

John Atkinson, Editor of *Stereophile Magazine* reports:



The MBL room was the last room I visited at the NY Audio & AV Show. I sat down in the sweet spot, on the couch midway between the MBL 101E Mk.2 'radialstrahler' speakers, each driven by a 9011 monoblock; Jeremy Bryan cued up a hi-rez file of Peter Gabriel singing 'Wallflower,' from his New Blood album; and OMG. This was true virtual reality! Then Jeremy explained what he had to do to tame the room's acoustics—see Ariel Bitran's blog following this one. All I can say is that it was worth the effort!

From: <http://www.stereophile.com/content/mbl-rocks-peter-gabriel>

Ariel Bitran, Editor of *Stereophile Magazine* reports:

Long lines flooded out of the MBL room on the 18th Floor of the Waldorf=Astoria all weekend long, so I arrived at 9:30am on Sunday morning to see if I could get a good listen to the MBL system by myself. Upon arrival, MBL North America's representative, Jeremy Bryan, was still setting up his smaller speakers, the mbl 120 Radialstrahler (\$21,400/pair, without stands) along with their mbl C21 stereo power amplifier (\$9200), mbl C11 preamplifier (\$8,800), and mbl C31 CD player (\$9,200), all members of their Corona line of electronics.

I sat to the side of the room while Bryan finished his set-up, centered in his listening position, and tilted his head back and forth. After the first ten seconds of four to five different demo tracks, Jeremy blurted, "Alright! I think we're set. Come sit down."

He added, "You know, we were having trouble at first with our set up. You see these radiators behind us?" Two massive radiators, one on each side of the wide room under two long windows, were covered by white sheets.

*"We noticed they were causing problems. The radiators boomed at 40–180hz all by themselves. Just a slight bump on them with your fist..you were booming at over 70db, and that was before the radialstrahlers sent their waves everywhere. With the radialstrahlers going, the 40–180hz region was up 12db higher than the rest of the signal spectrum. " To resolve the issue, Bryan and his team stuffed the radiators with 700 copies of *Stereophile* and *The Absolute Sound* they meant to hand out to room visitors. :-).*



Cement blocks were then placed on top of the radiators in front of the windows to stabilize vibrations and focus the image at midrange height. After the treatments, pink noise increased by 10db.

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While they were still experiencing a 4-5db spike at 50 and 60hz, the MBL team decided to move on from there.

The first recording we listened to was a synthesizer-based adaptation of Bizet's Habañera from the record Aria by the group Aria. My first noted impressions include a very clean and transparent sound but a touch thumpy. Maybe it was that 50 or 60hz spike.

Bryan knew I was a rock'n'roller so he played Metallica's "Fuel" from their record ReLoad. I have banged my head many-a-time to this song while speeding through the hilly suburbs of Birmingham, Alabama, searching for the excitement of steel clanging against steel and flaming pools of oil causing sweat to drip off my nose, the same search that would someday take me out of the lush green forests and stuffy houses to the industrial metropolis of New York City to work at Stereophile. I noticed bassist Jason Newstead's massive tone, a much clearer picture of the vocal harmonies in the chorus, and a realistic crunch to Kirk Hammett's guitar during his solo, the closest sound I heard at the show to a real guitar, which can be difficult to emulate. There are so many distinct tonal characters to a guitar raging from a tube amp that are difficult to emulate including the high-end bite without being piercing and the midrange-rich body that sustains notes from start to finish. The MBL system captured this.

I needed to hear more guitar.

Bryan played a song by the band Nightwish that started with pounding axes! Too bad the song was awful. I had to get involved.

"Do you have any Zeppelin?"

"I have How the West Was Won. Does that work for you?"

"Perfect!"

Before the public arrived, we listened to "Stairway to Heaven". Jimmy Page's jangly 12-string led the first half of the tune, but once Bonzo and JPJ kicked in for the latter verses, the thumpiness I heard during the Aria record returned. I forgot to mention, I also heard this excessive bass during Metallica's "Fuel". Gah. So many low-end problems at this show. Even when the manufacturer stuffed the radiators with Stereophiles, better sound did not permeate through the air.

"Do you have any Wagner?"

"I have Ride of the Valkyries."

Damnit! No Parsifal! I was starting to get upset with the music selection in rooms at the show. It was mainly my own fault. I forgot to bring my compact discs on Sunday, but do you know how many times I have heard Ride of the Valkyries at the show already? Another exhibitor who popped in to take a listen asked, "Have you heard the Pilgrim's March from Tannhauser?"

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My enthusiasm unbridled: "Yes! That's the kind of Wagner I'm talking about!" After hearing Valkyries so many times, I had become numb to its genius that was self-evident through the MBL system, which accentuated just the right level of stickiness to the brass and clung to your ears and demonstrated Wagner's drastic dynamic changes as the MBLs could fade quickly to a hard and deep black.

Bass notes finally started sounding right on a solo piano piece, supple and non-overwhelming.

We then compared an HDTrack of The Who's "Overture" to a DVD-A rip and a vinyl rip at 24-bit/88khz. While the HD track certainly sounded the most detailed, the vinyl rip was the easiest to listen to and gave more body to the drums. The listener next to me commented on how he preferred the DVD-A rip to the HDTrack. Fun stuff.

