

On Sunday, January 31, 2021, the monthly meeting of the Atlanta Audio Club was held via “Zoom” due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting featured Alan Jones, owner of the Hi-Fi Buys store in Buckhead. Steve (club president) had a list of prepared questions for Alan which also encouraged discussion of various related topics. The meeting was well attended, with about 35 participants. It started at 3 pm and lasted until about 5 pm. Please note that this secretary was not able to attend the last 30 minutes of the meeting (OK, I was hungry as was my wife and guest!), so these notes do not cover that timeframe. The club definitely thanks Alan for his time and insight!

Due to the nature of this meeting, these minutes will simply list the questions and discussions in roughly the order they occurred.

The first question asked Alan about his background and experience in the audio industry. Alan answered this, talking about his first store in Lawrenceville, his sales experience, and his 40 years in the business.

Next was a question about physical media versus streaming. During this discussion, Alan revealed that there are MQA encoded physical disks being sold in Japan.

Next was headphones. Alan said that the store’s headphone “bar” has been a big success, and also brings in younger customers.

Alan discussed Hi-Fi Buy’s web (e-commerce) site which 22 brands have approved for use (some brands insist on in-store sales). He encouraged participants to use their services that are offered on the site.

Next was a discussion on the importance of synergy between the components in your system. Listening to the right combination can maximize sound quality, to get that “right” combination.

Alan is very customer focused, he wants the customer to give him their thoughts first, then he offers equipment and installation advice, including advice on the room itself where the system is set up. His focus is to keep customers happy.

Alan is really interested in reducing noise coming into (or generated by) the system. He said noise actually makes it more difficult to listen (to concentrate), like being in a noisy restaurant when holding a conversation. The brain is “more comfortable” when there is less noise to deal with. Alan mentioned that Niagara products (power conditioners) is one product line that reduces noise a lot.

Hi-Fi Buys is starting a pod cast soon. They have already held multiple Hi-Fi Buys chats with manufacturers and reviewers on Friday afternoons, and replays are available to listen to.

The strength of the store environment is that there are multiple rooms with different systems at various price points that one can listen to and determine what is best for you. He can give advice on systems for any budget. They also offer in-home “try outs” for qualified buyers.

Alan likes to show the younger customers analog (vinyl) playback. Many are surprised at the quality of the sound, especially compared to lower quality downloads (MP3’s).

There was a discussion about MQA (encoding) “versus” Qubuz (hi-res streaming service). Alan mentioned that DCS (a manufacturer of very high end DAC’s) is working with the MQA folks to improve their techniques to create source MQA files.

There was discussion about the improvements being made in vinyl pressing, and the increased interest of multi-channel listening.

Alan says in general that the quality and value for most products is improving.

At this point, this secretary had to leave the meeting.

Again, the club thanks Alan for his time and insights!

**Minutes written by Thomas Horner, Secretary, Atlanta Audio Club.**