



unique high end audio

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Mark Henninger from "AVS Forums":

Best of CES: MBL Introduces Noble Line with N11 preamp, N15 Amp, N31 DAC/CD Player



As CES 2017 wrapped up Sunday afternoon, I ducked into the MBL room at The Venetian to check out what one of my favorite high-end brands had to show. I'm glad I did because it was a spectacular demo; the stereo contained new Noble Line electronics from MBL that debuted at CES. The system drove a pair of the company's iconoclastic Radialstrahler 101E Mark II speakers (\$70,500/pair), N11 preamp (\$14,600), and four N15 mono amps (\$17,800 each) for a total cost of \$156,300—not including cables.



When dealing with a rig like this, I put aside value judgments and enjoy the show.

The speakers were biamped, each one assigned two N15 monoblocks for a total of 1020 watts per speaker. The tracks in the demo were 24-bit / 88 kHz and sourced from studio masters—this was a hi-res digital presentation, no vinyl in sight.



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Check out this brief video of MBL's \$156,300 system featuring the Noble line.

MBL indulged my wish to audition iconic hip hop in a show setting. The first track played was "Nuthin' But a 'G' Thang" by Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg from The Chronic.

The show had just ended so nobody cared if we blasted music. It sounded great—for a 25-year-old rap song—with plenty of bass slam. It's not a sophisticated mix, but it's well produced. The synth sounds floated near the center while the beat created a canvas for Snoop and Dre's raps.

Up next was "Burning Down the House" on Speaking in Tongues by The Talking Heads. I loved the way the drums came through, with that dynamic, tactile feeling you get in a jazz club. When Bernie Worrell's synth entered the mix, the 101E Mark IIs rose to the task and enveloped me in funk. I loved it.

"Buffalo Soldier" by Bob Marley was excellent. The backup singers sounded like angels; I found it interesting how the MBL system rendered the horns so smoothly. Marley's voice had perfect clarity.

Yes, it's a dream rig. It's not as insane as the Radialstrahler 101 X-treme system I experienced at AXPOA 2016, but it aced delivering sweet sounds with transparency and zero dynamic compression. It's what you'd expect to get for shelling out the big bucks. Plus, it doesn't hurt that MBL speakers look like they come out of a science fiction movie.

A proper high-end demo demands a few obligatory Hi-Fi tracks, so we moved on to "A Battle Between" by Blue Tofu on Blue Tofu. Did the system handle well-recorded female vocals, ambient pads, percussion and lead synth with aplomb? You bet. The production is impeccable so I added it to my AVS Forum speaker evaluation playlist.

Live recordings create fascinating aural landscapes that offer insight into a system's performance thanks to a "you are there" feeling. "The Real Blues (Live)" by Ray Brown on Basics did it for me. The Piano and bass combo did it for me. Of the recordings I heard at CES, this one came closest to reality.

I enjoyed the holographic illusion of a band being in a room with you, the sensation that the bass is... a real bass and not bass coming from a woofer. You can hear the audience making comments and when they applaud—if I closed my eyes, I was there, simple as that.

And then came the grand finale that completely blew my mind. "Thriller" by Michael Jackson from the album Thriller. It's not a track I play often, but I've owned a version of since it first came out and everyone in my middle school was wearing those leather zipper jackets.

