

THE Show - 2011



DICK OLSHER'S BEST OF CES

BEST SOUND (COST NO OBJECT)

The Sound Lab Majestic 845 ESL partnered by Atma-Sphere's MA-1 OTL amps. Roger West is back on top with a full-range design capable of gorgeous tonality and exceptional musical realism.



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Just back from CES & THE Show. Favorites in speakers and rooms

earlinarizona -- Sun, 01/09/2011 - 11:50

SOUNDLAB ELECTROSTATIC ROOM: Last year I was in this room and the sound was good, big but with lots limitations when they used the lower priced model. This year was just a blow away sound in every sense. They had the new Majestic 845 full range speaker, which I kept wondering how they got it into that small of a room along with an Atma-Sphere OTL amplifier. First of all the bass out of that speaker was the most true of any and I mean any speaker at the show. Smooth with no crossover or different sound from multiple drivers. It turns out there is no crossover in this speaker. Think of it like the Wilson system if you only had one driver that had the full range. Its delivery was very fast and just there. You have no idea how fast and accurate bass can be. Think of this speaker like a very large Quad. In my lifetime I have had a few of the quad speakers but always had to supplement the bottom end with non integrating woofers, but not here. The rest of the system physically just disappeared when listening. I was staring right at the speaker just a few feet away and could not sense any sound coming from the panels. Voice was perfect, again with no crossovers or different sized drivers the sound was smooth. No beaming on the high end at all but again the actual speaker just disappeared. It painted a three dimensional picture for you with space between instruments. Keep in mind this room

was a little small for these speakers and they also needed more amplifier power. The rear of the speakers reflections were unnoticeable. This speaker had it all in spades with smooth sound, accurate without being at all analytical, bass that was faster than any cone at the show. On top of that the sound just enveloped you with ease of listening. I listened to many songs but one was with guitar pickers music. You could have just reached out your hand and touched them.. When you added up the cost of this system between just the speakers and amplifiers, it was about 240,000 less than the nth Lamm room with better sound.

QUAD ROOM: After leaving the Soundlab room I headed to the Quad room. I was in the sweet spot for quite a while and it brings you back to all of those great hours of listening to Quads over the last 20 years. These are great speakers for a very small personal system and have a better sound than a majority of the cone speakers in many ways. The problem now came with the Soundlabs sounding so full, the Quads sound small, no weight and a smaller soundfield. Kind of like driving a Ferrari and going back to a VW bug. Both are good cars. All the limitations of my previous quads were still there in the current 2908 on display while the Soundlab just had the size and HP. In total the Quads are still a treat, but compared to the Soundlabs it would be hard for me to go back.

David Matz -- Tue, 01/11/2011 - 16:24

Earl in Arizona, the Soundlabs are the best kept secret in audio. If one has a large enough room to make them disappear and if one can live without some bass slam, these are as good as you can find on the planet. At its price point there really is nothing that compares. The Magico Minis are pretty good. But they lack the naturalness, the inner detail, and coherence of a full range stat. For someone who listens to a full range stat every day for hours, coherence is a huge problem with most box speakers - the drivers just don't mate well. It's like flooring a car on a slippery surface - the front or back wheels will spin and the car will fish tail. The electrostat, however, is like driving that all-wheel-drive Audi on a snowy day. So when the flow of music changes, the box speaker just can't cut it. When you spend triple on a bigger Wilson or a Magico, you will definitely get better, faster, bass with more wallop, but that's just about it.

I guess there is always the new or sexy thing to talk about by the audio "press", so the Soundlabs don't get mentioned. But for those who want the musicians to visit them in their homes and can live with the limitations, there is no better speaker.