

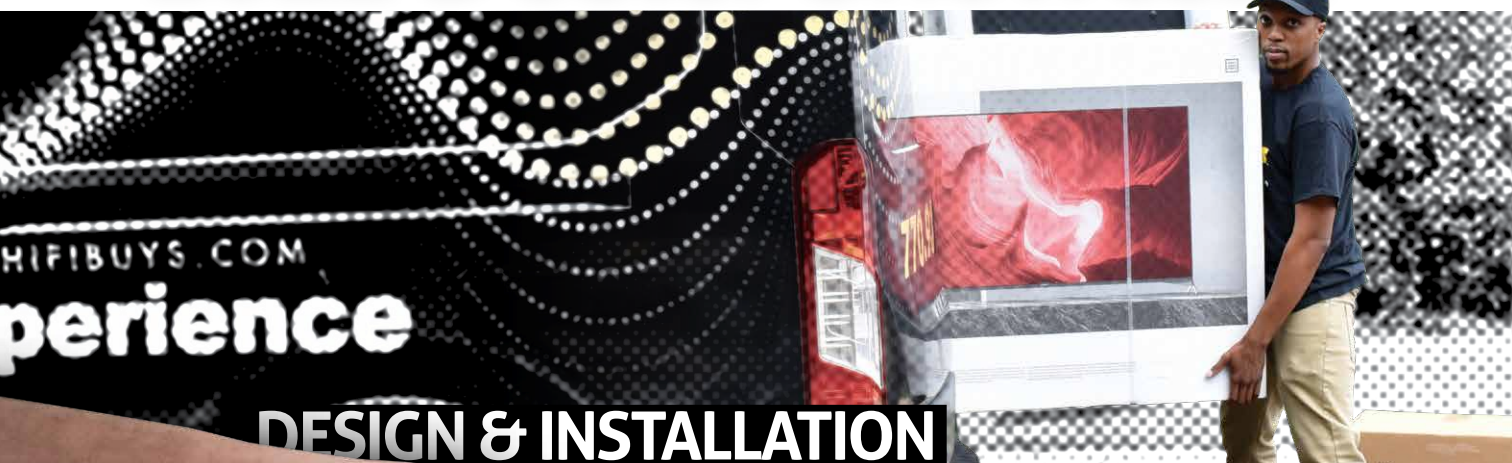


**DEALER EVENTS**

**LISTENING SESSIONS**



# the absolute sound **hi-fi+** 2022 Dealer Showcase



**DESIGN & INSTALLATION**

**SERVICE & REPAIR**





# CONTENTS

## 04 INTRODUCTION

## 06 YOUR SYSTEM'S MOST IMPORTANT COMPONENT

Robert Harley weighs in on the invaluable role high-end audio dealers play in shaping our culture and our values.

## 08 HOW TO CHOOSE A HIGH-END AUDIO RETAILER

Selecting the right high-end audio retailer could impact your equipment decisions more than anything else. In an excerpt from the new sixth edition of *The Complete Guide to High-End Audio*, Robert Harley offers advice on this pivotal first step to building your dream system.

## 10 KEEPIN' IT SIMPLE

Allan Moulton reflects back to a time when spontaneity and practical experience played the biggest roles in purchasing an audio system.

## 12 SIX SECRETS OF SPEAKER PLACEMENT

Getting the most out of your high-end audio equipment is both an art and a science. Robert Harley explains the profound effect speaker placement has on sound quality and offers up valuable tips to maximize your equipment. Excerpted from the new sixth edition of *The Complete Guide to High-End Audio*.

## 16 DEALER PROFILES

Presenting the best high-end audio dealers from around the globe. Learn about the rich history and personal philosophies behind these famous retailers. Discover details about their values, services, and all the brands they have to offer. From A to Z and everything in between, these dealer profiles showcase the best the industry has to offer.

## the absolute sound®

### Editor-in-Chief

Robert Harley

### Executive Editor

Jonathan Valin

### Acquisitions Manager and Associate Editor

Neil Gader

### Music Editor

Jeff Wilson

### Global Dealer Showcase Editors

Allan Moulton

Diana Nagler

### Creative Director

Torquil Dewar

### Art Director

Shelley Lai

### theabsolutesound.com Webmaster

Garrett Whitten

### Senior Writers

Anthony H. Cordesman, Wayne Garcia, Robert E. Greene, Jim Hannon, Jacob Heilbrunn, Arthur Lintgen, Kirk Midtskog, John Nork, Dick Olsher, Andrew Quint, Don Saltzman, Paul Seydor, Steven Stone, Alan Taffel

### Reviewers and Contributing Writers

Duck Baker, Soren Baker, Greg Cahill, Matt Clott, Randall Couch, Stephen Estep, Wade Forrester, Andre Jennings, Greg Gaston, Drew Kalbach, Muse Kastanovich, Mark Lehman, Sherri Lehman, Ted Libbey, Tom Martin, David McGee, Mike Mettler, Mark Milano, Bill Milkowski, Allan Moulton, Malgorzata Quinn, Derk Richardson, Stephen Scharf, Pam Torno, Greg Turner



### Nextscreen Chairman

Tom Martin

### CEO, Nextscreen Publishing Group

Lee Scoggins

### Publisher, Hi-Fi+

Pete Collingwood-Trewin

### Advertising Reps

Cheryl Smith (512) 891-7775	Brian Masamoto (310) 498-5245	Lance Profyt (512) 850-9035	Tom Hackforth +44 (0) 1425 655255
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**Address letters to the editor:** The Absolute Sound, 2500 McHale Court, Suite A, Austin, TX 78758. (866) 846-3997; e-mail: rharley@nextscreen.com

**Newsstand distribution and local dealers:** Ingram Periodicals, 18 Ingram Blvd, LaVergne, TN 37086-7000. (615) 213-5223.

**Publishing matters:** Contact Lee Scoggins at the address below or email lee@nextscreen.com. Publications Mail Agreement 40600599.

**Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:** Station A, P.O. Box 54, Windsor, ON N9A 6J5.

**NextScreen, LLC, 2500 McHale Ct. Suite A, Austin, TX 78758**

(512) 892-8682

**fax:** (512) 891-0375,

tas@nextscreen.com,

info@theabsolutesound.com

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# ONE

of the surest ways for an audiophile to get maximum enjoyment out of their music is to find a great dealer. Dealers bring value by helping customers assemble the right mix of components for whatever budget you have. They help with setup, often including speaker placement, which has a big impact on how your system sounds. They help answer questions about the best settings and they make sure everything functions properly. Dealers will suggest which accessories can enhance the sound further. They help coordinate any service issues under warranty and they advise on what your next purchase might be. But most importantly they create an exciting demo that highlights how lifelike the sound of a modern hi-fi system can be. Dealers introduce new and exciting products from the manufacturer. That excitement is contagious. Once you have heard what is possible, there is no going back.

In short, dealers play a critical role in growing a new generation of audiophiles.

My personal “aha!” moment came from a demonstration by the late Mike Kay of Lyric HiFi in New York City. I was brought into a room with Infinity IRS speakers and Mike played a track of some world music. It was so vibrant and realistic—I was just floored. It sounded as if real acoustic instruments were being played in front of me. I had no idea that things could sound that good. I began my audio journey that day. Sadly, Mike is no longer with us, but I will never forget that day and his enthusiasm for the music and sound.

With this new publication, *The Absolute Sound* and hi-fi+ are pleased to present in-depth dealer profiles as a resource for our readers. To make this publication even more useful, we are including some articles on how to use a dealer effectively and some basics on how to create a successful setup of a stereo system.

We would like to thank Allan Moulton and Diana Nagler for their efforts in assembling the profiles herein. We also thank our esteemed editor Robert Harley of *The Absolute Sound* for sharing his expertise with the reader.

Our local Atlanta retailer HiFi Buys has a clever tagline, “Get The Experience.” Spot on. Find your local stereo dealer and check out the latest gear they have to offer. It may just be an experience you won’t soon forget!

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# Your System's Most Important Component

Robert Harley

**W**here did you first hear a high-end audio system and become hooked for life? How did you discover that special component that elevated your system's performance to another level? Where were you introduced to new music that you now regard as essential? Or learn about some tweak or inexpensive accessory that allowed you to more deeply connect with music?

Chances are that all these life-changing events took place in a local hi-fi retailer's showroom.

The high-end audio dealer is the lynchpin of the industry. The dealer is the ambassador for good sound, introducing the uninitiated to the joys of high-quality music reproduction. The experience of hearing your favorite music wonderfully reproduced is one of those things that must be experienced firsthand. By providing that experience, dealers are a vital conduit for sharing our culture and our values to the current generation as well as to the next ones.

Even if you're a seasoned audiophile, there's still no substitute for the advice and services of a skilled and caring dealer. The best dealers are long-term consultants, guiding you as your system evolves and improves so that each upgrade is a real step forward and not a lateral move that merely trades one set of compromises for a different set. I hear from so many music lovers who flail around, jumping from one component to the next without any overarching vision for upgrading the system. Your dealer can provide that vision, ensuring that your upgrade dollars are spent where they deliver the greatest return and long-term satisfaction. It's false economy to buy discounted products on the Internet in the hope that one of those products will deliver real musical benefits in your particular system. That approach leads to the revolving door of disappointment. Audio components don't operate in isolation; each product's intrinsic performance is just one element of a much larger picture, a picture that experienced retailers often see but consumers don't simply because building musical systems is the retailer's profession. What matters is the final installed performance in your home, something that your local dealer is uniquely qualified to deliver. Some Internet retailers embody everything that's good about brick-and-mortar

stores, and have knowledgeable and passionate salespeople that can guide you on your journey.

There are hopeful signs that high-end retailing is strengthening. A few years ago I visited Lavish Hi-Fi in Santa Rosa, California, for an event with GamuT Audio. The store occupies 10,000 square feet in the heart of the city's shopping district. Lavish had moved from a 400-square-foot location 18 months earlier, and is thriving in the new space. San Diego county now has an outstanding high-end store in Alma Audio, which opened just a couple of years ago. They have since moved to a larger location and now offer such brands as Wilson Audio, YG Acoustics, Audio Research, MSB, D'Agostino, and many other top marques. Hanson Audio of Columbus, Ohio, has opened a second location in Cincinnati that is thriving. These three

retailer success stories have one thing in common: Their proprietors are all young, energetic, and have invested considerable financial resources in bringing brick-and-mortar high-end audio to their communities.

In his book *The Revenge of Analog: Real Things and Why They Matter*, author David Sax documents the reversal of the trend toward an all-digital world, from the resurgence of everything from vinyl records to

paper notebooks, from to brick-and-mortar retail establishments to photographic film. All over the world, in many businesses that were once thought to be on the verge of extinction at the hands of the digital transformation, people are finding the value of the physical over the virtual.

One way to expose new listeners to good sound, strengthen dealers, and help connect music lovers with each other is to build audio communities around local dealers. The Los Angeles & Orange County Audio Society is a spectacular model for doing just that. In the past ten years the society has grown from 200 members to more than 3000. It holds monthly events at different area dealers as well as puts on an annual gathering. The LA&OC Audio Society benefits from drawing on a large population and many local dealers, but its spectacular success could be replicated on a smaller scale in dozens of cities.

On a macro level, a healthy dealer base is essential to our industry. On a micro level, your local dealer may just be your system's most important component.





"Robert Harley's *Complete Guide* remains the most useful book about high-end audio ever written."

—Jonathan Valin,  
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# How to Choose a High-End Audio Retailer

Robert Harley



If, in the past, you've bought audio equipment only from mass-market retailers, you should expect to have an entirely different sort of relationship with a high-end dealer. The good specialty audio retailer doesn't just "move" boxes of electronics; he provides you with the satisfaction of great-sounding music in your home. More than just an equipment dealer, he's usually a dedicated audio and music enthusiast himself—he *knows* his products, and is often the best person to advise you on selecting equipment and system setup. The great dealers search the entire audio landscape for the very best brands and are extremely selective in choosing which lines to carry.

Consider the very different relationships between seller and buyer in the following scenarios. In the first, a used-car dealer in downtown Los Angeles is trying to sell a car to someone from out of town. The seller has only one shot at the buyer, and he intends to make the most of it. He doesn't care about return business, the customer's long-term satisfaction with the purchase, or what the customer will tell his friends about the dealer. It will be an adversarial relationship from start to finish.

Then consider a new-car dealer in Great Falls, Montana, selling a car to another Great Falls resident. For this dealer, return business is vital to his survival. So is customer satisfaction, quality service, providing expert advice on models and options, finding exactly the right car for the particular buyer, and giving the customer an occa-

sional ride to work when he drops off his car for service. He knows his customers by name, and has developed mutually beneficial, long-term relationships with them.

If buying a mass-market hi-fi system is like negotiating with a used-car dealer in downtown L.A., selecting a high-end music system should be made within a relationship similar to the one enjoyed between the Montana dealer and his customers.

Take the time to establish a relationship with your local dealer. Make friends with him—it'll pay off in the long run. Get to know a particular salesperson and, if possible, the store's owner. Tell them your musical tastes, needs, lifestyle, and budget—then let them offer equipment suggestions. They know their products best, and can offer specific component recommendations. The good stores will regard you as a valued, long-term customer, not someone with whom they have one shot at making a sale. Don't shop just for equipment—shop for the retailer with the greatest honesty and competence.

Keep in mind, however, that dealers will naturally favor the brands they carry. Be suspicious of dealers who badmouth competing brands that have earned good reputations in the high-end audio press. The best starting point in assembling your system is a healthy mix of your dealer's recommendations and unbiased, competent print-magazine reviews.

The high-end retailing business is very different from the mass-market merchandising of the low-quality "home entertainment" products sold in appliance emporiums. The specialty retailer's annual turnover is vastly lower than that of the mid-fi store down the street.

**In return for paying full price, however, you should receive a level of service and professionalism second to none.**

Consequently, the specialty retailer's profit margin must be larger for him to stay in business. Don't expect him to offer huge discounts and price cuts on equipment, to take a sale from a mid-fi store. Because the high-end dealer offers so much more than just pushing a box over the counter, his prices just can't be competitive. Instead, you should be prepared to pay full list price—or very close to it.

Here's why. After paying his employees, rent, lights, heat, insurance, advertising, and a host of other expenses, the specialty audio retailer can expect to put in his pocket about five cents out of every dollar spent in his store. Now, if he discounts his price by even as little as 5%, he is essentially working for free. If the dealer offers a discount or marks down demonstration or discontinued units, you should take advantage of these opportunities. But don't expect the dealer to discount; he deserves the full margin provided by the product's suggested retail price.

In return for paying full price, however, you should receive a level of service and professionalism second to none. Expect the best from your dealer. Spend as much time as you feel is necessary auditioning components in the showroom

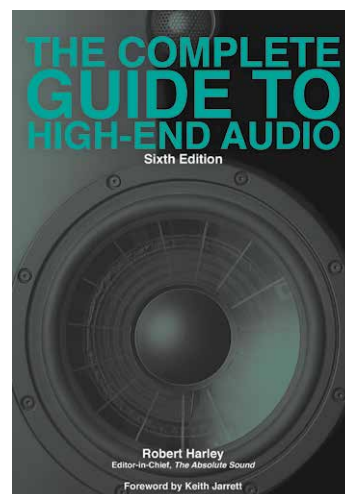
before you buy. Listen to components at home in your own system before making a purchasing decision. Ask the retailer to set up your system for you. Exploit the dealer's wide knowledge of which components are best for the money. Use his knowledge of system matching to get the best sound possible on a given budget. And if one of your components needs repair, don't be afraid to ask for a loaner until yours is fixed. The dealer should bend over backward to accommodate your needs.

If you give the high-end dealer your loyalty, you can expect this red-carpet treatment. This relationship can be undermined, however, if, to save a few dollars, you buy from a competitor or by mail a product that your dealer also sells. If the product purchased elsewhere doesn't sound good in your system, don't expect your local dealer to help you out. Further, don't abuse the home-audition privilege. Take home only those products you're seriously considering buying. If the dealer let everyone take equipment home for an audition, he'd have nothing in the store to demonstrate. The home audition should be used to confirm that you've selected the right component through store auditioning, magazine reviews, and the dealer's recommendations. The higher price charged by the dealer may seem hard to justify at first, but in the long run you'll benefit from his expertise and commitment to you as a customer.

If you don't live close to any high-end dealers, there are several very good mail-order companies that offer excellent audio advice over the phone. They provide as much service as possible by phone, including money-back guarantees, product exchanges, and component-matching suggestions. You can't audition components in a store, but you can often listen to them in your system and get a refund if the product isn't what you'd hoped it would be.

In short, if you treat your dealer right, you can expect his full expertise and commitment to getting you the best sound possible. There's absolutely no substitute for a skilled dealer's services and commitment to your satisfaction.

*Excerpted and adapted from the new Sixth Edition of The Complete Guide to High-End Audio. Copyright © 1994–2021 by Robert Harley. For more information, visit [hifibooks.com](http://hifibooks.com). To order call (800) 841-4741.*





# Keepin' It Simple

## Navigating Something Out of Everything

Allan Moulton

It's great, isn't it? At our fingertips we have access to seemingly limitless information, on anything and everything. Enthusiasts from all corners of the globe can do their magical "research" in the comfort of their own homes and become their own best and most informed advocates.

And yet, why with these advantages of instant information and opinions, do so many people in the audio hobby get it so wrong, so frequently? (And I can tell you from many years of experience in the industry that they most certainly do.)

How is it that the presumably smarter, or at least more informed, audio enthusiasts of today's hobby seem so lost and isolated when it comes to what should be the simple task of choosing a system through which to enjoy music? Within the promise of the Internet of Everything, how can we all get to the point of believing in something out of the daunting equivalency of everything?

I remember my first audio encounters in the late 70s, well before there was any rationale for putting three "W's" together in succession. My dad took me out and we went shopping for a music system at the local hi-fi stores. (Remember those?) Now, I'm from Nova Scotia in Canada, and the selection of equipment was

**I remember my first audio encounters in the late 70s. My dad took me out and we went shopping for a music system at the local hi-fi stores. (Remember those?)**

probably not that of New York City. However, in complete ignorance of this, we managed to audition all of the nearby options because, well, that's what you did in those days. And the end result of this incredibly fun process that I remember until now was that we (my dad, really) purchased a system that we enjoyed for the best part of 10 years, and that sowed the seeds for my working in the hobby today.

That process was successful by any standard, and we did nothing but listen to equipment that we discovered only through those experiences (like the little NAD 3020 that blew our minds). I was fascinated by all of the cool stuff that I knew we couldn't afford, and my imagination ran wild wondering just how good all this amazing equipment could sound.

We listened together to the things in our budget and we picked out—together—the system components that would bring so much joy over

all those years. No "what if's," no regrets, and no envy for the "we couldn't afford it" items. That there was a world of components not discovered or auditioned had absolutely no bearing on the confidence with which we selected the equipment, or in the years of pleasure with which we were rewarded.

The driving methodology was what I'll term pre-analytic. It was the intuitive idea that the way you selected an audio system was the same way you intended to use one—that you listened to music. The components weren't the ends in themselves; they were the means to the end, and that end was enjoying Peter Paul and Mary, Rush (I said I was from Canada), or Peter Gabriel, or whomever I or the rest of my family wanted to listen to. There was no list of "must-auditions" and no advanced research into either the collected opinions of experts or the objective test results and specifications for each





possibility. And yet...it worked. It really worked.

I have personally spoken with and taken calls from thousands of soon-to-be or existing audio enthusiasts, and I have come to the conclusion that the fundamental obstacle to success for most is the attempt to apply an analytic process to what is at heart a pre- or non-analytic experience.

Today's supposed "smart" shopper is one who advance surveys "everything." After all, the more information you have, the smarter you are, right? These savvy hobbyists, just like all consumers, believe that the only way to control the process (and it's about control) is to "research" and "know" everything so that order can be imposed (preferably in advance of auditioning) on the sea of possibilities that seem otherwise (at first glance) unrelated.

Most of these same consumers operate on the assumption that there is a truth behind and through all of the available information, and that with the appropriate Rosetta Stone algorithm the promised land of audio nirvana will be opened before them. If they just read enough reviews, call enough dealers, ask enough questions, or lurk on enough forums, then there will be the reckoning of a great audio enlightenment. It's as though there is some consensus of right that is being purposely hidden from them, waiting to be discovered.

