Subject: Advice on assessing stereo components
Posted by scyounts on Mon, 14 Dec 2009 21:16:13 GMT
View Forum Message <> Reply to Message

I am looking for advice and information about upgrading and/or repairing my current stereo components to attain a reasonably good quality sound system. I am able to afford repair work or the purchase of new or used components but, of course, cost is important. I do have some abilities to disassemble and repair mechanical devices. My knowledge of electronic components is limited.
Primarily, I am looking to attain:
1) A good to very good sound system for playing music (Cd's/radio/(and eventually MP3s?) in my house. I hope to install speakers in several rooms. Excess equipment would be placed in a separate apartment or disposed of.
Additionally, I hope to eventually have:
2) A good sound system (Home Theater?) for a large screen TV (which I do not yet own). This system may overlap the one above.
3) A moderate media center computer to stream Internet video.

I currently own the equipment below. Purchase dates and vintage are given when known. Condition is noted, as of last use, which may have been several years ago.

TV: Sony 27" Trinitron (not HD) circa 2005, in current use.
Tuner/Amplifiers, in current use:
1) Technics AV Control Stereo Receiver SA-GX650 (350W?), circa 1993.
2) Pioneer Audio Video Receiver VSX-305 (185W?),6/1997
Turntables:
1) United Audio, Dual 1218, circa 1970, possible uneven spin (needs a new belt?)
2) United Audio, Dual 1218, circa 1975, possible warble/unevenness in music. Some of the small pieces of plastic near the controls are warped, as though from exposure to heat.
3) Realistic LAB340 (This may be ok but I am unsure about condition. Sound may warble a little on this one also)
Cassette Players
1) Fisher Stereo Standard CR-W9435, circa 2003 (working).
2) Sony HX Pro TC-WR670, 1991 (not working, doors are jammed).
1/4" Reel to Reel Tape Decks
1) Teac A2300 SD, circa 1975 (working)
2) Teac (similar to above) 1970 (working)
Speakers (all working)
1) Two medium sized Dynaco (circa 1970)
2) Two medium sized Cerwin-Vega D3 (1990?)
3) A home theater setup consisting of two Bookshelf Bose 21 speakers, 2 additional small Bose bookshelf speakers and a large base speaker (circa 1993?)
2) Two medium sized Cerwin-Vega D3 (1990?).

So, where does one start? And then, how to continue?

Subject: Re: Advice on assessing stereo components
Posted by Wayne Parham on Mon, 14 Dec 2009 21:28:20 GMT
View Forum Message <> Reply to Message

For me, the biggest thing is the speakers. That's where there is the most difference in sound quality, in my opinion. Speakers have to transform electrical energy to mechanical, then to acoustic. So even though it's functionally one of the most simple systems in the audio chain - usually just two or three moving parts - a loudspeaker also has the greatest chance to mess things up. Get great quality speakers, and good quality amps sound fine. But get mediocre speakers and no amps or source material will sound good.

Subject: Re: Advice on assessing stereo components
Posted by scyounts on Mon, 14 Dec 2009 22:09:07 GMT
View Forum Message <> Reply to Message

Thanks for the lightning reply. After making my posting I had switched to the turntable forum and noticed you had made some interesting responses to queries.

So, I will begin my research with speakers.

This coming summer we will be doing a house remodel (which will include speaker wire as necessary). When we are done, I would like to have one room that is a great place to listen to music, with several (2? or 4?) nice speakers. I have enjoyed the old Cerwin-Vega and Dynaco speakers I own. They seem little large for some locations (the CV's are 28" high, 14" wide, 12" deep. The Dynacos are slightly smaller). I know many speakers are much larger. Should I be looking to upgrade these speakers? How do sound, size, and price interrelate? Would you have any suggestions as to how to go about research?

Also, turntables. The Technics SL 1200 looks like a wonderful piece of equipment. I would love to hear one someday, but for now, I can make do with something less. Should I and how could I assess the condition of my turntables? Should I take them to a shop or are there diagnostics I could perform? Or should I just look for a relatively inexpensive new purchase?
Thanks, Steve

Subject: Re: Advice on assessing stereo components
Posted by Wayne Parham on Mon, 14 Dec 2009 22:52:59 GMT
View Forum Message <> Reply to Message

I love those Technics SL1200 tables and would encourage you in that direction, sure. As for picking speakers, I suggest to follow your eays. The hardest part there, in my opinion, is what sounds good in a fifteen minute demo may not sound good at all after a few hours. So you're kind of stuck with living with your choice, but only after making the choice can you learn what living

with it will be like.

One thing that may help is to study the various design philosophies. You can always evaluate a loudspeaker design based on its measurements. Of course, it can be argued that you first have to know what measurements are valid and what are less important. But I think most everyone agrees that one-axis response is a top priority, and many agree that smooth polars (off-axis) response with useful patterns and uniform directivity are very important too.

Distortion is an indirect measure of linearity, so whether or not you believe THD is important, knowing one speaker distorts less than another at a similar drive level tells you something. I prefer speakers with low second and third harmonics, as they sound cleaner and are less fatiguing. A speaker with higher distortion levels can make me feel like I have tinitis after just a couple hours but a I can listen to a very low distortion speaker through a whole weekend-long trade show and still feel refreshed.

Subject: Re: Advice on assessing stereo components
Posted by scyounts on Mon, 14 Dec 2009 23:20:50 GMT
View Forum Message <> Reply to Message

So now I'll go listen. And do some reading up on spec. Thanks.
