Subject: Components beliefs
Posted by Earl Geddes on Tue, 03 May 2005 21:34:01 GMT
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I am often asked what I think of certain components, amps etc. and I often reply that it makes no difference to me. As I drove home from the GPAF it dawned on me that this might be misconstrued and perhaps some explaination is in order.I do believe that there are likely differences in the sound of audio components, but to me it still doesn't matter. Consider this test.Create four rooms of audio equipment, if the rooms are identical then it makes the experiment easier to follow, but it is not necessary that the rooms be identical, the same result will be obtained.The components, loudspeakers, everything, must be hidden from view - of course the best looking system will always sound the best, that goes without saying!Ask listeners to rate the systems. Now randomize the components in the variuos rooms. Rate again, (lather, rinse, repeat) I can say with virtual certainty that the ratings will follow the speakers. Do the other compoenets matter? I am sure that to a certain extent they do, but in the big picture of the whole systems sound quality, they don't really.The principle that I follow is "benefit bucks". What does one dollar of expenditure yield in sound quality benefit. To me the speakers are the overwhelming factor - always have been, always will be. I then weight my "budget" by the "benefit bucks" (everyone has a budget, and if you don't PLEASE contact me!). In other words, spend your money where it makes the most audible difference. In all of my systems the speakers are budgeted at about 65-80% of the total budget. To me this works out about right.So back to our test. What about the looks of the equioment. Inexpensive amplifiers don't look "cool". If you buy this stuff based on its looks, then simply buy an empty chassis, place some tubes on it, some chrome, even some gold if you like, and put the Sony receiver in another room. That will save you a ton of money.I like good looks too, and as far as a piece of sculpture goes - thats what a "pretty" amp is - I love sculpture. I have lots of it, all over the house. This helps to keep my desire for "pretty objcets" at bay when I go out and buy my audio equipment.So - do audio components matter? Sure they do about 10% worth.Just some sugestions.Earl Geddes

Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Manualblock on Tue, 03 May 2005 22:01:59 GMT
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I agree on the looks aspect; it corrupts the whole concept of acquiring the best sound for the money since appearance=most of the cost of retail equipment. Can you address this issue for me. I hear many speakers I like and can listen to for long periods without getting irritated; and anyone of them would suffice to provide good music in my home. However my CD player gets irritating after long periods; so I switch to vinyl. Trading my equipment for a cheaper less well engineered table always results in the return of irritation.My point; Any of those good speakers can be enjoyed but without the right front-end I get irritated. Cheap amps do it too. Soon as the good amp goes back in I can drift along with the music again.Now the reply will attribute that too phsycological effects but I will disagree. I have no axe to grind favoring the more expensive or complicated equipment; I am too long in this hobby to fall prey to easy explanations like that.How do you see this end of the discussion?I feel a good table/arm with some decent amps will make music with

any of a dozen properlly designed speakers; but the reverse does not always ring true.

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Earl Geddes on Tue, 03 May 2005 22:56:10 GMT
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You wrote:"Now the reply will attribute that too phsycological effects but I will disagree. I have no axe to grind favoring the more expensive or complicated equipment; I am too long in this hobby to fall prey to easy explanations like that."Whenever I see comments like that I have to reply; I am too long in this "profession" to fall prey to easy explanations like that.Of course your experience is psychological (sp!), you don't mean to imply that there is a physical reason for your reaction do you? I know of no one else who suffers this peculiar malady, do you? I mean even if you did, that's still two in a billion or so people who listen to audio systems.The one thing that is certain in the audio world (or any other world for that matter) is that there is no explaination for the unique personal experience. I can't explain yours any more than I could explain anyone elses, and I won't try. I can say with some certainty that in a double blind audio experiment there would not likely be a single other experience like yours. And even if there was, one in a large sample is considered an "outlier" and is usually just ignored.Enjoy your LP's and tube amps. I hope they continue to cure your problem.Earl

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by FredT on Wed, 04 May 2005 00:40:43 GMT
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I believe the appearance of the smoking color-changing fountain atop the source component is an important factor too, contributing 20% or more to my listening enjoyment.

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Earl Geddes on Wed, 04 May 2005 01:02:22 GMT
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For the record, I objected to the fountain.

