

Robert Deutsch, Editor of Stereophile Magazine reports:


"I've been an admirer of MBL's omnidirectional speakers, the latest 101E Mk.II reviewed by Michael Fremer in the April 2012, issue. These were demoed at SSI 2012, and sounded great, as always. While certainly an impressive illustration of the art and science of speaker design, for me, the 101E Mk.II, being priced at about \$70k/pair, is a speaker that I just can't relate to—the audio equivalent of a Lamborghini. What I found exciting at SSI was MBL's new entry-level "baby" speaker, the MBL126.

With a new radial midrange driver and tweeter, and two 5" "push-push" drivers, with MBL's less-expensive electronics, the pair of MBL126s at the show had much the same sort of open, non-listener-position-dependent sound that characterizes its senior siblings—and the price is a relatively-affordable \$11,800/pair."

From: <http://www.stereophile.com/content/mbl-126>

"On the morning of the last day of the show, I went around one more time, looking for anything that I might have missed, and re-visiting some exhibits that I particularly enjoyed. To this end, I stuck my head in the MBL room, hoping to get another listen to the small MBL126 speaker that had impressed me earlier. Alas, the speakers playing were the big ones, but Jeremy Bryan of MBL said that if I came back in 5 minutes, he would have a special listening treat for me. I went back—and, boy, was he right! What followed went beyond anything I had previously experienced at the show.



*The system was the same high-end all-MBL setup that I had heard before, but it was supplemented—if that's the right word—by Vincent Bélanger playing the cello, adding the live sound to the recorded one of his new CD release, *Là*, that was on sale at the show (Fidelio Musique, FACD032) Rather than Live vs Recorded, this was Live plus Recorded. I was seated front and center, about four feet from Bélanger and his cello. The sound was magnificent—and so was the artistry. Perhaps because of the tonal neutrality and omnidirectional radiation pattern of the MBL speakers, the blend between the live and the recorded sound seemed quite natural. Bélanger then invited me to come up and play a few notes on the cello, to experience the vibrations of the body of the instrument against my chest. Although I've never played the cello, or any other string instrument, this is not the sort of invitation I get every day, so I couldn't very well refuse. I even managed to coax the cello to make some not-too-sour notes, to the applause of the audience.*

Yes, it was quite an experience, and a fitting end to another highly successful Salon Son & Image."

From: <http://www.stereophile.com/content/vincent-b233langer-plays-mbl>

Hans Wetzel, Contributor of the online magazine, *The SoundStage! Network* reports:



"There's no ignoring the obvious: a fine line divides the unique from the obtrusive, and the styling department of Germany's MBL has no qualms skirting it. The company's room was littered with gear from their Reference line of equipment, and its all-white finish was hard to miss, as were the logos adorning the monoblock 9011 amps, which were large enough for the legally blind to see. Aesthetic criticism is all well and fun, but like any audio product, the briefly static MBL system, wired to the bookshelf-sized 126 Radialstrahler (\$11,800 USD per pair), couldn't really be judged until the music began playing.

Cheeky. Bastards. While it's worth noting that the 126s were at the business end of over \$25,000 worth of MBL's new Corona Line of hardware, including the 300Wpc C21 stereo amplifier (\$9200), C11 preamplifier (\$8800) and C31 digital front end (\$9200), they sounded sublime. Omnidirectional speakers don't tend to have the best imaging, but the 126s were excellent in this regard. Bass extension was admirable for a bookshelf, as was the level of coherence between the opposing side-mounted woofers and the ribbon-like Radialstrahler.



The party trick of the MBLs, though, was that the varied performances taking place in front of me sounded, without exaggeration, completely without the 126s' cabinets. Ostensibly, then, the German speakers might as well have not been propped up only a few feet from my central listening position, for it was like hearing into the music through an enormous and open window. To my ears, the sound's complete detachment from the speaker box was organic in a way that traditional direct radiators simply cannot achieve at any price.

That the MBL room has had a perpetual line of listeners outside its doors over the past two days is indicative, I think, of the utterly singular audial experience that MBL offers. It's not for everyone, in terms of both financial reach and sonic preference, but if nothing else it's inimitable. And I adore it."
 From: http://www.soundstageglobal.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=230&catid=85&Itemid=269

Michael Lavorgna, Editor of the online magazine AudioStream reports:



"I was about to enter the MBL room when I was halted just inches from the entrance, "There's a reviewer in there, Stereophile's Robert Deutsch, listening to the cello" I was told in a hushed voice, so hushed that I may not have heard it right. "Sorry?" I responded. "When we hear clapping, you can go in." How odd, I thought, that people would clap for a reviewer listening to cello music. But I'm game for just about anything at a hi-fi show. So I waited. Sure enough moments later clapping ensued, the heavy wooden door to the St-Lambert Suite was opened and I darted inside.

MBL's North American Distributor par excellence Jeremy Bryan spotted me and I was rapidly ushered into a seat right next to Robert Deutsch. The only downside was the guy who had been sitting in that seat was asked to move to another one to make way for me which always makes me feel awkward. It makes me feel like one of those reviewers I still complain about. But things needed to happen quickly so I sat down, thanked the kind gentleman who moved to make way, and took a deep relaxing breath. Cellist Vincent Bélanger then asked Robert to come up and take his seat (yes, musical chairs), his cello and his bow and within seconds Robert was playing like a pro. In all seriousness, Robert coaxed a few lovely notes from that cello and there's really nothing like that sound when heard that close up. It feels like something inside of you is singing.



After receiving applause of his own, Robert returned to his seat and sat (yes the music had stopped) and Mr. Bélanger played two more pieces for us accompanied by his own recordings on CD played by the MBL Reference Line System D (\$259,700). While I try to avoid commenting on the sound at hi-fi shows because there's simply too much going on the least of which is listening to music in a way that in no way resembles the way I normally do so, I will say that the live versus recording debate was overwhelmed by music. Lovely, moving music. I spoke to Jeremy Bryan afterward and he explained that this was a spur of the moment idea and I thought it was wonderful and encouraged more of the same in the future. Of course Jeremy was way ahead of me and has much larger plans for the Munich Show which is only weeks away."

From: <http://www.audiostream.com/content/it-live-or-it-mbl>

Marc Philip, of Magazine-audio.com named MBL "Best Sound of the SSI 2012.":



"Before going any further I have marked two names because they have circulated freely through the corridors of the show: MBL and Sony, which made their show! Without a doubt, they are the ones who I think won the prize for the show, something like excess through our senses. MBL for its expertise in terms of incredible sound reproduction, we had the chance to see and hear an exceptional hifi system, implemented masterfully by Jeremy Bryan, who is none other than the President & CEO of MBL North America, Inc.. This gentleman is young, dynamic, passionate, not just in business, this is a true music lover, who deeply loves music and we proved it several times, I would have the opportunity to get back to you."



I keep a lasting memory of the joint provision of Vincent Belanger on cello, the MBL system behind him with music from his album "La", it was for the privileged few present at this demonstration a unique sensory experience of a rare intensity, I put myself close to 15 minutes to get over, to recalibrate my senses before returning to play elsewhere."

From: <http://www.magazine-audio.com/2012/ssi-2012/>

Check out an SSI attendee's YouTube post, showing the MBL system:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPZsHPgROsY>