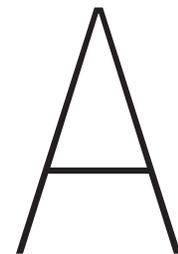


Audio Arts NYC

By Jeff Dorgay



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Audio Arts NYC provides an oasis of chill, just four floors above the hustle and bustle of New York City's Fifth Avenue, in the Flatiron District. Owner Gideon Schwartz buzzes me up to his suite, where the main listening room, about 20 x 30 feet, features a comfy couch, a wonderful view of the city, Madison Square Park and a big fireplace. When was the last time you saw a fireplace in a hifi shop? Instantly, your blood pressure takes a big dip for the better and it's easy to relax. This is not a typical retail environment in any sense of the word.

An Oasis on Fifth Avenue

The central room showcases one main system, with a variety of turntables from Holborne Swiss Audio, Simon York and a beautifully restored Thorens TD-124 from Schopper. Off to the left the massive Kalista CD transport from Metronome Technologie sits, waiting to make magic from the often criticized compact disc. A single pair of Zellaton speakers is placed to perfection in this acoustically correct space. Well off to the side, are some neatly arranged components from Nagra, waiting for audition by another customer, along with electronics from CH Precision (Switzerland), Malvalve (Germany), Lavardin (France) and Kora-Eda (Japan) flanked by a pair of Stenheim speakers.

"Want to hear a record?" Schwartz cues up Teddy Pendegrass, via the Holborne table and the sound from what some audiophiles might consider an average pressing comes to life on the big Zellatons, powered by the Burmester 911 mk. 3, an amplifier that I also use as a reference. The sound is infinitely familiar on one level, yet a few clicks beyond what I'm used to, as the Zellaton speakers provide such a clear window into the music. If I didn't know better, I'd think that we were listening to an expensive remaster of this recording. Fortunately, there are no audiophile standards in his record collection on display.



Switching to digital, we listen to *Musica Nuda*, by Petra Magoni and Ferruccio Spinetti, the delicacy of analog remaining. It's hard to believe we are listening to digital, and again, the combination of excellent music and system synergy allows the listener to forget about the left-brain stuff that often gets in the way of enjoying their system.

The magic that this system offers sums up what Audio Arts NYC brings to the table. Purchasing components at this level requires a well versed guide, someone capable of hand picking things that work well together for maximum effect and demonstrating them in a comfortable environment, lacking in clutter makes it easy to unwind and take it all in. (continued)



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At the time of our visit, a second, smaller room is nearing completion, to showcase other components, primarily speakers more suited to clients with a similar sized listening space. Here, I see components from Swissonor, Shopper Thorens, Wavelength and the new Midnight Blue series from 47 Labs.

While some of the names on the roster, like Burmester and Nagra are well known to American audiophiles, others like Zellaton and Stenheim are new to our shores. And while

some of these components carry a lofty price tag, many do not. All too often, hifi salons become myopic and militant, offering potential customers few choices, which can be detrimental to those wishing to engage this hobby. Everything here has been hand picked by Schwartz for sound quality, build quality and uniqueness. "It's really about the overall sound. I put a very strong emphasis on the greatest possible fidelity for every approach. This results in a musical consistency in my products regardless of cost."

Schwartz says. And whether your interest is in solid state, single ended triodes, or anything in between, Audio Arts NYC has an interesting solution.

Schwartz underlines the importance of this process. "Sometimes, it takes months for us to put just the right system together for a client. I'm not in a hurry." Right in the heart of New York City, he understands the stress that many of his clients face, and the importance a music system plays in their lives.

Wonderful as Audio Arts NYC is, perhaps the highest compliment I can pay Gideon Schwartz is that I heard four albums that were completely new to me. This is the direction that high-end audio has to take if it is to survive. Having just returned from Tokyo, reflecting back on my visit to Audio Arts, it reminds me of the Leica store in the Ginza shopping district, where photography and the gear to create those photographs is equally respected, showcased in a soothing environment.

This deliberateness, and attention to detail, all the while celebrating the music that makes it all possible is what makes Audio Arts NYC so unique; I highly suggest an appointment. ●

Audio Arts NYC
www.audioarts.com

