

# Hifi Pig Magazine

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## REVIEWS

Pro-Ject Xpression Carbon UKX Turntable  
KEF X300A Loudspeakers  
PrimaLuna Prologue Premier Amplifier  
Tellurium Q Ultra Black Interconnect  
MS Power Distribution Filter and Mains Cable  
CLONES Audio Pre-Amplifier and Monoblocks



**INTERVIEW** Behind the Brands with  
G rard Chretien of Focal

**PLUS** Editorial, Reader System, Dealer System,  
Album Reviews and Vintage Classics

**WIN AN AMPTASTIC MINI 1 AMPLIFIER**

# Birth of a Life-Long Passion

**French Hifi Pig reader Jen-Luc Sazio has a dedicated room for his kit. Here he tells us about his lifelong journey with music and some of the equipment he uses**



I'm 6 or 7 years old. I'm running around the table in the living room.

My dad chases me.

He also attends some correspondence 'radio courses'. Eurelec, rue Fernand Holweck, Dijon, France.

Every month, he receives a booklet about radio theory, a manual and electronic components to build measurement material, little amps and an FM radio. It's still the 'valve' era.

He eventually catches me and spansks me.

Well, this might be because he was actually soldering who knows what, because there was a speaker on the table, with a wire ended by a plug. I had cleverly decided to plug it to the 220 volts plug on the wall. Small 'ploc', then nothing... Then... a slap on my butt.

My audiophile vocation could have stopped here, but it's actually where it started!

Thanks to him, we have been one of the first families in our village to have a television (in 819 lines,

British people can get it), then to have the 2<sup>nd</sup> channel, then colour television...

52 years later, while listening to my system, I still remember this episode.

52 years later, this passion has never left me. How many DIY amps, often never finished (electronic is fine, but boxes...), with transistors or tubes, speaker kits, a small collection of vintage devices (vinyl decks, old radios...), loads of components. How many specialised magazines: Le Haut Parleur, Radio Plans, LED, L'Audiophile, Hi-Fi Stereo, La Revue du Son (almost all of them have now disappeared), and the ones you can read nowadays, Elektor, Stereo Prestige and Image, Haute Fidélité and, sometimes, Hi-Fi News in english, when it can be found in newsstores.

I can recognize from far away the great majority of vintage or brand new devices, quoting their brands, models and main features...

**LATER ON**

# Reader System

I remember my parents' first Hi-Fi system, bought at the TV/radio repairer of our village after an insistent lobbying from me: a Garrard SP25 deck, with automatic changer, nameless speakers and amp. Piézo cell. Hours of listening.

Each month, with my pocket money, I bought a record. Classical music. I was studying the trumpet at Grenoble's conservatoire. No time for Jazz, the Beatles et al in this very serious institution at that time!

My first salaries, in 1975-76 if I remember well, were dedicated to buying an amp, a tuner and a Sanyo deck. A TP1000 turntable with direct drive, a Grace tonearm and a Grado cartridge. I still use it today. I funded it partly by working extra hours at a TV-radio repairer in addition to my first job as a trumpet teacher (the equivalent of 2 months of earnings for the whole package, quite a big thing).

And my roommate, a clarinet teacher, who transmitted his passion for jazz to me.

And then, one day... soldering iron in hand, leaned over a DIY prototype of a valves amp 4xEL84 single ended in parallel, trying another combination of paper condensers and valve rectifiers, I raise my head and realize that, because I'm always willing to improve the latest improvements, I don't listen to the music anymore, but only to the system.

I tidy up everything, soldering iron, multimeter, oscilloscope, amp...

And with Marie, my partner who is also a musician, we start a quest for commercialized material in working conditions...

Being both musicians and in daily contact with live music of all genres and eras, our jobs lead our quest: try to find not what could be called an audiophile listening quality, but audio realism. Tones, fidelity of reproduction, lack of directivity or distortions. Is it a utopia?

## A LIFE-CHANGING ENCOUNTER

Paris, October 2009, Hi-Fi Showroom



After reading an article in Stereo Prestige and Image about a prototype of the new Leedh (whose name might not have been Leedh at that time), I went to the Pullman hotel for a listening session. First thing in the morning, I went directly to the listening room, convinced, based on what I had read, that I would experience a revelation, an artistic shock. After half an hour, I was actually troubled, destabilized, puzzled, without being able to do a proper analysis of what was a blurred feeling, almost an embarrassment. Was something missing? References? I thus decided to walk around the showroom and to do some more traditional listening sessions: Waterfalls, massive Triangles, brand new Davis, JM Lab... I think I found what I had missed, but that I was now considering as a 'too much': too much bass, too much distortion, too much level, too much colour, too many vibrations, too 'in your face'?