I have previously felt that we should rethink technology in terms of the Head, Heart, and Hands. Essentially, that we should think, feel, and sense the technologies we most use and care about.

The problem with the virtual research done by today's audio hobbyist and general consumer is that it exists on what I'll call the monkey bars of information analytics, and that doing so is a kind of parallel engagement that can never inform the basic experience of enjoying a music system.

I acknowledge that these monkey bars are all the entertainment

that some (apparently) need. For them, it's this grand, detached research experiment that gets the juices flowing, sometimes referred to as the "mental masturbation" of our hobby.

For the rest of us, who are more attached to what a great system can provide, the monkey bars are simply the area of

the playground filled with the permanent dissatisfactions of what a system is "not yet" (the Mark 2 Signature or the product you couldn't afford), or what system combinations and products have "yet to be tested."

The monkey bars are the area you visit to confirm that you'll never exhaust all the possibilities and, therefore, never make the ultimate, best decision. That's a lot of negation, and you'll see it on 95% of the faces at any consumer audio show.

My suggestion? Take your son or daughter or "uninformed" friend out to listen with you the next time you want to upgrade, or the first time that you're looking to get a nice music system. And instead of playing the role of insider guru and expert, just listen to and with them, and open yourself to the joy of owning a cool hi-fi system that lets you rock out or relax in the comfort of your own home.

And after you're done putting together a system that will provide joy for years to come, first pat yourself on the back for making your life better, and then and only then, feel free to try to analyze how it all magically happened.

**“The end result of this incredibly fun process that I remember until now was that we (my dad, really) purchased a system that we enjoyed for the best part of 10 years, and that sowed the seeds for my working in the hobby today.”**



# Six Secrets of Speaker Placement

Robert Harley

**T**he room in which music is reproduced, and the positions of the loudspeakers within that room, have a profound effect on sound quality. In fact, the loudspeaker/listening room interface should be considered another component in the playback chain.

Because every listening room imposes its own sonic signature on the reproduced sound, your system can sound its best only when given a good acoustical environment. An excellent room can help get the most out of a modest system, but a poor room can make even a great system sound mediocre.

Fortunately, you can greatly improve a listening room with a few simple tricks and devices. The possibilities range from simply moving your loudspeakers—or even just your listening seat—a few inches, to building a dedicated listening room from scratch. Between these two extremes are many options, including adding inexpensive and attractive acoustical treatment products.

In this excerpt from the new Sixth Edition of *The Complete Guide to High-End Audio*, I'll show you how to make your speakers sound better than you thought possible—without spending a dime.

## Loudspeaker Placement

The most basic problem in many listening rooms is poor loudspeaker placement. Finding the right spot for your speakers is the single most important factor in getting good sound in your room. Speaker placement affects tonal balance, the quantity and quality of bass, soundstage width and depth, midrange clarity, articulation, and imaging. As you make large changes in speaker placements, then finetune these positions with smaller and smaller adjustments, you'll hear in the sound a newfound musical rightness and seamless harmonic integration. When you get it right, your system will come alive. Best of all, it costs no more than a few hours of your time.

Before getting to specific recommendations, let's cover the six fundamental factors that affect how a loudspeaker's sound can change with their positions. Later we'll look at each of these factors in detail. (Incidentally, you should wait until after you've optimized your speakers' placement to install the speakers' spikes.)

- 1) The relationship between the loudspeakers and the listener is of paramount importance. The listener and speakers should form an equilateral triangle; without this basic setup, you'll never hear good soundstaging and imaging.
- 2) Proximity of loudspeakers to walls affects the amount of bass. The nearer the loudspeaker are to walls and corners, the louder the bass.
- 3) The loudspeaker and listener positions in the room affect the audibility of room resonant modes. Room resonant modes are reinforcements of certain frequencies that create peaks and dips in the frequency response, which can add an unnatural "boominess" to the sound. When room resonant modes are less audible, the bass is smoother, better defined, and midrange clarity increases.
- 4) The farther out into the room the loudspeakers are, the better the soundstaging—particularly depth. Positioning loudspeakers close

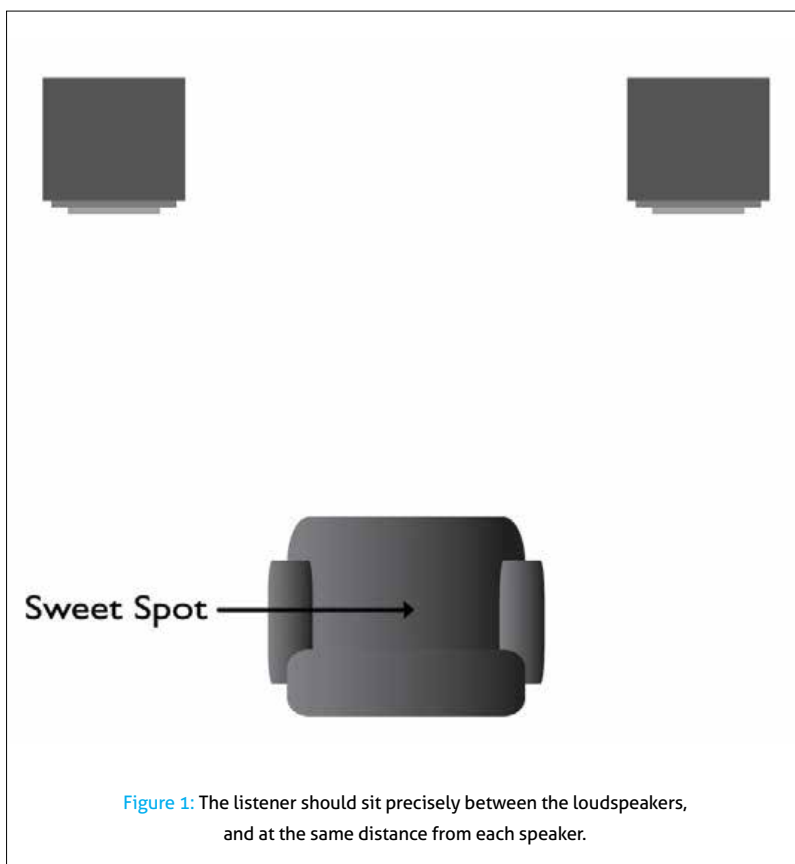


Figure 1: The listener should sit precisely between the loudspeakers, and at the same distance from each speaker.

to the wall behind them can destroy the impression of a deep soundstage.

- 5) Listening height affects tonal balance. With some loudspeakers, how high your ears are in relation to the speakers' tweeters can affect the amount of treble you hear.
- 6) Toe-in (angling the loudspeakers toward the listener) affects tonal balance (particularly the amount of treble), soundstage width, and image focus. Toe-in is a powerful tool for dialing in the soundstage and treble balance.

Let's look at each of these factors in detail.

### 1) Relationship between the loudspeakers and the listener

The most important factor in getting good sound is the geometric relationship between the two loudspeakers and the listener (we aren't concerned about the room yet). The listener should sit exactly between the two speakers, at a distance away from each speaker that's slightly greater than the distance between the speakers themselves. Though this last point is not a hard-and-fast rule, you should certainly sit exactly between the loudspeakers; that is, the same distance from each one. If you don't have this fundamental relationship, you'll never hear good soundstaging from your system.

Fig. 1 shows how your loudspeaker and listening positions should be arranged.

The listening position—equidistant from the speakers, and slightly farther from each speaker than the speakers are from each other—is called the "sweet spot." This is roughly the listening position where the music will snap into focus and sound the best. If you sit to

the side of the sweet spot, the soundstage will tend to bunch up around one speaker. This bunching-up effect will vary with the speaker model; some pairs of speakers produce wider sweet spots than others.

Setting the distance between the speakers is a trade-off between a wide soundstage and a strong center, or phantom, image. The farther apart the loudspeakers (assuming the same listening position), the wider the soundstage. As the speakers are moved farther apart, however, the center image weakens, and can even disappear. If the speakers are too close together, the soundstage narrows.

Speakers placed the optimal distance apart will produce a strong center image and a wide soundstage. A musical selection with a singer and sparse accompaniment is ideal for setting loudspeaker spacing and ensuring a strong center image. With the speakers fairly close together, listen for a tightly focused image exactly between the two speakers. Move the speakers a little farther apart and listen again. Repeat this move/listen

procedure until you start to hear the central image become larger, more diffuse, and less focused, indicating that you've gone slightly beyond the maximum distance your speakers should be from each other for a given listening position. There will likely be a position where the center image snaps into focus, appearing as a stable and almost tangible presence exactly between the speakers.

### 2) Proximity to walls affects the amount of bass

Room boundaries have a great effect on a speaker's overall tonal balance. Loudspeakers placed close to walls will exhibit a reinforcement in the bass (called "room gain"), making the sound more bottom-heavy. Some speakers are designed to be placed near the room's front wall (the wall behind the speakers); they need this reinforcement for a more natural tonal balance. Such speakers sound thin if placed out into the room. Others sound thick and heavy if not at least 3' from the front and sidewalls. Be sure which type you're buying if your placement options are limited.

When a loudspeaker is placed near a wall, more of its bass energy is reflected back into the room, essentially in phase with the speaker's direct output. This means that the direct and reflected waves reinforce each other at low frequencies, producing louder bass.

Fig. 2 shows the difference in a speaker's frequency response when measured in an anechoic chamber (a room that reflects no soundwaves) and in a normal room. A frequency-response graph plots amplitude (loudness) vs. frequency. As you can see in the graph, not only is the bass boosted by the room, the speaker's low-frequency extension is deepened.

Each surface near the speaker (floor, front wall, and sidewalls) will increase the speaker's bass output. The closer to the room's corners the speakers are, the more bass you'll hear. The speaker's position in relation to the front and sidewalls will also affect which frequencies are boosted. Correct placement can not only extend a loudspeaker's bass response by complementing its natural rolloff, but can prevent peaks and dips in the response. Improper placement can cause frequency-response irregularities that color the bass. That is, some

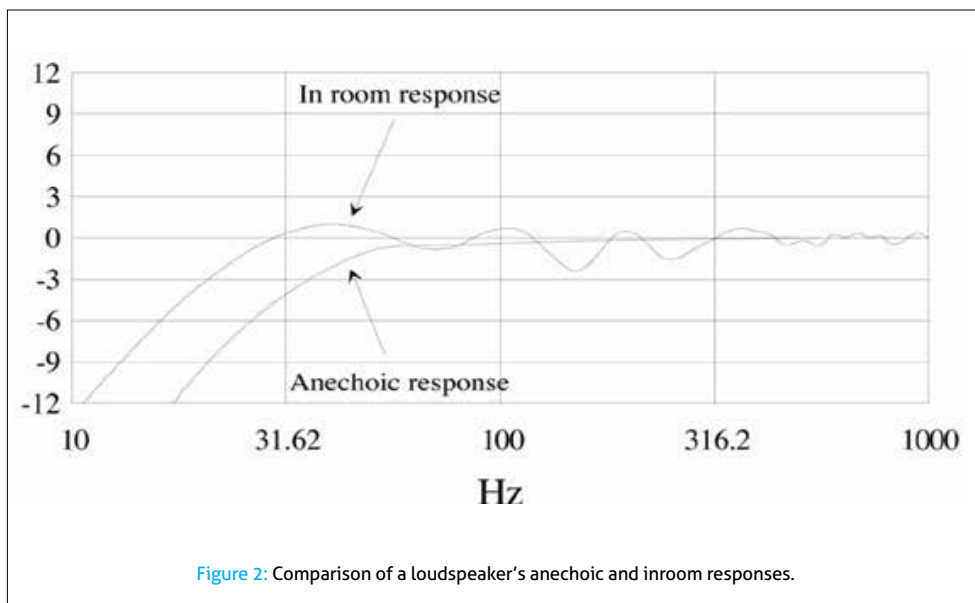


Figure 2: Comparison of a loudspeaker's anechoic and inroom responses.



## Feature: Six Secrets of Speaker Placement

frequencies are boosted relative to others, making the bass reproduction less accurate.

The loudspeakers should be positioned at different distances from the front and sidewalls. A rule of thumb: the two distances shouldn't be within 33% of each other. For example, if the speaker is 3' from the sidewall, it should be at least 4' from the front wall. Many speaker manufacturers will specify a distance from the front and sidewalls. When a measurement is specified, the distance is between the woofer cone and the wall. Start with the speakers in the manufacturer recommended positions, then begin experimenting.

### 3) Loudspeaker and listener positions affect room-mode audibility.

In addition to deepening bass extension and smoothing bass response, correct speaker placement in relation to the room's walls can also reduce the audible effects of your room's resonant modes. Room resonant modes are reinforcements at certain frequencies that create peaks in the frequency response. Room modes create standing waves, which are stationary patterns of high and low sound pressure in the room that color the sound. The standing-wave patterns in a room are determined both by the room's dimensions and by the position of the sound source in the room. By putting the speakers and listener in the best locations, we can achieve smoother bass response.

A well-known rule of thumb states that, for the best bass response, the distance between the speakers and the front wall should be one-third the length of the room (Fig. 3). If this is impractical, try one-fifth the room length. Both of these positions reduce the excitation of standing waves and help the sounds from the speakers integrate with the room. Ideally, the listening position should be two-thirds of the way into the room. Starting with these basic configurations, move the loudspeakers and the listening chair in small increments while playing music rich in low frequencies. Listen for smoothness,

extension, and how well the bass integrates with the rest of the sound. When you find the speaker position where the bass is smoothest, you should also hear an increase in mid-range clarity and definition.

### 4) Distance from front wall affects soundstaging

Generally, the farther away from the front wall the speakers are, the deeper the soundstage. A deep, expansive soundstage is rarely developed with the loudspeakers near the front wall; pulling the speakers out a few feet can make the difference between poor and spectacular soundstaging. Unfortunately, many living rooms can't accommodate speakers far out into the room. If the speakers must be close to the front wall, make that wall acoustically absorbent.

### 5) Listening height and tonal balance

Most loudspeakers exhibit changes in frequency response with changes in listening

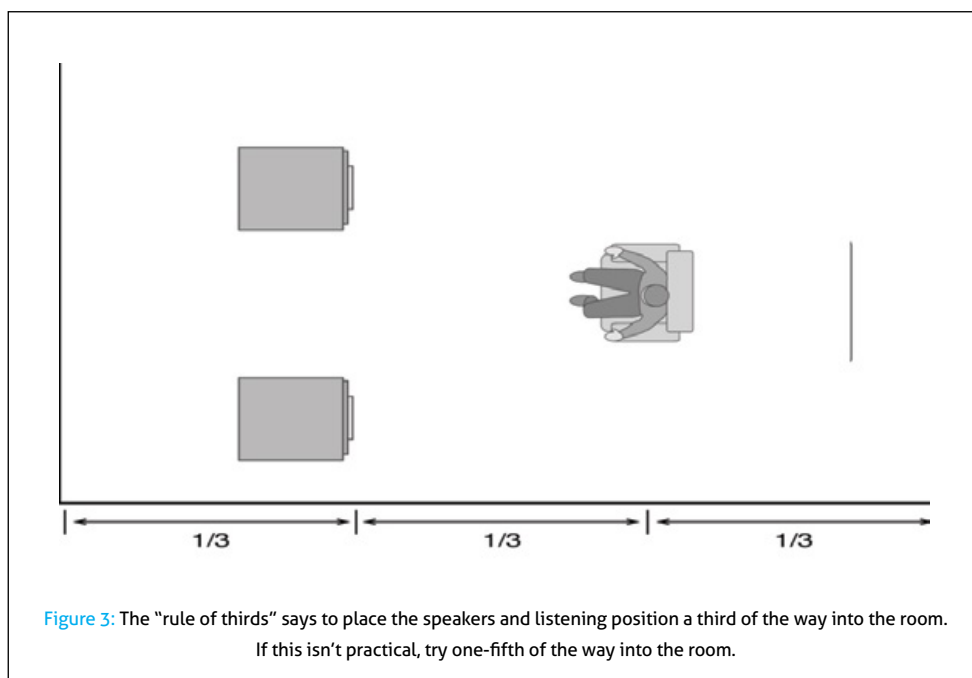
height. These changes affect the midrange and treble, not the bass balance. Typically, the sound will be brightest (i.e., have the most treble) when your ears are at the same height as the tweeters, or on the tweeter axis. Most tweeters are positioned between 32" and 40" from the floor to coincide with the height of the ears of the typical seated listener. If you've got an adjustable office chair, you can easily hear the effects of listening axis on tonal balance.

The degree to which the sound changes with height varies greatly with the loudspeaker. Some models have a broad range over which little change is audible; others can exhibit large tonal changes when you merely straighten your back while listening. Choosing a listening chair that puts your ears on the optimal axis will help achieve a good treble balance.

### 6) Toe-in

Toe-in is pointing a loudspeaker inward toward the listener rather than aiming it straight ahead (see Fig. 4). There are no rules for toe-in; the optimal amount will vary greatly with the speaker and the room. Some speakers need toe-in; others work best firing straight ahead. Toe-in affects many aspects of the sound, including mid- and high-frequency balance, soundstage focus, sense of spaciousness, and immediacy.

Most loudspeakers sound brightest when listened to directly on-axis (directly in front of the loudspeaker). Toe-in thus increases the amount of treble heard at the listening seat. An overly bright speaker can often be tamed by pointing it straight ahead. Some models, designed for listening without toe-in, are far too bright when



listened to on-axis.

The ratio of direct to reflected sound increases with toe-in. That's because a toed-in loudspeaker will present more direct energy to the listener and project less energy toward the room boundaries, where it might reach the listener only after being reflected from those surfaces. In a listening room with reflective sidewalls, toeing-in the speakers can be a decided advantage. Moreover, the amplitude of sidewall reflections is greatly decreased with toe-in. Conversely, less toe-in increases the amount of reflected energy heard by the listener, adding to a sense of spaciousness and air. Reducing toe-in can open up the soundstage and create a feeling of envelopment.

Similarly, toe-in often increases soundstage focus and image specificity. When toed-in, many loudspeakers provide a more focused and sharply delineated soundstage.

Images are more clearly defined, compact, and tight, rather than diffuse and lacking a specific spatial position. The optimal toe-in angle is often a trade-off between too much treble and a strong central image. With lots of toe-in, the soundstage snaps into focus, but the sound is often too bright. With no toe-in, the treble balance is smoother, but the imaging is more vague.

