

50

PAGES OF AUDIO EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

stereophile

ONLINE AUTHORITY:
WWW.STEREOPHILE.COM

AUDITORIUM 23'S
HOMMAGE CINEMA
HORN SPEAKER

SHURE KSE1500
ELECTROSTATIC
HEADPHONE
SYSTEM
P.109



WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

IN REVIEW

ELECTROSTATIC HEADPHONES
FROM KOSS & SHURE

STATE-OF-THE-ART DIGITAL
FROM MYTEK, PS AUDIO

EXOTIC AMPLIFIERS
FROM CLASSÉ,
HEED, PRIMALUNA

GREAT-SOUNDING
SPEAKERS
FROM MONITOR AUDIO
& ENIGMACOUSTICS



NOVEMBER
2016

THE
ENTHUSIAST
NETWORK

TEN

ART DUDLEY

The Second Coming

Keith Aschenbrenner, proprietor of Auditorium 23, based in Frankfurt, Germany, has long been associated with the people and products of Shindo Laboratory: From the early 1990s until the EU's 2006 implementation of the RoHS 1 regulation, which banned the sale of various old-style electrolytic materials—and thus most of Shindo's products—Auditorium 23 was the brand's European distributor and, arguably, one of its most empathetic and enthusiastic retailers worldwide. Throughout that time, and continuing through to today, Aschenbrenner has also worked as a designer and manufacturer of Shindo-friendly ancillaries and loudspeakers.

Those speakers have included some popular models, such as Auditorium 23's Rondo and Solovox models, both built around full-range drivers from the French company Phy-HP. Yet Aschenbrenner—who, for years, listened at home to a pair of vintage Western Electric 555 field-coil compression drivers loaded with large, ungainly horns—has continued his efforts to design new speakers that, in his words, help the listener “rediscover the qualities of the amplifiers that Ken Shindo was making.” It's worth noting that the amplifier designs of the late Ken Shindo, and those of his son Takashi Shindo, are uncompromising in that they're suited only for very efficient loudspeakers. (With few exceptions, the output sections of all Shindo amps are optimized for 16-ohm loads.)

Somewhere along the line—perhaps 10 or so years ago—Aschenbrenner hit on the idea of a speaker that could combine his preferred 555 compression driver with a modern horn of more modest size, supplemented with similarly efficient bass and treble drivers. That concept now exists as the Auditorium 23 Hommage Cinema loudspeaker (\$49,995/pair without field-coil power supply), but to get there required a great deal of work and more than a little luck. “When people would ask me what I am listening to at home, I would be very open and honest. [But] it was my dream to make something like the Cinema, with a very long horn.”

Hoping to find a substitute for the exceedingly rare and expensive Western Electric 555—even *broken* samples go for \$5000 and up apiece, while functioning 555s with original diaphragms have become nearly impossible to find—Aschenbrenner turned to his and Shindo's US distributor, Jonathan Halpern, of Tone Imports. In 2010, Halpern had just signed on as the US distributor for the Chinese manufacturer Line Magnetic, which in turn announced that they would manufacture a faithful replica of the 555, to sell for \$4950/pair. Although other companies have made compression drivers that were similar to the 555, and some now make 555 replicas of their own—the latter including the respected Japanese brand GIP and at least one or two others—Line Magnetic's 555 replicas would be the first to be offered commercially.

As Aschenbrenner told me, “In 2011, when Line Mag-

netic came on the market, we decided to try [to make a speaker that uses their 555], thinking, *Well, if it's a failure, it's a failure.*” He then enlisted the help of physicist Uwe Meyer—his design partner on other loudspeaker projects—and set to work. They came up with a folded midrange horn that's over 43" long, yet is contained within an area just 19" deep. The Line Magnetic 555 driver is fastened to the horn's throat by means of a cast-bronze coupler shaped at an angle of 80°. This hands off to the first of three wooden horn segments, starting at a cross-section of approximately 1" and exponentially increasing in size. A 180° bend leads to the second horn segment, which leads, through another 180° bend, to the third and final segment, the mouth of which is 15" wide and 15.5" high. The horn itself is made entirely by hand, mostly of European spruce, with select hardwoods used for some parts. According to Meyer, “the ratio of heavy to light woods and the thickness of all materials had been proved to be very important” to the sound. All surfaces of the horn are given what appears to be a hand-rubbed oil finish. (When I unpacked the Cinemas, the first thing I noticed was the distinct, pleasant aroma of linseed oil.)

The result is a horn that, in combination with the 555 compression driver, has an effective range of 200Hz–7kHz. As for the Line Magnetic driver itself, Aschenbrenner praises its unit-to-unit consistency—in contrast to the original, no two of which seem to sound exactly the same—and its sound quality in absolute terms: “I have four original Western Electric 555s. Now they are on the shelf.”

