

INDUSTRY FEATURES

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JAS Audio was a name new to me but the byline of the accompanying press kit – *"An inevitable trend - China to invade the US market in unusual places"* – was not. These speakers from Hong Kong are imported by Alfie Lew of **Gini Systems** in California and sport not only stunning finishes but a round twin ribbon tweeter also seen on the new Sound Fusion products from Canada. The *Orior* two-way arrives with a slanted baffle, faceted edging and a ceramic mid/bass driver looking very similar to the Accuton units employed by Marten Design, Kharma, Talon Audio and others. The *Orsa* is a two-cabinet 2-way with a Dynaudio-reminiscent 6" woofer. The four-driver 3-way *Orsus* sports a 5.5" Titanium alloy midrange and two of the Orsa's woofers while the *Batista* is a 2-way with an Altec stainless steel horn and a 9" bass unit. Cables and power line products round out the line. In keeping with my professorial membership in the oversight committee, I spaced out on swiping a press kit on the valve electronics in this room. Hopefully another show report has you covered there. Unlike many US brands without completely formal domestic representation – and plenty of grey market transactions, short-run rebranding and fly-by-night customer orphaning – Gini Systems makes it a point to stress that they've established a proper US base of operation and intend to do business the old-fashioned way: with service and not just rock-bottom pricing.

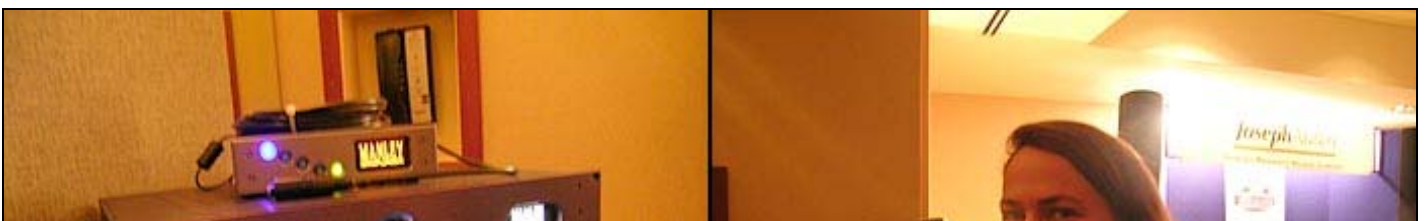




Jeff **Joseph**, like Peak Consult, chose HE 2005 to unveil a new speaker, in his case the \$12,500/pr *RM55LE*, essentially his flagship Pearl in a single chassis and with the same SEAS tweeter and midrange. With impedance never below 6 ohms, this is a tube-friendly load and the single 10" magnesium woofer further underscores that friendliness. Frequency response is given as 26-20,000Hz +/- 2dB and dimensions are 45" x 12.5" x 18" H x W x D. Exhibiting flawless taste in music as usual, Jeff demoed a few 3-channel tracks which were originally recorded that way.



EveAnna Manley of **Manley Labs** participated in the same exhibit and had *the* reviewer solution for pesky cable comparisons on hand. The *Skipjack* is a switch box with a hard-wired remote that allows on-the-fly comparisons and merely inserts a few inches of wire and some top-line sealed relays into the signal path [the small unit atop the big 'un below]. Never intended to become a commercial product, EveAnna had rigged up this device to facilitate in-house R&D during capacitor and transformer evaluations. Something musta told her that some professional reviewers *might* cotton to the possibilities inherent in the Skipjack. Right on, babe! Though she didn't have to – some interactions with the press in the past have her in grave doubt about our kind – she kindly made one of these available to Marja & Henk. Those two are presently knee-deep in the cable wars, with attacks ships by Crystal Cable, Siltech, Stealth and Harmonic Tech Cyber battling for supremacy in their rig. Gracias, EveAnna - thanks for going the extra mile!







Speaking of extra miles, Kari Nevalainen arrived from faraway Finland to cover the event [left|left] and Paul Candy drove from Montreal to fill out the moonie ranks and back up his bumbling editor (that was your plan, Paul?). In fact, so excited was New York by the arrival of the men from the frosty North that the mayor shut down 6th Ave right in front of the Hilton so they had an easier time traversing it. Well, except for the bicyclists who seemed to have forgotten that they were under strict orders to obey the usual traffic regulations. Their onslaught translated as anything but careful and some elderly woman was overheard asking a police officer how the hell she'd get to the other side. He smirked, reiterated the "obey the traffic lights" rules and volunteered that he'd arrest a few cyclists if need be. What service from New York's finest. Saludos!

I had it on good rumor that Finland is surprisingly fond of Tango and naturally grabbed the opportunity to quiz Kari about it. He confirmed that Tango is indeed extremely popular there but *not* the kind that is celebrated in Argentina and Uruguay.

Not sure what to expect by way of Finnish Tango, I asked whether he could send me some representational samples and international customs willing, a little musical care package should soon arrive from Helsinki to educate yours truly and perhaps result in some world music recommendations to spread the good vibes.





GTT Audio & Video did as they always do, make superlative sound with Kharma speakers. And as has been the case in the past as well, I thought the system with the \$21,000/pr 3.2E *Reference Monitors* outdid the adjacent one with the \$75,000/pr *Midi Exquisites*. Both rooms had the \$9,500 *Ceramique* sub going while amplification and front ends diverged. The smaller system used the dCS Verdi LaScala/Elgar+/Verona trio, the larger one the EMM Labs CDSD/DAC 6e combo. The smaller system used the Nagra PL-L linestage and Kharma's own diminutive *MP150* amps, the larger one a full contingent of Lamm L2 line stage, LP2 phono stage and M1.2 Reference amps, with a Kuzma Stabi/Stogi and Shelter 90x handling vinyl duties. And yes, the MP150s are Class D, and yes, they're proprietary and not based on ICEpower, Tripath, Toccata or anyone else's scheme.





The [ELP Laser Turntable](#) exhibit created more questions than it answered. Since a laser can't physically dislodge a dust particle like a cartridge needle will, it is more rather than less susceptible to surface noise. In fact, the bloody thing hung up during the demo to repeat a particular passage. Worse, it didn't sound like vinyl but digital - which isn't necessarily a bad thing at all but somehow defeats the purpose. Black licorice software needs to be *squeaky* clean to not upset this laser turntable so don't even consider it if wet and dry cleaning aren't on your list of audiophile rituals.





Victor Sima – formerly of Sim Audio which bears his name and now heading [Linnar Audio](#) – answered my question about how his sound compares to that of Simaudio as expected. I leave it to you to decipher the hint. His Class A/AB *Model 10* multi-channel integrated amplifier is a very unusual beast that has been comprehensively covered by the always dapper Kalman Rubinson in *Stereophile's* January 2005 issue. It does 5.1, 4-channel stereo, biampification, rear-channel and subwoofer volume adjustments and sports 120/200/300 watts into 8/4/2 ohms x 5 without any feedback, J-FETs in the input stage and Mosfets in the driver stage. The matching stereo amplifier is on my review docket to continue my exploration of solid-state amps a tube lover could fool - aw shucks, you know what I meant.



Showing with Gershman Acoustic's new Black Swan and their AvantGarde in two adjacent rooms, Sima's electronics were devoid of the classical transistor gremlins that valve hounds sniff out like police dogs smell bombs hidden in luggage. I look forward to reviewing his stereo amp which comes in either 50-watt pure Class A guise or 150-watt Class A/AB.





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