

license and designing the chip for it.

LOUDSPEAKERS

I finally got to listen to the WAMMs, Dave Wilson's awesomely expensive speaker system. And am I glad I did! The sound in the Wilson Audio suite was incredibly natural and lifelike. Earlier in the show, both LA and Enid Lumley had voiced complaints about the sound quality in the Wilson Audio room, so I wasn't quite sure what to expect. Dave told me that he took the criticism to heart and actually sat down and listened seriously, something he can rarely take the time to do at these shows. He puts on quite a demonstration, for about 30 minutes of each hour, and it's necessary to sign up in advance. By the time I got to his room, Dave had apparently managed to eliminate the problems LA and EL heard, because the sound there was undoubtedly the best at the show.

I was very much impressed with the Swedish "Respon" speaker system being demonstrated in Electrocompaniet's room. I liked the tonal balance of these speakers, which favor the warm and natural, and I suspect they'll give JGH's beloved Watkins WE-1—not to mention a lot of other pricey speakers—a run for the money. Projected U.S. retail is \$3500/pair.

Another very clean and cohesive-sounding three-way design is the SARAS ST-200; at \$1500/pair they promise to be a great value. SARAS, in business since 1972, was exhibiting at CES for the first time ever. Rudy Stoklos, the firm's president and designer, took pains to demonstrate his product and made a believer of me. Source material was from a Nakamichi OMS-7 CD player and Kinergetics electronics. I was surprised to see he had a CD of Proprius' *Cantate Domino*, as I did not even know Proprius was releasing on CD. (Wilson Audio is now the *only* perfectionist audiophile recording company that has not yet released on CD.) Try as I might, I just couldn't convince him to part with

it! But then I wouldn't have parted with it either.

An outfit entitled the Hi-Fi Club is now importing QLN loudspeakers from Sweden. (These were originally imported by Scandinavian Sounds, who now import the Raunas). OLN's Model One two-way, together with its "subwoofer," was referred to by the HiFi Club folks as their "superior system." It did manage to sound quite clean and refined even under show conditions. Tonal balance was fairly neutral—in fact, darned good for \$1350/pair. The Swedes are rapidly establishing a fine reputation in the field of speaker design.

Tubed speakers were very much in evidence, of all things! Not the glowing vacuum tube variety, but rather the PVC-pipe and paper-tube (similar to concrete-forming tubes) variety. Dantax of Denmark, a division of Seaspeak, featured a whole line of PVC-pipe speakers—Models Tube 1, Tube 2, and Tube 3---ranging in price from \$200 to \$500/pair. The accent here is on beauty and placement flexibility. That may in fact be all they have to offer, as none of the Danes showed any interest in augmenting my look with a listen. These were on visual show only.

Another tubed speaker line, from Alta of Goleta (CA), uses resin-impregnated paper tubes. Their top-of-the-line Model .5 is a 14-inch diameter cylinder that towers an impressive 7½ feet high and is finished, as are all the Alta models, in black cloth. The economic advantage of this sort of enclosure is obvious: getting away from veneers and carpentry reduces cost. According to Alta, though, the real payoff is an enclosure that is inherently rigid and inert, and eliminates standing waves and resonances. The claim that a tubular enclosure automatically eliminates standing waves and resonances is nonsense, as anyone familiar with pipe organs or brass instruments can tell you. (But the fact that a paper tube can make an excellent enclosure has been proven by Spica, whose older SC-50s earned good