

We should be spending less time on internet forums discussing audio and more time with our friends...

Did your interest in the high end come from the music or the electronics side?

My interest definitely stems from music. I can still remember my family playing Beatles' records and my brother giving me the Rolling Stones on cassette tape. The electronics are a means to an end. It's the music which has emotional impact, stimulates, and draws my attention. The electronics are important because they influence how we experience the music.

What was your first high-end system?

Zanden was my first high-end system and was digital only. The focus of the system was Zanden's now discontinued 5000S DAC and 2000P transport. I used a few different amplifiers (both solid-state and tube) with Zanden's 3000 preamplifier and an original pair of B&W 801 Matrix speakers. I was surprised and impressed that B&W provided data sheets for each individual speaker with its measured response, demonstrating that the two speakers were closely matched. This aligns closely with Zanden's philosophy for stereo music. People often seem to forget that for stereo, regardless of the quality, it is fundamentally imperative to ensure both channels have the same sonic signature or tonality. If the right and left channels sound different, the listener will be distracted and confused, ruining the musical experience.

When did audio turn into a career?

Discovering Zanden and developing a friendship with the founder clearly set me on my current path. Meeting Kazutoshi Yamada was a fork in the road and altered the course of my life. A friendship and shared interest in music and music re-

production grew into a partnership. Before taking on the role of Zanden's North American distributor, I was already helping with promotional materials, participating in shows, and evaluating new products. So, when Jim Smith of Avantgarde USA retired in



2005, I jumped at the opportunity to become the next North American distributor. It has been extremely rewarding.

How do you define the difference between hi-fi and high-end audio?

Although we tend to use both terms interchangeably, they are not the same. Hi-fi or high fidelity implies truthfulness to the music and accurate reproduction. High end, on the other hand, is rather straightforward and simply means a piece of equipment is very expensive. Ideally, all high-end components would be high fidelity. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. One of the problems with high fidelity is that it is much more subjective, making it difficult to establish objective criteria. It relies on human perception, which is not easily quantified. On the other hand, it is quite simple to describe the objective criteria for a high-end component. How much does it cost? People may have different definitions of the high end, but it is determined by a single parameter and easily understood.

What is Zanden's company philosophy?

Zanden's company philosophy is quite simple: eliminate the perceived gap between live and reproduced music. Live music in an acoustical space is the ultimate reference. We inhabit a physical world, and Zanden strives to recreate the physical experience of live music.

What interesting fact or aspect about Zanden Audio might surprise audiophiles?

Zanden electronics are high tech. Because Zanden is a manufacturer of primarily vacuum-tube-based electronics, most people would not consider Zanden to be high

tech. However, there is very little about Zanden amplifiers that could be considered vintage. As an example, Zanden Audio has been using noise-absorption materials in its products since the early 2000s, when it was developing its digital playback system. These materials were originally created for highly sensitive IT and communication technologies. We are currently using a third-generation material. I'm not sure how many other vacuum-tube manufacturers are extensively using such materials in their products, but I think there are very, very few, if any.

What are the greatest challenges confronting the high end in the future?

I'm not certain it is the greatest challenge, but I think creating a sense of community among audiophiles and music lovers is a challenge. One of the great joys of being in the high-end audio industry is the time I spend with customers, dealers, and industry colleagues simply listening to music. A lot of audiophiles are disconnected from their peers. We should be spending less time on internet forums discussing audio and more time with our friends, neighbors, and fellow audiophiles listening to music. We should be looking for ways to connect people interested in music generally and high-end audio specifically.

Outside of audio, what do you do for fun?

I was raised with an awareness of the duality of humanity, which means I have always had an interest in both the body and the spirit. Work generally keeps me focused intellectually, so I enjoy sports and training in my free time. I played organized sports until I was about 30. Since then, I focus on weight training and jogging. Interestingly, music blurs the line between the physical and spiritual and has characteristics of both. Maybe that's why I enjoy it so much!

What inspires you about your work?

My interactions are typically limited to very experienced listeners: dealers, industry colleagues, and seasoned audiophiles. These people are not easy to impress or surprise. So, when I make them sit up and take notice, that's inspiring. I get to share a kind of musical revelation. **tas**

