

U L T R A F I D E L I S

H I G H P E R F O R M A N C E A U D I O & V I D E O

Latest Observations...

...in 200 words or less. What follows are experiences and observations about things audio, video and life in general.

May 2, 2003

It's got to be more than a coincidence, more like a good omen, that our demo Linn Unidisk player is shipping from Scotland on my birthday. This is, of course, the machine that will, in one fell swoop, replace every player of little shiny silver or gold discs one could own or rent. D's of the C variety, the C-R, the DV, the DV Audio, the Super Audio C, the C-V, even the Kodak Photo variety- they ALL play in this one machine. Even more significant is that the technology and therefore the performance of this player is entirely generated inside the walls there in Glasgow. Yes, SACD is a Sony concept, but now, for the first time, the world will be able to experience this medium free of Sony's sonic thumbprint. Add to that a CD playback capability rumored to be just a shade, maybe a half-shade, off of the legendary Sondek CD 12 plus a movie-maker that one magazine has called the best they've ever seen and it's no wonder that same publication dubbed the Scots the new kings of audio and video technology. Plus, it's just got to be great. It's shipping on my birthday.

-Jon

April 29, 2003

The Bucks lost game 5 last night, not that I really care that much, but I watched. I used to be an NBA junkie during the Magic vs. Bird era, but ever since Jordan left the Bulls, I could take or leave watching NBA games. So why did I watch the game last night? Because it was on in High Definition, of course. Incredible! I could almost become a hard core fan again if every game were shown in HD. Seeing the action on my 7.5 foot screen seemed better than being there. It was so good that I watched the entire Indiana vs. Celtics game that followed- something I never would have normally watched otherwise. It turned out to be a great game since Indiana was about to be eliminated (down 3-1 in the series) and they managed to hold on and win in overtime. As a matter of fact, I'm inspired to watch every playoff game for the rest of the year if possible. Best of all, if you have digital cable, it's free!

-Dave

March 31, 2003

The AVPP is now capable of tuning and recording, YES! RECORDING, high-definition broadcasts to the hard drive. How cool is that? I flipped on channel 10 the other day and they were showing this incredible program in HD with outdoor shots from helicopters and close-ups of bees drinking nectar from flowers. So I hit the record button and captured a perfect copy that I can show to anyone who wasn't there to catch it live. Now I'm just trying to get Jon to stay up late enough to record Jay Leno in HD. I watch it at home on my projector and it's so detailed you can see all

U L T R A F I D E L I S

H I G H P E R F O R M A N C E A U D I O & V I D E O

of the chips and scratches in his desk, not to mention bad makeup on some of the guests. There are many prime time shows now being broadcast in HD, like Fraiser, and NYPD Blue. During the afternoon I even found one of the popular soap operas in HD. Why they bother with a soap and don't yet do more sporting events, I will never understand. But someday it'll all be HD!

-Dave

March 23, 2003

Coming from a long lineage of DIY home improvement types as she does, I had always treated Monica's threats to single-handedly gut and remake our primary bathroom as more than idle. This January, while perusing the Sunday morning newspaper ad flyers, she asked if I wanted to accompany her to her favorite local home improvement store to see some fixtures she was keen on. I knew then that the old bathroom's days were numbered, so, determined to break the bonds of the old adage that the cobbler's children go shoeless, I suggested we wire for speakers and control while the walls were down. Oh, and how about a little TV set up in the corner visible from the tub?

Her initial reaction was a laugh, but the wires for ceiling speakers, a keypad and a small TV now protrude from the unfinished drywall that went up this past weekend. Soon, the tub, the floor, the fixtures and the finish work will be done. I'm looking forward to Car Talk or WMSE's the Chicken Shack in the morning, for sure, but the real treat is going to be watching that first 6 AM Sunday morning Formula One race from the Jacuzzi.

-Jon

March 17, 2003

Saturday night I went to the Jazz Estate on Milwaukee's East Side. The place is tiny with dim lighting and small round tables just a couple of feet from the stage, the perfect atmosphere for experiencing live jazz. I've had almost nothing but great experiences there and this time was no exception. I went, as I normally do, without knowing who was playing until walking through the door. Saturday night it was the Robert Grimwood trio consisting of Robert on piano, a bass player I didn't know and drummer Dave Bayles, whom I have seen many times with the Bill Martin Trio. They played lots of standards and interesting tunes throughout the night and sounded great as an ensemble. The sound quality was superb, as it usually is there. I left thinking about how incredible The Estate is as a live music venue. I'm making a point of going more often from now on.

