

# Toward a More Realistic Audio

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**A complete, frank discussion of the trend in equipment development which is necessary to provide the discriminating listener with optimum reproduction in the home, if the consumers' demand is to guide the engineers.**

**T**HIS IS, FIRST, a report on the attitudes Consumers' Research has found commonest among those interested in high-fidelity in the home. CR receives more inquiries on this subject than on any other except automobiles, so we believe we are dealing by no means with an insignificant minority. Common factors in these inquiries have importance to those in the profession.

Assemblies of high-fidelity components have been well received by consumers. We are much impressed with the willingness they show to make substantial investment in their equipment. It is surprising that so many are asking, not for the "best low-cost equipment," but for the "best available." Encouraging as this may be, there are widespread danger signals of consequence to everyone in audio.

The amount of misinformation reflected in our inquiries is appalling. Some of what passes for quantitative data in advertising is, we believe, downright misleading. Some of it may be written by people who are, themselves, misled, but much of it appears to be deliberately misinforming, composed with full understanding that however ambiguous the impressive figures may be, even professionals are enormously influenced by graphs and charts that appear to be derived from measurements on equipment too complex and expensive to be familiar.

Aside from the advertisements, the dealer himself too often sponsors confusion in the buyer. There seem to be two common types: the one who first feels out the customers' prejudices, and then feeds on them; and the type which assumes an Olympian attitude toward all mere customers—an attitude whose loftiness is the best measure of its ignorance. There are, of course, the honored few who offer respect and seek

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to inform: we owe them a profound debt of gratitude.

## Nature of Unfilled Demand for Audio Systems

Non-professional high-fidelity enthusiasts, we find, are more interested in good record-playing equipment than in anything else. Radio is most often regarded as an accessory, to be used for incidental listening, but not as a primary source of serious musical entertainment.

There is an important minority of non-technician consumers which is interested in home recording. These are almost exclusively concerned today with magnetic apparatus, with tape commanding most inquiries.

Another matter of wide concern is the consumers' inability to hear and see the equipment before purchase. Many still are unaware that well-equipped sound salons are maintained by dealers in the larger metropolitan areas.

Many purchasers of assemblies inform us that they experience difficulty in

making the necessary interconnections in their assemblies. Much hum, and most reports of unreliable performance are traceable to this difficulty. Often when the supplier has not volunteered full information on the necessary wiring, the non-technician is at a complete loss.

A fourth too-common complaint is made over the difficulty of laying out an assembly so that the controls come out symmetrically and at one central point, so that duplication among them is avoided, and so that convenience of operation is optimum. The physical configuration of the equipment is blamed.

Related to this objection is the series of inquiries on how to arrange the equipment in either built-in or cabinet set-up so that the final assembly looks neat and professional. It is said that expensive arrays of fine equipment should look well enough to justify their cost. Nobody, it is suggested, short of a combination architect and electronic engineer could assemble, re-arrange, and alter some of the components on the market,

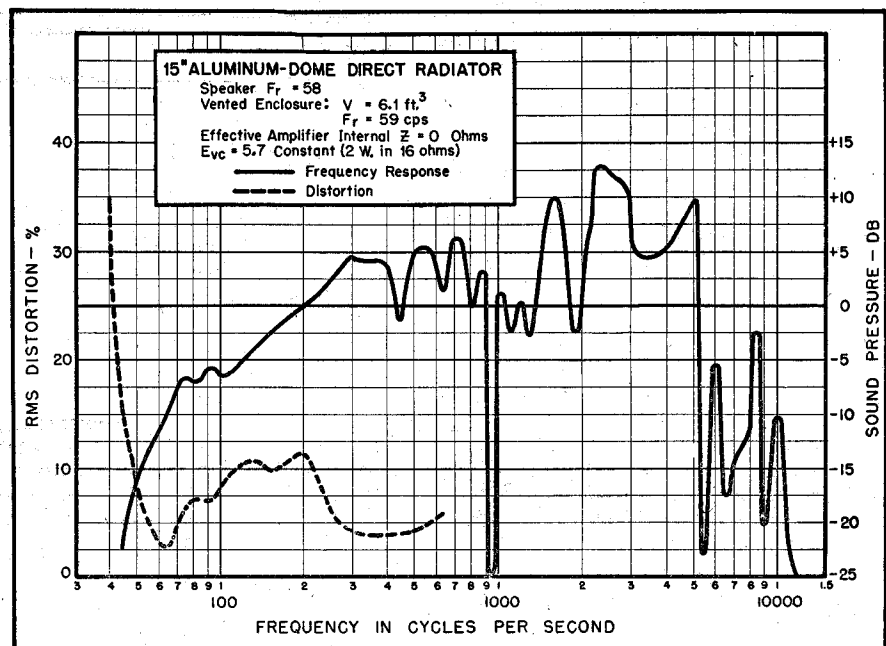


Fig. 1. By no means a "horrible example," this is one of the most highly-regarded of contemporary loudspeaker systems. The measurement was made outdoors from the top of a high building in a silent location. It should be noted that the amplifier source impedance was artificially reduced to absolute zero (constant-voltage) conditions. The bass characteristic assumes somewhat more normal proportions when the source has some, if little, effective internal impedance. The 1000-cps dip may be due to rim resonance or to a cancellation arising out of cabinet conditions.





