Subject: Houston Audio Society - Oct 15th
Posted by FredT on Sat, 01 Oct 2005 10:05:16 GMT
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Our October meeting will focus on single box CD/SACD players, with examples ranging from budget entry level to some very expensive models. We're having pizza, and Houston's own St Arnold microbrew beer, plus an audio flea market. Information at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/houstonaudio/

Subject: Meeting Follow Up Report
Posted by FredT on Sun, 16 Oct 2005 21:04:26 GMT
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We had more than 20 people at the meeting and listened to several digital players whose retail prices ranged from a low of $299 to a high of $13,000, including an Onix XCD-88, Rotel 1072, CEC TL51XZ, Shanling SCD-T200, Linn Ikemi, Exemplar Audio Modded Denon 2900, and Esoteric UX-1. The preamp was a modded Assemblage / Sonic Frontiers, the amps were Audio Mirror parallel 6C33C SET monoblocks, and the speakers were Selah Audio XT8 line arrays. Interconnects for most of the meeting were Kimber Silver Streak.The consensus was generally what I expected, with the more expensive players sounding smoother and more dimensional than the lower priced ones. We started out using the Shanling as a reference, and playing the same track on the Shandlig and immediately afterward on the Onix ($3,000 vs $300) revealed a significant and easily discernable difference. The Rotel was better than the Onix but still clearly in the budget class. One surprise: A direct comparison between the belt drive CEC ($1,600), on demo-loan to a HAS member from Brian Kurtz of Sound Mind Audio of Austin, and the Linn Ikemi ($3,000+), revealed the CEC to be a more musical sounding player that was preferred by everyone who voiced an opinion. Sound Mind Audio's website is at http://www.soundmindaudio.com/austin_home.htmlWhen we finally heard the $13,000 Esoteric player my first question to my wife was "Honey, how big are you expecting your executive bonus to be this year"? (not big enough it turns out). It was clearly more open and detailed than the others we had heard. We attempted a comparison between the Esoteric and the Exemplar Modded Denon, but a tube in the Denon's output stage began hissing and we decided a valid comparison wasn't possible.While this wasn't a "blowout" type contest to determine which player was best and which was the weakest performer, some differences were obvious to everyone. None were losers that you wouldn't want in your system, and there wasn't always a direct correlation between price and performance, but the more expensive ones (especially the Esoteric) sounded far more "real" than the budget models. You don't always get what you pay for, but you never get what you don't pay for.We had several flavors of Houston's own St Arnold handcrafted microbrew beer, and pizza for lunch. We also had a very enjoyable flea market sale at the meeting, with a wide range of offerings including new Audio Mirror Dacs and preamps, several vintage components, many cables, vacuum tubes, AR/TDS sound enhancers, and even a pair of Bose speakers someone bought from me for $20 (sucker, you paid too much). I took just a few pictures which are located at http://fredt300b.smugmug.com/gallery/885692/1/40092318