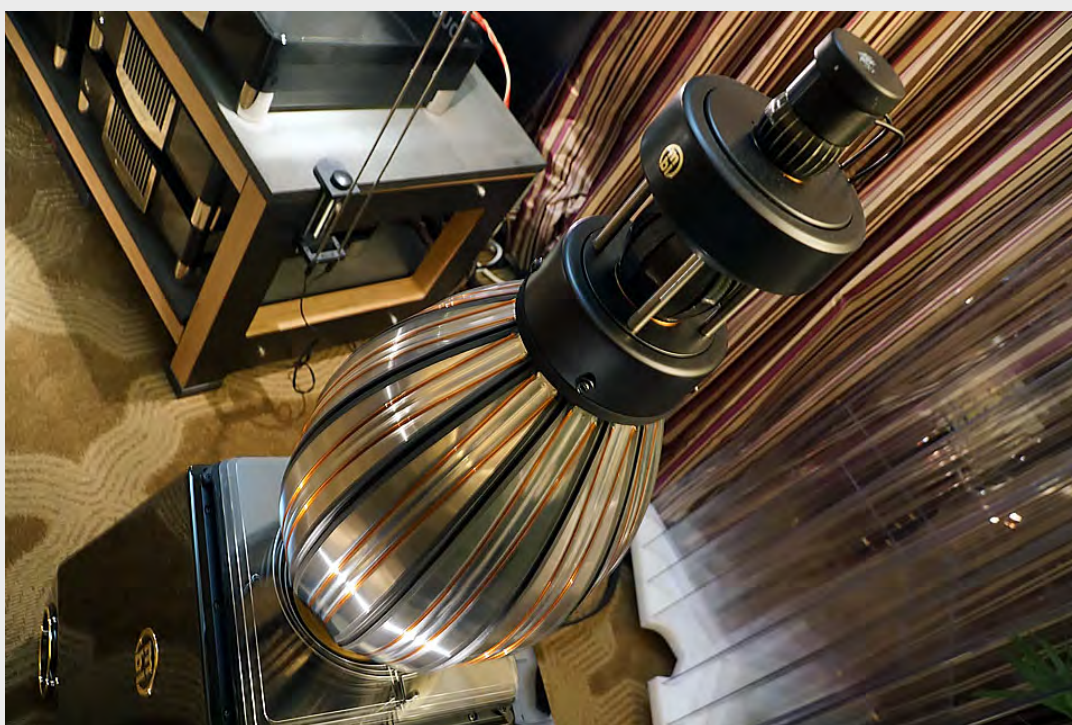


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Anyhow, I did not expect the profound physiological reaction I experienced as the track played. From three seconds into the track onward, I had the most extreme goose bumps I've ever experienced.

As the track progressed, playing at unity gain, the hairs on my arms stood on end without subsiding. Usually a reaction like this lasts for 20 or 30 seconds. This time it kept going as the track played. And then, when Vincent Price came in I could feel the hair on my head tingle and the goose bumps got even more extreme. It's the first time that reaction outlasted a song, and not something I'll soon forget.

Thriller was the very last thing I heard at the show, which officially ended a half hour earlier. Sometimes, at high-end shows, I feel jaded. The next day, when I got home, I described it to my wife and got goose bumps again—ridiculous! I can only bow to MBL. Best of CES for sure.



The Radialstrahler 101E Mark II is one of the most radical looking speakers out there.

from: <http://www.avsforum.com/best-of-ces-mbl-introduces-noble-line-with-n11-preamp-n15-amp-n31-daccd/>

Top 10 Audio Demos at CES 2017

Millionaire toys that deliver on their promise of an elevated level of performance are probably the most entertaining aspect of high-end audio shows. In this instance, MBL absolutely blew me away during an extended demo that turned out to be the last of the show. By the time it wrapped up with a rendition of "Thriller" playing at unity gain, I had the goose bumps to justify calling it the best audio demo.

There's no mistaking MBL Radialstrahler 101E Mark II speakers for any others.

from: <http://www.avsforum.com/top-10-audio-demos-at-ces-2017/>



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Julie Mullins from “the absolute sound”:

CES Show Report: Electronics \$15k and Up and Analog Highlights
MBL Noble Line N15 amplifier and N11 preamplifier

the absolute sound®

The MBL N15 monoblock amp (\$17,800 each) and N11 preamp (\$14,600) debuted at the show—and delivered a big, full, 3-D sonic thrill ride powering the MBL 101E MkII Radialstrahler omnidirectional speakers (\$70,500/pr.) via Wireworld Eclipse 7 cables. It was hard to believe these electronics were so fresh off the shelf they’d had no break-in time. According to MBL design engineer Juergen Reis, the N15 can handle more loudspeaker phase shifts thanks to its higher current, and the new N11 design has improved unity gain for better sound quality and greater transparency. All the Noble



line amps also feature MBL’s LASA (Linear Analog Switching Amplifier) technology, initiated in the Corona line. While LASA is in essence a Class D variant, the resultant load-independent frequency response and very low (frequency-independent) distortion figures measure more like those of Class A. Hence, these deliver far better sonics than Class D designs of old. The N15 and N11 are expected to be in full production the first half of this year.

