Subject: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by AudioFred on Sun, 09 Aug 2009 12:20:24 GMT
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Houston, we have a problem. Our oldest high end audio store, and one of only two that displays two-channel gear in a city of 4 million inhabitants, Audio Concepts, closed its doors last month. Almost everybody likes music and listens to it regularly in their car. Many listen on their computers or their iPods, but few are buying even mass market home audio equipment, and almost none are buying high end equipment.

My solution to this problem is very simple, it's just not the solution most audiophiles (or any high end audio dealers) want to hear: Let people hear what high end can sound like on my audiophile system, then help them choose the compoenents they can afford to build a mass market system.

Some ideas I've considered, but which I believe are not practical for non-audiophiles, are:

1) Building a high end system from scratch. Few people, even those with lots of disposable income, aren't willing to spend the $1.5K minimum needed to buy even an entry level system.

2) Buying used equipment. Non-audiophiles know nothing about what brands are good, what works together, etc. Also, they have no experience with used audio equipment and would be concerned about getting ripped off.

3) DIY. Not a practical alternative for somebody with no knowledge or skills.

One idea that may be viable is to start with whatever they are now using as a source, such as an iPod or a computer, and build a system around that.

What do you think?

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Bob Brines on Sun, 09 Aug 2009 13:00:28 GMT
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Fred, I'm with you!

Of course, my speakers are a bit above your price point -- $825 for what I consider "entry level", but the basic point remains. Plugging decent speakers in ANY consumer grade amp gives pretty good sound.

The problems with the decreasing audio market are:

1. Since the advent of TV, Internet and computer games, very few people either have the time or are willing to take the time to set down for an hour and listen to music.

2. When people listen to music it is in the car or on the iPod. This sound is the standard the Hi-Fi is measured against.

3. Current pop music sounds horrible on ANY system. However, it sounds worse on a good system. Have you tried to listen to any of this crap on your 2-channel? The guy in the street listens to current pop crap on a good system and comes to the conclusion that it is the SYSTEM that is bad.

4. Americans are driven by price. Quality is irrelevant. Given the choice between quality and price, the average consumer will choose price every time.

Fortunately, there will always be a few people that will listen to music. They are out there. As the high end stores continue to close, more and more of these folks are forced to take a gamble on Internet shops like me. In fact, business is starting to pic up. I have two orders in hand at this moment.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by AudioFred on Sun, 09 Aug 2009 13:15:24 GMT
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Bob Brines wrote on Sun, 09 August 2009 08:00Fred,
Fortunately, there will always be a few people that will listen to music. They are out there. As the high end stores continue to close, more and more of these folks are forced to take a gamble on Internet shops like me. In fact, business is starting to pic up. I have two orders in hand at this moment.

I agree the internet is the future of high end audio. A few residence-based sellers may also survive.

I also agree (if I understood you correctly) that the speakers are the most important variable in the audio chain. It's not that the other components don't matter, but that the minimum needed to get good sounding speakers is greater than the minimum needed to get acceptable electronic components. If a friend told me he has a mass market DVD player, HT receiver, zip cord cables, and generic speakers, and he has a $1K budget for to upgrade his system, I would recommend he spend the full $1K on upgrading his speakers.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Shane on Sun, 09 Aug 2009 14:55:55 GMT
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As someone who enjoys the high end gear, but could never justify spending a lot, I think I fall into a middle category. When I bought my first "system" back when I was a freshman in high school, I

bought a set of speakers before I even had any other components. I bought the best sounding ones to me that I could afford, then 6 months later got a receiver and listened to radio for 6 more months before I got a cassette deck, then a CDP as they were coming out. None of my gear is even remotely high end. The 12B4 Abraxas amp is probably the closest. I've got some Carver, Kenwood (70's), and some NAD SS gear as well. Then the DIY stuff which is entry level stuff. Generic cables and IC's. My NAD stuff goes into some little Polk Audio bookshelves for the living room and they sound quite nice for what they are.