That was enough MBL for the morning, but Bryan promised the big speakers would be hooked up later in the day, so I promised to return.

A man of my word, I returned and made MBL my final stop for the show on Sunday for a grand conclusion. Listening through the MBL Reference Line System, including the mbl 101E MkII Radialstrahler loudspeaker (\$70,500/par), mbl 1621A CD Transport (\$28,000), mbl 1611F D/A Converter (\$28,700), mbl 6010D Preamplifier (\$26,500), and two mbl 9011 monoblocks (\$53,000/each), which can also be used as a stereo amplifier, I decided to put back on the Zeppelin and hear what the bigger system could do.

"Could you put on 'Black Dog'?"

"Sure thing." Bryan responded, "Just give me a moment." He prodded at his iPad, then gave the audience a warning, "We're about to play some heavy metal, so for those of you who are the faint of heart, consider this a warning."

I interjected, "Wait. What are you about to play?"

"Metallica's 'Fuel'."

"No no no, please put on 'Black Dog'." There was zero desire in me to hear Metallica's 'Fuel' again. That recording is way over-compressed, and I didn't want to continue to overload the room with bass again.

"Gotcha," said Bryan, returning to his iPad.

Cue the first few notes of 'Stairway'.

*"Woah woah woah! Could you please play 'Black Dog'?" I felt bad halting the demo so many times and amidst the gear, the audiophiles, and the requests, I can understand how Bryan could get confused, but I knew what I wanted to hear and why. **Story continues on page 4***

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Finally the right song began.

"Hey hey mama said the way you move / Gon' make you sweat, gon' make you groove."

Uh! That was fucking visceral! Bonzo's titanic drumming, Plant's sexual sibilants, and the accuracy in Page's Les Paul tone, accentuating the honey-sweet treble, put Zeppelin right in front me, possibly the closest I'll ever get to the real thing. At one point, I thought Plant was singing behind me, but that was just a fellow fan. Everyone in the room was smiling, sharing in the experience of hearing the closest thing to what was live Zeppelin. The stage wide and tall, just like the real thing. Easily my favorite memory from the show: is there a better way to make new friends than through the hi-fi?

From: <http://www.stereophile.com/content/mbl-rocks-radiators>

Marshall Nack, Editor of *Positive Feedback Online* reports:

I visited the MBL room early on Saturday to avoid the persistent line that develops out in the hallway. The first selection was a solo piano recorded in high res by Jurgen Reis MBL's chief designer. The sound was as impressive as last year at Axpona NYC 2011, with some minor quibbles: the piano's case resonances could have been a tad more developed and the bass was a bit congested. Then I learned that I was listening to their new, lower-priced Corona Line. Holy smokes!

MBL's demo alternated between complete Corona and Reference Line systems during the course of the day. When I returned to hear the Reference Line, which most people consider the King of Brawny Power, I heard a sweetness and delicacy previously undetected from this gear. The MBL room was truly reference caliber, as usual.

From: <http://positive-feedback.com/Issue60/nyshow.htm>



Jeremy Kipnis, of Home Theater Review.com reports:**Room 3 - MBL Germany**

mb1 101E Mk.2 "radialstrahler" speakers
mb1 120 Radialstrahler (\$21,400 per pair, without stands)
mb1 C11 preamplifier (\$8,800)
mb1 C31 CD player (\$9,200)
mb1 C21 stereo power amplifier (\$9,200)
mb1 9011 monoblock amplifier

A big crowd pleaser, the MBL Room, as always, was packed to capacity, and center seating was highly coveted and not easily acquired. As you might expect, **the MBL 101s** were fully engaging, with their 360-degree radiation pattern, which is a real difficulty when it comes to hotel rooms, where the geometry of the room is usually not symmetrical. Extensive tuning of the room was required in the first 48 hours of the show in order to reach the level of fidelity exhibited here. For a room that was very damped by curtains, acoustic treatments, people's bodies and all the Stereophiles they had brought stuffed into the windowsills (by Jeremy Bryan), the speakers sounded amazingly clear and transparent, without being particularly colored. My iPad audio analyzer kit revealed amazingly detailed waterfall plots, showing how the speaker clearly resolves musical nuance to a far more accurate degree than any other design at the show. These details are normally obscured by speaker cabinet resonances. The MBL speakers, amps, and source components worked together in synergy to produce one of the most transparent and musical sounds at the show. Had they used a larger suite, I'm certain this combination would have been number one by a long shot. But the room was the limiting factor, in spite of all the fine acoustic tailoring.

From: <http://hometheaterreview.com/the-10-best-sounding-rooms-from-the-new-york-audiophile-show-2012/?page=2>

Electronichouse.com reports:

"One of most popular rooms at the show was the MBL suite. These very modern-looking speakers, which don't really even look like speakers, range from \$6,000/pr to \$271,000/pr. Playing when I was there were the Radialstrahler mb120 models at \$21,400/pr. The whole system, with MBL amps, pre amps and CD player ran around \$100,00.

