

MOON 888 Monoblocks Coverage



1) Digital Trends (USA)

Simaudio MOON 888 mono amplifier: Our first take

<https://www.digitaltrends.com/home-theater/simaudio-moon-888-mono-amplifier-ces-2017/>

Also mentioned on:

Techsite (WORLD)

Simaudio MOON 888 mono amplifier: Our first take

<http://www.techsite.io/p/525146>

World News (WORLD)

Simaudio MOON 888 mono amplifier: Our first take

https://article.wn.com/view/2017/01/12/Simaudio_Moon_888_mono_amplifiers_Our_first_take/

15 Minute News (WORLD)

Simaudio MOON 888 mono amplifier: Our first take

<http://www.15minutenews.com/article/111990728/simaudio-moon-888-mono-amplifiers-our-first-take/>

AudiophilePure (WORLD)

Simaudio's \$120K MOON 888 mono amplifiers: First take at CES 2017

<https://audiophilepure.com/2017/01/12/simaudios-120k-moon-888-mono-amplifiers-first-take-at-ces-2017-video/>

Thenet24h (USA)

Simaudio's \$120,000 MOON 888 Amps Aren't Excessive, They're Supernatural

<http://thenet24h.com/1767910/simaudios-120000-moon-888-amps-arent-excessive-theyre-supernatural.html>

SpeedyFreaks (WORLD)

Simaudio's \$120,000 MOON 888 Amps Aren't Excessive, They're Supernatural

<http://speedy-freaks.blogspot.ca/2017/01/simaudios-120000-moon-888-amps-arent.html>

Computer Magazine (USA)

Simaudio MOON 888 mono amplifier: Our first take

<http://www.computermagazine.com/syndicated/simaudio-moon-888-mono-amplifiers-our-first-take/>

Yahoo! Tech and Yahoo! News (USA)

Simaudio MOON 888 mono amplifier: Our first take

<https://www.yahoo.com/tech/simaudio-moon-888-mono-amplifiers-001512821.html>

2) WhatHiFi (UK)

MOON 888 monoblocs to launch in UK for £125,000 a pair

<https://www.whathifi.com/news/moon-888-monoblocs-to-launch-in-uk-ps125000-pair>

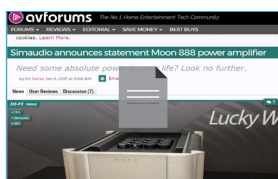




3) HiFi+ (UK)

Recent product launches in London and Edinburgh show how it's done!

http://www.hifipus.com/articles/a-tale-of-two-cities/?utm_source=Default+Hi-Fi%2B+List&utm_campaign=e1a75823b2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_05_09&utm_medium=e



4) AVForums (UK)

Need some absolute power in your life ? Look no further.

<https://www.avforums.com/news/simaudio-announces-statement-moon-888-power-amplifier.13265>



5) InsideCI (UK)

Magnificent £125,000 monster MOON 888 monoblocks amps available to order in the UK

<http://www.insideci.co.uk/news/monster-moon-888-monoblock-amplifier-rocks-uk.aspx>



6) HiFi Pig (UK)

MOON, Avantgarde and Loud & Clear

<http://hifipig.com/moon-avantgarde-and-loud-clear/>



7) Part Time Audiophile (USA)

CES 2017: Day Four – Avantgarde Acoustic, MBL, Pro-Ject, and Canada's MOON statement mono blocks

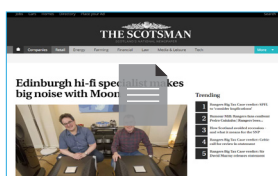
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8) Top News (USA)

CES 2017 on those you may not be able to afford the technology products

<https://www.yahoo.com/tech/simaudio-moon-888-mono-amplifiers-001512821.html>



9) The Scotsman (UK)

Edinburgh hi-fi specialist makes big noise with MOON

<http://www.scotsman.com/business/companies/retail/edinburgh-hi-fi-specialist-makes-big-noise-with-moon-1-4429580>



10) The Audio Beat

Searching for Texture: The 2017 Jimmy Awards

(See appendix for PDF version)



11) HCC

Fly me to the Moon

(See appendix for PDF version)



12) Classic Rock Magazine (UK)

The Moon 888 from Simaudio might just have grasped the holy grail for hi-fi amplifiers

(See appendix for PDF version)



13) WifiHifi (Canada)

CES 2017: Audio

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14) CPA Magazine (Canada)

MOON Shines

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15) T3 (UK)

Hi-fi is taking the way the digital world works and pumping it up to 11 (and 120 grand)

(See appendix for PDF version)

OTHER LANGUAGES



16) HiFi.nl (Netherlands)

Imposante MOON 888 Monoblock OP CES 2017

<https://www.hifi.nl/artikel/25231/Imposante-Moon-888-Monoblocks-op-CES-2017.html>



17) TVA News (Canada)

160 000\$ pour la «Ferrari» des amplificateurs

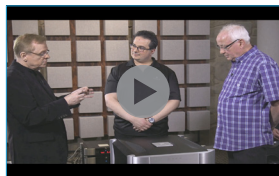
<http://www.tvanouvelles.ca/2017/01/06/160-000-pour-la-ferrari-des-amplificateurs>



18) Les affaires (Canada)

Voici comment les technos québécoises se démarquent au CES 2017

<http://www.lesaffaires.com/blogues/alain-mckenna/voici-comment-les-technos-quebecoises-se-demarquent-au-ces-2017/592528>



19) Son et Image (Canada)

Costa Koulisakis, Vice-President Customer Experience, introduces the empowering 888s!

<http://tele-mag.tv/emission/son-et-image/Amplificateur-Moon-888-ep.-1-de-3>



20) TVA News (Canada)

Des technos québécoises en pèlerinage à Las Vegas

<http://www.tvanouvelles.ca/2017/01/08/des-technos-quebecoises-en-pelerinage-a-las-vegas>



21) OnMag (France)

MOON 888 "Lucky Watts": l'ampli Hi-Fi High End le plus impressionnant du CES 2017

<https://www.on-mag.fr/index.php/component/tags/tag/1047-moon-by-simaudio>



22) OnMag (France)

MOON 888 "Lucky Watts": l'ampli Hi-Fi High End le plus impressionnant du CES 2017

<https://www.on-mag.fr/index.php/topaudio/actualites-news/15772-moon-by-simaudio-888-lucky-watts-l-ampli-hi-fi-high-end-le-plus-impressionnant-du-ces-2017>



23) AF Digitale (Italia)

CES 2017: Debutano i nuovi amplificatori Moon 888

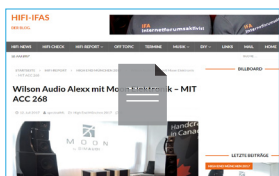
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24) RDI and Radio-Canada News (Canada)

Le meilleur amplificateur du monde est-il fabriqué à Boucherville?

