

HAPPENINGS

SHOW REPORT

Heathrow '07



There was plenty to see at the London Sound & Vision Show 2007 says **Malcolm Steward**

For many years, *Hi-Fi News* staged the annual September show at Heathrow. The event at the Renaissance Hotel became so popular at one point that it overflowed across the road into the Park Inn. Ultimately, the show's size and popularity waned, and last year a new organiser, the Chester Group, staged a separate show – effectively competing with the original – at the Park Inn. This year, with *Hi-Fi*

News no longer running events, Chester Group took control of the Park Inn and hosted the London Sound & Vision 2007 on its own.

The show attracted a fascinating mix of exhibitors but it was as interesting to note who wasn't there as who was. For example, Naim and Meridian were present but Linn, Arcam and Cyrus were not. Bowers & Wilkins, Mission, Wharfedale, Quad and KEF were also no-shows.

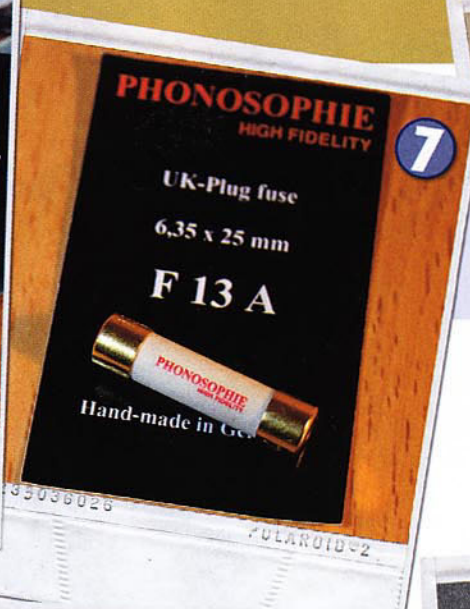
1 Luckily for audiophiles, the 'Sound & Vision' show was distinctly sound-oriented and there was no shortage of vinyl front-ends, many of which were sounding particularly fine, it has to be said. Several manufacturers were bolstering this seeming renaissance with a host of new phono stages, including the new Naim SuperLine which made its debut. Vinyl sellers proved popular, too and **Paul Messenger** was buying.

2 With a large number of valves in evidence too, it was all rather warm, cuddly and nostalgic. Adding to that feel in large measure was one particularly famous name making its reappearance at the show: **Transcriptor**, the company that gave the world the innovative Hydraulic Reference turntable (hydraulic referring to the paddle and fluid arrangement that allowed users to fine-tune its speed) that featured in Stanley Kubrick's epic 1971 movie, *A Clockwork Orange*. The sons of its designer, the late David Gammon, are releasing new models including the Spider – £1,750

without a tonearm – which they showed alongside their illustrious forebears, including the ingenious Transcriber from 1977, in which the cartridge stayed still while the platter (and disc atop it) moved – making it perhaps the ultimate parallel tracker. If you're one of those people who regret not buying a Hydraulic Reference the first time around, we're told that it will soon be making a return for £3,500.

3 **Pure Sound** was one of the great many companies showing a new phono stage, the £400 P10, but this, by its very nature, was far less interesting to photograph than the £1,699 2A3 line-level integrated. That said, the styling of the new 18-watt, push-pull valve integrated was appropriately restrained and purposeful, allowing the music it was making – rather than flashy aesthetics – to produce the impact.

4 With all the interest being shown in vinyl it was only fitting that there were plenty of accessories to enable users to care for their LPs.



German analogue mavens, **Clearaudio**, had a selection of turntables, phono stages, power supplies and associated ephemera on display, including a device for de-warping records – a kind of sophisticated trouser press for your LPs that costs £1,370. Once your records are flat they might benefit from a clean, and Clearaudio is able service that need too, with its Double Smart Matrix cleaner. The device wet cleans both sides of the disc simultaneously, removing any static build-up before vacuuming it dry all in under a minute. This slick, grey vinyl-washing machine will set you back £1,080.

5 Tom Tom Audio was playing its usual selection of Naim amplification through the new top-of-the-range **Kudos C30** loudspeaker, which was being demonstrated in prototype guise. The Kudos designer described the C30 as, “a very simple two-and-a-half-way design, ported through the base using the best quality components and drive units available.” It’s hoped that it will be available before Christmas at an estimated retail price of close to £5,000. It sounded rather appealing on demonstration, coming across as musical and appropriately fast throughout its bandwidth: an excellent match for Naim electronics.

6 **Leema** was showing its new ‘budget’ components, which the company hopes will be in the shops in time for Christmas: the £995 Stream CD player, and the £995 Pulse integrated amplifier. The Stream, which is closely based on the more expensive Antila model, is unusual in that it is, quite literally, a multi-DAC device in so much as it employs 16 DAC chips. The player is controlled by a single knob on the fascia that’s described as operating like the BMW iDrive controller.

7 The truest budget component of all, though, was surely one of the mains upgrades being offered by **Phonosophie**. Just £47.50 buys you a hand-made, high performance, better sounding replacement for your 13A mains plug fuses, sand-filled and complete with silver wire and gold-plated end caps. There was also a range of replacement pure silver fuses for those inside your components available at £37.50 each. We thought it too tweaky to ask whether they were directional like many standard fuses...

8 **Krell** provided a surprise in the shape of the KID, an iPod docking station and preamp that aims to give high-end system owners and their families a way to enjoy their iPods through their Krell-amplified systems. Priced at £1,100, KID is a fully balanced differential device with a digital output. It can accept other sources and comes with full remote control. It also sports tone controls and features full RS-232 capability, which is something you probably won’t see on most docks!

9 Joining Krell in the ‘we never expected to see an iPod dock from you’ camp was French amplifier specialist, **Jadis**, with its Orchestra DiP integrated amplifier. This iconic valve design comes complete with iPod connectivity, although don’t expect a remote control! The Orchestra will set you back £2,500.

10 In the **Creek** room, the company was showing its now complete Evolution series of electronics – complete in the sense that the final scheduled component, an AM/FM tuner, has been added. The company’s forthcoming turntable is expected to be available in November at a cost of £2,000 and *Hi-Fi Choice* will bring you the world’s first review. **HFC**