

Audio Video Show, Warsaw

Words & pictures: Ken Kessler



There is no longer any doubt: after Munich High End, the Warsaw Audio Video Show is Europe's biggest hi-fi event. Once again organised to include two hotels – virtually across the street from each other – and the VIP suites at the Warsaw National Stadium, with a coach service between

them, the show embraces all home entertainment wares, with enough screamingly outrageous high-end gear and fascinating local products not seen outside of the country's borders to make it a must-see event. This year, Jean-Michel Jarre turned up for a session [*HFN* Jan '19], public numbers increased substantially and the amount of vinyl – new and used – was overwhelming. I'm already booked for 2019.

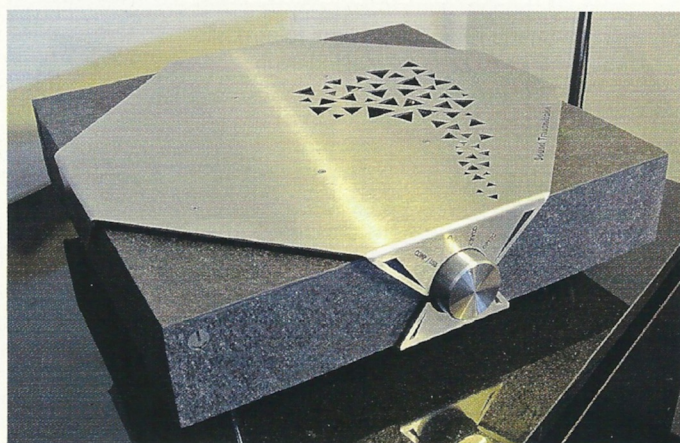
Shades of 1955 – a throwback to the days when audiophiles built their own gear. Even Auto-Tech's website declares its target customers to be DIY enthusiasts. It produces a vast range of drivers, acoustic horns, enclosures and other elements for home constructors, as well as ready-made systems. www.horns-diy.pl



Block Audio showed its Line & Power Block dual-mono preamp with battery power supply, with 15 hours' operating time, driving the Mono Block 'Class A' mono power amps. The preamp offers single-ended and balanced inputs, and the user can select battery or AC operation. www.blockaudio.com



Fascinating design and breathtaking woodwork from Natural Sound's bold-looking Samurai – so named, I suspect, because the upper element's proprietary horn construct looks a bit like a samurai warrior's headdress. Said to be hugely efficient, this 3-way loudspeaker is fitted with an 18in woofer, 12in midrange and – surprise – a 10in AMT tweeter. This is the first time I've seen an AMT drive unit in a horn enclosure, but why not? www.natural-sound.eu



Super Sound Service's ST-DAC-1 server and audio file player does it all with a 24-bit Burr-Brown PCM1794 chip and an integrated computer with an SSD disc. Analogue output is via 6N23P/E88CC vacuum tubes while inputs include two coaxial, plus one each of optical, USB, LAN and Wi-Fi. www.supersounddevice.com

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Here's the room and system used by Jean-Michel Jarre to debut his new album, *Equinoxe Infinity*, to an eager group of invited journalists and guests [HFN Jan '19]. A pair of Wilson Audio Alexx loudspeakers [HFN Nov '16] fronts the set-up, driven by a Dan D'Agostino Progression preamp [HFN Apr '18] and Relentless monoblocks. A dCS digital front-end comprising a Vivaldi DAC, Upsampler, Clock and CD/SACD Transport was also employed while the turntable shown is an Acoustic Signature Thunder Mk2. www.audiofast.pl



An oldie but a goodie, Scheu's Drive No 2, fitted with an SME 309 arm, can actually handle three tonearms. Design is clean and minimalist, with mass applied judiciously – the total weight is circa 38kg with the acrylic platter weighing 7.5kg. The three-legged chassis consists of a multi-layer glued acrylic frame with stainless steel base and is available in black or satin. Armboards are offered in acrylic, brass or bronze. www.scheu-analog.de

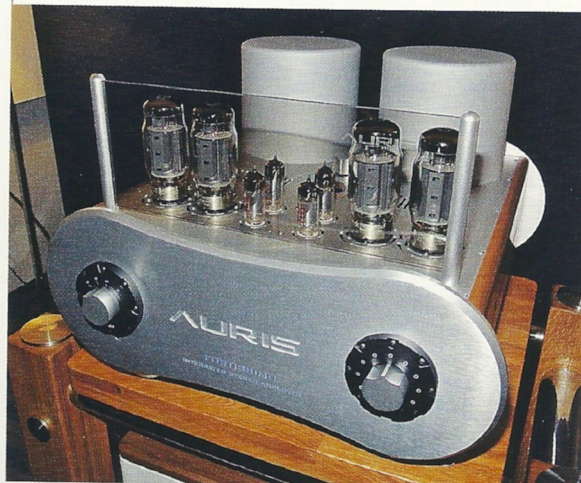


Sparkler Audio, which was formerly 47 Treasure, is a deliciously tweaky Japanese brand offering this two-chassis deck with outboard PSU, the top-loading S507u 'notebook II Minimal Size CD player'. Equipped with a NOS Philips TDA1543 16-bit DAC, it's also available minus the converter as the S507t transport-only version. It supports two digital output types: S/PDIF and I²S. www.sparkler-audio.com

Called the Dueventi – Italian for 220 – this striking integrated amp uses four EL34 valves to produce a claimed 2x20W in pentode mode, or 2x10W in triode; operation is 'parallel single-ended' Class A. The unit features automatic bias, zero negative feedback and it has four line inputs. www.mastersoundsas.it



Looking fabulous in a gunmetal hue, with the company's signature wooden side sections, Auris' Fortissimo is a 100W/ch integrated amp operable in pentode or ultralinear modes, with power from four KT120s. Three line inputs plus one XLR and dimensions of 490x335x447mm (whd). www.aurisaudio.rs



