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Subject: Reviewers - Is it possible for them to be unbiased?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Thu, 31 Mar 2005 08:05:42 GMT

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Since this is the dungeon, and since we're on a political tangent, I've got a hornet's nest to stir. Is it even possible for a reviewer to be unbiased? What prompted this train of thought is a conversation that John and I had about a magazine that "reviewed" speakers made by a company that the editor owned part of. It was an obvious conflict of interest, and when exposed, gave a distinct impression of foul play. But after thinking about it, they all support themselves with advertising revenues, so they all have a conflict of interest. They all have a stake in the companies they review. The only exception I can think of is Consumer Reports. So I ask again, Is there such a thing as an honest review?

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Subject: Re: Reviewers - Is it possible for them to be unbiased?

Posted by [Manualblock](#) on Thu, 31 Mar 2005 23:19:39 GMT

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Forget Consumer Reports; there was that scandal where one of the reviewers on the speaker review project was a personal friend of Amar Bose; of course the Bose received glowing reviews. There is nothing wrong with doing business with the folks who offer their products for review as long as you are up-front and provide full disclosure; allowing the readers the opportunity to make an informed decision as to whether to accept the reviews outcome. Anyone who relies on a review to purchase something w/o either hearing it or contacting someone you trust who has heard it is taking a gamble and should accept that fact; even a totally unbiased review doesn't address your needs in your system in your house. It puzzles me when people get excited about minute differences in perceived sound quality; disregarding effects of weather and humidity and mood. We ask of reviewers the impossible task of defining a set of criteria based upon intangibles; then committing to a position and a judgement to be universally applied. Then individuals state requirements that contradict each other; and use test procedures that disregard common sense. Example; using single driver systems with high power SS amps and classical music. Rough example but that's the idea. The whole concept becoming self-defeating. Or they run low power tubes on inefficient speakers, or require beautiful finishes on inexpensive units. The price dictates where the money goes, for a phenomenal finish means a sacrifice on parts etc. Or they have a closet sized space in which to listen but want 15" woofers. My point? Figure out what a review will do for you, if you think it will make a choice of equipment easier, you have the wrong concept of the reviewer's art. Example; I bought my Pi 4's based upon a conversation with Wayne on the phone, never having heard them or of them; and knowing no one who had. I bought based on our talk and knew full well that was just as good a reason to purchase as any other, including that of reading some review. No regrets.

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Subject: Re: Reviewers - Is it possible for them to be unbiased?

Posted by [wunhuanglo](#) on Fri, 01 Apr 2005 00:18:42 GMT

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Maybe. I think Anthony Cordesman was an honest broker (is he still reviewing anywhere?) and I'm certain J. Gordon Holt was never a sell out. Cordesman never seemed to give a damn what anybody thought, and I never read a fawning, over-the-top review by him. I also think Holt's record speaks for itself - he'd rather go out of business than pander to anybody. But two out of hundreds is not a good record.

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Subject: Re: Reviewers - Is it possible for them to be unbiased?

Posted by [Manualblock](#) on Fri, 01 Apr 2005 00:25:54 GMT

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Exactly; you found two you trust and can relate to their opinions. That's how to do it.

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Subject: Re: Reviewers - Is it possible for them to be unbiased?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Fri, 01 Apr 2005 00:27:19 GMT

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Oh, wow. I didn't know the story about Bose and Consumer Reports. I know Bose has been extremely aggressive with marketing, but I didn't know that story. Our recent conversation made me ponder this question. I haven't ever gotten very involved with reviewers, so I'm pretty naive about the publications industry, but I'm getting more acquainted with it every day. What I've seen hasn't been particularly pretty. It seems to me the best thing to do is to listen to products, let them speak for themselves. But there are a lot of reviewers, magazines and E-Zines, and most if not all receive funding through advertisements. That makes me concerned that their reviews might be impossibly biased.

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