

## Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo):

### X-Fi and the audio nerds

During the last weekend of September a large audio show called X-Fi was held in Eindhoven. When hearing the term X-Fi you could very well be thinking of an event organized by the Dutch X-Men fan club. But no, the X-Fi show is a genuine Hi-Fi show.

The X-Fi show: during a weekend thousands of audio nerds are packed in big and small rooms while listening to exotic (and expensive, very expensive) audio equipment.

I was there last year. Yep. I was an audio nerd on location. Together with little old men with their hands on their backs I was strolling down the hallways entering the rooms with all kinds of exotic (and expensive, very expensive) Hi-Fi equipment.

That day I've had just one listening experience that I could remember. It was my listening experience with the Grimm Audio LS1 speakers. Grimm Audio is a Dutch firm run by Eelco Grimm and Guido Tent, a couple of true Dutch audio pioneers. Not completely fair because I already heard these units in a studio. But darn, these are some mighty fine speakers! Very exact imaging and stereo field featuring DSP controlled crossovers and built in amplifiers and D to A converters. And also very pleasing to listen to, not to be underestimated.

And it's exactly that what's confusing when paying a visit to an audio show like X-Fi. As I mentioned in earlier columns acoustics play a very important role in our listening experience. I made a little formula for this: monitoring = speakers + acoustics.

It's virtually impossible to maintain proper acoustics in a packed conference room. Each person has a different listening position making it very difficult to judge equipment on its own merits. For that matter the Grimm's actually performed remarkably well.

For a serious evaluation of Hi-Fi equipment like speakers and amps a more controlled listening environment is needed.

Speakers, amps, streamers, D to A converters and cables. It's all looking fabulous when displayed at an audio show but they can hardly perform well in such circumstances and that's a shame.

In fact you should visit a show like that to see what's happening in audio land, followed by an appointment in a more controlled listening room at a dealer or retailer of the equipment. Or you make a deal to take the gear to your home which is even better if you want to know if those mouth-watering speakers really suit your taste.

Well, I'm getting closer and closer to the statement of promoting a good music quality experience. I think next month I'll be finally ready to make that statement.

Right, I'm going to listen again. To a good ol' compact disc this time, without any analog crackle but through my mighty fine custom built monitoring system!

Renzo

*Renzo (Masterenzo) is a Rotterdam based Dutch mastering engineer. He has worked for Gery Mendes (GMB), Charlie Dée and Phil Bee's Freedom. More info about mastering and about Masterenzo can be found on his [website](#).*