Compression obsession

Looking at the Hommage Cinema from the side, you could be forgiven for thinking that its 555 driver is loaded with a single-segment, unfolded horn: Most of the bronze coupler and all of the horn's first two segments are concealed within a wooden tray whose tapered sides are shaped to match the curves of the visible portion of the horn. The tray, which is covered with thin padding and fabric, gives the horn a flat bottom, to which are fastened four bronze feet, each 1.5" in diameter, with hollow centers and stiff felt washers. The feet fit neatly atop four corresponding pegs built into the top of the Cinema's bass cabinet, which measures 27.5" high by 14.75" wide by 16.5" deep. (The bass cabinet is supported by four adjustable feet—similar to but larger than the midrange horn's bronze-and-felt feet—that add about 2" to the speaker's overall height.) Much of the bass enclosure is upholstered in the same manner as the base of the midrange horn, although on portions of the front and rear surfaces, there's no wooden structure immediately behind the fabric: in these areas, the Hommage Cinema's bass cabinet appears to be an open design.

That was confirmed by Keith Aschenbrenner, who described the loading of the Cinema's two bass drivers—one 12" woofer and one 7" woofer—as being unique: “The large woofer is loaded on one side with a horn, and on the other

side with a port. So it is a dipole, but with a complex [loading] structure to minimize the output—to deliberately limit, acoustically, the high-frequency output of the large woofer. The small woofer is on an open baffle, with perforations, for air movement. [Thus] we adjust the rolloff of the two drivers differently.”

As for why the Cinema uses two dissimilar woofers, Aschenbrenner points to the challenges of making a full-range loudspeaker work in rooms of different size and character: “It is due to the interactivity of low frequencies and the room. These two different-size woofers are chosen because, if you have two woofers [of the same size] and there’s a problem, there is double the problem. Having two different woofers minimizes the failures of similar woofers.” He says that the large woofer reproduces fundamentals down to 50Hz, while the small one gives the Cinema its ability to re-create the “flavor and character” of recorded music. Uwe Meyer added that “the acoustical crossover frequencies are between 150 and 200Hz for the 12" driver and a bit more than one octave higher for the 7" driver.”

Each Cinema bass enclosure contains two 50W, solid-state, class-AB amplifiers: one each for the 7" and 12" woofers. Each amp has its own input transformer, driven by the signal from the user’s speaker cables (as opposed to line-out cables from the user’s preamplifier), and each has its own user-adjustable level control, labeled Volume Woofer 1 (12" driver) and Volume Woofer 2 (7" driver). Next to those knobs, on the speaker’s rear panel, are banana-style inputs for the system’s main speaker cables, plus separate pairs of output jacks, also bananas, for directing the output of the Cinema’s built-in amps to the 555 midrange driver and 597A treble driver.

The 597A is itself an interesting beast: As with the original 555, Western Electric patented the 597A in the late 1920s, and introduced it to the cinema-sound market in 1929. Also like the 555, it was a field-coil-energized compression driver with a lightweight aluminum diaphragm—yet the 597A, which is designed to reproduce frequencies up to 10kHz and beyond, is loaded by its own integral, 5"-long, exponential horn, the shape and color of which bring to mind the telephone used in all six seasons of *Green Acres*. (Indeed, as the sole supplier of equipment to AT&T and the developer of countless historically significant developments in the parallel fields of telecommunications and sound reinforcement, Western Electric referred to all of their earliest cinema-sound drive-units and speakers as *loud-speaking telephones*.)

Original samples of the Western Electric 597A are even rarer and more costly than the WE 555—at present, the going rate seems to be \$10,000 and up for a single 597A. Consequently, the 597A used in the Hommage Cinema is a replica, also manufactured by Line Magnetic (and sold separately for \$5950/pair). (For this accomplishment, the Chinese company appears to have been beaten to the punch, by GIP, as well as an independent designer-builder known only as Mr. Ogawa, whose work Aschenbrenner admires.) This is fastened to the upper edge of the Cinema’s bass enclosure by means of a simple L-bracket, with the suggestion that the user install the speakers with their tweeters on the outer sides of the cabinets. (As originally conceived, the Cinema’s 597A was mounted on a structure atop the housing of the 555 driver; this was ditched in favor of the side mounting.)

As specified by Western Electric, the original 597A and 555 drivers required 7V DC each to magnetize their field

coils, used in place of permanent magnets. Like other contemporary manufacturers of field-coil loudspeakers, Auditorium 23 has noted that some degree of variance from the 7V norm is not only acceptable but, in some domestic installations, desirable. Thus the field-coil power supply included with each pair of Cinemas allows the user to adjust the voltage, in 0.1V steps, from approximately 4V to at least 8V. (It may go higher than that, but I wasn’t comfortable trying.)

