
Subject: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [AudioFred](#) on Wed, 03 Nov 2010 13:35:28 GMT
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Here's a question for 2010 and previous years' LSAF visitors: Are you interested in seeing and hearing "affordable mainstream high end" equipment at the 2011 show?

By "mainstream high end" I mean products that are offered by relatively large manufacturers, advertised in the mainstream audio magazines, non DIY, and marketed through high end audio retailers (brick & mortar and online). This is to differentiate them from the typical LSAF exhibitor, who is a one-person company that sells direct with no "middle man", and whose product prices are relatively low compared to the prices of comparable mainstream equipment.

I'm asking because I need to decide whether we should actively encourage local high end audio retailers to exhibit at the show. The 2010 post-show internet chatter (or the lack thereof) about expensive equipment tells me it's a waste of time and money to exhibit \$4K power conditioners, \$7k electronic components or \$15K speakers, but I believe a retailer's presence with one of their more affordable systems (e.g. NAD electronics driving Maggie 1.7's) would be an asset to the show, and could result in some sales for the exhibitor.

So what do you think?

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Wed, 03 Nov 2010 23:44:52 GMT
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Personally, I think that is part of what LSAF is all about. You know, this part of the country really has very few high end audio stores or dealers. So LSAF is a good chance to introduce people to that market. It also allows manufacturers to reach out to an untapped market segment, to show their products to an audience that is largely unfamiliar with this kind of product.

I can't tell you how many people I've met that naively purchased mediocre sound systems and home theaters, spending a great deal of money on what is really pretty average junk. When I meet someone like that, I am certainly not going to be rude and tell them how much they've been "had", but their reactions are always the same when they come over to my house and experience true high-fidelity sound. They're usually very quiet for a while, listening. Then they start asking questions, and some eventually start upgrading their own systems, often completely replacing them. Most never knew there was better equipment available. They bought what the local audio store owner said was "best".

LSAF provides an opportunity to introduce people like that to equipment that is genuinely high-quality. Lots of shops in this part of the country sell and install expensive systems, but very few do anything even close to high end. Just high priced. I even know one guy that bought \$100K worth of monster cable, on the recommendation of the dealer, of course. So LSAF can

help manufacturers of that market segment reach prospective customers in this part of the country. This will do everyone some good, helping prospective high-ticket buyers to get actual value and helping upper-echelon manufacturers find these customers.

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [Norris Wilson](#) on Sat, 06 Nov 2010 01:10:56 GMT
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There were invitations sent out to many of the retail audio stores in the Dallas area for LSAF 2009.

There was not one reply to any of these invitations. And of course, not one retailer showed up.

I have said that LSAF needs balance of audio companies exhibiting. Exhibitors from the retail stores that carries Mid-Fi to Hi-Fi needs to be a part of that balance. But, how does one get them to what is usually a DIY and direct sales specialty audio show?

I talked with John Wolfe of Audio Classic reproductions while visiting RMAF last month about his NOT returning to LSAF 2010. He said that it is just too small of a show to afford coming to have 25 people show up to his exhibit, not selling anything. Maybe trying to sell \$30,000 speakers at a show like LSAF is not the best way.

So, here is an issue that is a hard nut to crack.

How to get beyond the way LSAF is supported now, to exhibitors like Classic Audio, and many in between?

Good luck in your efforts!

NW

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sat, 06 Nov 2010 03:29:36 GMT
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I wouldn't expect a retailer in Dallas to participate in a show like this in Dallas. It doesn't benefit them, since they already have a presence there. I think LSAF probably makes more sense for niche market manufacturers, and maybe regional distributors, not local retailers. It's a place to reach out for companies that do not have a dealer network, or for those that have very few dealers and little or no representation in this part of the country.

That said, I think Norris' comments clearly illustrate one problem LSAF has to overcome. The Lone Star Audiofest is a very different kind of show than RMAF. You don't pay anything to be an

exhibitor, but that means you have to take some of the responsibility for your own promotion and your room's success. If you want people to know you're there, you have to pass the word, yourself. Especially in John's case, where he set himself apart from the rest of the show by exhibiting downstairs in the conference room.

When I spoke to John Wolfe at LSAF 2009, he seemed pretty excited about the show and thought his setup was good. He told me that he didn't like AKfest though, saying it had way too much DIY and not enough commercial interest. So maybe later, he started thinking LSAF was the same way. Maybe his foot traffic wasn't as high as he hoped. Or maybe his system wasn't sounding as good as he wanted. I don't know.

I am guessing I have around a couple hundred people go through my room each year, and it always results in a lot of exposure I wouldn't have gotten otherwise. My talks are usually attended by 30 people or so. Most of the attendees are already aware of my products through the internet, but many have never met me in person or heard my speakers. So the LSAF is not a point of first-contact for me, but it is a point of first-meeting and first-impression. This is where I usually meet people face-to-face for the first time, and that's what is most important to me, personally.

