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Small DVD, Small Faces

Posted Wed Jan 25, 2006, 1:16 PM ET



For my money, the best 1960s rock singer wasn't Mick, or John, or even Eric Burdon, good though they were/are very good. My favorite was a small pack of dynamite named Steve Marriott, front man for the Small Faces, an East End mod soul/rock outfit that only had one hit in America, the psychedelic ditty "Itchycoo Park." It was probably the first time "flanging" had been used on a pop tune, if you know what that is. If you don't, well, I'm not going to describe it here.

I bring up the Small Faces because I recently took delivery of a great new DVD called *the Small Faces Under Review* (Chrome Dreams DVD CV1S395-distributed by Music Video Distributors). Now this is a "small" DVD about a relatively

"small" band, never mind the size of their faces, but this is precisely why DVD are so cool right now.

Everything and anything now gets released on DVD. It's easy, it's cheap, you can author one on your computer, send it away and have it duplicated for next to nothing. Not that this is an amateur production, just that it is aimed at a very small, and specified audience and that audience includes me! I don't care what your interests, there are now dozens of DVD available for whatever interests you.

I am definitely interested in the Small Faces. They only released a few albums but had many great songs on both Decca UK and Andrew Loog Oldham's Immediate label. However, there's not that much video footage of the band, which included machine gun drummer Kenny Jones who ended up in The Who, and Ronnie Lane who recorded an album with Pete Townshend called *Rough Mix* that's oh so easy to recommend. It was really the first "Unplugged" album.

So what makes this Small Faces DVD so much fun is both seeing live footage of this fireplug of a white soul singer Steve Marriott, belting out tunes like "Here Come the Nice" (about a amphetamine dealer--and it's spelled out directly in the lyrics: "he's always there when I need some speed"), and the other great rockers in the Small Faces ouvre.

The disc is called "Under Review" because in between the footage is a history and analysis told by NME and Melody Maker critics, Small Faces experts and friends that sews together the group's short history and explains what they did and how they did it, and how certain songs came to be.

For those of us who are fans of their "round" album *Ogden's Nut Gone Flake*, we even get to see the UK version of Professor Irwin Corey, the double-talking Sir Stanley Unwin, who narrates the tale of "Happiness Stan."

If you're a Small Faces fanatic, don't miss this trifle. It will be special for you because it was made especially for you. That's what's great about the current DVD glut. There's something specifically made for everyone, and it doesn't cost a lot.

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No Thank You, Virgil!

Posted Wed Jan 11, 2006, 6:40 PM ET

Do you know why there are no more Worlds Fairs? Because its cheaper to fly to



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Brussels for Belgian Waffles than it is to visit the Belgium exhibit at a Worlds Fair and eat them there. Worlds Fairs are more expensive than actually visiting the world! After slogging through this year's 7AM to 7PM press event chain, I've decided that "press day" and press events have become passe for the same reasons that Worlds Fairs have. With the advent and maturation of the internet, we simply don't need them.

After you sit through a usually horrible presentation, you get handed a USB flash memory thingie containing all the same stuff you just saw delivered miserably by some executive in need of a lesson in public speaking. So what's the point?

Now, there are some good press events and some good speakers like Toshiba's Scott Ramirez, who is both entertaining and well-informed. Scott combines the humor of a stand up comic with the knowledge and crisp delivery of a drill sergeant, but most presenters read off a teleprompter using the same canned sing-song lilt that gets boring pretty fast.

This year Sony's press event and booth display were particularly effective but most were rehashes of last year's or the last decade's. You can always count on Philips for ear-bleedingly *loud* press events backed by Euro-Technobeat thumping and an announcement as predictable as the sunrise that the company has finally figured out how to become consumer-friendly. Don't count on that, but count on the same announcement next year!

Philips made a big deal out of its backlit televisions again this year, which indicates to me that the idea has been a success. Why? Don't ask me! In fact, it's been so successful that the company is including "Ambi-light" on its washing machines next year. Pop in a white load and white lights glow behind the machine. Pop in a colored load and the lights flash in color. The dirtier the load, the darker the lights. As the wash gets clean the lights glow brighter. The lights come set to around 10,000 degrees Kelvin, but can be ISF calibrated.

Last year, at CES 2005 I ran a panel discussion on the future of high-end audio and practically nobody came, but down the hall the dramatically titled "Battle For the Digital Living Room," drew a large crowd of warmongers.

My friend Neil Gader ran this year's enthusiast audio panel over at "the zoo," and not surprisingly, it was, he said, "sparsely attended."

Consumers seem oblivious to sound right now with the big chains happy to oblige. For now consumers have their sights on HDTV and who can blame them?

Today's bouyant stats make HDTV seems like a no-brainer now but only a few years ago a well financed array of special interests and their supporters in the business press tried to kill off what they saw as a bandwidth-sucking, government-advocated boondoggle, with unsuspecting consumers being victimized by pushy Utopian bureaucrats. How dare they advocate quality when the mainstream agenda for decades has been *crap* in place of quality

"HD will fail!," we were told. "The people won't stand for quality!" It's easy to mock the struggle, but it was real and it was fun to both cover it as a journalist and advocate it as a partisan.

However, since watching train wrecks and plane crashes isn't my idea of a good time, I'm steering clear of the Blu-Ray/ HD DVD debacle. The tech- blood spilled in the SACD/DVD-A wars produced no winner, only two losers. I don't have the stomach to watch history repeat itself. For that reason, I have to confess, I pretty much stayed away from the main convention center.

I did go on Sunday and what I saw wasn't surprising: a mind-boggling array of HD displays using familiar technologies that have become bigger, better, thinner and especially cheaper. But aside from yet another demo of Canon/Toshiba's promising SED technology, there was not much that I saw that could be considered "new." Those expecting to see production SED at this show came away disappointed.

While some flat panel advocates continue to claim that microdisplays will "disappear" within a few years, I don't think so. In a culture where "bigger is better," (except for bigger price tags), RPTVs still hold a considerable advantage in terms of price/size ratios and some might argue also in terms of picture quality.

Texas Instruments showed some incredibly thin DLP based RPTVs that aped flat panel LCD and plasma form factor but at, what the company claims will be a much lower price for a much larger picture. Unless one must wall-hang a screen, who can argue with that?

But back to the format war: having lived through the Beta/VHS war as a consumer, can I now, as a writer, advocate in good conscience, one format or the other? No, I can't. Sure, early adopters with deep (and not so deep) pockets will simply buy one of each player and discs to play in them but if this industry thinks they can build a new format out of that dissonance, they're kidding themselves. It's difficult enough to grow one new format, but perhaps the quick and easy success of DVD has clouded their minds.

