

On Sunday, June 28, 2009, the monthly meeting of the Audio-Video Club of Atlanta was held at the Marriot Courtyard Hotel in Tucker, Georgia. The theme of this meeting was Headphone/Desktop/Computer Audio with setups utilizing PC's and DAC's as front end sources, headphone amplifiers, and headphones instead of speakers. There were over 40 in attendance including 8 exhibitors and the guest speaker, Tyll Hertsens, CEO of Headroom, Inc. which manufactures electronics for headphones (for example, amplifiers and DAC's), and sells high quality headphones. Their web site is www.headphone.com (not headroom.com). The exhibitors each showed their PC and headphone listening systems utilizing various types and models of PC's, DAC's, headphone amplifiers, and of course some very nice (high quality) headphones.

First up at 2 PM was John Morrison, who handled the business meeting of the club before the presentations and listening began. He discussed upcoming meetings and invited all visitors to join the club if they wanted.

Next up was our primary presenter, Tyll. He spoke on the current state of computer audio and the use of higher quality electronics and headphones to improve the listening experience. He also discussed the various file formats available for computer listening, both "lossy" and "lossless", such as .wav files for PC's and AIF/ACC files for Apple computers. He then said something most audiophiles can identify with. The hardest part of listening is deciding WHAT to play, given that most audiophiles have a large music collection. This is a "drag" he said. This is a very interesting dilemma that the computer is perfectly suited to resolve. With computers there is now software that will choose music to play from your collection based on your past history and/or your answers to questions on what you want to hear. One such program is 'Music IP Mixer' which you can tell what you might want to hear from your collection in general terms and it may choose anything from an opera to jazz that match those requirements.

Next up were the exhibitors who each described the setup they had brought in to demonstrate. Most of them are contributors to the head-fi.com web site, a site designed to promote headphone listening. This secretary could only make quick notes on each presentation. Mikel has a 'regular' (speaker based) audio system and a computer/headphone based system, and enjoys them both. He used custom cables to send music from his turntable to an A/D converter. Ryan (Fitz) uses a 1 TB (1000 GB) file server with a 'squeezebox', and showed us two custom headphone amplifiers he had built. Matt had a more 'modest level' system (his words) including a second hand DIY headphone amplifier and DAC which he is very happy with. Tom discussed his DIY forum and web site he sponsors where folks can order custom PCB's (printed circuit boards). Brent showed his Grado headphones (HF-1) that were built especially for the headphone community. Perk showed a discreet headphone amplifier plus an Audio-Technica headphone and headphone amplifier "pair" that were built for each other. Horton showed us the Wadia iPod transport he uses for his listening. Finally, Tyll showed us two computer systems he had set up, one using a \$329 Costco Acer notebook computer, and the other with speakers and two Headroom amplifiers driving them, a Headroom headphone amplifier, and a Headroom desktop DAC.

After the presentations, all were invited to cruise the room and listen to each set up individually and speak to each of the exhibitors. Toward the end of the meeting a raffle was held where the first two prizes were Headroom products (headphone amplifiers) contributed by Tyll, and the rest were CD's contributed to the club.

It was a great meeting and very much an eye-opener for those who are more used to speaker based (non computer) audio systems. The club thanks Tyll and all the exhibitors for bringing their knowledge and expertise to our meeting, and all the time they spent setting up their demonstrations and presenting them to us.

Thomas Horner
Interim Secretary, A-V Club of Atlanta