Subject: Report from Son&Image
Posted by GarMan on Mon, 05 Apr 2004 19:43:37 GMT
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Spent the weekend in Montreal at the Son&Image Festival. My first audio show and had a great time. Ate my share of Smoked Meat for the rest of the year. However, I was a little disappointed as I was expecting to hear "magic". Magic as in substantially better than what I'm used to from my own system. Magic as in all those amazing things that reviewers write about. Magic as in "It's like the band is in the room".There were a few rooms that I really enjoyed though.Song Audio had a couple of rooms with Loth-X speakers and their own electronics. The Loth-X Troubadour with Song Audio's 300B SET was very enjoyable. Up until that point, the only Loth-X that I was familiar with was their BS-1, which had a very "honky" sound. The bigger and more expensive Troubadour was much more natural, although it still had that paper sound. While the speakers were tonaly inaccurate, the dynamic realism blew me away. These speakers are effortless. More and more, tonality is starting to take a back seat to dynamic range for me. I'm not refering to shear volume, but rather the instantaneous change and range of volume you get within a single note or a singers voice. Sure, it's great to have both tonal and dynamic accuracy, but a ruler flat response at the expense of dynamics sounds dead. Not to name names, but those ruler-flat speakers with carbon/kevlar cones, 84dB sensitivities and more components in their crossover than most tube amps just didn't do anything for me.Omega Loudspeaker made the trek from CT. Heard a lot about these guys on the Net and I was amazed how natural these single drivers sound. Of all the single drivers I heard at the show, these had the least amount of paper sound. Also love the way Omega can get such big sound from those 4 inch drivers. "Modified Fostex" was how they were described.StudioLab was another room that I really enjoyed. These guys are located just 10 minutes from where I live, so I'm pretty familiar with their stuff. Very simple two way speakers with first order crossovers, but executed very well with high quality components. While these were not single drivers, they still had that "ease" of reproducing as the single drivers did. And none of that paper cone sound. There wasn't any one thing that was exceptional about them, but it did everything very well. Probably the best "all-arounder" for me at the show.Another notable was Divertech, distributor of Copland, ASL, and Ref3a. They had their new Ref3a Dulcet, powered by an ASL Explorer, controlled by a Copland preamp. The Dulcets were small bookshelves with huge sound. Again, very effortless, probably due to its lack of crossovers (only one cap on the tweeter).The biggest "Whatever!" came from the HK Rooms. They had one K2 S9800 sitting in the corner. I was very excited to see it and had a few questions for the reps. When asked if they were going to demo it at during the show, the answer was "No, it's too expensive to amp." "Oh," I thought. They must mean that if they amplify it, it becomes a demo unit, and therefore lose its value, kind of like taking a new car off the lot. That, I would understand. But no. According to the rep, it would be too expensive to get an amp big enough to power this speaker! But aren't these guys 94dB sensitive? And most of the British reviewers loved it even with low powered tube amps. "Well the room's too small for us to demo the speaker properly." The room was about 20x30. I think this guy has the K2 confused with JBL's Tour Sound arena speakers. What ended the conversation was when the rep said, with frustration, that they are not JBL, but Erikson Consumers, the distributor for HK, Infinity, and JBL products. That they are not at the show to promote just one product (ie, K2). Everything they do at the show must go towards helping their retailer partners sell all their product lines. In other words: We're only interested in selling mass marketed consumer home theatre systems, so please F-0ff. Obviously, these guys have never heard of halo brand effect. Does he have any idea how many

Intrepids or Stratus the Viper has helped Dodge sell?So, what did I get out of listening to over 70 systems in 12 hours over the course of two days?- For me, dynamic range contributes more to realism than tonal accuracy, although it's nice to have both.- My Pi's are pretty amazing considering I only spend a few hundred bucks on them. Of course the $20K speakers are better, but come on ... a few hundred bucks!- First order multiways are under-rated. I'm starting to think that this is the best compromise between the ease of single driver and the range of multiways. Definately need to investigate this further.- JBL will never establish themselves as a contender in the hi-end market in Canada as they have in Japan (and to some extent Europe) due to poor training and bad attitudes of their reps (yes, I'm bitter).Gar.