We only have two stereo shops here in Amarillo, and neither carries very high end stuff. One Mac, the other B&W and such. You mention tubes or a turntable and they start to reminisce about the good old days. I bought a 1/2 dozen LP's at a city wide garage sale yesterday and the guy asks me if I collect them (he had several 1000 there). I told him that I play them, not collect them. He didn't even know they still made equipment to utilize vinyl. They were all his albums and he said he couldn't play them anymore as his TT had died 20 years ago. So there is unawareness even among those that listened to music.

I don't discount the sound of an IPod. If you put lossless music on one and run it through a good head-amp using the LOD connection into good cans, it can rival any high end stereo rig in my opinion. Unfortunately that is a small section of the population that uses that kind of setup. Dedicated they are, though. People just tend to discount headphone listening all together which is too bad. Because I can get into a complete headphone rig for less than $1K that is very nice.

Current pop music is made to be played through earbuds and factory car systems and is compressed to death. Some car systems sound phenomenal if done right. One of the best sounding systems, home or car, I've ever heard was the Clarion salesman's car system. He used 4 6.5" speakers individually amped for the low end, then a few mids and tweeters throughout the car. Not the boomy bass most go for, but a tight, quick bass that when eq'd through a digital setup was very balanced and "correct". He probably had about $3K in it. There is a very visceral feeling to listening to a hard rock CD in a car that is quite similar to being at the concert. One of the reasons I appreciate a good car setup.

But there is a lot of badly recorded music. There is an awful lot of poorly recorded classical music, especially anything "live". Sounds like it's coming from another room around the corner with a door shut. Now not all is that way, but most of the stuff I've heard is, which is one reason I can't get into it as much as I would like.

I think the small shows like LSAF give the public an opportunity to hear what can be done, and Fred's room showed that you don't need a lot of money to get good sound. I guess I'll never have a decent system as I can't bring myself to spend $3-5K on audio gear. Mortgages, car payments, and kids take care of that

Well, I've rambled on and lost the point all together.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Wayne Parham on Sun, 09 Aug 2009 15:22:48 GMT
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I started off with an absolute need to keep costs down. My first speakers were an attempt to get good sound on a budget. That's how the smaller speakers in my line were born. After that, I wanted to do some price-no-object models, and my larger speakers and cornerhorns were a result. Still not expensive by audiophile standards, but they do incorporate a whole lot more engineering than many loudspeakers on the market. So I guess, in a way, all my speakers are about value. That's what counts, in my opinion, no matter the price tag.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by AudioFred on Sun, 09 Aug 2009 18:47:40 GMT
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I believe most who are into high end audio today started with a mass market system and upgraded over time as I did. So I believe it's a good thing to encourage non-audiophiles to buy mass market components, but this is something most audiophiles don't want to hear. However, when somebody's budget is $400 it's a choice between mass market and nothing. Eventually, as their spending cababilites grow they'll be back for something better.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by AudioFred on Sun, 09 Aug 2009 18:57:09 GMT
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Shane wrote on Sun, 09 August 2009 09:55 My NAD stuff goes into some little Polk Audio bookshelves for the living room and they sound quite nice for what they are.

Sometimes audiophiles are too quick to dismiss the quality of budget brands like NAD, Cambridge Audio, etc. It's all a matter of where you're coming from. If you listen to $10K components it won't sound very good, but if you're listening to an Insignia receiver like the one I had at the LSAF it will sound very good. A friend has B&W standmount speakers driven by an Onkyo receiver, and when I loaned him an NAD integrated to try with them he was surprised by the improvement. Then another Houston Audio Society friend loaned him an expensive pair of monoblocks and preamp, and he was ruined for life.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by SteveBrown on Mon, 10 Aug 2009 14:20:22 GMT
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I have pondered the same thing. My wife just got an Itouch, and she and her daughter loaded it up with all kinds of music, she loves it. Now consider that she generally will not spend more than 10 minutes listening to serious music on a good system (like mine). She is even content to play music from the itouch on the internal speaker, yes, it sounds worse than a tin can! Why? Well, I

