

## AV Guide Best of CES 07



### Best High-End Audio Demo

Three of six AVguide.com attendees awarded Best CES Demo to Kimber IsoMike/SoundLab/Pass Labs/EMM Labs room, which featured eight Sound Lab ProStat 922 loudspeakers, four Pass Labs X350.5 amplifiers, Genex Audio GX9000 with DSD-BNC interface, EMM Labs DAC8-MkIV, EMM Labs CDSD-SE, EMM Labs Switchman III, Kimber Kable D-60, Kimber Select KS 1130, and Kimber Select KS-3038.

#### **Jim Hannon: Kimber/SoundLab & Verity Audio**



Two large, expensive speaker systems, and one smaller one, put the performers in the room. The gargantuan [SoundLab ProStat 922](#) with two 9-foot panels per side, at a cost of \$15K per panel, were producing beautiful, effortless, and natural sound on a variety of specially recorded four-channel IsoMike recordings. A much more reasonably sized and beautifully finished loudspeaker, Verity Audio's new Lohengrin II (starting at \$67,995) driven by Nagra electronics, produced sound that had everything you'd want: a holographic soundstage, reach-out-and-touch-it transparency, awesome dynamics, and sonic realism. It made me dream about winning the lottery. Lastly, the [Quad ESL-2805](#) system described above sounded so natural I could have listened to it all day. That's what Ella's voice and Coleman's sax are supposed to sound like.

#### **Robert Harley: Kimber/SoundLab, Spectral & Magico**



All the best sounds at the show shared a commonality; the signal source wasn't CD, except in the case of the [Spectral SDR-4000 Pro](#). The best sounds were Ray Kimber's four-channel Soundlab system fed from a DSD master recording; the Spectral system mentioned above (which wasn't fully dialed-in when I heard it); and the [Magico Model 6](#) loudspeaker fed from a 15ips analog tape machine. Overall, I have to pick the Model 6 for its stunningly low coloration, spectacular dynamic behavior, coherence, and lifelike immediacy. The Model 6 might be a breakthrough in dynamic loudspeaker design.

#### **Alan Taffel: Kimber/SoundLabs, Hansen Audio, & CES**

Three views. I have split my best sound award into three sub-categories: the impractical, the practical, and the commercial.



Winning for best, albeit impractical sound, was the [Kimber/SoundLabs](#) room. There, Ray Kimber played the modern equivalent of master tapes -- in this case, raw DSD of his own

recordings straight from the hard drive -- through a quartet of SoundLabs ProStat 22's. The speakers, consisting of two monstrous panels in each room corner, were gigantic even by SoundLabs standards. But then, they were designed to be used in public spaces rather than in the home. The only normal equipment in the room were the Pass 350X amps and the Meitner SACD and multichannel electronics.

So, you can't have this system -- heck, the speakers alone would crowd you out of your own listening room! But if you could, you would realize just how "hi fi" virtually everything else sounds. Through this system, the sense of actually being in the recording space was overpowering. The sound was stunningly natural. And unlike virtually every other system I've heard, the venue was not presented as a weak afterthought to the primary musicians. Here, the two were integrated, exactly as they are at a real concert, thus making for a truly convincing mirage.

I will say that the ProStat's could not plumb the very deepest depths, but with the other amazing things this system was doing, that hardly mattered. ...

[to the web article](#)

© 2007 AVguide.com

AVguide.com is produced by Absolute Multimedia, Inc., publisher of [The Perfect Vision](#) and [The Absolute Sound](#).