

Jan./Feb. 2005  
Volume 4 Issue 1

Recent and  
Upcoming Events

# WILSON<sup>®</sup> AUDIOFILES

Jan. 6-9, 2005  
Consumer  
Electronics Show  
Las Vegas, NV  
Wilson Audio Specialties  
in Penthouse Suite  
at The Mirage

## Wilson Audio Authentic Excellence

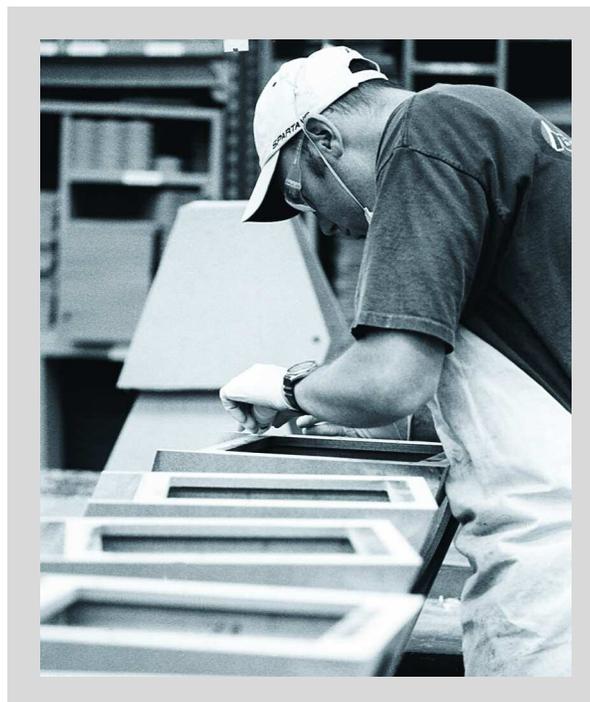
### Part One: Provenance

by John Giolas

In his third-floor woodshop in North Cambridge, Massachusetts, Bob Childs lovingly handcrafts violins in the mode and fashion of Amati, Stradivarius, and Guarneri. The shelves are lined with cords of various types of wood. Bob's method is meticulous and slow – he builds five to seven violins each year, each instrument commissioned by a musician. Each stroke of the plane against maple, and every gouge cutting into spruce is guided by an admixture of passion, experience, and technical expertise. When a client invests in a Childs violin, he/she is given choices on varnish color and antiquating style, but it is Bob who creates the voice of the violin. He has spent a lifetime understanding the sonic effects of different woods, evolving his mastery over his tools, and perfecting his construction technique. Bob's clients include a lead violinist for the Boston Symphony (who also plays an Amati), the all-Ireland fiddle champion, as well as the fiddle champion in Scotland.

When Dave Wilson is developing a new product, he often begins by sculpting in clay, experimenting with shape and proportion. During this process, he creates a vision for the new loudspeaker. He has the uncanny ability to transform this vision into a physical reality. Dave is an artist; the loudspeaker is his medium. This perspective of artisanship motivates him to accumulate unprecedented technical solutions that advance the science of loudspeaker design and propels him to demand unparalleled craftsmanship in the execution of his loudspeakers. From this point of view, Dave has assembled a group of like-minded fanatics in the form of Wilson Audio, and he cares for them as he would family.

Bob Childs and Dave Wilson are kindred spirits who have embarked on a lifelong journey to create objects that transcend mere functionality, that stand the test of time, and that unabashedly rise above the status quo. The destination of the journey is the products they create. Both of these men fashion state of the art vehicles that prodigiously convey music created and performed by others. But just as importantly, these products are a distinct reflection of their creators. The products are an authentic expression of the visionaries who dreamed them and, as a



result, become art forms in and of themselves. This purity of approach defines genuine excellence.

