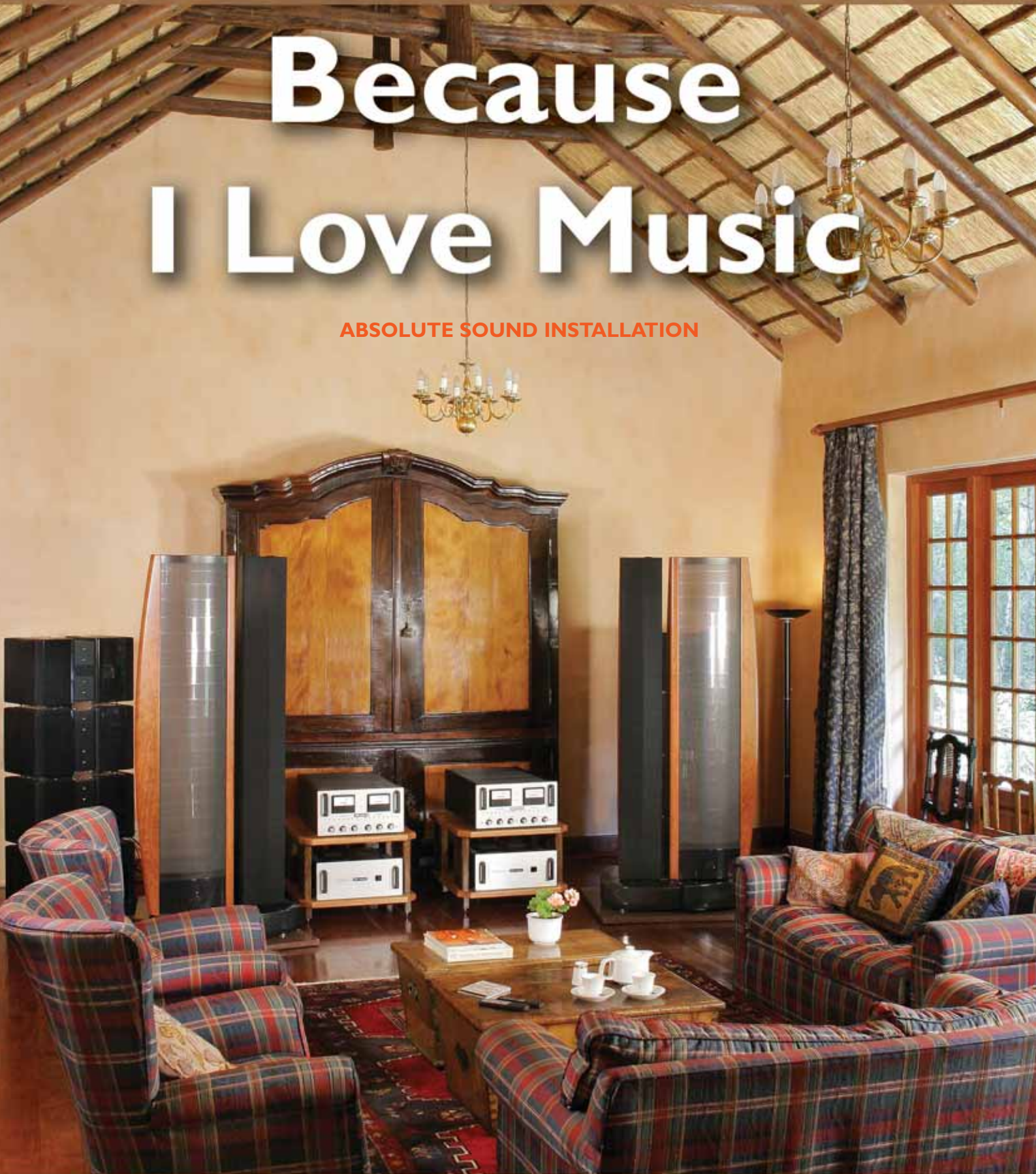


i n s t a l l a t i o n

# Because I Love Music

ABSOLUTE SOUND INSTALLATION



It has long been my contention that it is people who are not actually A/V fans who own the majority of ultra high-end A/V systems.

