

On Sunday, February 16, 2014, the monthly meeting of the Audio-Video Club of Atlanta was held at the Virtual Properties Realty office training room in Duluth. This meeting showcased an outstanding pair of speakers from Scaena, the Mainframe music server, and Audio Consulting amp and preamp. There was a standing-room only crowd of about 45 new and current members present.

The meeting started at 2 pm with John Morrison up first with a few club announcements. He thanked our presenters who were Sunny Umrao, Konstantin Gregg-Saad, Alan Eichenbaum, and Darren Censullo. Sunny and Konstantin had traveled from Nashville, Tennessee; Alan came from Plantation, Florida; and Darren from Fayetteville in south Atlanta. Also thanked were the nine folks who showed up early (at 10 am) to help set up, and those who supplied the refreshments. John mentioned that Darren is offering club members discounts on the entire line of iFi products – see our web site for more details.

John then dealt with official club business. Three new officers have to be elected in March, President, VP of Industry Relations, and Secretary, for two year terms. The three current office holders have agreed to run again, so John asked for any other nominations from the members present. There were none, so the ballot will contain only these names: President, John Morrison; VP-Industry Relations, Chuck Bruce; and Secretary, Tom Horner, plus any write-ins. John then spoke on the updated bylaws that the executive committee has agreed upon. These are now on the website and also need to be approved, this time by two-thirds of the active club members. John asked that all members present please vote on the officers and the bylaw changes on the club's web site during the coming month, so results can be announced in March. John also announced that the new refreshment coordinator will be Steve Gooding.

John introduced Sunny who had brought the Scaena speakers. Sunny is the primary designer of the speakers overall architecture, style, and unique enclosure design, and Alan Eichenbaum is the company's CEO. The team spent over two years developing, designing, and testing the "Iso-Linear Array" speaker we heard, and first introduced it at the Consumer Electronics Show in 2007. Their offices are located in Plantation, Florida, and the factory and engineering is done in Nashville Tennessee. Konstantin Gregg-Saad is an audio dealer from Nashville and traveled with the Scaena set-up team to our meeting to assist with the demonstration. He has audio shops (called 'atelier 13') in Nashville and Geneva (yes, in Switzerland). He provided the Swiss made Audio Consulting amp and preamp that were used.

These minutes cannot portray with any accuracy what these speakers look like, but as part of the set up team, this secretary can attest to the weight of these speakers. Take a look at Scaena's web site, www.scaena.com. We listened to the model 3.2. These contain 12 midrange speakers and 9 planar tweeters per speaker array, and two separate woofers (2 drivers per side) using separate Crown woofer amplifiers. The source was the Mainframe music server (more on this later) driving an Abbingdon Music Research (AMR), one of the foremost digital engineering companies in the world, DAC. This drove an Audio Consulting preamp and power amplifier brought to the meeting by Konstantin. These units are 24 volt battery powered. The speaker cables and interconnects were provided by Current Cables. These cables are designed by Darren Censullo and a metallurgist friend of his in Florida. Darren also provided all of the iFi digital products including the Gemini USB Cable, iUSB Power, and the iPurifier all used in the signal path from the Mainframe to the AMR DAC. All of these are among the products currently offered to members at a discount.

The Mainframe music server is an "enterprise" quality computer that runs software that enables one to download and play back any resolution of music from multiple sources (the Internet), and also plays the audio on any type of "silver" platter. By "enterprise" quality, you are speaking about a computer that is normally used by business enterprises in a computer center to run their business. Businesses require computers to have a guaranteed level of performance. This is not your normal desktop PC. It is powered by clean battery power. It can do ripping, performs error correction in memory, and separates the music functions from the "housekeeping" functions all computers must do. This means that no computer hardware/software "interrupts" pauses the CPU that is processing the music, which means cleaner sound.

After a brief introduction of the equipment, Sunny had club members bring up their music selections to listen to. Despite all the setup required for this meeting (it took over 3 hours), everything worked perfectly when the switch was thrown. The sound was the best this secretary ever heard at one of our meetings

(you are talking tears here!). This secretary went to a live concert with the Eagles the day after this meeting, and the Eagles cut we heard at the meeting was probably better than what I heard at the arena! Others at the meeting agreed that this was one of our best meeting/demonstrations we have ever had in the history of the club.

Multiple cuts were played, too many to list here. John wanted club members to emphasize "new" music. John encouraged attendees to bring in recordings that feature either music recorded within the past few years or, if recorded earlier, is relatively unknown. For example, John played a short amount of the cut Salsa Americana and the full cut, Peralada, by Emily Bear from her CD "Diversity". I played a cut from Stan and Tami, a new acoustic duo that I met at a private home, from their first demonstration CD. All the cuts sounded "more" than fantastic!

The meeting concluded at 5 pm, with several members staying behind to clean up. After that the team went out to dinner with our guests.

The club cannot thank our presenters enough for their time, travel, and trouble (heavy lifting) in bringing all this equipment to our meeting for us to hear and admire (shall I say drool over)!

Thomas Horner
Secretary, A-V Club of Atlanta