

On Sunday, November 24, 2019, the monthly meeting of the Atlanta Audio Club was held at the Dunwoody North Driving Club clubhouse. This meeting featured presentations by Brian Walsh of Exogal and David Solomon of Qobuz (a music streaming service). This secretary was unable to attend this meeting, so these minutes are based on detailed notes from Dennis Juranek and comments from Chuck Bruce.

Mark Chaffin opened the meeting at 2:00 pm. He announced that there would be no meeting in December. In January 2020 the Club will have their annual winter party on January 5, and the January Club meeting will feature David Snyder who will give a detailed overview of digital playback from different types of computers and how to create a digital streaming setup. We also will be staging a silent auction for a new Nitty Gritty record cleaner donated by Kevin Berg of Elusive Disc at a future meeting.

Mark then introduced Brian Walsh, sales representative for Exogal, and David Solomon with Qobuz.

Brian described the equipment he brought. He first established a "hot spot" for internet access using his cell phone. This allowed his laptop computer to connect to Qobuz and Tidal. The Exogal equipment that was featured consisted of the Comet Plus DAC with built in preamp (32 bit digital volume control) which was connected to the Ion Power amp via a specially designed HDMI cable. Other cabling included Teo Audio cables and Verastarr AC power cables. Brian also brought Ryan R630 speakers used for playback. The Ryan R630 speakers are 3-way tower loudspeakers and sounded excellent.

Detailed specifications for the Exogal equipment can be found at www.exogal.com.

The Comet Plus DAC lists for \$3500 and the Ion power amp for \$4250. If purchased together the price is \$7400 (a \$350 discount). The Comet plays DSD up to 128 and PCM up to 32/384 via USB inputs. PCM is played up to 24/192 through other digital inputs, except optical which is limited to 24/96. The DAC has true balanced XLR outputs, single ended RCA outputs, and a headphone output. The Comet has all the common digital inputs. It also has analog inputs, but analog is converted to digital for internal processing before output. The Ion amp outputs 125 watts per channel. The equipment is sold in Atlanta by Mike Powell of Verastarr.

Brian played a variety of excellent sounding tracks from the Qobuz steaming service and from his computer hard drive. The sound was one of the best we have heard in the Dunwoody Club House.

David Solomon then gave an exceptional presentation on digital streaming of audio. He outlined the streaming resolutions provided by the different companies in the US. The only two that stream lossless audio are Tidal and Qobuz. Tidal streams at a maximum 16/44 (CD quality) unless you have a DAC that decodes MQA. Qobuz streams at rates up to 24/192. He played several tracks from Qobuz illustrating sound quality from music recorded at bit and sample rates ranging from 16/44 to 24/192. It was David's opinion that up-sampling a song released in 16/44 format did not improve sound quality. He also thought that a performance that was expertly recorded and mastered at 16/44 could sound as good as many higher resolution recordings. He demonstrated a couple of such recordings.

Qobuz has recently reduced their monthly subscription cost to about \$15 a month. David said that purchasing a yearly subscription lowers the monthly cost to about \$12.

The club sincerely thanks David and Brian for two excellent presentations, and all the others who helped set up and run this meeting including Mark Chaffin and the Refreshment Director, Dan Wittmayer. The secretary again thanks Dennis for his notes!

Thomas Horner
Secretary, A-V Club of Atlanta