Toe-in also affects the sound's overall spaciousness. No toe-in produces a larger, more billowy, less precise soundstage. Instruments are less clearly delineated, but the sound is bigger and more spacious. Toeing-in the speakers shrinks the apparent size of the soundstage, but allows more precise image delineation. Again, the proper amount of toe-in depends on the loud-

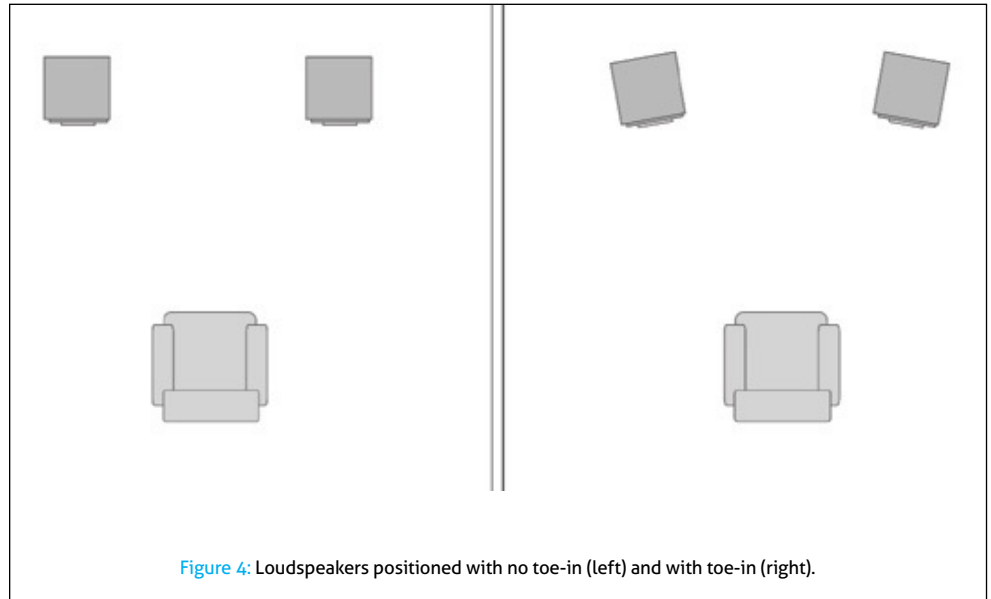
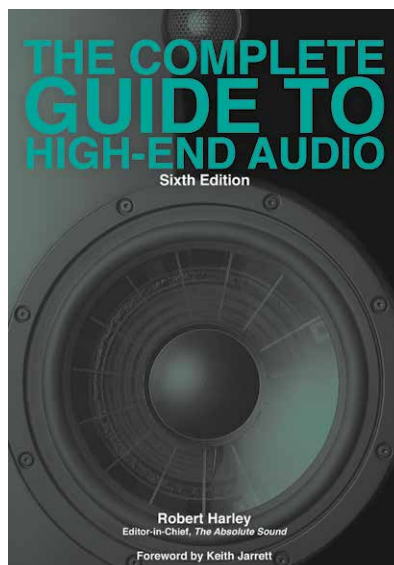


Figure 4: Loudspeakers positioned with no toe-in (left) and with toe-in (right).

speaker, the room, and personal preference. There's no substitute for listening, adjusting toe-in, and listening again. Identical toe-in for both speakers is essential to soundstaging. A speaker's frequency response changes with toe-in, and identical frequency response from both speakers is crucial to the precise placement of images in the soundstage. Achieving identical toe-in can be accomplished by measuring the distance from the front wall to both rear corners of one speaker; these distances will differ according to the degree of toe-in. Repeat this procedure on the other speaker, adjusting its toe-in so that the distances match those of the first speaker. Another way to ensure identical toe-in is to sit in the listening seat and look at the speakers' inside edges. You should see the same amount of each speaker cabinet's inner side panel. You

can also use a laser-alignment tool to ensure identical toe-in. Substituting a piece of cardboard or similar material for the listener in the listening seat, mount the laser on the top of one of the speakers, flush with one cabinet edge. Mark on the cardboard where the beam hits. Repeat the process with the other speaker and adjust the toe-in so that the beam strikes the same spot as the first beam. The laser alignment tool will come in handy later to verify that each speaker has the same degree of backward tilt (or no tilt at all). The degree of tilt, called the rake angle, can vary if the speaker's spikes are not screwed into the speaker at uniform depths.

Keep in mind that any change in one parameter of speaker placement will affect all other parameters. For example, a wide soundstage can be achieved with narrow placement but no toe-in, or wide placement with extreme toe-in.



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# Alpha High End

High End with an Eccentric Touch

**B**elgium...yes, you might think, "isn't that the little country famous for its fine chocolates and exquisite beer located next to Brussels?" And yes, that is definitely true, at least the part about the chocolate and beer...but there is more to this small country than culinary delicacies. There is also a very thriving music scene—think Toots Thielemans, Jacques Brel, Rene Jacobs, Django Reinhardt, and Adolphe Sax (inventor of the saxophone).

Belgium is a rainy place with alternating long winter nights and short summer periods. It offers a prime climate to enjoy your favorite music and keep those famous chocolates from melting. It is in Brussels that Sammy Feldman, owner of Alpha High End, recently opened a gorgeous new-old showroom in Ukkel. It is described as "new-old" because there are eccentric touches visible throughout the entire setup that evoke bygone eras. The special ambiance is created with treasured items, such as an antique typewriter, a vintage telephone with a rotary dial, and a beautiful ancient 16mm projector illuminating the enamel wall.

Although this creative setting is retro in style, the venue oozes pure comfort with nice

## Alpha High End

Four locations in Belgium:  
Brussels, Antwerp, Brasschaat,  
and Turnhout.

Please visit [alphahighend.be](http://alphahighend.be) for  
contact information on each location.



## Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 4 Locations



big rooms and one massive showroom featuring top-notch equipment ready to bring the Toots tune “Bluesette” back to life. The tasteful décor creates the right atmosphere for visitors to get a truly rare experience. There is also a convenient private parking space right next to the showroom so guests can relax, take their time, and enjoy an exceptionally delicious cup of coffee with some Côte d’Or chocolate.

“The Brussels showroom is the fourth Alpha store in Belgium. It all started in Antwerp in 1986 near the Central Station and the diamond exchange,” Sammy explained. He is passionate about music and quickly puts visitors to the showroom at ease. Mixing many languages into a single sentence, Sammy is clearly a man in his element when the topic is about music and general culture. “The main objective with a high-end store is differentiating it between what some people refer to as ‘hi-

fi’—which can be as far from musical fidelity as concentrated orange juice is from a freshly squeezed glass of real oranges. It is surely not an attitude question,” Sammy said, using the analogy to define the level of quality that Alpha offers to customers.

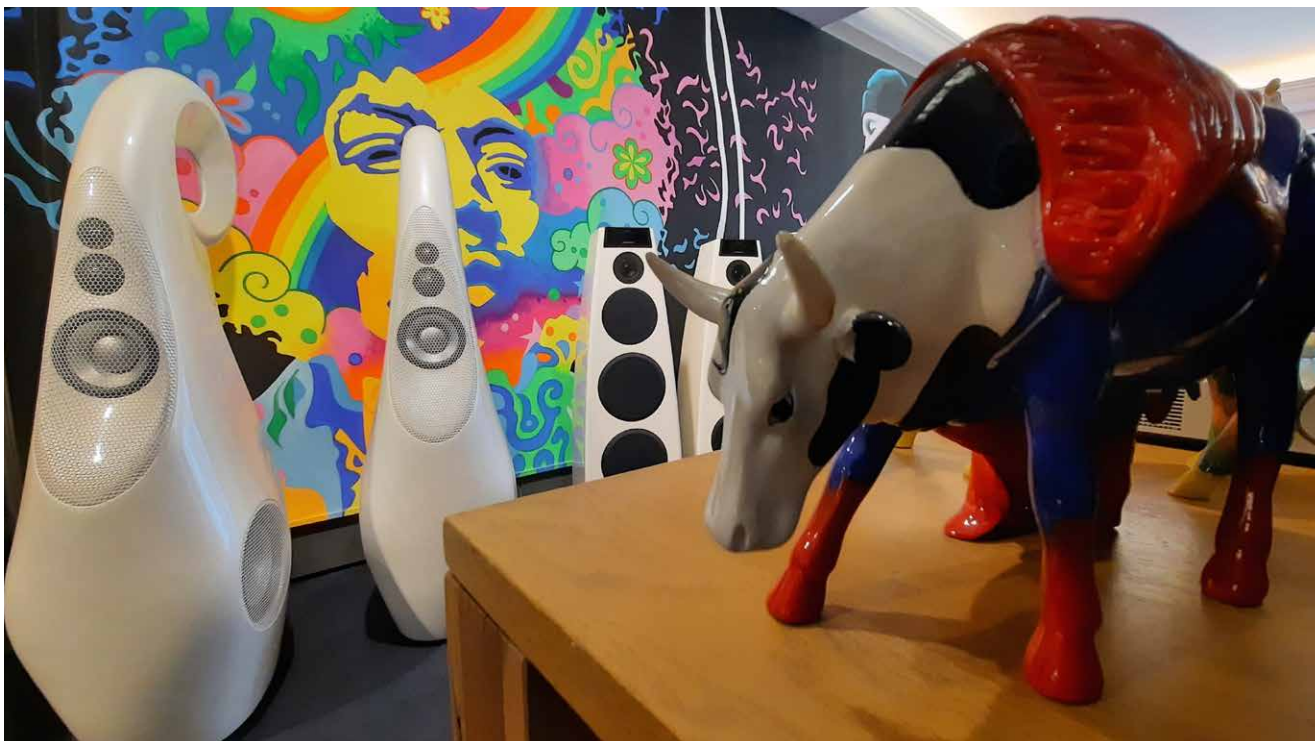
“We pride ourselves on introducing the joys of good sound to customers at very affordable prices, with brands like Audiolab, Rotel, and Rega—while at the other side of the spectrum, presenting the masterpieces made by some exceptionally gifted designers. We celebrate the talents of Laurence Dickie from Vivid Audio, and Hervé Deletraz from DarT-Zeel, along with delighting in the presence of the late Ken Ishiwata proudly presenting his famous Kl improvements on the legendary Marantz products, and our own Belgian master designer Bruno Putzeys from Mola Mola fame,” Sammy said.

This wide variety of available products allows Alpha to offer customers more brand access and greater options for their audio needs. “Every year, Alpha organizes very popular shows with some of the most illustrious hi-fi designers around,” Sammy explained. “One of the annual shows is called the “Cost is No Object” show. The name says it all, but make no mistake, it is not geared toward the “if I were a rich man” crowd, but rather to showcase the extent of what is possible. Usually, you would have to go to a Munich high-end show to experience that—but now these products are at your neighborhood store!

“Recently, we demonstrated (with MBL’s kind assistance) their X-treme set for the first time outside Germany in Europe. It was a huge success. Many of our clients started with a smaller set and then evolved into a truly exceptional set that gives them extreme pleasure. One customer said to me, ‘Sammy, I have to thank you for making my COVID lockdown experience so much less painful.’ I would say that is a great compliment,” Sammy said with a smile.



## Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 4 Locations



The main theme behind Alpha is passion, along with an insatiable curiosity for all things audio-related—qualities that visitors seem to appreciate about the company. Sammy described how the entire Alpha team shares the same passion for great sound. The team is very patient, knowledgeable, and never pushy. Most of all, they have the right attitude toward their clients—they genuinely want to help give customers good solid advice. Along with the availability of most major hi-fi brands in their four stores, the Alpha team can easily arrange a customer listening session that could enlighten the entire family. After all, the “WAF” (Wife Acceptance Factor) is decisive, Sammy said with a wink. He tells customers to bring their partners along to the showroom to share the experience together, whether to shop for a home theater, a multiroom A/V project, or just a fine stereo set.

The new Alpha showroom in Brussels has that “coming home” feeling with an easy-does-it attitude, which coupled with the amazing collection of top gear, makes Alpha an easy choice for music lovers living in (or passing through) the “chocolate country” of Belgium. To quote the movie *Forrest Gump*, “life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you’re gonna get.” That might be true for most things in life, but at Alpha, the chocolate is always good!

We carry very wide range of solid hi-fidelity products, just a sampling: Accuphase, Amphion, Anthem, Aries Cerat, ASR, Audio Analogue, AudioQuest, Avantgarde, Aurender, Auratic, AVM, B&W, Burmester, CEC, CH Precision, Chord Electronics, DarTZeel, Devialet, Dipityque, Dynaudio, Egg-Shell, Focal, Gato, Gryphon, Hegel, Innuos, Lumin, Lyravox, Manger, MartinLogan, MBL, McIntosh, Morel, M-Fidelity, Mola Mola, Naim, Pass Labs, PMC, Rega, Rose, SME, Sonus faber, Spondor, Soulines, TAD, T+A, Wilson Audio, Wolf von Langa, Transrotor, Vivid, Yamaha, LG OLED screens, JVC and Sony projectors.

Most quality headphones companies: Grado, HiFiman, Dan Clark, Meze, Sennheiser, Audeze, Astell&Kern, Shanling, and more.

Cables: Tellurium, AudioQuest, Kimber, Wireworld, Chord, and many more.



The four stores are in Brussels, Antwerp, Brasschaat, and Turnhout. Opening times are different best to check on our website or to call 0032 499202626. For specific demos, it is best to contact Alpha in advance to make sure that what you’re interested in is the right venue.

We offer TAX arrangements for export or diplomatic sales. Worldwide shipping is available.

We also offer repair service on audio equipment, virtually any brand (just ask). Free advice and estimates for all your audio needs.





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# Audio Advisors

Pushing the Limits

**“** now know why Audio Advisors will soon hit its 40th year...”  
“When I came to this place, it felt like just walking into somewhere that I had been my whole life, and I was just immediately like, OK, this is where I will be.”

That is the experience every customer wants. The feeling of being welcomed alongside the comfort of knowing your needs are in good hands. It's a trust built from doing things the right way, and for the right reasons.

West Palm Beach Florida's Audio Advisors is a living tribute to the idea that longevity doesn't have to mean complacency. This isn't a store that rests on its history or reputation, and it doesn't hide behind its A-list product offerings. Instead, there's a continual energy to push the limits of what's possible in 2 channel playback, and perhaps most importantly,

Arcam • Audio Research • Aurender • Boulder • Bowers & Wilkins • Chord • Focal • JBL • JL Audio • Marantz • Mark Levinson • McIntosh • MoFi • NAD • Pro-Ject • Rega • Revel • Rotel • Sonance • Sonos • Sonus faber • VPI Industries • Wilson Audio • and much more

## Audio Advisors

2271A Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.  
West Palm Beach, FL 33409  
(561) 478-3100

[audioadvisors.com](http://audioadvisors.com)  
[info@audioadvisors.com](mailto:info@audioadvisors.com)



there's a deep, genuine love of music that drives the entire operation. Founder/ President Jeff Hoover and Store Manager Rudi Kothe bring essential elements to the fore that can't be faked: experience, expertise, and a love for what they do.

It's a great destination store with world-class products and solutions, but beyond this, customers will feel a common purpose and enthusiasm at Audio Advisors that put it in that rarified air of a retail store that gives you that "I'm home" comfort.

One look at the product list tells you Audio Advisors is one of the premier dealers in the country. But it takes a visit to the store to get the full picture, or should we say...sound. These guys are into music! Big bins of LPs are constantly replenished, which encourages regular visitors to find new and old titles. Rare finds and sealed collectibles like some of the out-of-print MFSL One-Steps are also on hand. Audio Advisors sells and buys music collections, making them a real musical authority. This commitment to music is an enormous part of what they do. It's the whole reason they push the boundaries of high-performance sound systems in the first place—to transform how you experience the soundtrack of your life.

As a certified VPI specialist, turntable users from all over Florida come to Audio Advisors for yet another reason—to have their tables (of all brands) set-up and/or upgraded. This is a rare specialty in today's market, and the combination of top-tier vinyl expertise in both the hardware and software of the hobby always makes any in-person visit worthwhile, even when traveling from a distance.

Audio Advisors is a store (unlike so many...) that offers easy, high-value trade-ins, and has an active trade-in room. Everything is a well-organized effort to make sure that customers can acquire the system of their dreams without the barriers other dealers typically erect. The experience and professional drive of their team results in a buying process that is low on the stress meter.

As part of the larger, diverse, The Advisor Companies, Audio Advisors takes its



2-channel focus and combines it with the resources and human capital (over 60 talented employees) not available to the typical corner hi-fi shop. Staff receive unprecedented access to continual education classes in their own, in-house, 35-seat training facility. It's the resources and desire to do things right and stay on top. Think of Audio Advisors as the best of traditional, high-end audio store backed by a modern infrastructure. It's literally 2 buildings: one with all the dedicated 2 channel audio ear candy and expertise (thanks to Rudi and Jeff), and one "command center" supporting expertise in electrical & systems integration (Ask The Advisors), mobile electronics (Serious Autosport), as well as resources for design, repairs, and installation.

All the passion. All the music. All the expertise. Audio Advisors lights Florida up with the best the industry has to offer to the client looking for that "I'm home" experience.





# The Audio Consultants

Highest Quality Sound Over Convenience

**A**ll too frequently, today's audio dealer is nothing more than a glorified display shelf for fancy (and expensive!) boxes with fancy names emblazoned on their sides. What's conspicuously absent is the purpose of it all...

The Audio Consultants has a focus that supersedes the importance of any one brand or piece of equipment. It's their goal to assemble 2-channel systems at varying price points that *emulate the concert hall experience*. They believe in a listening experience set a good few rows back from the front of the stage rather than the all too common bright and forward presentation that delivers both an initial "hi-fi" brilliance, along with the accompanying long-term fatigue! The sound of an Audio Consultants system is one with a wide and especially deep, holographic stage. It's a layering of properly sized and placed instruments with natural timbre and tonal balance. Put simply, it's the sound of the **best seats in the house!**

Amphion • Atacama • Audio Analogue • Audiolab • AudioQuest • AVM • Benz-Micro • Clearaudio • DS Audio • Eggleston Works • Furutech • Futureglass • German Physiks • GutWire • Hegel Music Systems • HRS • Innuos • Kerr Acoustic • Kiseki • Kudos Audio • Larsen • Lateral Audio • Luxman • Lyra • Nottingham Analogue • Puritan • and much more

## The Audio Consultants

4 Zephyr House  
Calleva Park, Aldermaston  
RG7 8JN, UK  
0118 981 9891

[audioconsultants.co.uk](http://audioconsultants.co.uk)  
[info@audioconsultants.co.uk](mailto:info@audioconsultants.co.uk)



## Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



The Audio Consultants is clear on the purpose of it all, and it has the experience of knowing how to get there. At varying price points, and in varying acoustical environments, they bring a philosophy of high performance that informs every decision. In a world of infinite, instant information, and seemingly endless choices, it's refreshing to have real experts with a real focus so that the rest of us can get to the job of a real musical experience.

The unwavering focus on recreating the best seat in a concert hall is made possible, in part, by The Audio Consultants' relatively small size. There is a concentration of resources and expertise, all pulling in one direction. It's a consultancy whose demonstrations are operated by appointment only, usually after prior consultations by phone or email to focus on the client's priorities and final goals. Their 5.25 X 3.7 m (17 X 12 ft) demonstration room is very close in size to that of a standard living room, and it is comfortably equipped to allow the differences in components to be easily determined.

The Audio Consultants' portfolio of products is carefully curated and chosen by listening tests only. Every electronic component, signal cable, power cord, and equipment support system is extensively auditioned by The Audio Consultants team before it is offered to the public. "Famous" name brands, often despite excellent re-



views in the specialist audio press or online platforms, are frequently rejected under the demanding light of these testing sessions. High margins or other marketing incentives are of no influence.

More than 25 years of experience has led to the company philosophy of a sonic presentation that is both holographic and natural. Judged through recordings of unamplified instruments with as little post-production artifice as possible, The Audio Consultants is a firm believer that physical formats such as vinyl and CD outperform files ripped to a hard drive, hi-res downloads, or streamed from subscription services. While they support the notion that these newer formats are a fantastic way to discover new music and perform admirably as secondary sources of casual playlists, they remain committed to physical formats as the heart of any primary, high-quality 2-channel system.

As one might also expect from a dealer of such dedication to audio's higher ideals, no stone is left unturned. The Audio Consultants specializes in harmful noise reduction of all kinds, whether it be through products such as HRS equipment supports to reduce air or chassis born vibrations, or in quality power distribution that doesn't involve filtration or significant electronic filtration. It's all an effort to reveal soundstage scale and dynamics, not compress them!

Experts as well in room acoustics (proper use of bass frequency traps to improve articulation and soundstage focus), and turntable/ tonearm/ cartridge setup, this is an audio dealer of exceptional depth. Audio with a sure and uncompromised purpose.

Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



# Audio Element

Innovation at its Best

**A**udio Element feels different. Talking with the people there gives you...hope. Smart. Energetic. You get a sense of a dealer that enjoys what they do and looks forward to tomorrow. Frankly, they don't seem old and tired. And the combination of that youthful energy and intellect with an A-list product lineup is extremely rare in today's marketplace.

Audio Element takes the classic values of listening to great music on great systems and moves them into the relevant now. Today's buyer often doesn't have the time for the mental clutter associated with unfamiliar brands and the technicalities of properly assembling and setting up a rewarding music system. Audio Element simplifies the process. They make it less confusing. More about having fun than pretensions. A customer gets all the advantages of an experienced, established dealer and access to superior, exclusive brands without the bitter aftertaste. And that makes it the perfect dealer for music lovers of all budgets and levels of experience.

Connecting with the music you love doesn't get old. Old dealers with old ways get old. Audio Element is an essential...element...of the new.

AMG • Audio Physic • Auralic • Boulder • Cardas • Clearaudio • Dan D'Agostino • dCS • Grand Prix Audio • Hana • IsoTek • Jadis • Koetsu • Lyra • McIntosh • SoundSmith • Transparent • Tri-Planar • VTL • Wilson Audio • and much more



## Audio Element

117 East Union Street  
Pasadena, CA 91103  
(626) 793-7229

audio-element.com  
sales@audio-element.com





Owner and founder Brian Berdan was born into the business of ultra-performance music systems. His father Brooks was a renowned master in the art of turntable and system setup. A deep understanding of the smallest of details runs in his blood. It's in his DNA, right alongside a love of great music. But he came to feel that the industry had drifted away from its beating heart. There had developed a disconnect from the simple appreciation of quality music.

