



AN ESSAY BY LOUIS MOTEK,
 LESSLOSS AUDIO DEVICES



Sound Systems for Show

Audio is not wallpaper

In the past two to three decades the consumer audio electronics industry has managed to divorce itself from the belief that fidelity to playback quality is important. Tragically, for the public at large, music has been reduced in importance to the role of an interior design element: nothing more than a lifestyle statement for you to invest in, and for your friends to talk about. As if your choice of wallpaper and playback equipment are somehow equals. Music is thrown in as an extra; if you really want to play it, this function is accessible in there somewhere.

Our other option is fiddling with some 200 buttons to achieve instant audio nirvana (to taste), with Times Square LED panels twinkling away as we press things we know nothing about, but imagine in our naive, good natured minds that some engineer in Japan has been working on... if for no other reason, to justify the marketing department's techy new patented adjectives-turned-nouns of the season. Whether they are selling a fireworks display or a music system doesn't matter much, as Roger Waters said, "as long as the kids go."

But in reality, a scantily outfitted chamber in which a music-loving human being lives and listens is far more valuable than the most lavishly decorated big'n'rich system set up merely for show. The listener is eager to discover time and again what it means to be human, to enter the mysterious realm of artistic imagination and insight, and to feel close to his fellow citizens on the other side of Earth and beyond Time. What the artists have put onto tape matters, because we in turn put it directly into our souls. Recording and playback equipment is a time machine, funnelling all of history into sounds.

Listening to music is more than a pastime. Music comes from our most basic humanity, from the deepest fathoms of intuition.

Albert Einstein said it well: the only real valuable thing is intuition. This well-known genius played the violin and led a rich life experiencing wonder and awe. Call it what you want: the child within, the eternal student, the taste of life, God's voice – it doesn't matter. What matters is that we are all boats on the same sea, and we're all captains learning from one another's analyses of the stars.

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Communication comes in handy. But communication requires an adequate absence of interference. Speech needs to be intelligible. On a phone line, this is achieved with only a few digital bits of audio and some really fascinating compression algorithms. Those, however, who discover the unending ocean of beauty, insight, and intuitive knowledge which has been recorded in the form of music will desire even more precision and quality from their playback equipment. Not for the sake of the gear, but for the sake of a desired proximity to the recorded audio event—for its content is so vast and deep, the musical vocabulary so unending in its nuance and expressive touch, that a phone line scenario would be extremely limiting to the sublime information that ought to be communicable through music.