

audio video 2015 pt.1

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The Audio Video show in Warsaw, Poland has grown to be the second largest in Europe and packs in every variety of audio kit you can imagine alongside a selection of big TVs. Located in two hotels and the national stadium it gathers audio brands from across the world. There is naturally a strong showing from Polish companies but most of the high end and mainstream names are represented. I spent a great three days listening to people and systems at the event and have to say I'm impressed with the enthusiasm of the visitors and the standard of sound they got to hear, it's one of those 'why can't we do this in Britain' events that takes you back to the halcyon days.



Nomos service will fix anything audio it seems, their wall of vintage cassette decks was a highlight of the show for me. Rarely do you see engineering of such variety and quality in mainstream products today. The Nomos guys even had white coats on and a desk full of test and measurement equipment.



Turntable and electronics maker Muarak showed its Mr Black/White turntable with Jelco arms and used this with a prototype processor to demonstrate SQ Quadraphonic, the seventies surround format. Playing Dark Side of the Moon on this format, *plus ça change!*



Mikar is a vintage audio restoration company that specialises in receivers, or so the ten or so substantial examples in the room suggested. In pride of place was a Sansui QRX9001 quadrasonic receiver that was as big as a bus and had more controls than a 747. The system featured Technics SB-G910 speakers, McIntosh MC2250 power amp and a second generation Philips CD player.



Room treatment was prevalent in many demos at this show, diffusers like these from Acoustic Manufacture being popular. This Project Experience SB fronted system with Primare PRE60/A60 amps and Audiovector SR3 Avantgarde sounding very clean and luxurious.



440 Audio from the Czech Republic makes a range of minimalist but chunky turntables based on natural materials like wood and stone albeit topped by acrylic platters. The G4 shown is the penultimate model and prices range from €2,500 to €9,300.



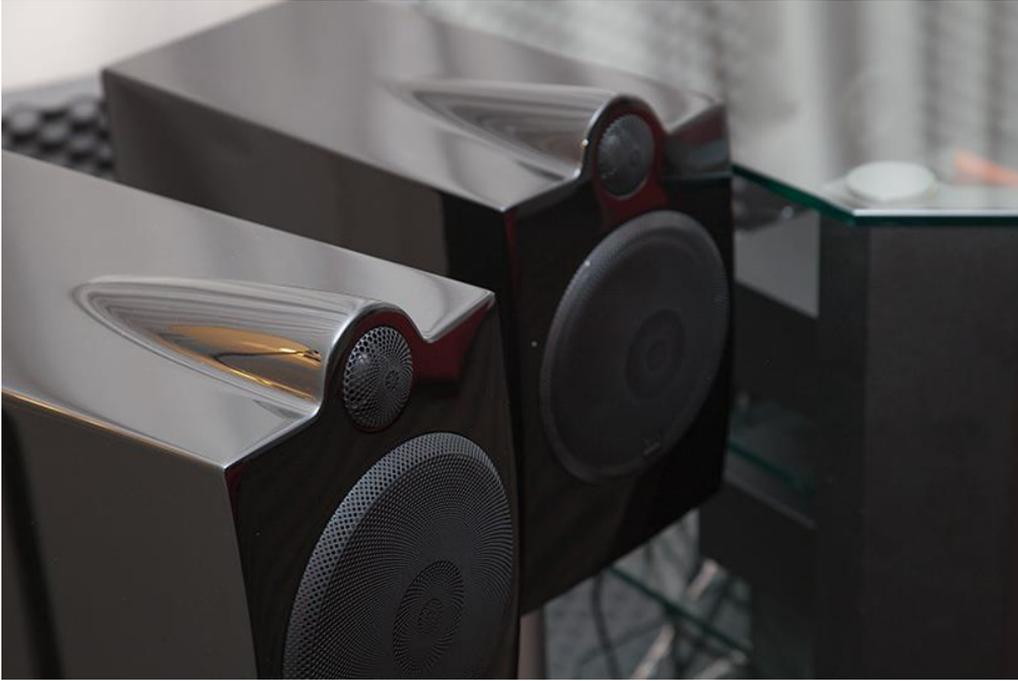
The Audio Academy Rhea speaker was very engaging on the end of a Plinius CD player (Toko or Mauri) with an Ars-Sonum Filarmonia SJ, an EL34 equipped integrated tube amp. Sound was a little rough around the edges but had dynamics and groove even before the Scott Am/FM tuner was switched in.



One of the most entertaining systems at the even was fronted by Klein Hummel OX active speakers from the sixties. These substantial beasts had a tube amp onboard alongside a 15inch bass driver and horn assisted tweeter. Black Sabbath's Paranoid sounded a lot better than it did at the school disco!



The front end on the Klein Hummel system was a revamped Lenco turntable with an SME 3012 arm on a beautiful wooden plinth by Somos (see Klein Hummel pic one above). The whole thing being supported on a Stacore pneumatic platform with a slate top plate and six axis isolation (£2,000).



Morel is a brand that we've not seen on these shores for a while but its still going strong and had the attractive Octave LE models on dem, the Octave 6 comes in floor and standmount forms with the former having a 9inch side firing bass unit to augment the 6inch mid and a tweeter in a raised housing.



You get unusual product combinations in different countries and Poland has more than most, Bryston for instance has the same distributor as Larsen. This Swedish speaker brand makes omnidirectional floorstanders that are fairly compact but throw up a good size image. The model 8 delivering a particularly cohesive and solid yet well timed sound that reflected well on the Canadian source and electronics.



There weren't many Brits in Warsaw so it was nice to bump in to Nic Poulsen of Trilogi and Isol8. He had brought the first sample of the most affordable Trilogi phono stage yet, the 906 is an MM/MC stage with dip switches for cartridge matching that will be £895 when it hits the stores.



The Polish Kondo/Audio Note Japan distributor had some large but attractive speakers from Germany called Black Forest, these aren't horns but have a large baffle that's wrapped around for size reasons and has horn like dynamics thanks to a full range driver from France. Front end here was a Helius Alexia turntable, the same Helius that makes the Cyalene arm that topped it. This rare beast has a suspended armboard and optically encoded drive system, it sounded pretty good playing *In A Silent Way*.



Akkus was making some good sounds with its Monolith F1 floorstander (on left, approx. £700), with own brand power amps, a Music First controller and M2Tech DAC connected to a laptop running Audirvana+. The Hadouk trio sounded great and then they put on The Eagles; a cue to run for the door!



Ubiqu Audio's Model One from Slovenia is one of the best looking speakers I've seen for a long while, despite appearances it's a three-way and all three drivers have oversize voice coils and paper or polyester drivers. Price is a suitably high end €10,500 + VAT.



Arcam unveiled an AV receiver with a difference in Warsaw. The SR250 is a stereo amplifier with full AV processing, the ability to down mix multichannel codecs to stereo and and lip syncing features for those who don't want a room full of speakers. It's a cross between an A39 and an A49 in amp terms and comes in at €3,500.



In one of the bigger rooms I found a TechDAS Airforce One supporting a Schroeder LT arm playing Pink Floyd's *Division Bell* on (monster) Vitus Audio MP-S201 amplification via driving Gauder Akustik Berliner RC9 speakers to rather good effect.



The most impressive system of the show was also the most expensive. Touted by the event organisers as the most expensive in the world at \$2,000,000 the Living Voice Vox Olympian and Vox Elysium four box horn system pulled in the crowds like nothing else. Kevin Scott of Living Voice beguiled visitors with a broad range of music and garnered mainstream TV coverage for having the audacity to create such an outrageous system. But it did sound rather special.