<http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1041578/simaudio-amplificateur-moon888-haut-gamme-boucherville-pme-quebec>



25) HI-FI-FAS (Germany)

Wilson Audio Alexx mit Moon Elektronik - MIT ACC 268

<https://hifi-fas.de/wilson-audio-alex-mit-moon-elektronik-mit-acc-268>

[CES 2017](#)

Searching for Texture: The 2017 Jimmy Awards

by [Jim Saxon](#) | January 31, 2017

Within minutes of my landing in Las Vegas, Marc Mickelson rushed us over to a listening session arranged by Harman International. It was an utter failure. The room was cramped, the music was horrid, and the sound was glassy and hard. Marc used the word "glare" to describe the ear-piercing emanations from a pair of new and improved loudspeakers. Never has a Consumer Electronics Show started so dismally.

The next morning, we were ensconced in an ample suite in the Mirage confronting a gigantic pair of Wilson Audio loudspeakers. Along the wall a daunting array of dCS products filled the shelves of a large rack. A pair of diminutive D'Agostino monaural amplifiers powered the system. Like a whipped dog, I almost cringed, expecting the sound of glare magnified to lethal extremes. Instead, the first track caused me to leap off the sofa shouting, "That's it!" Tom Jones singing "What Good Am I?" was so realistic I could tell how old he was -- almost 77! To my ear, the sonorous sexuality of a youthful male voice has been replaced by a tinge of pathos -- even great singers eventually fade away. Such insight, whether true or not, derives from a system's ability to unveil texture, defined as "how the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic materials are combined in a composition, thus determining the overall quality of the sound in a piece."

Yet even that dictionary definition is insufficient. Texture includes the microscopic details that breathe life into a recorded performance. Therein lies the day's lesson. A stereo system that captures the breath of life is discerned by bodily reactions. The resulting thrills and goose bumps, even the desire to gesticulate, make the costly hi-fi hobby worthwhile. Yet, many industry designers who work hard to create works of electronic art can't seem to tell when their products sound bad. So many systems filled their rooms with glare, the way the sun shines off a tin roof, rather than with texture, as a flickering lamp illuminates an oil painting. The sun-shiny demos simplified the music like a page of childish art, while the oil-painting rooms displayed the mature complexity of even simple songs. Those few exhibits that painted with a master's brush are honored here.

Rogue Audio is located in an Eastern Pennsylvania community so small (population 1627) that it's not even a town but a "census designated area." As one enters the "area," a big sign proclaims "Entering Broadheadsville." As one drives by, the flip side reads, "Leaving Broadheadsville." (Just kidding.) Tiny town or no, the area inspires the design of best-value tube amplifiers. Although Rogue Audio has won Jimmy Awards at prior CESes, their 2017 system was their best ever for two reasons. First, the Rogue Audio RP-7 preamplifier (\$4995) and Stereo 100 100Wpc power amplifier (\$3495) were mated to the fabulously musical **Joseph Audio** Pulsar speakers (\$7700/pair) via **Darwin Audio** Truth II speaker cables (\$2995/8' pair) and Darwin Audio Truth II XLR interconnects (\$1195/pair) and power cords (\$1295 each). Second, a MacBook using **Pure Music** software streamed songs into an **Ayre Acoustics** QB-9 DSD DAC (\$2500). The results were irresistible.

For those to whom \$25,000 is a pain in the wallet, a Rogue Audio/Darwin/Joseph Audio/Ayre system is sufficiently wretched excess, and it wins a Jimmy Award for High Fidelity for the Impecunious but Discriminating Audiophile.





Bluebird Music is a North American audio distributor. Their award-winning demonstration included **Vienna Acoustics** Liszt loudspeakers (\$14,998/pair), **Chord Electronics** Red Reference CD player (\$21,900), CPA 5000 preamplifier (\$17,000) and SPM 6000 mono amplifiers (\$41,000/pair), all lashed together with **van den Hul** Platinum interconnects and Cumulus 3T speaker wire (\$19,000). If one prefers to stream his music, a DAVE DAC (\$11,900) could replace the Red Reference CD player, saving a cool ten grand. The system reminded me of a custom-made suit -- subdued but elegant. Would the individual components sound as good as separates in any other system? Bluebird Music wouldn't say. For selecting synergistic components to market, Bluebird Music enriches their trophy case with a Jimmy Award for Best Distributor of European Stereo Equipment at the Show.



Having spent my early working years in New York City, I have a warm feeling for people from Brooklyn. They are smart, sassy and self-reliant. At least one of the denizens builds great loudspeakers. John DeVore of **DeVore Fidelity** works at a Flushing Avenue address in Brooklyn. Although he lacks a Noo Yawk accent, he is fearless. No other manufacturer would dare play Earth, Wind and Fire on vinyl at the CES. I mean, the group is not audiophile approved. Yet, the horn-and-bass-line signature of America's greatest funk group beckoned like a brazen lover. Listening to "That's the Way of the World" recalled the hot summers of the '70s and the unlimited future ahead. The retro look of the rectangular, two-driver Orangutan O/96 speaker (\$12,000/pair), veneered in warm walnut, enhanced the moment. Ah, where has the time gone?

Although the Orangutan's whopping sensitivity of 96dB would suggest the use of a 5-watt single-ended tube amp, DeVore employed a muscular British solid-state amplifier, the Sugden AudioSapphire FBA800 stereo power amp (40Wpc, \$7500) to spread a convincing soundfield. Other Sugden components included the Masterclass LA-4 preamplifier (\$3750), and the Masterclass PA-4 phono stage (\$2500). An **EMT** SD-75 MC cartridge (\$2100) mated to an impressive-looking **Brinkmann** Spyder turntable with two armpods (\$14,400) and Brinkmann 10.5 tonearm (\$5490) captured the nostalgia of recalling funk in the city. DeVore generously lists other components as the **Box Furniture Co.** HD3W walnut double-wide three-shelf equipment stand (\$5500) and **Auditorium** 23 RCA and XLR interconnects (\$795/ meter pair) and speaker cables (\$980/2.5m pair).

Amazingly, the horn-like design was free of nasality. Consequently, DeVore Fidelity earns a Jimmy Award for Most Tonally Balanced High-Efficiency Loudspeakers at the CES.

