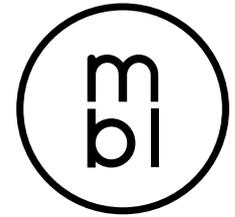


Interview with actor Kim Jae-Won



“THE MBL 101E MK II IS A SPEAKER I CAN INVEST IN FOR LIFE.”

Interview at the MBL booth by Hifi Club magazine with actor Kim Jae-Won during the 2019 KOBA Audio Show in Seoul, Korea

A request for an interview came in May. I was asked to interview actor Kim Jae-won. Kim Jae-Won !!?? The famous actor known for his killer smile? Why him? I know he has appeared in many popular TV dramas such as ‘Romance’, ‘Rivals’, ‘Hyung-su is nineteen’, ‘Hwang Jin-yi’, ‘Hwa-jeong’, ‘And If I Speak Her’. But my curiosity didn’t stop there for there are many known celebrities that are audiophiles, such as Kim Jong-jin, singer Choi Seong-su, or actor Jung Jin-young, but to name a few. Jung Jin-young even attended the Seoul International Audio Show a few years ago, and Choi Seong-su had a new album release that she performed at the Hi-Fi Club City Hall in 2018.

In actual fact, Kim Jae-won is rather discrete about his passion for high-end audio. In his home, he has a complete system, save the source, by German manufacturer MBL. In fact, I visited MBL’s production facility in May last year, and it was nice to know that a famous Korean entertainer is an MBL user.

My interview with Jae-won took place at the MBL booth during the 2019 KOBA show. The system at the show consisted of the world-renowned Radialstraler 101E MKII, their flagship omni-directional speakers, their Reference preamplifier, the 6010D, and a pair of mono-block power amplifiers, the 9011.

Nice to meet you. I was surprised to learn that you are an audio enthusiast. How long have you been interested in audio?

Kim Jae-Won: I did a lot of MC hosting for music programs and concert performances when I first started out. This allowed me to experience music up close, the liveliness and presence were an eye-opener for me.

But I couldn't feel that emotion or thrill with headphones. Then I was invited to a restaurant by a friend of mine in which the speaker sound was exceptional. I asked what speaker it was and he said it's from the UK, a brand called Harbeth. Until that time, I had no idea that this kind of world existed.

What was your first audio purchase?

Kim Jae-Won: The system that I first started with consisted of the B&W 800 Diamond Speaker powered by an April Music amplifier. Then I moved onto Wilson Audio Sasha speakers before, following by a pair Sonos Faber Amati Homage. Due to size constraints, I changed to the Piega Coax 10.2 bookshelf speaker. That's when I realized that space and volume was important in hifi audio.

Why did you choose Piega Speakers?

Kim Jae-Won: Their sound and timbre were comfortable to my ears.

Did you come to the MBL full system after using Piega?

Kim Jae-Won: Yes, I did. In a way, the 101E (same model we have here at the booth) was a speaker that I shouldn't have auditioned for I didn't want to spend big money on yet another pair. But as soon as I heard the 101E, my body went to jelly. Often, with other speakers I get tense when listening, as if it was a punishment. But with the 101 I felt like I was listening to music that was being performed right next to me. It reminded me of the moments I listened to music while I was hosting a live performance in a music theater.

With the MBL 101 speaker, the price of the speaker is considerable.

Kim Jae-Won: It is a financial consideration, without a doubt. So, I thought of the middle model below the 101E (the 111F), but the more I listened to them, the more I became attached to the 101E. Then I concluded. „This is a speaker I can invest in for life.“

I know that your current system consists of the MBL 9011 mono-blocks and the flagship 6010D preamplifier. I wonder why you chose MBL Reference amplifiers. There would have been cheaper MBL models you could go with.

Kim Jae-Won: In order to listen properly to the 101E MKII, I thought I would need an MBL amplifier. After I studied the lineup, I first tried an amplifier model below the Reference Line, but I was not completely satisfied. As a result, I eventually disposed of all the amplifiers in my house and now only listen to the 6010D and 9011.

What kind of source products do you use?

Kim Jae-Won: the Aurender N10 and Meitener's MA-1 DAC. I used to listen to CDs and LPs so much, but now I'm focusing more on network playing as it's more convenient

101E MKII is a omnidirectional speaker, as you well know. What did you like about this speaker?

Kim Jae-Won: Many speakers match with certain song types, music characteristics or genres. Personally, I like rock, and when I listen to a typical floor standing speaker, it sounds good with certain music genres, but when I switch to rock, it actually collapses. It's the same with hip hop. But the 101E never comprises, it always keeps up, no matter the music type.

It's a non-directional speaker, but I understand toeing them in is still important. How do you position them yourself?

Kim Jae-Won: I tried it myself and it didn't really matter how much I toe-ed them in. It's perhaps less of a factor in my case as I'm not always sitting on the couch when listening to music. I like to exercise at home, read books, wander about while enjoying my 101 speakers. I recently listened to another brand of speaker, and I became tired after 10 minutes.

Did you have any objections to the (unique) speaker design?

Kim Jae-Won: At first, I thought it was a rugby ball (laughs). It is a unique design that can be difficult to adapt to at first. But it didn't matter anymore as soon I felt the taste of the sound. My other Dream Speaker is the MBL 101 X-treme, the model above the 101E.

Is your family also interested in audio?

Kim Jae-Won: I'm a wild goose of a father (laugh). But both my wife and son love music very much.