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Manualblock on Wed, 04 May 2005 01:17:51 GMT

Thanks for the thoughtfull reply. Not to beat a dead horse but I do believe in a reference standard. When good equipment is playing in a room you know it immediately; and most of those who take this seriously tend to agree on whether a system sounds good; not necessarily on whether it is their personal favorite, but on the fact that it does sound good. That is the reason I believe that some eqiupment tends to stay popular for many many years, even after the marketing dept. is long gone.As for my malady, how do you explain all those people who can discriminate between the sound of different wooden guitar bodies; is that not a physiological response? Do you imply that what they are percieving has a determination component or some kind of intellectually motivated choice?Double-blind testing is a fallacy anyway; which of course you know.The pshycological paradigm infects all aspects of acoustics logically reverting opinions to personal experience. Just one mans opinion.But I will admitt to; upon hearing the tones of bass fiddle flattened out by cheap electronics even from another room it does get irritating. The position that there is no basis for comparison due to differing perceptions works both ways; and my bewilderment probably would equal your own at the exposure to alternate playback systems of less than competant ability.( Thats ability I refer to; not price or exorbitant extortion.) As you can guess this is an important subject to me and I appreciate you taking the time to discuss it; J.R.

Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by FredT on Wed, 04 May 2005 01:22:27 GMT


Sorry, Earl, I had to do that. For those who weren't there, the Audio Kinesis room had the coolest looking tabletop fountain I've ever seen. It was so unusual that it competed with the speakers for everyone's attention, but only for a moment until you started listening and realized how good the Summas sounded.I do agree with you about the relative importance of the speakers in an audio system. I can't comment on the relative importance in percentage terms, but a good speaker can sound very good with mass market electroncs (as did the Summa) while even the best electroncs can't mask the limitations of a poorly designed speaker. The room is also an important factor, as is the quality of the recording. Some highly compressed and equalized recordings wouldn't sound very good in any system.

Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Earl Geddes on Wed, 04 May 2005 01:40:19 GMT


Thanks for the compliments.When we show in Denver, the room will be bare!! Nothing to look at or talk about except the speakers.  Got to keep the folks focused!I know that the percentage issue is hard to come to terms with, but its critical.  No matter what the percentage is, to you, it is imperative that you decide what it is or you will not optimize your purchase. I have seen this over

and over and over. The budget gets blown on a whim and everything else gets sacrificed. Please do decide this critical point before you buy your next system. You'll thank me for it in the end.The recording should never be part of the equipment evaluation. Thats why it is crucial that the source material be something which you know very well and that you should not expect to hear anything new from. I have used Moondance for evaluation for years. I know every location where the voice clips the microphone input and I darn well better hear that! On a very new recording of Lion King, which is superb by the way, there is a glitch at about 3 minutes. I always listen for that. If I don't hear it I know something is wrong.

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Wayne Parham on Wed, 04 May 2005 02:35:23 GMT
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I agree completely. I believe that most people agree with this too, that the environment and speakers have the most influence on sound quality, followed by the other components. But to have the best, to go the last 10%...

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Wayne Parham on Wed, 04 May 2005 02:36:11 GMT
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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Wayne Parham on Wed, 04 May 2005 02:37:16 GMT
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I dug it. I bought two of 'em. If you object to having it, then next year, ask Lori to put it in my room.

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Wayne Parham on Wed, 04 May 2005 02:42:52 GMT
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Here's the lamp.  Look at the lower right in the photo below.That big black thing in the center of the photo is Geddes Summa loudspeaker, by the way.  Earl Geddes and Duke LeJeune, Summa loudspeaker and groovy vapor lamp

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by akhilesh on Wed, 04 May 2005 03:01:07 GMT
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Nice post, Earl!. And a pleasure to meet you & Duke & Lori!Here are my 2 cents:THe most important determinant of god sound is the recording, followed by the speaker-room system, followed by the components. Given today's excellence in digital sources & amplification, i'd agree with your percentage allocation, except in a few instances. Three of these are below:1. If a component or amplifier is deliberately skewed to sound "pleasant" it will make a difference. For example, in the setup I listen to most nowadays, 90 HZ to around 3300 HZ are driven by a SET 45 amp connected to a vintage driver (8 inches). Is the resulting sound accurate? Heck no! Is it pleasant? In spades!2. Some DACs and CD players are deliberately rolledoff, or HAVE to be rolled off (Wadia for example) by as much as 2-3 db in the high octave. This can create again, an inaccurate but pleasant sounding effect.  3. Several cables, esp. speaker cables, with appreciable LC or R can skew the frequency response of the amplifier-cable-speaker sub-system. TO some this can sound pleasant. Overall, ther is NO doubt to anyone who has spent much timein this hobby that the speaker-room interaction makes the bigest difference: since speakers generally have the most distortion, and the most skewed freq response. thanks-akhilesh

