



CES 2009

Sheer See-Through Transparency

By John Atkinson



European
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awards

"Now that can't work," I thought, as I went into the Crystal Cable room and saw the Dutch company's new Arabesque loudspeaker (45,000 Euros/pair, equivalent to around \$60,000). A glass enclosure? But as I listened to a variety of recordings that I thought would expose cabinet problems, such as female vocals and solo cello, I didn't hear any flaws that I could lay at the feet of the enclosure. Panels of $\frac{3}{4}$ " glass are glued together to form an enclosure that from above looks like a truncated spiral and sits on a heavy aluminum base that carries the crossover components. A RAAL ribbon tweeter crosses over to three Scan Speak Illuminator woofers, and the internal wiring is, of course, Crystal's own Dreamline cable.

A highlight of CES for me was listening on the Arabesques to Gabriella Hofer's performance of the famous Chopin Berceuse (Op.57), from a sampler CD Crystal's Gabi van der Kley had released for the Show. (I believe Ms. Hofer was Mrs. van der Kley in a former life.) This had been recorded in the Buda-Pest concert hall pictured on the drape suspended behind the speakers: 5 minutes of welcome contemplative calm amidst an ocean of Show hubbub. The tubed Nagra VPA amps didn't hurt, of course!