The Cinema’s standard field-coil power supply, the NT1 (\$5495), was designed by Claus Jäckle and built in Germany by his company, AcousticPlan. The NT1 measures 8" wide by 7" high by 12.5" deep and is built on an aluminum chassis, covered on top and on two sides by a distinctly cool-looking—in every sense—steel-mesh wrap. Inside are a big transformer, big capacitors, two big rheostats for adjusting voltage—each controls the voltage for one pair of output jacks, and it’s up to the user whether to assign each of the two pairs to a given speaker or to let one pair do the tweeters and the other the midrange drivers—and two big selenium stacks for rectification. As with all of the AcousticPlan electronics I’ve seen, the NT1 is beautifully styled, with a machined aluminum front panel and machined aluminum control knobs, all finished in a matching shade of dark gray; these elements are executed so well that the NT1’s entire front end looks as if molded or cast in a single piece.

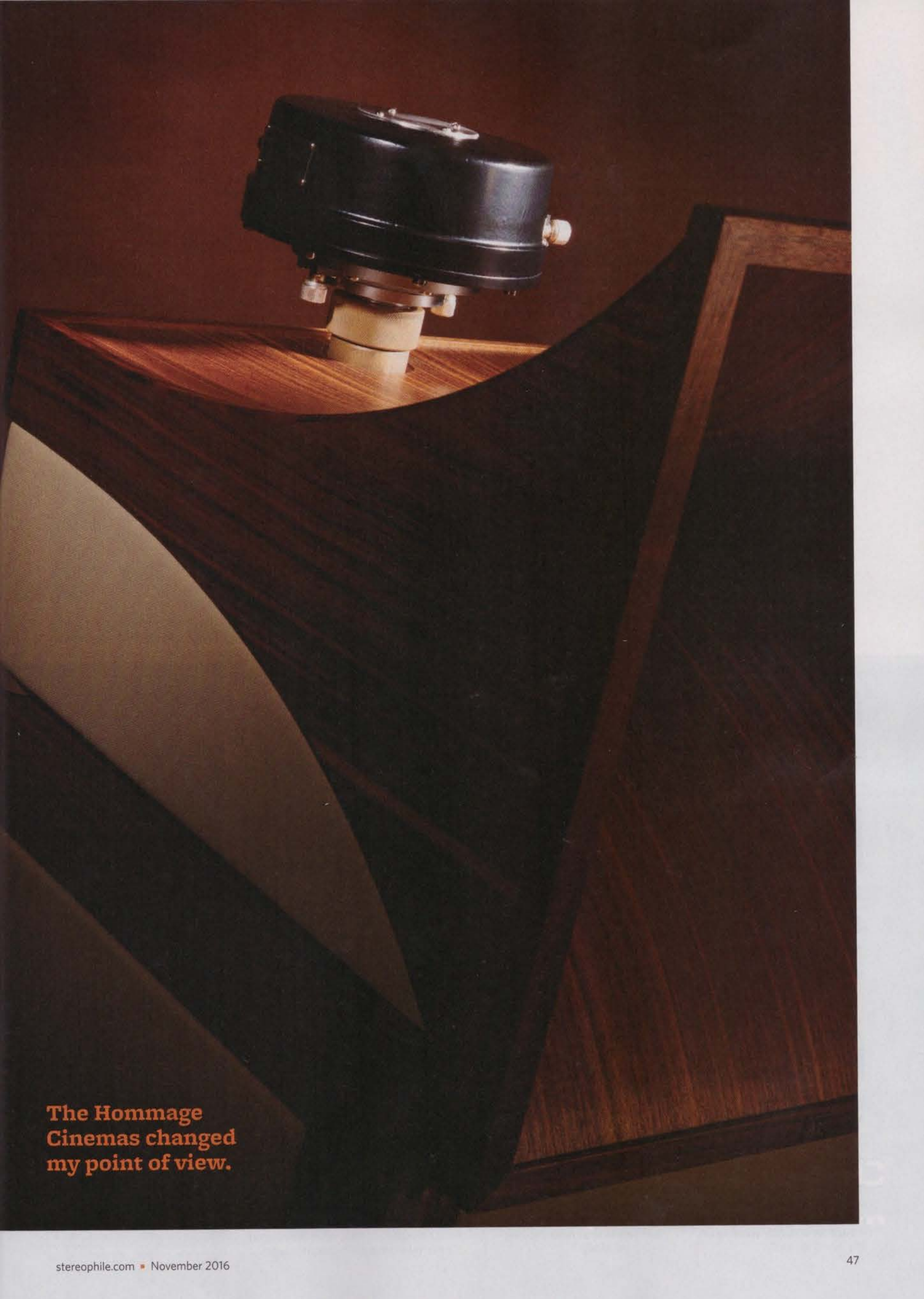
Jäckle also designed the amplifiers for the Cinemas’ bass enclosures, which share real estate with the speakers’ crossover elements: a 7kHz high-pass filter for the treble horn, and a 300Hz low-pass for the midrange horn—both executed with paper-in-oil capacitors—along with 6dB/octave low-pass filtering in front of the bass amplifiers, behind the secondary windings of each input transformer. No electronic equalization is provided.