In 2013 Brian opened Audio Element as an innovative store that would bridge this widening divide. The first goal was to make the process of getting a great system fun again. It would be a place that earned trust, first and foremost through the simple act of listening to a customer. Audio Element would approach each client with an open mind and start by understanding their needs, not dictating a predetermined outcome. Unique in-store solutions like their trademarked (and now copied elsewhere...) Turntable Bar™ would then provide customers the ability to make informed decisions more easily and efficiently than had been possible before. More fun. Better decisions. An experience truly centered on the needs and experience of each unique buyer.



Unlike the atmosphere of so many "high-end" dealers, Audio Element knows that nothing they sell is a life necessity. It's about a good time and good music, not pretensions. That's a welcoming, comforting feeling for every customer, but particularly the uninitiated who are too frequently turned away by dealers that make them feel anxious and inadequate. Audio Element removes those barriers. Brian and his team have created a store more of friends and family. A place of fellow, passionate music lovers who believe that high quality really brings you closer.

A superior experience. Superior equipment. An innovative, energetic, and welcoming atmosphere. And the cherry on top of an owner recognized as a true master in the art of turntable, loudspeaker, and overall system setup. There are very few stores in America that can legitimately claim to having one of the top experts in this technical field, and Brian has proven his mettle publicly as a frequent winner of Best Sound in Show awards. That level of knowledge and expertise is exceptionally rare and valuable.

Audio Element is at the forefront of bringing the industry of high-performance audio back in line with the basic priorities of its customers. Whether you are interested in digital or analog, state of the art, or entry level, Brian Berdan and his team of friends and family represent the perfect combination of old school knowledge and new school thinking.

Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location

the **audio salon**  
for the love of music™



# The Audio Salon

## Reinventing the Retail Experience

Owner Maier Shadi's concept for a better audio experience has evolved and been refined over the past 30 years. The Audio Salon in Santa Monica, California, has been proclaimed the "most disruptive audio store" in the United States, and Mr. Shadi is proud to embrace this title. There is no cash register at the front, and they don't take credit cards. This is a retail experience that is entirely built upon relationships. Not one aspect of The Audio Salon is organized around the traditional retail routine of "moving boxes." Perhaps inspired by the location in the Bergamot Station Arts Center, Maier has found his groove in a business that slows the pace to make room for a more considered appreciation of the things that really matter. Empowering his customers to be moved to feel something.

The list of products represented is both exceptional and focused. The Audio Salon is a representative for SAT analog products and the #1 TechDAS dealer in the U.S. for four consecutive years. As the only dealer in the world showcasing the TechDAS Air Force Zero turntable, Maier has established a reputation for truly state-of-the-art analog playback systems. His expertise and dedication to Wilson Audio loudspeakers is also second to none

in the industry, and proven by the countless awards that line the store's entrance. The Audio Salon has even created an innovative program of fully restoring earlier Wilson speakers to "as-new" condition allowing clients to experience world-class music reproduction at dramatically more approachable price points.

Trusted by Paul McCartney • Quincy Jones • Beyoncé • Jay Z • Flea • Neil Young • Lenny Kravitz • and producers Rick Rubin • Andrew Watt • Sean Combs

### The Audio Salon

2525 Michigan Avenue, Unit F1  
Santa Monica, CA 90404

(310) 863-0863  
audiosalon.com





In speaking with Maier Shadi, you may indeed forget, for a moment, that The Audio Salon does after all...well...they sell things! And wonderful things at that. However, the focus is building value in the long-term relationship and the joy of the process for everyone involved. It's never simply about the sale. It's also about exceeding demanding goals for deserving clients. The proof of Maier's dedication to an exceptional level of service and expertise can be found in the trust earned from an exceptionally discerning and demanding customer base. A few of the familiar names in the music industry who have

found The Audio Salon to meet or exceed their uncompromising professional standards are listed at the bottom of the previous page. It's a business about people before anything else.

Maier's commitment to relationships and service begins long before a purchase and extends long after the equipment is meticulously installed and working flawlessly. For a prospective client in the North Eastern U.S., Maier traveled with a small team across the country on a day's notice (on a weekend) and with no commitment or promise from this prospect to purchase anything from The Audio Salon. Maier just wanted to meet with the client in person, and discuss his needs, ready to be of service if the need was there and a compelling and complete solution was possible. From the big picture vision to the smallest details a master plan was crafted, and years later that relationship continues to flourish. Maier discovered that this customer had a favorite record that was difficult to obtain. Maier took the time and effort to search the globe for the best copy of this album, eventually determining that the only acceptable solution was to find the original master recording on tape, and have a new lacquer made from that master! That's correct. As a gift to the client, Maier located this master tape (in Russia no less) and arranged for a record to be cut for him at 45rpm. Maier then collected 21 different copies from around the world and compared them to the newly mastered, custom album. There was no comparison. That is extreme service and a dedication to exceed and excite his customer's desire to really feel something.

These kinds of incredible service stories are only possible because The Audio Salon is so disruptively un-retail in every aspect of the total experience. Maier's unusual and profound desire to have people really feel something sets each relationship on a personalized pathway to find the products that really make sense to that individual client, and their unique needs, budget, environment, and love of music. Maier's genius is in a patient, experienced approach to each client opportunity and relationship, and his fanatical attention to the smallest details. He's genuinely excited by amazing products and the emotions they often stir within the soul, and he's created a store to celebrate these feelings with those like-minded kindred spirits who share his passion in finding the necessary in the unnecessary.



Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location

**brianandtrevors**  
The Original House of Hi-Fi Just Listen



# Brian and Trevors

Just Listen



Trevor Liddle, Owner

Brian Morris, Owner

**T**here's a disarming comfort in being home. The ability to let all your defenses down and just be yourself. Brian and Trevor of Greater Manchester's cleverly named brianandtrevors know what it's like to be a customer. They allow you to listen to real music in a real home. The genuine and relatable vibe results in typical demos of two hours or more, and purchasing decisions are frequently taken only after multiple visits. The entire experience is more like an audio consultancy rather than that of a traditional hi-fi shop where the goal is to move boxes...quickly! brianandtrevors is more personal. More characterful. A place where you can take your time, be yourself, at ease and at home.

There is substance with this style too. Originally launching House of Linn in 2007, brianandtrevors followed in 2009 as the evolution into broader offerings, but always with

ATC • Audio Technica • Boenicke • Brigadier • Chord Cable Company • Dynaudio • Fidelice • Graham Audio • Hana • Innuos • Keith Monks • Kudos Audio • Lateral • Linn • Melco • Moonriver • MoorAmp • Naim • Puritan • Quadraspire • REL • Roon • Sugden • and much more

**Brian and Trevors**  
Manchester UK  
+44 (0) 161 766 4837

brianandtrevors.com  
houseoflinn.com  
booplith.com  
info@brianandtrevors.com  
Appointments Only.





the principle that this would be equipment that Brian and Trevor would listen to themselves. You get their 40-plus years of industry experience and four living rooms in a Victorian home within which to play and enjoy. Whether it be to have great music in just one room or throughout your home, brianandtrevors keeps the focus on having great music in and through your life. Want proof? Brian and Trevor simply suggest, "Listen to our clients before you listen to us." Customer service is key and has long been a priority for the team. The company won the UK Enterprise 2020 Customer Service Excellence Award from SME News, which honors the best small and medium-sized enterprises across the UK.

Brian Morris and Trevor Liddle founded House of Linn because they wanted to establish a "Linn House of Excellence." They both worked at Linn from 1989/90 through to that retail venture in 2007—Brian focused on public relations and marketing, heavily supporting Linn's growth in the U.S. market at the time, while Trevor had worked in a sales account manager position with retailers and distributors in the U.K. and around the world. Together, Brian and Trevor had seen retail done right around the globe, and retail (more frequently) done wrong. House of Linn represents this broad collected experience together with an unparalleled level of technical knowledge, service, and setup abilities that is unbeatable for anything Linn, both new and old. They even designed and developed Booplinth, one of the most effective LP12 aftermarket plinths on the market. Everyone calls themselves experts, but these guys are Linn experts in every way.

The brianandtrevors audio consultancy



is the logical extension of those same House of Linn principles, taken outside the boundaries of the Linn ecosystem. Customers had inquired about other manufacturers, so brianandtrevors was born to add select product ranges that still satisfied Brian and Trevor's personal sonic goals. It all had to be equipment they personally enjoyed. They needed to be as committed to new gear as they were to all things Linn. brianandtrevors is a broader approach to those same, classic, enduring beliefs in music that moves you.

It's always been about personalized service. The model is appointment-based (with an average of three appointments per week and around 2000 since opening and counting). The experience is individualized for the customer. brianandtrevors is a true audio consultancy in the comfortable setting of a real home. You experience what is possible to achieve in your home, not a fanciful acoustical "trick" created in an unreal, unfamiliar environment. They did it right so you can get it right.



Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



# Command Performance AV

A Personable, Holistic Approach



Jeff Fox, Owner

**A**t Command Performance, our mission is to provide you with an unparalleled home music experience. Our experienced staff will provide you with a comfortable, no-pressure environment for auditioning a wide range of carefully selected equipment. We also offer professional installation services to ensure your equipment is properly set up.

Command Performance started out as a home-based dealer almost 15 years ago. Owner Jeff Fox and his loyal sales associate Bella (his dog and loyal companion) took great pride in providing a welcoming and relaxed listening environment where customers could assess fine audio equipment.

In 2014, we moved to our current brick-and-mortar location in Falls Church, Virginia. While the new store was a major expansion, with four dedicated listening rooms, Jeff and Bella's goal was to keep that same level of personal interaction and to continue to provide an experience as inviting as a visit to a home. At Command Performance, we welcome you (and your

## Command Performance AV

115 Park Avenue, Suite 2  
Falls Church, VA 22046  
(703) 532-7239

commandav.com  
info@commandav.com

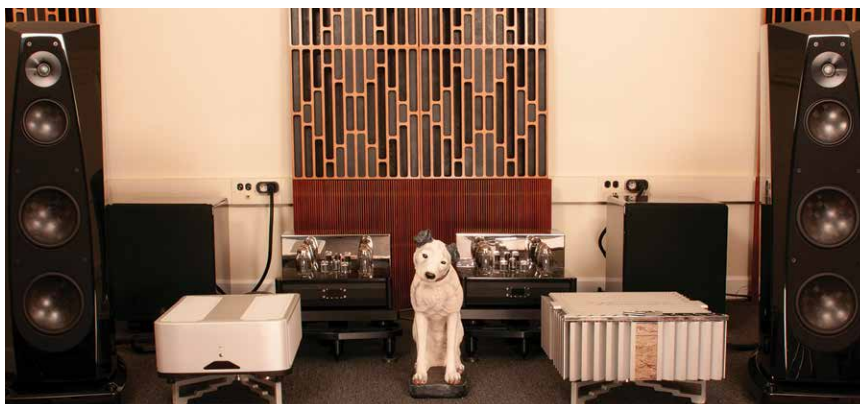
**Ansuz Acoustics • AudioQuest • Aurender • Burmester • Cardas • Clearaudio • DeVore Fidelity • Dynaudio • Focal • Gryphon • Hegel • HRS • Innuos • IsoTek • JL Audio • Koetsu • Luxman • Magico • Marten • Naim • Rockport • Wireworld • and much more**



pets) regardless of whether you are buying your first quality system or purchasing top-of-the-line dream components.

With the move to our retail space, Command Performance added premier brands of electronics, speakers, cables, and accessories from around the world. We pride ourselves on having a wide variety of models on active display. For example, Command currently has 10 turntables and a half-dozen streamers and DACs available for audition.

Just as important as expanding the selection of equipment was hiring highly skilled and customer-oriented staff. Our staff members understand the technical details of our products, as well as the extensive knowledge of home networks, analog setup, room acoustics, and component matching. We have invested in the tools and training to expertly set up and install our equipment both locally and across the country. Rare in high-end retail, we check



our egos at the door. We offer unbiased advice, caring first and foremost about delivering a system you will enjoy.

Jeff's background as a systems engineer for some of the U.S. government's top research organizations trained him to look at any piece of technology as part of an overall system and to maintain a clear focus on the user's requirements. He brought this practice with him to Command Performance. This means that our staff will work with you to understand your needs, desires, and constraints. We use that information to help you select the most appropriate gear in the context of your other equipment, your home listening environment (including a significant other), your level of comfort with technology, your budget, and your musical preferences. We recommend equipment we think is best for you, not what costs the most or pays the highest commission.

Jeff's engineering background also taught him to look at the entire lifecycle of a system, so we are here for you from beginning to end, helping you explore options and evaluate gear, providing hands-on training, offering post-sales support, and a path for future upgrades. This holistic approach has led to many long-term relationships with our customers, having earned their trust and their repeat business. We view every customer as part of the ever-expanding Command Performance family. We look for to earning your business and joining our family.





# Criterion Audio

Setting the Standard



Mike Cunningham

**L**et's say that you could distil it all down to some basic principles. You could survey the audio industry from the inside, and customer perspective from the outside, to find the essential ingredients (the *criterion*) to build a world-class dealership that could serve both the hardcore enthusiast and yet welcome the less hi-fi aware but music-loving public. How would you build your store to be both serious and relaxed? To represent the highest levels of performance without the intimidation factor?

Criterion Audio welcomes you to a store that answers this question of essential principles. We've built the ultimate facility with the right attitude to satisfy the needs of both the

Analysis Plus • Atacama • ATC • Audeze • Audio Desk Systeme • AURALiC • Aurender • Avantgarde Acoustic • Bassocontinuo • Bel Canto • BlueSound • Boulder • Burmester • Cyrus • Falcon Acoustics • Focal • Grado • Graham Slee • Innuos • KEF • Linn • Melco • Michell Engineering • Moon by SimAudio • Nagra • Naim • Ortofon • Plinius • PMC • Pro-Ject • ProAc • Sennheiser • Shelter • Siltech • SME • Sonus faber • Soundcare • Spendor • Technics • The Chord Company • Trichord • Weiss Engineering • YG Acoustics • and much more

## Criterion Audio

Criterion House  
Oakington Road, Cambridge  
CB3 0QH  
+44 01223 233730

[criterionaudio.com](http://criterionaudio.com)  
[hello@criterionaudio.com](mailto:hello@criterionaudio.com)



dedicated audiophile and the curious visitor just interested in hearing some great sounding music. In other words, it's a store for you, no matter who you are. A modern interpretation of what could happen if you were empowered to find *your* sound. A staff with over 30 years of experience will be there to guide you in your audio journey, at your pace, with a wide selection of exceptional components ready to fill the needs of all budgets.

Criterion Audio is a high-end audio store worth visiting. The criteria are in place. All the gain. No pain.

### Welcoming

Criterion Audio opened in 2014. It was director Mike Cunningham's response to the observation that premium audio wasn't sufficiently catered to in the Cambridge area. Mike believed that the future of audio retail would be a response to customer needs, not another store that tried to dictate the terms. Criterion would listen. It would dazzle experienced hobbyists with unique brands and world-class performance, but it would also welcome a broader range of new, music-loving people with their unique needs. Criterion Audio would fuel a wider passion.

You can't welcome people if they can't get there or can't find parking once they do! Situated in a peaceful, semi-rural location on the northwest edge of Cambridge, Criterion Audio offers plenty of parking and easy access from all major routes. It's open to the public without the need for an appointment, however, if you're looking to audition specific components, it's advisable to book so everything's warmed up in preparation. There is a display/showroom area in addition to the dedicated listening



rooms that welcomes casual browsers and serves as an area for attendees to congregate during store events. Easy and inviting, Criterion is much more than a store for the hi-fi hobbyist. It's a welcome mat for those music enthusiasts ready to have the experience of great sound in their homes.

### And Serious

Recently, Criterion completed an extension to the rear of their building, adding two more custom listening rooms built to their exact specifications. Non-parallel walls and vaulted ceilings were utilized to minimize standing waves, and both areas were clad with dual layers of SoundShield plasterboard sandwiching Green Glue Noiseproofing Compound to keep them as disturbance-free as possible. Individual fresh air ventilation systems are incorporated with air conditioning and underfloor heating in each room, making them exceptionally welcoming and comfortable.

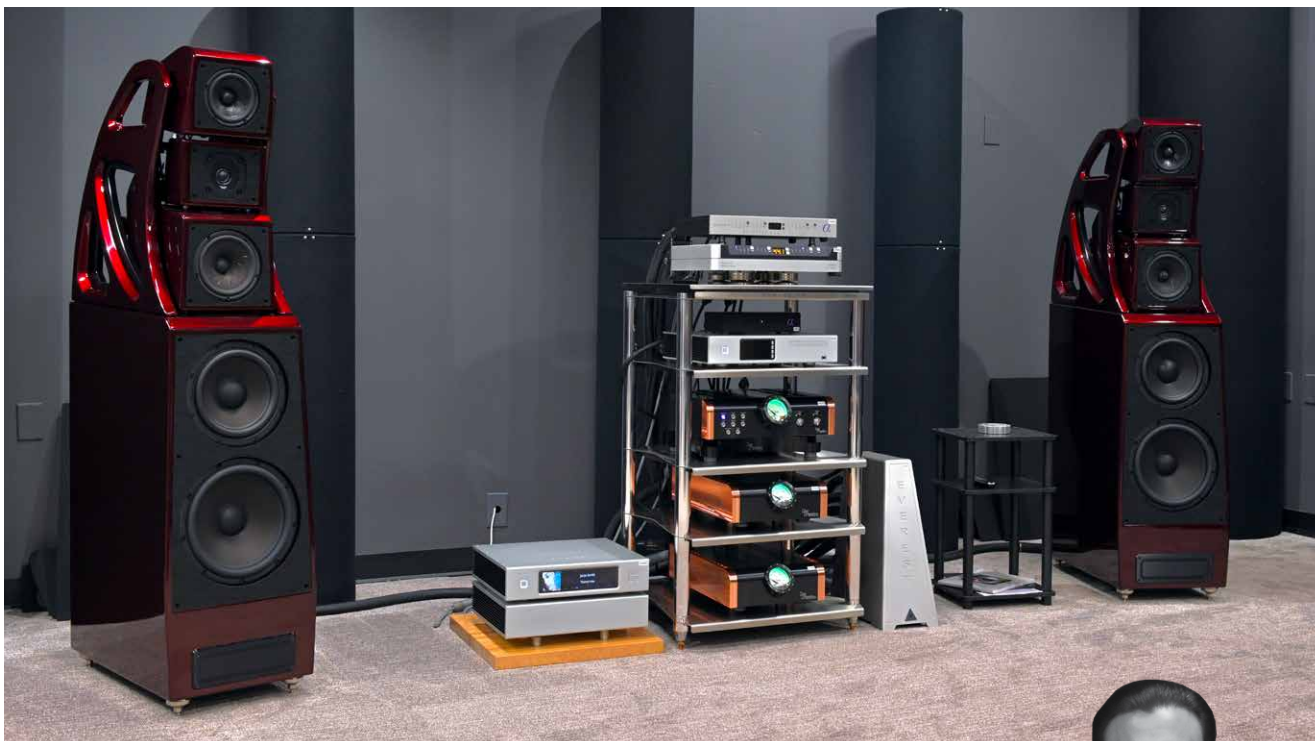
This new expansion means that Criterion now offers three dedicated, acoustically isolated, and well-stocked two-channel listening rooms of various sizes—small (4.8m x 3.5m), medium (6.5m x 4m), and large (8.5m x 5.5m)—alongside its display/showroom areas. The setting is extremely well-appointed, comfortable, and luxurious, and furthermore, it's lauded by many of its suppliers as one of the finest demonstration facilities in Europe.

Criterion is also an authorized Linn LP12 specialist, offering service and updates to LP12s of all vintages. It's an indication of a commitment beyond the fancy walls and equipment. Sales, service, and support. Everything needed as you continue forward on your audio journey.



Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location

devAAudio



# devAAudio

"Music is our meditation."



Dr. Deva Chandramohan, Owner

**D**evAAudio is "the new kid on the block" in terms of HiFi stores! The owner, Dr. Deva Chandramohan, has put together an incredible range of high-end brands that coalesce into a real live sounding performance at a variety of price points. He is passionate about what he does and together, with his new store manager Brian West, they work closely with clients to help them achieve something truly special. Their approach and genuine connection with customers is something they hold with high regard. Deva likes to say, "Ultimately, we are building a relationship with people...one based on trust. We always advocate for a better customer experience. That is at the forefront of what we do. We don't just sell audio equipment...we sell an audio experience!"