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Seen in handsome bamboo woods, the Holophony Number 1 floorstanders and Number 4 standmounts from both ends of the four-model lineup are notable for high sensitivity. The former is said to be 97dB/1W, the small two-way 90dB. The Polish speaker builder favours paper cones and, apparently, employs 'original drivers from the '50s and '60s'. www.avatar-audio.com

Karl-Heinz Fink's latest is the Borg, which should prove more manageable than the massive WM-4. This 2-way floorstander uses a 10.25in mid/bass driver and an Air Motion Transformer (AMT) tweeter in a faceted 1050x300x400mm (hwd) enclosure. Weight is 52kg. www.finkteam.com



Old-school valve gear – JAG Electronics' 200SE II integrated triode amp will have special appeal for those who still adore the classic sound of EL34s. Said to be good for 2x20W, the unit also contains 6SL7s and features three line-level inputs via a front panel rotary and a volume control. Delicious vintage purism in a wood-trimmed chassis. www.jag-electronics.pl



Acoustic Plan uses neither valves nor transistors, but its own amp technology it calls 'MagAmp', employed in this, the 2x100W Mantra integrated. It has four line inputs and an optional phono section is available. Dimensions are 260x170x350mm (whd), weight a hefty 17kg. www.acousticplan.de



This odd speaker from Manron is the Lambda 100, made only to order. This allows the company to configure any combination of colour, cabinetry and fine-tuning. No specs are available, the company preferring to promote tailoring each speaker to the intended room. www.manron.pl



Hailing from Greece, Ideon's Absolute Hyperstream DSD/DXD DAC is based around the popular ESS9038 Pro converter – its quad-channel architecture supporting balanced and single-ended outputs and both USB and S/PDIF inputs. Two large linear PSUs are specified with custom transformers and seven stages of local regulation. www.ideonaudio.com

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From Japan, a display of SPEC's electronics was heard through Davone's familiar Grande speaker. The products, amid Manley and other fine units, are those with the bold orange-y wood trim, which incorporate their special feet. The lineup includes the RPA-MG1000 200W monoblocks on the floor and the RMP-X3EX network player on the top shelf. www.spec-corp.co.jp



Aesthetic values to the fore, Eryk S Concept promises 'Elegant design concepts' and every unit is custom-made. The brand showed the 2x15W Red King valve amp (inset) with two pairs of EL84 tubes, four inputs, DAC, USB, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, and the 2-way Wind speakers which boast specially developed full-range Japanese cellulose drivers along with an Alnico 30cm woofer. www.eryksc.com

One of the most outrageous turntables at the show – and there were plenty of 'em – was this massive wooden affair from Polish company Tentogra. Known as the Oscar, power is via battery, running for 30 hours on a charge, to ensure total isolation, or 68 hours with a larger battery. Eight hours, or left overnight, will charge the battery fully. The deck weighs 70kg and 92.5kg in combination with its dedicated stand. www.tentogra.pl



The wild-looking, possibly *Alien*-inspired, Elite 2 loudspeaker from Nime Audiodesign is an angular creation containing a 220mm hard-paper cone woofer and a 30mm ceramic tweeter. Sensitivity is said to be a high 92dB/1W/1m and the speaker is offered in gloss white or black lacquer, matte black, satin steel or a custom finish. www.nimeaudiodesign.com



Comprehensive lineup of valve electronics forms Lucarto Audio's handsome Songolo series. The top shelf contains a pair of MA300BSE monoblocks good for 14W each from two 300Bs, framing the P300SE dual-mono preamp. The bottom houses the dual-mono Class A D300SE valve DAC with processing to 384kHz/32-bit and P300SE power conditioner with 2500W capacity and ten sockets. www.ucartoaudio.pl



Polish high-end brand Lampizator demonstrated its Pacific Balanced DAC, and 211 Balanced monoblock amp it says produces 60W. Valves are two directly-heated 211 triodes, two 6H6P dual triodes and E88CC input tubes, with the Silk AC Filter just visible under the rack. www.lampizator.eu

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Omnidirectional speakers have always charmed designers, and ZetaZero offers a plethora of cylindrical floorstanding models with 'programmable polar patterns' in its Orbital360 range. Seen here are (l-r) the Slim, the Nano and the bass-only section of the Discovery. www.zetazero.eu



Among the more outlandish speaker makers at the show, Sound Kaos's collection includes the 1020mm-tall, copper-grilled Liberation, which looks like a Quad '57 made by aliens. The open-baffle design houses an 18in woofer in the lower enclosure and a Raal ribbon super tweeter flanked by two 8in drivers up top. www.soundkaos.audio

Tsakiridis was present with the new Aeolos Ultra, an update of the Aeolus. Now fitted with KT150 tubes (though this example has what I believe are KT90s), it has 'a facelift' and, according to the company, offers more power at 2x70W. Features include remote control, four line inputs with a tape output, an ALPS volume control, porcelain valve bases, 1% tolerance metal film resistors and other niceties. www.tsakiridis-devices.com



I got a whiff of Gravelli's amazing work on a plinth for E.A.T. at the Munich High End show. The company uses a damped polymer concrete material for a non-resonant enclosure in the digital-ready, active, 15kg, 160x380x280mm Virtuoso speaker. www.audio.gravelli.com



Pretty much all-bespoke, Sound Design Atelier's Russian-made amplifiers include the SE-811 Solo at the top of the rack, flanked by a couple of behemoths fitted with whatever valves the user requires, eg, 2A3, 845, 6L6G, etc. The company also offers a choice of single-ended or push-pull circuits. www.vinsluh.org.ua

Next month

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