



A SOUND EXPERIENCE NEWSLETTER 03 FOR 2009: 26 FEBRUARY 2008

This is the third newsletter for 2009, issued each month. Read more about:

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MUSIC DAY, 21 MARCH 2009



Mark 21 March in your diary as “**Booked: Music Day**”. A change of scenery is always a good thing and our first music day of the year sees AV Cables, A Sound Experience and Valve Audio working together for the benefit of anyone who enjoys music. This is the first music day to be held in Pretoria and we trust our friends from the Johannesburg area will understand that we need to have a Pretoria venue as well to cater for those enthusiasts who live on the other side of the Jukskei river.

Join us at Thula Thula Lodge, east of Pretoria, for a day of music and relaxation. Situated a few kilometres from the Zambesi tollgate, Thula Thula is a unique escape from the busy malls and shopping centres we tend to spend a lot of time in. A 220m² thatched entertainment area is the focus of the day and the three businesses will run one system comprising components spanning our catalogues. Come and listen to Jeandre’s EMM Labs SACD player, Schalk’s Whisper phono stage, A Sound Experience’s Rega turntables and the very popular and quite exquisite Sendor loudspeakers, again from AV Cables.

Treat yourself to some Furutech and Ecosse accessories; Rega spares for your turntable; and some new software from Naim Label, Stockfisch and others. On sale will be some regular best sellers as well as the new album by Sara K, **Made in the shade**. We will also be demonstrating a recent Stockfisch release, the Paperboys' **Live in Stockfisch Studio**.

AVSA Magazine will be present as well, and so expect to see Joel and Bob there, supplying AVSA Magazines.

In addition, we will take care that you do not go hungry, with food platters available and also a limited bar where you can buy some beers, cooldrinks, and so on. The lodge does not have a liquor licence and so "hardehout" is out of the question. The food platters are for *mahala* but beers will cost you R10.00 per can / bottle and cooldrinks will set you back R5.00 per 340ml can. There are tables and chairs for your use inside the listening area and you can also spend time outside. Bring along the family - there is a pool but please note that the children's safety is the responsibility of the parents or guardians. There is an animal farm and the area generally allows you to relax. Should you want to stay there for the weekend or get any other information, visit their web site on www.thulathulalodge.co.za. The web site's roadmap is accurate and easy to follow. Sufficient parking is available and there are shops nearby. Bring a picnic basket if you like and spend some time in the beautiful gardens.



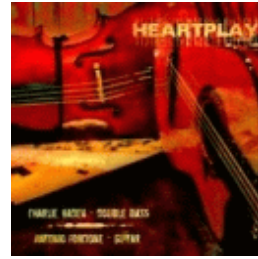
We will start at 09:00 and finish at 17:00 and you are welcome to join in whenever you like. Quick directions: Take the N1 North to Pietersburg / Polokwane. Go past Rigel, Atterbury, Lynwood and Stormvoël. Go through the neck and take the Zambesi offramp. Pay your R5.80 and turn right into Zambesi, going east. Go across the Moloto intersection and up the hill. The shopping centre with Renegades and news Café is to the left. At the next intersection, turn left into the Kameeldrift road. Continue for about 2km and look out for the following marker to the left: Laerskool Die Poort to the left. Continue for another 3km. A shopping centre is on the right. Don't turn left at the intersection here. A large church is on the right just after the shopping centre. Another kilometre or so, look out for the Thula Thula board to the left of the road. The entrance is to the right. One of

AV Cables / Valve Audio / A Sound Experience banners will be next to the road and clearly visible.

SOFTWARE SPECIALS

Looking for excellent titles but still taking a bit of strain after December? Stock up your collection at the music day. On sale will be the following titles: Rega's Christine Collister LP, Love (R250.00); Naim's Sampler 6 (R100.00); Antonio Forcione's Touch Wood, Heartplay, Tears of Joy and other AF titles (R100.00). In most cases this is a 50% discount. These prices are not available to dealers though and will apply only on 21 March.

Paying for your items is easy and you don't need to bring cash. Simply sign the order form and I will send you an invoice for electronic payment on the Monday. This way I can keep an eye on which stock was sold to whom, which helps the business build a customer profile, based on purchasing preferences. Cheques are OK too but I would like to limit the amount of cash I have to carry, due to the risk. I remember walking away from the Blues Room in 2007, after the Antonio Forcione show, with close on R13 000.00 in cash stashed in my pockets. It's scary as you never know who is in the vehicle behind you...



