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I have my own personal favourite recordings, ranging from Gorillaz *Plastic Beach* to Kari Bremnes *Gate Ved Gate* and from Arturo Delmoni *Songs My Mother Taught Me* to Beethoven's *Symphony No.9*, with much in between. At the end of the day though there is no substitute for listening to your own music when evaluating a system, and that's precisely what I encourage customers to do.

What is the best piece of advice you can give to someone who is looking to improve/upgrade their system?

To love music is to be passionate and I ask people to 'feel' rather than 'think' their way to their next purchase. Buying or upgrading audio equipment is often an emotional decision and is fraught with many conflicting factors, not least the cost. So it is hard to be sure you are making the right decision. Always ask yourself first and foremost, how is this component or whole system making me feel. Once that question is answered, the rest falls into place much more easily. The finer nuances of voicing, detail, dynamics, soundstage, etc. almost answer themselves.

There's one more important aspect to this. The old adage that "People Buy People First" is as true in our industry as in any other., but is often forgotten both by dealers and by customers in search of a bargain at all costs. The key is to find a dealer that you can relate to, from whom you can learn, and with whom you can further your quest. System building is an evolutionary process; it grows and evolves as we grow and evolve and as circumstances and technologies change. ▶

▶ and hydro/pneumatics). I was first inspired to design a turntable based on those technologies (but that's another story).

By the late 1980's engineering was on its knees in the UK and I was debating in which direction to take my career. Then as now it was hard to find a dealer that would a) take in a part exchange and b) that was not locked in to a narrow range of brands. In other words who offered real CHOICE. So the upgrade process was a slow and laborious one. It was the unduly painful experience of upgrading my LP12/ Naim system and the search for alternatives that provided the inspiration.

Leaving the world of engineering behind I started Choice Hi-Fi with the major differentiating principals: that I would welcome trade-ins, sell both new and used equipment, and therefore not limit the brands I offer.

High end audio is built to last so this marriage of new and used as well as the willingness to take trade-ins allows my customers to have access to a level of equipment whose quality and performance is far beyond that which their budget would otherwise allow. In short, my customers enjoy far more bang for their buck and the upgrading process is kept simple as I handle both ends of the transaction. It also means that over the years I have gained first hand experience of almost all brands as well as a deep understanding of the synergy between products both old and new.

What music do you listen to when doing a demo?

By and large, an audio system ought to be ubiquitous, meaning it should be equally at home with classical music as with grunge. The reality, however, is that some speakers tend to be better suited to one genre or another, although most attempt to be at home with all.