I also know that this show has been successful for many other exhibitors too. Not just DIYers or companies with budget products, but also top-tier manufacturers with high-end equipment. Duke, for example, reports that he sells AudioKinesis equipment at shows. They're not nosebleed expensive, but they're not budget boxes either. Since LSAF costs him nothing but his travel expense, I think it is probably a good deal for him. I've heard or read similar stories from Bob Brines, Danny Ritchie and others. Really, just about everyone I've spoken to has this experience. It isn't the biggest show, but it does provide meaningful traffic. It is also the only show of this kind in this part of the country.

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [Shane](#) on Sat, 06 Nov 2010 03:42:03 GMT
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I think part of the problem is exactly as Norris stated. John sells \$30K speakers powered by 10K amps. Do they sound good? Damn right, some of the best horns I've ever heard; but for the average consumer, and even those looking for a "good" system, that is a down payment on a house. Maybe the point of aim should be lower priced, "affordable" mainstream equipment. When I say affordable, I'm thinking in the \$10K and less for a whole rig. Not even remotely not do-able for audiophile sound. Of course I can't afford it, and many others can't either, but there reaches a point for the average Joe where the total dollar amount appears out of reach in his/her lifetime. When I mention to my friends that I really like this \$1500 turntable and \$3000 speakers they think I'm completely insane. Then they hear a setup like that and understand, but still see the money part as insane.

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF

Posted by [gofar99](#) on Sat, 07 May 2011 22:55:11 GMT

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Hi All, I nearly passed on this reply... But couldn't. I figure we fit into the small company slot. It would be nice to get some sales from the Fest, but not essential. A lot of our business is by word of mouth so exposure is as valuable as sales. For me personally, as long as we don't go broke and have to sell out, I'm happy. I'm a diy designer/builder at heart.

I can certainly see why any system costing over 10K would be a turn off. To be honest my personal system would retail for more than that. Even audiophiles need to eat. With our tube line of gear, it is hard to convince someone that an amplifier that delivers 10-20% of the power and has distortion figures 5-10 times worse is really worth paying 5 times more than a SS one from a big box store. A big part of the reason we (Oddwatt Audio) do kits is they are less costly to do in the relatively small quantities we market. Pretty much anyone who knows which end of the soldering iron gets hot can put one together in a matter of hours. Since we started as diy folk, kits seemed to be a way to make it possible for others to get excellent sound without breaking the bank. One of our goals is to make it possible for a budding audiophile to experience tube sound at something reasonable in cost. I'm looking forward to the LSAF as an opportunity to both show off and see what else is around.

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sun, 08 May 2011 01:56:59 GMT

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I hear you. The system I usually bring to LSAF is in the \$10K-20K range. It's affordable, but definitely not what the majority of the public buys. Even fairly wealthy people often skimp on sound systems. But people that are concerned with quality sound will often pay these prices and more.

For those that have more limited budgets but still want good sound, the kits are very attractive ways to get a sound system worth tens of thousands of dollars for low thousands of dollars and some sweat equity. For just a few hundred bucks in the right kits, you can do better than what the big box stores sell retail at any price.

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF

Posted by [Cask05](#) on Thu, 28 Nov 2013 22:15:27 GMT

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Sorry to resurrect this old thread, but this is "near and dear" stuff. High end audio prices always make me feel actual disgust, which reoccurs when I look at virtually any audio mag. Understanding why something sounds good is a path to saving thousands acquiring good systems affordably.

One of the subjects that I still ponder is "how to get the word out", apparently like you all have. Like supporting your local live music musicians and their places of business, I personally subscribe to the idea of direct sales and DIY in audio, as well as educating newcomers on what works and what doesn't, what costs too much and looks pretty, and what knocks your socks off.

Perhaps I should start a thread on "why did you spend all that on electronics and TTs/carts and so little on loudspeakers, room treatments or even just better architected listening rooms and loudspeaker placements. It makes no sense to me to lay out thousands of bucks on afterthought systems that "look nice", instead of first using their ears and acquiring the stuff that puts the recorded performers into the room with you. Cost always matters (...even more of late). I see folks sitting around with 4/5s of their audio budget sunk into the signal chain: they are really dropping the ball wrt the most critical two pieces: the output devices and room acoustics.

Anyhow, my first post here and I thought that I'd go for the gold. To all folks responsible for LSAF over the years: my note of thanks...and congrats. It appears like this event is actually gaining steam--unlike other "high-end shows".

Chris

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [gofar99](#) on Sat, 30 Nov 2013 23:19:42 GMT
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Hi Everyone, Lots of food for thought. The topic and direction it is heading is a mixed bag for me. I like the diy aspects of the fest as it is a source of new ideas. Things that big companies pass over. It is a friendly fest, not cut throat competition for customer dollars. These things are important and worth retaining. At the same time there is indeed a factor of cost. Even as small as we are the cost runs to around \$2K. This can pose a serious burden for exhibitors and certainly scares some off. Yes we do some sales, but that is almost secondary. The exposure is more important and often results in sales at a later time. This is typically after a potential customer has listened to other systems and made sonic and financial comparisons.