Crate to plate

The Hommage Cinemas are shipped from Germany in lightweight padded crates; the AcousticPlan power supply is shipped separately, also from Germany, and the Line Magnetic compression drivers are shipped via UPS from Tone Imports in New York. Setup was straightforward. The user fastens the 555 driver to the midrange horn by means of a threaded collet, and attaches the 597A driver/horn to the bass enclosure as described above, then makes the electrical connections to the NT1 field-coil supply. The DC cables are a little over 16' long, terminated with XLRs at their power-supply ends and either O-lugs (treble) or tinned bare wires (midrange) at the ends that connect to the drivers. The fabric-sheathed “pigtailed” that go from the bass enclosure’s integral crossovers to the midrange and trebles drivers—39" long for the 597A, 27" long for the 555—appear similar to Auditorium 23’s enduringly recommendable speaker cable, and are terminated with gold-plated Z-plug bananas at the crossover end, and O-lugs or bare wire at the other.

Though heavy, the bass enclosures are not difficult to move: as mentioned above, the sturdy bronze feet are fitted with stiff felt pads; the user can “walk” the cabinets across carpeted surfaces and, with care, slide them across hardwood floors.

I used my review pair in two different rooms. The Cinemas spent a short while in our living room (27' by 21' by 8'), and a far greater amount of time in the room where I do most of my listening (19' by 12' by 8'). The speakers sounded better in the larger room in several ways: the



**The Hommage
Cinemas changed
my point of view.**

sound was more coherent overall, surely owing to the fact that listeners didn't need to sit as close to the drivers; and it seemed easier to dial in really superb bass performance, to achieve both temporal and timbral tightness along with good bass extension and excellent bass and lower-midrange color. That said, our living room is our living room, and isn't suitable for serious listening without intrusions from pets, visitors, or life.

In my smaller listening room, I wound up with the Cinemas roughly the same distance from the front wall as my big Altec Valentias—ca 3' between the rear surface of each bass enclosure and the wall—with different distances between the each bass enclosure and its nearest side wall (23" on the left and 27" on the right, both measured from the centers of the sides of the enclosures). Toe-in was generous but not drastic—I could still see the surface of each enclosure's inner side panel from my central listening seat—and I carefully leveled each bass enclosure before installing the midrange and treble horns. And I did indeed position the speakers so that the 597A tweeter horns were mounted on the enclosures' outer edges.

Just prior to the Cinemas' arrival, distributor Jonathan Halpern called with some advice about setting bass levels: The knobs for Volume Woofer 1 and Volume Woofer 2 both go from "0" to "10," and Halpern recommended beginning with both knobs on both speakers set to "5." That proved to be good advice: For weeks, I enjoyed the Cinemas with those settings, temporarily avoiding the temptation to obsess over knob-twiddling. Only two months ago as I write this—around the time I temporarily moved my system into the larger room, then back again a few days later—did

I begin in earnest to experiment with woofer-volume settings. I determined that, in the 27' by 21' room, the system sounded best with both Cinemas set to a little over "6" for their 12" woofers (Woofer 1), and between "4" and "5" for their 7" woofers (Woofer 2). In my smaller room, I vacillated between "6" and "7" for both channels' 12" woofers (higher for piano and solo recordings of violin, guitar, etc., lower for orchestral music and bass-heavy recordings of jazz and pop), and gained clarity by keeping the 7" woofer in the right-channel speaker at "4," and the one in the left speaker between "2.5" and "3.5."

As for break-in, the Cinemas made very noticeable gains after just 12 hours of nearly steady use—before which they were extremely midrange-prominent, and their trebles were an odd combination of very muted and slightly brittle. By day two the trebles were fully audible, smoother, and of a kind with the mids—and the woofers went from sleepy to wide awake. Break-in was accelerated with the aid of another suggestion from Jonathan Halpern: To make the diaphragms of the compression drivers work harder than usual in the mechanical sense, use deliberately low DC voltage settings for the field coils—5V or less. Even now, it seems to me the Line Magnetic 555 drivers in particular continue to improve. Perhaps that's the reason why, every three or four weeks, I have found myself turning up the field coils another 0.1V, to the point where I now run them at 6.4V—a level that, a few months ago, seemed to provide just a bit more explicitness of detail than I cared for. (For the longest time, I cruised at a steady 5.9V.)

