



# High End Show Munich 2019

THE BIGGEST AND BEST HIFI SHOW IN THE WORLD ROLLED INTO BAVARIA AGAIN, AND ED SELLEY WAS THERE TO GET THE SPIRIT OF THE EVENT

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It's been 15 years since the High End Show relocated from Frankfurt to the MOC Exhibition centre in Munich, and rarely have the fortunes of an event been so positively affected by a change of venue. As a space for an audio show, the MOC is extraordinarily effective, combining spacious halls – for booth and stand exhibitors – with dedicated rooms for larger and more ornate systems. Like all such buildings, it isn't perfect sonically – far from it, its mass of glass and concrete being singularly unsympathetic to the business of great audio. Get past this, though, and the sheer breadth of product on show makes this an unmissable event.

In terms of new product, pretty much every category of equipment has been bolstered. Picking out overarching themes at shows of this nature isn't always easy: there's enough of any given thing being announced for advocates of that approach to declare that it is the one that the industry is adopting wholesale, when of course nothing of the sort is happening. Nonetheless, I'm willing to stick my head above the parapet and suggest that there are some meaningful patterns.

The first is that the high end is in rude health. If you have the budget to go for a piece of equipment that lassoes exotic ends of the periodic table together to create something with the density of a neutron star, there are any number of companies clamouring for your business. Furthermore, there is a specific subset of these products that is now openly gunning to be labelled 'The Best In The World': you only needed to look at the Wilson Benesch *GMT One* turntable prototype to see this in action. Everything, from the contactless 'Omega

Drive' system to the remotely adjustable VTA adjustment good to increments of microns is there, all in the pursuit of being the best and attracting the customers who must have it.

This also manifests itself in the release of limited editions in genuinely limited quantities. If you want a pair of Focal *Scala Utopia* 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary speakers in their fetching silver black finish, you'll need to be quick and lucky: only four pairs are to be made. The industry as a whole is starting to get to grips with the idea of genuine exclusivity and the excitement the concept generates.

Even with products not technically limited editions, many companies took the opportunity to demonstrate and bolster the top of their range. In the case of some of the combinations on display – such as Magico and MSB and Martin Logan and Pass Labs, to name but two – the results were extraordinarily impressive.

Not everything was aimed at the luxury trinket set however. The Magicos at the show (and there were

*Above: There were born speakers aplenty, but Living Voice's Vox Palladian with Vox Basso subwoofer produced the best performance*

*Magico was the speaker brand of choice for electronics companies to front their systems – here the M6 partners Soultion's equipment*

