

## CES 2019 • Best of Show



Kharma's Classique speakers (\$130,000 per pair) looked like the model we first heard and admired when the Alexis Park was a CES site, circa 1999, but they were only outwardly similar. The most recent version of these imposing masses use Kharma's updated F drivers. The Lamm M1.2 Reference (\$32,490 per pair) and M2.2 Reference (\$32,190 per pair) monoblocks used to biamp the speakers -- the class-A M1.2s for the treble and midrange, the class-AB M2.2s for the bass -- also looked like what we might have heard in 1999, but they, too, were updated versions of well-established models.



Also in use from Lamm were an LL1.1 Signature line stage (\$51,900), LP1 Signature phono stage (\$42,990) and LP2.1 phono stage (\$10,990). Digital was from Aqua Acoustic Quality, the La Diva CD transport (\$9000) and Formula xHD DAC (\$17,000). Analog playback was via a Döhmann Audio Helix One turntable (\$65,000) with Schröder CB-L tonearm (\$4500) and MY Sonic Labs Ultra Eminent EX moving-coil cartridge (\$6995). Cables were from Kubala-Sosna's Elation and Realization series, totaling nearly \$130,000. The rack for the analog gear was a Soul to Sole Stiletto (\$16,000), while the preamp and digital gear rested on Sanus Euro racks totaling \$840.

This system had all of the sonic earmarks of previous Lamm-Kharma pairings, including gobs of musical detail, abundant tonal color, and great presence. This was an easy system to like and listen to -- for recording after recording. Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Tin Pan Alley," a well-worn demo cut, was a real treat, sounding more like analog than the digital -- a plain, old CD -- that it was.



But it was analog that commanded the most attention. The Döhmann Audio Helix One is an intelligently designed turntable that takes a multi-faceted approach to eliminating harmful vibration -- no small matter with analog playback, which relies on the retrieval of as much good vibration as possible. Mark Döhmann played nothing-special LPs from Neil Young and INXS, music the Helix One reproduced with impressive naturalness, detail and low-end power. How this turntable would handle a [Music Matters SRX](#) or [Mobile Fidelity One-Step](#) reissue is an intriguing proposition. ☺