So while the participation of mid to high end companies might enlarge the fest, it might at the same time cause the demise of some of the key positive aspects it now has. We don't do ones like RMAF as we don't care for the venue.

'enuf of my 2 cents. A good discussion though.

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [Cask05](#) on Sun, 01 Dec 2013 14:05:45 GMT
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Bruce,

It's easy for me to understand why LSAF is working, and how to make sure that it stays that way--by focusing on the customer (buyers/users) and a dedication of LSAF to helping them gain better knowledge on that subject, and providing opportunities for buying and building their own.

If you continue to emphasize that, I believe that LSAF will continue to be successful. However, if you allow high-end audio dealers that are "selling" to muddle that message, then I believe that you will begin to see problems like elsewhere. I can see why the "high end" dealers don't show up, unless of course they are dedicated to providing value to their customers, not trying to convince them to buy their badly overpriced equipment that has dubious effect on the resulting sound of the system. This subject includes the equipment, its placement AND the room acoustics. Unless you're spending time educating with no-kidding truthful information, I don't believe that the results in the ears of a customer are going to thrill.

I think that Wayne P. has the right formula by continuing to bring in folks to give talks to educate, i.e., this is the same message as "an educated consumer is our best customer". I also think that emphasis on DIY and kits, especially loudspeakers and room treatments, is a key point.

For instance, I plan to demonstrate in the Allen room next May the effects of room treatments and proper speaker/furniture placement (especially using corner horns) which is a critical subject for the buyers but unfortunately an afterthought for sellers. I find that these sellers don't really understand the subject well or even care much as long as they make a sale.

The same thing goes for high-priced electronics and input devices: if a person walks in and mentions that s/he has, say, Bose speakers and is looking at expensive tube amplifiers, I think it's time to educate the customer to invest in better speakers first. I also think that it's critical to understand their listening room by looking at a picture of their proposed listening space before prescribing a piece of equipment to buy.

To that end, I think it would be a good idea to recommend to participants to snap a picture or two of their listening room(s) prior to driving to LSAF in May. I know that it always makes a tremendous difference when I see their actual setups when giving advice. Perhaps I'll start a thread on that subject here instead, because this is one of the most interesting subjects that I've encountered in this pastime.

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [Denny9167](#) on Mon, 16 Apr 2018 19:48:48 GMT
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I am new to LSAF, I've been in the audiophile hobby for I would guess 30 years now and the Audio business for almost half of that time building loudspeaker systems first and moved on to gear after that, and I've lived in and near the Dallas area for several years as well, and darkened the doors of the 2 channel stores quite often when they were still around, but there are not many left, and the ones that are don't cater to the average joe like me, and I think it will be to their downfall as well. Not many younger novices coming into the hobby, the mainstream I think should start paying more attention, and get as much exposure as they can or else they won't be Around

any more!

Anyway looking forward to the event and meeting new people. I hope I'm not painting with a too broad of a brush here. But that's my 2 cents.

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Mon, 16 Apr 2018 21:19:06 GMT
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Looking forward to meeting you! We've been doing this show for the last dozen years or so, and a couple years in Tulsa before that.

Having been to other shows in other parts of the country, I have to say this show is the most fun, by far! It's not the biggest show, but it's definitely the best, at least for me.

The Lone Star AudioFest is laid back and intimate, and everyone there is there because of a love of music with much less emphasis on commercialism than other shows. If that sounds like your kind of place, you're probably going to love it there!

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [Denny9167](#) on Mon, 16 Apr 2018 21:26:13 GMT
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Wayne Parham wrote on Mon, 16 April 2018 16:19

Looking forward to meeting you! We've been doing this show for the last dozen years or so, and a couple years in Tulsa before that.

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The Lone Star AudioFest is laid back and intimate, and everyone there is there because of a love of music with much less emphasis on commercialism than other shows. If that sounds like your kind of place, you're probably going to love it there!

Sounds like my kind of place to be! Thanks

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [AudioFred](#) on Sat, 19 May 2018 01:19:59 GMT

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Any new thoughts about this after the 2018 show?

Subject: Re: "Mainstream High End" at the LSAF
Posted by [Denny9167](#) on Sat, 19 May 2018 01:35:27 GMT

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AudioFred wrote on Fri, 18 May 2018 20:19Any new thoughts about this after the 2018 show?

Really enjoyed myself, Had a experience of listening to some horn drivers, have never listened to them for an extended period of time, and I wasn't fatigued. I really enjoyed the room a couple of doors down, and Russ' room had some cool looking gear, The Raven Audio stuff is just truly a work of art! I was disappointed with the YG Acoustics room, I was expecting more! Maybe it was the gear, not sure. All in all it was a great experience.