During my visit to the **Joseph Audio** room, I was appalled by the lack of foot traffic. The estimable Jeff Joseph opined that the 2017 show had more visitor peaks and valleys than other shows. I'll say! In part the problem may have been that, unlike in prior years, Joseph Audio did not share a room with **Bel Canto Design**, makers of aurally pleasing class-D amplifiers. Traditionally, Bel Canto draws a crowd.

However, Joseph Audio is nothing if not resourceful. They found an Ayre solution. A stack consisting of an **Ayre Acoustics** QX-5 Twenty digital hub (\$8950), KX-R Twenty preamplifier (\$27,500) and MX-R Twenty mono amplifiers (\$29,500/pair) provided stunning motivation to Joseph Audio Pearl 3 speakers (\$31,500/pair) via **Cardas** Clear Beyond speaker cables (\$8668/2.5m pair) and interconnects (\$3750/meter pair). The blooming synergy between Ayre and

Joseph Audio may become a future fixture assuming high-end audio remains a segment of subsequent Consumer Electronic Shows. Joseph Audio/Ayre earns a JA for Most Promising New Pairing at the CES.

At **MSB Technology** I encountered an old friend, Mark Markel, the guiding light of cable maker **Analysis Plus**. Mark's recent absence from the high-end audio scene was due to a successful foray into the pro-audio market. For home stereo users of Analysis Plus cables, the return to the field of a fine gentlemen and great designer is good news.

Despite the bustle around us, Mark graciously supplied a price list of the entire MSB array: MSB Technology M204 mono amplifiers (\$39,950/pair), Select DAC II (\$89,950) with Femto33 clock (\$9950) and Select power supply mono bases (\$19,995/pair), and Universal Medea Transport V (\$6995) with Dual Signature transport power base (\$4995). Cables included the new Analysis Plus Micro Golden Oval-In interconnects (\$4995/pair), Golden Oval speaker cables (\$19,400/4' pair) and Ultimate Power Oval power cord (\$1795). MSB Technology employed **YG Acoustics** Sonja 1.2s (\$73,400/pair), a transducer shown in at least two other demonstrations that, in my opinion, lacked the listening ease obtained by MSB.

Played on this heavyweight system, Steely Dan's "Babylon Sister" was detailed and dynamic with a slight splash from the high hat. After sixty seconds, the gentleman with remote control in hand suggested we switch over to **MQA**, the digital decoding technology developed by Meridian of the UK. Holy Calculus, Batman! Cymbals were cleaner, the soundfield wider and deeper. The chorus had a rounder prominence and the lead voice was free of hiss. The only negative was an obscuring of the drumsticks' syncopation, as if the MQA cleanup process had scrubbed a little too close to the bone. Well, progress involves tradeoffs. Here are two thumbs up to MQA and a Jimmy Award to MSB Technology for Most Convincing A/B Demonstration at the CES.

Robert Lee of **Acoustic Zen** asked a contemplative question, "If the speakers aren't right, how can the rest of the system bring you joy?" Year after year, his Crescendo loudspeakers (\$22,000/pair) bring me joy regardless of the electronics he uses. This year Acoustic Zen shared a room with British brand **Questyle Audio**, whose 200 System includes a 5gHZ wireless signal transmitter and two tiny 200-watt monaural amplifiers (\$4500 set). Since wireless amps preempt the need for interconnects -- how nice -- Robert employed a minimal cable set of Acoustic Zen Absolute 75 coax digital cable (\$498/meter length) and Hologram speaker cables (\$1248/8' pair). Only a designer of altruistic intent would use fewer rather than more of his company's cables.

Mr. Lee has written a meticulous white paper to explain his loudspeaker's preternatural clarity and openness. His design brief includes extreme phase accuracy and an almost resistive load for the amplifier to see. These requirements are easier said than met. The practical result of single-minded zealotry is a hazeless sound that calms the mind, independent of the electronics' pedigree. Despite tough competition from a host of big names, the Acoustic Zen Crescendo claims a Jimmy for Most Perfect Loudspeaker Output at the CES.



Luke Manley and Bea Lam of **VTL** enjoyed an embarrassment of riches. Not only was the VTL room full of visitors, but they also had a live music performance on hand. Professional ukulele player Jake Shimabukuro entertained with his own rendition of the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby." Although the experience showed there is no substitute for live music, I personally would have liked more inner detail.



Thankfully, VTL filled the bill with a scintillating long-play recording of Frank Sinatra. The Nelson Riddle Orchestra performed the music and a youngish Sinatra conveyed the hopefulness replete within "Blue Moon." A **Brinkmann** Balance turntable with 12.1 'arm (\$27,490) RoNt power supply (\$4190) and Lyra Etna cartridge (\$8995) extracted every nuance of Sinatra's light baritone (in 1961 before all the smoking deepened his voice).

VTL amplification did the heavy lifting. A TL-7.5 Series III Reference preamplifier (\$25,000) and TP-2.5 phono stage (\$3750) fed an S-400 Series II Reference stereo amplifier (\$33,500) that drove a pair of **Wilson Audio** Yvette loudspeakers (\$25,500/pair) to heights of ecstasy. **Nordost** Odin 2 signal cables and power cords were used throughout along with their QB8 Base Mk 2 power conditioner. Despite following a live act, the ethereal presentation across time and space of a legendary singer was sublime. With only a modicum of ticks and pops, Old Blue Eyes was in the room! A Jimmy Award goes to VTL for the Best Vinyl System at the CES.



Even after four decades, loudspeaker designer Richard Vandersteen does not rest on his laurels. In fact, he's now building his own drivers. The **Vandersteen** Quatro Wood CT speakers (\$13,900/pair) may be the best famous-name transducer value in hi-fi. Despite their diminutive footprint, the Quatro Wood CTs float a lifelike image, a Vandersteen specialty. Listening to Johnny Cash sing "Rose of My Heart" on vinyl gave me pause to reflect. This was the second system that revealed a singing icon's crinkley old-man voice. At the time of the recording, Johnny Cash was my age and died soon after, but it worries me not. He lived a lot harder than I -- maybe [gulp].

Vandersteen's sources and electronics consisted of **Brinkmann** components: Bardo turntable/10.0 tonearm (\$9990), Pi Cartridge (\$2490), Fein phono stage (\$3100), Nyquist DAC (\$18,000) and Brinkmann integrated amp (\$7200). It's worth noting that three systems won awards using Brinkmann products. Hard-core hobbyists might want to check out this German manufacturer's wares.