HARDWARE SPECIALS

To start the new financial year on a new note, why not treat yourself to some decent equipment. The following items are brand new, some having been only used for review purposes by Audio Video South Africa (AVSA) Magazine. These are available to private buyers at the prices indicated below in bold and will be available at the music day event on 21 March. Dealers interested in these items should enquire with me:

	<p>A brand new pair of R5 loudspeakers, used by AVSA for their October 2008 review of this fine product, is available. The retail price is R13 000,00 and the boxed pair is available for R11 000.00. The speakers carry a full one year guarantee and are in perfect condition. The finish is Maple.</p>
	<p>The Radio 3 FM/AM tuner is perfect to complement the rest of your Rega equipment. Available in satin, the item retails for R7 500.00 and is available for R6 500.00.</p>
	<p>A P5 turntable, with satin surround (black surround pictured here) is available. Used for a few hours during a demonstration, there are marks on the headshell where the cartridge was bolted but it is normal for all Rega arms to show this wear as the external paint surfaced will scuff, no matter how careful you are. The unit normally retails for R13 700.00 and is available for R12 000.00. Add the TT PSU off board power supply (retail price R3099.00) in either silver or black and you have probably the best value for money of all Rega's turntables, including the much liked P3-24. The quality of the RB700 allows fitting a really top notch cartridge of your choice and special three-point spacers are available to raise the VTA if required.</p>

NEW RELEASE: SARA K'S "MADE IN THE SHADE"

Sara K is no stranger to the Stockfisch label. Known as "the queen of audiophile", Sara's music is brilliant in many respects - a voice somewhere between that of Diana Krall and Joni Mitchell and absolutely stunning recording and support by her backing musicians.

Following her last recording with the late Chris Jones as lead guitarist, Hell or high water, Sara released a solo recording spanning much of her pre-Stockfisch career, **Don't I know you from somewhere?** Back in the studio for much of 2008, the new release *Made in the shade* is due middle-February 2009.

Made in the shade will be released as a hybrid SACD/CD, meaning those with high resolution SACD players will have the advantage that this format provides while the standard CD player is available for all non-SACD compatible players. You can pre-order your copy today, which is available at R290.00.



NEW SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE

Some new software and hardware will be available shortly. December was a "dead" month in terms of deliveries to the country and there are some very anxious clients waiting for deliveries. My apologies especially to those who ordered Rega spares, the supply and shipment of which was severely delayed. Since I am without a cartridge at this point and am also waiting for this same delivery, I am starting to have some bad "cannot play vinyl" withdrawal symptoms!

Titles have been ordered from Stockfisch Records as well as from a US supplier. The latter include some really stunning XRCD titles, some vinyl and especially hard to find accessories for vinyl supporters - anti static inner sleeves and plastic outer sleeves.

Back to Stockfisch. There are some titles that are consistently popular: *The Closer to the Music* Volume 1 and 2 SACD; Chris Jones' *Roadhouses and Automobiles*; Bassface Swing Trio's Gershwin and Cole Porter tributes; Steve Strauss, Mike Silver, Allan Taylor, Sara K and many other artists will be available. Contact me today for pre-orders to ensure you get a copy.

REGA REVIEWS IN AVSA

We try to have equipment reviewed in AVSA Magazine as often as is possible. A Brio integrated amplifier; Apollo CD player; R1 loudspeakers and a Radio FM/AM tuner found their way to AVSA's offices recently and I was very motivated about the outcome! Look out for the test results in the April, May and June editions.

REGA AMPLIFICATION

It looks as if Rega's amplifiers have had people sitting up and taking note recently and in a matter of a few weeks units spanning the entire range have found new homes. The baby Brio is actually an incredibly versatile unit. Apart from having a lot of grunt for what is quoted as only a 49wpc stereo amplifier, it has one feature onboard that will leave a lot of other amplifier manufacturers gasping for fresh air - a really outstanding MM phono stage. With vinyl making inroads again and many people not wanting the clutter of a separate phono stage, having an on board stage makes a lot of sense. Considering that the Fono MM unit, when purchased as a separate unit, retails for R3099.00, the selling price of the Brio for only R7500.00 means you get an audiophile quality amplifier for a shade over R4000.00 partnered with one of the most underrated MM phono stages on the market!

The next Rega product to be reviewed will be the P3-24 turntable. Turntable of the year in 2008, as in 2007, we will let the reviewers tell us why this turntable keeps trouncing units much more expensive than its R8500.00 selling price, time and again.

While the Brio comes fitted only with a MM phono stage, the higher specced models can be ordered with either MM or MC stages. The Cursa pre-amp even has the option of a line input in the place of a phono stage board, allowing one more input available for whatever item you wish to add there. Rega's inputs, other than the phono stage, are all exactly the same, making the Cursa perfect for a variety of inputs.

Moving up, the Mira integrated amplifier offers significantly more muscle and features. It can be used in combination with existing amplification (a client of mine uses the pre-amp section to drive two Linn power amplifiers) and the volume

control, with very specific and small increments, is a joy.

