Subject: Bose buys McIntosh?!!
Posted by Wayne Parham on Thu, 21 Nov 2024 18:32:20 GMT
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This has been the audio buzz for the past couple days, but I'm so busy I hardly paid attention. When I heard it on Tuesday, I mentally tuned it out as noise, thinking it some branded marketing rubbish.

Then just now, Kelly said to me, "Did you hear that Bose bought McIntosh?"

For some reason, her saying it made it resonate. I was sure she got that wrong, so I looked it up and sure enough. Bose bought McIntosh.

I've never been thrilled with Bose because of its original technology, the "direct/reflecting" loudspeaker. I always agreed that the reverberant field was important and that making it uniform and balanced with the direct sound was the goal. But the way to do that, in my opinion and frankly, I think most others in the industry, was by using controlled directivity and really, by controlling reflections. Make sure that the off-axis sound is uniform, but reduced. Bose did it by increasing off-axis sound, multiplying reflections.

In fairness, the multisub approach uses a similar idea, but it's done in the modal region, where sound isn't a reverberant field. Multisubs introduce something like a reverberant field in the sound range where it really doesn't exist. This is very different than the "direct/reflecting" approach that Bose used, which simply energized the reflected energies much more than the direct sound. To me, that has always been the wrong direction to go. It's interesting for a little while, but gets old quick.

But I digress. Bose has "come a long way" since then. They are no longer really a loudspeaker company. They are an electronics marketing company. I think they're probably better known for their noise-cancelling headphones than they are anything else. Today's younger buyers have probably never heard of the "direct/reflecting" approach that Amar Bose championed in the 1970s or its flagship, the Model 901, introduced in 1968.

Still, this has me wondering what's next for McIntosh. They've always been the Rock of Gibraltar in the world of audio. Nothing controversial about McIntosh. Maybe for a while - back when Bose was getting its sea-legs in the 1970s - McIntosh might have seemed dated as the hifi market moved towards solid-state. But they had been around for decades before that, and like the rock, they lasted steadfastly even as the hifi market changed. A few decades passed, and a resurgence of interest in tube amps brough McIntosh well into view. They're like a classic car, but one you can still buy.

So what gives with this Bose/McIntosh marriage? What do you think it'll bring? End of an era or beginning of something great? Or maybe an oddball marriage that lasts a couple years but then fizzles or ends with a bang?