The way things stand now, when both formats have been launched, how are the software sellers going to stock their shelves? If it's like the SACD/DVD-A debacle, there will be a "ghetto" off in a corner where these discs will be displayed. Average consumers may see them by accident, and see the high price and wonder why the same title is half the price elsewhere in the store. Or worse, if the retailer chooses to place all three versions in the same bin, as some tried with DVD-A/SACD, there will be even greater confusion and perhaps no sale at all!

That's what happened with SACD/DVD-A: confusion. Consumer confusion is the last thing a new format needs to succeed. Yet that's where we're heading.

So, yes, any of us can start getting these players and discs to watch and review, and

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we can start advocating one format over the other or even both, but as tempting as it would be to play, I think I will steer clear until the digital dust settles.

When SACD launched I said the only way it would succeed would be if all titles were issued in a hybrid form costing the same as the CD version. Then the transition would be seamless and painless.

That's how I feel about HD DVD. The format is first out of the box and perhaps has an advantage because of that and because of its lower pricing at launch and its seamless backwards compatibility. If HD DVD advocates really believe in the format, and if the manufacturing is as relatively easy and inexpensive as the advocates claim, then it should neither be too difficult or too expensive to manufacture *all* discs in the format as hybrids containing both a standard NTSC DVD layer and an HD DVD layer, selling for the cost of a standard DVD.

Yes, it will cost more to produce initially, but if the HD DVD advocates really believe in their format they should be willing to subsidize the production in the short run, to assure the format's success.

Doing so would take the burden from the software vendors to stock separate titles, and to maintain a "ghetto" format section. Doing so would also alleviate consumer confusion, but it will cost MONEY.

My feeling is, if Toshiba and the other HD DVD hardware and software manufacturers are not willing to put their money where their mouths are by subsidizing the format until it catches on, then why should consumers spend their money on it? So, until there's a clear winner in this format war (and it's quite possible we'll get two losers as we did with DVD-A/SACD), I can't get enthused about either one of them. So to both Blu-Ray and HD DVD, I quote Rod Steiger in "In The Heat of The Night": "No thank you Virgil." I'll buy vinyl instead, and watch HD broadcasts when I need a hi-rez digital fix. In other news: Microsoft announced a new music download service called "Urge." I don't know about you, but when I hear the word "urge" I associate it with urination. Not a good name. Microsoft also announced its new Vista operating system (formerly called Longhorn for some reason I can't fathom), with a three word slogan, the first word being "Confident." Now I associate that word with being able to eat corn with dentures but I understand why Microsoft is using it: NO ONE using any of the current Windows operating systems is "confident." By the way: I was only kidding about the Ambi-Light washing machines!

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Plugging That Analog Hole

Posted Mon Dec 19, 2005, 4:46 PM ET



His nickname is "Tex," but only to his enemies, since it derives from the source of his wealth: he's heir to the Kotex fortune. He *hates* being called "Tex."

He believes in restoring "decency" to the airwaves, but not by enforcing the "indecent" statutes as it's currently done--with civil fines---no, "Tex" wants to *criminalize* speech which he and his "freedom loving" cohorts on the far right deem "obscene."

Given how selectively the Taliban-like "indecent" laws are currently enforced (Michael Powell actually once said that Howard Stern could be fined for saying the same thing Oprah says no problem, because Oprah is "loved"), can you imagine how free expression would be extinguished by threats of jail for talking about dangerous things like poopie and doo doo? And even you know

what? That really dirty deed?

Anyway, Tex is James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), a petulant, little man (like me!) who, last June 10th summarily ended a congressional hearing on the Patriot Act, interrupting Congressman John Conyers's opening statement with an enormous hissy fit, and declaring the hearing over by announcing, "Much of what has been stated is not irrelevant."

It goes without saying, Sensenbrenner was actively involved in the impeachment of Bill Clinton but seems so far to have no problem with a president secretly tapping U.S. citizens' phones without a warrant, which just *might* be a more serious offense than lying about having you know what with a zoftig Jewish girl. It also goes without saying, he's all for long prison terms for "substance abuse." He's got a "substance abuse" problem of his own: FOOD.

So Sensenbrenner, along with, I'm sad to say, the usually Sensensible John Conyer, (D-MI)--the very guy Sensenbrenner abused at that Patriot Act hearing--have just co-sponsored "The Digital Transition Content Security Act of 2005" that does, among other things, plug that pesky "analog hole" (not my terminology, but, ironically, sure to get Sensenbrenner's indecency antenna up, oops! another blow to decency. oops! another one).

This piece of...er "legislation" will close the gaping analog hole that allows analog video content to be digitized and then "stolen" and shipped over the internet. I'm not making this up.

All new consumer electronics devices manufactured more than 12 months after the bill is bought and paid for through Congress, oh, sorry, I mean after it's "passed" Congress, will be required to be able to detect and (love this word) "obey" a "rights signaling system" that can limit how content is viewed and used.

Two DRM technologies, VEIL (Video Encoded Invisible Light) and CGMS-A (Content Generation Management System) would end up embedded, like journalists in Iraq, in broadcast and other analog content, but only video, so thank goodness, I'll be able to copy my LPs to my iPod without being arrested. Whew!

The idea of "fair use" decided in the famous Sony Betamax Supreme Court decision would essentially be overturned. Think I'm being hysterical? Get this!!!!!! Section 201 (b) (1) of the act gives you 90 MINUTES, COUNT 'EM, 90 MINUTES from the time you record something, to when you can watch it! When the 90 minutes expire, the show you want to watch is automatically erased. I'm not making this stuff up, folks! It's real, according to Eric Bangeman (watch the name Eric, Sensenbrenner may not like it) of the website arstechnica (<http://tinyurl.com/b6tzt>). Read the story for yourself please, and then do yourself a favor and call your local representative to bitch about it--especially if "Tex" is your representative!

It just gets worse and worse and stupider and stupider every day.

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The New York Times Blows It Again

Posted Fri Dec 16, 2005, 11:06 AM ET

Okay, this is a bit off topic, but I can't help it. And since this is a family site the headline doesn't really express what I wanted to say, which is the headline minus "It Again."

Whatever you think of him--and I think he's great--today was Howard Stern's final day on terrestrial radio. It was a major event in NYC, with crowds and a hysterical reaction no unlike what happened when The Beatles arrived in 1964. Yet there was *not one word* about the event, about Stern's final radio show in today's New York Times. Instead they ran a profile of David Lee Roth, who is Stern's replacement! What a poke in the eye from the paper to Stern--a guy who takes every opportunity on the air to laud the paper.

The New York Times has turned into a piece of crap in my opinion. I still subscribe because there's no where else to go.....

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"King Kong": Believe The Hype!

Posted Wed Dec 14, 2005, 5:56 PM ET

I saw "King Kong" last night at a Toshiba-hosted screening for consumer electronics writers (among others). It proved to be everything the hype suggests--a rarity in today's overhyped everything.

I wasn't going to see the movie period. The story is too disturbing. I remember seeing the original on "Million Dollar Movie" as a kid and bawling my eyes out. The pain I felt in my side from when Kong bounced off the Empire State Building is still with me, I think. So who needs that?

But the invite was too enticing: the print was brand new, the theater was the one that held the World Premier event the week before, there would be food and drink, and I had to be in the city anyway.

I went in skeptical. I'm not a fan of big budget, computer animation-laden, empty, Dean Devlin type "Independence Day" spectacles. Fortunately, Jackson's period piece homage to the original "King Kong" is so much more.

Tell you one thing: World Premier's can't be the glamour events they used to be, given the drab, mundane theaters they're building now.

Anyway, if you can be made to believe the babe's in love with the ape, the movie works no matter what else might be wrong with it, and in this remake that does happen, thanks to the way the relationship is carefully built in the script, the brilliance of how King Kong was computer-animated to life and of course Naomi Watts's great appeal and heart-wrenching performance. In a role that called mostly for screaming and being dragged around, she wrung incredible variety and nuance from the meager emotional pickings.

Adrian Brody is equally effective as the smart-alecky scriptwriter conned into making the journey to Skull island, and the human love-interest. Here's something no one talks about: I'm glad that Brody has left his beak untouched. I hate nose jobs on actors and actresses--especially the bad ones where the person is left with the same sculpted nose as 1000 other people you meet so there's a unique-looking face and a generic nose that sticks out like a piece of manufactured putty. You can almost feel the plastic surgeon's saw, looking at those "off the shelf" noses. Here's a great actor with a big, hooked hooter, who manages to be unique-looking and not "handsome" in the cookie-cutter sense the word has come to mean, and he plays leading man love interest roles. There's a lesson in there.

I can't say I was as enthusiastic about Jack Black's performance as the cynical, two-faced, manipulative adventurer/entrepreneur/producer. He played it way too

cartoony for my taste, though the character was terribly underwritten and two-dimensional, so perhaps I'm being unfair.

Speaking of cartoony, there was this running subplot (well, it ran until one of the characters got eaten) between the ship crew's young apprentice and an experienced sailor-mentor. Most of the interchange consisted of questions that resembled Peter Graves's banter with the young passenger in "Airplane," who he asked questions of like "Do you like seeing men naked in the locker room, Jimmy?" or whatever Graves actually asked along those lines.

The computer and set reconstruction of New York City circa the 1930's is absolutely stunning, and for those of us old enough to remember the city during the 1950's, it brought back of flood of "how it used to be" memories. I asked around at the end. The winter light cast on the Empire State Building in the climax was every cold winter New York morning I can remember.

The three hour-long film is nonstop eye candy of one variety or another, with physical set shot scenes and computer animation competing for which looked and felt the most real, while still managing to maintain an impressionistic, fanciful flair.

Jackson's direction and the camera's busy eye keep things moving quickly despite the film's three hour length. Jackson never lingers on anything or anyone long enough to prick the film's balloon and send it plummeting back to earth, and that goes for both the images and the storyline.

There are scenes and sequences laden with physical cliffhangers that literally take your breath away and that are as classic and memorable as some of Spielberg's in "Raiders of The Lost Ark." You could say one big dinosaur scene was lifted from the scene where Indiana Jones is chased by that big boulder. There are also a few gruesome scenes as horrifying as anything seen in "Alien," yet Jackson holds back sufficiently for the sake of young audience moviegoers, and because this is not a horror film. It's a love story.

James Newton Howard's sweeping, old-school orchestral score (with more than a few glints of Bernard Herrmann and James Horner), augmented by a few "ethnic drumming" cues, is filled with sufficient dread and horror, grandeur or romanticism to effectively provide an adrenalin booster shot where appropriate.

The sound effects were effectively done but aside from the voice of "Kong," somewhat mundane and forgettable. The overall mix--at least in the theater in which I heard it--while coherent and tasteful, sounded and felt drab, colorless, not at all transparent, and lacking in the visual's vividness.

All I could think of while paying attention to the music's recording quality was how, vivid, transparent, palpable and lush-sounding was the music from Jerry Lewis's original "The Nutty Professor" recorded in the 1950's compared to what I was hearing. True, one was on the new DVD played back through my home theater, but I can tell.

So, "King Kong" is destined to become a classic: a big budget, audience pleasing, cartoon of a spectacular and the rare one with heart, soul and a genuine emotional core. Jackson plays the horror card but not too strongly and in the end, he tempers the audience's pain at losing "Kong," by allowing the unlikely couple to bond completely.

Don't miss this one while it's in the big screen theaters. Even the biggest home theater screen can't do "King Kong" justice.

Cynics who will watch "King Kong" and come away saying "She was the top of the Empire State Building barefoot in an negligee in the dead of winter and wasn't cold," and "She got dragged through the jungle for two days and never had a scratch, a bug bite, never had a glass of water or something to eat" can stay home!

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Roots of Woodstock

Posted Mon Dec 5, 2005, 1:28 PM ET



If you enjoyed Martin Scorsese's Dylan bio "No Direction Home," you definitely should pick up Murray Lerner's "Festival!" DVD, originally issued on film in 1967.

Much, if not all of the early Dylan Newport Folk Festival footage used by Scorsese was taken from this extraordinary documentary featuring Judy Collins, Dylan, Mike Bloomfield, Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Son House, Howlin' Wolf, Donovan, Peter Seeger, Johnny Cash, Peter, Paul and Mary, and many others. Shot in sumptuous black and white, the film combines footage from four years of Newport Festivals, probably shot in 16MM.

The sound, available in Dolby Digital and DTS surround (synthesized) is superb, given the conditions under which it was shot, but what really makes this film fascinating is the footage of the crowds, and the early 1960's pre-hippie scene. In retrospect, you can see and feel what was going to emerge a few short years later. It's like watching a seed you've planted just begin to sprout, or a flower bud about to burst.