guess because it is easy and it is the music she likes. It reminds me of a similar stuggle I've had when in the 80's I had my own photo studio. People would call and ask why my prices were 4x as much as the JC Penny Portrait studio. My response was, if you can't tell the difference, go to Penney's. I think we've gotten to a point as a society where people just don't really care all that much about the quality. Oh there will always be some, but it is a small crowd. One more experience to relate! My wife and I like good wines. When we first moved to Columbus 4years ago she was invited to a neighborhood Pampered Chef party so she took one of our few bottles of very nice wine we had brough from an Oregon vineyard. Our neighbor served it with ice and 7-up. I could have cried.

Subject: Re: Why the lack of interest in high end audio these days
Posted by CAspeakerman on Tue, 11 Aug 2009 19:51:08 GMT
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Hello all...

This is long... there is a lot involved with this topic.

Having watched and participated in the rise... peak... and now fall of the public 's interest in high end audio, I have several personal observations to interject here.

Demographics are the first thing that I think are a large part of this. As in the baby boomer generations numbers exaggerating the whole cycle. One could write a book... but I think most of us understand what the relationship has been with out listing it all here.

Competing technologies... In the 60's when high end was transitioning from a very exclusive ... limited specialty item to mainstream... electronically there was radio (FM stereo was a big deal then) TV... as in COLOR TV and little else. Now the list of electronic goodies is near endless.

Culture... people on balance are way more active and have way more disposable income now. A lot more interest - access to a wide variety of pursuits. We are a more fragmented society today relative to our leisure time. And I think listen to a lot more live music than in the past. Going to live concerts is a priority for many people today and there are so many more venues today. Casino's and so on. People just don't hang around the house like they used to.

Novelty... well... it has passed. A real music reproduction system was a rarity in the late 50's and a lot of the 60's. It was mainly limited to audio purists... Ham radio - electronics nuts and those who had a ton of money coupled with an interest in music.

Like a Corvette... today just about anybody with any kind of desire and a credit rating can buy one if they really wanted one.

Not so 40-50 years ago.

And people today tend to dabble, satisfy their curiosity and move on to other things. In the 60's & 70's it took a big financial commitment to have a high end system. You planned and saved up and invested. Not so much anymore. You just pull out your credit card...

I would be interested in others comments on this. It is key to answering Fred's original question. I do think as our economy and personal disposable income decline... high end audio has a real chance at moving back into the mainstream. We shall see.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by PR Audio on Wed, 19 Aug 2009 08:19:28 GMT
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I'll try to contribute more thoughts here when (if) I can get a little more time, but, 1st, you all have made some quite good observations.

Steve, in specific response to your comment about quality, I think that when it comes to many areas, people have simply been "dumbed down", and manufacturers for the most part now expect this type of consumer. In other words, most manufacturers don't think their customers will really expect all that much from them, and customers figure that's how they'll be treated and approached, and are too lazy(?) / busy / whatever to do anything but oblige them.

It's much like my old assistant at Credence: She figures ALL politicians are crooks, so, (paraphrasal) "might as well vote for whoever promises the most goodies and hope they come through with some of it." No attempt is made to hold said politicians to a higher standard. (I really think this points toward a sort of moral decay in our society, but I suppose that's a subject for an entirely different thread!)

Going back to "high end" (or even halfway decent audio), what we have is a vast majority of people who don't hold themselves or vendors of audio products to much of an expectation. Probably the most common phrase I hear is "Oh, I probably couldn't tell the difference" (in sound quality). But, the great majority of people to whom I get a chance to demonstrate the difference, between simply "good" sound, and the average of what people are listening to, CAN tell a difference, and some, when they find out that they can "build up to it", and not have to spend a whole ton of money, get interested in doing so. The main thing is to get 'em interested, and I think that's Fred's point about what he's trying to do.