Imagine for a moment if Bob decided to increase from the seven or so violins he creates each year to fifty or even a thousand. He also decides that he wants to find a way to make his violins for a tenth of what it costs him now. He reduces the selling price of the instruments by thirty percent as a strategy to broaden his market – a sales price that nevertheless increases profit margin by over one thousand percent. He facilitates this goal by mass-producing his violins (to his spec, of course) in a factory in China. The Asian manufacturer ensures Bob the mass-produced violins, upon casual inspection, will be cosmetically and superficially indistinguishable from the hand made violins. The Chinese manufacturer also informs him that if the violin strings are installed stateside, under U.S. law, he can legally claim that the instruments are made in the USA. Would his clients, knowing all this, still be interested in paying the multi-five-figure price tag for a Bob Childs violin? What would happen when a musician played one of these mass-produced violins?

Customers of an Oregon-based audio cable and interconnect company had the unfortunate opportunity to answer these kinds of questions. This manufacturer had long been advertising and selling products they asserted to be made in the United States, when in reality, they were covertly manufacturing them in China. This came to dramatic head when local police and federal agents raided their corporate offices acting on a warrant claiming the company had intentionally mislabeled their products as “Made in the USA.” Only the packaging and some terminations were performed stateside. The culminating irony: The company’s slogan is, “The cable that God uses.”

How does this (apparently illegal) practice differ from the normal OEM relationship almost all manufacturers employ? The single-word answer: *Authenticity*.

For years, Ferrari contracted with Carrozzeria Scaglietti to manufacture the coachwork and bodies on most production Ferraris. A new automobile from Ferrari, the 612 Scaglietti, pays homage to the historic significance of this symbiotic OEM relationship between two great specialty manufacturers. Ferrari outsources other significant components of their vehicles; brakes from Brembo, engine management electronics from Magneti Marelli, and tires from Pirelli are a small sampling of the myriad of parts Ferrari has had manufactured for them. The relationship Ferrari has with OEM manufacturers is congruent with their culture because Ferrari is transparent about these relationships. But most of all, Ferrari employs this manufacturing strategy in the genuine pursuit of excellence.

However, when a manufacturer, in the greedy pursuit of greater profits, employs a manufacturing process hidden and undisclosed from the potential consumer, the product is, by definition, inauthentic. This business model, based on pretense and incongruity (in the name of marketing or profit-building), is corrosive in an industry that was built on the premise of genuine excellence.

And yet, within the high-end audio industry, this practice is disturbingly common. There is a cynicism that pervades our culture perpetuating the false belief that we can have our cake and eat

it, too. The false belief goes something like this: A company can pursue an OEM relationship with with a low-income, offshore manufacturer based solely on the desire for bigger profits, while at the same time, through clever marketing, maintain the image of a high-end company. By cynically manipulating U.S. Customs law, the manufacturer assumes the claim can be legally made that the products are made in the U.S.; the actual, offshore point of manufacture is undisclosed to the consumer.

As a result, the company’s marketing image is inherently incongruent with the product’s substantive reality. To compensate for this, the company engages in cagey, skin-deep packaging (involving more deception) in an effort to maintain the “high-end” perception of the product. Consequently, words like “signature,” “statement,” and “high-end,” become slogans, bereft of their original meaning. The fundamental lack of authenticity this approach requires is utterly corrosive to an industry ostensibly based on a steadfast commitment to genuine excellence.

And this is just one of the ways our industry has veered from its original path, a path based on the honest passion to design, build, and sell products authentic in their excellence. The cynical among us would argue, in today’s world, these (one-time) core principles are quaint and naïve. Wilson believes, conversely, that justifying this brand of cynicism is dangerous and destructive to our industry. Wilson believes that the survival of our industry depends on differentiating ourselves with marketing principles congruent with the substance of the products we promote.

The vanguard in any industry never follows the path of least resistance; they are driven by an intense dissatisfaction of the status quo. These industry pioneers change paradigms and courageously forge new paths. They are typified by passionate beliefs and an eagerness to share these principles with others. They are not influenced by market trends, but instead create new markets, born of their intense desire.