If you are in the greater Kansas City region, it would be well worth your time to contact devAAudio. They enjoy meeting new clients from all over the country and can also add a personal touch to the online sales experience. Customers have appreciated their help in solving problems, advocating for them with manufacturers, and being attentive to their audio needs through good communication. In addition to providing a worry-free customer service experience, devAAudio also has made it their mission to support local musical

Acoustic Sciences Corp • ATI • AudioQuest • Aurender • Berkeley Audio Design • Bluesound • Dan D'Agostino • Electrocompaniet • Furutech • HB Cable Design • KEF • Mytek Digital • NAD • Rega Research • REL • Shunyata Research • Stage III Concepts • Stillpoints • Symposium • Theta Digital • Wilson Audio • Wilson Benesch • Ypsilon Electronics • and much more

**"We don't just sell audio equipment —we sell an audio experience!"**

## devAAudio

11812 Roe Avenue  
Leawood, KS 66211  
(913) 498-9768

devaaudio.com  
devaaudio78@gmail.com  
@devaaudio78 (social media)

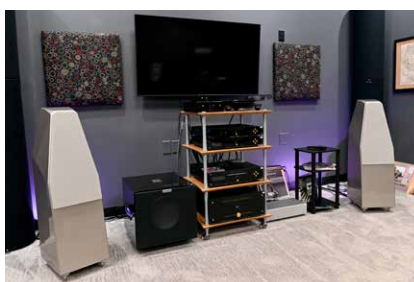
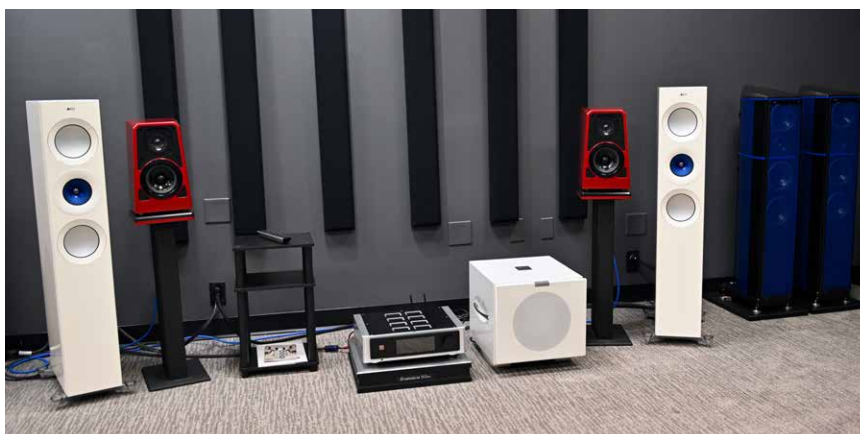
artists through a number of special events. They believe "the future is bright, the future is filled with music, and the future is fellowship through music!" Come see what sets devAAudio apart from all the others!

### From the owner...

Music and audio systems have been a passion of mine since early childhood. I have always been fascinated with audio technology and sound reproduction. I still have many great memories from visiting HiFi shops as an adolescent. There were so many "wow" moments but the "real" learning has taken place over countless nights listening to different systems in my home. It was here that I learned about how slight adjustments made meaningful strides. This, along with a variety of equipment upgrades, led to incremental improvements in the overall sound of my music systems. I learned that in order to get the most out of a system it takes desire, patience, interest, a willingness to learn, and attention to detail. To me HiFi audio has become a fusion of art, entertainment, relaxation, and even meditation.

Here at devAAudio we are doing our part to promote HiFi audio awareness and a healthy HiFi culture. We have started promotional efforts with local KC artists to provide a venue to discuss their music followed by demonstrations of their recordings on our HiFi systems. This gives our community the opportunity to connect through an amazing audio experience. It is our belief that by providing a welcoming atmosphere we can help everyone understand the value of what we do.

We have many fun resources through our website [devaaudio.com](http://devaaudio.com) including links to our "Audio Blog" which contains a wide range of topics ranging from Tidal song playlists we have put together to personal equipment reviews to philosophical discussion pieces about audio...there is something for everyone! We also encourage everyone to become a subscriber to our newsletter through our "Contact Us" tab so you can follow along with our progress, learn about new products, and stay up to date with our events.



The year 2021 has been an exciting time for us in more ways than one! We are fortunate to have been able to relocate our storefront into one of the most sought after retail commercial complexes in our region, Town Center Plaza in Leawood, Kansas. In addition, we were successful in hiring Brian West as our store manager and director of marketing/business development. Music is near and dear to Brian's heart...He is an accomplished trumpeter and a member of the 12-piece band "Four Fried Chickens and a Coke." With his help, we remain committed to helping our customers bring the thrill of a live concert experience into the comfort of their homes.

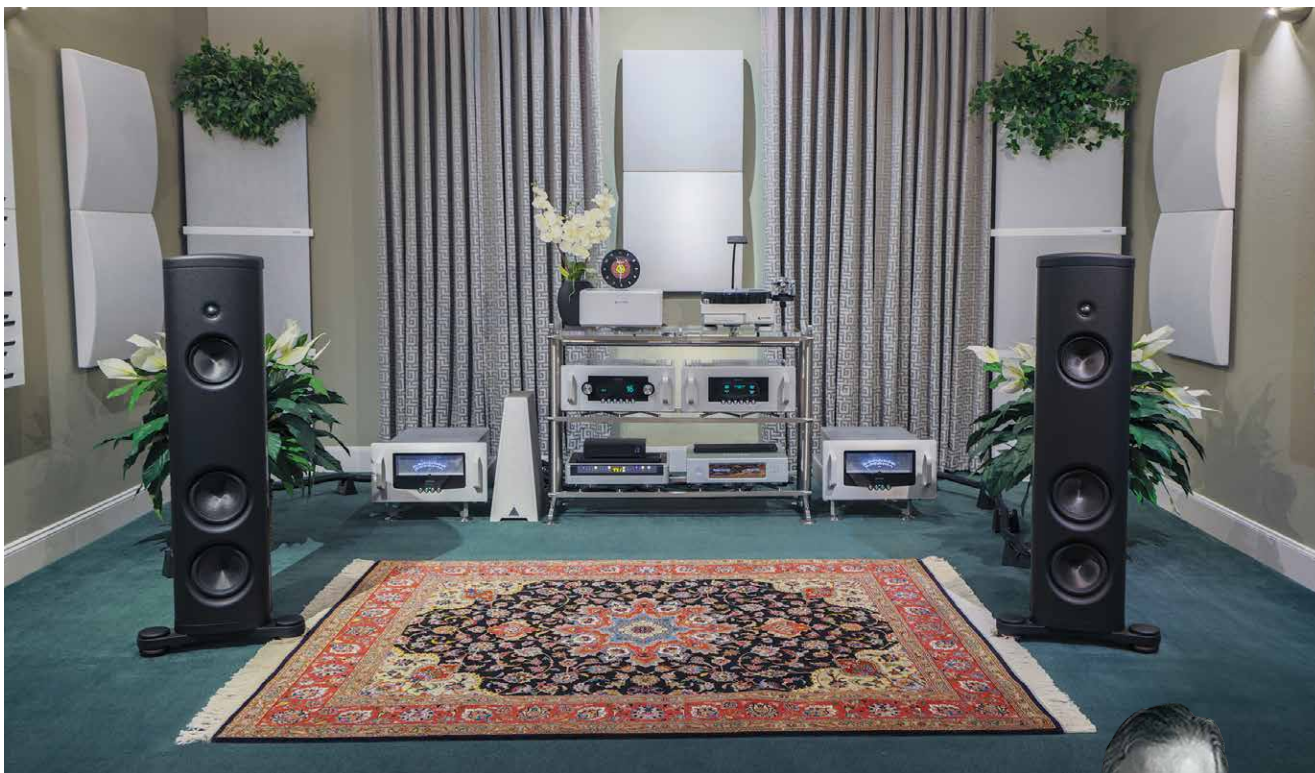
Please check out our normal business hours of operation and email, text, or call ahead for an appointment. We can't wait for you to visit so that we can build a relationship together and help our passion for audio become yours!



Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location

G A L E N  
C A R O L

AUDIO



# Galen Carol Audio

Earning Your Confidence



Galen Carol, Owner

Since 1972, I have had the opportunity and pleasure of viewing the audio business from many different perspectives—record engineering, audio sales, recording studio design, acoustic consultation, service and repair, and retail sales (as a store owner since 1975). This broad range of experience has given me a more complete understanding of high-end audio in general, and more specifically, how to best serve your needs with qualified consultation and advice.

Even more important than knowledge is my commitment to honesty and fairness. My advice is given only after a clear understanding of your goals—a concept often forgotten in today's world of audio "mega-merchants." Your goals exclusively dictate my recommendations, not the equipment occupying the warehouse floor. New lines must exhibit a balance of sonic excellence, quality construction, attention to detail, reliability, and long-term manufacturer support.

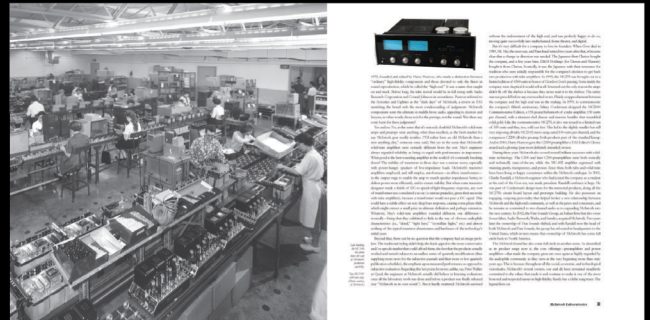
Aperture • Audible Illusions • Audience • Audio Research • AudioQuest • Aurender • Basis Audio • Berkeley Audio • Bryston • Cardas • Chord • Clearaudio • Davone • DS Audio • Grado • Graham Engineering • Hana • Herron Audio • Jadis • Jeff Rowland • Kimber Kable • Koetsu • Lyra • Magico • Nordost • Parasound • Quadraspire • Rega • Rogue Audio • Shelter • Shunyata Research • SME • Sophia Tubes • Stein Music • Stillpoints • Sumiko • Symposium Acoustics • Technics • Vicoustic • VPI • Wireworld • Zesto Audio • and much more

I want you as a longtime, repeat customer. Earning your confidence is the key to our philosophy, and I do this by offering honest, knowledgeable advice tuned to your specific needs. Maybe that is why most of our business comes from satisfied repeat customers and the friends they refer.

## Galen Carol Audio

P.O. Box 17562  
San Antonio, TX 78217  
(210) 805-9927  
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[gcaudio.com](http://gcaudio.com)



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Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location

GOODWIN'S  
HIGH END



# Goodwin's High End

5 Professionals. Over 200 years of industry experience.



Alan Goodwin, Founder

"The cream rises to the top." Alan Goodwin has always believed in the basic tenet that high performance is something that can be heard and should be demonstrated. Goodwin's High End offers the consumer a unique combination of serious equipment in a relaxed environment where purchasing decisions aren't dictated, they're determined.

A team of unparalleled experience makes for a worthwhile visit, whether you're traveling from nearby Boston or from across the country. You'll be an integral piece of the puzzle, where systems are custom set up for your goals from a dazzling array of demonstration equipment in 6 rooms, custom designed to show off just how worthwhile and special the musical (and film!) experience can be. You'll soon realize why Goodwin's is considered an industry leader in residential acoustics. Your room matters!

AMG • Avalon • Basis Audio • Berkeley Audio Design • dCS • Devore Fidelity • Dynaudio • Gryphon • HRS • Innuos • JL Audio • Linn • madVR Envoy • Magico • MartinLogan • MIT Cables • Moon (by Simaudio) • My Sonic Lab • Naim • PSB • REL • Rockport Technologies • Shunyata • Spectral • Trinnov • Vinnie Rossi • Wadax • and much more

## Goodwin's High End

899 Main Street  
Waltham, MA 01760  
P: (781) 893-9000  
F: (781) 893-9200

[goodwinshighend.com](http://goodwinshighend.com)



## Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



Following 3 years of industry apprenticeship, Alan Goodwin launched a small, appointment-only retail space in 1977. Goodwin's was born on Newbury Street in the heart of Boston's shopping district with a simple yet ambitious concept: to assemble the finest audio systems in the world judged against the only reference that mattered—live music. In 1978, Alan assembled a state-of-the-art recording system that was used to make location recordings in the wonderful venues surrounding the Boston area (Boston Symphony Hall, Paine Hall, Jordan Hall, Emmanuel Church, to name a few). Goodwin's would be the realized vision of a standard for reference audio playback. From those early days forward, and in various locations in the Boston area, Goodwin's would be a store informed and driven by an understanding of these two coequal sides of

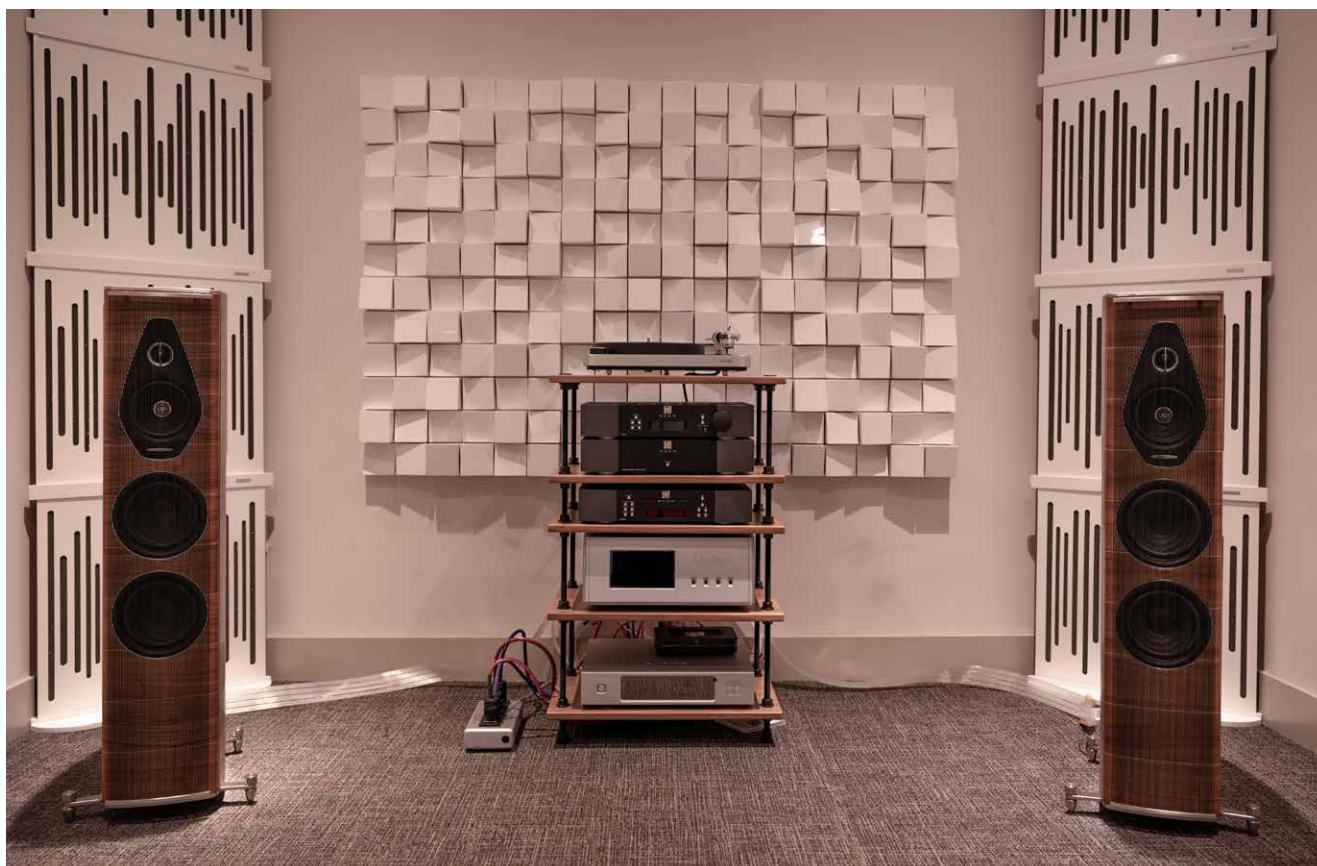
music reproduction—the recording process and the replay systems we would enjoy in our homes.

Goodwin's High End in Waltham, Massachusetts has expanded on those original, uncompromising standards to heights that must have been unimagined by even Alan Goodwin himself. A team that averages nearly 45 years of experience (which must be a record in the industry) welcomes music lovers from across the country to a custom-built demonstration facility with six rooms and halls filled with the ear candy one normally encounters on the pages of a magazine.

The biggest surprise for visitors, however, is the atmosphere and range of equipment on display. No longer a by-appointment-only establishment (though it's never a bad idea to call ahead), Goodwin's High End prides itself on a "no hurry, no pressure" approach. There is a genuine, collaborative belief that it's better to get the job done right than to get it done quickly. And whether a client is interested in components under \$1K or systems well over \$100K, there is an equal commitment to the notion that decisions are best informed through a proper demonstration of performance. Value is proven. The cream can then rise to the top.

Goodwin's High End offers a team of unparalleled experience, an exceptional demonstration space, plenty of stress-free available time, and an array of equipment that makes for one of the rare treats in audio retail today. Serious, fun, and relaxed can all coexist. It is music after all. And those founding principles of audio systems held against the impossibly high standards of live music will continue if the Goodwin's of the world have any say in the matter.





# Hanson Audio Video

## Lifetime Customers vs. One Time Sales

**T**roy Hanson grew up surrounded by a love of music, which formed the foundation for one of the premier high-performance audio businesses in the United States. Hanson Audio Video has grown since its start in 1999 to include two award-winning showrooms in Cincinnati and Dayton, Ohio, with a base of delighted customers in the Midwest and across the U.S.

A visit to Hanson is all about the experience. The ability for customers to audition products in a variety of listening rooms is what Hanson is all about. Their audio experts are not just selling products, they are helping customers select the right solutions for their environment and budget parameters. At any given time, Hanson's showrooms have over 75 pairs of speakers available for comparison with a variety of components, turntables, streaming devices, cables, room acoustics, headphones, and more. Hanson's experts are

Audeze • Aurender • B&W • Boulder • Clearaudio • Critical Mass • dCS • Dynaudio • JL Audio • Magico • Magnepan • McIntosh • Moon • Nordost • Octave • Paradigm • Pro-Ject • REL • Transparent • Sennheiser • Sonus faber • and much more

### Hanson Audio Video

10800 Montgomery Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45242  
3140 Far Hills Blvd  
Dayton, OH 45429

(513) 563-0444 or (937) 293-6200  
hansonav.com



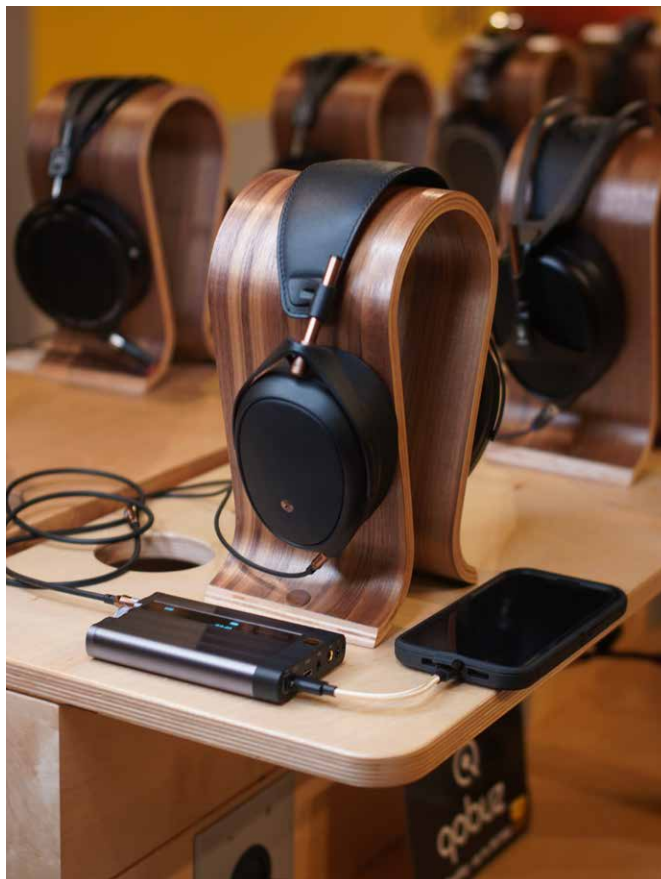
there to advise and help customers make the right selection by "trying before buying." This philosophy helps Hanson accomplish their goal of having lifetime customers versus one-time sales.

