

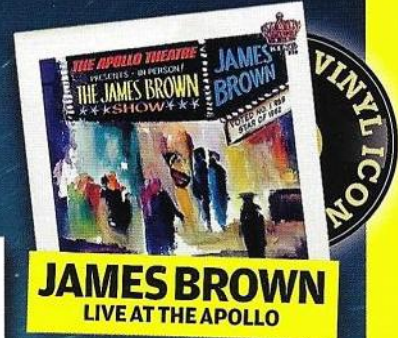
# hi-fi news

THE HOME OF REAL HI-FI

& Record Review

Exclusive

# THE POWER GENERATION



Breaking barriers with T+A's two-box integrated

**AVM CS 8.2**  
Ovation all-in-one  
- with tubes!

**Benchmark**  
The 'professional'  
DAC, rebooted

**PMC is 25!**  
twenty5.24  
speakers blow  
out the candles



**INVESTIGATION**  
**One-Step Beyond**  
MoFi's search for the ultimate LP, p26  
**Grado GS2000e**  
Headphones that make a Statement

- PLUS 18 pages of music • **VINYL RE-RELEASE** Chet Baker Sings on 180g LP
- **OPINION** 12 pages of comment • **VINTAGE REVIEW** Technics SB-F1 speakers
- **SHOW BLOG** Tokyo & Paris • **READERS' CLASSIFIEDS** Hi-Fi bargains galore

UK £4.99 US \$13.00 Aus \$12.99



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# Tokyo Audio Show

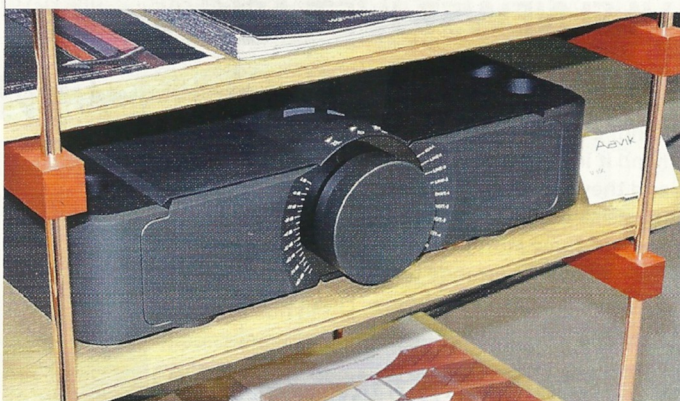
Words & pictures: Ken Kessler



It is, as a colleague reminded me, like visiting another planet: Japanese audiophiles comport themselves with such seriousness, politeness and dignity that every element of Tokyo's high-end show encourages thoughtful listening – and that's not something I do at shows. I know it's so, because I lectured three groups of 100 attendees, and they sat rapt as each LP track played to its end.

This show, though compact, is one of the calendar's more important events because it's a rare occasion when heavy-hitter imports share Japanese exhibition space with local majors (Luxman, Accuphase, etc) and native esoterica, such as Air Tight. There were launches a'plenty, the usual oddities, but overall an atmosphere unlike any other hi-fi event I can name. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

This unit is Aavik Acoustics' U-300 Unity Amplifier. A diminutive 440x370x100mm (wdh), it's good for a claimed 2x300W into 8ohm and, ulp!, double that into 4ohm. The rear features RIAA, five digital and three line inputs. Note D'Agostino-style venturi cooling. Price is – another ulp! – £27,900. [www.aavik.jp](http://www.aavik.jp)



Retro styling and attitude continues with Luxman's LX-380 valve integrated amplifier – the ideal choice for those who love vintage but can't handle the risks of aged kit. It promises 2x18W into 8ohm from four 6L6GC tubes and offers phono MM/MC and a row of the world's niftiest toggle switches. [www.luxman.com](http://www.luxman.com)



When Stig Bjorge of Lyra says, 'You *must* hear these!', I tend to listen. The tiny Kiso Acoustic HB-1, atop the HB-G1 woofer tower, delivered some of the best sounds at the show. The upper satellite is offered separately in a number of forms and custom finishes. A frame allows you to stack two, or place them atop a woofer stack to create the ultimate three-way, with external crossovers. The impedance is said to be 4ohm while sensitivity is given as 86dB/1W. [www.kisoacoustic.co.jp](http://www.kisoacoustic.co.jp)



