

Audio Video Show, Warsaw

Words & pictures: Ken Kessler



For years, I'd been hearing that Warsaw has a terrific, 'old school' hi-fi show, but on a scale rarely seen anywhere in the world. This year, I was invited to attend and it was like stepping back in time... in a good way. Just under 12,000 visitors, loads of new audio equipment in a few hundred great-sounding rooms: the

general consensus is that the only event in Europe that's even grander would be Munich's High End Show.

Two hotels and the clever use of the VIP rooms at the country's largest stadium, no shortage of gear from brands not known here, lots of valve amps, new turntables, visitors under 50 years old and families too – there was everything present to ensure *HFN* will be back in 2017.

Voxativ's 9.87 system takes the company's Pi full-range speaker system and augments it with a dipole subwoofer. Offered in piano black or white, it uses two woofers driven by Class AB amps delivering a claimed 250W. The addition of the woofer enclosure brings the dimensions up to 38x110x31cm (hwd). Frequency response is said to be 20-20kHz. www.voxativ.com



From Serbia, a luscious range of valve electronics with clearly Italianate styling, manufactured by Auris. Seen here is the Largo SE preamp flanked by the Forte 150 power monoblocks, said to be good for 100W each from two KT150s. Auris also offers DACs, integrals and a phono preamp. www.aurisaudio.rs



Two speakers from the vast range produced by Acoustique Quality from the Czech Republic – the catalogue runs to 32 pages. The radical, angular Passion Orca to the left is brand new, the company remaining tight-lipped about its specs, but the Passion Teen on the right is a two-way system with ScanSpeak 1in tweeter and 6.5in woofer in a 450x226x360mm (hwd) cabinet with a front port. The internal wiring is AQ solid-core. www.aq.cz



Zingali speakers from Italy were demonstrated with electronics from Amare Musica, a young Polish brand represented here by the Diamond line, including the DeForest preamplifier (named after you-know-who), the 'chipless' Tube DSD DAC and a selection of valve power amplifiers. www.amaremusica.pl

Natural Sound is the Eastern European distributor for Vertere turntables, FM Acoustics electronics, Mysonic cartridges and Audio Tekne valve electronics, but it also demonstrated its own products. These are based on Maxonic 'Field Excitation' designs from Japan but are made in Slovenia, such as the Natural Sound 1 speakers in the middle. The large, pyramidal speakers flanking them are prototypes of the Natural Sound Milena, which feature an unusual combo of a ribbon in a horn.

www.natural-sound.eu



Fezz Audio seemed omnipresent, another young Polish manufacturer with a vast selection of superbly-made and great-sounding valve electronics. This is the Mira Ceti integrated amplifier, offered in black or white gloss, with valve cage included. Power is 8W/channel on paper from a pair of 300Bs, operating in single-ended Class A mode. The unit offers three line inputs, automatic bias and optional remote. www.fezzaudio.com

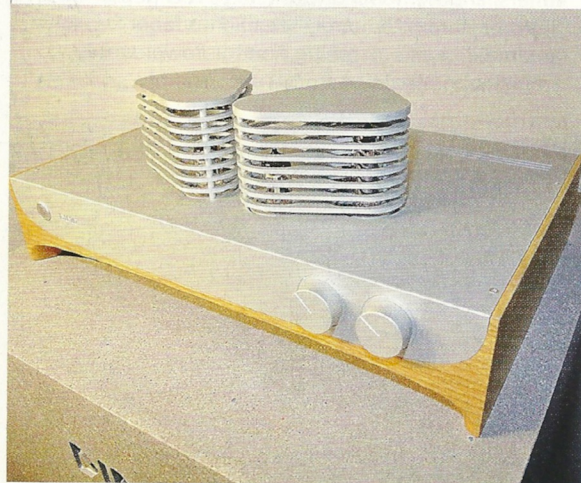
An intriguing deck from Czech manufacturer 440 Audio. All models are similarly styled and use bases made of stone, wood or glass, in various plinth and platter thicknesses, and all employ the same plinth architecture of two 'points' with tiny outrigger stabilisers. Finish is impeccable. www.440audio.eu



I can't resist DIMD's gorgeous PP10 integrated amp, made in Latvia. The 159x430x280mm (hwd) chassis employs CNC-machined 5mm aluminium with wood base, and the tube cage is stunningly handsome. Four line inputs, four EL84 pentodes said to deliver 10W/ch, ALPS pots – valves for the 21st century. www.dimd.eu



There were locally made turntables a'plenty, including this unit at €6900 from JR Audio. It offers a pulley-under-platter belt-drive and a model with outboard motor as seen here. The unit rests on four anti-vibration feet with patented rubber dampers. JR provides a choice of tonearm mounts, but the surprise is its own 'pantograph' reminiscent of the Garrard Zero 100! www.jraudio.pl



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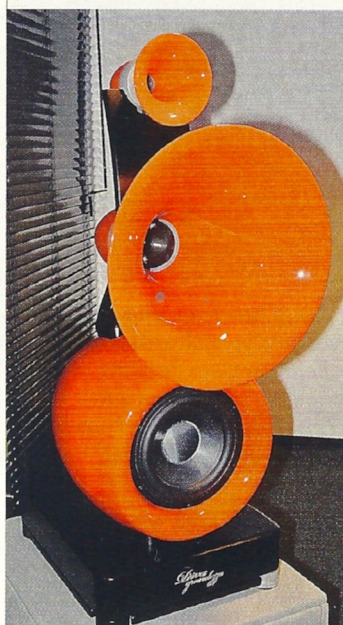
Imports were well represented in Warsaw, and I noted that a number of the US trade visitors to *HFN's* Hi-Fi Show *Live* event in Windsor stayed in Europe in order to carry on to Poland. Representing Canada were Tenor Audio electronics, sounding superb through Hansen Audio's four-driver Dragon Legend E speakers. www.tenoraudio.com; www.hansenaudio.com



To my delight, the Warsaw Audio Video Show also hosted a couple of exhibitors with refurbished vintage gear, one room displaying a wall of 1970s Japanese tuners, another loaded with reel-to-reel decks – hi-fi heaven! Here is the rarely-seen Sonus faber Driver preamplifier and matching Amator Power stereo amplifier combination from 1990. Yummy...