Visit their website for an overview of their vast selection of high-performance audio products. You can also select the "shop online/clearance" section for floor models and specially-priced items. Both their website and in-person showrooms allow Hanson to offer a unique experience for all customers, from the casual buyer to the most meticulous listener.





Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



# HiFi Buys Atlanta

"Staying home never sounded so good."

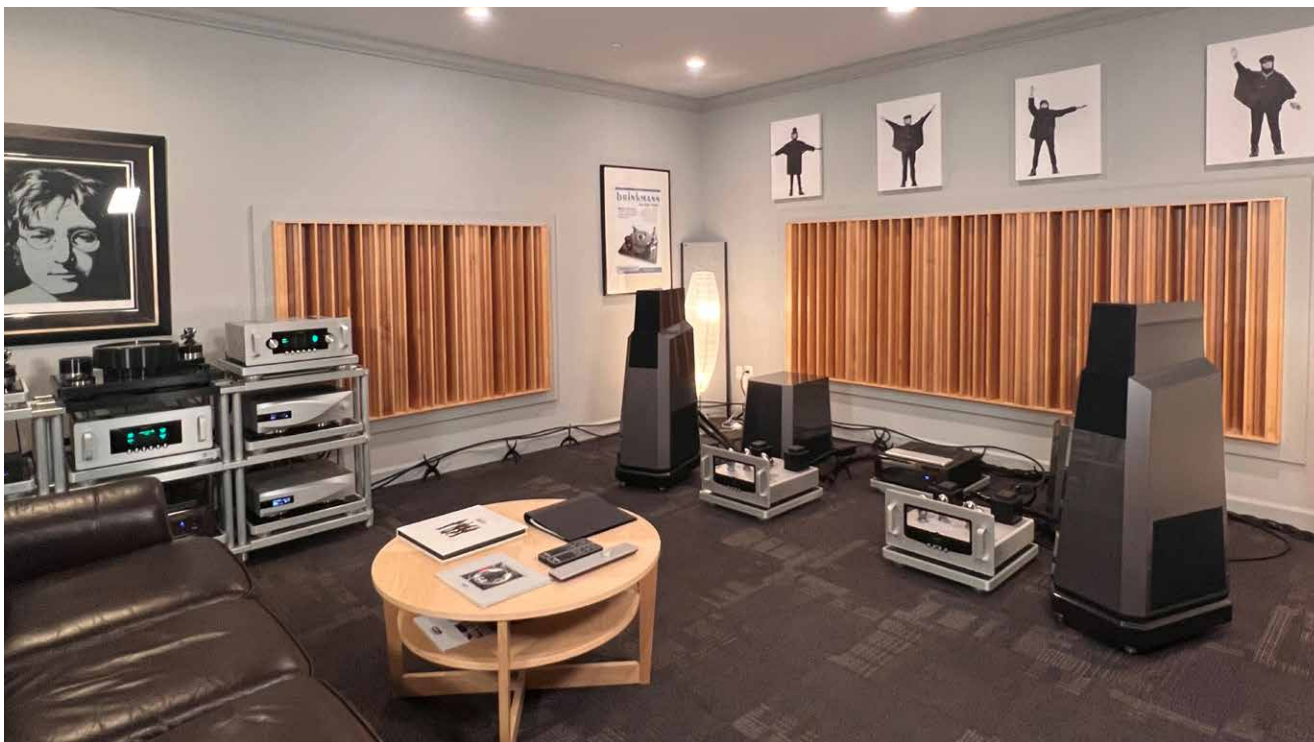
**W**e are HiFi Buys, a small group of audiophiles who love music and believe it should be seen and heard at the highest quality possible. We created a unique business where we get to share our passion and help other music (and movie!) lovers learn about all the possibilities, experience quality sound for themselves, and build the best possible system for their homes. You will find the best mid- to high-quality hi-fi, home theater, and smart home products produced by the best manufacturers in the market. Best of all, we take the time to listen to you, show you the options, and help you find the best possible solution. Come visit us to experience the difference!

Anthem • Audeze • Audio Research • AudioQuest • Bowers & Wilkins • Brinkmann • Chord • Clearaudio • Dan D'Agostino • dCS • Elac • Focal • Grado • iFi • JL Audio • KEF • Marantz • Meze Audio • MoFi • NAD • PrimaLuna • Rega • REL • Wilson Audio • and much more

## HiFi Buys Atlanta

3157 Peachtree Road NE  
Atlanta, GA 30305  
(770) 931-0606

hifibuy's.com  
info@hifibuy's.com



### "Stuffy stereo store stereotype BLOWN AWAY"

From your first, entry-level system to equipment and performance beyond what you can imagine, HiFi Buys Atlanta approaches it all with the same attitude. Owner Alan Jones has assembled a great team with a wealth of experience that doesn't believe in pretenses. Every effort has been made to blow away the stuffy stereo store stereotype. They don't think there are "stupid" questions, and they don't need to see money falling out of your pockets. It's an atmosphere built around

the simple idea that your visit should be both casual and fun. It's the goal of having their passion for the experience of great music or movies enter your life. As Alan likes to say, "Staying home never sounded so good." A relationship with HiFi Buys Atlanta is a close connection with the greatest equipment and expertise in a warm, welcoming environment.

### "We don't just sell stuff."

Of course, HiFi Buys Atlanta does sell "stuff." Amazing stuff. But customers come away with the feeling that it's about more than the boxes. They leave with a deeper appreciation and understanding of the music and movies they love. Over 15 systems in seven rooms are at the ready on any given day, and there are always one or two systems actively playing music. In other words, what HiFi Buys Atlanta is "selling" is simply the experience of great music and film.

It's that infectious energy and passion that makes HiFi Buys Atlanta a true audio and video theme park for the senses. A showcase of 30 pieces or so in a little "museum" highlighting significant or simply interesting components from audio's past is yet another value added for any visit. It all comes back to their desire to share everything the industry has to offer. They want the customer to learn, experience, and simply have a great time in a casual environment.

### "Check out the reviews!"

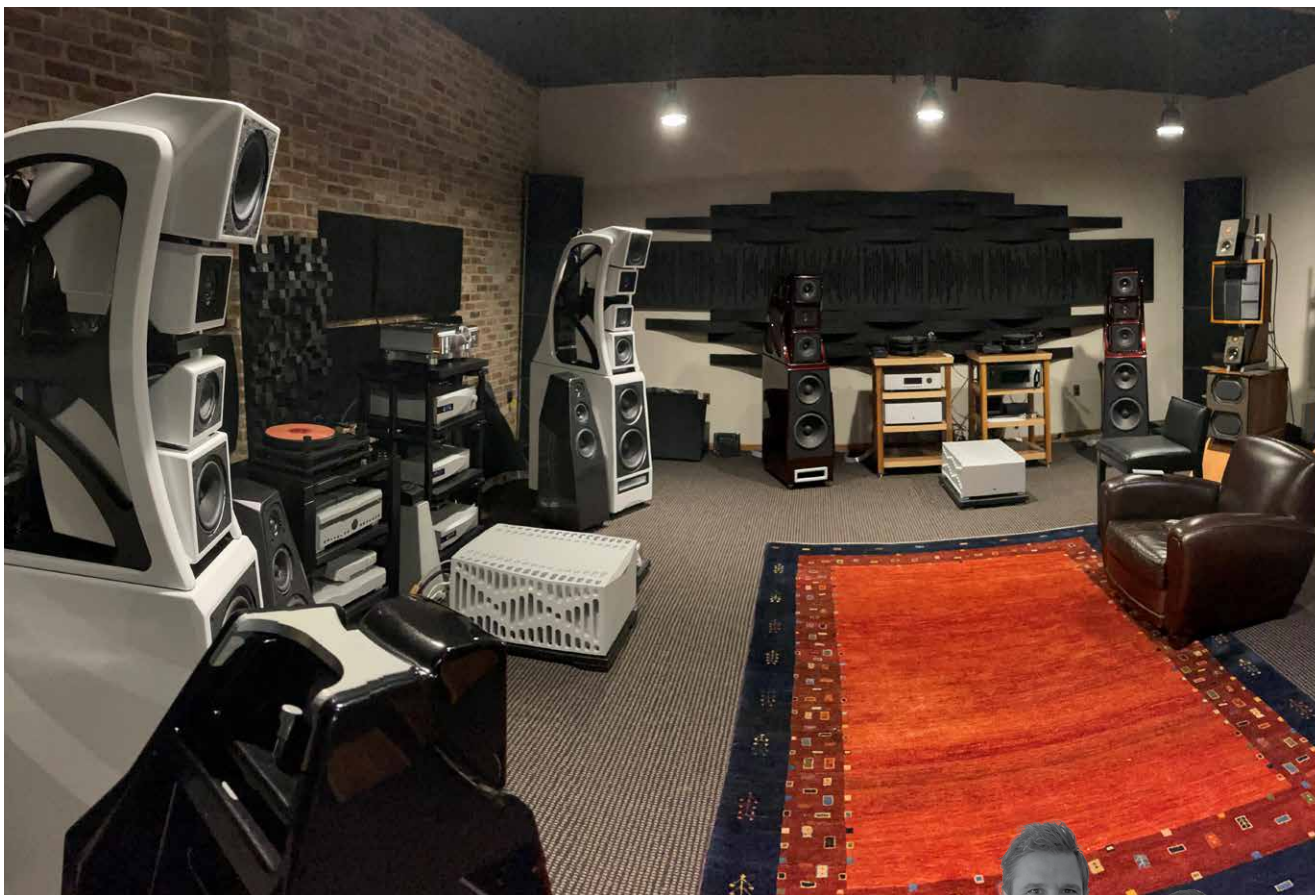
With over 25 years in business, the reviews are in. Alan Jones is justifiably proud to point anyone to firsthand accounts of his store. He has confidence that HiFi Buys Atlanta has continued to deliver on its goal to be a special place that treats customers like family. The line list of products speaks for itself, but these testaments from visitors and clients tell the real story.

The largest, best-curated setup of serious hi-fi in the Southeast, HiFi Buys Atlanta is the destination for experiencing real performance through a truly customized approach, all in a fun, comforting environment.

As Alan likes to say, "music moves everybody." Visit. Be moved.



Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



# JS Audio

A Lifelong Musical Journey



Dave and Steve Kennedy, Co-owners

**"O**ur store is about the experience and journey to appreciate truly great music. Music that shapes our lives, touches us, comforts us, and reaches out to us like an old friend. We are here to enhance the experience of music on a level you have never even dreamed.

Through these masterfully designed and independently manufactured audio products moments of magic occur in our homes, and we are fortunate to offer this level of gear.

Enjoy our storefront's three listening rooms, situated in Bethesda's bustling downtown. We look forward to seeing our old friends (after 40 years there are a few of you left) and welcoming new clients who love the music and the lifestyle."

Dave and Steve Kennedy, co-owners of Bethesda, Maryland's JS Audio.

Atoll Electronique • Audeze • Audio Research • Boulder • Bryston • Cardas Audio • Dan D'Agostino • DCS • Dynaudio • HRS • Lyra • McIntosh • Nordost • Ortofon • Shunyata Research • SME • Stillpoints • Wilson Audio • and much more

## JS Audio

4919 St. Elmo Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
(301) 656-7020

jsaudio.com  
jsaudio@jsaudio.com



A high-end audio store should be more than a demonstration facility for top-quality brands. It should have a pulse. It should have experts who are connected to something beyond the equipment on display. Today's customers demand that knowledge be combined with passion and purpose.

JS Audio co-owners (and brothers!) Dave and Steve Kennedy grew up with live music as an integral part of their family. With a father a member of a Chicago-area band, both vividly recall the experience of listening to live sound checks. Real musicians on stage playing into a reverberant, yet-to-be-filled space. All that energy, swagger, atmosphere, and anticipation which live music can provide, forever imprinted into the hearts and minds of two young boys. JS Audio is a place where Dave and Steve

can offer everyone the opportunity to experience the musical passion that has driven them since before they can remember.

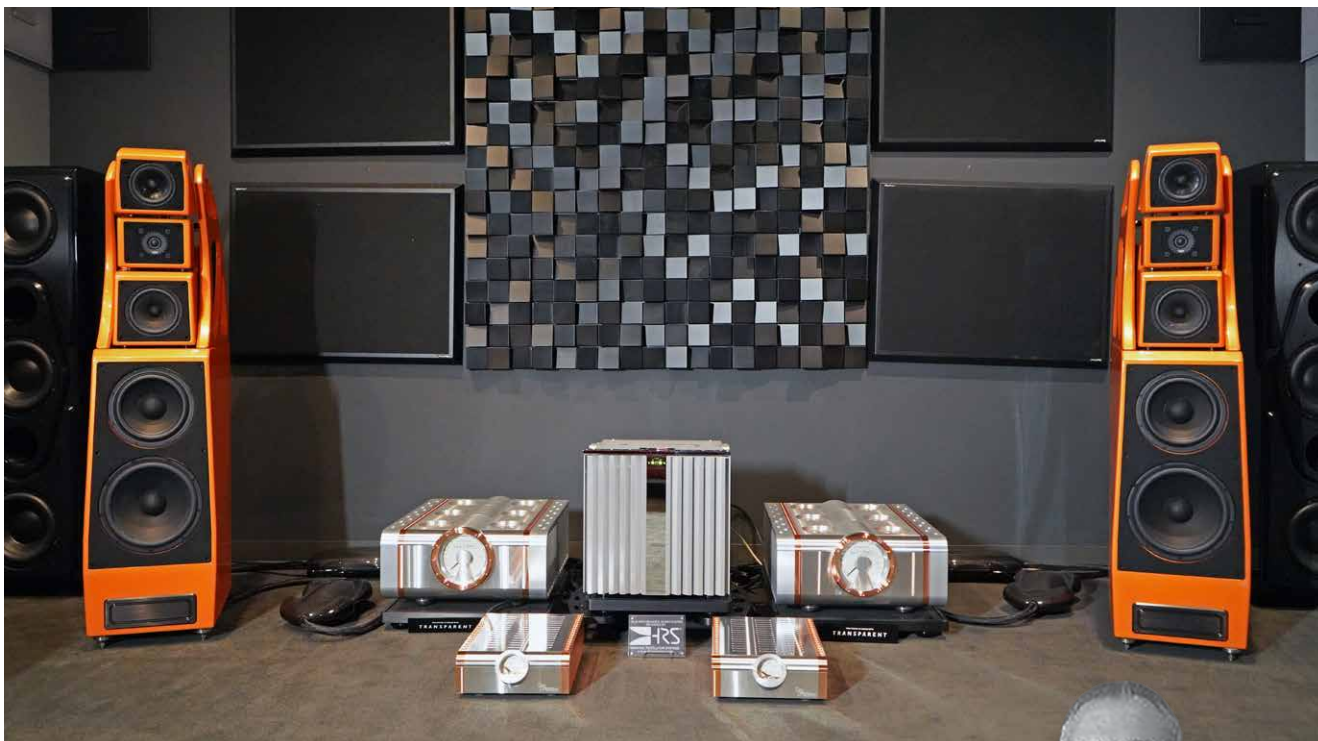
The investment in an active community of like-minded music lovers is a further indicator of JS Audio's commitment to spreading this life-long passion. Many private and public events are offered where existing and (hopefully!) future customers can meet and share ideas and experiences. Along the way, everyone gets a chance to talk with and learn from industry professionals, all while simply enjoying some great music reproduced on some great systems. JS Audio strongly believes in providing its customers a value-added experience that stretches beyond the sales floor. It's not just a place of business. It's a comfortable place to relax, learn and enjoy.

JS Audio's product list is notably impressive for both its outstanding quality and its focus. Dave and Steve are firm believers that "you can only be an expert in so much", and they have clearly chosen the quality over quantity approach. They heavily value lines that offer exceptional build quality and strong resale values to offer the client both an easier ownership experience along with a better opportunity to make future upgrades when ready. It's all about a musical journey that's as smooth and friction free as possible. After all, less time fussing is more time listening!

Experience that rare combination of experience, passion, and uncompromising audio equipment in a welcoming environment. JS Audio is a store connected to the musical experiences we all hope to recreate in our homes. They get it.



Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



# Paragon Sight & Sound

An Amusement Park for the Senses



Larry Marcus, President

**L**arry Marcus took the reins in 1997 with a Midwest dream: build it (right) and they will come. Paragon Sight & Sound is the fulfillment of that dream. The goal was simply to be the best. To provide the best in products and in service. To be a complete solution for your audio/video needs, whether you favor traditional two-channel music systems, or if your life needs some exciting home theater or intelligent home automation. To offer new gear, used gear, and easy trade-ins. To have an expert, experienced staff that does more listening than pontificating. Paragon Sight & Sound would do it all and do it well. They built it, and the people are still coming.

As one of two McIntosh Experience Centers in the U.S., and one of the few active demonstration facilities for the incomparable Wilson Chronosonic XVX, Paragon Sight & Sound is an amusement park for the senses. A must-hear, must-see destination. Their Modern Music Center (MMC) represents those of more modest means and presents an interactive experience of new technology at budget-friendly prices. Streaming, headphone, and turntable bars encourage new customers to make discoveries at their own pace. Something for everybody.

It was a great, ambitious dream. Sometimes, reality is better.

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Put some  
objective in your  
subjective.

**Paragon Sight & Sound**  
3780 Jackson Road, Suite H  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
(734) 662-3595

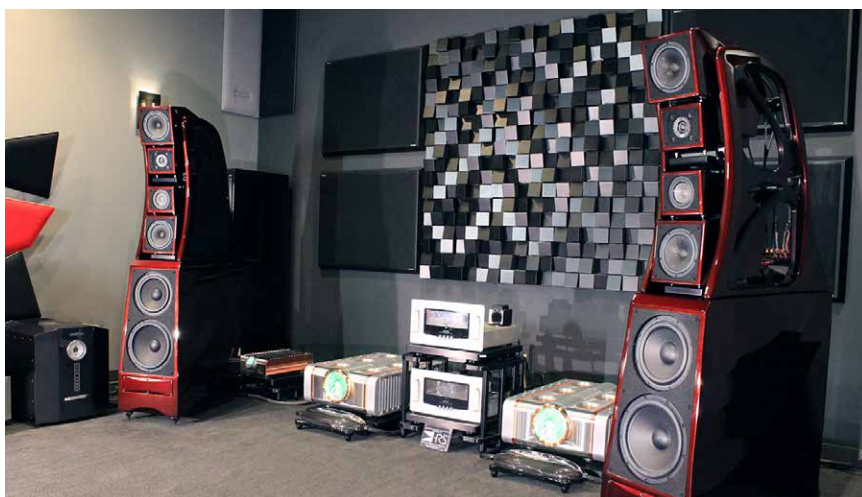
paragonsns.com  
info@paragonsns.com



**"Put some objective in your subjective."**

You get carried away. You're supposed to. They encourage it! But what separates the finest dealers is the effort and investment they put in behind the scenes to protect your investment. Out of sight, great dealers are the ones that build a solid foundation so that when you sit down to play, that's all you have to do. In other words, they put some serious objective in your subjective.

The exceptional, comprehensive value Paragon Sight & Sound offers its clients is in large part due to this promise they make. It's a promise to do the hard work necessary in vetting vendors based on extensive research, factory visits, and expert evaluations. They investigate a company's financial strength, service ability, product support, years in business, and product-line development. The result of all this deep dive effort alongside the usual upfront performance evaluations is that Paragon Sight & Sound makes better, more informed decisions regarding a vendor's overall value to you. Their promise to represent responsible, stable, and high-performing companies has resulted in a business with very little brand shuffling. Paragon Sight & Sound does the research, then fully commits to the brand for the long haul because they've answered the important questions. It's no surprise



then that they are a rare store that displays a near-complete lineup for the brands they represent. Their promise leads to their full commitment, which in turn builds your trust and confidence.