-Dave

March 10, 2003

U L T R A F I D E L I S

HIGH PERFORMANCE AUDIO & VIDEO

The Grand Prix is on the air! My favorite sporting series, The Formula One World Driving Championship, held its inaugural race of 2003 in Australia last night and, like the other 16 events this year, it gets beamed by satellite around the world. For us few fanatics, this is Opening Day of a season of traveling the world from the comfort of home and we celebrate it with a viewing party. Technically, the race was run Sunday afternoon in Melbourne, but that's Saturday evening, late prime time, here in the Central Standard Time zone. Perfect excuse to get together at RJ's house and celebrate the return of our one common sports addiction. And RJ's is the perfect venue, housing as it does his \$1.3 billion home theater. State of the art projection video and surround sound coupled with a healthy dose of TiVO to keep things under our control create an evening of intense entertainment and a welcome diversion. A night like this goes a long way toward paying back the price of admission for a quality home theater system. While the cost up front may appear somewhat daunting, the experiences that unfold for a lifetime are invaluable.

-Jon

March 3, 2003

We now have Integra's Net Tune system running at Ultra Fidelis and it's pretty slick. We use our AVPP with its 120GB hard drive as a high-resolution music server, storing albums at full CD resolution (16 bit, 44.1 Khz). At that rate, we can fit about 220 albums on the hard drive. Should we decide we want more capacity, we can simply add additional hard drives. The AVPP is then connected to a wireless network which streams all of the stored music recordings to one of up to twelve Clients. The Client is a small receiver-looking box that has a large display and controls for accessing any of the music stored on the server. Currently we are running just one client which is connected to the high-end system downstairs in our showroom. The sound quality is excellent and so is the flexibility of the system. Imagine twelve people listening to different things simultaneously off of the same music server and all of it happening wireless!!!

-Dave

February 25, 2003

Spending the week in Jacksonville for Linn training served several purposes. Of course, I learned more about how to set up and optimize Linn components and systems. Along the way we observed how the sound just keeps getting better, more "tuneful and rhythmic" as they say it, as we upgraded all the components in front of a pair of Katans to the point where we had a \$40,000 system with \$1000 in speakers. And I had a thorough course in Knekt, their extraordinary multi-room system. We even got a sneak peak at the imminent Unidisc and Kisto, an any-disc player and surround processor respectively which suggest the next evolutionary step in high quality home entertainment. Perhaps the one unifying thread throughout the week was Linn's total commitment to performance, reliability and longevity in their products and relationships. From the awards covering the wall of the lobby to the dedicated demo and training rooms and through to the top-notch staff that taught us by day and wined and dined us by night, there was evidence everywhere of the power of Ivor's dream. The world truly is becoming a safer place for high performance audio and video.

Page 3 of 6

Copyright © 2004, Ultra Fidelis, All Rights Reserved

Ultra Fidelis 740 North James Lovell Milwaukee WI 53233 Telephone: 414-221-0200

U L T R A F I D E L I S

HIGH PERFORMANCE AUDIO & VIDEO

-Jon

February 17, 2003

On Saturday we hooked up the new 150M Audio Research solid state amplifier for the first time and, although I had heard it previously, hearing it in a familiar environment made me realize just how special it is. It is a multi-channel design that can have up to seven channels installed, but I think it may be very useful as a two-channel high-end music amp as well.

At the factory a few months ago I took pictures of what was to be a dedicated two-channel model utilizing the same switch-mode circuitry that may never be produced. Why? Because the power supply in the multi-channel 150M is so massive in order to accommodate up to seven channels that it sounded better than the dedicated two-channel prototype with its more typically sized two-channel supply. Anyway, the sound of the 150M is different from any amp I have ever heard. It is not solid-state sounding and not tube sounding, but something new that is in-between. With few hours on the unit, it is open and friendly, tight and powerful in the bass and just plain fun to listen to. I can't wait to hear it fully broken in!

-Dave

February 10, 2003

I noticed in the paper a month ago that The Commander Cody Band was going to be playing at Shank Hall, one of my favorite local music venues. I saw the old Commander replete with His Lost Planet Airmen twice including an insurgent takeover of the Lawrence University chapel, but those were both back in the '70's. Doing a little research I discovered that The CC Band consisted of four pieces including Cody's piano, fully half the numbers of the LPA "big band," but I decided to risk the cost of a \$10 ticket despite the 25 year gap between concerts.