There's plenty of ammunition for right wingers: like a shot of a young "folkie" sleeping atop his new Corvette Stingray.

The concert footage is wonderful and to see how young and fresh everyone was is both invigorating and somewhat depressing, but you can't go back, so enjoy and be glad you're still here to enjoy it!

I've long had a theory that the air back then was different air. It felt different, it smelled different and it kind of *looked* different. The vibe was definitely different, less insane, and when you watch this, if you're of a certain age, you'll be reminded of the smell, feel and look of that special time in the early 1960's.

The 97 minute film from Eagle Rock Entertainment costs \$14.95

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Sharp Thinking?

Posted Sun Dec 4, 2005, 6:20 PM ET

At the 2004 CEDIA Expo, during Sharp's press event, journalists were shown the company's upcoming television advertising campaign, produced by the prestigious Wieden-Kennedy agency (I think they did the famous MacIntosh "1984" campaign), for the then new Aquos line of LCD televisions. I don't remember exactly what was in the ad, but it was a mini-movie that had little (if anything) to actually do with the television.

Now, we journalists usually don't get involved in critiquing a company's advertising, but as long as we were asked, we told. My comment was why did the ad neglect to mention that the sets were HIGH DEFINITION. Why was the key buzz phrase left out?

The answer was that the agency had a reason and that at some point that would be added. Another writer pointed out that there was almost no narration in the spot and that if a viewer got up to get a drink, some food or hit the head, that person would have *no idea* what the spot was about.

That really nailed both the idiocy of the spot, and the arrogance of the self-important agency. I mean, maybe the egomaniacs who created the spot thought people would remain glued to their couches, watching the agency's dazzling ingenuity, but get real! Most people do get up and do stuff and given how expensive the advertising time would be for the campaign, shouldn't they at least make sure TV watchers would *hear* what the spot was for? And *hear* the Sharp name?

That made basic sense to me and to all of the journalists assembled, most of whom went on record as saying the spots had NOTHING to do with Sharp, nothing to do with Aquos televisions, told consumers nada about either the company or the product and, given that at least half the audience would be up doing other things and not even get a clue as to what the ad was for since the audio didn't give a hint, the spot was a TOTAL WASTE OF MONEY, produced by TOTAL incompetents who were wasting Sharp's money to produce some kind of self-important artistic blather that would be of zero value to Sharp.

And those were the nice comments!

Cut to two years later and what did I see today on TV during the Giants/Dallas game? Another Sharp Aquos spot and guess what? No mention of HIGH DEFINITION! *Blame the agency for being clueless, but blame the Sharp advertising point person for continuing to accept the ads being created by the clueless agency. Or is there some brilliant marketing strategy behind not mentioning that the sets are HIGH DEFINITION?*

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The High and the Mighty or Just Plain High?

Posted Fri Dec 2, 2005, 3:21 PM ET



I wonder how many movie-goers who went to see the hilarious Abrahams/Zucker Brothers' flick "Airplane" back in 1980 had previously seen "The High and the Mighty," the movie "Airplane" spoofs?

Back then you had to actually go to the *movies* to see a movie, or if you were lucky, you could catch it on television. This was way before VCRs, video rentals, cable and satellite as we now know it-never mind the Internet!

So I'll bet the vast majority of "Airplane" fans just found it funny without knowing the actual "take-off" movie, "The High and the Mighty," though a large percentage of the audience was probably mighty high!

I benefited from having actually seen "The High and the Mighty" before seeing "Airplane." In fact, I saw "The High and the Mighty" in the theater in 1954 when it first came out! That's how *old* I am. YIKES! (The picture of me here is current so I think I'm pretty damn well preserved!)

I was 7 when "The High and the Mighty" hit the theaters. It was the second movie I remember going to see: the first was Danny Kaye in "Hans Christian Anderson."

Anyway, as far as I'm concerned, to really appreciate "Airplane," you need to see "The High and the Mighty."

Today it's easy and that's especially true right now because Paramount has issued a "restored and remastered" double disc widescreen, 5.1 channel surround sound DVD of it.

If you haven't seen it, "The High and the Mighty" stars Wayne as the co-pilot who's lost his nerve and Robert Stack as the pilot who loses his during the flight from Hawaii to San Francisco. It's suspenseful, and in today's perspective unintentionally funny. It's got great music and features Claire Trevor as well as wonderful character actors like Phil Harris, Robert Newton, and Jan Sterling (the original mom on "Lassie" before June Lockhart. Of course "Airplane" features "The Beaver" 's mom, Barbara Billingsley).

"The High and the Mighty" is both compelling and as hokey as the "Airplane" spoof makes it out to be, but it makes fascinating viewing just to see how different our world is today compared to the mid-'50's. How different flying was, how small everything was, and of course how different film-making was then. Even though it is just a movie on one level, on another it does give a reasonably accurate portrayal of what it was like to take an airplane flight back then: no security screening, you could smoke on the plane, and on and on.

Moving on to "Airplane," there's a new "Don't call me Shirley" edition, also from Paramount, and the damn thing is as funny as ever. Watching great veteran actors, now deceased, like Stack and Lloyd Bridges is pleasure enough. It was the film that built "serious actor" Leslie Nielsen's comedy career and the one that led to "Naked Gun" and all the others for him.

Best of all, there's a "long haul" version with deleted scenes and interruptive commentary from the writers/directors that makes watching it twice mandatory.

You'll learn cool stuff like, the co-pilot role was not written for Kareem Abdul-Jabar. It was written for Pete Rose! But because it was filmed during the baseball season, they couldn't get him, so they turned to Kareem!

Also, you'll recognize one of the Hari-Krishna guys as David Leisure, who went on to become "Joe Isuzu" the "liar" guy in the TV ads.

So I recommend buying or renting or whatever you do, "The High and the Mighty" and "Airplane" and watching them in chronological order.

What's really scary is seeing how old 1980 looks compared to today and that wasn't that long ago...well it was, it just doesn't seem so.

I wonder how many people know who the guy left waiting in the taxi cab at the beginning of the movie is? He's Howard Jarvis, the originator of "Proposition 13" the "taxpayer revolt" guy in California. Thanks to Howard, the state's public school system, its colleges and universities, libraries and infrastructure were trashed over time due to lack of funds. The bad choices, and the electoral turmoil faced today by "the Governor" and the politicians in California, are all due to the idiocy (my opinion only of course) of Proposition 13.

Also included on the "Airplane" DVD are interviews with some of the actors from the movie, including Robert Hays but not Julie Hagerty.