If Paragon Sight & Sound invests that much effort in the stuff you can't see, just imagine the experience you'll have with all that you can. Owner Larry Marcus worked in the A/V industry through college and graduate school, and a passion that started at age 12 permeates everything you'll hear, see, and experience at Paragon. It's all about exceeding the customer's expectations in products offered, the sales process, and after-sales support. It's a white glove carpet ride from the moment you walk through the door. Full service and fully stocked, with expert assistance from a staff with extensive on-hand, real-world product experience.

A 5,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility that includes a World of McIntosh (WOM) Experience Center, a Modern Music Center (MMC), an Automated Paragon Smart Conference Room, two dedicated theater rooms, and a pre-owned demo gear sales room. Paragon Sight & Sound is truly a destination for your entertainment dreams. Turns out that Ann Arbor (home to the University of Michigan) is for more than just Wolverines.





# Reference Recordings®

The best seat in the house since 1976.

**R**eference Recordings was founded in 1976 by audio writer and producer Tam Henderson, on a quest for "the sound of real musicians making music in real space." He and legendary audio engineer Keith O. Johnson molded Reference Recordings into one of the most innovative and respected independent labels in the music business. The 100-plus recordings they made together are considered by many to be the finest-sounding ever made.

The original "RR Sound" comes from Mr. Johnson's singular methods and self-designed and patented equipment, almost all hand-built or extensively modified by him. Mr. Johnson, a GRAMMY®-winner with 12 additional nominations, continues to record for our label, now working together with second-generation RR team member and 4-time GRAMMY®-nominated engineer Sean Royce Martin.

Reference Recordings records and manufactures Reference Mastercuts LPs, Hybrid SACDs, and HDCDs as well as offering files for digital streaming and downloads, including high-resolution PCM downloads and stereo and multi-channel DSD downloads. We have a special interest in Immersive Sound, and we have many releases in the multi-channel SACD format. Our very first Surround Sound SACD release won a GRAMMY® award for Best Surround Sound Recording in 2010. In total, RR projects have won 7 GRAMMY® awards and have received 29 additional nominations.

Including our *FRESH!* series of recordings from outstanding artists and engineering teams from beyond the original RR team, we now have over 180 titles in our catalog. Most *FRESH!* releases are recorded and mastered in DSD by the team at Soundmirror, Inc.

**Genres include:** Classical · Orchestral · Chamber · Choral · Opera · Jazz · Blues

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## Reference Recordings

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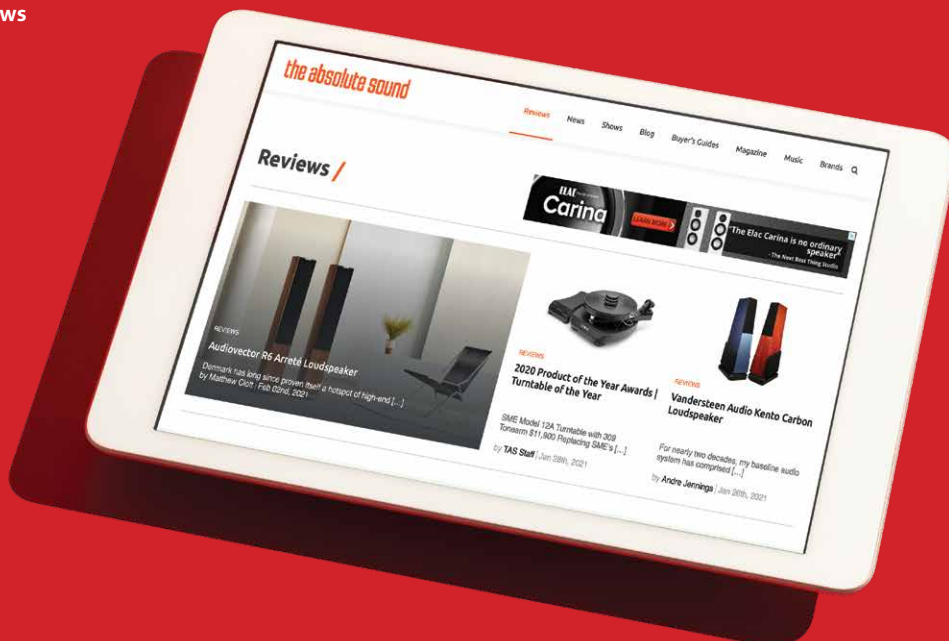
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# Sound by Singer

Capturing the Magic

**E**xperience high-end audio like no other. We have the most musical collection of High-End Audio components anywhere...An unbridled passion for music in all its forms...40 years of High-End Audio experience...The most acute ears in the business. WE ARE...High-End Audio done right. WE ARE...Sound by Singer. The World's best high-end audio store. **AND we have your music!**

Forty one years ago I gave up what looked like a promising legal career at one of New York's top law firms to start Sound By Singer. I did not hate practicing law but there was nothing about it that made me want to get up in the morning and hit the ground running except perhaps the salary.

**Absolare • Audience • Audiodesk Systeme • Bergman • Bryston • Crystal Cable • darTZeel • Gryphon • Harbeth • HRS • Luxman • Manger • MasterBuilt • Nordost • ProAc • Raidho • Sendor • Stein Music • Straight Wire • Von Schweikert • and much more**

## Sound by Singer

Andy Singer, President  
242 West 27th Street, 2nd Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
(212) 924-8600

[soundbysinger.com](http://soundbysinger.com)



My abiding passion was and still is music. I played instruments solo and in bands since I was 10 years old, and when I was not playing, I was listening to both live and recorded music. Playing and listening to music made my heart beat faster and captured my imagination like nothing else.

Once I realized that I was never going to be a rock star, most of my attention was given over to finding the best way to make recorded music sound as close as possible to a live performance in my own living room. I read and experimented, auditioning, buying, and learning the whys and wherefores of the art until I knew as much or more than anyone working in any of the hi-fi shops I visited.

More importantly, I discovered that I had the best ears in the business—I knew when something sounded right and when it did not and how to implement an audio system which satisfied even my impossible standards of accuracy.

So, I took the leap and the rest as they say is history.

The entire premise for Sound By Singer is rooted in our belief that while other forms of entertainment may come and go, music always was, is now, and always will be an essential ingredient to nourish our souls. To ensure that our customers have a



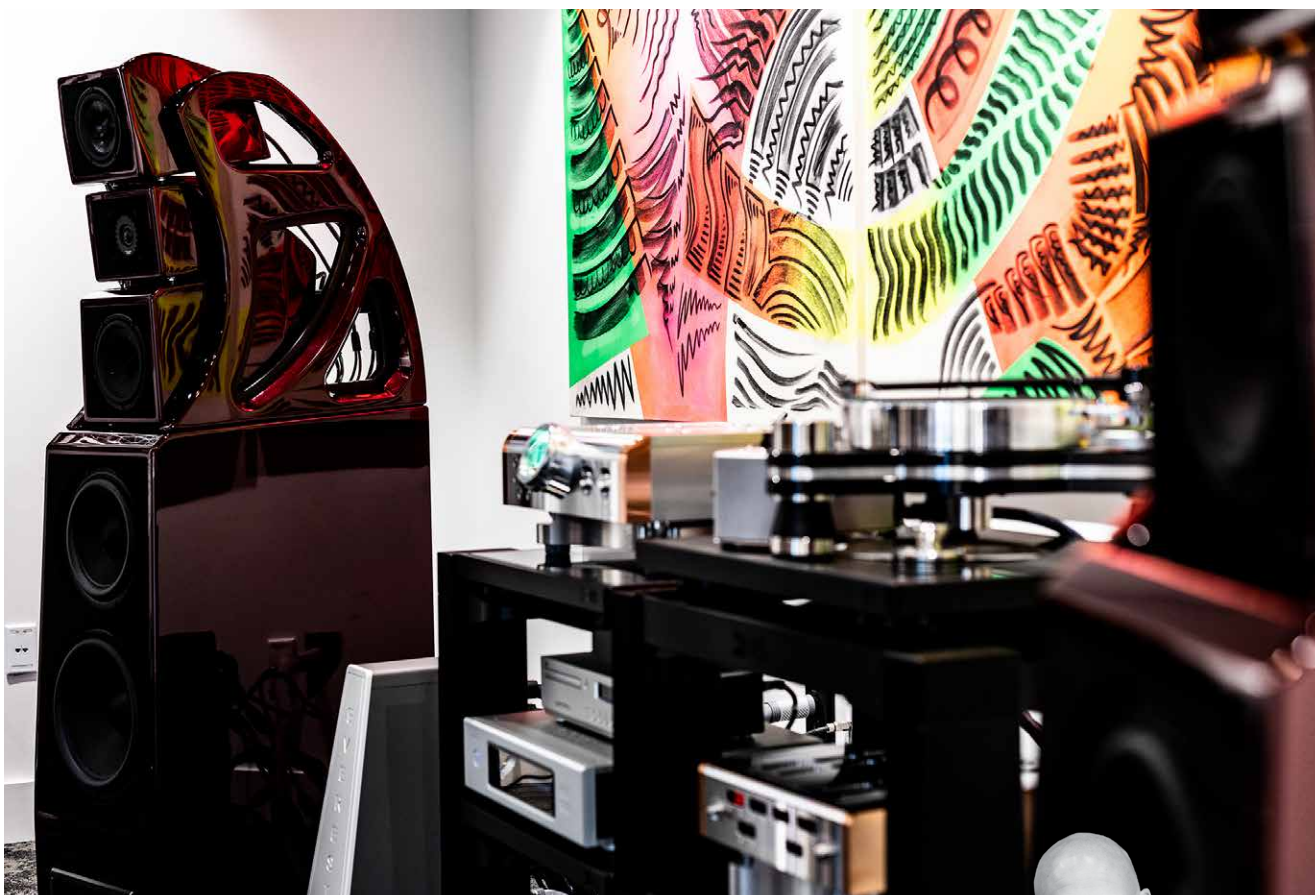
balanced diet, we have assembled the finest collection of high-end audio components and systems available anywhere.

We consider designing audio systems to be an art. From the start, the selection of the equipment we sell is a painstaking process. Each component is incorporated in a reference system and evaluated to see how close it comes to recreating the experience of live music. Then it is assessed individually on its own merits for sound quality, construction, and reliability.

Only after a component passes our stringent tests and meets our high standard do we begin our exhaustive matching procedure. We match each component to others whose characteristics are most complementary to create systems that capture the magic of the live experience.



Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



# Sound Sanctuary Austin

Listen to the Best



Glenn Mierendorf, Founder

**S**ound Sanctuary Austin delivers Music in the Foreground. Sound so engaging, it can't be ignored. Our customers are encouraged to Just Listen while comfortably seated in demo rooms surrounded by art, with equipment that could almost be considered sculpture. Our brands are amongst the best in the industry, and we confidently present them as an essential part of a stylish home.

In launching Austin's Sound Sanctuary, founder Glenn Mierendorf has brought something refreshingly new and needed to the high-performance audio marketplace. Emerging from the East Coast's financial world, Mr. Mierendorf moved to Austin, Texas, to create a vivid showcase for what he calls "Music in the Foreground." No doubt fueled by an appetite for three to four live concerts a week (remember those?) and an eye for art that does

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## Sound Sanctuary Austin

4616 Triangle Avenue, Suite 404  
Austin, TX 78751  
(737) 205-7401

[soundsanctuaryaustin.com](http://soundsanctuaryaustin.com)  
[glennm@soundsanctuaryaustin.com](mailto:glennm@soundsanctuaryaustin.com)



not shy from the spotlight, this bold idea is at the same time quiet. Even simple. It's the most fundamental notion that all art is to be appreciated upfront, face-to-face. Sound Sanctuary Austin is the opportunity to experience ("Just Listen," as he says) reproduced music in its best light, out of the shadows of appliance store systems and their resulting sound.

Glenn had been in too many beautiful homes where the typical "hide the equipment in a closet and the speakers in the ceiling" mantra (so common in today's custom installation market) was on full display. Music (art) deserves better. Sound Sanctuary Austin is a name that signifies the importance of having a place in any fine home where the sound quality can rise to the artistry. Where music steps forward in ways that no slick home-theater system can provide. A sound sanctuary is a special place where music and equipment don't need to hide!

Sound Sanctuary Austin offers an artistic experience with some of the world's finest equipment, celebrated in the foreground just like the music they make. Five turntables and plenty of records are on display. The whole vibe is alive, and passion filled. Its style and substance brought together in a truly unique way. Visit and hear music and art where they belong: upfront, beautiful, and appreciated. All you have to do is just listen.





Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



# Sound Xperience

We Do It All



Paul Sandquist, CEO

**S**ound Xperience is a family-owned and operated business with over 30 years of experience in the audio/video and home integration industry. We are focused on providing our customers with the friendly, personalized service you can only get with an independently owned company.

At Sound Xperience, we love music and movies just as much as you do. Just like you, we want your entertainment experience to be the best it can be. When you have our experts design your hi-fi audio system, you're getting the same attention to detail we put into creating our own systems in our own homes. We rely on products from brands that have been proven to be among the best of the best, time and time again. The list is strong, and it's only getting stronger all the time.

Not only do we carry the finest hi-fi audio brands on the market—we've got the experience you need to design the perfect hi-fi system for your space and budget. Our highly professional project managers, installers, and programmers are regarded as the best, most reliable team in the tri-state area. They pride themselves on their level of knowledge, professionalism, and customer service.

When you want the latest technology with the most proven brands and truly superior customer service, you've come to the right place. At Sound Xperience, only the best will do.

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can be.**

## Sound Xperience

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Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



# Speaker Shop

Your Home Entertainment Store!

**S**peaker Shop is all about incredible sound that conveys emotion, realism, and musicality! Our focus is to achieve one goal—your total enjoyment of listening to music. Speaker Shop is ready to integrate the right components into your home. We offer comprehensive services, from system design and equipment selection, to installation and repair. We stock our store with top-shelf audio component brands, but this alone is just not enough—our customers receive knowledgeable, no-pressure assistance with their purchasing decisions. That is why we have always operated our business with a non-commissioned sales staff. Non-commissioned sales is the most appropriate way to ensure our clients are getting the correct advice and components for their budget and system needs.

Originating as a maker of hi-fi loudspeakers in the early 70s, Speaker Shop has evolved into western New York's premier audio and home theater store. The most important and valuable component we make available to you at Speaker Shop is our experienced sales staff. It is imperative that we have employees who truly know and enjoy music and components, and who enjoy sharing that knowledge with you. We will do our best to meet your budget—and exceed your expectations for performance and value. This is the kind of service we promise you.

#### Speaker Shop

3604 Main St.  
Amherst, NY 14226  
(716) 873-1557

[speakershop.com](http://speakershop.com)  
[speakershop@verizon.net](mailto:speakershop@verizon.net)



Way back in 1977, Speaker Shop opened its doors for business by building and repairing speaker systems. Amateur speaker builders and hi-fi hobbyists discovered Speaker Shop for quality hard-to-find, raw-frame speakers, speaker kits, and speaker parts to build, upgrade, and repair speakers. We offered the local hi-fi marketplace a uniquely valuable product and service—hence the name, Speaker Shop. Just as it was back then, our passion to share extraordinary and high-performing prod-

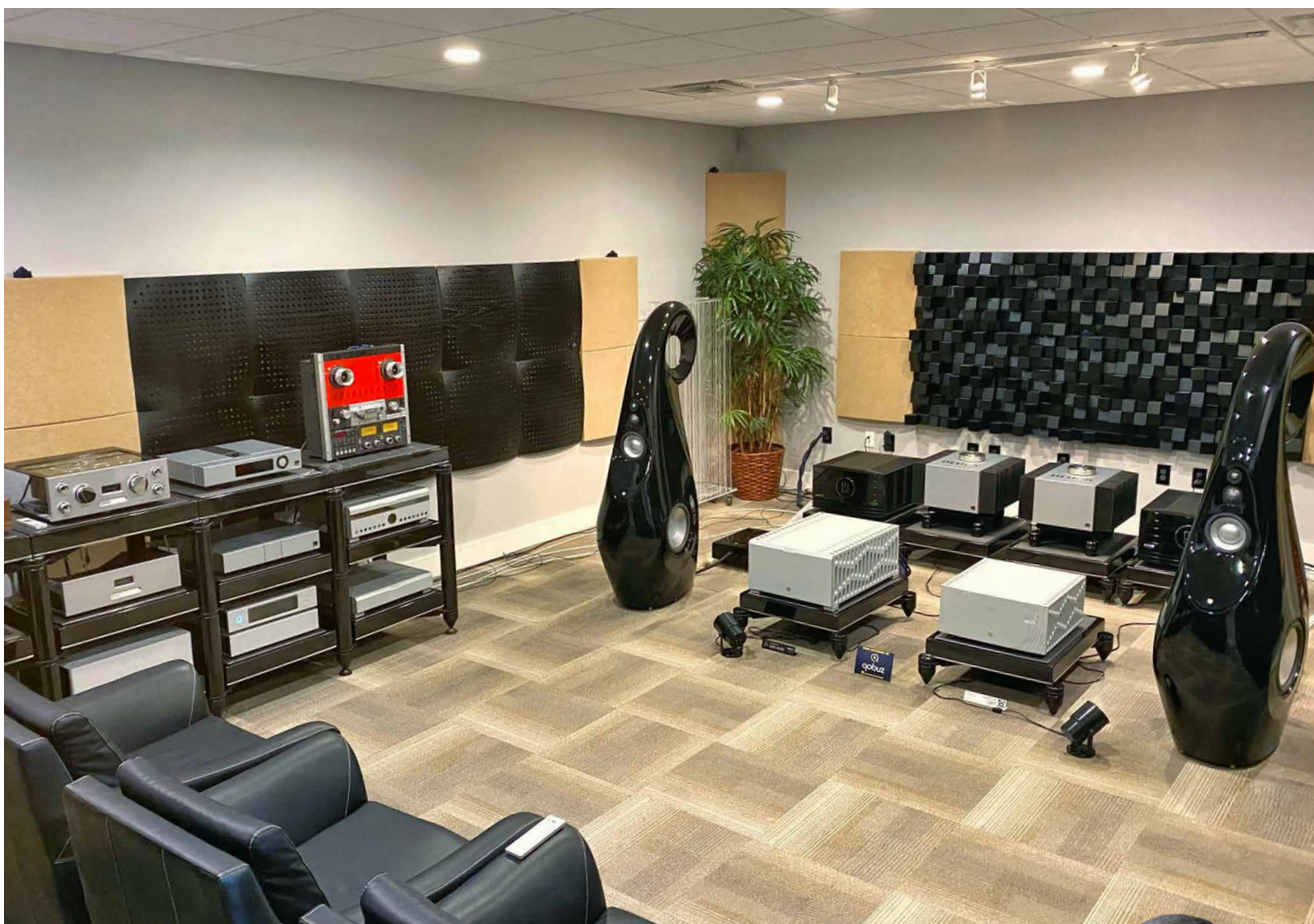
ucts and service is very much alive and well! Today, Speaker Shop is a destination for those seeking the finest performing electronic brands for their music and movie enjoyment.

Over these many years, so much has changed as technology continually pushes forward with the "Internet of Things" and "All Things Connected." Speaker Shop has developed a diversified portfolio of products and services supported by a skilled team of designers, integrators, installers, and programmers to provide a wide range of solutions for a true "Best-in-Class Home Entertainment Experience." We simplify today's technology to make your system experience easy and fun to use—after all, isn't that what it's all about?

Just as in 1977, Speaker Shop remains locally owned and operated. Our passion continues with sharing in the wondrous fun of higher-performing entertainment components and systems. Speaker Shop strives to provide outstanding customer care to all, each and every time.



Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



# Suncoast Audio

Voice of Reason



Mike Bovaird, CEO

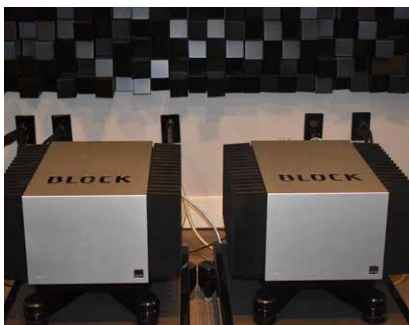
**W**e know you get carried away sometimes. We do too. After all, at the time of writing, Suncoast Audio is the only location in North America to demonstrate the full (and amazing!) MBL 101 Extreme system. So we understand the enthusiasm to jump ahead and dream really big. But we also understand that to get all the way to your sonic goal line, you need to look beyond the shiny objects and understand the whole picture—the fundamentals. Suncoast Audio brings a voice of reason—a practical approach—to the job of building a music system that exceeds your goals. We understand

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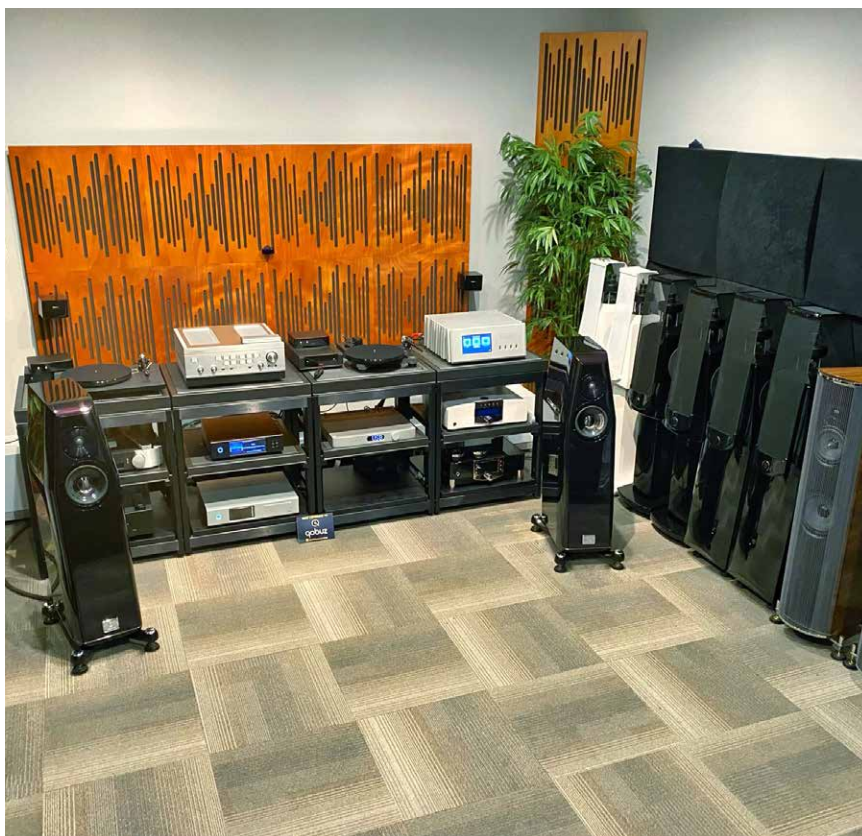
## Suncoast Audio

Premiere Florida Dealer  
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Sarasota, FL 34240

(941) 404-1099  
[suncoastaudio.com](http://suncoastaudio.com)



## Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location



the essential contribution that room treatments, power conditioning, and proper setup make, and we specialize in clients looking for complete solutions built on the foundation laid by these fundamentals.

Go ahead. *Dream* your biggest dreams. Suncoast Audio will be there to help you *think* really big too. The best equipment anchored by a practical, wholistic, and experienced approach. It's the recipe that has made us grow faster and larger than even our biggest dreams.

Suncoast Audio's founder, Mike Bovaird, knew from his IT background that this isn't your father's audio industry. He realized that an effective retailer had to do more than simply reach out to the community, it had to build a community—one with a remote, digital and social fingerprint. Mike built the thriving, over 28,000-member online audio community forum Audioshark.org. He co-owns the annual Florida Audio Expo. Suncoast has a YouTube channel, and can be found on Facebook and Instagram.

Mike Bovaird isn't just a part of the audio industry and community, he is on the front lines, promoting and sponsoring its growth. In a world of givers and takers, Suncoast Audio is firmly in the former category.

The result of Suncoast's engagement is not simply a more interesting world for the dedicated audio enthusiast, it's the collected expertise gathered from firsthand involvement with consumers, manufacturers, and other dealers. Through this tremendous knowledge base, and combined with the system/ equipment testing in its 3 in-store dedicated listening rooms, Mike and his team have created one of the largest think tanks for what works and doesn't work in building a world-class music system at all price points. They have worked hard to develop solutions that are synergistically sound, not just fancy brand bound. Most dealers are limited to their "in-store" expertise. Suncoast's vast reach pulls from a much wider laboratory. That's a powerful value add to you the consumer.

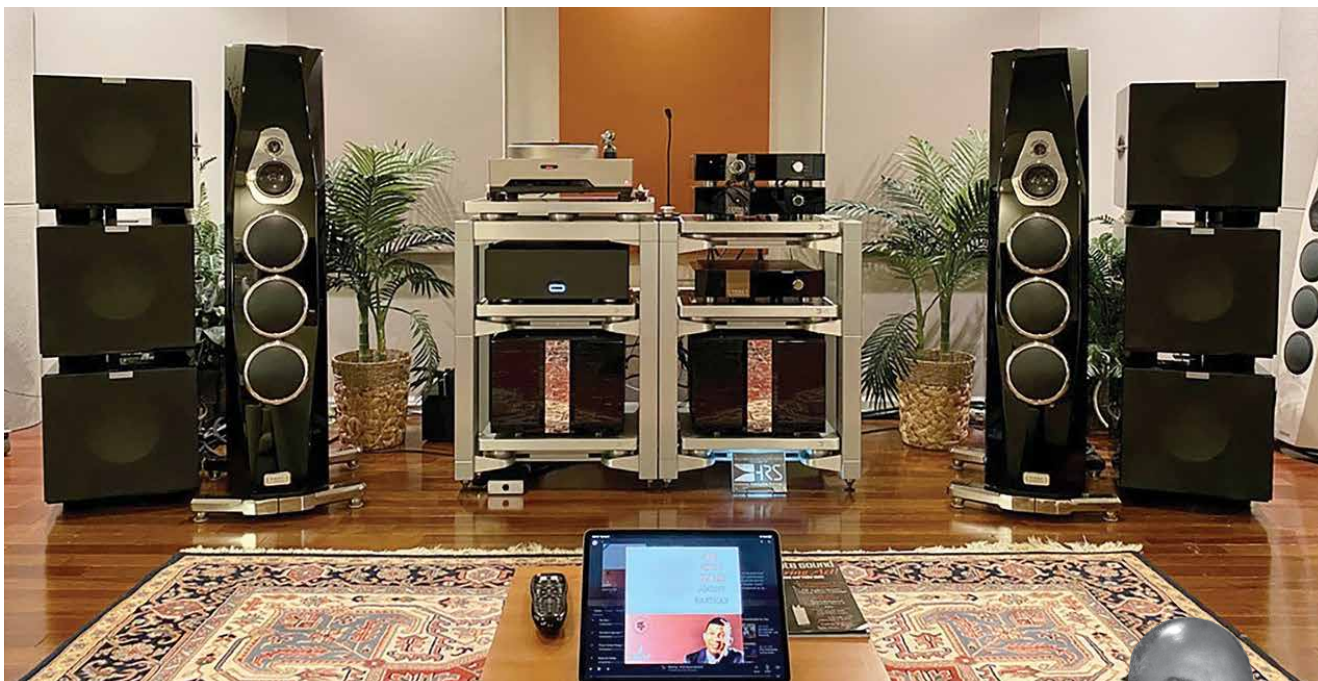
Suncoast Audio is building a better audio future. It combines the strengths of a traditional brick and mortar retail environment (single room demonstrations, person-to-person advice, on-the-ground service and support), the advantages of an online community (Audioshark.org, 28,000 strong), the digital outreach and information provided via YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, with the ability for consumers in the Florida region to hear great audio gear from around the world at the Florida Audio Expo.

All this expertise. All this active involvement. An enviable line up of manufacturers, and the fundamental, rational approach to building a whole system that will engage for years to come. It's no wonder that Suncoast Audio quickly expanded from Mike's home many years ago into a dedicated retail space today. That wholistic approach to your system and to his business is what should see Suncoast Audio expanding and promoting great audio into the foreseeable future.



Retailer. Brick and Mortar. 1 Location

# The Voice That Is



## The Voice That Is

Conveying the Sound of Music



Doug White

**"M**usic is the most powerful language we have." This is the guiding principle of Doug White, owner of The Voice That Is (TVTI), where the approach to audio clients is more consultative and guidance-driven, rather than simply transactional. The goal is to understand the client's listening habits, music preferences, current equipment, and sonic goals.

Established in 2007, our reputation is why music lovers seek us out. For over a decade, we have consistently been awarded multiple "best of show" accolades—an achievement long recognized by industry reviewers for producing great sound in difficult show environments. This is proof that, if we can do it there, we can easily do the same in your home.

TVTI is highly selective with the product choices offered, and we maintain long and exceptional working relationships with manufacturers, distributors, and clients. We take pride in having open and honest communication across all channels. Our clients appreciate and trust our approach, knowledge, expertise, and guidance, which leads to more long-term sonic satisfaction.

Our "by-appointment" experience is personal, focused, and comfortable—geared toward system synergy and the mutual goal of musical enjoyment. Our commitment and service is why clients stay and grow with us year after year.

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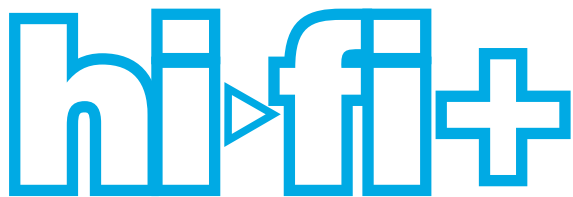
Music is the  
most powerful  
language we  
have.

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Underwood HiFi



# Underwood HiFi

"People who try us come back."



Walter Liederman, Founder and President

**U**nderwood HiFi's business model matches its message: direct, clean, and clear. The goal is to offer innovative, high-end audio products of extreme value. It's a single-minded focus on offering components and systems that are both affordable and that compete with or outperform audio equipment selling for much, much more.

In-house brands like LSA (loudspeakers, headphones, electronics, turntables), Core Power Technologies A/V (power conditioners and cables), and Emerald Physics (open baffle speakers and electronics), take Underwood's central principle of extreme performance and value to its highest level, with a direct-to-consumer approach backed by owner Walter Liederman's 50 years of industry experience. These universally lauded products sit alongside a powerful lineup of like-minded, "performance without the price" audio brands, and together bring to the consumer a peerless value proposition.

Underwood HiFi is for the enthusiast seeking the overperforming, not the overpriced. The unnecessary has been cut from the process. Your connection to the world-class audio systems and components you've been craving has never been closer. You don't have to compromise any longer.

Underwood HiFi Inc. is the home of "Underwoodwally," a name very familiar to Au-

**Ampsandsound • Audio Alchemy • Audio-GD • Black Ice Audio • Bluesound • Bob Carver • Core Power Technology • DSPeaker • E.A.T. • Elac • Emerald Physics • Focal • HiFiMan • IsoAcoustics • LSA • Marantz • MartinLogan • Melco • Mofi • Music Hall • Musical Fidelity • Ortofon • Peachtree Audio • Pro-Ject • Quad • RAAL Requisite • Silverline Audio • SPL • Sumiko • SweetVinyl • Wireworld • Wywires • Zesto Audio • and much more**

**Underwood HiFi is for the enthusiast seeking the overperforming, not the overpriced.**

#### Underwood HiFi

Marietta, GA 30067

(770) 667-5633

Daily 10:30 a.m.–8:30 p.m. PST

[underwoodhifi.com](http://underwoodhifi.com)

[underwoodwally@aol.com](mailto:underwoodwally@aol.com)

diogoN shoppers as the email alias and username of Walter Liederman. Walter is a 50-year industry veteran who spent 23 years as one of the partners in the 10-store Atlanta-based chain HiFi Buys. In 1997 Walter worked as a consultant for Infinity Speakers and Acoustic Research. He also helped fund and became a partner in Perpetual Technologies, a leading player in DSP speaker correction and digital audio technology.

His 50-year tenure in the audio industry then led to the home-based side business Underwood HiFi through which Walter marketed new products, closeouts, B-stock, discontinued products, and other specialty audio items that manufacturers didn't want to promote through their established distribution chains. Earning an enviable track record with AudiogoN's savvy audio shoppers (over 2,500 points back then and now over 13,600 points), what had begun as a part-time side business soon developed into a full-time operation, mostly selling new high-value, high-end products.

Living in an Atlanta suburb, Walter then combined his exploding online audio sales venture with a small home-based retail operation to serve the local community "by appointment" to audition actual components and complete systems. Careful selection of a few chosen brands offering superior price/performance ratios led to such lines as Jolida, Emerald Physics, PS Audio, LSA, Gallo speakers, Music Hall, Carver amps & speakers, Quad, and Peachtree Audio. In 2010 Walter moved full time to Maui, Hawaii, and changed the business to an Internet-only model. Products are still shipped from the Marietta, Georgia, warehouse or drop-shipped from the manufacturer.

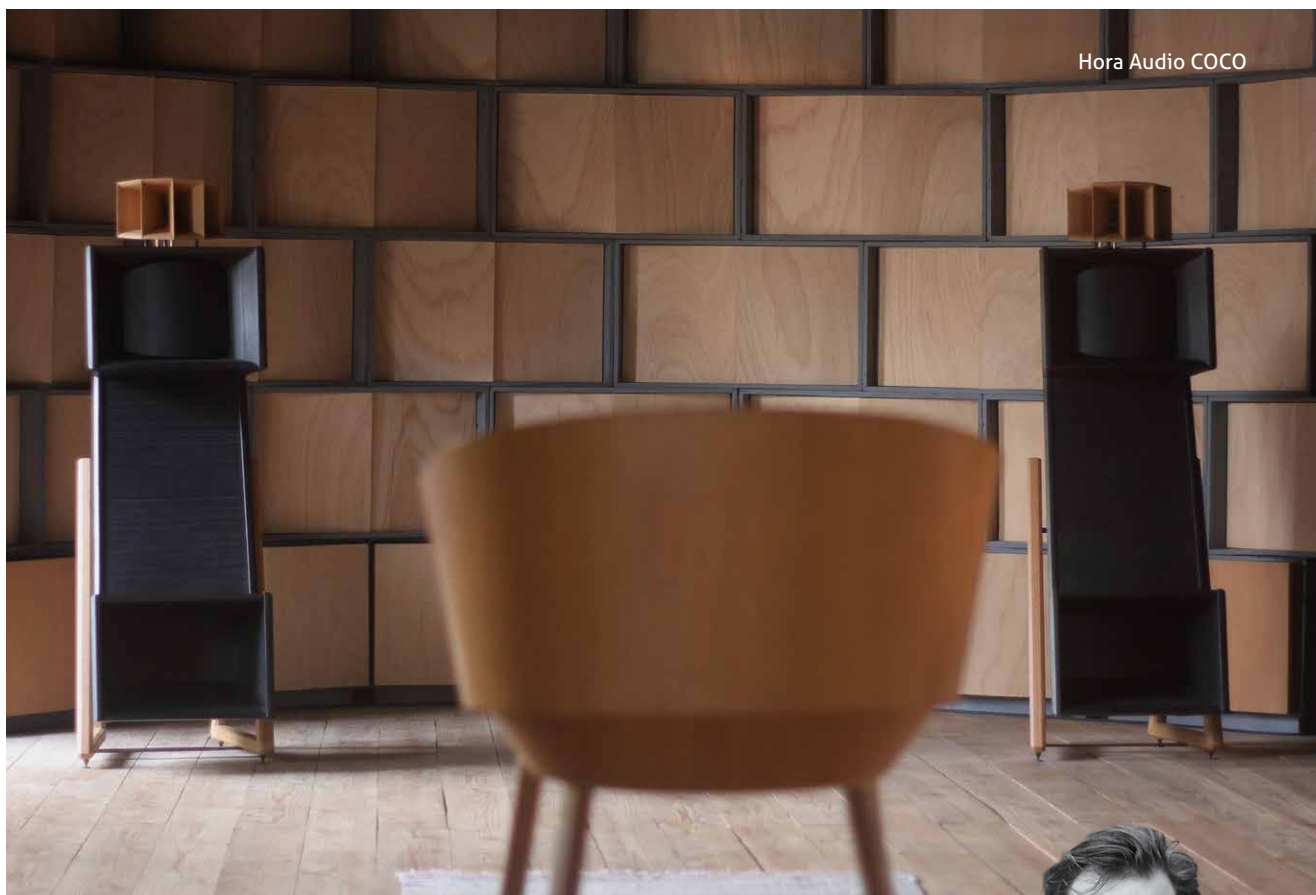
After becoming a dealer for speaker pioneer Emerald Physics and witnessing their amazing performance and customer satisfaction over four years, Walter had the opportunity to buy Emerald Physics in January 2010. Over the next four years, Walter and his team totally redesigned and expanded the Emerald Physics line and added electronics, the goal being to sell



a complete Emerald Physics system offering state-of-the-art performance at real-world pricing. Emerald Physics is sold along with many other high-value, high-end lines through Underwood HiFi. Currently, there is an entire new Emerald line being developed with three open baffle speakers, a hybrid amp, preamp, and new state-of-the-art DSP-based integrated amp.

Walter has also bought LSA Speakers and Core Power Technologies A/V, a supplier of line conditioning products and now a line of cables as well. In 2019 Walter decided to expand LSA into a full line of super high-value, Internet-direct products with integrated amps, power amps, preamps, music streamers, headphones, turntables, and phono stages. All products are designed and priced to deliver extremely high, direct-to-consumer value.





# VAL HiFi

Championing Boutique Brands



Greg Chapman

**W**hat if your only guiding principle in purchasing a music system was your instinctual, emotional response to a stunning track from artists like Bill Evans, Grant Green, Bob Dylan, Nick Cave, or Max Richter? What if you desired a transcendent experience that exceeded what you thought was possible? Something that took you away from the common, daily routine.

VAL HiFi is anything but common. It's about discovering and curating boutique brands that get to the powerful heart of the musical experience. It's the belief that there are manufacturers other than the big, well-known ones that can take you musically further, often without the huge price tag. That feeling of discovering something truly special and unique is what has driven VAL HiFi since the beginning. The very best in hi-fi does not necessarily come from the brands you already know, and VAL believes it has the ultimate alternatives.

**432 EVO • AGD • Aretai • Boenicke • Line Magnetic • Lu Kang Audio • Melody • Merason • Moonriver Audio • Orchard Audio • Rosson Audio Design • Supravox • True Signal Audio • The Wand • and much more**

## VAL HiFi

Ashford, Kent

TN25 4HS

+44 333 577 2005

[valhifi.co.uk](http://valhifi.co.uk)

[greg@valhifi.co.uk](mailto:greg@valhifi.co.uk)



Warwick Acoustics  
Limited Edition  
Gold APERIO



Wand Turntable  
and E.Q. Phonostage

Greg Chapman got bitten by the audio bug. Music had been a lifelong passion, but it accelerated into the grasp of the audio obsessed a little over 20 years ago once he met his brother-in-law, who had Vandersteen speakers and an incredible record collection. There was no turning back, and Greg gradually fell in love with the process of building a great music system. He discovered in that process that many of the manufacturers who delivered the sonic goods were off the beaten path taken by so many audiophiles. Greg was a music-first audiophile, and he felt that there was a hole in the market for people like him who enjoy discovering boutique brands and the special results they can bring when carefully assembled. VAL HiFi was born!

Set in the Kent countryside, the VAL listening room welcomes visitors to a dedicated midcentury-styled space, as unique as the products demonstrated. The appointment-only experience is relaxed, and the systems are set up according to the client's needs or interests. Augmenting this ability to privately evaluate the equipment on display is the opportunity to audition components in your home if you are in the Kent vicinity. The comfort of knowing that



Aretai Contra 350F

everything works with your system and home environment is the ultimate arbiter.

To further the close connection between unique audio equipment and a professionally designed, equally unique listening room, 2022 will see the launch of VAL ROOMS, a dedicated audiophile-focused music room installation service. Greg Chapman's other business is building one-off, architect-designed homes, and so he is in a unique position to use that other skill set together with his team, and combine it with the products of VAL HiFi to offer a truly unique service. From full, start-to-finish construction of a music room home extension or detached space, to the renovation or conversion of an existing room, VAL ROOMS will be an exciting addition to South East England's hi-fi community.

It's all part of that same goal—to offer a transcendent, unique musical experience, something uncommon and fit for you, and something you can be proud of for years to come. Simply put, something special.





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