JM’s Best of Show: **Best Sound** (Cost No Object)

MBL 101E MkII Radialstrahlers (\$70,500/pr.) powered by MBL Noble electronics. It’s no accident these guys regularly host after-hours listening gatherings at shows. These omnidirectionals really immerse listeners within the soundscape like few others.

from: <http://www.theabsolutesound.com/articles/ces-show-report-electronics-15k-and-up-and-analog-highlights>

Neil Garder from “the absolute sound”:

Neil Garder’s Best of Show: **Best Sound** (Cost No Object)

the absolute sound®

“For sheer majesty, ambience, and slam, I extend the nod to the unsinkable MBL 101E Radialstrahlers partnered with MBL’s new Noble electronics, player, pre, and monoblocks. Wunderbar!”

from: <http://www.theabsolutesound.com/articles/ces-2017-show-report-neil-gader>



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Jonathan Valin from "the absolute sound":

CES 2017 Loudspeakers \$20k and Up

The venerable, \$70,500 omnidirectional MBL 101 E MkII, on the other hand, driven by Juergen Reis' new MBL electronics (N31 DAC/CD player, N11 stereo preamplifier, N15 monoblock amplifiers) and wired with Wireworld Eclipse 7 cabling, sounded better than I've heard it sound in years. Simply wonderful on the "Overture to Candide" [Reference], it pulled off as complete a disappearing act as (and generated a more three-dimensional soundfield than) any other speaker at CES—reminding me of why I feel in love with Radialstrahlers in the first place, lo these many years ago. With lovely timbre on strings, fabulous 3-D soundstaging and imaging (though a Radialstrahler's imaging will never be as dead-centered or tightly focused as that of a director radiator), this was simply a fabulous presentation, as realistic and musical as anything at the show.

the absolute sound®



Best of Show (price no object)

For overall soundstaging and three-dimensionality, the MBL 101 E MkII with MBL electronics.

from: <http://www.theabsolutesound.com/articles/ces-2017-loudspeakers-20k-and-up>

Rafe Arnott from "PartTime AUDIOPHILE":

PART TIME AUDIOPHILE

CES 2017: Day Four – ... MBL, and Canada's Moon statementmono blocks

... So it was that these thoughts were on my mind as I stepped into the MBL room, and soaked in the Radialstrahler 101E MKII vibes.

These particular MBL transducers are also known as Daleks by some of us because of their visual similarity to the alien mutants/robots made famous in the original UK Doctor Who television series in the '70s. While the Radialstrahlers may look like different things to different people, most will agree it doesn't matter what they look like, it's the sound that matters. I find their sonic signature to be incredibly detailed, and very powerful, with the ability to seamlessly disappear into their surroundings thanks to a neat trick of evenly pressurizing a room.



from: <https://parttimeaudiophile.com/2017/01/09/ces-2017-day-four-avantgarde-acoustic-mbl-pro-ject-and-canadas-moon-statement-mono-blocks/>



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Larry Greenhill from "Stereophile":

CES 2017: MBL's New N15 Monoblock Amplifier

stereophile



Jürgen Reis, MBL's lead engineer, was delighted to show me the company's new 560W (into 4 ohms), mono power amplifier, the MBL N15 (\$17,800). Slimmer than MBL's reference-line amplifiers, four N15s (for bi-amping) fit into one equipment rack. There are two XLR (balanced) inputs, one for a preamplifier and the other for a future media server. Reis was proud of the N15's very high common-mode rejection and 36-ampere output capabilities. Using MBL's smart-link network connection, one can access a display showing the amplifier's temperature and fault status. I was treated to a detailed PowerPoint presentation showing the amp's stability and low distortion while driving difficult speaker loads. I was impressed by how the amplifier is cooled using diecast internal heatsinks via chimney-style air distribution that flows from an intake at the bottom of the chassis, up through the output stage and power supply, and out the rear panel.

from: <http://www.stereophile.com/content/mbls-new-n15-monoblock-amplifier>



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Michael Lavorgna from "Audio Stream":

CES 2017: A Conversation with Juergen Reis (MBL) and John Atkinson (Stereophile)



Jana's video schedule allowed for some AudioStream time so I planned a video conversation with Juergen Reis, MBL's chief engineer, because I enjoy talking to Juergen, learning from him, and thought you might enjoy sitting in. I ran into John Atkinson just prior to our scheduled time and John graciously agreed to join us.