Great fun and highly recommended!

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Microsoft's "Expensive" New X-Box

Posted Fri Nov 25, 2005, 5:48 PM ET



A few years ago, The New York Times, the newspaper with the most inept consumer electronics reporting in the country, perhaps the world (okay, I exaggerate out of decades of frustration with the paper's CE coverage), published a blurb about a set of Sony wireless headphones.

The product included a pair of high quality over the ear full range headphones, Dolby Digital decoding, synthesized surround sound-from-stereo circuitry, attractive styling, and a nice "base station"/headphone holder, among other features.

Unfortunately, according to the writer, these Sony headphones had one terrible flaw: they were "expensive."

How much did they cost? \$2000? \$1000? \$800? No. These "expensive" headphones cost \$499. FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE DOLLARS!

That, to The New York Times, a newspaper probably second only to The Wall Street Journal in upscale reader demographics is *expensive!*

Mind you, in that same day's "Home" section was a story about a \$3000 antique place setting--some dishes--with not a word from the writer about the cost. Not one word.

I read The New York Times every day (well at least since resuming my subscription after giving it up thanks to a pre-presidential election front page piece that began: "Like a hamster in a cage, John Kerry..." Never having read "Like a chimpanzee in the Oval Office, George Bush..." I canceled) and it mostly covers truly expensive stuff, and almost never is any of it characterized as expensive, except for relatively inexpensive CE.

Anyway, I read the paper regularly and when it covers restaurants, they *are expensive* but the cost is never really dealt with, even though, unlike headphones, the next day all you're left with is poop. When The Times covers real estate it's *expensive* but no one belly aches about the cost. When the paper covers automobiles, they are almost always *really expensive*, same usually with wine, and clothes and YOU NAME IT, IT'S EXPENSIVE, but the writers rarely complain about it and for good reason: good stuff costs \$ and better stuff usually costs more \$\$\$\$\$, which is not to say there aren't great values out there in everything that don't cost a great deal.

But for some reason when it comes to consumer electronics, and consumer electronics only, *expensive* starts at around \$200.

What got me going on this today, was a story in today's paper about the roll-out of Microsoft's new X-Box. Now don't get me wrong, I have about as much affection for Bill Gates as I do for Amx Bose. I'm a Mac guy and a lover of really good sound, and even though my nephew is the CEO of Activision (someone in the family has to make the big bucks and I'm helping with the image you see at the top taken from an Activision X-Box game), and I don't play video games despite pressure from friends (one keeps calling to tell me about some new game I'm going to love. "Does it involve shooting people and jumping over them so I can shoot the next person?" I always ask. "Yes," he always replies, "but this one you're gonna love), the story in today's Times about the X-Box launch really set me off! GUESS WHY?

Right! And I quote Seth Schiesel's story: "It is also, however, an expensive statement. The full version of the 360 costs \$400..." FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS!!!!!!!!!!!!

Nothing else written about in The New York Times costing \$400 is characterized as expensive. Not even a 400 bottle of wine. Show me where!

Yet again, when it comes to CE, \$400 is "expensive" for a state of the art video game device that doubles as a home media hub, seamlessly connects to the Internet, plays back DVDs, slices, dices chops, grinds and peels, gives your children great haircuts, is a pocket fisherman, a rotisserie and G-D knows what else it can do.

I have been bitching to The New York Times for years about this absurd double standard (not to mention the often inept reporting--never when Joel Brinkley is on the case, of course--), yet it never seems to change....today was yet another example...ugh. I posted a link to the story but you may need to register to read it

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My Wife "Couched" It in No Uncertain Terms!

Posted Fri Nov 25, 2005, 3:05 PM ET



Are you a devotee of "7.1 channel sound?" Is anyone? Oh, I'm sure there are a few of you. And maybe a few more putting speakers on the ceiling and maybe dug into the floor. But you live alone.

In my house, I have gotten permission to turn the living room into a home theater and a semi-work space and believe me, that wasn't easy. When my wife complains, I point out the 3 big dogs, 4 cats, litter boxes, dog toys, couch-rips, pee stains (not mine!) and the like. Fortunately, I don't think she's reading

this blog, because otherwise, I will pay a price for this rant!

In any case, as a reviewer, I feel it necessary to have those extra rear channels available for when reviewing 7.1 channel receivers. In the case of the Lexicon RV-8, its Logic7 program really makes those channels worth having.

What didn't make them worth having was my previous rear channel installation: I have no room for speakers behind the couch since there are only windows, so what I did, was take a few inexpensive stands, turn them upside down, put them behind the couch and rest the stand bottoms on the top of the couch-rear/window ledge, to make a sturdy platform, on which I rested a pair of Energy RVSS bipole surround speakers I had handy.

This drove my wife *nuts* as it was ugly, and you could see the backs of the speakers from the street. I got away with it because it was *work*, but she still managed to complain about it almost daily and I don't blame her. But what to do?

M&K had the solution with their thin Tripole series of speakers designed to go behind the couch and disappear. The 29" tall CS29WHs (white) are 3-way dipoles, with a forward firing bass driver, two side firing out of phase drivers and an upward firing mid/tweeter array.

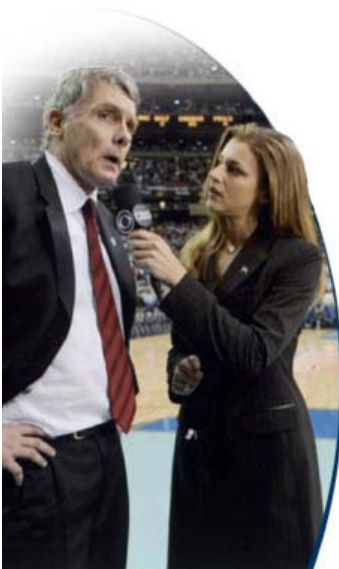
You don't see them in the picture do you? Yet they are there. And when there's rear channel info encoded on a disc, or when Logic7 is on, they spread sonic sunshine all over the rear of the room, without ever calling attention to their location, which is inches from the couch.

They sell for around \$1200 the pair, but in certain applications, like mine, they are essential and highly recommended. I know my wife seconds that!

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Can the Crib Music, Please?

Posted Fri Nov 25, 2005, 2:37 PM ET



It started creeping in during televised golf tournaments (I have a life, so I don't watch too many, but The Masters in HD caught my attention).

I'm talking about this corny, gooey, unctuous, tinkly piano music played in the background during the coverage. It's the kind of music programmed into those crib-hanging thingies you get to sooth an INFANT.

