

# Premium Hi-Fi, Moscow

Words & pictures: Mikhail Borzenkov



With more than 700 companies in attendance and 150,000 visitors, the four-day Premium Hi-Fi show can rightly claim to be the largest electronics exhibition in Eastern Europe. It is divided into two parts: the CEP EXPO held in the huge exhibition halls of Moscow's Crocus Expo centre where mass-market products are shown, and the Hi-Fi & High-End Show in the Aquarium hotel nearby. Here premium brands demonstrate components in smaller rooms

while the seven most expensive systems were presented in a concert hall located on the hotel's top floor.

This year was the first to see 'smart home' products demonstrated, but while certainly clever in their implementation, none was able to rival traditional hi-fi when it came to sheer sound. From the stands hosted by the Chinese production companies to the VIP lounge, here we bring you the best of Moscow 2013...

In the room of local distributor Barnsly, valve amps from German company Octave were used with a Hanss Acoustics T-30 turntable to drive a pair of Audiovector's flagship R11 Arrete speakers. The phono stage was a Whest PS.30R and the cartridge an AT-33 EV from Audio-Technica. [www.audiovector.com](http://www.audiovector.com)



Transrotor recently added two new turntables to its catalogue – the Rossini and Crescendo – the latter shown in Russia for the first time. Weighing more than 25kg, it's the most affordable deck from the German company to feature its Transrotor Magnet Drive technology. [www.transrotor.de](http://www.transrotor.de)



Mikhail Borzenkov is the Editor-In-Chief of *Stereo & Video*, which is the oldest hi-fi magazine in Russia and one of the most popular. A monthly publication running to 200 full-colour pages, it was first published in 1994 and offers subjective reviews as well as lab tests, conducted at the magazine's own facilities. Originally a TV journalist, Mikhail also hosts a programme on the Russian Culture channel which sees him discuss modern cinema. [www.stereo.ru](http://www.stereo.ru)



One system that drew a constant stream of visitors was this all-Naim set-up. A CD-555 CD player sits atop the left rack while an NDS network player using an iPad takes pride of place atop the right rack. Speakers were the Ovator S-400s. [www.naimaudio.com](http://www.naimaudio.com)

Clearaudio showed its new Master Innovation turntable (top of left rack) featuring technology from its flagship Statement model. The deck features a no-contact drive system, which sees the main and upper platters floating on a magnetic field above the drive platter. The electronics used were from Teac's Distinction series, which echoes the looks of the more costly Esoteric line. The AI 3000 integrated (bottom of left rack) had no problem driving the B&W 800 series speakers. [www.clearaudio.de](http://www.clearaudio.de), [www.teac.com](http://www.teac.com)



A real show-stopper was this multichannel system from McIntosh, the XRT1K speakers sporting no fewer than 28 tweeters. They were driven by MC2301 valve monoblocks said to be capable of delivering up to 300W into 8, 4 or 2ohm. A real surprise came in the form of a new USB DAC/digital preamp. Dubbed the D100, it fed hi-res tracks from a laptop to Sennheiser HD650 headphones [see p32]. [www.mcintoshlabs.com](http://www.mcintoshlabs.com)

Here a pair of KEF Reference Series speakers were being driven by Bob Carver Black Beauty 305 power amps. Said to deliver up to 290W into 2ohm, these little American power houses proved a good match for the KEFs, making for a powerful but gentle sound that certainly impressed many a visitor to the room. [www.bobcarver.com](http://www.bobcarver.com)



A rare combination: Montana SPI speakers are used with valve amps and a phono stage from Canor plus a new Storm deck from Acoustic Signature. The system also featured a new digital source component from Aesthetix Romulus comprising a Teac CD transport, USB DAC and tube output stage in one package. [www.aesthetix.net](http://www.aesthetix.net), [www.acoustic-signature.com](http://www.acoustic-signature.com).



