

fresh bull

winter 2017/18

signals
hl-fl for grown-ups

Newsletter

winter 2017 / 18

What interesting times these are. Brexit, currency fluctuations that seem to be on a one-way ratchet, the big orange one and short fat one scaring the hell out of us. In the world of HiFi we have the unexpected development of Arcam, Lexicon and Mark Levinson becoming sister brands within a Harman organisation itself under the ownership of Samsung.

Our own little world has changed too. Most of you will be aware that we finally evicted signals from my home in May 2017. Our new business location gives us far more demonstration space (four rooms) and what we thought was oodles of storage. Already, we are struggling to accommodate more and seemingly ever larger loudspeakers.

After a false start in September, our Audio Show East (let's call it ASE) finally took place at Trinity Park in November 2017. The damned thing went well too. So much for plans to retreat to doing smaller shows in our former Roman Catholic Church.

It looks likely that ASE will return to Trinity Park for 2018. Dates to be decided.

Looking at that Naim image here and wondering? Me too. Apparently, it's part of the Core. Still, now it's come up, let's grasp the nettle. As our most significant brand, Naim had a large impact on us in 2017. If ever there was a feeling that a company had ever so slightly lost the plot, it was Naim in late 2016 and a fair amount of 2017.

At ASE, Naim's Jason Gould and I had a refreshingly open conversation. This was followed up by a visit from head of sales, Alan Burns, in late November.

Good excuses are not hard to find:

Phenomenal levels of growth, roughly threefold since the Focal deal, and a large influx of new staff have brought operational changes. The, to some eyes, excessive focus on products such as Mu-so, the hugely protracted Uniti launch, have all conspired to convey the perception that Naim had forgotten about their core business. Production delays were the last straw. 2018 should, we gather, see a return to their former levels of focus. The excessive lead times should be dealt with too. For the first time in around a year, we felt quite up-beat when being told something of the future plans.

In taking on our new premises, we invested heavily in our future. It's not exclusively about Naim but we want them to remain very significant to us. Oddly, through all this chaos, our business has remained buoyant. As ever, our thanks go to you for that.

oppo



Oppo have progressed rapidly from being the quirky AV brand for those in the know to being the gold standard for BluRay and 4k replay. If a high ranking, high performing player does not say 'oppo' on the front, there is a reasonable chance that it will have oppo kit on the inside.

Given their standing, it is probably fair to say that we have not really made enough of their arrival onto our list of brands.

We are pleased to have the complete range of, currently, two 4k BluRay players, UDP 203 + 205, the funky portable HA-2SE DAC, the brilliant Sonica DAC / streamer and three sets of headphones. All are held in stock and on demonstration.

All make fantastic Christmas gifts, of course!

DYNAUDIO



Dynaudio is a very new arrival. New as in demo stock is still due, next job is to put them on the web site. Both Kala and Bill from Dynaudio have visited us. Kala before we moved when we had no room. Bill after we'd moved when, bizarrely, we again, have almost no room.

But we will wriggle things around! For now we will just have the high value Emit range of two stand-mounts and a floor stander plus the rather lovely Special 40 pictured above.

It's the Special 40 that has really stopped us in our tracks. It's a genuinely marvellous compact stand-mount built to celebrate their 40th anniversary and to showcase their latest thinking.

We have a feeling that this is a relationship that could grow.



New to us in late 2017 was Pro-Ject Audio Systems. The range of products, not just turntables, is breathtaking, in fact downright bewildering. Unsurprisingly, we don't have the full set but we do have a very reasonable cross-section of what they have to offer, including record cleaning machine, phono stages, and, of course, some excellent turntables.

The bundle deals with Ortofon cartridges make some of the turntables extraordinary value for money. Add in the small form factor of several of them and the colour choice and you have very compelling proposition..

head-fi

As a club Orpheus store, we carry the full range of Sennheiser's audiophile 'phones. Well, the sensible stuff, anyway.

We have HD 660, IE80s, IE 800, HD 800s and the excellent HDVD 820 headphone amp / DAC looming here.



In addition to Sennheiser, we stock Audeze, Grado and Focal.

One of the most exciting recent arrivals has been the Focal Clear, which sits above Elear and below Utopia. All are on demonstration. Unusually, Clear comes complete with a carry case and a full set of cables, one of which allows for balanced use.

We've witnessed the benefit of this with the Sennheiser HD800 and 800s. It makes for a very interesting listen!

Clear is great but the Focal Utopia still remains something very special indeed. Why not book a listening session. We can find you a quiet corner!