One Wilson mark of excellence is the close attention to detail that goes into each one of our speakers. From the cabinets to the crossovers to the fine finish, each and every speaker is tested and must pass rigorous quality control standards. Each speaker is a work of art, maintaining our distinct level of excellence.



In the spirit of this desire, Wilson has chosen to introduce a new brand: Wilson Audio Authentic Excellence™. This new name celebrates our resolute commitment to greatness.

As Bob Childs says, “Not all violin makers will agree, but I believe that the soul of the maker goes into the instrument. I want whatever it is I’m expressing through the instruments I make to live beyond my own life.”

We couldn’t have said it better.

Excerpts from *The Absolute Sound* December 2004/January 2005 **TAS Roundtable**

## “Playback Systems: What Matters Most?”

Wayne Garcia, Harry Pearson, Jonathan Valin,

Linn Products Founder Ivor Tiefenbrun, and Wilson Audio Founder David A. Wilson debate the role of each component in the playback system. Robert Harley moderates.

ROBERT HARLEY: The topic of this Roundtable discussion is system hierarchy - which components in the playback system matter most, and which matter least. . . .

I'd like to start with Dave Wilson. You conducted a highly unusual demonstration at the last CES in which the audience believed that they were listening to a \$25,000 CD player at the front end of a system using Wilson Sophia loudspeakers, and at the conclusion of the demonstration you revealed that it was, in fact, an iPod.

DAVE WILSON: . . . That demonstration was meant to explore some prejudices in the way people look at system hierarchy. To me, that means determining which element of the system is the most critical in determining the quality and the character of the sound the listener will experience.

And in thinking about that, I came down to the three most important factors. First is the microphone used in the recordings. Another is room acoustics, and then the third is loudspeakers. . . .

The loudspeaker is, to me, the most critical element in the playback chain. The purpose of that experiment was to show that the quality of the loudspeaker overrules the quality of the amplifier, the quality of the cables, and even the quality of the signal source.

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DW: Loudspeakers are the least perfect devices in the system and yet they have the hardest job. . . .

Because there is such a range between the poorest to the best loudspeaker, it behooves the customer to anchor the system with the best loudspeakers that he can, and then to build the rest of the system around that.

\* \* \*

DW: I agree that just because something is the most important thing in the system doesn't mean it's the only thing. As a system evolves, balance becomes important.

\* \* \*

DW: Very often when the consumer goes to the store they follow some arbitrary formula such as a third of the budget for this component - the components are selected because of price point rather than merit. I think it's very important that you lay a high-quality cornerstone in that system that you can use as your reference to build the system over time. And this benefits the listener because they're going to get better overall sound at the beginning of their experience and will be able to appreciate improvements that they make in the rest of the system as they grow and develop. The system begins to more and more reflect their taste, their aesthetics, their desires in music and in their own home.

From “Editors’ Choice *The Absolute Sound* 2004” Oct./Nov. 2004

### Wilson Audio Specialties X-2 Alexandria

“This recommendation must be considered preliminary; it is based solely on RH’s 90-minute private audition. Nonetheless, those 90 minutes strongly suggest that the X-2 is not only a breakthrough product for Wilson Audio, but a landmark achievement in loudspeaker design. Easily besting the X-1 (which was on-hand for comparison) in every respect, the new Alexandria has seemingly unlimited dynamic capabilities and bass extension, yet also exhibits a finely nuanced rendering of timbre and inner detail. The stunning industrial design and gorgeous finish quality complete this serious contender for the state of the art.” (RH)

### Wilson WATT/Puppy 7

“This classic loudspeaker has taken a significant jump in performance with the new 7 version. Although modest in dimensions, the WP7 has the big sound associated with much larger systems. With astonishing dynamic impact and coherence, coupled with deep bass extension and gorgeous rendering of inner detail, the WP7 is enormously rewarding musically. RH’s reference. (Reviewed by RH, Issue 143)”