We'd give living space to most speakers produced by Italian manufacturer Rosso Fiorentino. Here the standmount Fiesole (left of picture), with its hand treated soft dome and ribbon super tweeter, is accompanied by the new flagship floorstander Siena (far right). This features a closed-box bass section, two aluminum cone woofers and an Italian leather finish. The Volterra can be seen centre. [www.rossofiorentino.com](http://www.rossofiorentino.com)



While the colourful Onkyo Colibrino micro systems and Ilunar docking stations (bottom of display rack) certainly caught the eye – the latter promising ‘3D sound’ thanks to drivers spread around the curved chassis – the real news was the company’s ES-FC300 headphones. Best known for its AV receivers, headphones mark a new departure for the company. [www.onkyo.com](http://www.onkyo.com)



Teac’s new mid-sized 501 series of components includes a stereo integrated amp, headphone amp, a DSD-capable DAC and CD player. Beautiful retro styling, high class metal bodies and outstanding build quality makes for a great combination. They also see the company taking a serious step into real-world hi-fi. [www.teac.com](http://www.teac.com)



ELAC speakers, Hegel DACs and amplifiers, Cambridge Audio CD-spinners and network players... but the Qv2 AC Line Harmonizer from Nordost was the stand-out product here. A simple-looking cylindrical plug, it really seemed to change the sound when added to the power socket. [www.nordost.com](http://www.nordost.com)



Guru speakers from Sweden are new to the Russian market. They come in a variety of colours, sport aluminium top plates and promise to deliver sound as uncoloured as is possible to achieve from a passive home monitor (Guru has a pro-line of active monitors as well). The ‘Helmholtz Resonator’ enclosures also have their appeal. [www.guruaudio.com](http://www.guruaudio.com)

A new series of sturdy, classic looking CD/SACD players and stereo integrated amplifiers from Pioneer could be also heard, though the N-50 and N-70 media players and A-50 and A-70 Class D amps were the stars of this show. We were taken by their junior brother, the A-30 – a humble Class AB affair whose sound was truly addictive. [www.pioneer.eu](http://www.pioneer.eu)



Harman Group manager Michael Pyle, who is responsible for the promotion of Mark Levinson, Revel, Lexicon and JBL Synthesis in Russia, told us about a new Performa3 line from Revel, featuring a completely new tweeter and other components reworked to new specifications. He also revealed that the top-of-the-line Mark Levinson 52 preamp is due soon. [www.revelspeakers.com](http://www.revelspeakers.com), [www.marklevinson.com](http://www.marklevinson.com)



## SHOWBLOG Sights and sounds from around the globe



Accustic Arts' Streamer ES is a UPnP media player/internet tuner with support for playback via flash-drives. It handles FLAC up to 24-bit/192kHz, features gapless playback and fast/forward functions and can be controlled via devices running Android and Apple OS apps. Last but not least every component used in its construction is made in Germany. [www.accusticarts.com](http://www.accusticarts.com)



Russian tube amplification and acoustics specialist Next Sound came up with an unusual system. Vintage professional JBL 43 series speakers were driven by proprietary vacuum tube monoblock amplifiers and an active crossover. In terms of sound it was perhaps easily the best rock-oriented system of the show. [www.next-sound.ru](http://www.next-sound.ru)



Mark Levinson products have been absent from the Moscow show for several years but were back in force in the form of the No512 SACD player, No52 preamp (a two-chassis construction in a bid to isolate the control block from the audio circuits) and mighty No53 Reference Mono power amps (the first switching power designs from the marque). Speakers were the Revel F208s. [www.marklevinson.com](http://www.marklevinson.com)



Probably one of the most anticipated premiers at the event: the ultra high-end NHB-458 mono power amps from darTZeel paired with Montana WAS speakers. Very expensive and very ambitious, the system was well worth hearing, even if we had doubts that the Jadis digital source was the best choice. [www.dartzeel.com](http://www.dartzeel.com)



Primare showed its BD32 universal Blu-ray player hooked up to a PRE32/A32 pre/power, SPA22 AV amplifier and DAC30 digital-to-analogue converter. Sadly the company's new 60-series didn't make it to the show but the NP30 network player did, if only for a day. Not yet available, it was good to catch a glance of what appears on paper to be a promising release. [www.primare.net](http://www.primare.net)

