

On Sunday, October 22, 2018, the monthly meeting of the Audio-Video Club of Atlanta was held at the The Audio Company of Marietta and featured many items, including a one-million-dollar system (you read that right!). We saw the Von Schweikert Ultra Model 9 and 11 tower loudspeakers, with builder Damon Von Schweikert there to present his products, along with Leif Swanson. The extensive line of VAC tube electronics, with a special showing of the brand-new integrated tower model 450i iQ amplifier w/phono, with designer Kevin Hayes, was here also. A complete ensemble of top line Esoteric Audio electronics of Japan and equipment racks were also shown. This was a special showcase for our club, along with other invited guests. There were at least 50 people present, including about 5 new-comers to the club.

In John's absence (family emergency), Chuck Bruce made some quick announcements about our November 11 meeting, which later had to be cancelled due to the presenter having eye surgery. He thanked the Audio Company folks and our two featured guest speakers for giving us the opportunity to see and hear this great equipment.

Up first was Damon, who gave us a history of the Ultra line. A customer of Von Schweikert asked the company to come up with a "cost is no object" speaker a few years ago. This customer even funded the 3 and half year design project. The result was the Ultra 11 speaker, which costs \$300K per pair, which Damon says made other speakers sound "like a dog" (his words). The Ultra 9 is a "downsized" version of the Ultra 11 with more "realistic" physical measurements, and costs \$200K per pair. What is unique about their design is the way one can adjust the speaker to the room using controls on the rear of the speaker. You can also dial in the bass to the room. The speakers have a 15-inch woofer with its own built-in amplifier at the rear, along with an ambient speaker. The speakers also feature ceramic drivers, ribbon tweeters, and use a fourth-order crossover. For more detailed information, visit their web site at <https://www.vonschweikert.com/ultra-reference-loudspeakers>.

Our other speaker was Kevin Hayes who introduced the VAC amplifiers we would be listening to. VAC uses an "intelligent" auto-biasing system (iQ) for the tubes in the amplifiers. Their two newest products are the Sigma 170 iQ, a \$10K integrated amplifier, and the integrated tower model 450 iQ, which is the largest integrated amp the club has seen. It is a tower to minimize noise between the preamp section and phono section (which are close to the inputs), and the power amplifier section in the lower part of the tower.

After the two brief presentations, the visitors were taken to four listening rooms to see and hear various pieces of equipment. This secretary did not get all the details, but room 1 had Von Schweikert VR-55 speakers, a VAC Statement integrated amp, and vinyl was used as the source. Room 2 had Von Schweikert VR'5 and a VAC 4505 amplifier. Room 3 had the Ultra 9 speakers with VAC 450 iQ's (2 of them), and finally the "million dollar" room featured the Ultra 11's and four VAC 450 iQ's, with Esoteric front-end units (preamp, disk player, phono preamp, etc.). These listening sessions started around 2:45 pm and lasted the rest of the afternoon.

The club gives many thanks to our hosts at The Audio Company (Jim, Keith, and Gordon) for having this event, and our three manufacturer representatives. The great refreshments were again supplied by Dan Wittmayer.

Thomas Horner
Secretary, A-V Club of Atlanta