

Warsaw Audio Video Show

by Alan Sircom

To the casual audiophile, rocking up to Warsaw in Poland in the middle of November doesn't sound like the best thing to do.

They are dead wrong, because the Audio Video Show is second only to Munich in European audio events. Two hotels and the many hospitality suites of the country's national stadium, with almost 200 rooms given over to good audio makes Warsaw more than just a local event, and with nigh on 14,000 show-goers (and not just the 'old guy' brigade seen in many UK/US audio events), this is fast becoming the must-see event at the end of the calendar.

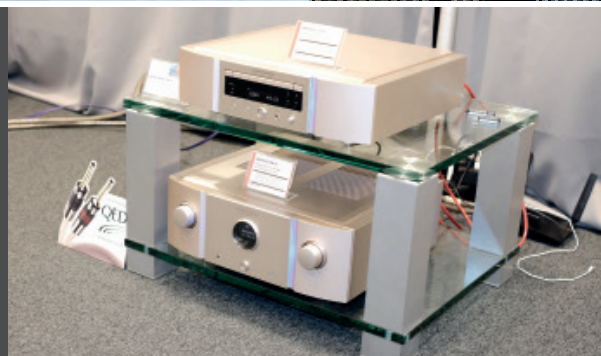
Cleverly, the show is more about quality than quantity, despite the relatively complex logistics involved. The organiser Adam is first and foremost an audio enthusiast and his show reflects that. It also manages to balance the needs of the local manufacturers, building Polish products in Poland for Polish enthusiasts, and the demands of the internationals, without patronising or sacrificing the needs of either.

You can't help but be impressed. Even if you come away from the show with something equivalent to PTSD from being sardined into room after room with literally dozens of very broad-shouldered Polish people. This is the only show I've been to in decades where you have to queue to see an exhibitor, or even queue to get on one of the floors of a hotel to see the exhibitors on that floor. That's off the chart in audio terms.

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Marantz Legendary Series has been a constant in the European high-end firmament. The new SA-10 player and PM-10 amp are the first new models in the range in years. After all, if it ain't broke, don't fix it! The Ken Ishiwata-derived system sounded exceptionally good, driving a pair of Q Acoustics Concept 500 floorstanding loudspeakers.



Polish audio royalty Mytek is perhaps best known for its MQA-ready digital converters, but for Warsaw, the company introduced a set of bridgeable Class D power amps in the Brooklyn series.



Muarrah Audio is a Polish audio company that makes a range of turntables, tube amplifiers, and accessories. Perhaps the smartest of these is the IntelliClamp, a record clamp that sends speed data to the record player power supply.

**JENNY THIS NEEDS TO BE
AN IMAGE OF THE SONUS
FABER!**



There was an exciting and vibrant headphone audio section at the stadium, although the number of new products launched at the event was relatively limited. The usual suspects – from AKG to Westone – were there, often grouped together by their respective Polish distributors.

The big launch at the show was the new version of the Sonus faber Aida. With a new tuned mass damper system (think the earthquake-proofing counterweight inside Japanese skyscrapers) and clever Zero Vibration transmission floor mount system, this range-topping speaker sounded as good as it looks.

Divaldi is a Polish brand making a range of very small electronics with a very large sound. Naturally, this bends the company toward headphone amplification and its Amp 01 (which is capable of up to 3.5W power output) looks promising, even when not in cyberpunk spider livery!



RCM Audio is perhaps best known outside of Poland for its excellent phono stages. Inside Poland, however, the company is a key high-end importer and distributor. RCM was given the exclusive first play of the excellent new Kuzma 4Point 9 tonearm (reviewed in this issue).



Lampizator had demonstrated its new Pacific flagship DAC at RMAF a few weeks before Audio Video 2017, but Lukasz Fikus is a local boy, and that local boy made good with this single-ended triode, DSD playing, masterpiece of a quad mono digital converter.



If beauty is only skin deep, then the Netherlands-built Pink Faun products are built inside out. The company's new Streamer 2.16 (left, silver) coupled to the two box DAC 2.32 and the D-Power 180 amps (black, left and right) sounded excellent. The Roon Core streamer is both sophisticated yet seemingly easy to set-up and the whole package costs around £14,000 for a turnkey just-add-speakers system.



elinsAudio is a well-established Polish amplifier manufacturer with a very fine range of electronics, including this system comprising Concerto preamplifier and power supply, with the two mono Mille power amps above it. Total price: around £16,000.



It wasn't all Polish brands at Audio Video 2017. In fact, the show bristled with the best in audio, but as we have already covered almost all the new launches from a number of shows across 2017, we can be selective. One of the best systems at the show was featuring AURALiC's outstanding new ARIES G2 streaming transporter and matching VEGA G2 DAC.



The Sigma Acoustics MAAT is available in three different styles; Orchestra, Classic, and Modern. Aldo Zaninello, Sigma's owner and chief designer claims the loudspeakers can be driven by even the simplest, smallest amplifier. They need a big room, but deliver an impressive sound.



The Acoustic Dream Ag1 power conditioner is a hand assembled filter and conditioner designed for very heavy duty use, and partners well with T+A's high voltage electronics. It costs roughly £7,500 and is extremely well respected by those in the know in Poland.



Fezz Audio's Silver Luna helps show why Warsaw is an important show. This 35W all valve line-level amplifier uses four EL34s, sounds excellent, looks great, is built in Poland, and would cost less than £850 if it were available in the UK, or under \$1,000 in the US!



Genuin Audio is a start-up company from Germany. Its new Drive turntable with built in phono stage, carbon-fibre Point arm, and Sting cartridge look and sound promising.



Auris Audio's reference system comprises a D2D digital converter, Largo SE preamplifier, Forte 150 mono power amplifiers and either Poison 8 (pictured) or Poison 88 floorstanders. This was one of the most effortless sounding rooms at the show.



The Pivotta Opera Only amplifier is a machine of excess. The 1.5 tonne amp can be configured in a number of ways, including 2x 60kW stereo. The price of this 2.5m tall, unfolding amplifier is a cool £1.5million!



The British contingent was out in force, with representatives from Arcam, Chord Electronics, Naim, Wilson Benesch, and more. Neat Acoustics intended to demonstrate the new Neat Iota Xplora (right), but only one arrived!



Warsaw allows a lot of Eastern European manufacturers to showcase the latest versions of their products, which might otherwise never see the light of day. Romania's Rockna is a case in point with its latest Wavestream DAC.