I believe that the systems are used as status symbols, rather than for their designed purpose, which is to deliver the ultimate in audio or video reproduction

Fortunately, there is always the exception that proves the rule, and the owner of the system featured here is exceptional.

Exceptional in that he owns what must be one of the most awesome stereo systems in the world and exceptional in that he and his family were willing to open up their home to allow an outsider like me - amongst others - in to look, listen and admire.

Before moving onto list the components used in the system, I shall briefly relate how the system grew to the one it is today.

For many years, the owner had been a client of Absolute Sound and had built up what most of us would consider being a good-sounding system. This system did however have one or two small anomalies that could be improved upon.

One day on returning home, the owner found out that midnight shoppers had liberated some components from his beloved system.

This, as one can imagine, was rather upsetting. But it did set in motion the purchase of components that would not display any of the anomalies of his previous system.

To replace his Magneplanar speakers and Velodyne subwoofers, the owner - no doubt prompted by Heinz and Jerome of Absolute Sound - chose Martin Logan Statement Evolution 2 loudspeakers. These seven foot tall behemoths, complete with sixteen 12-inch subwoofers, are driven by a pair of Audio Research REF 600 MKIII mono vacuum tube



power amplifiers (used to drive the electrostatic panels and mid-bass drivers), and a pair of Audio Research D400 MKII solid state stereo power amplifiers to drive the subwoofer towers.

Source components include on the digital side an Audio Research CD3 MKII CD player/transport connected to an Audio Research DAC3 MKII vacuum tube digital to analogue converter.

A Clearaudio Anniversary turntable fitted with Unify tonearm and Virtuoso MM cartridge is used as the analogue source together with an Audio Research PH2 phono stage.

Source components are all connected to an Audio Research REF2 MKII vacuum tube pre-amplifier. System cables include AudioQuest Cheetah interconnect cables and AudioQuest Volcano speaker cables, whilst all components - barring speakers - sit on custom built Sound Structures component stands. The speakers themselves sit atop solid slabs of granite.

An interesting snippet of information is that this "stereo only" system has a retail price tag of around two million Rand.

A system as physically large as this one naturally needs to be in a relatively large room if it is to deliver anything near its sonic potential.

The room in question, with its high-pitched roof and tasteful décor, is however not totally dominated by the sound system. Taking pride of place against the far wall is a beautiful Cape Dutch style cabinet, which I was informed is not used to store anything in, as when open, the doors are so heavy that the entire cabinet tends to fall over. Flimsy it is not.

Now the question on all readers' lips most probably is, what does a two million Rand sound system sound like?

To answer this question, I arrived at the owner's home early - a good hour or so before any of the other invited guests. I did this so that I could spend some quality time with the system without any interruptions or distractions (Apart from a glass or two of Merlot).

Now the owner's music tastes spreads across the entire musical gamut, from classical to rock, and just about everything in between, and a requirement of the system was that it be capable of handling any genre of music and at just about any volume.

This it does, but with the kind of control and slam that justifies its lofty price.

Despite the speakers' rather large dimensions, they were more than capable of delivering subtle details that lesser speakers simply couldn't match.

Whilst detail was impressive, the sheer low frequency grunt delivered by the subwoofer towers could literally take your breath away with their sheer pace and ability to move a lot of air.

Imaging as one would expect was superb, with space behind, in front of, and around the speakers. I did feel that in some instances, the central image was possibly a tad too big. Being able to portray a large and accurate image did however mean that orchestral pieces sounded life-like and the stage had physical dimensions that were close to that of a concert hall.

Another system highlight was its accuracy and ability to transfer alternating voltages into sound. Pin-sharp accuracy also meant that bad recordings or small flaws that would be inaudible on lesser systems were highlighted.

The best part of the system (apart of course from the sound, which is difficult to adequately describe), is the fact that the system is used.

In the approximately two months that the system had been running, three weeks of which the owner and his wife had been on holiday, the couple had already listened to over 250 hours of music.

When asked why he was willing to spend as much as he did on a sound system, the owner's answer was simply, "Because I love music."

Joel Kopping

• Absolute Sound ☎ 011-234-0440

