

AXPONO 2013 SHOW COMMENTED BY SOUNDSTAGE

Axpono 2013 SoundStage!: "On the first day of the show, high on my agenda was Jeff Catalano's High Water Sound all-analog room in an upper floor. Unfortunately, Jeff's gear suffered a lot of damage from shipping and he'd lost a channel in his phono stage, a Thöress Phono Enhancer (\$9000). He had to shut down his demo on Friday and work frantically into the night trying to get it restored, alas, to no avail. Luckily, he also had a Tron Seven GT phono (\$20,000) he'd brought along for a client and it performed wonderfully. By Saturday the whole system was singing, and he treated me to a long session that I hated to leave. Source was the TW-Acoustic GT turntable (\$9500) with two TW-A Raven 10.5 tonearms (\$5500 each) that each had a Miyajima Labs cartridge mounted -- for stereo, a Shilabe (\$3000), and for mono, a Zero (\$2000). Electronics were Thöress Systems 845 SE mono amps (\$14,000/pr.), Thöress preamplifier (\$9000) and the aforementioned effed-up Thöress phono Jeff managed to rescue for mono playback. The rack was a Silent Running Audio Scuttle with Ohio XL bases. Signal cables were from ZenSati, and Tel Wire supplied the power cables. A Silver Circle Audio Tchaik 6 (\$9500) handled AC. Featured were new Hørning Eufrodite Zigma Plus speakers (\$24,000/pr.) just in from Denmark (shown in photo right).

On mono playback, I got Wes Montgomery in an organ trio strumming and plucking a deft "Round Midnight," followed by old folkies Ian & Sylvia on their eponymous debut LP teaming up for a sensational version of "Down by the Willow Garden." For this tune Sylvia ditched her normally demure singing style to take on a spooky, Makeba-like voice with faintly Caribbean verbal inflections, raising up the short hairs on my arms and haunting the air with an eerily lifelike presence. On stereo I got Steely Dan performing "Babylon Sisters" from Gaucho, Handel's Water Music on Harmonia-Mundi LP, and Mussorgsky's "A Night on Bald Mountain" from The Power of the Orchestra by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra on an Analog Productions repressing of the original RCA Living Stereo LP. Every track had great depth and layering, wondrous imaging, air and punch, and fine shadings of inner detail, along with an almost plush texture to the soundfield with gorgeous articulations of instrumental and vocal timbres. There was a profound balancing of audio values into a coherent musical presentation. The Mussorgsky piece was particularly big, bad, and beautiful, with superb dynamic expressiveness and an instant movement of motifs from section to section in the orchestra. All was swift, fleet, and sure-footed with superb shadings and magnificent orchestral scaling. I was completely convinced of the Hørning speakers' prowess on large-scale music. Best analog in show? Most definitely! I thought this debut of the Hørning Eufrodite speakers so stunning, in fact, that I asked to review them on the spot. Look for it in a coming issue of Ultra Audio."