

NHT

NHT decided to let it all hang out, so to speak, with this year's exhibit. Instead of the usual regimen of carefully pre-selected source disks, NHT took the bold step of setting up a demonstration of their flagship NHT 3.3 speakers using **live music** ([Clik4Pik](#)). NHT hired an assortment of musicians to play live in room 1041. The music was captured by microphone and fed into a mixing console in room 1040 next door, where it was then channeled to Bryston and NHT amplifiers and, ultimately, to the 3.3's. This enlightening display allowed the listener to compare the sound of the live event to the sound "heard" by a microphone and recreated by a high quality stereo system. By taking recording and replay out of the sound reproduction process, NHT eliminated two links in the playback chain, offering the listener a purer "look" at the remaining elements.

Room 1041, where the live music took place, featured electric guitarist Jim Campilongo, the leader of Bay Area country-jazz group The Ten Gallon Cats, harpsichordist Katherine Shao, and early music vocalist Allison Zelles. During my various stops at this entertaining display, I heard the guitar and harpsichord, but unfortunately missed the vocals. It was interesting to note how the microphone "hears" the event and how, in some cases, the reproduced music bore little resemblance to the actual event. Though I lack the technical expertise in the process to explain the why or the how, the harpsichord, at least to my ears, was reproduced with an almost Technicolor, hyperrealistic quality while the guitar, conversely, sounded noticeably thinner. This phenomenon puzzled me, as it was the exact opposite of what I thought I would hear.

As good as NHT's 3.3 speakers are, and I believe I've heard them at their best, there was no mistaking which sound was live and which reproduced. **Any** high end system will suffer in comparison to the real thing, and the demonstration served as a reminder that there's still plenty of room for improvement at all levels of the sound recreation process, from microphones to speakers.



NHT's Ken Kantor