

On With The Show!

By Greg Weaver
(photos by Greg Weaver, and Angela Cardas

The Inaugural Pacific Audio Fest: A New Star

It was November of 2019, as the last Capital Audiofest held before the Covid-19 Pandemic forced us to reimagine our world was winding down, that Lou Hinkley, the owner, designer, and craftsman behind Daedalus Audio Loudspeakers of Ferndale, WA, first let the cat out of the bag. He had been thinking about and planning to establish a new, consumer-based audio show, one that would be the first of its kind to ever take place in Seattle. The only question was, WHEN!

Initially slated to run at the end of July 2021, by min-April, just three and a half months before it was to launch, once it had become obvious that the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions would prevail, Lou disappointingly – and prudently - announced that the inaugural event would be postponed; it would be rescheduled for the end of July 2022.

While I did not doubt that Lou, in partnership with Capital Audiofest founder and organizer, Gary Gill, bolstered by further supplemental support from the now-defunct Rocky Mountain Audio Fest’s own remarkable Marjorie Baumert, would pull off anything less than a first-class event, PAF 2022 proved to be not only a stellar maiden outing, but one of the most engaging shows I’ve attended in recent years!

The hotel is sprawling. The original section of the hotel, the two-floored, extended wings to either side of the open section housing the pool and spa, to the north of the main halls and the tower, were built in the late 1960s on the original wetlands of the nearby spring-fed Bow Lake Reservoir, resulting in some portions having been erected on structural pylons. The tower section, fourteen floors high, was added to the south end of the main wings in the mid-nineteen seventies, housing the main entrance, primary ballrooms and meeting rooms, which occupy the main and second floors.



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One of the major contributing factors to a successful vendor show is overall sonic quality. Everyone I talked to agreed just how bloody good the bulk of the exhibits set up in Wings Two and Seven, sounded. (Which are typically sleeping rooms.) I suspect the native sonic advantages offered by these standard hotel rooms, not the banquet, ballroom, and meeting rooms, were a result of a combination of their construction methods, materials, along with their sheer size. Combined with a lack of built-in, non-removable furnishings, made for some of the best sounding rooms many of us have heard in recent years.

Yet another extremely important attribute that helps underwrite such an event's success is its overall vibe and feel; its TONE, if you'll forgive the pun. Where most shows tend to be more impersonal, frenetic, rushed, or even haggard, the mood and attitudes here were almost ubiquitously particularly upbeat and welcoming, culminating in a manifestly friendly, accessible, and pleasurable atmosphere, fostering a great sense of community.

In this sense, this initial PAF was remarkably reminiscent of the recently defunct and sorely missed Rocky Mountain Audio Fest, as this prevailingly communal attitude was something that Marjorie Baumert had so successfully cultivated, especially with the earlier shows. I'd suggest that her near omnipresence here, meeting, greeting, and helping everyone she spoke with, so willingly and enthusiastically contributing to its accessible and welcoming demeanor, was an indisputable contributing factor to the shows overwhelming success. It was as if the Rocky Mountain Audio Fest baton was being officially passed to Lou and Gary, as if signaling her endorsement of this new and highly promising show.

Finally, this show was of a more manageable size! With a total of fifty-two rooms and twenty-eight table vendors, representing nearly two hundred distinct brands, it was possible to stop by every exhibit over its three days of operation.

Were there some missteps and hiccups along the way? Of course! But I'd suggest that it is at best an odd rarity that any first-time event this ambitious and gratifying comes off without a hitch, or three! Yet its combination of overall extremely good-sounding rooms, the welcoming, engaging vibe, and the overall manageable size, that contributed to producing one of the most exciting and gratifying new events on our annual show calendar.

I wouldn't dream of missing next year's Pacific Audio Fest. I hope to see you there joining in all the fun!

