Subject: Visit to RMAF
Posted by gofar99 on Sun, 28 Oct 2012 03:20:04 GMT
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Hi Everyone, I went to the Rocky Mountain Audio Fest earlier this month and thought I would provided some feedback. First off it is a chaotic event. Any time you have about 500 exhibitors in one building it gets a bit crazy, like a whole lot of crazy. Some exhibits were simple and had only a single table and some handouts, others took up large meeting rooms. The cost and complexity of equipment went from a few dollars to mega dollars. I would estimate that several of the top exhibits had in excess of $500K of equipment. That is easy to do with the $50-100K turntables several had. The inter-connects alone cost more than many new cars. Anyhow it was fun. My general thought was that most systems regardless of cost sounded only so-so. Part of this is due to the locations. Concrete walled rooms do not lend themselves well to audio. Still I have had some experience with that problem (at LSAF) and it is possible to get decent sound if you are patient. Now for some more detailed thoughts:

There was a lot of partnering between companies. Speaker companies would partner with amplifier and source ones and cable companies with nearly everyone. This was good in that you could hear the same product used in different systems.

Most exhibitors were using digital sources for their demonstrations. Lots of PC based material. The next largest group (about 1/3 of all) was using vinyl. There were many really expensive high end turntables and cartridges. There were a few analog tape systems as well. They did quite well IMHO.

Pretty nearly all the exhibitors played the music too loud and with too much emphasis on bass response.

There were a goodly number of tube amplifiers in use. I would estimate that about half of the exhibits that actually played music used them. There were many tube amps with KT120s. I talked to a number of the exhibitors that had the KT120 amps and they said they were as surprised as I was that the tube was so good. They also hoped like I do that they will continue to be that way. A sole source is always a problem.

Many of the exhibits and demonstrations were about of the same level as at LSAF. I didn't count them, but I would estimate about 25-33% would fit right in at LSAF. They were doing the same sort of things as we all did.

I met a lot of really nice and knowledgeable people and was equally surprised that nearly as many were completely ignorant of what they were exhibiting. When I could tell more about a piece of equipment just by looking at it than they knew about it, it demonstrated to me that the buyer needs be alert at high end stores just as much as at a big box one. The sales staff may well be clueless.

Overall an event worth going to at least once in your audio life. Next year Oddwatt may be there to show.

Subject: Re: Visit to RMAF
Posted by The Noise on Tue, 30 Oct 2012 03:06:07 GMT
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gofar99 wrote on Sat, 27 October 2012 22:20
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That's a pretty astute observation. I always looked at conventions like that as a way to network with people. When I used to go to those things, it was more about who was there then what was there.

Subject: Re: Visit to RMAF
Posted by Shane on Tue, 30 Oct 2012 22:51:20 GMT
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That's been my observation from the one time I've been as well. The best sounding rigs IMO were the ones who were using some sort of digital EQ to balance out the crappy room situation (Emerald Physics comes to mind).

Did you make it to the Head-Fi room with all the headphone stuff. Amazing sound to be had there!

Subject: Re: Visit to RMAF
Posted by gofar99 on Tue, 30 Oct 2012 23:00:35 GMT
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Hi Shane, yes I made it to the phone room. I wanted to hear some in particular (Fosgate as they were also using his phono preamp). Lots of cool stuff. I liked the room full of vinyl for sale. Thousands of disks all types, new and used. I escaped before my Visa went south.