In a more recent conversation with Jonathan Halpern, he reported exceptional performance when powering the Cin-

Masters of the Mastering Universe

PH50 phono stage for moving magnet



- Phono stage for moving magnet cartridges
- Ultra low noise transformerless design
- Variable high-pass filter to eliminate rumble
- 91dB dynamic range - 0.002% distortion
- Plug and play easy to set up and use



Eric Boulanger
Mastering Engineer
- The Bakery (Stax)
Imagine Dragons, Neil Young,
Colby Caillat, One Republic, Kate Bush

"I installed the Hafler PH50 to the pickup of my Neumann VMS70 cutting lathe. This phono preamp is such an accurate window on the world for me."

PH60 phono stage for moving coil



- Phono stage for moving coil cartridges
- Ultra low noise transformerless design with 70dB gain
- Switchable high-pass filter to eliminate rumble
- Internal jumpers to match cartridge impedance
- Plug and play easy to set up and use



Emily Lazar
Mastering Engineer
- The Lodge
Coldplay, Foo Fighters, Beck,
David Bowie, The Killers

"The PH60 translated so incredibly well in conjunction with not just one, but all of our turntables that have moving-coil cartridges!"

HA75 Tube Head™ 12AX7 tube circuit



- 100% discrete class-A circuit with 12AX7 tube drive
- Variable Focus™ control to simulate listening in a room
- Adjustable negative feedback to tailor signal path
- Choice of unbalanced RCA or balanced XLR inputs
- Dual headphone outputs to share with engineer and talent



Tom Coyne
Mastering Engineer
- Sterling Sound
Adele, Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, Marc Anthony,
Maroon 5, Sade

"The HA75 is a compelling choice. The extra depth in the soundstage and fullness to the bottom register translates nicely to what I'm used to hearing when listening on the big monitors in the mastering studio."

Mastering Engineers are the true 'golden ears' of our industry. They take the final recordings and mold them into the records that we love and cherish. So before you buy a phono stage or headphone amp, consider the gold reference.

Hafler.... masterful quality and performance for the very best.

