 but which was never released as a commercial product (he is the inventor of the CD!)

## President's Message by John Stone

**W**e had an absolutely fabulous meeting last month. Jules Bloomenthal delivered a wonderful presentation covering the early days of digital recording at Soundstream and played several illustrative tracks that sent several of our members scrambling to the internet to find vintage Telarc vinyl. See the full writeup elsewhere in this newsletter.

Over the last month, I've auditioned a quartet of DACs, and have never experienced a session of equipment reviews quite like it. Along the way, I learned a lot but am not sure the knowledge gained will ultimately serve any useful purpose, but here's how it went down:

Received the first DAC on short-term loan from a very generous manufacturer. What server-DAC interface connection to use? USB, Toslink, or RCA? USB is the new thing, let's go with that. What the heck is that noise (loud hum)? Maybe I need a better (shielded) cable. Hmm... isn't that what audio buddy's are for? Borrow one from an audio buddy.

Ok, now I've got the killer cable, shoot, it's not long enough. I'll have to move equipment and then explain to Spouse why this new black box has displaced her orchids.

Oh no, (lower-level) hum is still not acceptable. Better go to Toslink until I figure this one out. Darn it all! Toslink will only play Redbook (no drivers for Toslink connection). It's always something isn't it!?

Audio buddy loans me his Mac-based server. Does the DAC require different drivers? Of course it does. If

I want to listen to hi-rez (and what self-respecting audiophile doesn't?) I'll need those drivers. Are drivers included on disc with DAC? Arg! No such luck, have to download them from manufacturer's website. WhuzupwitDAC?

Can I get the drivers to install properly? Not the first time, darn not the second time, jeez, but after several tries, connecting and re-booting equipment in various sequences, eventually everything (software and hardware) is recognized. Time passes. Much wine is consumed. Spouse suggests I try deep breathing and yoga. Spouse and pup leave room due to wild gesticulations and colorful language.

Does the manufacturer provide adequate setup instructions? No. Would it kill them to include a couple of helpful screenshots? One manufacturer provided instructions... in Italian!



Seriously?

Listening to music (finally!). Hum gone using Mac.

Can I tell the difference? In most cases, yes. The sound is different, but is it better? Some things are better, some things are worse, I think...

This fancy DAC has a volume control, what does it sound like if I go direct from DAC to amp? Wow, resolution improves a lot! But what happened to dynamics?

Ask advice from audio buddies. Answer: get a better preamp, stop whining, and drink more wine. And, oh by the way, you need to buy a better (way more expensive) power cord.

Try same DAC in other systems and compare to audio buddies' DACs. How do the DACs sound? All DACs sound better in someone else's system,

oh crap, how much is this really going to cost me? Don't worry about it, can't afford their gear anyway (not even close). Got to buy something, let's look at HD Tracks; hi-rez rules.

Borrow audio buddy's preamp and bring it home. Now how does my system sound? Wait a minute, this preamp has balanced outputs, and passive or active mode, while we're at it, let's see what they do.

Why won't the music play? Plug in the preamp dummy!

Hey, hum's gone (ground loop eliminated). Listen to music. Yep, looks like I need a new preamp.

How much is a good preamp? More than I want to pay, unless I can put off the new roof for another year, hmm....

Bad news? I'm not very good with computers. I'm not even close to making

a decision on either a DAC or preamp.

Good news? My audio buddies were awesome. Spouse ok's purchase of better preamp, as long as her orchids get their home back. Pup forgives and forgets all as soon as

I throw the ball. Serenity returns. This is a great hobby!

# May Meeting Notice

Guest speaker Dan Schmale (aka Doc Bottlehead)  
Speaker Listening Session and Headphone Listening Session

by Dan Schmale



The source will be my Nagra T Audio playing Tape Project tapes including some sample tracks from the upcoming Series Three.



The discontinued 96 dB sensitive Straight 8 speakers with two pairs of 8WPC Paramount single ended parallel feed 300B amps and a prototype low impedance line stage we have been experimenting with.

I will also demo our little 2WPC 6DN7 based Single Ended eXperimenters amp since it can run these speakers too.

After the break we will hook the Nagra up to my line distribution box and have 300B Paramounts running AKG K1000 headphones, A Crack OTL headphone amp running some Sennheisers, and our S.E.X. amp and a prototype of our upcoming new Smack transformer output headphone amp running some other headphones TBD. That would present four listening stations for folks to rotate through.



