

kaiser acoustics

Kawero Loudspeakers - An Ultimate Experience

as reviewed by Jim Merod

I suppose I'm more fortunate than most because I'm often invited to audition fabulously expensive, and sometimes fabulously great, audio gear. It's part of the good luck of the sometimes hard work of an audio reviewer's life. I have no complaint about the hard work and, when it comes to the cheer of experiencing music at its utmost degree of resolution, anything invested in working with the High End world of sound is literally eligible.

Recently I had one of those wonderful moments of sonic bliss and motional as well as aesthetic surprise. Rick Brown, of *Hi Fi One, Carlsbad, CA.* is an audio guru of unusual discrimination and jovial intelligence. I was invited to join a small group of superior listeners, that included Robert Harley of *The Absolute Sound* and Steve McCormack of SMC Audio and the Lotus Group, for a late afternoon-early evening bivouac with Rainer Weber's Kawero speakers.

Rick had McCormack's extraordinarily resolving VRE-1B preamplifier in the sound chain along with a pair of Berning Quadrature "Z" amplifiers (at 220w each). Rick's listening room is beautifully set up and fully (carefully) damped with sound reinforcement panels, Rick's generosity as a host is perfect: amazing cheeses; gaggles of good beer; and many drams of good sparkling wine to cap such manic happiness.

We dug into the system with vinyl. Nothing we heard was out of whack, especially given the laser-like precision with which Rick and Steve McCormack dialed in tone arm weight. For anyone not thoroughly aware of the vast enhancement possible by accurate, well-chosen arm loading, find the nearest vinyl junkie who is an expert at such things. You have a world of sonic joy waiting. The Spiral Groove "1" platter was augmented by a Tri-Planar 4 arm along with a "Lyra Scala" pick up and Concert Fidelity SBA4BC. Until the end, all cables were Echoplex "Obsessions"... and here I must note that the entire system's jaw-dropping resolution, with its immense transparency, was brought to even fuller realization by many iterations of Paul Waukeen's Stillpoints' Reference Isolation System.

After our small gang got the point—that Rick's happy vinyl rig is a source of deep pleasure for him and for his friend—we moved to CDs. Rainer Weber was interested to hear the outcome of "live" recorded sound through the Kawero's. I was no less interested... in fact, far more, since the album I very much wanted to hear was perhaps the most difficult recording I've ever made: a seven mic set up to capture one of the greatest jazz trios on the globe—Buster Williams, on bass; Kenny Barron, on a Steinway "O"; and Lenny White, drums.

That recording was impeded (almost destroyed) by a break in to the SUV that held all my recording gear outside the producer's front door. My best equipment was stolen. I had to record this world class trio with inferior gear. Luckily, years of recording tricks learned the hard way and the good luck of having just plain old "good luck" working for me against odds (as well as the forensic mastering delicacy of Maestro McCormack) all eventuated in a successful recorded outcome. Joe Kubala was on hand in northern California on the day of the concert and helped considerably with mic placement during an especially burdened sound check before the performance. That fortuitous companionship is precisely part of the "good luck" at work here. The album's playback, through Rick's state of the art system with the Kaiser Kawero's in place, was the moment of truth for this recording.

The outcome was "affirmative cubed"... I have never heard this recording with such exposure and vividness. Any audio system driving musical signals through the Kawero speakers (at 92dB sensitivity and maximum internal damping) would be hung out to dry if it had a weak link in the sonic chain. I can now rest assured that concerns I had about the ultimate truthfulness of this recording were dissolved. With Kawero speakers delivering this fantastic trio's brilliant playing, there was no "recording." There were no speakers. The trio sat before us with utter reality, holographic and powerfully, texturally present. The music and these players were *in the room* with us.

Only when we finally replaced a single set of cables, swapping in a balanced pair of Stealth Metacarbon cables between the CD player and the preamp, did even more vividness, "there-ness," and sonic amazement burst forth. In my astonished witness, two events occurred simultaneously: (1) My most rigorous and challenging recording came to full life with completely transparent resolution; (2) Kawero speakers notched themselves into my awareness as not merely "world class" music delivery boxes, but speakers that are very hard to equal at any price. Sound is an elusive topic to describe verbally. You must hear these speakers to understand the full impact of their musical magic. I'll attest, right here, that Kaiser Kawero speakers are at the top of my list. I know of only one set of speakers to date that rival these for the sheer production of "living sound." Differences between the speakers that have earned my deep respect are subtle, but the Kaweros own the distinction of an indescribable invisibility. Their thoroughly absent audio "footprint" just may be, in my experience, unrivaled. Period. **Jim Merod**

Retail: \$65,000 a pair

Kaiser Acoustics
<http://www.kaiser-acoustics.com/>

JIM MEROD'S SYSTEM

LOUDSPEAKERS

TETRA 606s (also: Apogee Stages, SP TECH Time Piece 1.2s, Vandersteen 2Ce-modified, Acoustic Zen Adagios, van Scweikert VCL-15 monitor reference and sub, Tetra Manhattans),

ELECTRONICS

Z Systems UDP-1, Birdland Odeon-Ag 24-192/SACD Upsampling DAC, Manley Shrimp, Meridian 518 mod plus, Audio Research SP-8 Dahong Seeto version preamplifiers. McCormack 125 Platinum Full-Rev Edition, Nuforce P-9 mono blocks, KR VT600-MK tube mono blocks, McCormack 0.5 "Lady Day" Edition amplifiers.

SOURCES

OPPO DV 970HD, Denon 1650-AR, Pioneer Elite DV-45A, Samsung DVD R135, McCormack CD Drive-plus, Alesis ML 9600 MasterLink 24-96 digital recorder, Tascam RA1000 DSD recorder, Marantz "Professional" Recorder, Tascam RW750 Pro CD Recorder,

CABLES

Nordost Valhalla, Stealth Metacarbon and Stealth ZERO limited edition, Kubala-Sosna Emotion and Emotion "cry'd", van den Hull carbon, Acoustic Zen Matrix and Silver Reference "Exact", Magnan Silver Bronze, Silversmith Paladium, Analysis Plus ULTRA PLUS, Wireworld Eclipse III, Audience Conductor, Bogdan Silver Spirit, Silverline "Alan Yun Special Edition" balanced digital, Acoustic Zen MC-Squared, Magnan digital RCA. Kubala-Sosna Emotion, Analysis Plus, Acoustic Zen Absolute. Gargantua, Krakatoa, and Tsunami power cords, VH Audio Flavor 4, Stealth, PS Audio, WireWorld power cords.

ACCESSORIES

Audience AdeptResponse 12 outlet power conditioner and Magnan ultra power strip.