At LSAF '09, a group of us ended up in Keith Larson's room, late Sat., and this was one of the topics that came up, at least in relation to getting more attendance at LSAF, general interest in audio, and so on. I made the suggestion that somehow combining some sort of audio demos / shows with other events that already draw people in would perhaps be useful. I'm toying with the idea myself. For example, from Section 270.65 of the Illinois Administrative Rules for the "DuQuoin State Fair":

Section 270.65 Policy of Permitting Space Without Monetary Charge

To promote the dissemination of free information and/or to provide for the free entertainment of fairgoers, the Department may provide space and/or facilities to exhibitors without monetary charge for industrial, cultural, educational, trade and/or scientific exhibits, provided that the

exhibits fit into the general theme of the State Fair, space is available, and no direct sales to the public are made on the fairgrounds.

So, potentially I could go up there and put up a "non-sales" type exhibit, and many thousands of people would walk by, daily. Then I just need something to get some of 'em to come in. (My 21" woofer? Free Lemonade? Free Water? [Hey, Murdale Water District, #3 in the USA for best water in 2006!])

Ok, granted, an outdoor fair in August in So. IL might be, umm, "sticky" (hot and humid.) And I'd have to come up with a tent / booth. But, there are all sorts of other kinds of events and festivals, too...

I have some other thoughts regarding getting people interested, through the avenue of A-V. I'll try to get some time to get those thoughts organized and posted, uh -- sometime!

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by PR Audio on Wed, 19 Aug 2009 09:10:13 GMT
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Bob Brines wrote on Sun, 09 August 2009 08:00
4. Americans are driven by price. Quality is irrelevant. Given the choice between quality and price, the average consumer will choose price every time.

Bob, in general I agree with you, but, I don't entirely agree with you on point 4. Toyota and Honda did very well for quite some time by emphasizing quality at a moderate price, NOT the lowest price around. Their Korean competitors started doing better once they, in turn, were able to improve their quality to the point that they didn't kill themselves by offering much longer warranties.

Conversely, based on price and economy, the Ford Focus should be a smash sales success, but, it's reputation for poor quality drove a lot of people away from it. (Including me - I bought a used Mazda MX-3 GS many years ago, and a used Toyota Matrix more recently, over a new Focus, and for higher prices to boot.)

Ok, I may be "weird", but are there more Focus's out there than Accords or Corrolas / Corrola based vehicles?

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio

Posted by Bob Brines on Wed, 19 Aug 2009 11:38:22 GMT
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"No generality is worth a damn, including this one." --GBS

Cars, houses and a few other this are indeed different. Cars and more so trucks represent one's manhood. Detroit alienated the public with crappy QC and "planned obsolescence". (It is amusing to look back at a time when cars were designed to wear out in two years, now that we take out six year mortgages on new cars.) The Japanese stepped in with good QC and still today, the general opinion is that oriental cars are built better than American cars. This may be marginally true, but only marginally.

For everything else, may I mention Sam Walton?

Bob

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by akhilesh on Thu, 20 Aug 2009 22:10:13 GMT
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HI Guys,
I agree with most of what has been said. I think the main reason the hifi industry is dying is because of the way people listen to music.
Most people listen to it casually or in the background. I often tell my friends: if you listen to music in the background, get a compact system. But if you like to sit down and lose yourself in the music, if how a cello sounds and a piano sounds and a trombone sounds matters to you, then you get started on a real good system.
Mastering engineers pretty much follow the trend: so if most folks listen to stuff in the background on cheapie systems, they will compress accordingly.

For the hifi industry to pick up, people need to be educated into listening to music and the joys it can bring. Really listening.

-akhilesh

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Wayne Parham on Fri, 21 Aug 2009 01:19:07 GMT
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I suspect that demographics are responsible to a large degree. Seems to me the largest group of people that are really into music are teenagers and twenty-somethings. That's not to say some of us older guys aren't as into music as they are, but I do think many people stop listening to music regularly when they get older. It becomes less a part of many people's lives as they become adults.

