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I don't consider myself a person with any knowledge of how audio equipment works. But I enjoy listening. The type of listening where you can hear. And until today, it feels like I haven't heard. I can be honest with myself, terms like *stage* or *instrument separation* felt more like something audiophile reviews were using to sell their products than something an untrained ear can actually appreciate. I haven't actually heard any of that. Until today. NIDA is something out of a different world. A world based only on engineering know-how. I could compare that to the rocket science - you know in general that there's a science behind every decision yet you can't comprehend or appreciate the whole result until you experience it. And I have experienced it today.

My expectation before coming to the listening session of NIDA system was to prove to myself that a human voice can sound natural when played through the audio equipment. Boy, I heard more, so much more. I'm more of a photography person. I know how it works - there is a medium (be it a photo film or a digital sensor), then there is processing that makes it "right". And then there is a print or a monitor that can present it. It feels like with audio it's exactly the same and with NIDA you can hear all of that process - what was there in the concert hall or a studio, how the operator altered it and how he (or she) wanted you to hear it. I guess in many cases it's even more than that - you can actually hear operator's mistakes. Amazing.

Pink Floyd - *Grantchester Meadows*. Right. There is a fly. Now I can argue that's in fact a bee. Ok, for some, there is also a stream. A few, would have probably heard the bystanders chitchatting on the other side of the stream. But with NIDA, you can almost smell the flowers in midsummer fields. Or the slippers. Which, to be honest, don't sound natural. And I blame it on the sound recordist, but never - on NIDA. Because I heard how the Sennheiser microphone test samples of banging on the tin garage door sound on it. It sounds *real*. And you can even smell the oil.

It would have been just another Big band track. But no, wait, I could have listened to it as many times as there were instruments in the band - because you can easily listen to each of them without any distraction, because there is *instrument separation*. Should I now consider myself an audiophile having used the term? Ok, let me go a step further - to my disappointment, *stage* does not go beyond the width of the speakers. That's pure acoustics. Until, of course, you hear that dog from Roger Waters - *Amused to Death* that is directly to your right. Magic? No, says Ceslovas, simply some psychoacoustical wizardry, albeit fully scientifically explainable.

My greatest shock? Coming back home and putting some of these tracks on my recent upgrade to the home kit - Focal *Electras*. *Excuse moi*, Focal, I haven't had a chance to expose my ears to *Grande Utopias*. I can just hope it's anywhere close to what I have heard today from NIDA.

Oh, and for the record, Spotify quality is more than enough. And no, you don't need to buy these new expensive cables. It's all about the speakers.

Hats off to Ceslovas Paplauskas. Thanks for pleasing my ears today.