

# The Audio Beat

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## Audio Show 2016 • TABlog

by [Roy Gregory](#) | February 29, 2016

The Lisbon show presented at least one object lesson on just how easily things can get past you. UK manufacturer Avid are best known for their turntables: compact, heavily machined works of engineering art, perfect aesthetic partners for the SME tonearms they are so often paired with. Alongside those they also produce the essential power supplies to drive them and a range of well-regarded phono stages. That's as far as they go - at least as far as I was aware.



So you can imagine my surprise, walking into their room in the Pestana Palace, at being confronted by a complete Avid system - and not just any system either. This was an ambitious and clearly carefully coordinated assault on the high end involving a two-box, full-facilities preamp, massive mono amps, stand-mounted loudspeakers with extravagantly machined aluminum cabinets and dedicated stands, as well as a full suite of cables and supports. That puts Conrad Mas, managing director and designer-in-chief at Avid, just a tonearm and cartridge away from a total system solution.



The familiar front-end in this system was the flagship Acutus Reference turntable (£15,000) carrying an SME 5 and Benz Glider cartridge. That was joined by the Reference preamplifier (£40,000), Reference monoblocks (£45,000 the pair), Reference Three loudspeakers (£35,000/pair), Isorak supports (£2280 each) and Avid's own SCT/ASC interconnects and speaker cables. The electronics are all fully balanced, fully differential designs, featuring massive power supplies and selected components. The preamp has two completely separate phono stages, allowing users to connect up to four different cartridges, while the more perceptive amongst you will have spotted the fact that the nomenclature of the stand-mount speakers being used suggests that there are already at least two other models -- and yes, they are bigger!

Official launch will be in Munich, where the full range will be on display (Atrium 4 - E121). It's going to be interesting to see (and hear) what's on offer there, but this is a physically and sonically impressive start.



Despite the awkward acoustics presented by a smallish room, with a mix of mirrors and tiles on the wall, the sound was neatly presented and well behaved, refreshingly free of glare or hardness. Beyond that, any serious judgment will need to wait for (far) more familiar surroundings, but there's no mistaking the seriousness of the intent or the determination being displayed here. Avid might be faced with some pretty stern competition, but they've managed to sneak up on it (at least on me) virtually unnoticed, and I have a suspicion that there are a few established electronics manufacturers who are about to be just as surprised as I was. 😊

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