### Wilson Sophia



“Wilson’s Sophia has all the hallmarks of Wilson loudspeakers - extraordinary transient fidelity, deep bass extension, a huge spatial presentation, and a cabinet that contributes little sound of its own. With surprising bass and dynamics for its size, the Sophia sounds like a much larger speaker - gorgeous finish quality and attention to detail, too. The Sophia is also extremely easy to drive, making it a good choice with lower powered amplifiers. (RH, Recommended Systems, Issue 136)”

Excerpted from an English translation of an article appearing in the November issue of the French magazine *AudioVideo Prestige*

## “Wilson Audio Alexandria X-2 Speakers”

Text by Eric Charlot; Photos by Dominique Mafrand

“We tested the Alexandria X-2 speakers and were taken on an amazing journey through the heart of music, or shall we say Music?”

“We thought we might be in for an unforgettable time with this latest offering from Wilson Audio because those speakers have a wonderful reputation all over the world. All the products this brilliant designer has ever put out have been welcomed in the audio trade press with avalanches of awards. This is no accident, but rather the reward of years of research and design.

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“The Alexandria X-2 is the result of the implementation of years of techniques used by Wilson Audio on all its models, which includes a home theater series. This manufacturer doesn’t make compromises and seeks the absolute perfection in sound production. Real sound and reproduced sound are so close with Wilson Audio that it’s hard to tell them apart. That’s what gives Wilson Audio its distinctive quality.

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“The quality of the finish is unmatched anywhere. We had never before seen a product where every tiny detail was worked out with this level of perfectionism, not only when it comes to technical issues, but with every aspect of the manufacturing.

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“Wilson is to the audio world what Ferrari is to the automobile.

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“This is the product to beat, both for its looks and its sound.

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“In this majestic environment we were able to appreciate the amazing talent of the Alexandria. Despite their considerable size, those speakers disappear and make room for expressive, vibrant and liberating music.

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“As we came in the door, we could hear music coming from the listening lounge and we were already impressed: this system sounds wonderful even out of sight. The notes flowed with rare expression; the timbres and harmonies rolled without fault. As soon as we entered the room our ears were charmed with the African melody, its atypical percussions, and the soothing voice of the vocalist. This system brings out the very best in sound imagery and hyper-realistic presence: a great airy feeling, a superb height of notes, and dynamics “as if we were there.”

“No matter where we went in the room, the music flowed naturally from this virtual orchestra created by Alexandria. The Alexandria seems to reveal everything you’ve always wanted to know about your numerical CDs or your vinyl and never dared ask. We heard details in Luciano Pavarotti’s interpretation of Lagrima Furtiva that we never heard before when

testing other systems. We could see the tenor standing towards the back of the stage and when the notes die, we hear the natural echo of the hall, as if we were sitting in a concert hall. Astounding!

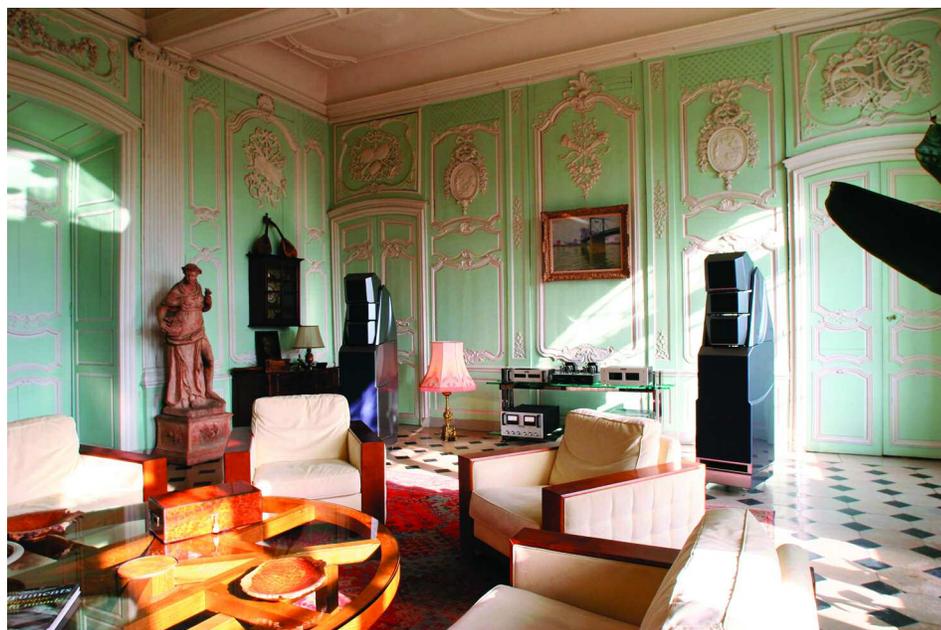
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“The Alexandria X-2 sets a high standard when it comes to music reproduction. It gathers into one product qualities that no other manufacturer has been able to pull together in this way. The usual list of strengths would not do justice to the potential in those exceptional jewels. A few seconds listening to them could convince anyone that Wilson Audio has a product that will be acclaimed in audio history. A lighthouse of a speaker!