visit hafler.com

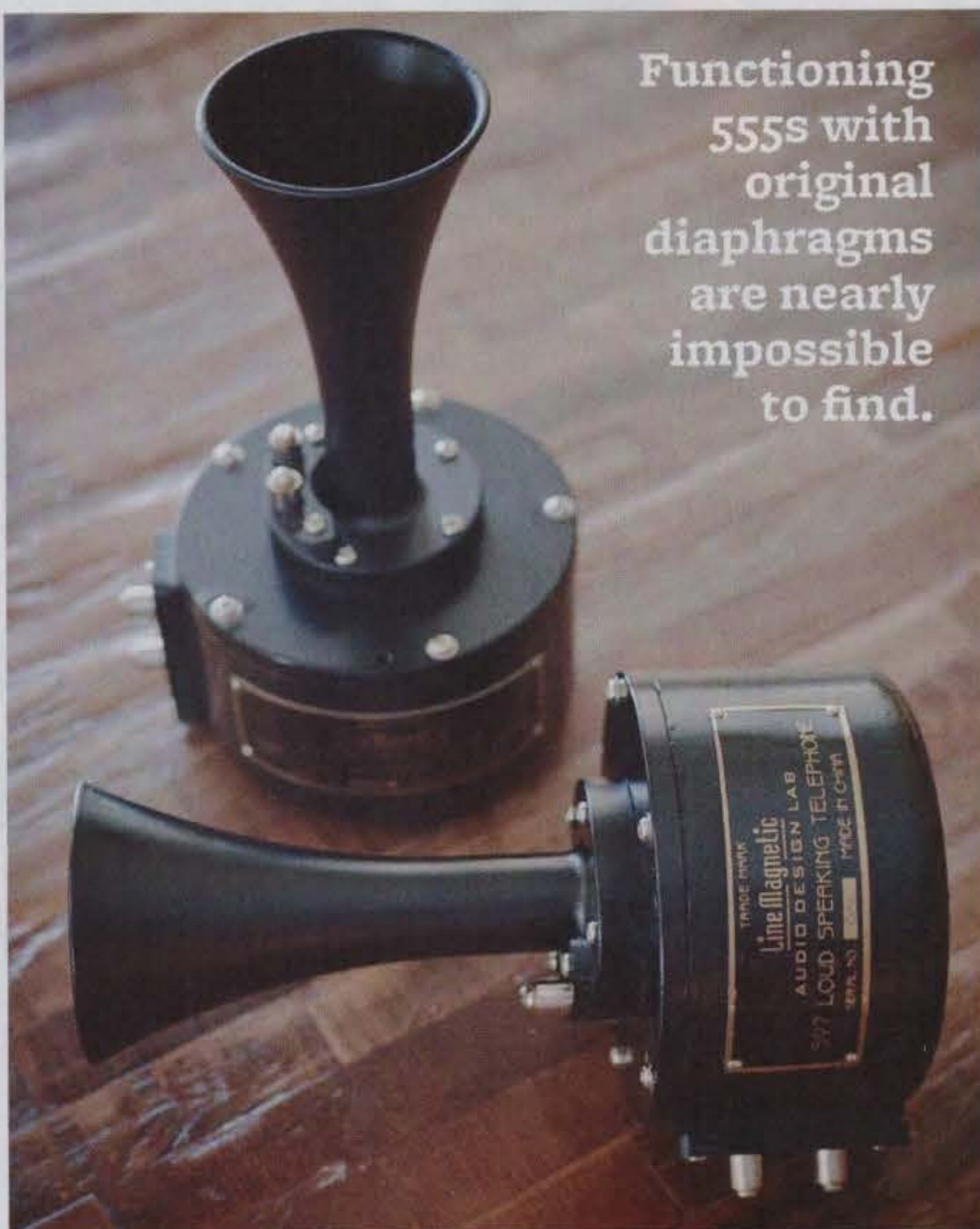
Hafler®

dynaco

Hafler and Dynaco are trademarks of Radial Engineering Ltd. 1588 Keblet Way, Port Coquitlam BC V3C 5M5

Copyright ©2016 Radial Engineering Ltd. all rights reserved. Specifications and appearance are subject to change without notice.

Functioning
555s with
original
diaphragms
are nearly
impossible
to find.



emas with a dual-mono pair of Line Magnetic PR-22 Tungar field-coil supplies (\$3750/pair). (Tungar was General Electric's trade name for the gas-filled rectifier tubes they made in the late 1920s, said to be well suited to outputting low voltages; each PR-22 has three of those big, hot tubes.) While no one can deny the appeal of spending less money for something that offers both potentially greater sound *and* distinctive styling—the oddly shaped Tungar tube would not have looked out of place on the creation-scene set of *Bride of Frankenstein*—consider that bringing a pair of PR-22s into a smallish room already filled with tubed electronics is bound to raise the temperature to an extent that is both measurable and, in all but the coldest locales and times of year, uncomfortable. I haven't heard, let alone seen, these alternate power supplies (I write this in late August, a time when the humidity levels dampen my enthusiasm for such things), but if I can keep the Cinema review samples for a few more weeks, I'll try to get hold of a pair of Tungars and report back.

Midrange, not mudrange

Before swapping them out for the Hommage Cinemas, I sat down for a good listen with my Altec Valencias. I mention this only because my system, thoroughly warmed up for the occasion, sounded

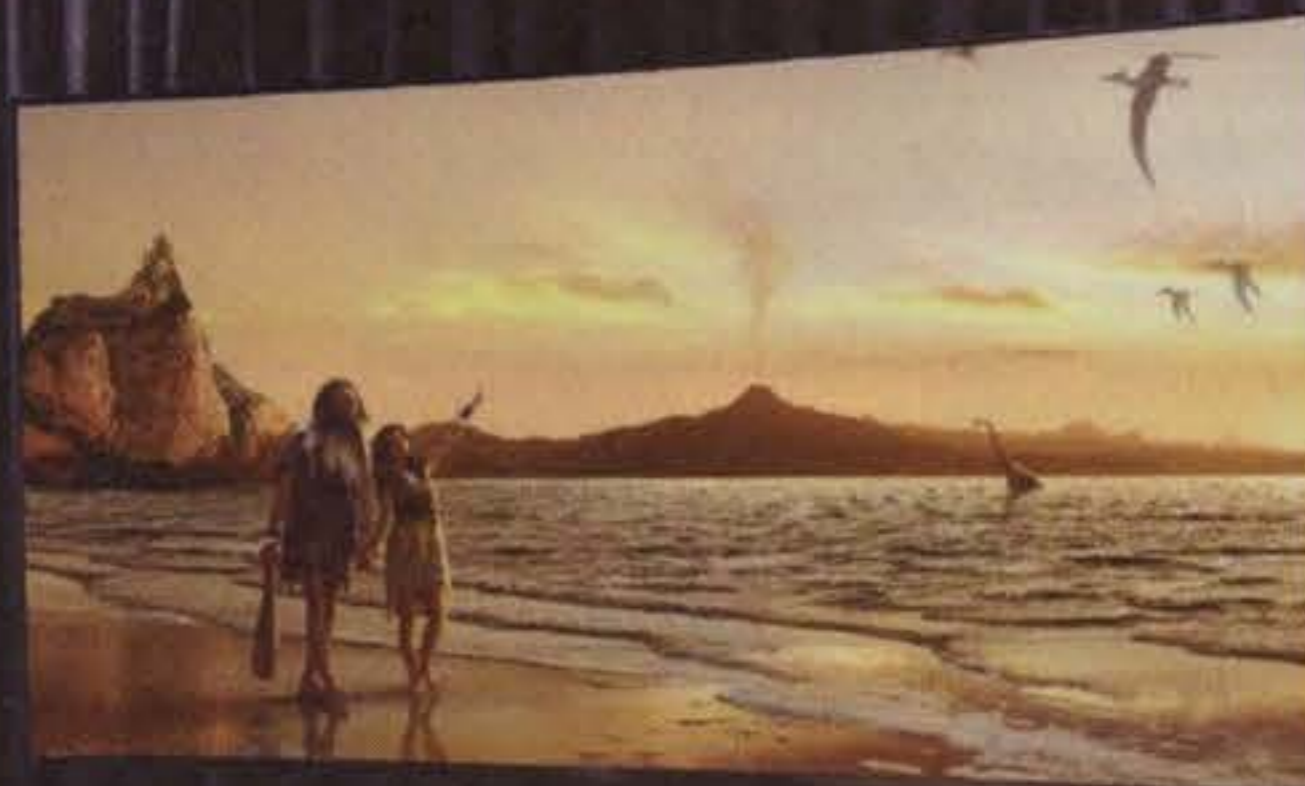
Treble is handled by Line Magnetic's replica of the 597A horn tweeter.

