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Posted on May 1, 2019 by Marc Phillips in AXPONA 2019 // 0 Comments

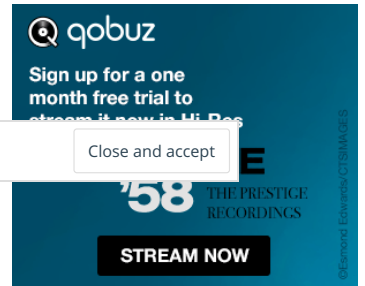


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I just checked out the AudioQuest and Vandersteen room back at Rocky Mountain Audio Fest last fall, so walking into this room at AXPONA 2019 felt like it might be more of the same—an excellent same, but. Within seconds I noticed the presence of Rob Robinson of Channel D rushing around the giant room, keeping the music flowing, while Richard Vandersteen sat in the back row of the room and nodded approvingly. The room felt decidedly different from the last, even with the presence of the same massive Vandersteen 7 system—Vandersteen Model 7 Mk. II loudspeakers (\$62,000/pair) with the granite upgrade (\$10,000) mated to a pair of Vandersteen Sub Nines (\$18,900/pair)—taking up so much floor space.





But here's the thing--there was a lot of floor space. This was a big room. And I know that the Sevens are remarkable when it comes to energizing a room of this size, but I was still amazed at the tight and focused soundstage, and how instruments existed in the proper size and location. Big systems in big rooms can sometimes be too much of a good thing, especially when you miss some of that inner detail in all that real estate, but the AudioQuest, Vandersteen and Channel D room excelled at detaching from the room and playing the tunes the way they were meant to be heard.



The Rise of Channel D?

Channel D was always known for hi-rez music server software, but they've expanded in recent years. They now offer phono preamplifiers called the Lino and the Seta. The Lino (\$2499) offers both balanced inputs and outputs, and unbalanced outputs, battery-powered operation and "precision" RIAA equalization. The flagship Seta L20, now in its Mk. 2 version, is fully balanced, dual mono, direct coupled and is designed to set a "very high bar" for phono preamplifiers in every parameter. It comes at a high price, \$63,000, but you can save over 20K when you buy direct. Both units were gorgeous with their hypnotic blue LED-auras and silent operation.



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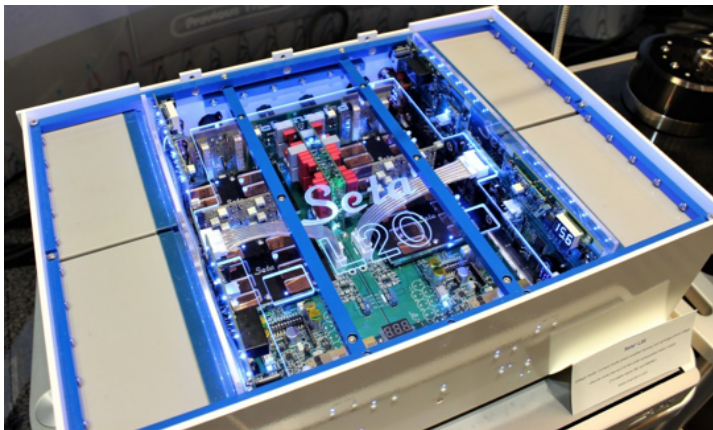
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I still can't ignore the Vandersteen 7s and how far Richard Vandersteen has come since I first heard a pair of Vandersteen 2s back in college (and never quite saved enough money to buy a pair, although I talked about it all the time). These new speakers are phenomenal in the way they can control such a vast space. And I'm particularly interested in AudioQuest right now since they sent me a box of goodies to play with, and I'm having a great time plugging and unplugging and plugging again. But the sound of the AudioQuest, Vandersteen and Channel D room was memorable to me for many reasons, and I think that crazy beautiful Seta L20 Mk. 2 is going to start making nightly appearances in my dreams any time now.



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