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Subject: Rocky Mountain Audiofest: This visitor's thoughts

Posted by [3moons](#) on Thu, 26 Oct 2006 16:16:23 GMT

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First, I want to thank the Colorado Audio Society for their help with the show. <http://www.coloaudio.com/CAS/> These shows are always exciting, especially for audio nuts like me. Talk about audio as fine art, as audio jewelry. It was there. If the high-end audio industry has done nothing else, it has created some imaginative, artful eye candy. And much of it sounds good too! One gripe about these shows is the strange need for many exhibitors to play their systems way too loud. If I never have to hear a saxophone or brass instruments played louder than life, in a small hotel room, that will be just fine. Maybe I'm in the minority but I want to be drawn into the music, not blown over in my chair. Thank goodness there were also plenty of rooms playing good music at or close to comfortable listening levels. Human voice, classical, jazz, blues and country was all doing things right from a few well set up systems. Hotel rooms can be so problematic when "tuning" a system. In one or two days! The biggest, baddest JM Labs speakers ever made sounded thick and boomy this year. And it's not the speaker or the electronics, as I've heard this same gear sound "Grand" in the home of one of our very own FM Tuner members here in the Dallas area. So they can sound glorious. There were different problems with the Audio Note room. The room in Denver just sounded wrong. And I went back several times. Very strange as much of the same Audio Note gear sounded quite wonderful at the Great Plains Audiofest for the last two years running. With those Audio Note systems set up in two different rooms, no less. <http://www.greatplainsaudiofest.com/> Another shock, I thought, was the Harbeth speakers that sounded so fine last year but not this year. I say, I thought, because this time I heard them being driven through class D amps. I didn't hear any of these type amps produce what I consider good music in any of the rooms. Maybe a few generations from now? Maybe never, for my tastes. The McIntosh room with their array speakers weren't bad at all. At least from the first impression. The array type speaker is one of the reasons I went this year. I have several friends with great sounding arrays from companies like GR-Research, Dali and Selah. Those, one and all, have huge, wide and tall (and good) sound. I DO love my small JM Labs and Dynaudio Aries speaker systems. But every time I visit one of these guys, my system comes up, "plays up" short in size, if not in good sonics. As I expected, nothing affordable... of this type... on my retirement income... is out there. I need a paying job! Two small speaker systems that I found quite nice were the ACI speakers in room 1022 and some new home theater speakers called ERA speakers in room 2000. I won't go into tubes versus solid state, as the division didn't seem to jump out at me this year. Good sound came from both. On my FM tuner fetish, I didn't see any on display. Last year was better. There were music servers and the, quickly becoming, famous Slim Devices Squeezebox. I have a Squeezebox in my second system sitting on one of my tuners. Thank you Fred! It has internet music coming from my router/high speed cable and the computer's hard drive. I have compared several hard drive stored formats. Sent from my M-Audio card, digital out and hardwired into my main system DAC. For me, the sound quality measured up like this. EAC WAV files direct from CD as best. With WMA lossless and iTunes lossless about neck and neck second and downhill from there with iTunes and MP3. I bring this up because in the Evergreen Ballroom Salons, room A, there was some HUGE Wilson speakers driven by Halcro amps. The music was from a hard drive in WMA lossless format. The sound was OK but I did get the feeling it was from a "soft" format. Not what I normally hear from a pair of Wilson's on transistor or tube gear. I dare say one of our DIY members could have extracted better sound with a "real" CD in an \$80 Panasonic DVD player as the transport and a nice moderately priced DAC. Just my opinions.

On the final musical note. I enjoyed the music and talking to the people in the Quicksilver, ModWright, GR-Research, Welborne Labs, Atmosphere, Experience Music, Inc., Amber Wave Audio, Zu Audio, Hagerman Technology and Tyler Acoustic rooms. When reading the list, I'm sure my DIY bones must be showing. Love that music! 8:-) jim... If you've somehow missed it, Fred has about 55 photos of some of the more affordable and non-mainstream companies can be seen on the link below. <http://fredt300b.smugmug.com/gallery/2040368> So what's next? For me, it will be the Lone Star Audiofest in Dallas next May. Hope to see you there.  
jim...<http://www.lonestaraudiofest.com/>

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