Vandersteen also credited **HRS** RXR stands (\$6210), four R-Series 1921 bases (\$494 each) and a custom M3X-1921 base for the Bardo (\$2895). Power and cabling were provided by AudioQuest, including the Niagra 7000 power conditioner (\$7995). The first pair of hi-fi speakers I ever purchased were Vandersteen 2Bs. If I had just traded up within the Vandersteen line over the past 37 years, I'd have a great system today, along with money in the bank. Vandersteen Audio, with the Quatro Wood CT, takes home yet another award for Best Richard Vandersteen Design at the CES.



For those who've salted away \$118,000 and can hold on to it until the second quarter of 2017, Moon by **Simaudio** has an amplifier in the production queue just for you. The [Moon 888 Extreme Reference mono amplifier](#) (\$118,888/pair) can output up to 888 watts into 8 ohms. The 56 transistors per side are custom made by Motorola, an extreme design advantage. However, bookish audiophiles need not apply, nor for that matter champion weightlifters. Despite weighing 250 pounds, this behemoth comes without any way to grab it for lifting purposes. Pity the poor reviewer who is home alone when two giant crates arrive.

Besides the 888, Simaudio had other reference gear on hand, albeit not Extreme Reference. The Moon 780D streaming DAC (\$15,000) with 820S power supply (\$8000) decoded the music selection. The Moon 850P preamplifier (\$30,000) transferred the signal from the DAC. Rockport Technology Cygnus loudspeakers (\$62,500/pair) handled the 888s' output with ease. About \$60,000 worth of Nordost Valhalla 2 cables tied all six pieces together.

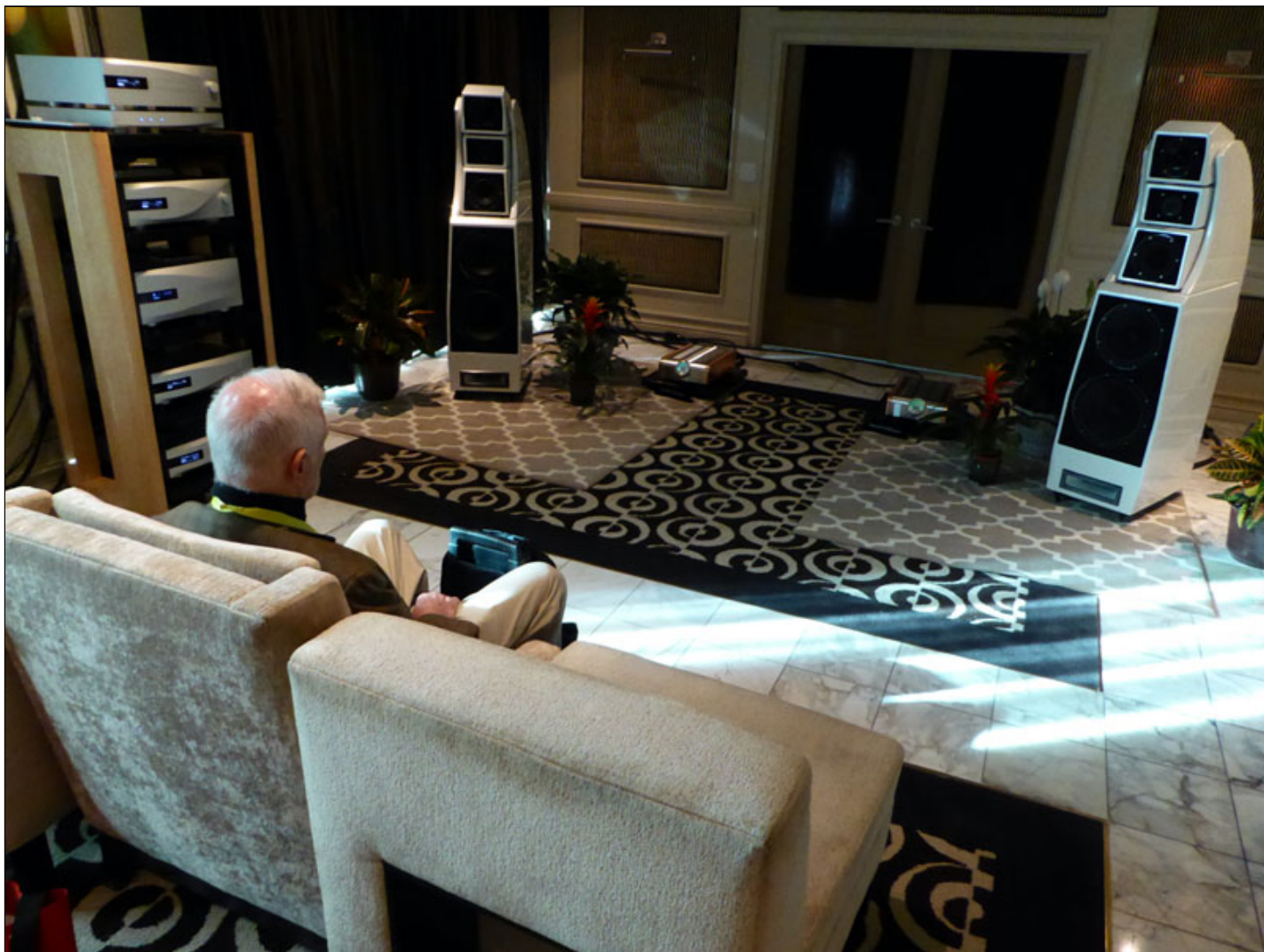
Despite its sound-reinforcement specs, the Moon 888 displayed a tubelike delicacy at low volume. Dire Straits' "Love over Gold" conveyed startling chord changes at 80dB. Nevertheless, stifling an urge to blow out the hotel's windows was a pressing chore. For Most Daunting New Product at the CES, Simaudio wins a 250-pound Jimmy. Come pick it up.



In former years, I could not warm to the sound of **mbi's** highly regarded omnidirectional loudspeakers. It seemed to me that the presentation, while vanishingly low in distortion, was too far rearward from the plane of the speakers. The depth of image seemed artificial, as if I were watching *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the veranda while the performers were cavorting on the other side of the swimming pool. This extreme depth of image seemed to me a distortion from reality; mbl enthusiasts disagreed.

But it now appears that the company's engineers took my misgivings to heart. With the introduction of mbl's new Noble line of electronics, the mbl system now projects 3D images within the room instead of floating in faux space a long distance away. The result is as captivating as the old portrayal but now immediate and tactile. The N-series components have enabled the realization of the mbl dream.

