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By Jason Victor Serinus



Until I encountered the world premiere of the imposing Wharfedale Airedale Neo loudspeaker (\$20,000/pair), I hadn't run into speakers from the 70-year old company in many a year. The wait was worth it. This wonderful-sounding speaker, which weighs over 125 lbs and can handle up to 400W power, boasts point-to-point wiring, frequency response of 25Hz-45kHz, and 88dB sensitivity.

The speakers weren't the only premiere in Ron Gold's Gold Sound room. Parasound CEO Richard Schramm (right) introduced three new products: the John Curl-designed JC3 phono preamp (\$2000), Z CD/SACD player (\$400), and Z phono w/USB (\$400). Along with Parasound's universally praised Halo JC 2 preamp (\$4000) and Halo JC 1 monoblock amplifiers (a steal at \$8000/pair), this system delivered great highs, ear-opening depth and three-dimensionality, and excellent midrange. With the volume turned way up, there wasn't a hint of strain on mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato's voice. As for the beginning of Mahler's Symphony No.2, as conductor by Ivan Fisher on a Channel Classics Record-to-Die-For, the sound was sensational enough to live for.

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