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“We loved: The masterful musicality. The absolute finesse of the analysis. The phenomenal finish. The hypersensitivity.

“We would have loved: To win the lottery. To be friends with David Wilson.”



Fittingly, Phillipe Demaret of Europe Audio Diffusion, Wilson Audio’s distributor in France, showcases the Alexandria’s in a home once belonging to Louis Pasteur. The Alexandria’s classic beauty complements Pasteur’s elegant music room.

# A History of Hard Work

by Sherri Burge

Hard work is nothing new to Victor Morales, who is in charge of Wilson Audio's physical plant and building safety, and who also is assigned to cover special projects at Wilson.

Victor was born in Monterrey, N.L., Mexico and began working full time as young as junior high age. He came to Wilson Audio over 11 years ago with a background in mechanics gained from both work experience and a college education.

Another part of Victor's background valuable at Wilson is his previous experience in cabinet making.

As one of the long-term employees in Wilson's manufacturing division, Victor has seen the company grow from infancy to its present influence in the world of audio. The growth and change at Wilson have afforded Victor many opportunities to

demonstrate his skills and learn new ones. Other positions Victor has occupied include working in and supervising the woodshop.

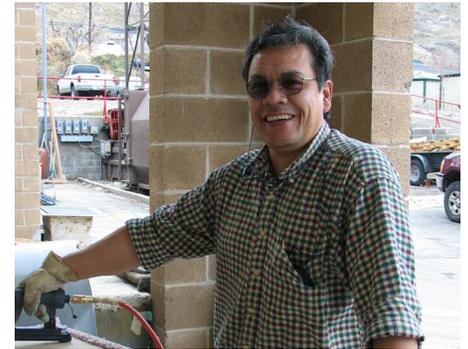
Victor's certification as an industrial fireman inspector and his previous certification as a first aid instructor make him the logical person to conduct new employee safety training and to interface with the fire marshall and safety inspectors.

At home, Victor keeps busy with a variety of things. Victor's wife (of 25 years) decorates with natural flowers and supplies pastries for weddings and other special occasions. Victor is a great support in her endeavors, and his previous employment in an industrial bakery gives him an unusually helpful knowledge.

Victor spends part of his free time providing Spanish translation services. He has translated books, training and equipment

manuals, church materials, and also does live interpretation.

One accomplishment Victor is proud of is the work he did to become an American citizen in 1997. Another source of pride is Victor's two teenage daughters. Their successes in music and academics reflect the legacy of hard work and dedication learned from their father.



## John Giolas: Telling the Story of High End

by Sherri Burge

An older brother with a big McIntosh system, a 12 year old boys' curiosity and determination, and a father's unused tubed Zenith console sitting in the basement begging to be taken apart and made into a component audio system launched John Giolas' career in high end audio.