# Reader System

After a too-expensive-for-what-it-was lunch, I decide to go back and listen to the Leedh again. I think I stayed more than 3 hours (I would have loved to stay longer, but had a train to catch): what I felt was missing that morning was indeed the ‘too much’, I needed some time to ‘rehab’! And there, after an aimless discussion with Gilles Milot and a few others in the corridor, I felt I had heard what I was looking for confusingly, forever: a natural sound, very close to reality, a transparent system.

Using the wisdom of patience, I started to look for a new amp (my DIY with 4xEL84 class A SE tubes in parallel with its 18 watts and unique out entry in 8 ohms didn’t seem to be suitable). Step by step, the perspective of spending €8,000 (retail price of the time, quite an investment!) to buy a new system instead of refurbishing the kitchen blossomed in our mind.

Since then, Gilles Milot comes to our place on a regular basis: he offered me the chance to listen before anyone else to his E2 prototype (they’re still at our place since then!), his cables (they’re still at our place since then...), the prototype of his subwoofer (which will be at our place, one day.)

Laughter and sarcasms often take place in front of these confusing objects (especially from the ones who have never listened to them). But every time a musician came to visit and listen to them, he or she rediscovered sensations experienced in gigs. And my son, very good musician expatriated in London for Deezer UK, brings some devastating playlists that confirm, if needed, a choice that might have seemed a risky one.

## THE CURRENT SYSTEM

### •The ‘Listening’ shed:

22 sq m (4,20x5,20x2,53) annexe made of stones from Brittany (70 cm-wide walls) with one floor. Inside walls in stone with joints made of ground, the wall at the back of the room is covered in wooden planks, vibrating. The floor is concrete on top of which I’ve put 4-5 cm of river pebbles, diam 20/40mm, 1.9 tons, yes, indeed (you can imagine the face of the delivery man).

Ceiling with exposed beams, compressed wood for the ceiling and flooring. The idea is to have as few vibrating surfaces as possible and as few parallel



surfaces as possible. No wall, except the wooden-covered one at the back, is plain.

Double glazing PVC door and window. Usage of as many ‘natural’ materials as possible. Power source: the EDF current transformer that provides electricity to the 18 houses of the hamlet is located c. 20 m from the house. One 4x10mm<sup>2</sup> cable (original) goes directly from it to the annexe to provide power to a box with 30mA differential. This box provides power to the system, after a bipolar circuit-breaker, through a 3x6mm<sup>2</sup> cable terminated by a 20A plug with a 16A adaptor (the diameter of the cable doesn’t allow to plug it directly to a 16A plug).

Two other circuits for plugs for light and other usages. No wi-fi (no way to make it go through the walls anyway!, neither do mobile phones), no CPL system.

The system is plugged to a good quality multi-socket, but it’s not an audiophile one.

### •Sources:

Primaluna Prologue 8 CD player: this is a valve CD player, including a mini triode in the clock’s circuits. It delivers an analogic sound close to what you can hear when listening to vinyl records.



# Reader System

A vintage DAC Audioalchemy with a DIY power supply, plugged either to a Windows 8 tablet via a USB M2Tech Iface2 interface (SSD hard drive and battery power supply) with Foobar or Aimp3 players – Wav, Flac, Wma audio files are stored on the SSD hard drive – or to an iPhone dock with optical output to listen to Mp3 files on Deezer.

Vintage record player: Sanyo TP 1000, Grace arm, Grado signature cartridge and Thorens TD 145, SME 3009, Shure V15III cartridge, RIAA DIY Elektor scheme pre-amp.

The Sanyo record player has been used since c. 1976...

•**Amplification:** Primaluna Prologue 3 preamp with JJ Electronics valves, 2 Primaluna Prologue 6 mono blocks, 70 W, JJ and KT 77 Genalec Gold Lion valves.

The choice to use valves material is as much an aesthetic one as an emotional one, a sort of bridge with my past, a link with my lost-but-still-here father.

The interconnect cables are either vintage Leedhs and Kimber cables from the 90s, or Baie Audio ones (French brand now disappeared)

And, of course, HP Leedh speakers and cables.

## CONCLUSION

Life, the building of a human being, has according to me a lot to do with people you meet.

Music, Hi-Fi, are two factors that help these encounters: passion, sharing, artistic emotion, exchanges.

And since I'm a happy owner of the Leedhs, the house is never empty!

