

December 9th, 2006

I'm a new Sound Lab owner and I've wanted to write for some time now regarding Sound Lab speakers and my experience with them. I've been reading this forum for over a year now and have used the member's posts and opinions to familiarize myself with the various issues of owning Sound Lab speakers. So I write this as a documentation of my experience and as a thank you to the various individuals who have helped me along the way.

In the fall of 2005 I decided that the existing speakers I owned were perhaps not the best match for me, or the Atma-Sphere amps I own, and I started looking for something to replace them. After searching and researching for several months I had it narrowed down to three separate brands of speakers and two different technologies. One of the three brands was Sound Lab.

In the spring of 2006 Brian Walsh of Essential Audio held an open-house featuring Sound Lab U-1 electrostats powered by Parasound JC-1 amps. Brian also owned the amp/pre-amp combination I own, the Atma-Sphere MA-1 mk III and the Atma-Sphere MP-1 mk III pre-amp, so it was an excellent opportunity to hear these speakers with amps I know and love. He invited me to fly to Chicago to hear the Sound Labs using both the Parasound and Atma-Sphere amps and to meet Dr. Roger West, who would also be demonstrating the Sound Lab Majestics at a meeting of the Chicago Audio Society.

At the open house Dr. West and a number of Chicago area Sound Lab owners were happy to share their experience with these speakers. This was a great chance to get to know both the inventor, the business person, the representative and the people who ultimately enjoy these speakers. Everyone was very helpful and honest in their glowing opinion of these speakers and their experience. Brian was very knowledgeable and ready to answer any question I had and he allowed me to listen to the speakers privately with the very amps that I owned after the open-house was finished.

At the Sunday meeting of the Chicago Audio Society I had the opportunity to speak at length with Dr. West and Connie who took the time to answer every question I had in detail, from room dimensions and acoustical treatments, to amp loading, to the various options and flavors of the Sound Lab panels. The absolute depth of knowledge and commitment to detail was indeed impressive and I would like to thank both Roger and Connie for all of their time at that meeting.

Brian's absolutely heroic efforts in setting up the Majestics and a complete system in a large hotel meeting room, in a matter of hours is to be commended. He assembled something truly special for the members of the Chicago group and I remain absolutely impressed with the demonstration. It's safe to say that I have never heard a more realistic presentation of music in my life and the first cracks of the drum solo that were played as a demonstration of the Parasound amps and the Majestic speakers were indistinguishable from a live drum solo.

They played several different types of music for the next few hours as members of the Chicago Audio Society brought forward music they would like to hear. These speakers appeared to play everything well and when the music was recorded well the illusion was complete and wonderful.

So, by the end of the weekend I had decided to order a pair for myself and I selected the Sound Lab A-1PX panels and later added the "hot-rod" back-plates before they were finally delivered. I had them wired internally with Purist wire as suggested by Albert Porter, who was also very helpful in selecting these speakers. They were framed in birds-maple as were the back-plate boxes. They used the black fabric covering as suggested by Brian and Dr. West.

It took some time for them to arrive as you might expect and at 520 lbs shipping weight getting them into Canada required some paper work and several shipping companies. Brian assisted in every step of the way and personally drove from Chicago to Ottawa, Ontario, Canada (no small distance...) to help with the set-up and optimization. I have never encountered such dedication and customer service and I thank him and the people at Sound Lab for providing an outstanding service experience.

So, what do I have ultimately and how do I feel about them? In short, the sound in my room is outstanding and it's difficult for me to imagine a superior system. From the first notes these speakers are spectacular and greatly improve on the previous speakers (Kharmas and unlike the Kharmas they make everything easy to listen to. On truly exceptional recordings the sound from these speakers is as close to real live performances as I can imagine. They are the last speakers I am likely to own and a wonderful match with the Atma-Sphere amps.

Once again I would like to thank Sound Lab, Dr. West, Connie, Brian and all of the people who were so kind to offer advice at the Chicago meeting. You helped me make one of the most significant audio purchases I have ever made and you have impressed every step along the way. I'm looking forward to years of musical enjoyment from these fabulous instruments.
Thank you

R. H.