Looking for more control and separate units? Then the Cursa pre amp and **Maia stereo power amp** may just be all you will ever need. The Maia offers tremendous current and can handle just about any speaker load. It runs hot - I have been on the receiving end of a very hot unit and it burnt quite a bit - but Rega insists that as long as the unit's ventilation is not hindered, this is normal. My Valve Audio Predator does exactly the same and Schalk's reaction was: "*Wonderful, your amp runs perfect if it is hot, as it shows that heat is effectively dissipated using the entire unit.*" Now I am not going to argue his point!

If at this time you want to go all out, the Cursa with two **Exon mono amplifiers** will do just nicely, thank you. A client recently took ownership of such a system and he is as happy as a kid given a lollipop! Plenty of current and **control** like few other amps will provide, this is a beauty. OK, so you need lots of space (Rega insists these units should never be stacked) and a few interconnects and three power cables but hey, that's hi-fi.

Tuners? I can't remember when last I listened to a radio broadcast on anything other than a smallish system downstairs and while slogging through traffic. Using the **Radio 3** tuner that had just been returned from AVSA's offices, I was quite amazed about how good FM broadcasts can actually sound! If only radio stations would play decent music (like Radio 5 did many years ago with Chris Priors' late night show - I remember listening to an entire playing of Dark Side of the Moon, late at night, lights turned off, after reading a book on UFO's. Scary.).



The only FM/AM tuner I have in stock is a satin unit, referred to elsewhere and available at a discounted price. It will perfectly complement an existing Rega satin coloured amplifier and / or CD player.



Rega's speakers are special. Ask anyone who has listened to the **R5 floorstanders**, reviewed in October 2008, or Louis, who has just bought a set. What is really nice is the versatility these units have. Due to the side firing bass driver and a front firing port, these units can be placed close to side and back walls and, depending on your requirements, the units can be swapped around to fire either inwards or outwards.

Those tiny **R1 stand mounted speakers**, pictured left, pack dynamite into a very small enclosure. Last Saturday I delivered a Brio amp and R1 speakers for a client and out of the box, with no run-in, they sounded absolutely wonderful. Oh, and the owner is a lady with a Thorens TD 166 Mk II turntable - an absolute gem in pristine condition.

I could not believe that a woman (and please, there are no sexist intentions here) would actually own a turntable of this kind. I almost lost it when, on requesting an LP to test the system, she brought a Teldec DMM pressing of a stunning piano and big orchestra performance of some well known music. I listened to "The Entertainer" and "Summertime" quite a few times. The Thorens is satin and black, and is a perfect visual match for the Brio, also in satin.

SOFTWARE LABELS - DITCHING SOME, GRABBING OTHERS

During 2008 I put in a lot of effort selling off stock that belonged to the late Heinz Zaczek. This comprised mostly Deutsche Grammophon; ECM, Jeton, Clearaudio and some other labels. The financial reality is that I did not gain much in the process as for each item sold, 70% went to Heinz's estate and 30% came to me. In many cases the profit I made was offset by the effort to deliver items and so it really was a labour of love. While Clearaudio is very keen for me to keep on distributing Deutsche Grammophon and Clearaudio locally, these are becoming simply too expensive to import. After returning the remaining stock to Heinz's wife, no more Deutsche Grammophon, Clearaudio, Jeton or ECM titles are available. I do have a few ECM titles available though, mostly Pat Metheny (Offramp, American Garage).

On the other end of the scale I will start supplying titles on the Tacet label as well as Groovenote and Top Music. The latter is a really top notch outfit. Although their web site is quite horrible, their productions on CD, SACD, XRCD and LP are phenomenal. When at the music day, take time to listen to "Autumn in New York", a collaboration by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong, and you will hear what the fuss is all about.

SUPPLIER FRUSTRATIONS

Eish, getting your stock is not always easy. First the bank has a new regulation that invoices for international purchases will from now on only be in English (For three years they never had a problem with my Stockfisch invoices being in German

- how difficult can it be to convert the invoice's Euro amount to ZAR, use the bank's details and SWIFT code and transfer the funds?) Of course this bank, which liberally helps itself to administrative fees from my business account, did not seem to pay its telephone account last month and so could not phone me to ask for a new invoice, and I heard of the problem two weeks later when enquiring about the transaction's delay. O well, this is the sort of thing we importers have to live with. Fortunately my supplier understood the dilemma and sent a new invoice. In English.

On the other side of the planet, it appears as if public holidays exceed working days in the week and there has been a massive delay in my Rega order. My apologies to all who are desperately waiting for Rega items. I am not going to make promises about the landing date, but the supplier has indicated mid-March as a realistic delivery date.

I trust that these items will all be available by 21 March. Don't forget our appointment at Thula Thula Lodge!

Best regards, Andries O
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