Subject: Re: The State of Hi Fi
Posted by Wayne Parham on Sun, 06 Nov 2022 14:56:34 GMT
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I agree, Rusty.

I've been in audio for nearly fifty years now and have heard this same warning cry the whole time. I expect the same song was uttered for fifty years before that.

First I heard - in the 1970s - was complaints about Japanese imports. Then those actually became some of the most sought-after components. Next it was the introduction of digital in the 1990s. Then it was the sad decline of vinyl. Of course, that's definitely not the case now. I expect there are more vinyl sales that there are of compact disks.

So I don't agree with any suggestion that high-end audio is dying. That's an old worn out discussion that pops up pretty regularly in the audio world.

What I would observe is that online sales have hurt all brick and mortar institutions. I'm of two minds there.

I really hate seeing some of my favorite retailers suffer and die. Record shops are more scarce, often surviving because of their resale offerings. High-end audio shops are scarcer too, but they've always had trouble because they're selling into a small market. Big Box retailers attract people away from them, which was the case long before the popularity of the internet.

On the other hand, niche market products are much more available now. Audio has never offered a big income for individuals, so the most talented designers don't usually choose an audio field as a career. But they often create their own systems and sometimes offer them online. This brings a whole new selection of high-end products to the market.

I sold my speakers by word of mouth in the 1970s. It was a hobby, not one I aspired to make a living with. So my speakers were popular only in and around Tulsa, Oklahoma. But the internet changed all that.

And I have found a similar story at literally dozens of small companies. When I go to audio trade shows, I see a vast assortment of truly high-end products from passionate designers. Every one of 'em has a story just like mine.

So I would go so far as to say high-end audio has never had it so good.