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This is my first HIFICRITIC editorial since taking over the role from Paul. In future I intend sharing this column with our new Senior Contributing Editor, Andrew Everard, and on occasion, with a guest – and the same will apply to our back page opinion piece, now renamed *Sound Stage*. As you'll see in this issue, we'll be using that back page to draw in opinion and insight from around the hi-fi industry.

For now, however, I want to introduce the vision we have for magazine and the content we intend bringing to our readers. Andrew has a wealth of experience in both reviewing and journal production, and not least blog and web site skills. He is full of enthusiasm for all aspects of audio from the nitty gritty of the digital sub-structure, of operating systems, to the niceties of thermionic amplification for a hybrid preamplifier.

Quoting Andrew: 'What is HIFICRITIC? The answer is simple: it's different. Independent of advertisers, written by – and for – true hi-fi enthusiasts, and backed up by a wealth of technical knowledge and listening experience, we'd like to think it's as much of a breath of fresh air as it was when the first issue appeared in 2007, and still offers an alternative perspective to that of the other magazines in the market.'

Analogue and digital designs will figure as strongly as ever but we will try harder to represent the balance of technologies supporting the global audio market. All at HIFICRITIC value our mission to present independent objective opinion free of advertising bias. Our extensive product review content is balanced by powerful technology features, opinion pieces, and not least the music: record reviews, pop, classical, folk and rock.

Four of us HIFICRITICs went to the Munich High End Show in May, simply because it's the biggest event for high-end audio not just in Europe, but probably the world: Colloms and Everard, plus Jason Kennedy and Ed Selley formed our 'landing party'. with the last- named penning the report published in this issue. During the show we exchanged findings on interesting show products and related technology developments, as well as demonstrations and exhibits that we felt should not be missed.

While a feeling of malaise seems to permeate the UK it did not seem that way at the Munich show, which was far from despondent: in fact, was the best ever, 6.8% up on visitor numbers (a total of 21,000 over four days), with an 8.6 % increase in trade visitor attendance, this representing 72 countries. And while 551 exhibitors from 42 countries is good for the show, it certainly proved challenging to reach a fair overview of the exhibition.

Having recently published the Thorens Phono Enhancer review (Jan-Mar Issue 2019), I planned to visit the company's stand at the show, where I found a good quality fabricated demo room boasting a complete Thorens line up. This included the large, efficient, floorstanding loudspeakers, which were delivering a musically involving and naturally dynamic sound: clearly this company can do it all.

In a similar vein of high efficiency and musicality I experienced the latest Voxativ Ampeggio Due full range 'driver in-a-large-baffle' and was surprised by the uncoloured and full range output of this design. The bass was deep and tuneful, the overall sound well balanced and immediate. A well tuned acoustic line back-loads that exotic custom driver, rather confounding my preconceptions.

A confessed Magico owner (S5II), I did seek out three of the company's Munich demos, for the M6, M3 and M2, and noted that costly audio electronics were present in each case. While there were variations in performance, the overall standard was very high and as I noted in our site blog, the re-mastered LP of Belafonte's classic 'Day O' was particularly captivating. I also made a point of experiencing the Wilson Sasha DAW demos, finding good results, though perhaps not quite as convincing as in my own listening room.

Top quality supporting electronics is essential to these demonstrations but frequently it is the loudspeakers which hog the reporting limelight: the Martin Logan Monolith sounded very good as did the ATC 100 ASE active floorstanders. For a fuller round up of sights and sounds, visit my Munich Show BLOG at HIFICRITIC.COM

Martin Colloms
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