

Warsaw Audio Video Show

Alan Sircom

The European audio calendar is dominated by Munich High-End in May, of course, but recently the Warsaw Audio Video Show has become of ever-increasing importance. With more than 16,000 people visiting the show – across three venues over three days – it's one of the best attended audio events in the West. It attracts a lot of international visitors, too; even though this year's event clashed with the Tokyo Audio Show (report to follow next issue), there were many famous brands accompanied by equally famous names; not only industry luminaries, but musicians like Jean-Michel Jarre launching his latest album at the show.

In a way, the Warsaw show's biggest problem is that success; we have grown used to the more sedate pace of shows in sparsely-populated hotel rooms, and when it takes ten minutes to navigate through the throngs of people and ten more minutes to queue to gain entry to the room you had intended to visit, it becomes functionally impossible to inspect every one of the hundreds of demonstration rooms. But if this is a problem, then it's one I'm sure most show organisers and manufacturers are only too happy to have.

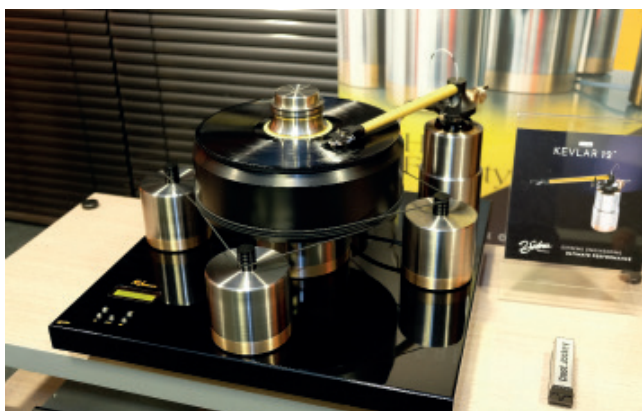
What follows is barely scratching the surface of this young, exuberant event. There were hundreds of rooms filled with wonderful equipment, much of which is made in Poland, by Polish people, for Polish people and as such lacks some international relevance. However, on that international front, when you think that it should take quite a lot to entice the international audio world to rock up to a gloomy, wet, and freezing cold Warsaw in mid-November, and yet the show is packed with people flocking to two hotels and a sports stadium to show their new products, something is going very, very right! +



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Anthem's STR range is very popular in Poland, and looking at the quality of the STR full-function preamplifier, and matching 400W per channel STR stereo power amplifier, it's not hard to see why. The UK prices are £3,645 and £5,490 respectively.



The Sikora Reference turntable complete with new Kevlar 12" tonearm. The €12,500 Sikora Reference turntable has been seen many times, both in the UK and in Poland, but the Kevlar arm is both new and a world first. Price (in Zloty, Euro, or Pound) is yet to be determined.



Tri-Art audio is a Canadian company that makes practically everything from turntables and tonearms to loudspeakers, and even the stands everything sits upon, out of bamboo, soaked in hemp oil and sealed with beeswax. Prices are in the 'affordable/attainable' level.



Pro-Ject has found the perfect record player for an Octopus' Garden... the submerged €1,995 Yellow Submarine!



Wilson Audio was in Tokyo, but still chose to send the new Sasha DAW which proved to be a draw in one of the Gryphon rooms.



Two brands that were dotted around the show were Moon and Audiovector. They came together in one room in the national sports stadium, and this showed off the new PL5,995 Audiovector QR5 floorstanding loudspeaker. We were so impressed by them, we have a pair on for review!



First seen last year, the Tentogra Oscar turntable is inspired by the Brazilian National Congress centre, designed by Oscar Niemayer. The 14inch Kuzma tonearm and 12" record playing gives some sense of scale to this vast turntable, priced around €20,000 depending on finish.