Austrian company Vienna Physix demonstrated the Diva Grandezza horn with amplifiers delivering a claimed 500W for the active 10in woofers. Drivers comprise a 180mm high frequency horn for the 1in tweeter and a 500mm midhorn. Overall height is 1210mm. www.viennaphysix.at



More gear from Poland: Baltlab charges just €3000 for its new, beautifully-appointed ENDO 2 integrated. The rear boasts XLR inputs for one source and five pairs of RCAs for line sources, tape out, and slick multi-way binding posts. Power output is said to be 120W/ch into 8ohm. Dimensions are only 170x450x420mm (hwd). www.baltlab.pl

Italian valves were well-represented at Warsaw, one highlight for me being the Mastersound Evolution 845 integrated amp. This single-ended, dual-mono design uses, yup, a brace of 845s per channel – one of my all-time fave tubes – to give 55W per channel on paper. Simply luscious! www.mastersoundsas.it



Avcon's 3-way Avalanche Reference Monitor is a €4500 Polish speaker that's appeared at a few shows, but this was my first chance to hear it. Bass comes via a 260mm SEAS paper cone woofer, mid is a 130mm cone while treble is handled by a ribbon. www.avcon.com.pl



This mildly amorphous design is the Mummy from hORNS. The speaker uses a 1in tweeter and 12in woofer in a single-wire, 1230mm-tall, 30kg bass-reflex enclosure. Sensitivity is stated as 93dB/1W. It's also offered in gloss black – both are striking. The UK distributor is G-Point Audio. www.horns.pl; www.gpoint-audio.com



There is no shortage of horns in Poland: Destination Audio, based in Warsaw, manufactures bespoke horns with a Japanese flavour, including this massive 3-way system. My Polish is limited, but from what I could gather the sensitivity is said to be a remarkable 103dB/1W! www.destinationaudio.eu

Muarah from Poland debuted last year and wasted no time producing a range that includes this handsome turntable with Jelco arm, called Mr Black or Mr White depending on colour, the MU-4 valve integrated amp said to deliver 2x50W from four KT88s and the MU-2 tube phono MM/MC preamp, both also offered in black or white. A company to watch! www.muarah.com



Guru Audio's two-way, ported Q10 comes from Sweden and is an ideal match for the new wave of small amps – think Quad VA-One. Dimensions are 35x65x35cm (hwd), yet the in-house B59 mineral fibre woofer is said to go down to 30Hz. www.guruaudio.com



Bach Loudspeakers from the Netherlands opted for a soft covering, producing a suede effect. And, no, I didn't shoot this with a wide-angle lens: the cabinet is curvy. This is the two-way Bach S II HE with 26mm Audax titanium tweeter. The shocking pink version is far too bizarre to show. www.bachloudspeakers.nl

I was told that LampizatOr is 'probably the hottest Polish high-end brand', one that definitely exports. This is the superb 211 Balanced Monoblock Amplifier, offering balanced input-only like the name suggests and two directly-heated 211s, which the company says are good for 60W. It also offers a wide selection of balanced DACs. www.lampizator.eu



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Polish company Nomos specialises in vintage gear restorations, and I have to say I wish we had more companies like this refurbishing old kit to ensure peace of mind. It lists just about every type of component as eligible for servicing, and its site is worth a visit if you're an anachrophile. This is its wall filled with revived 'golden age' tuners from Marantz, Denon, Kenwood, Sony, TEAC and others, all working perfectly.

www.nomos.waw.pl



Slim floorstanders were plentiful, one of the more notable being Audium's 'Comp' speakers from Germany. They're offered in passive or active versions, wireless, and with room correction, using a full-range driver augmented by a downward-firing oval woofer. The full range comprises a surround speaker, subwoofer and a bookshelf model along with no fewer than five variations of the Comp 5 floorstander, shown here.

www.audium.net



You gotta love a company called 'Old School Audio', a manufacturer from Latvia that is clearly under the spell of British monitors of the 1960s, à la BBC designs. These are the M2 on the left (€2490) and the Classic One on the right (€2790). Also available is the coaxial M1 (€1790) at a teensy 390x207x343mm (hwd).

www.oldschoolaudio.eu

Pink Faun, which hails from Holland, produces compact components with a minimalist feel, reminiscent of no-nonsense efforts like the early Audio Alchemy products with all the money spent on the insides. Seen here are the Preamp, DAC 3.32 and Streamer 3.4. The units can be loaded with options like clock upgrades, extra DACs and added inputs.

www.pinkfaun.com



One source told me that Sikora is one of the best of Poland's turntable manufacturers, and this is the entry-level Initial, with belt-drive and outboard power supply. It weighs 28kg, and the family goes up to the 80kg Standard and the 108kg Reference. All decks share the same main bearing, motor and controller, the Standard using two motors and the Reference using four! www.jsikora.pl



Back view of Yayuma's Awareness fully-balanced analogue signal processor. It employs the company's proprietary PONA (Pure Original Natural Audio) sound technology and is said to 'recover lost information without affecting dynamics'. Oh, and the audio processing is made only in the analogue domain. www.yayuma.eu

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