Think about it - Almost everyone listens to music a lot in their youth and they make it a big part of their lives. But as they age, many people get busy, start to listen more to the news and current events, and rarely turn on the sound system unless its tied to their home theater. Once you've brought a couple of rug rats into the home, it gets harder to spend an hour of undivided attention to your favorite album.

When you were a kid, you could stay in your room for hours listening to music. You probably had your first kiss at a school dance - listening to music. You went everywhere with the stereo in your car going, knew all the current songs. We sometimes get sick of the kids with their stereos blasting in traffic, but hey, they're still enjoying music.

To be honest, I don't think I see the "hifi downturn" as much as maybe some other people do. I was always interested in making speakers inexpensive, and I think that keeps me plugged in to the youth market, especially the younger DIYers. At least some of my products appeal to this demographic.

At first, having inexpensive but high-quality speakers was a necessity because I was one of those kids wanting the best but having little spending money. Then later, as my disposable income grew, I was able to make more price-no-object designs. But even they are inexpensive compared to some audiophile offerings.

Most of the people I deal with buy kits, and while not recession proof, that's exactly the kind of product people buy when they are trying to save money. DIY seems to be counter-cyclic with respect to economic downturns, so when the economy gets weaker, DIY products seem to sell more. As a result, I almost never see any real change that I can pin on a downturn in hifi or even in the economy. It's a steady stream to me, with most of my builders being the same sort of person that would do their own car tune-ups or put in their own kitchen tile. They often want to pinch a penny but they also want it "right", and they think "if you want it right, you have to do it yourself."

I think that brings us back full circle, right back to where Fred was when he started this thread.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Barryso on Thu, 27 Aug 2009 18:06:06 GMT
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One of my friends is one of the most musically knowledgeable folks I've ever met. He's just over 30 years old and knows stuff from the 1930's and later in the styles he likes (mostly rock and pop but he also knows blues and a little jazz).

He GLADLY attends the music nights the local "music crazies" hold from time to time. He loves listening to the big systems and always brings good music to hear on these systems.

But he has no interest in gear or in having gear.

A few years back when Jon Busch had his small open baffle speakers at the Lone Star Fest I decided to build a pair. It was a really cool project and a chance to see if the open baffle speakers would work in a really crappy (square) room. They do!

Figured when I was done with them my friend could have them. He also has a square room and tends to listen to music in compressed formats. The JB speakers are fairly forgiving in the mids and highs so it seemed like a perfect match for his environment.

But he had no interest in them. Doesn't want a system.

I'm not surprised he doesn't want to go whole hog into fancy schmancy audio but am really flustered that he doesn't want a quick, cheap, great sounding system given how much he enjoys music.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Wayne Parham on Thu, 27 Aug 2009 18:41:18 GMT
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That's a weird deal, but I know lots of musicians like that. Never understood it really, but I think to them it's more about the content than about the quality, in a manner of speaking. They sort of hear through the media, if you know what I mean. They can listen through a distorted amp and buzzing speaker and get just as much as they would through a better system.

I think most people are more quality sensitive than that. If they hear good sound, they can easily identify it as being better, and they prefer it. But if they never get a chance to hear really good quality sound systems, they don't know what they're missing. And then there's the money factor too, maybe more a bang-for-the-buck metric.

I think lots of people would rather listen to their favorite music through a $500 to $1000 system like Fred is talking about, or the one you put together for your friend, than they would listen to an iPod or Best Buy micro-satellite system. The quality difference is striking, noticed immediately. Move up to a $5000 to $10,000 system, and I think most would prefer that to the $1K system. The quality difference is still pretty apparent, you can hear the clarity difference right away (if the components chosen are truly higher quality, of course). Some people will balk at the price tag though, and may be quite happy with the less expensive system. On to the $10K+ systems, you'll really lose a lot of people on the price, and especially since the sound quality improvement, while there, isn't as noticeable. The most expensive systems look expensive, but you reach a point of diminishing returns regarding sound quality, so not as many people buy them.