Octave's MRE220 monoblock from Germany enjoys hero status in Japan, having won the Golden Sound Award from *Stereo Sound*. It was designed for the KT120 and is said to deliver 220W/4ohm. The preamp section can be fitted with an optional input transformer to facilitate balanced XLRs. [www.octave.de](http://www.octave.de)



## SHOWBLOG Sights and sounds from around the globe

Although I am inordinately predisposed toward small speakers, I was not prepared for the sheer scale and room-filling power of Fostex's insane little FE83/YK83-Sol, which is an affordable kit speaker with a single, full-range driver and front-ported cabinet. The luscious cabinet costs a mere £119! The demo area was massive, yet even at the back this little package delivered the goods with the authority of a massive floorstander. Next year, perhaps, a pair goes in the hand luggage... [www.fostex.jp](http://www.fostex.jp)



No unnecessary humility in the perfectly-named Grandioso F1 from Esoteric. The luxuriously appointed integrated amp pumps out a mere 30W/ch into 8ohm on paper, but it's a MOSFET design with other charms to justify a £15k price tag – like silky sound, on-board DAC and heart-stopping looks. [www.esoteric.jp](http://www.esoteric.jp)

Your reporter demonstrates Mobile Fidelity's edition of the *Keb' Mo'* LP in the Stella room, through Vivid loudspeakers and Constellation electronics, with the TechDAS Air Force One as the front end. One hundred guests per session enjoyed three 'performances'. Professional interpreter to my right!



If any market deserves the sneak preview of a McIntosh prototype, it's Japan, where the brand has some of its most devoted followers. No information whatsoever was available for this unit, but the MA252 is a compact valve integrated with – unusually – no trademark blue-lit meters. Sorry about the lack of details, but my Japanese encompasses food names only. Even so, I suspect it's an entry-level tube/transistor hybrid. [www.mcintoshlabs.com](http://www.mcintoshlabs.com)

Flat is in – *pace* Artora – and MSB uses the form for its two-box Select DAC. Cool feature? The modular DACs, clock and input/output sections are user-replaceable. As a section is improved, the Select can be updated – bye-bye obsolescence. [www.msbtechnology.com](http://www.msbtechnology.com)





Another scoop for the Japanese: Air Tight already marked its 30th birthday with the Opus 1 cartridge and ATM-300 Anniversary amp, but the ATM-X monoblock arrived to cap the celebrations. Valves are two 'Platinum Selection' 211s per side. Congratulations, Miura-san! [www.global.airtight-am.net](http://www.global.airtight-am.net)



Similar in looks to the monoblock MRE220 [see p18], Octave's RE320 stereo amplifier boasts the *tube du jour*, one of my faves: the rocking, kickass KT150. Two per side are said to deliver 130W/ch with the higher of two operational settings. Both this and its sibling are offered in black or silver. [www.octave.de](http://www.octave.de)



Here you see but the tiniest sampling of the massive Triode valve amp range: the 24-page catalogue shows 19 Triode models, with a separate brochure for the Triode Advanced Junone Reference One 'Ultimate Pre-amplifier'. The spokesperson is pointing to the flagship TRX-M845 monoblocks, good for 50W each from two 845s. Speakers are Sendor SP200s while the turntable is the Kronos Sparta. [www.triode.co.jp](http://www.triode.co.jp)



Another fine open-reel-tape demo in Tim de Paravicini's room, with the latest EAR-Yoshino CD player visible below the turntable to the left. Tim again used the ultra-rare Denon DH-710F, and, yes, the tape revival is happening! [www.ear-yoshino.com](http://www.ear-yoshino.com)



Accuphase's E-270 integrated amp marries retro looks with the ultra-modern. The meters, tone controls and tape loop provide the period atmosphere, and there's a slot for an optional DAC module or phono stage. The amp produces a useful 90W/ch says Accuphase. Price in Japan? Under £2500. [www.accuphase.com](http://www.accuphase.com)



Crosszone's CZ-1 is a new headphone from Triode. It looks 'normal' but the literature shows that it employs three drivers per cup, for treble, mid/bass and a third creating what they call an 'Acoustic Delay Chamber' for producing stereo more like that heard from loudspeakers. [www.triode.co.jp](http://www.triode.co.jp)