The music oozes gauzy sentimentality, but it has the opposite effect on me. Kind of like how they give speed in the form of Ritalin to hyper-active kids and for some reason, it has the opposite effect and calms them down. When I hear this oozy, awful stuff, I go crazy!

Then it started creeping into horseracing. I heard it sliming its way into the Kentucky Derby, the Belmont and the Preakness. Feh! What ever happened to the Runyonesque take on the horses ala "Guys and Dolls?" Now *that's* horseracing music, not tinkly piano syrup that makes you

think of doody diapers and talcum powder.

Yesterday during the so-called "National Dog Show" (actually a Philly show taped the week before, re-packaged and heavily edited) shown after NBC's coverage of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, I heard that damn piano crud again. Now dog shows and dog people can be amongst the most unctuous, corny and sentimental drips you'll ever want to meet. I know, because my wife shows dogs sometimes and I've been there. Having been behind the scenes, I can tell you that Christopher Guest's "Best in Show," is more like an actual documentary than a spoof! The real dog people are 10 times more ludicrous in their devotion to and obsession with their dogs. The Parker Posey character was really funny, but hardly a caricature.

So maybe that tinkly ooze belongs on a televised dog show, but even there *strenuously object*. So, since TV producers and network exec are obviously a bunch of uncreative sheep, we can expect to hear this music very soon throughout *every* sporting event. It may even have been there during the World Series. I can't remember. It's going to ruin sports on television unless you get involved and start complaining!

The only thing worse are those chicks on the field during football games doing superfluous "color commentary." The Bonnie Bernsteins. Who needs them?

Are they there to attract more women to TV sports? Forget it! If women want to watch sports they will. Having a shrill, shouting woman sticking her face into the HD camera and showing up as a three feet in diameter *face* on your 65" screen---a chick who can show up the majority of men watching when it comes to knowledge of what's happening on the field---is A) not going to attract women to watch B) make the men watching feel inadequate C) tick me off bigtime!

It started out on one network and now they all have their Bonnie Bernsteins. And all of them sound the same, have that same look on their face and say equally little of importance.

Now don't get me wrong: Bernstein is knowledgeable, well-educated and knows here stuff. But what they have her and her clones doing on the field during the game is useless, annoying and disruptive. Put her in the booth, or put her out to pasture! So if you agree with me, while you're at it complaining about the crib music, take a shot at the chick color commentators...or, take a shot at me if you disagree! I have a confession to make: every year after the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and now after the dog show, NBC runs "Miracle on 34th Street," and every time, I cry. Bawl like a baby. I'm not sure why. Perhaps I cry for the America that used to me, even though the movie is as much a fiction as the America it portrays. Perhaps it's just the sentiment delivered without an overdose of sentimentality, or perhaps its the unlikely Macy's Gimbels cooperation in place of today's partisan bickering and how nice it would be if a real live Santa Claus came along and got everyone to cooperate? Whatever it is, that movie just gets to me.

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And the Winner Isn't!

Posted Wed Nov 23, 2005, 11:54 AM ET

Have you ever bought or sold stuff on Ebay or Audiogon? I have plenty of times, mostly with great success. I've sold LPs all over the world, as well as used audio gear, much of which I'd picked up at garage sales.

I am in the midst of an Audiogon dispute with a guy I wish I could tell you how I feel about, but I don't want to get sued!

He won an auction for a vintage tube tuner with a very delicate tuning dial. I estimated the shipping weight at 10 pounds in the auction, but when I went to pack it, I realized that due to its fragility and the way FEDEX and UPS Ground tend to mash stuff up, if I didn't double box it, chances are it would arrive in 10 pieces.

When he won the auction, he asked if I'd ship FEDEX Ground and I agreed, knowing that it would be a 15 minute drive to and from a FEDEX-run drop center that accepted Ground packages. Otherwise, there would be an additional charge. I was willing to do the guy the favor.

But, when I emailed him with the actual shipping weight of 21 pounds instead of 10, he went bonkers and preferred to play a game of "gotcha," insisting I had said "10 pounds" and since according to his calculation that was \$7 and change, I was supposed to eat the difference!

Aside from his stupid game, his emails were ALL IN CAPS and all of them *ordered me* to do things. Not for a minute did he write in a personal or friendly, or first person voice. It was all drill sergeant barking IN CAPS. I have never dealt with such an abusive creep!

Here I was, making sure the tuner he supposedly wanted would arrive in one piece and if it didn't, at least it would be packed so the claim might be paid, and he's telling me "eat it!"

On top of that, I was willing to go way out of my way to save him a couple of bucks. As it turned out the difference between 10 pounds and 21 pounds from my home in NJ to his in a nearby state was *a matter of a few buck!* and he insisted on being a (male anatomy part).

So I said, fine, I'll sell it to you, with \$10 shipping because that's the cost for 10 pounds or 21 pounds, but now, because you've been such an abusive (male part of the anatomy), I'm not going out of my way to drive for 1/2 hour to save you money. Therefore, you have to pay the \$4.00 pick-up fee.

. MORE BARKING ORDERS, MORE DEMANDS MORE NONSENSE. So I filed a dispute with Audiogon explaining why I refuse to deal with this (male anatomy part) but I've yet to hear back. Meanwhile, I contacted the runner up bidder and offered the tuner to him, if he'd be willing to pay the difference for the safe, double boxed shipping. I haven't heard back yet.

So tell me: what would you have done? I am quite convinced that had I shipped the tuner to this guy, he'd want to return it because it wasn't in "brand new" perfect condition (nor did I advertise it as such).

