

My stormin' Gale second system

MCINTOSH, MICHELL AND A SET OF VINTAGE SPEAKERS... RETURN TO ANALOGUE RESULTS IN A STRIKING-LOOKING SET-UP

I have just assembled a second system that cost me \$20k, having purchased all the components in one go. After having sold my turntable and vinyl record collection 33 years ago I realised recently this had been a terrible mistake and that it was time to correct this. So now I am back into analogue!

My turntable is a Michell GyroDec with an SME IV tonearm and Clearaudio Ebony cartridge. Preamp is a McIntosh C50 [HFN May '11] with a McIntosh MC275 MkVI tube power amp [HFN Feb '13]. And now for the really interesting bit: my speakers are a pair of fully refurbished Gale GS401As.

The turntable and electronics sit on a custom-made Core Audio PlyKraft 3L rack. Not only does the system look beautiful, in my humble opinion, but it sounds spectacular too. Recently my wife and I listened to the new MFSL Bill Evans *Sunday At The Village Vanguard* UltraDisc One-Step LP [LMFUD1S002]. We honestly thought we were listening to live music. I could not believe this recording is 56 years old. Background noise was non-existent while dynamic range and frequency response was as good as anything I have ever heard. I am lucky enough to have also acquired the two other One-Step MFSL discs – Donald Fagen's *The Nightfly* and Santana's *Abraxas*. To my ears they all sound about as good as it's going to get.

I also use the system to listen to computer audio via a MacBook Air running Audirvana Plus with the



ABOVE: Reader Marcus's 'chrome-ended' GS401A loudspeakers and Core Audio PlyKraft 3L rack housing (top to bottom) his Michell GyroDec, McIntosh C50 preamp and MC275 MkVI power

McIntosh C50 acting as the DAC. Again, with great results. In conclusion, after more than 50 years of being an audiophile I have at last assembled a perfect system and could not be happier with the sound. Furthermore, I have what I consider to be beautiful hi-fi art in my listening room.

As well as my vintage Gale speakers, I also have a very good home theatre system comprising a 4K Sony VPL-VW665ES projector, 110in Stewart Firehawk screen, Oppo UDP-205 UHD Blu-ray player, Krell HTS-7.1 processor (in my case acting only as a volume control) feeding a Krell TAS power

amplifier. Speakers here are B&W through and through with left and right duties taken up by a pair of 801s, the centre speaker being an HTM1, the N805 model is used for rear left and right speakers while the subwoofer is a B&W 850. Sound quality is also very impressive to my ears.

I have been an avid reader of *Hi-Fi News* for nearly 50 years (I am now 63) and have owned a very wide variety of equipment during that time.

Marcus McHugh, via email

Ken Kessler replies: How refreshing it is to hear from someone who is totally happy with the sound of his system! I wish this applied to everyone, and while some might surmise that this would obviate the need for you to continue reading *HFN*, the fact that you remain an avid reader is proof to the contrary.

What I love about Mr McHugh's 'second' system is the mix of new equipment and vintage classics, and I must also add that I am impressed that one can still have old Gales refurbished. These are highly-controversial yet highly-desirable speakers with a distinctive, involving sound that must love being matched to the valve McIntosh MC275 power amp – a recent incarnation of one of my all-time favourites. Good lateral thinking has created a nicely-balanced system with multinational origins.

Mr McHugh is also clearly a committed audiophile, having acquired all three Mobile Fidelity One-Step titles to date. Bravo!



ABOVE: For more on the Gale GS401 loudspeaker series see www.vintagegale.com/index.php