S.E.X. amp



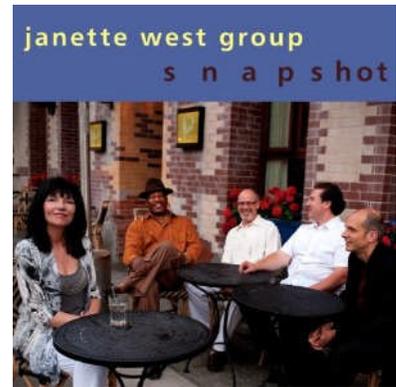
Crack OTL headphone amp

## Local Music



**Tuesday May 17th 2011 7:30pm**

Features **THE JANETTE WEST QUARTET**, with Janette on Vocals, Eric Verlinde on the Steinway, Chuck Kistler on Bass and Marty Tuttle on Drums. Come and celebrate the CD release of Janette's latest great recording titled "Snapshot" This is going to be a super show with Janette leading this fantastic band of "all stars"



**Tuesday June 14th 2011 7:30pm**

We are excited to be featuring for the first time at the Eastside Jazz Club **Jim Kerl's SWING SESSION BIG BAND**. "Swing Session is a swinging, exciting musical experience. The music of Swing Session mirrors the philosophy of its bandleader, Jim Kerl; accessible melodies that swing hard and leave the audience and band wanting more. To paraphrase the great Count Basie, "It don't mean a thing if you can't pat your foot to it." More details next month but meanwhile go to their website <http://www.rainiermusic.com/swingsession.html> and listen to Mack the Knife.

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](mailto:lionel.kramer@comcast.net)



## Blast Off! by Joe Pittman

**B**lowing on your records to remove visible dust particles is a bad idea. Your breath includes moisture and a whole host of bad things, like bacteria and particles from last night's pizza.

A cool gizmo I use is from the camera world. And was originally purchased to blow micro dust off of my digital camera's photo sensor. What was needed was a clean, dry, powerful focused air stream. The "Giottos AA 1900 Rocket Air Blaster Large" was just the ticket. Available at places like Amazon.com for around 10 bucks, it's a cheap thrill.

So get a Rocket and "blast off" micro-dust (sorry for the pun, I couldn't help my self).



Rocket Air Blaster

## Coming Attractions

### May 12 PNWAS Meeting

Dan Schmalle (aka Doc Bottlehead) is the guest speaker and will demonstrate his gear and Tape Project source.

### June 9 PNWAS Meeting

Bud Purvine with Enabl will demonstrate "Enhanced Acoustic Boundary Layer" technology.

### July 14 PNWAS Meeting

The Equipment Committee report and High Efficiency Loudspeakers.

### August 11 PNWAS Meeting

Road Trip to Mike Lavigne's.

### August 27 DIY MEET

Our semi-annual 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

TBD



### 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 Jerry's annual HD Concert Video Fest.

### December 15 PNWAS Meeting

Annual Christmas music competition.

## Classified Ads

Used **Accuphase E-213** Integrated amplifier \$2400 (New price \$7000).

This is a superb integrated amplifier in very good condition (like new). It is rated at 90 watts per channel into 8 ohms and is built to last as are all Accuphase products. The reviews of this amplifier have been excellent and they are right, it sounds and looks very good. The amplifier includes a remote, original manual, and box. I will also include a pair of Accuphase balanced interconnects.

Specifications:

Input: Single ended or Balanced

Output: 90w per channel into 8 ohms, 115w per channel into 4 ohms

Speaker outputs: 2 pairs of speaker outputs

Can be used as a Power amplifier driven by a pre-amp

User Manual and detailed specs: [http://www.accuphase.com/cat/e-213\\_e.pdf](http://www.accuphase.com/cat/e-213_e.pdf)

Price: \$2400 (OBO).

Shipping weight: 50 lbs.

Contact Renan Jeffereis

Email: [renanj@jeffereis.org](mailto:renanj@jeffereis.org)



### 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](http://www.audiosociety.org)

### E-mail

[info@audiosociety.org](mailto: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.

### Executive Committee

President: John Stone

[John.W.Stone4@boeing.com](mailto:John.W.Stone4@boeing.com)

Vice-President: Darin Forkenbrock

[forkenbrock@gmail.com](mailto:forkenbrock@gmail.com)

Secretary/Treasurer: Willy Chang

[chang98@comcast.net](mailto:chang98@comcast.net)

Editor: Joe Pittman

[joe@kosmic.us](mailto:joe@kosmic.us)

### Committee Chairs

Equipment: Terry Olson

[CornyGuy@aol.com](mailto: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

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