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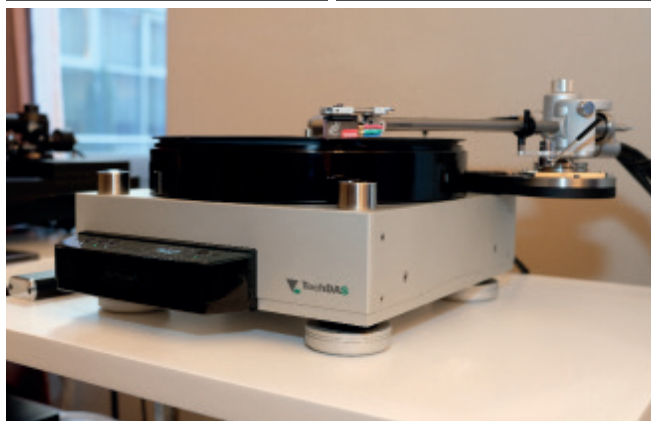
Perhaps the happiest man in audio right now... Rune Skov moved back to his first love in audio – Gryphon. It made a good sound too.



Fyne Audio is fast becoming more than just ur-Tannoy. The company's ranges are gaining a lot of attention, in a good way!



Fink Team had showed the new Borg floorstanding loudspeaker in late prototype form at Munich, but the final version was demonstrated to the public for the first time in Warsaw. The €24,000 AMT-sporting floorstander is the result of decades of Karl-Heinz Fink's thinking.



The excellent sounding Air Force V, the entry-level for TechDAS turntable range, was playing the current darling of the vinyl cognoscenti, the exquisite coreless straight-flux Top Wing Suzaku or 'Red Sparrow' cartridge. Don't expect much change out of €8,000 for the cartridge alone!



This is the Manron Delta SE 150, a single-ended triode amplifier with a tube the size of a crash helmet. The company only had one...



Focal have completed the popular Kanta range, and the \$2,500 No1 standmount sounds as good as it looks.



Boenicke Audio managed to achieve the impossible, in producing a really big sound in a really big room, from a pair of not that large W13 loudspeakers. These might be the company's €20,000+ flagships, but they saw off some even more exotic designs and were a star of the show.



Local heroes Mytek showed the new €2,995 Brooklyn Bridge, which is essentially the Brooklyn DAC with a built-in network player and wireless streamer. It also has an analogue input if you want to use it as a preamplifier, and retains the great headphone amp of the standard Brooklyn.

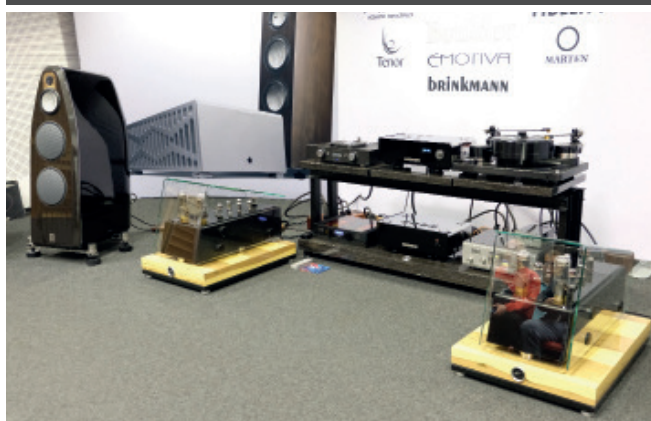
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Mark Levinson's new five series was introduced at RMAF and Warsaw was one of its first European outings. The \$8,500 Roon-chummy 5805 integrated amplifier/digital nerve centre is making friends around the world and is proving something of a sweet-spot for the brand.



The super elegant Helix 2 turntable from vinyl atelier Mark Döhm, uses what it calls Micro Signal Architecture to reduce noise and keep the vinyl signal pure. It's used here with a nine-inch Schroder CB arm, all for a package price of £25,000.



Almost the full Scandiwegian system here, with Marten's excellent Coltrane 3 (Marten celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2018) coupled to some excellent Engstrom and Engstrom audio electronics. The German connection from Brinkmann helped, too.



The SoulSonic Hologram X loudspeakers use an eight-foot ribbon and five bass drivers. Perfect for ticking all the WTF boxes.



Alongside all the usual show-going parts, synth legend Jean-Michel Jarre launched his new album at the Warsaw show.



Polish power company Gigawatt branched into amplifiers this year, with the launch of the Marton Opusculum Reference. The brand existed in the 1990s and the owner of Marton and Gigawatt are good friends, so it was only logical to bring out a 120kg integrated amp at around €60k!



This is perhaps the best reason why the audio industry loves this show. Try to find any other audio event that has its own chill-out zone, has people young enough to bring their infant children to a show, and have the presence of mind to bring ear-defenders for the kid. Brilliant!