By the time John was a senior in high school, he didn't own the cool car most teenage boys aspire to, but he did have a Linn/McIntosh/Dahlquist system.

As a college freshman and sophomore John worked for Winterton Audio, a high end store in Salt Lake City.

Interestingly, it is his experience working for a high end independent clothing retailer while finishing his degree in British literature and creative writing to which John credits his understanding of the culture of high end.

The owner, John Hepworth, was able to create within his store an atmosphere almost magical. In this environment John gained his sense of merchandising and developed a philosophy of specialty retailing that influenced his own audio store.

In 1985, just a year out of college, John opened Audition Audio, which grew to be Utah's largest specialty retailer. In 1989, John began a relationship with Wilson Audio by adding it to the line of products Audition offered.

October 2000, about a year after John sold Audition, brought



a phone call from David Wilson, and John was recruited for the sales and marketing position he currently holds.

Influenced by his love for literature, one focus of John's marketing strategy has been to better tell the story not only of Wilson Audio, but also of the culture of high end. Hepworth's example of creating a magical atmosphere is continuously revealed in the new posters, brochures, ads, and owner's manuals Wilson uses to convey our culture to a greater number of people.

In order to tell a story, one must have a vehicle for doing so. John has intentionally worked toward building better press relationships and sought to think outside the audio box as he's developed relationships with such publications as Robb Report and Fortune Small Business.

John believes at Wilson Audio we have something unique. What we do and who we are is exciting, wonderful, and noteworthy to talk about. However, he is quick to note that the most important part of Wilson is at the grass roots level with our dealers. Thus, one primary focus for John is working closely with our dealers and developing more effective methods of dealer training.

Has John's approach to marketing been successful? Results speak loudly. Wilson has grown by almost 50 % in the last five years, and has introduced three all new products with a fourth being introduced this CES.

Outside of Wilson Audio, John fills his time with family - his wife Rachael and their nine children. The Giolas clan loves camping, hiking, and going to the beach. In a spare moment, you might find John involved in another of his passions - photography.

## Breaking News from the SoundsStage.com Network:

### “Wilson Audio Alexandria X-2 Loudspeakers: *Ultra Audio’s Product of the Year for 2004*”

Excerpted from the [ultraaudio.com](http://ultraaudio.com) article by Jeff Fritz

“I have three distinct recollections of the Wilson Audio Specialties Alexandria X-2 loudspeaker:

“The first was during my trip to David Wilson’s home in Provo, Utah....

“My second recollection is of the installation of my own pair of Alexandria X-2s....I commented to David Wilson that the sound I was enjoying in my home was even better than what I’d heard in his home.

“Last and most instructive, this past May I heard the X-2 in a six-speaker rotation at the High End Society’s High End Show in Munich, Germany. Several of the most highly regarded speaker systems in the world, from various manufacturers around the world, were wheeled into a large room and played consecutively in what must be considered an exhaustive exercise for a trade show. To this listener, the Alexandria X-2 was clearly the most enjoyable speaker of the bunch.

“But each of the above experiences, magical as it was, pales in comparison to actually owning and living with the Alexandria X-2s for the past year.

“I’ve heard glowing reports from readers, friends, and audiophiles around the world who own X-2s. Most of them already owned other Wilson speakers when they bought the Alexandrias....

“So now you know that I and many other Wilson speaker owners have purchased pairs of Alexandria X-2s....You’ve also heard descriptions of its performance from reviewers and owners that make it seem close to perfect. Perhaps these reasons alone are enough to explain why this product, above all others discussed in these pages in the last 12 months, is the *Ultra Audio Product of the Year for 2004*. It’s a strong case.

“But for me, there’s an even better reason. The X-2 represents a clearly compelling case for calling it the *best available loudspeaker*. When all relevant factors are considered -- performance, build and finish, company support, depth of design -- the choice is crystal clear: If you’re a devoted music lover and audiophile and your budget permits access to such luxuries, the Alexandria X-2 is the best speaker system you can buy.”



COLOR