especially good, in a key way:

It was keeping my attention focused not on the sound of the hall or the artifacts

PRIMACOUSTIC MAKE MAN CAVE SOUND GOOD!

Primacoustic has everything you need to bring your listening space out of the stone age. Panels are made from high density glass wool for even absorption across the spectrum. Easy to install, safe and so effective they will make any cave sound amazing!



London 10™
room kit - \$499.99



PRIMACOUSTIC®

www.primacoustic.com

A division of Radial Engineering Ltd. - 1588 Keblet Way, Port Coquitlam BC V3C 5M5
©2016 Radial Engineering Ltd., all rights reserved. Specifications and appearance are subject to change without notice.

Audiophile
review.com

"...spend all the money you want on audiophile electronics but your room acoustics are the single most important factor in how good your audiophile system will sound."



The horn is made entirely by hand, mostly of European spruce.

Chopin's Prelude 2 in a (mono LP, UK Columbia 33CX 1877).

Perhaps more important than

of the recording technology, but on what the musicians were doing. One evening in particular, I found myself nearly mesmerized by how conductor Adrian Boult shaped every line in his recording of Elgar's oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius*, with tenor Nicolai Gedda, the New Philharmonia Orchestra, and the London Philharmonic and John Aldis choirs (2 LPs, EMI SLS 987).

A day or so after I installed the Cinemas, I began jotting down notes on how well they played a variety of records. To return to those notes six months later is to be reminded that, as a critic, the praise I give those things that most impress me seems mild and with little fire compared to the remarks reserved for products that impress me in the here and now but do not change my point of view. And the Hommage Cinemas changed my point of view, simply by being the most thoroughly competent, contemporary, high-efficiency speakers—estimated sensitivity 105dB, estimated nominal impedance 20 ohms—I've had in my home.

And if *competent* doesn't sound like a terribly exciting word, consider that literally every other single-ended-triode-friendly speaker I've tried has been beset by one or more failures that my ears have had to squint not to hear: lack of bass, lack of treble, lack of coherence, screechiness, edginess, mechanicalness (*ie*, lack of musical flow), lack of spatial information, grossly skewed frequency response, and, worst of all, gross inability, despite their efficiency, to communicate the wonderful things that are on my records, not to mention the wonderful things the rest of my system does to uncover them.

Over the years I've had them, I've come to know the sounds of the various amplification and source compo-

nents I'm lucky to own; with the Cinemas in place of my Altecs, while music was supremely coherent and unfussy and artistically satisfying, I found that it was also easier than ever to identify the products upstream. The differences in musicality between my Garrard 301 and Thorens TD 124 turntables were heightened, not glossed over. My EMT OFD cartridges were even juicier and more dramatic than ever. My Shindo Haut-Brion sounded more like a Shindo Haut-Brion, my Fi 421A more like a Fi 421A: the former was primary-colorful and richly textured, tending to emphasize the attack components of notes, while the latter was more pastel in its approach to colors, with clear-water clarity and head-spinning momentum and flow.