Enjoy!

from: <http://www.audiostream.com/content/ces-2017-conversation-juergen-reis-mbl-and-john-atkinson>

Jana Dagdagan from "Stereophile":

MBL's Juergen Reis talks Digital with John Atkinson



Last week, we posted a video on AudioStream of a conversation between Juergen Reis (MBL's Chief Designer), Michael Lavorgna (AudioStream), and John Atkinson, which we filmed during CES 2017. During that same session, we also filmed a conversation between JA and Juergen that focuses more specifically on MBL's new N31 DAC, which JA will be reviewing in a future issue of Stereophile.

In this video, Juergen and JA discuss digital filters, aliasing, Nyquist ringing,

USB inputs, inter-sample "overs," and many of the other arcane issues involved in DAC design.

(Editor's Note: the graphs presented in this conversation do not show the N31's behavior but were chosen by JA from his measurements library to illustrate and clarify the points made.)

from: <http://www.stereophile.com/content/mbls-juergen-reis-talks-digital-john-atkinson>



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Leo Yeh from "MY-HIEND":

主題: 2017年CES實況報導- High Performance Audio 高級音響



MBL NEW NOBLE系列的兩位家族成員N11前級與N15單聲道後級正式發表，現場發聲的是整套NEW NOBLE系統，包括N31 CD-DAC、N11前級與4台N15單聲道後級，喇叭為101 E MKII，整體維持MBL一向以來的高水準表現。

MBL總工程師Jürgen Reis跟我講解N11前級與N15單聲道後級的特點。



from: <http://www.my-hiend.com/vbb/showthread.php?11377-2017%E5%B9%B4CES%E5%AF%A6%E6%B3%81%E5%A0%B1%E5%B0%8E-High-Performance-Audio-%E9%AB%98%E7%B4%9A%E9%9F%B3%E9%9F%BF&p=230544#post230544>



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Jack Liu from "Audionet":

[CES音響展] CES 2017電子展報導

... 我原本是要從29樓開始，接著30樓，31樓，34樓，35樓，這是往年的順序。但是剛踏入29樓，就碰到MBL的總工程師Reis，剛好我有Noble Line N31 CD唱盤的問題要請教他，於是就跟他先上30層。

普洛影音網

AudioArt 音響論壇 PRIMA 新視聽



請教過Reis之後，我就順便坐下來聽了，今年就從30樓開始吧！喇叭還是熟悉的101 E MKII，不過擴大機可不一樣，用的是還沒在台灣露臉的Noble Line N11前級與N15單聲道後級。我聽到的聲音非常活，尤其低頻段很有彈性，中、高頻段很輕鬆，聽起來好像把101 E MKII的聲音變得更年輕，更輕鬆，更好推的感覺。



我問Reis，他是否也有更好的感覺？他點頭稱是，他說這幾年自己設計擴大機的確又往前進了一大步，不過因為還是有人喜歡老MBL的聲音，所以他們也還保留Reference Line。



架子上就是N31 CD+DAC，N11前級與N15單聲道後級，這部單聲道後級每聲道輸出560瓦。

from: <http://www.audionet.com.tw/thread-9206-4-1.html>



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**Chris Martens from "hi fi +":
Best of CES 2017: Traditional Two-Channel Audio**

hi-fi+

MBL Noble N11, N31, and N15

Many audiophiles hold the German firm MBL and its vaunted omnidirectional loudspeakers in very high regard, but a challenge for any would-be MBL speaker owner is the admittedly thorny issue of how best to drive those speakers. Stated simply, when it comes to amplification MBL's speakers tend to be demanding with a capital "D"! Naturally, MBL's flagship range of Reference-line electronics are up to the task, but frankly those models tend to be physically massive and to carry correspondingly wallet-crushing price tags, so that's what's desired is a range of electronics that can make the top-flight MBL speakers sign, yet that are at least somewhat more compact and that sell for merely expensive (as opposed to ohmigosh-über-expensive) prices.



