



My Top Three Rooms - 2014 Axpona Chicago High End Show

by Robert S. Youman

...It might just have been a coincidence, but it seemed like many rooms were playing tributes to Chicago artists and especially the blues. A much older Buddy Guy was now playing in the room and standing just a few feet away. His *Blues Singer* album touched all the right bases for me. This man can really wail on guitar and over the years his voice has become much more mature and expressive. Again, this system provided impressive levels of resolution, dynamics, and just overall seduction! It was hard to sit still—my toes were a-tappin' big time.



My favorite room

was not really a surprise but more of a revelation. I have heard several Legacy speakers over the years at both shows and in private listening rooms. Having lived in Chicago for most of my life, I always had a hankering to take a road trip down to Springfield, Illinois, where Legacy headquarters is located. Many friends tell me that their listening rooms are unrivaled and their generous hospitality alone is well worth the trip.

Midwest Audio – Legacy, NAT, Triangle, Resonance Labs

One memory that always seems to resonate is that Legacy speakers can really move some air. The original Legacy Focus came out in the early 1990s. I had a friend who had a pair, and whenever we put on some Who, or Stones or Pink Floyd, we were in Rock 'n Roll heaven. Beyond that, the Legacy Focus speakers provided a very sophisticated sound that could play any genre of music with great results. Definitely a big bang-for-the-buck, even back then!

The **Legacy Aeris Speakers** are cut from the same cloth but are even more refined and articulate. At \$20,735 (with Black pearl finish), they are without question one of the great values in high-end audio. Yes, that is still a significant amount of money, but these days when all the audiophile magazines are reviewing many speakers in the \$50K to \$200K range, the Aeris stands tall and strong.

I am told that there are three keys to this superb design and execution. Bill Dudleston (Legacy CEO and Chief Designer) continues to demonstrate his innovative track record by not being afraid to think out of the box.

- 1.) A multi-functional 40-bit matrix DSP room correction processor is utilized between the preamp and amplifier.
- 2.) Each speaker cabinet has two 12 inch woofers, each woofer driven by its own dedicated 500 watt ICE Class D amplifier (yes, we are talking four amplifiers for the four woofers).
- 3.) Highs are provided by well integrated Heil AMT tweeters—still one of the best if properly implemented.

This woofer and dedicated amp design allows you some flexibility in amplifier selection for the midrange and tweeter drivers. The all tube NAT Audio Transmitter Amps (\$23K), Symmetrical Preamp (\$10K), and Signature Phono Amp (\$10K) seemed to be adding a great deal of addictive bloom and inner detail to the sound—but I could not verify this without a comparison to other electronics. I'd also love to get my hands on the Resonance Invicta Mirus DSD DAC (\$5K) that was one of several front ends for the system.

For most of my time in the room, there was plenty of modern well recorded "world music" type tracks playing. These tend to be impressive even on the most average systems: Plenty of deep tight bass and spectacular acoustic and electric instruments entering and exiting the sound stage. The Aeris performed well beyond the call of duty, but I wanted more. Then the magic stepped forward.

I asked for a little acoustic jazz with some male or female vocals. "The Girl From Ipanema" written by Antonio Carlos Jobim and sung by Astrud Gilberto with Stan Getz on sax is a great test—not bad for a 50-year-old recording (1962). I have never heard it better. Vocals were pure and creamy. Piano had plenty of resonance and texture. Even Getz on sax had just the right amount of sizzle and leading edge. This is not always the case with other expensive systems. It can be an impressive track, but that sax can also burn your ears off in the wrong hands.

Bottom line: There was a combination of transparency and speed along with a natural weight and timbre that was hard to believe at this price point. Definitely worth a listen if not a road trip!