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Saab Story

Posted Tue Nov 15, 2005, 3:30 PM ET

Is Saab following me? I find it interesting that there are two Saab sponsored links below. I have been driving these cars for 33 years. I love them. So forgive me for going off topic here for a minute and talking about cars. GM bought Saab to save the brand and now they're killing it as far as I am concerned—and I'm not one of those "purists" who only liked the pre-GM Saabs. My GM built 9-3 Vector is the best Saab I've owned, and I've owned every model Saab there's been except for the 99, which was a good idea. I'll take that car over any 3 series Bimmer, Audi or whatever. Don't expect the car reviewers to so conclude because they're SHEEP I tell you SHEEP. Every Saab review calls them "quirky." Are they? NO. But these guys are SHEEP. They make A/V reviewers seem like the most open minded, free spirited thinkers on the planet, and we've got our own BA BA BA BAD herding problems too. The problem with GMs vision of Saab starts with the Saabaru. That was a stupid idea. Taking a perfectly good Subaru and tweaking it a bit and raising the price and calling it a Saab is not what Saabers want and not what Subaru owners want. It's apparently what no one wanted, so few have sold. But I bet it cost the brand a lot of money! Now GM has sold it's interest in Fuji heavy industries, which makes Subaru (I'm suspicious of a car brand that spelled backwards is "U R a BUS"). Then, GM decided that repackaging a GMC Envoy SUV and calling it a Saab was a good idea. Well they're timing sucked. The 9 7x just came out and I drove one and for an SUV it's pretty nice. Not too big but gas mileage? Fugedaboudit! Not good. Maybe it will be a hit. I doubt it. And I wouldn't mind them doing that except that when it comes to the real investment needed, a replacement for the excellent but 8 year old 9-5, they're a few years behind. So the 2006 9-5 is just a facelifted version of a car introduced in 1997. Sorry, you can't compete in today's market with a 9 year old design. BAD MOVE. Instead of the UR a BUS or the SUV, they should have concentrated on a new 9-5 for THIS YEAR. But that's not all! One of Saab's great strengths is the turbocharged 4 cylinder engine. It SCREAMS. I have one in my Vector with a six speed manual gearbox. I drove that to the HDTV Summit in Washington D.C. last spring (see, I did get HDTV into this!) and I drove at 90 mph for

much of the time (otherwise trucks would have passed me and that creeps me out) and I still managed over 22 MPG. Plus the car is fast off the line, I mean fast. and really fun to drive. So for 2006 what does General Mutilation do? They get rid of the great 4 cylinder 210 HP 2.3 liter engine in the high performance Aero (Vector had to go because someone else holds the trade mark), and replace it with a heavy 6 not engineered by Saab, but by some other GM division. So now, it's heavier and probably doesn't handle as well, and the extra weight probably makes the car no faster than before but it now gets worse gas mileage. Now that truly is stooooopid. Plus they added this tacky chrome insert to the steering wheel that maybe would go over with in Infiniti driver, but not with a Saab guy. At least not with me. So, after 33 years of Saabs, when my lease is up, I'll either buy my Vector, which I still love after three years, or I'll bite my tongue and consider going to the dark side and get a Bimmer—this written by a guy whose license plate used to read "BMW5 UGH." That's how far GM has gone to alienate me. Good work jerks!

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Subjective Versus Objective

Posted Tue Nov 15, 2005, 3:08 PM ET

I just finished reviewing Sony's new SXR D RPTV and I did it without test gear. I didn't measure anything. Of course when the set was calibrated I did get some information about gray scale, color temperature and light output but beyond that, I used only my eyes. That's how I review audio gear too. Now it can be said that there's a big difference between the two because while there are no standards in audio recording, there certainly are standards in video production. Oh, of course there are some audio standards, but they are of greater concern to the pros. In the end, when a CD or LP is mixed and mastered, the results are a matter of taste more than they are the result of standards like the color gamut or 6500 degrees Kelvin. So while audio gear does get measured in Stereophile after the "observational" review is written (calling these reviews "subjective" opens cans of worms and is not really a good descriptor), basically an audio reviewer calls it as he hears it. Video is different because there are codified standards. So the question you have to ask yourself is: is an "observational" review of the display device worthwhile? I happen to think so. Now, one good thing is that Tom Norton does try to measure some of the sets reviewed by purely observational reviewers and he did manage to get his hands on the Sony and measure it. However, in the end, I don't measure televisions, I WATCH THEM. That's what I do. That's what most consumers do. Even without measurement gear it should be pretty easy to see if a set is BRIGHT or dull. And it should be pretty easy to see if a set stretches the correct color gamut when grass looks like it would after you've smoked some instead of looking like what you might see while out on the golf course (unless you play golf bonkered). And if the reds are orangey or if they just explode from the screen unnaturally, you should be able to see that without measuring it. And if you don't see it, it's either because the reds are fundamentally right, or they're off by so little it really doesn't matter unless you're more interested in measuring than watching. That is, unless you're not a discriminating reviewer, which I like to think I am. I hate reviewers who always write positive reviews. They're chicken. They're afraid of offending manufacturers. But obviously they're not afraid of offending or misleading readers! Now that's lame! At least that's how I see it. I'll tell you another thing: I am more interested in reviewing more consumer friendly products than the top of the line, most expensive projectors and such. Oh, those are fine too, but I know there are some other guys here more excited by that stuff than they are reviewing sets like the \$5000 Sony. I get to review crazy audio products like \$100,000 turntables, so why not let the other guys do likewise with video? There are many more readers interested in, or capable of buying that \$5000 Sony than the \$25,000 Qualia projector, so I'm happy to address them. I like to think I bring some real world perspective to the table that makes such a product review from me worthwhile. We can talk more after the Sony SXR D review gets posted

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Corning Cooks UP an LCD Website

Posted Tue Nov 15, 2005, 2:54 PM ET

Did you know that Corning, the company that brings you Corningware is a leading worldwide supplier of glass substrates for LCD panels? It is true. You may already know that and don't know what Corningware is. Especially if you don't cook. I cook. Anyway, they have this website www.corning.com/lcdtv where consumers can go to learn about LCD television technology. Don't expect to read about the benefits of plasma or DLP and based on the first article reprinted on the site "What's Best: Plasma Or LCD?" by some yahoo named John Yacono writing in digitalconnectmag.com, don't expect to get anything more fair and balanced than you'll get watching FAUX News Channel. Read it for yourself. However, I always maintain that even propaganda is better than nothing as long as you get propaganda from all sides. One good thing about it, is you learn just what propaganda is, and how that differs from a genuinely fair and balanced perspective. In any case, we report, you decide. The site is a resource to be considered, just take it with a pinch of salt when cooking your own HD casserole---in Corningware of course!