While the attainment of realistic perspective does not come cheap, the cost of the entire mbl package is reasonable by reference standards: Radialstrahler 101E Mk II loudspeakers (\$70,500/pair), N11 preamplifier (\$14,600), N15 mono amplifier (\$17,800 each, four used), and the luscious N31 DAC/CD player (\$15,400). Moreover, MSB's cable selection seriously economizes this incredible system. **Wireworld** Eclipse Series 7 interconnects (\$450/meter pair) and speaker cables (\$1550/meter pair) were right at home here, as was mbl's own PC2 power cords (\$950 each) A **Silent Running Audio** Scuttle² (\$7000) housed the electronics, proving that good racks cost money, but please note the disparity between the low cost of Wireworld Eclipse cables and the prices of other brands used in prize-winning systems. If a system can garner an award for Best Sound at the Show linked up with Wireworld, why, may I ask, should anyone invest six figures in cabling? In case the reader missed the off-handed remark, here it is again. The Jimmy Award for Best Sound at the Show goes to mbl.



Yet, the awards show isn't over. Having painted myself into a corner, I must now escape without making a mess. That's because two demonstrations that featured the same **Wilson Audio** Alexx loudspeakers (\$109,000/pair) continue to haunt me weeks after the show. At the **dCS** demonstration mentioned early on in this report, the Vivaldi 2.0 four-piece stack (\$115,000), tightly packing an **HRS** MXR rack, motivated a pair of **D'Agostino** Momentum mono amps (\$55,000/pair), demurely situated near the speakers thanks to long lengths of **Transparent Audio** Opus interconnects. After Tom Jones had me twitching and bouncing, an unfamiliar Tom Waits' song, "Come On Up to the House," mesmerized me further. When Waits slyly attacks self-pity with the line, "Come down off the cross, we can use the wood," I actually laughed. Rarely have I been so involved with song lyrics upon a first listen, and almost never in Las Vegas. The dCS/Wilson Audio/D'Agostino system scores a JA for Most Emotionally Compelling Presentation at the CES.



Finally, we come to the biggest sonic surprise of the show, at least for me. But first, here's the list of suspects: **Nagra** HDdac (\$30,000), Classic preamp (\$17,000), HD mono amplifiers (\$82,500/pair, 2000 watts from only six MOSFETs), VPS phono stage (\$7650), CD transport (\$14,775), and Seven recorder (\$4800); **Kronos** Pro turntable (\$38,000) and Kronos Black Beauty tonearm (\$8,500); **Wilson** Alexx speakers (\$109,000/pair); **Transparent Audio** XL interconnects (\$6400/pair), and Opus speaker cables (\$39,000/pair); **HRS** SXR-1921-3V audio stand frame (\$5195), M3X-1921 (\$2895) and M3X-1923 (\$3695 each) isolation bases.

Over the years Nagra setups have left my forehead cool to the touch, as if the blood had drained away looking for a warm place to hide. Yet recently, something has happened at Nagra. For the first time, their equipment revealed the tiny inflections, the filigrees and fractals -- the texture -- that gives reproduced sound a hint of reality. The difference between the dCS/Wilson/D'Agostino room and the Nagra/Wilson demonstration was the silence of the loudspeakers on Nagra electronics. It was as if the Alexx towers were on silent display and the music just arose at the front of the room. In two decades of covering the CES, I have never heard a system where the speakers weren't there. Though Nagra's technology is now available for a king's ransom, one hopes it will eventually trickle down. For achieving a taste of the virtual music (perhaps soon to be accessible to audiophiles everywhere), the Nagra/Wilson system wins a Jimmy Award for the Once and Future Representation of Recorded Music. 🎵

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Fly me to the Moon

Simaudio's 888W monoblock amplifier got an airing at Munich, but not before **Mark Craven** enjoyed a sneak preview at its UK distributor. Warning: contains flowery hi-fi language...



HOW MUCH POWER does your speaker system need? The answer is not as much as you probably might think. But if you want power with total control, huge reserves for dynamic swells and are keen to keep processing and amplification chains away from one another in pursuit of signal purity, then a monoblock amp for each of your speakers is the way to go. And once you've gone down that route, you might as well take a look at Simaudio's new Moon 888. Just to gawp, of course.

This new flagship design from the Canadian audio specialist is a heavyweight piece of engineering, destined for installation in costly setups. Its buyers will mostly be high-end hi-fi enthusiasts, but there's no reason you couldn't park a Moon 888 on the end of your front left and right channels in your home cinema. Except that you'll need £125,000 for a pair of them.

Coming up with a plan

The Moon 888, named after its rated power output into 8 ohm loads (1,776W into 4 ohms), is the end result of a two-year product development plan that, says Simaudio Vice President Costa Koulisakis, was in part kickstarted by the efforts of other brands.

'We've seen trends in the last few years of other manufacturers, often ones that no one has ever really heard of, launching crazy and very expensive audio products. And we've watched and we've thought: "One day we'll do ours".'

'Two years ago we made the decision to do it. We didn't know what we'd call them. All we knew is that we wanted to put together everything that we'd learned in amplifier design over the company's 37 years, and put it all into one product.'

'Why didn't we do something like this earlier on?' he asks himself. 'Pressures of the marketplace... the immediacy to have products that people want to buy right away. Not that nobody wants to buy these. Everybody wants to buy these. It's just that most people can't afford them!'

The finished product is a bit of a beast. Measuring 559mm across and 686mm deep, it won't rack nicely next to your Sky Q box. And I'm told it weighs 136kg, which, I work out afterwards, is nearly twice as much as me.

The styling is reminiscent of the brand's other Moon hardware, naturally so as it's an extension of Simaudio's product line, as opposed to an entirely new clean-sheet design. 'If we were to set out and

Simaudio's Costa Koulisakis: 'You don't have to step on the gas to feel the power'



design something entirely new with no relation to anything we've done before, we'd be putting the onus and responsibility on the customer,' explains Koulisakis. 'If we came up with something that over time turned out to be not as reliable or high-performance, it's the customer that pays the price, and they've invested heavily.'

So the amp takes Simaudio's previous top model, its 880M (£32,500-per-pair), as its starting point. Engineers, reports Koulisakis, were then told to 'have a ball', and not to bother asking about budgetary considerations.

You might be asking exactly what can make a single-channel power amplifier (Class A/B – 'they run in full Class A mode for most of your everyday listening levels') so expensive. I'm not given an exacting list of component prices and man-hour costs, but it's clear that a good chunk of the price comes from the heatsinks alone.