I guess it's like anything else, really. Same deal with cars. Most are in small, economical or midsize, mid-price cars. Fewer people drive expensive cars, even though most are clearly better in terms of performance or comfort or both. And then, some people don't even want to own a car. It isn't always economic either, some people just rather not drive, prefering public transportation or cabs. That's another thing I never figured out, 'cause I love to drive. But people from other cultures don't drive as much, so when they're here, they'd rather not drive even if they can afford a

car. Different strokes for different folks.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Shane on Thu, 27 Aug 2009 20:34:54 GMT
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Being a musician and someone who appreciates good quality sound (I know, I'm unusual), I guess I'll throw a few comments in the hat from a guitarists point of view. These are only my opinions as an electric guitarist and not everyone thinks as I do.

Most musicians I know like a good sound, but their perception of good sound in a live setting is different from an audiophile as Wayne said. They want that good sound an audiophile likes in the final mix most of the time, but rarely get it. I look for "tone", not necessarily balanced sound across the board. We fiddle with all the tone controls depending on the songs we like to play. A big, chunky low end for metal--with slightly scooped mids--and a ripping high end with lots of presence. A smooth low end, with more mid, and a rolled off treble for a lot of blues (ala Clapton or Eric Johnson). We change the sound with a multitude of effects after all that a lot of times because we can and it adds to the total viceral effect of the song. Imagine AC/DC played through a straight clean channel with every control set down the middle--I've done it and it bites! Each instrument in the band is done in some fashion like this. Even acoustic players do this to some degree, although they rely on the guitar itself to produce the "tone" they're looking for. In the end an engineer balances all these to make a nice homogenous sound, well some do anyway--then they compress the hell out of it.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Shane on Sun, 06 Sep 2009 13:39:51 GMT
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As a continuation of attracting people, especially younger people, to better sounding audio--how about we as a group research some music that is recorded well that the younger generation may like? You're not going to convert many people in their late 20's -early 30's by playing Mozart or Miles Davis or even Diana Krall. I am turning 40 and really just began appreciating other types of music other than rock/metal/pop in the last several years. I've heard it most of my life, but considered it either boring and lifeless, or just plain confusing. Don't get me wrong as I've always liked live classical performances where you could see the action as well as hear the music, but a recording of it left me sleeping--which is what it will do to most younger people. Although my 11 year old daughter really likes the psuedo classical Mike Oldfield Music of the Spheres. My kids are different I guess because they are exposed to many types of music. I bought the Beatles White Album the other day and she is digging that too. If only I could get my hands on one of the new mono boxed sets

Anyway, if you know some younger people you might ask them what they listen to and try to find some good recordings of their type of music. That way when they come into an exhibitors room

they can hear the difference. They're are some good recordings of rock/metal and popular music out there. I've heard some high end systems do metal quite well. In fact I think this type of music really show what a speaker system can do. There is more going on in the band than most people realize.

What ya'll think?

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Wayne Parham on Sun, 06 Sep 2009 14:54:22 GMT
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If you remember, there is all sorts of good music on half-speed mastered vinyl. Some rock, some jazz, some of all sorts. Now I realize that era ended in the late eighties, but there is still some music the kids will identify with. I'll bet we can find some audiophile vinyl of newer music too. Vinyl records on Amazon.com

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Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Shane on Sun, 06 Sep 2009 15:58:49 GMT
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Vinyl would probably be the best bet for the best sound, CD's are out there, but you definitely have to research and be selective. I just know that I have employees at work that shrug off what most consider "audiophile" music when I have it playing on my computer. Sound at that point isn't the issue, it's definitely the material.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Wayne Parham on Sun, 06 Sep 2009 17:59:14 GMT
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I agree, and frankly, I understand. People naturally find their own favorite music. Once you get into high-end audio, you start hearing the flaws in many recordings, so you seek out higher quality cuts. But that sometimes forces you to limit your choices, even branch out. I think that was exactly your point.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by PR Audio on Sat, 26 Sep 2009 01:48:45 GMT
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I did a quick search on the forum and didn't find any exact matches -- have you all (y'all?) had any discussions on the so-called "volume wars"? I recently posted a YouTube vid link about compression on modern recordings on my website, and also linked to a lengthy Wikipedia article about it. The Wikipedia article has many references, including a website that posts a dynamic range database on over 2400 albums: It's fascinating information, especially when they compare old album releases to newer releases of the same albums. True, it's really depressing to see what's happened, and happening, but, this sort of confirms what our ears are telling us: If we want to find a pop CD with good music material on it*, and at least a decent quality recording, there is a a lot more available if one "goes back 30 years" (or more).