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The Black Death

Posted Sun Nov 6, 2005, 1:33 PM ET

I wrote a column back in May 2004 about "ez-D," the "Flexplay," DVD with a 48 hour shelf life, once the disc is removed from its vacuum-sealed package (kind of like how luncheon meat is packed). The discs were going to be sold like sundries, hanging on pegboard hooks at truck stops, Stuckey's, Shoney's (I thought that chain was owned by Native Americans but it turns out Schoenbaum, one of my people, shortened his name), and other such roadside stops. Parents crazed by their kids' behavior, would buy these discs out of desperation, and get



two-day's peace until the discs expired. Now, whoever thought up this idea must have gone to work for General Motors and think up the idiotic scheme to repackage a Subaru and call it a Saab. Man, did that tick me off. I've probably been driving Saabs longer than anyone at GM working on killing, Saab, er I mean "building it up" has been alive. Subarus are good cars, but I'm suspicious of any brand that spells "U are a bus" in reverse. I am not a bus, nor am I a lesbian, which is Subaru's target market. Anyway, back to these disposable DVDs. I was sent a bunch and watched one to check out the picture quality, which seemed to be as good as a normal DVD. Sure enough, 48 hours later, the red inner ring by the hole, turned black and the disc became unreadable. Like the public, I immediately forgot about this idiotic product, but when two sealed ones ("Streets of New York" and "The Count of Monte Cristo") appeared from under pile sitting atop a stack of CDs I'd been meaning to audition for over a year, I noted the black ring on both sealed discs. As with luncheon meat, the disc had a freshness expiration notice: "Product Freshness Guaranteed Until March, 2005". I popped the disc in my player and it was unrecognizable. As with expired luncheon meat, this marketing scheme STINKS. I'm glad it failed.

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Flip the Switch Max!

Posted Sun Oct 30, 2005, 7:12 PM ET

Did You watch "Saturday Night Live" last night? NBC made a big deal a few weeks ago out of the fact that they'd spent about a million dollars to convert the show to HD. And why not? Live HD is about as good as it gets, though the same can't be said for the show. It's had a few good episodes this year, but last night wasn't one of them. But anyway, I tune it in and the show opens with a Daryl Hammond imitation of Dick Cheney—one of his best, at least physically. And it's not in HD! Now this has happened before on CBS, where they went to a New York Giants football game a few Sundays ago and even though it said "in HD where available," it was in NTSC. I called my friend Gary Merson who had the phone numbers of the master control rooms for the major networks, and he called to find out what was going on. It turned out that there was another game still in progress being beamed elsewhere, that was tying up the HD system. Apparently they can't run two network games in HD simultaneously. A short time later, when the first game ended, the Giants game switched HD. What a difference! How did we ever watch football the other way?

Anyway, last night there's Daryl Hammond not in HD, but in a 16:9 letterbox within a 4:3 frame. Now that looked ridiculous! So I tried calling NBC's main number, which I thought was 212 864-4444, but no, it's some poor woman who must get wrong numbers all the time..and DON'T YOU DARE CALL HER!!!!

So I gave up and returned to watching. About 20 minutes later or so, the picture suddenly switches to HD.

This morning I spoke to Merson, who I *knew* would be watching and on the case, and sure enough, he called NBC master control and got some guy on the phone, who seemed totally disinterested when Merson told him "Hey! How about flipping the switch to HD?????"

"Yeah, yeah," or something equally blase was his response, but sure enough, shortly thereafter, the show began being transmitted in 1080i.

Frankly I think it's rather pathetic that we HD dweebs have more enthusiasm for the format than the guys working at NBC master control! Had they even been conscious of what was going out over the air, they would have noticed. That it took a viewer (never mind that he's a journalist) to wake them up to throw the switch strikes me as pathetic.

Is that what NBC spent a million bucks for?

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Something New Under the Sun?

Posted Thu Oct 27, 2005, 1:29 PM ET

I have been a Bruce Thigpen fan for more than twenty years, no pun intended. Don't worry if you don't get the pun yet. You will shortly. Thigpen first came to my attention more than twenty years ago as the inventor of one of the first practical air bearing, linear tracking tonearms.



Most tonearms are pivoted and so describe an arc across a record, but record grooves are cut in a straight line tangential to the grooves. Pivoted arms suffer from tracking distortion. Thigpen's arm traced the grooves as they were cut, theoretically eliminating tracking distortion. Problem solved. I immediately bought one.

Ah, but sometimes the cure proves worse than the disease and for reasons not appropriate to discuss here, I've gone back to a pivoted arm, though I still have a great deal of respect for Thigpen's tonearm.

Thigpen next created a series of impressive-sounding "flat panel" dipolar planar magnetic loudspeakers that operate as genuine "push-pull" transducers, with opposing field magnetic structures held together under great force on either side of a thin sheet of plastic onto which is etched a long, flat voice coil. I owned a number of those through the years as well. They were fine musical performers—"fast" and open-sounding, but the technology is electrically inefficient and requires considerable power and large panel size to produce satisfactory output and low frequency response. As with every solution, there are problems created.

Now Thigpen has created the Eminent Technology Model 17: a subwoofer he says is efficient, linear, and without equalization, capable of low frequency response from 30Hz down to below 1Hz! I haven't heard it yet, but I can definitely tell you it blows! That's because the Model 17 is basically a fan.

Yes, the Model 17 is a rotary subwoofer that looks like a fan. It modulates air sort of like a DLP chip modulates light. Well, that's a crude analogy. The fan blades, which are articulated, rotate at a constant speed. The blade pitch is modulated proportion to the audio signal applied using a conventional voice coil and magnet assembly. As the blades pitch while rotating, a pressure wave is generated, the degree of pitch controls the amplitude of the pressure wave. Air is allowed to transition through the blades. Thus oscillating, the pitch of the blades creates sound while they are rotating.

Why and how this works, and why the design is so much more efficient at producing low frequencies and moving air is explained on Eminent's website at the listed URL.

Thigpen claims that one 16" rotary woofer driven by a 300 watt amplifier equals the output of 20, 15-inch, ½ inch excursion woofers driven by several thousand watts at 5Hz.

Now, why would you want to be able to reproduce frequencies down to DC? There is little musical information down there, but explosions? Wind? Helicopter blades? There's plenty of low frequency stuff down there, and don't forget about "hall sound," the low frequency pressurization you feel when you enter a large auditorium. With the Model 17, you could create the ultimate sensation of space on live recordings, even in a two channel system.

The published specs are impressive: frequency response from 1Hz to 30Hz ± 4dB, 90dB sensitivity (1w meter @ 10Hz), maximum acoustic output >110dB between 1 and 30Hz, with 3% or lower distortion between 1Hz and 30Hz. @90dB.

How's that? Impressive right? So where's the catch? Well you have to supply your own 200 watt amplifier and crossover network, but that's no problem. And the cost is \$12,900, again no problem for the owners of kilobuck state of the art home theater installations. The only catch is that the system requires an infinite baffle behind it, meaning it needs to see either your entire basement or attic to work properly.

So it's not for everyone, but for those with the money, the desire and the attic or basement opening, I bet it's a real pants flapper!

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