

inches, this 50 pound beauty will do 300 watts into 8 ohms. The MX-R uses a massive linear power supply, is fully balanced and uses a zero-feedback topology. Available now at \$15,000.00 a pair.

Boulder Amplifiers, Inc. unveiled their new 800 Series line that includes the 865 Integrated Amplifier (125 wpc), the 810 Line Preamplifier (\$8,000.00), and the 850 Mono Power Amplifier at 200 watts into 8 ohms (\$5,000.00 each). Drawing on the technology and the polished physical presentation of their more exotic brethren of the 1000 and 2000 lines, these new additions were likewise elegantly executed. The best part was the sound. I was completely drawn in by the sophisticated and effortless presentation that could be enjoyed on the very revealing B&W 801D loudspeakers. A special pleasure through and through.

In another part of the park **Esoteric** was showcasing their expanding product offerings. Hot on the heels of last year's absolutely stunning unveiling of their P-01 and D-01 (\$50,000.00 total) premier playback components, Esoteric introduced the P-03 transport (\$13,000.00) and the D-03 stereo D/A converter (\$13,000.00). Though priced at a more comfortable level, the 03 series retains many of the advanced technology aspects and the ethereal elegance of the 01 series components.

On top of that, the new 03 pieces offer increased flexibility. For example, the P-03 transport will put out, not only an 8 times up-converted 24/172.4 signal, but it can now handle the DSD 64f sample rate as well. Flexibility is outstanding with AES/EBU, dual AES, RCA digital and Toslink in/out connections. For DSD data transfers, the choice of the IEEE 1394 "Firewire" route or their own ES-LINK is provided. To get the most out of the P-03/D-03 tandem, Word Clock synchronization from the Esoteric G-0s will be accepted on 75 ohm BNC inputs on each unit.

Played back on the marvelous Aerial 20T loudspeakers, using the Esoteric Class A monoblocks and the ARC Ref 3 preamp, the sound was exceptional.

Esoteric also introduced a new "Aesthetic Lifestyle" series consisting of the SZ-1 Super Audio CD player, the UZ-1 Universal Player, and the AZ-1 Digital Integrated Amplifier. These components have been designed to a very high technical standard, and come packaged in a strikingly elegant 77 mm high chassis design. The pricing is very accessible.

Jeff Rowland Design Group used this CES to introduce a new stereo power amplifier, the Model 102. Using Jeff's version of ICEpower technology that has been the basis for the success of the C201 and C501 models, this little darling will put out 100 watts per channel into 8 ohms and 200 wpc into 4. The \$1,490.00 price is darling also. This year **JRDG** showcased great sound yet again by getting the Magico Mini loudspeakers (\$22,500.00) to sing absolutely delightfully. Up front Jeff had the Ayre CX-7e player and his own Synergy Ii preamp with the flagship JRDG C203 (\$15,000.00) power amps driving the speakers.

Pioneer really got my attention with their new EX Speaker Series. And why not? Andrew Jones of TAD played a significant role in the design and development of these stunners. According to Andrew, this series has been "developed from the knowledge gained in designing the TAD Model 1." What piqued my interest, however, was the sound. These speakers conveyed the



