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Subject: A Rise In Numbers?

Posted by [Azuri](#) on Fri, 10 May 2019 16:38:45 GMT

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Do you feel that audiophiles like us are growing in numbers? I haven;t done anything formal to prove this point, but being on the Internet and seeing brick and mortar stores, I get the distinct impression that more and more people are getting into this.

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Subject: Re: A Rise In Numbers?

Posted by [Rusty](#) on Sat, 11 May 2019 14:35:35 GMT

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I'm old enough to remember when there were a multitude of brick and mortar locations serving the dilettante and the audiophile public. Since the internet shut down most of brick and mortar, I can't really say if there are an increasing number of audiophile oriented people. It still cost's quite a bit more to have any so called bragging rights to that privilege. One thing I'm glad to see though is the proliferation of DIY choices provided by the internet. And that, is definitely an increase in public interest. If that equates audiophile sensibilities then that's peachy. But I think it's good for people to get a taste of the nuts and bolts of this hobby. Usually at a substantial savings to the ready made products that you just buy, plug & play.

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Subject: Re: A Rise In Numbers?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sat, 11 May 2019 17:50:24 GMT

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This subject often gets brought up at audio club meetings and at audio trade shows. Some say "the sky is falling" and the industry is in decline. Others say new lesser-expensive technologies and the ease-of-discussion from the internet has brought in many more audiophiles than ever before.

I personally think this industry has always been a niche market that has stayed basically constant.

Prior to about WWII, only technically proficient DIYers could get what would have been then the state of the art in sound. Most people had table radios or console radios with one big full-range speaker as their only sound equipment. Some had record players but, just like the console radios, they were relatively poor quality even if they were in an expensive console. Only "audiophiles" would have tried to build equipment capable of better quality sound. That's a small group of people indeed.

Then later, as America enjoyed post-war prosperity, some high-fidelity equipment started showing up as consumer electronics. The early DIYers had some competition from commercial offerings. Some of the early companies were started by passionate individuals, so many of the commercial offerings were polished versions of their DIY efforts. But in any case, the point is that was a time that the numbers of audiophiles grew, because availability grew.

But even then, in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s - when several hifi products were available - most people still usually chose inexpensive sound systems over high-fidelity equipment. So even with high availability and no need for technical competence, the numbers of people that owned high-fidelity equipment was much smaller than those that had mid-fi or low-fi equipment.

Availability has continued to increase and costs have tended to decrease. A lot of this is due to digital electronics, which have been developed in rapid pace. No other industry that I've ever seen has grown as rapidly as digital electronics has since the 1970s.

Some audiophiles believe that only analog provides "true" high-fidelity sound. Those are the ones that love vinyl and tape media. Some believe tube amps and/or single ended amps with low feedback are required for best high-fidelity. Both of these technologies tend to be a little (to a lot) more expensive. So in the beginning of the 21st century, the latest talk about "audiophiles being a dwindling breed" tended to come from the vinyl and tube amp lovers. Naturally, these audiophiles were a small group but they weren't any smaller than their counterparts in the early 20th century.

And now look at the market: Vinyl is decidedly returning to popularity. It is still not as popular as digital formats, both physical formats like CDs and BluRay disks and soft formats like data streams. The millennials and Gen-Z kids definitely love their MP3s on phones. So as always, most people own mid-fi and low-fi equipment but the audiophiles, while in a minority, seem to have more choices than they ever had.

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Subject: Re: A Rise In Numbers?

Posted by [gofar99](#) on Sat, 11 May 2019 23:39:40 GMT

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Hi, I figure this is tough to call. Audiophiles may be relatively few in number and as Wayne noted. This certainly was true in the past. Still I wonder about how I would define one. I have a hi-rez FIIO portable player. It can handle anything up to 36/192. It can store 1000's of uncompressed tracks. The sound with good phones is superb. I have a major hi-fi system in my house. Electrostatic speakers, huge subs, 4 class A tube amps, it can handle vinyl, R-R tape, cassette, XM satellite, CD, BlueRay and PC generated music. Which system designates me as an audiophile. I think it is more that I like well reproduced music not so much on how it is played. So with that sort of definition there are likely more audiophiles than ever. For them, there is a really monstrous array of quality gear now. Much of quite inexpensive. I hope the desire for quality reproduction continues.

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Subject: Re: A Rise In Numbers?

Posted by [Rusty](#) on Sun, 12 May 2019 15:59:35 GMT

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It's always seemed to me that the term audiophile was and is still associated subjectively with a certain advantage of a small exclusive economic class. As mentioned though, now a blurring of

what constitutes a state of the art and whom can afford may be more democratized. For me, the kit market and DIY based free intellectual property sharing has given more people an opportunity to narrow the personal limitations between high end expense and an ordinary blokes income. But there's always that niche unobtainium market group that can pay for the product reflecting that expectation of a subjective term. Audiophile grade. That may be a greater illusion now than ever before.

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Subject: Re: A Rise In Numbers?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sun, 12 May 2019 17:24:32 GMT

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I agree with you, Rusty.

I think that many people today consider "high end audio" as a rich man luxury. And so the term "audiophile" might be used to describe them.

But that wasn't the way the field started, and in fact, no amount of money could have purchased high-end audio in the beginning because there were no commercial offerings to purchase. One had to be technically proficient and they had to do-it-themselves.

Now days, a person can purchase high-end gear and much of it is expensive. But just like you've said, a person can still do-it-themselves with kit offerings and enjoy very high-quality sound on a reasonable budget.

I've been to enough audio shows to see a lot of what I'd call "audio jewelry." It's very expensive gear that appeals to the rich but that actually performs poorly. It's very much an "Emperor's New Clothes" thing. So honestly, even having a fat wallet won't necessarily guarantee high-quality sound. That kind of "audiophile" is really just someone that likes to impress people with what they think is "finer things."

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Subject: Re: A Rise In Numbers?

Posted by [Rusty](#) on Sun, 12 May 2019 19:43:10 GMT

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It's emboldened by the audio elite publications whose feedback in advertising is promoted to the glowing reviews for some of that audio jewelry. An audio designer I admire and does no advertising but by word of end users said of the audio world. "It's like a Byzantine bazaar marketplace. Anything goes, with designs and products that reflect the pinnacle of the state of the art, to outright charlatans. So buyer, beware, and builder, put-r-there."

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Subject: Re: A Rise In Numbers?

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Posted by [Azuri](#) on Wed, 02 Oct 2019 01:43:13 GMT

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Gofar.....defining an audiophile is pretty easy. You just have to have a fondness for audio. Which could mean just basic sounds, or the intricacies of a classical piece.

I have always held that it has nothing to do with what you own that brings man made sounds, or songs, out.

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