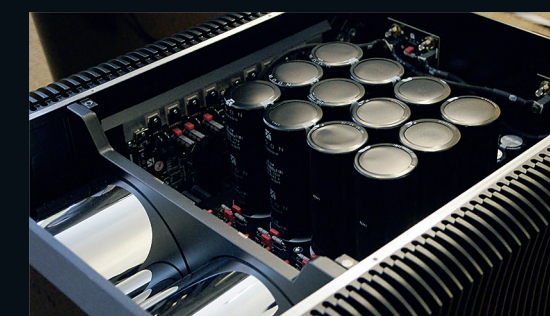
Koulisakis, on haunches and with the 888's lid prized off, waxes lyrical about the amp's thermal managing tech. 'This massive heatsink is one giant piece of cast aluminium. It's not an extrusion that's cut and bolted together.' Such a design brings sonic benefits, he says. Having a single piece allows maximum heat transmission from one end to another, for instance – 'If one side or one section gets warmer it can pass off that heat rapidly and efficiently' – as opposed to a heatsink comprised off different parts. And by using an aluminium mould, Simaudio's engineers have had the freedom to create a unique form, boasting (internally) various channels, shapes and holes to further dissipation and control vibrations. Furthermore, the sink is rigid, with minimal flexing.

'The only downside,' says the Simaudio man, 'is cost. Particularly in the low volumes that these will be manufactured in.'

Twin transformers, one handling in phase and the other the out-of-phase signal, are encapsulated in a special pot, chrome-plated and filled with epoxy, to reduce vibration. The output boards are themselves inset into the 888's heatsinks, again to minimise vibrations. The dual binding posts (for biwired setups) are rhodium copper-plated designs from Japanese specialist Furutech.

Attention to detail extends right down to the Moon 888's chunky boots. All of the company's other amps have threaded cone feet that can be adjusted to ensure the product sits level on an AV stand, but the weight of this flagship makes lifting it up to fiddle with feet not an option. Instead, it boasts a quartet of 'self-levelling' feet, with a spring-loaded rubber insert that threads inside, depending on the amount of weight on top of it. Simaudio claims this means it will sit perfectly level on any surface; it also acts as a natural dampening material. That's right: this amp has its own internal suspension.

'It's a very minor benefit,' admits Koulisakis. 'But it has an incident. These small differences on a lesser amp probably wouldn't make much of a difference. But in a product of this level, where you're talking nanoscopic details, you can hear what these things do. If I were to remove them and put on regular feet you would hear it.'



Top: The 888s in situ, powering YG Acoustics floorstanding speakers
Above: Twin transformers sit near the front of the chassis, housed in chrome-plated pots

Our demo was set up by Simaudio's partner in hi-fi crime, Renaissance Audio, a dealer/distributor based in Edinburgh. A pair of the Moon 888s were run into YG Acoustics floorstanding speakers. Again, these are pricey (around £100,000 a pair) but, says Renaissance chief John Carroll, exactly the kind of system level they expect Moon 888

buyers to have. Further back in the chain were Simaudio's own processing and DAC separates, with content coming from... an iPad. I had perhaps been expecting a £20,000 CD player.

The amps strut their stuff, and the performance is – as hoped – startling. But while it's a sonic experience that warrants hi-fi-certified phrasing about imaging and tonality, what is most apparent is the impeccable bass weight that these amps can muster. The low-frequency drivers of the tower speakers are held in a vice-like grip.

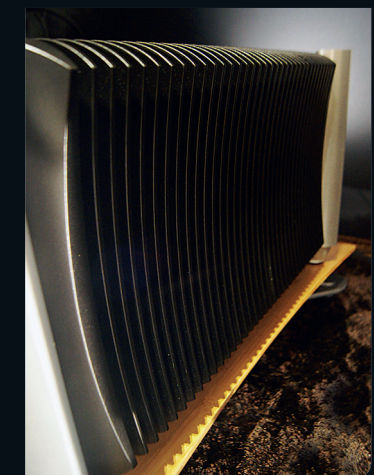
The moody synth pop of London Grammar's *Hey Now* sounds thrillingly life-like and evocative, a mix of reverby vocals, electro noodlings and lows that go deep, and then deeper still. At the opposite end of the scale, Metallica's *Enter Sandman* is effortlessly punchy and tight, with monster riffs surging forward atop insistent kickdrum thuds and snare blasts.

And, yes, the amps can comfortably play loud, without any sign that anything isn't ticking over as it should. But, according to Koulisakis, that's not the entire point of such a premium design. 'It's not just about the high volumes. It's about playing at moderate listening levels, content with a lot of detail in it. It's the resolution of the amplifier.'

'It's akin to driving a 2,000 horse power car on the street,' he adds. 'You don't have to step on the gas to feel the power. You just have to tap on the gas to feel that power's there...'

I depart, having exhausted Renaissance Audio's streaming track library, idly totting up the cost of a seven-channel speaker system with Moon 888s all round. This is fantasy, I know. The good news is that Moon also sells a seven-channel power amplifier, the MC-8. And it doesn't cost as much ■

The Moon 888's heatsinks are made from a single, sculpted piece of cast aluminium



● RAW POWER

Heavenly Body

The Moon 888 from Simaudio might just have grasped the holy grail for hi-fi amplifiers.

MANY PEOPLE HAVE pondered over what might be achievable when technical excellence, uninhibited imagination and unlimited funds come together. Opportunities for that to happen are rare, results that justify it even more so. Tipped hats, a bubbly toast, a 21-gun salute and a mighty "Wow!" then, to highly respected Canadian hi-fi ninjas Simaudio for having had the wherewithall – and the balls – to put their money where their vision was and produce the Moon 888: an object of desire that stakes a loud claim to be, in Carlsberg parlance, probably the best hi-fi amplifier in the world. "Get the best components on the planet, spend whatever it takes" said the suits. "Oooh!" said the white lab coats.

There's no space here for the tech stuff, so if you dream about capacitors and waveforms and stuff then head over to the Simaudio website. What there is space for is to tell you that the Moon 888 is rated at 888 watts, weighs about the same as a small elephant, looks purposeful, eye-catching and delightfully dangerous, and has innards that Starship Enterprise engineer Scotty

would want to marry. And the sound? Well, to these ears it sounds amazing, whether it's delivering hard-hitting heavy metal, spiky punk, lush melodic rock, a featherlight sonata or anything in between. Most importantly, it does a very simple-sounding but phenomenally difficult task – the audio world's holy grail – superlatively well: putting out exactly what you put in; as with the best health foods, nothing is added, nothing taken away. And in terms of output power, it'll pin a tank against the wall.