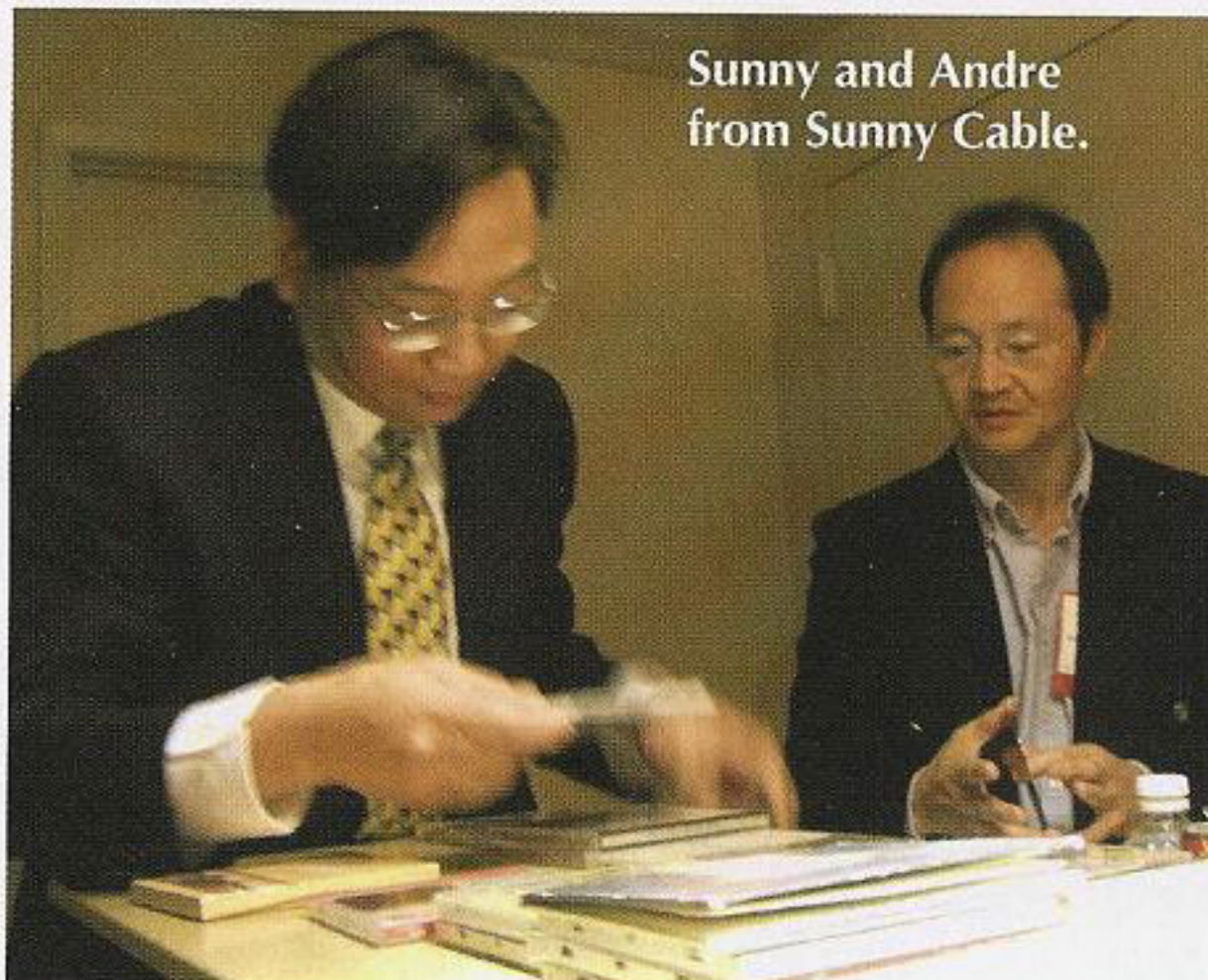
Threshold S/350 Stasis amplifier.

music in a very poignant and involving manner. Pinpoint imaging; solid, extended bass, and tremendous dynamics all gelled to draw me into the performance. Large amounts of credit for this great sound has to go to the auxiliary gear: **Bel Canto's** CD-1 CD player for source material (\$4995.00), their PRe3 line-level preamplifier (\$1695.00), and their new ICEpower Technology REF 1000 monoblock power amplifiers (\$1995.00 each).

For handling the mids and highs, the EX Series uses a slightly modified midrange driver of the Coherent Source Transducer (CST) that had been developed during the TAD- M1 project. While the concentric beryllium tweeter remains unchanged, magnesium has been substituted for the midrange diaphragm in this iteration. For bass an 18-cm driver with an Aramid cone was designed from the ground up. The S-1EX, their top model, sports a CST driver and a pair of the 18 cm woofers, all time aligned along a curved front panel in an absolutely striking enclosure. Internally bracing abounds, and all parallel walls are avoided to produce a very inert enclosure. At \$9,000.00 per pair, judging from what I heard and saw, these speakers are a runaway bargain.

Sunny Cable Technology, a relative youngster in the business, introduced several speakers to add to their extensive cable repertoire. According to Sunny Lo, the designer, his speakers use the "back-to-basics" approach concentrating on two main considerations. First, he time-aligned the areas of the cones that emit the sound and not the voice coils as is the more common practice. And second, Sunny focused on the speed of the electrical signal as it travels through the cabling and the crossover to the drivers.

The enclosure, housing a 15 inch paper cone woofer, is basically your rectangular shape with only



Sunny and Andre from Sunny Cable.

Photos: Ross Wagner