PMC®



Not content with making some of the best selling loudspeakers that we stock (Twenty5 series), the Professional Monitor Company have also managed to lean on their 25 years of electronics expertise and build a genuinely special integrated amplifier in the shape of the Cor.

Cor is hand built in Luton at the PMC factory, it's compact, powerful, transparent and fun. It also has tone controls. Weird :)

The PMCTwenty5 series seems to be all-conquering at the moment. The performance, styling, size and finishes all seem to be right on the money.

Conveniently, they work extremely well with all the electronics brands that we sell. And especially well with the Cor.

LINN Katalyst



Not exactly new to us but inexcusably rarely mentioned, we have the Linn Klimax DS with Katalyst DAC architecture.

Around Christmas 2017 there are some Linn offers too:

- Buy Klimax DS or Klimax DSM and receive a complimentary Majik DSM
- Buy Akurate DS or Akurate DSM and receive a complimentary Sekrit DSM

audioquest

This is slightly related to Linn in that they do funky digital and network cables. We are now selling Audioquest products too.

We're kind of dipping our toe in this area, so don't have a colossal range quite yet (!). Feel free to ask if there is a particular cable that you are considering.

Naim Audio & Focal

We have the new Focal Kanta loudspeakers. First UK public showing was at our Audio Show East and the decision to simply have a Nova driving them in a huge room was an interesting point well made. They sounded great.

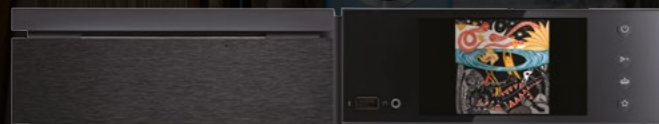
On home turf, they continue to impress, even in our smallest dem room.

We have the full range of Uniti products both in stock and on demonstration. They continue to impress too, offering convenience with real quality and sophistication. While stocks last, the prices for Uniti are still at 2017 levels :

Atom @ £1750

Star @ £3299

Nova @ £4099



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Kudos Audio



One of the stars of ASE was the Kudos room, where they demonstrated the benefits of active operation on their 707 loudspeakers, pitting 2 x Naim NAP 300 power amps against a single NAP500 in passive configuration. Active certainly made a case for itself and so too did the NAP 500. Ideally, of course, you do both! Either way it sounded great.

The final loudspeaker in the new Titan line-up is the smallest, the 606 and this near mythical beast should be with us before Christmas (2017).

With 808 and 707 already on permanent demonstration, these 606s cannot arrive soon enough!

In addition to the Titan range, we also have the Super 10, Super 20 X3 and giant killing X2 miniature floor-stander.

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regga



Latest turntable from Rega is the lovely Planar 6.

There are bundle deals with Exact moving magnet cartridge and the superb Ania Moving Coil.

The Planar 6 uses the foam structure first used on RP8 and RP10 but does not utilise the skeletal chassis of those decks. It comes with the latest Neo power supply unit that is also now available as a stand-alone purchase for use with the Planar 3.

Late in 2017 we received the new Apollo CD player, a perfect match for the latest version of the Brio amplifier. As with the Brio, we try to maintain stock.

Fresh into our hands, too, is the superb Atlas electronic stylus balance. Shown inset above, this is the perfect present and, remarkably, it's also in stock :)

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Q Acoustics



Q Acoustics Concept 500's, are, we think, an absolute revelation.

These tall monolithic floor-standers use the same gel core sandwich construction for the cabinet walls as used on the cheaper Concept 20 and 40 loudspeakers but they take the performance to a much higher level.

For a couple of our customers they have represented a dream come true in the combination of resolution, refinement, dynamics, bass extension and, well, fun.

They are easy to drive, so don't need a 'loony' system to make them sing. Ignore these at your peril!



Chord Electronics Ltd.

New arrivals here from Chord are Blu II CD player digital scaler, the Poly networking module for Mojo and the new Hugo II portable DAC. All, including Mojo are in stock.

Blu II is a deeply impressive upgrade for anyone using a DAC especially if it's called Dave and the high end CD replay that it brings is pretty much a side-issue. Quite why up-scaling the digital sources makes to much difference baffles even designer, Rob Watts. But it works. Best book a dem to find out!

The Poly module for Mojo has taken a while to finally arrive but those who have opted to buy one rapidly find it indispensable. Rather than build a huge lump of mobile phone/ music store and DAC, you can simply access the music from your phone, local storage or the local network, wirelessly.