Enter MBL's new Noble line electronics, comprising the N11 preamplifier (\$14,600), N31 CD player/DAC (\$15,400) and the N15 510-watt monoblock power amps (\$17,800/ea.). Note that each MBL 101E MkII loudspeaker requires two N15s, so amplifier costs can add up quickly.



Having heard MBL's 101E MkIIs driven by the firm's over-the-top Reference-line electronics many times, I can honestly say the new Noble-line electronics give up very little in the way of performance vis-à-vis their larger and far more costly siblings. And that, I think, is the point. As you can see from the accompanying photograph, the Noble-line electronics can fit neatly on a conventional hi-fi shelf and look good doing so, whereas the Reference equipment is so big that your listening room might well wind up looking like a high-end audio 'shrine' (complete with

'altars' to the massive Reference power amps) and not a practical living space at all.

Well done, MBL.

from: <http://www.hifiplus.com/articles/chris-martens-best-of-ces-2017-traditional-two-channel-audio/?page=2>



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Olaf Sturm from "i-fidelity.net":

i-fidelity.net



MBL-Entwickler Jürgen Reis hatte den neuen symmetrischen Vorverstärker N11 im Gepäck. Die Lautstärkeregelung erfolgt mit Unterstützung durch einen Schrittmotor. Nichtgenutzte Eingänge können abgeschaltet werden. Des Weiteren erfolgte die Konstruktion unter den Aspekten hohe Bandweite, geringes Rauschen und niedrige Verzerrungen. Insgesamt können sieben analoge Quellen angeschlossen werden. Ebenfalls neu sind die Monoverstärker N15, die 560 Watt an vier Ohm leisten und Spitzenströme bis zu 36 Ampere generieren können.

from: <http://www.i-fidelity.net/reportagen/themen/ces-2017/seite-6.html>



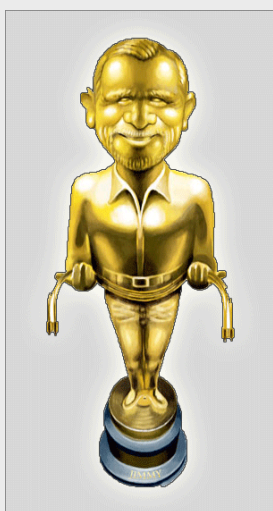
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**Jim Saxon from "The Audio Beat":
The 2017 Jimmy Awards**



In former years, I could not warm to the sound of mbl's highly regarded omnidirectional loudspeakers. It seemed to me that the presentation, while vanishingly low in distortion, was too far rearward from the plane of the speakers. The depth of image seemed artificial, as if I were watching A Midsummer Night's Dream from the veranda while the performers were cavorting on the other side of the swimming pool. This extreme depth of image seemed to me a distortion from reality; mbl enthusiasts disagreed.

But it now appears that the company's engineers took my misgivings to heart. With the introduction of mbl's new Noble line of electronics, the mbl system now projects 3D images within the room instead of floating in faux space a long distance away. The result is as captivating as the old portrayal but now immediate and tactile. The N-series components have enabled the realization of the mbl dream.



While the attainment of realistic perspective does not come cheap, the cost of the entire mbl package is reasonable by reference standards: Radialstrahler 101E Mk II loudspeakers (\$70,500/pair), N11 preamplifier (\$14,600), N15 mono amplifier (\$17,800 each, four used), and the luscious N31 DAC/CD player (\$15,400). Moreover, MSB's cable selection seriously economizes this incredible system. Wireworld Eclipse Series 7 interconnects (\$450/meter pair) and speaker cables (\$1550/meter pair) were right at home here, as was mbl's own PC2 power cords (\$950 each) A Silent Running Audio Scuttle² (\$7000) housed the electronics, proving that good racks cost money, but please note the disparity between the low cost of Wireworld Eclipse cables and the prices of other brands used in prize-winning systems. If a system can garner an award for Best Sound at the Show linked up with Wireworld, why, may I ask, should anyone invest six figures in cabling? In case the reader missed the off-handed remark, here it is again.

The Jimmy Award for Best Sound at the Show goes to mbl.

from: http://www.theaudiobeat.com/ces2017/ces2017_jimmy_awards.htm