When we entered there was one table of four up by the stage and the Commander was sitting at the bar downing Heinekens. Uh oh! Catastrophe! Not to worry. The boys swung, boogied, wailed and rocked through one of most infectious back catalogs I know of and there were times where they sounded like the full corps of Airmen. Back home, I went up to the vinyl library and retrieved my mint copies of the first six CC & LPA records. Since then, I have been reliving my youth and reaffirming the link between live music and great hi-fi.

-Jon

February 2, 2003

U L T R A F I D E L I S

H I G H P E R F O R M A N C E A U D I O & V I D E O

I'm going to be talking about experiences with the AVPP a lot, because it's so damn exciting. In addition to doing so *many* things that I can't live without mine, the AVPP is a direct-digital-path DVD player/scaler with a computer engine. It allows you to play back DVDs in a way that is much more pure than a regular stand-alone DVD player/scaler combo, mainly because it avoids a series of digital-to-analog-to-digital conversions that normally occur in DVD playback.

On Saturday, we did some picture quality comparisons with the direct digital path compared to the normal DVD player/analog scaler system using the movie *Goldmember*, which has a great picture by the way. The monitor was the 42 inch Fujitsu Plasma. The direct digital path looked remarkably clear and detailed when compared with the other system. It was much more sharply focused, in a natural way, making the analog system look a bit blurry and soft. It also had much more dimensionality allowing us to see details deeper into the background of a scene. I'll report more soon, but I'll say right now: AVPP is the cutting edge for people with HDTV displays!

-Dave

January 27, 2003

I had an early visit to a customer's home a fair distance away Saturday so I opted to turn on NPR to accompany breakfast in lieu of my usual morning paper. For over twenty years, no matter where I lived I've had speakers in the kitchen. I grabbed the Pronto, touched the RADIO button and on came Weekend Edition. Scott Simon was finishing up a piece as I sectioned a grapefruit. Just as the toast popped up, he introduced Dame Edna Everage and the ensuing interview nearly made me late for my appointment from laughter. And Scott almost didn't make it to the end of the interview.

If you aren't familiar with Dame Edna, she gives a wonderful summation of her life story to Scott and you can access the interview in the Audio Archives at www.npr.org. Later, on my drive, I reflected on how much pleasure my wife and I get from having speakers, in this case little SpeakerCraft 5.2R's (under \$200 pair!) I stealth-mounted in the cabinets, available throughout the house. It is a luxury we would never be without.

-Jon

January 20, 2003

I swore off football after the Pack's embarrassing loss to Atlanta in the first round of the playoffs- at least until the Super Bowl. But I couldn't stay away from the Oakland vs. Tennessee game last night because they lured me in with HDTV. I thought the game would be meaningless to me, but watching at 1080 lines on a seven foot screen has a way of making you re-evaluate things a little. The only distraction was the imaginary banner that kept flying around my head which read: "EVERYTHING SHOULD BE IN HDTV!!!" And it's true of sports more than anything else.

U L T R A F I D E L I S

H I G H P E R F O R M A N C E A U D I O & V I D E O

You can, at times, actually count the blades of grass on the field. And there isn't much need for instant replay because you can see what happened so clearly the first time around. The bottom line is, I would watch professional badminton if it were on in HD.

-Dave

January 13, 2003

It was Saturday, often the day for revelations around here, it seems. Two guys who are brothers come in late in the day, nice guys, one used to work in the industry. We get to talking and one is interested in replacing his quite respectable entry-level separates. I suggest tubes, either Audio Research, maybe one piece at a time, or Rogue if you want to kill two birds at once. He suggests an integrated amp and I hook up the Rogue Tempest with the fabulous new Integra DPS 8.3, which plays any disc you can fit in the drawer, and a pair of ProAc Response 2.5's all hooked together with some really snazzy AudioQuest wire (Cool! An integrated amp means only one pair of interconnects so you can splurge.) and we're off to the races.

Well, it wasn't much of a race. Diana Krall, not the title they wanted, but who cared, just popped out and seduced the three of us. Then Count Basie, small group, Pablo, was so in-the-room we were afraid he was back from the dead. Moral of the story? Maybe it *can* make sense to go from separates to integrated. One thing's for sure: he ain't buying transistors.

-Jon