

# Best Reproduced Music Award

Steve Rochlin, Hi-Fi '97 Heaven

The winner of my best reproduced music award at the show goes to an almost unknown manufacturer! Right across the hall from the California Room, where all the vinyl/CD goodies were, was Legend Audio Design's showroom. Their room consistently sounded very good from day one to the last day I attended the show! They make complete systems ranging from DACs to speakers and everything in between. At the show they used the Legend LAD-L2 preamplifier, which produces 40 watts per channel using the KT90 output tube; and The Legend minimonitor speakers mounted on their Unique speaker stands, which weigh 100 pounds before filling with sand/lead! Legend wires were also used for every part of the signal chain. When you buy into a system approach you're basically agreeing with the ears of the main designer and her/his philosophies. Me? When it came to delivering the goods, the Legend Audio room was the clear winner.

My first pass at this room was in hearing the excellent Reference Recording's drum solo ditty. Being a drummer/percussionist since 1975, I can't help tearing a system to bits when I hear drum solo material. The dynamics being produced were very, very good... with only 40-watt amplifiers and small speakers! Despite being minimonitors, these babies had bass without sacrificing midrange clarity. The sheen of the cymbals was reproduced to a very high degree. so high, in fact, that only four other systems in my lifetime have gotten this close to the real thing. The initial impact of the bass drum mallet to the subsequent inner resolution to the dynamics of the resonating drum itself-were astounding. Yup, the first thing I looked for was a subwoofer, but there was none. The tom toms were handled just as well as the bass drum. On the snare drum, everything from rim shots to snare drum sticking technique was fully evident. You see, a drummer can hear the subtle volume differences with right-hand versus left-hand sticking at times. I don't care how consistent a drummer you are, there are subtle differences, at times, between hand changes whether they be of the volume content or of the positioning-of-the-stick-to-the-head variety. Again, the Legend Audio Design system showed these subtle yet apparent musical events.

Moving to jazz and classical music, this system had great soundstage depth and lateral imaging, too. the dynamics of this music reproduction system were excellent, though not necessarily in the *p* to *fff* variety for proper reproduction of music. Tonally, this system had the best mix of harmonic rightness at the show in my humble opinion too. Between the inner resolution, the harmonics and the handling of the various musical dynamics, this system rates as my personal best reproduced music at the show. Enjoy the music!