After six months of using the Hommage Cinemas with such a wide variety of amps and cartridges, I came to know the Auditorium 23 speaker as a distinctly coherent-sounding thing. Its mid and treble ranges sounded as if cut from the same cloth: It was difficult to tell—and, given the satisfying end results, difficult to *care*—where one left off and the other began, so much so that, every time I put my ear up to the 597A horn, I was mildly startled to hear any sound coming out of it at all. The bass range, for its part, was also of a kind with the mids, but the attack components of notes didn't sound quite as taut as I'd expected: the edges of bass notes were slightly rounded, although without any suggestion of slowness. I've listened to countless piano recordings through the Cinemas, and musical timing was never less than perfect—and the sheer presence and musical will of the player always came through 100%, as on Samson François's singularly emotional 1963 recording of

sonic coherence are two defining qualities that the Cinema also had in spades: physicality and ease. The former was evident every time I played that François collection; I delighted in hearing his often deliberate, startlingly forceful touch reproduced so convincingly. Physicality was no less apparent—or appreciated—with subtler recordings, such as Julian Bream's *The Golden Age of English Lute Music* (mono LP, RCA Soria LD-2560): the music exited the loudspeakers with the full force of Bream's original performance, no less and no more.

I'm sure the almost uncannily good sound of the Bream record through the Cinemas was also a product of the speakers' exceptional ease—that too-rare quality in which music is neither shot nor squeezed, toothpaste-like, at the listener, nor left hanging stagnant, half a world away. With record after record, music simply *happened*; although there's no way to know for sure, I was always left with the sense that the force behind its remaking was on a par with the force behind its making.

Drawbacks? Treble extension was noticeably less than one associates with modern loudspeakers, manifesting in lessened air and sparkle with some recordings. (That didn't bother me often. When it did, it was with 1960s and '70s multitracked pop recordings, on which voices had already been dulled by excessive studio fuckery.) Bass notes were, again, a little more rounded than I think is absolutely neutral: the oft-heard E-flat3 in the first movement of Mendelssohn's String Quartet 1, for example, as performed by the Eroica Quartet (CD, Harmonia Mundi HMU 907245), was just a shade too rich and plummy. (But that didn't bother me, either: I *like* plummy,

as long as it doesn't affect timing—and through the Cinemas, timing was tight as a nut.) Although stereo imaging and spatial depth weren't bad at all, I doubt whether the Cinemas would please those folks who insist on being able to hear that Jacintha's left tonsil is bigger than her right. And as far as the price goes . . . well, with my daughter in college, and being as close as I am to at least *semi*-retirement age, I don't imagine there are any \$50,000/pair loudspeakers in my earthly future. That said, given the work and materials that have gone into the Cinema, the price seems fair—and I know of no similarly or lower-priced alternatives that offer this combination or strength of qualities.

Nothing happens till it happens twice

Years ago, when I returned to college and earned a degree in elementary education, I was taught the concept of the *spiral curriculum*: the notion that most subjects are presented to the student more than once during his or her time in school, always in greater depth and with greater nuance than the time before. Thus the first-grader who knows that Lincoln freed the slaves becomes the fifth-grader who knows the Gettysburg address by heart and the 10th-grader who knows all about the relationship between slavery and the technology of agriculture in the 19th century. (And if the student is athletically gifted, he or she may become the 12th-grader whose coach pressures the social-studies teacher to award a passing grade without the need to know any of those things. Look out, voting booth, here they come.)

I remember one of my professors drawing a parallel between the spiral curriculum and the image of a falcon that spirals away from the falconer in ever-greater circles—the same image that W.B. Yeats used to great effect in his poem “The Second Coming.” At the time, I also couldn't help thinking of that poem's second-most-famous line, *the centre will not hold*—although whether I did so as an informed pessimist or merely as a cynical crank is something I no longer recall.

It seems to me now that revisiting the same topic every *x* number of years works only if the topic in question is something the learner wants to know about; otherwise, the experience is one of deeper and more nuanced levels of indifference—a dissolute if not quite



Each bass enclosure contains two 50W, solid-state, class-AB amplifiers.

apocalyptic conclusion to one's career as a learner. Thus my tendency, and surely that of every other passionate reviewer, is to tiptoe around my *favorite* passions, and to sneak them into the dialogue every few years or so. The main reason being: Given the slow and gradual nature of my own audio education, I wonder if I would have *gotten* wooden horns and Western Electric compression drivers at age 42 instead of 62. Probably not.

In the Hommage Cinema, Auditorium 23 has given us what may be the best and easiest opportunity to experience once again a class of loudspeakers that dead engineers forgot to keep making. As second chances go, it's a hell of a thing. ■

CONTACTS

Auditorium 23

Thüringer Strasse 4
D-65824 Schwalbach
Germany
Tel: (49) (0)6196-402-516-8
Web: www.auditorium23.de
US distributor: Tone Imports
Web: www.toneimports.com

ortofon
accuracy in sound



The Ortofon
MC Anna paves
a new way
in audiophilia



Sound which
has to be
experienced

ORTOFON INC

500 Executive Blvd Suite 102
Ossining, NY 10562
P: (914) 762-8646
F: (914) 762-8649
INFO@ORTOFON.US
WWW.ORTOFON.US