This system produced some of the most detailed and realistic, maybe hyper-realistic, music of the show. At one point I listened to an acoustic version of Bohemian Rhapsody and when the bass kicked in it was getting hit with a wave at the beach. You felt every grain of sand and salt."

From: <http://electronichouse.com/slideshow/category/12813/1684>

Michael Lavorgna, Editor of AudioStream.com, reports:

MBL was playing their Combination D System (\$259,700) and each time I passed the MBL room there was a (long) line of people waiting to get in. Once again I was ushered in, cutting the line, but I could not bring myself to displace anyone especially the guy in the sweet spot since he looked to be having an out-of-body experience.



From: <http://www.audiostream.com/content/mbl>

The Part Time Audiophile reports:

You have to say this for mbl — they're consistent. Here again is the \$260,000 Combination D System I saw at AXPOA, again in that scrumptious white finish. Yum.



I didn't actually get to hear that system, though — what I heard was the smaller, \$21k/pair, mbl 120 Radialstrahlers. The Corona Series provided the rest of the signal chain here, including the \$9,200 C21 stereo power amplifier, the \$8,800 C11 preamplifier and the \$9,200 C31 CD player. The Corona line is quite new and represents mbl's most affordable offerings. The units here at the show (the pre and the digital front end are the ones in black, below;

*the amp is tucked between the Reference Series amps, above) are actually the first production units out the door. This is the prettiest gear in high-end audio right now! If you have a minimalistic thing going on at home and have successfully upgraded all your interior decor from those modest IKEA beginnings, I think this all-white finish will really appeal to your sensibilities. Not really being a fan of desert landscapes, myself, I revel in the luxuriousness of this look-and-feel. It's about as bespoke as you can get. **Story continues on page 7***

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Aside from putting together a thrilling demo, another thing mbl does well is manage the crowds. Their room wasn't large, certainly not as large as I've seen them command at other shows, so some crowd-control was pretty much a requirement. What I wasn't expecting was the line.

Each day, there was a line. At some points, the eager would-be auditioners completely choked off access to other parts of the show.



United Home Audio's Greg Beron, my local mbl dealer, is a tall man with a serious demeanor and forbidding look (until you catch him smiling). I found him in the hall playing bouncer on Sunday morning when I finally gave up waiting for the demand to ebb and just asked if I couldn't just slip in for pictures. He did get me in and damned if I didn't feel a little bit the rockstar. Yes, that's me, not waiting. Seeva, suckas!



Inside, the room was very cozy, so my luck did not, however, secure me the sweet seat. In fact, all the seats were claimed. No matter! I made myself annoying by taking pics until the lucky seat got vacated.

With the setup on the long wall, there really wasn't much room for seating. There was a couch in the center and some seats along the sides of that, but that was it. Pretty obvious why they were managing the entry.

Beautiful gear and some beautiful sound. Ideally, a larger room would have been more helpful, one with more separation between the listener, the speakers and the walls, but given the challenges, I think the mbl team did as good as they were going to be able to. I was a happy camper — the sound was enveloping and dramatic. Painting the musical pictures we were treated to, with words, is an exercise in pale frustration, so I'll leave off by saying this — no one else does this, to this level, with this level of fit and finish. Startlingly good on all fronts.

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The Reference line of gear is rather beefy. Check out the DAC above and player, below. My back hurts just looking at it.



Unfortunately, I missed the big Combination D System so I can't compare, but for whatever it's worth, the "baby" mbl omni's really do a remarkable job of recreating a "live space". Hopefully, this gear (or some iteration/selection of it) will also be on display at CAF this year, where I'll be attempting to get a lot more time on it.



From: www.parttimeaudiophile.com/2012/04/23/nyav12-mbl

Ken Micallef from 6 Moons.com reports:



"The challenge of getting good sound in a hotel room is a quandary for exhibitors regardless of venue. But when a handful of rooms produce excellent sound (often playing excellent music) you start to wonder whether it's really the rooms causing the trouble or rather a lack of knowledge in setting up equipment amid the vicissitudes of padded walls and plaster ceilings - or just poorly designed equipment, period.

'This was a tough room,' Jeremy Bryan of MBL North America, Inc. stated. 'We had to stuff the radiators under the windows with 700 copies of Stereophile and TAS which we were going to hand out to visitors. We built a cinder block wall on top of the window sills because the windows were set back about two feet taking away any treble that was left after the carpet, fireplace and silk padded walls had sucked it up. And we had some shipping damages to fix before setup.' Bryan's comment details the lengths some manufacturers will go to turn hotel rooms into listening rooms. Did I like the MBL room? I sure did. Its 360° sound was as lush, energetic and involving as

a sweet woman in her wonder years...Fitting in an audience from a line outside the door, the MBL room looked dark and felt cool, contrasting the deep fast and pleasingly hothouse 3D sounds emanating from its sleek systems. With its dimmed lights and largely white-tint equipment the MBL presentation felt like an intimate church service. I only missed the incense. The 360° staging was very alive and quite natural. With seamless frequency response and relaxed sonics, the MBL room had presence in spades."

From: <http://6moons.com/industryfeatures/nyc2012/1.html>