It seems to me to be noteworthy that even "Rolling Stone" has had an extended article about it.

It'd also be great if some of you have the capacity to upload more material to the database -- I'd love to see how something like some more of the old Sheffield releases such as Thelma Houston and The Pressure Cooker: "Pressure Cooker" would rate. (POW!!!)

This subject can be Googled, or, I have a few "starter" links & that YouTube video here:

http://praudio.com/site/prs-favorite-youtube-music-videos-and-more/

*I'll post further about this, one of these days. One thing that may be encouraging is that when I look up old tunes on YouTube, one often sees comments by youngsters, like one by a 16 year-old saying (paraphrasal) "Jethro Tull is the greatest!", or someone marvelling over "Salisbury" (remastered) or "In the Court of the Crimson King" (which ICCK release sounds best is a topic on Amazon, too), or even talking about how clean the sound is compared to modern recordings. (They notice this even on YouTube, and probably using cheapy computer speakers or $20 headphones!) These are not all audio masterpieces, by any means (though some Tull CD's, for example rate fairly well in the Dynamic Range Database). And, musical taste is just that... BUT... some of these kids seem to have the right idea: There IS more to even rock music than a 3 minute blast of mush.

My God, there may be a slim ray of hope???

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by Wayne Parham on Sat, 26 Sep 2009 02:05:12 GMT
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You raise a very good point, and no, I don't think we've ever discussed compression here, not the studio recording kind anyway. It is a pretty popular discussion at the audio get togethers though.

My favorite music growing up was pretty complex and with a very wide dynamic range, which probably contributed to my needs for high efficiency speakers using prosound drivers. Not much else would really work for me. King Crimson, Yes, Genesis, all the art rock of the 60's and 70's has very quiet passages. No compression there. Classical music also tends to have a wide dynamic range. My vinyl collection is almost all classical and art rock.

Now when I listen to the radio, even back then, it's audibly compressed. Now days, even more so. It all sounds like a commercial, same process, make it all one volume level and keep the VU meter pegged at +6dB.

Subject: Re: Attracting Non-Audiophiles To High End Audio
Posted by PR Audio on Sat, 26 Sep 2009 07:52:09 GMT
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I'd agree with basically all of that! I listen to the radio (FM) in my lab (sometimes) and often while working @ my workbench, on a reasonably good, though not "high end" system. I've noticed that after a little bit, I often tend to turn it down to a fairly low level, unless a song I really like comes along. Now, granted that is partially to keep from being blasted by commercials(!), but I also think it's an almost subconscious reaction to the fatiguing sound. I almost never do that, listening to a good CD. (The vast majority of my CD's are old CD's.) In a sense, the volume wars often "backfire", I think. When I have the volume turned down at my end, I don't take much notice of what's being played, for the most part, and most anything new pretty much gets ignored, because it's just more low level hash. It doesn't have a "sound" that involves me, and doesn't even have that "oh, that's a cool old song" / memory / familiarity / impulse to get me to "lend an ear".

This is not to say ALL compression is bad. Carefully used, it can actually add (subjectively) to the "punch" of certain sounds. (I've done this myself, fooling around with a good compressor, and I'm far from being an expert in using one.) But, what's going on now, with most modern recordings, is, it seems to me, often driving people away from real enjoyment and appreciation of, and involvement with, music.