Below can be seen the Avantara Plus speakers from Audio Physic with rear-tilting baffles and side-firing woofers. Paired with Accustic Arts amplifiers the sound was smooth yet wonderfully precise. The turntable was a Spiral Groove SG2 while an FL phono stage from Audia Flight completed the system. [www.audiophysic.com](http://www.audiophysic.com)





Onkyo can't be accused of hiding anything from its customers. Here its flagship TX-NR5010 AV receiver had its top plate removed so that everyone could see that it genuinely has no fewer than nine channels of amplification. Also of note is that it has an active (digital) crossover built in, enabling it to drive a front pair of speakers, avoiding their passive crossovers. [www.onkyo.com](http://www.onkyo.com)



Thirty years ago, the former Soviet VEF Radiotehnika RRR brand symbolised the best quality and sound available in the USSR. Now based in Riga, its recent speakers, with their 3- and 4-way designs, wide front baffle and adjustable crossovers, echo late '80s models, immediately promoting waves of nostalgia among Russian music lovers. [www.rrr.lv](http://www.rrr.lv)



The Odeon No 38 horn speakers from Germany are not brand new, but they remain extremely popular with hi-fi show goers. Weighing 125kg each, they have a claimed sensitivity of 96dB and could be driven easily by the Jadis valve amps used here. A French Verdier turntable served as the only source for the system, giving the whole set-up real appeal to those who like to break with the norm. [www.odeon-audio.com](http://www.odeon-audio.com)



Here Teac's new 501 range has a full audio system built around it, though you can simply use the 501DA integrated amplifier. Offering 24-bit/192kHz high resolution content streaming via USB, the 501DA can easily drive quite demanding speakers as it is said to deliver 90W per channel into 4ohm thanks to its use of Class D ABLETEC modules from Norway. Bowers & Wilkins CM8 floorstanders completed the system. [www.teac.com](http://www.teac.com)

Aside from Marantz's new SA-11S3 SACD player and NA-11S1 network player [see p14], Ken Ishiwata showed an entirely new product: an iPod/iPhone/iPad dock called the Consolette. It supports AirPlay, wireless and wired Ethernet connections, plays FLAC files and has a real wood veneered rear panel. It also has a built-in tuner with a '60s style jog-wheel. [www.marantz.com](http://www.marantz.com)





If you're a movie freak with modestly deep pockets then your dream of high-end cinema sound at home may come true with the Anthem Statement system. The Anthem D2v 3D processor packs the latest Sigma Design video processing engine along with eight HDMI inputs. Add the five-channel A5 power amplifier kicking out a claimed 5x180W plus the Paradigm Signature S6 full-range speakers and you've a set-up to really rattle the rafters. [www.anthemav.com](http://www.anthemav.com)



T+A export manager Jens Weltke told us about the company's new HV Series media player and amp [see p52], which was first shown at this year's CES. According to Jens, the solid state amp aims to mimic the sound of a valve design. The idea is to have the transistor output stage working at a higher voltage, hence the HV (High Voltage) monicker. [www.taelektroakustik.de](http://www.taelektroakustik.de)



Paradigm's Soundtrack System comprises a powered soundbar with a double-ported wireless subwoofer and aims to meet the needs of those looking for a compact home cinema speaker system. Class D amps are used, while inside the soundbar can be found two tweeters, two woofers and two passive radiators. [www.paradigm.com](http://www.paradigm.com)



Marantz brand ambassador Ken Ishiwata presented a new network player/DAC. Designed fully in-house, the NA-11S1 fills a hole in the company's reference product line and includes DSD support [see *HFN* Jul '13]. At the listening session, foobar2000 was the media server software of choice. [www.marantz.com](http://www.marantz.com)

Yamaha is well known for its excellent AV receivers, speakers, musical instruments and even motorbikes, but this year it made a bold move into the mobile accessory market with a new line of headphones. Coming in a wide choice of colours and a range of prices, the flagship HPH-Pro 500 models will set you back 500 Euros. [www.yamaha.com](http://www.yamaha.com)



Next  
month

We reveal the winners of the  
EISA Awards 2013-2014