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by guitarplayer on Wed, 04 May 2005 11:36:37 GMT
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Interesting post.  I respect your opinion, but respectfully disagree.I am not going to go into a long explanation of my point of view, but in the last 25+ years in this business, my experience is that EVERYTHING matters.  I do agree that speakers are a very important part of the equation, but 90%?  Sorry, can't go with you on that one.BTW, I thought the lamp was cool as well!

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by michael.e on Thu, 05 May 2005 02:14:55 GMT
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But I will admitt to; upon hearing the tones of bass fiddle flattened out by cheap electronics even from another room it does get irritatingMy problem/freedom is,that I dont hear instruments live

very often,more likely to hear Djs spinning vinyl through Qsc power amps into cheaply filtered HF horns and 15" midbass!I dont know if its good or bad,I can just adjust my soundsystem til I think its best,without any reference!CheersMike.e

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by Manualblock on Thu, 05 May 2005 11:37:25 GMT
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Mike E; There is always air guitar!

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Subject: Re: Components beliefs
Posted by mikebake on Thu, 05 May 2005 14:09:06 GMT
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Totally with you here, Earl, and always have been/probably always will be. My thoughts exactly. Didn't even read any other replies before making mine because I know what I think....."benefit bucks"; great way to put it.I have been making the case for the speakers being totally paramount for years.....

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Subject: BTW,
Posted by mikebake on Thu, 05 May 2005 14:13:17 GMT
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Bruce Edgar "always" says, when it comes to audio gear, that "people see what they hear, and hear what they see".....how true. Not seeing what they are listening to would bug the shit out of most "audiophiles" as they would be afraid of liking something they "shouldn't' or disliking something they "should". Their opinion is highly shaped by what they see, and their expectation.

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Subject: Re:And SOoo -
Posted by Earl Geddes on Thu, 05 May 2005 14:44:34 GMT
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manufacturers give them eye candy, poor sound and charge big bucks!  When I was at Ford in the aerly years of OEm audio wars, the markeyting guys insisted on flashing lights.  Theye didn't have

to mean anything and it didn't matter if sound quality had to be sacrificed - there had to be eye candy or no-go.  Nothing has changed.

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Subject: Re:And SOoo -
Posted by akhilesh on Thu, 05 May 2005 18:16:19 GMT
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I like to sip a good single malt scotch when I listen. I find that it, along with the warm yellow glow of the NOS tubes on my SET, adds immeasurably to my enjoyment of the music. Sets the mood. It's great to stimulate 2-3 senses at once. Just kidding.-akhilesh

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Subject: Re:And SOoo -
Posted by Earl Geddes on Thu, 05 May 2005 19:22:36 GMT
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Well, I lack the tube glow, and I prefer Bourbon, but I can appreciate your comment.And I always pray while I listen to music - I pray that its not too loud so I won't get yelled at!  When you live with an Audiologist, too loud is if she can hear it.

---

Subject: Re:And SOoo -
Posted by akhilesh on Fri, 06 May 2005 01:10:32 GMT
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Funny, Earl. My wife also objects to music being over 85 db. Ahh well! akhilesh

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Subject: Re:And SOoo -
Posted by Earl Geddes on Fri, 06 May 2005 01:27:30 GMT
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But see here is the catch 22!As I get older - I'm not young anymore - my hearing gets worse so I want it even louder, but since my wife knows my hearing is getting worse she wants me to listen softer so that my hearing doesn't get even worse.Caught between a rock and a hard place.

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Subject: Re:And SOoo -
Posted by Wayne Parham on Fri, 06 May 2005 02:56:09 GMT
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Subject: The role of prayer
Posted by Duke on Fri, 06 May 2005 21:09:38 GMT
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"And I always pray while I listen to music - I pray that its not too loud so I won't get yelled at!"Earl, you had me laughing so hard I couldn't see the screen!