

On Sunday, April 19, 2015, the monthly meeting of the Audio-Video Club of Atlanta was held at the Virtual Properties Realty training room at their offices in Duluth. This meeting featured listening to various DAC models with three versions of the new Geek Pulse and an iFi iDSD Micro supplied by Charles Berry of Sight and Sound Gallery. There were over 35 people in attendance, including three new members (two of which joined today).

Up first was John Morrison, club president, at 2 PM. He reminded attendees that many have dues (\$40 per year) that are due on March 31, but there is a 30 day grace period to pay them. It is best to use the web site to renew and pay. He then opened the floor for nominations for two officers whose 2 year terms are ending in April. The offices are Vice President and Treasurer. The current office holders, Dennis Juranek and Paul Tarver have agreed to run again. There were no nominations from the floor, so they were closed. The voting will take place via the web site. John mentioned that the next meeting, which is the headphone and portable DAC meeting, is in only two weeks away, on May 3.

John then asked a member, Carl Turner, who took home the club's tube traps last month, for his thoughts on what they did to his sound. He reported that there was little change in his big living room's 2-channel system, so he tried then in his smaller home theater room (which is 14 by 20 feet) that uses Definitive Technology speakers. The results were quite startling as before the traps were in place he had some difficulty understanding speech during movies, and even had to resort to using closed-captioning on some films. With the traps, the speech became very clear. He plans to buy some for his home theater.

It was time for the listening session. The playback system consisted of an Oppo BDB-93 source (using various source files) using its digital output feeding the DAC with single ended coax (S/PDIF) cable. The output of the DAC (also using single ended cable) went into the club's integrated tube amp and the club's two subwoofer amps using a 'Y' connector. The integrated amp drove the club's two-way speakers and the club's dual subwoofers were driven by their respective amps.

Up first was the iFi iDSD Micro which sounded quite good given its low price – some liked it a lot. The music piece played was a 24 by 192 version of "Cherokee" by the Duke Ellington big band, which was used to compare all the DAC's. Up next was the "base" Geek Pulse which costs about \$1000 when available. It seemed better than the lower cost iFi model, with attendees reporting tighter bass, smoother high end, and less "ragged" sounding. Then the Pulse fi model was used, which is the single ended (unbalanced) model with the Femto Clock upgrade and other upgraded components in it. It costs roughly \$2000, but may not be available anymore. "Holy crap" was one comment heard, even better with a wider soundstage. Finally, the most expensive Geek Pulse, the Xfi, (this retails for about \$3000) which is the balanced version of the Geek Pulse with dual Femto clocks was played. Much to our surprise, this unit did not appear to sound as good as the unbalanced version, but be advised that we were using it in unbalanced mode, and with unusual amp connections, which may have compromised the sound. Finally we used the Oppo's internal DAC's and the soundstage was not quite as good as any of the other DAC's.

Using the DAC most attendees requested, the Geek Pulse fi, we auditioned a custom made power supply that Sam had put together from "spare parts" in his shop. Compared to the Pulse's "wall wart" power supply, this made a positive difference. This power supply was not regulated and is not suitable for commercial sale, but this comparison shows that outboard power supplies can make a difference. Also, note that the manufacturer of the Geeks (LH Labs) offers their own outboard Geek Pulse power supply (the LPS) on their web site. We also did some cable swapping between the Oppo and the DAC, and differences were again noted by the participants. These were two cables made by Sam, one grey and one white, with different wire used in each. After that, there were many music cuts played supplied by various members, as others went to the break room to discuss the results of our listening tests.

The club gives many thanks to Charles for bringing the iFi DAC, and to all the equipment managers and setup crew. The setup crew got first crack at some delicious chili from Mark Foster's wife (Deborrah). Also, once again, our thanks to everyone who brought the other refreshments.

Thomas Horner
Secretary, A-V Club of Atlanta