Of course, a system of any kind is only as good as its weakest link, so if your aspirations are high enough and your pockets deep enough (you lucky people) to take a pair of Moon 888s home, they'll need to be deep enough for you to also take home equally reassuringly expensive speakers and other necessities; a quarter of a million earth pounds should ensure you're not selling the Moon short.

RRP £125,000 a pair. More information at www.simaudio.com

Paul Henderson



THE BEST OF THE BEST

Cream were the most super of all supergroups.

When it comes to creating something from the very best components around, the band that did it first was Cream (pictured) in 1966, forming what was the very first, and definitive, supergroup. Many so-called supergroups have come and gone since then (Blind Faith, Emerson Lake & Palmer, Asia, Transatlantic, Chickenfoot, the Dead Weather...), but there's a strong argument that Cream – drummer Ginger Baker, guitarist Eric Clapton and bassist Jack Bruce – was the only one where each of the musicians involved really was the very best in their field.

A rock band with pop sensibilities in the studio, an outrageously capable improvisational jazz trio playing live, Cream lasted just three years before they imploded in 1968, leaving behind some classic albums. More importantly, they inspired so many others by showing what is possible when imagination, desire and supreme talent come together.



Lenbrook confirmed that is working on an Alexa implementation, allowing for voice control of a Bluesound system via Amazon Echo speakers. No word on timeline though. Also, the entire Bluesound range now supports MQA, allowing for playback of TIDAL Masters content.

Monitor Audio/Roksan: While it didn't show any new speakers, Monitor Audio (Kevro International) did have some big news at CES. The company has purchased the London, U.K.-based audio brand Roksan, which offers a broad range of products including amplifiers, CD players, DACs, speakers and phono stages. George Haight, Kevro's newly appointed Sales Director for the U.S. Central Region, confirmed that Kevro will distribute Roksan in North America. "I'm not sure what this means for Cyrus," he added, referring to another U.K. line of audio components currently distributed by Kevro.

Moon by Simaudio: Last year at CES, this Montreal-based manufacturer launched the ACE ("A Complete Experience", reviewed in our September 2016 issue), an all-in-one integrated amp/DAC/streamer intended to attract a younger, more mainstream audience to enthusiast audio.

At CES 2017, Simaudio went in the opposite direction with the Moon 888, a massive monoblock power amplifier aimed at the hardest of hard-core audiophiles. Rated power of the 300-pound beast is 888 watts (or 1.2 horsepower!) into 8 Ω or 1,776 watts (2.4hp) into 4 Ω . Audio circuitry is integrated into the massive single-piece die-cast aluminum heat sinks to eliminate the effect of vibrations. The power supply has 350,000 μ F of energy storage, and the output transistors have combined power rating of 8kW, so it's hard to imagine the 888 ever running out of gas. It ships in Q2 for US\$118,888 per pair. Simaudio Spokesperson Lionel Goodfield told me the company had pre-orders for seven pairs before CES opened, so the 888 is already a nice piece of business.



Monitor Audio has purchased the U.K. audio brand Roksan, whose products include the premium Blak integrated amplifier. Launched last summer, the 150-wpc amp has built-in high-res USB DAC, Bluetooth streaming and MM phono input. Kevro International will distribute the line in North America.



Rated at 888 watts into 8 Ω , the 888 power amplifier from Moon by Simaudio will ship in Q2 for US\$118,888 per pair. Even before the official launch at CES, Simaudio already had pre-orders for seven pairs.

Paradigm/Anthem/MartinLogan: Paradigm Electronics Inc. used CEDIA to launch its Performa high-performance free-standing speakers and Anthem STR two-channel amp, so it was weirdly fitting that it would use CES to launch two new series of in-wall LCR speakers. Intended for the residential home-theatre market, both series launch in February.

All models have integrated .75" MDR back-boxes, bezel-free magnetic micro-perforated grilles, screen-compensation switches, and 1" pure aluminum ("X-PAL") tweeters with Perforated Phase-Aligning (PPA) lenses.

The CI Pro P1 (US\$999) has dual 5.5" mineral-filled polypropylene mid-bass drivers. The CI Pro P3 (US\$1,499) adds two 5.5" passive radiators with overmoulded Active Ridge Technology (ART) surrounds, which allow for higher output and lower distortion. The CI Pro P5 (US\$1,999) has dual 6.5" woofers and dual 6.5" passive radiators with ART surrounds, plus 6.5" mineral-filled polypropylene midrange.

With the CI Elite series, enhancements include woofers and midrange drivers with X-PAL cones and overmoulded ART surrounds on all models. The CI Elite C3 (US\$1,999) has dual 5.5" woofers and passive radiators. The CI Elite C5 (US\$2,499) has dual 6.5" woofers and passive radiators, plus 6.5" midrange. The CI Elite C7 increases woofer and passive radiator diameter to 8".

In April, Paradigm will add a smaller powered speaker, the PW300, to its Premium Wireless line of Play-Fi-based wireless whole-home audio products. Also, a firmware update will allow users

to play sources connected to the PW Soundbar (which ships in February) in other zones.

Sister company MartinLogan announced its Outdoor Living series, which includes two satellites and two in-ground subwoofers. The Sat 40 and Sat 60, which feature waterproof ABS enclosures, can be set for 8 Ω , 70V or 100V operation. Both models have 0.75" aluminum dome tweeters. The Sat 40 (US\$300) has a 4" mid-bass driver, while the Sat 60 (US\$550) has a 6" driver.

The 10" Dynamo Outdoor Sub 100 (US\$1,700) and 12" Dynamo Outdoor Sub 120 (US\$2,400) are both designed for 8 Ω operation, and feature .625" polyethylene enclosures.

The Outdoor Living series is supported by a variety of mounting accessories, which includes ground stakes, burial conduit junctions and surface-mount brackets. The series will be sold on an *à la carte* basis, so customers can tailor the system for their needs. However, MartinLogan will also offer a 4.1 system, consisting of Sub 100, four Sat 40s and four ground stakes, for US\$2,900.

Pro-Ject: At its suite, Pro-Ject (Gentec International) showed a couple of interesting looking USB-equipped turntables – the Debut Record Master and Debut Record Master Hi-Res – both of which let users digitize their vinyl collections.



Paradigm's CI Elite series of in-wall LCR speakers employ pure-aluminum bass and midrange drivers with overmoulded ridged surrounds that increase output while lowering distortion.

MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

Buying spree

IN 2016, Canadian corporations carried out 2,685 merger and acquisition deals for a total of \$331.5 billion, reports *Investment Executive* from figures compiled by Crosbie & Co.

"M&A has shown considerable strength for the past three quarters," says Ed Giacomelli, managing director at Crosbie & Co. "The headwinds that appeared in early 2016 have abated and the M&A outlook remains steady."

In the third quarter of 2016 alone, 16 mega-deals were signed for a total of \$115.4 billion. This included Enbridge's massive acquisition of Texas-based Spectra Energy for \$61 billion. — YB

ONLINE MARKETING



Watch your Vs and Cs

BUSINESSES SHOULD BE careful about terms they use on their websites to identify themselves to search engines. Those terms could contravene trademark laws, as Vancouver Career College discovered recently in a BC Court of Appeal, reports *Business in Vancouver*.

Reversing a prior judgment, the BC Court of Appeal ruled that the college's use of VCC as an acronym on its web pages was contrary to the Trademarks Act and violated Vancouver Community College's official mark, which it has used since 1999.

The Career College did not have to pay any penalty, but will have to stop using VCC or VCCCollege online. — YB

Thierry Monasse/Getty Images Courtesy of VCC Courtesy of Simaudio

CETA



Win-win or lose-lose?

ACCORDING TO A RECENT STUDY, the free trade deal signed last fall between Canada and the European Union is based on a flawed economic model, says the *Huffington Post*.

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) makes use of the "computable general equilibrium" model developed in 2005, which is far too optimistic about how economies react to free trade deals, says the study.

The model predicted that CETA would bring a 20% jump in trade between Canada and Europe, adding \$12 billion (0.7% of GDP) to Canada's economy. Instead, the study says the deal may eliminate 227,000 jobs by 2023, including 23,000 in Canada. The loss in jobs will depress wage growth, costing the average Canadian worker \$2,460 a year (at current exchange rates). — Yan Barcelo

AUDIO

Moon shines

AUDIOPHILES dreaming of reaching sonic heaven might want to put their money down on Simaudio's most recent Moon amplifiers, reports Montreal's *Les Affaires*. They'll only need about \$300,000.

For 37 years, Simaudio, based in Boucherville, Que., has made world-renowned, state-of-the-art amplifiers. In recent years, the company developed more affordable versions of its Moon brand, but in so doing it lost some of its cachet. So it has now responded with a no-holds-barred, top-of-the-line system: the Moon 888, which is rated at 888 W and sells for about \$160,000 a pair. Of course, speakers that link to such amplifiers don't come cheap, nor do CD players or preamplifiers. So the \$160,000 price almost doubles to \$300,000. Still, the company expects to sell 20 sets this year, for a total of \$3.2 million. — YB



OPINION

Duncan Bell is wired for sound

Hi-fi 2.0: in a digital age, all you need is love of music (and maybe half a million quid)

Do you remember when hi-fi was a massive deal, back in the '70s and '80s? I don't.

But I do recall it still being in fairly rude health in the early '90s.

Back then, going to Richer Sounds to spend your entire student loan cheque on an amplifier from Rotel, speakers from Mission and a CD player from Marantz was still an important part of a young man's accession to adulthood.

Now, the idea of buying a box to play music, a box to amplify music, two more boxes to hear it out of, plus a bunch of connecting wires that somehow cost £500 has gone out of fashion. Like ripped jeans, hi-fi has been flushed down history's dumper.

"Aha!" you say. "But I've been to London this year and seen LOADS of young men wearing ripped jeans!"

To which I knowingly smirk and say, "Yes, that is the point I am over-elaborately making. Do you see?"

Hi, fidelity, hi

I think hi-fi did run into a very serious problem when MP3 and digital in general became the norm.

The idea of a compressed music format was anathema to 'audiophiles' so they ignored the obvious up side of MP3 and other digital formats. "Who wants massive portability, convenience and instant access to all music ever?" they asked. Then they waited for the rest of the world to realise that this new-fangled MP3 music sounded crap.

The problem with that was that the rest of the world decided it sounded perfectly good enough, thanks. Just as they had for decades listening to AM and then FM radio, the democratising analogue ancestors of MP3.

But now, hi-fi, like ripped jeans and pony tails, is back, back, back. Part of that is the same retro frenzy that's rehabilitated dubious fashions from the same era. But a bigger reason is hi-fi

learning to stop worrying and love the digital.

That manifests itself in two ways. One is comparatively high-end, one-box solutions such as Naim's Mu-so or Bowers & Wilkins' Zeppelin. These take the music on your phone and give it a bit of digital and analogue polish. Feed in decent bitrate digital files and you get very pleasing results indeed, but with the same convenience as a £100 Bluetooth speaker.

Something like a Mu-so is the new student loan system from Richer Sounds, complete with a line in for your 'vinyl turntable' (record players, as we used to call them).

The other is to take a time-honoured hi-fi path and make everything fantastical, no-holds-barred and, if necessary as a side effect of that, really, amazingly, eye-wateringly expensive.

A case in point: this month I went to Scotland to see a £120,000 amplifier.

Hi-fi is taking the way the digital world works and pumping it up to 11 (and 120 grand)

The size of two beer fridges (you need an amp for each channel), weighing 140kg and packed with capacitors the size of cans of Tennent's Super, the Moon 888 certainly quelled any old clichés about Scots being mean. Okay, to be strictly accurate, this monster amp is actually Canadian, but it's distributed through Edinburgh's Renaissance Audio.

Since an amp can't do much on its own, it was plugged into a further 350 (or so) grand's worth of Moon's wireless

digital audio-processing tech, and speakers the size of *The Fast and the Furious* stars.

What was great about this was that the event made the amp's expense seem just like a natural side effect of Moon's demented quest for audio perfection.

Most launches of products costing six-figure sums I've attended have layered on the luxe with a golden trowel, but this involved staying in a Travel Lodge on a ring road, and haggis.

It wasn't a rarified, 'audiophile' affair, either. Yes, it was exclusively populated by middle-aged white men, but some of us weren't from the hi-fi press, enjoyment was actively encouraged and at no point were damnable 'hi-fi' musical atrocities such as Norah Jones, or the acoustic version of *Hotel California* inflicted on us.

Did this half-million-quid stereo sound good? I'm going to stick my neck out and say, "Yes. Yes it did."

Did it justify its cost? For those of us without the luxury of the time, space and cash to just sit back and listen to it forever, of course not. How could it?

But whatever. I'm glad that hi-fi is back, taking the mobile, digital way the world now listens to music, and pumping it up to 11 (and 120 grand).

