

## Harman Luxury Update – June 2021

### JBL Synthesis: How Your Brand Can be Associated with our Fastest Growing Brand

By Dave Tovissi, Vice President and General Manager

Last month I wrote about the power of partnerships and I would like to continue that theme in this month's article. It has been almost 18 months since we held our first JBL Synthesis Dealer Council meeting at ISE in Amsterdam. Since that time, we have been hard at work developing a brand strategy that depicts the reason that JBL Synthesis was first created. Our conversations with dealers and other industry professionals have given us the inspiration and the courage to go back to the original vision of the brand.



With the introduction of our latest custom loudspeakers, JBL Synthesis is clearly the only solution that a dealer can guarantee the performance level of its components based on the room parameters that we are given, regardless of price.

With the vision clearly in our sights and the product development focused, now is the right time to create the new [jblsynthesis.com](http://jblsynthesis.com) website. We want this site to be representative of the brand and the dealers who specify and install these systems.

Partnering with Huemen, HARMAN's in-house creative agency, we'll be modernizing the website with a refreshed look and feel and an improved user experience. We also plan to tell the story of the brand in a way that's clearer and more compelling, sharing everything that makes the JBL Synthesis experience so unique. After all, the JBL Synthesis brand represents the very best in immersive surround systems. And the goal of this redesign is to have our website better reflect that.

A certified JBL Synthesis System installation starts and ends with a customer engaging with one of our dealers. We want to make it easier for customers to find our authorized dealers. One way is by creating a better Dealer Locator, but an even better way is to showcase photographs of our dealers' handywork on our site.



EUROPE'S BEST HOME CINEMA (BY ROLAND KOLLER)

This is where we could use help from our JBL Synthesis dealers. As part of the website refresh, we'd love to showcase some new photos of your remarkable installation galleries. For our dealers, this is a rare chance to have a photo from your store featured on the brand's website.

If you'd like to share a photo (or photos) for possible inclusion on the updated website, please send high-res images of your installation gallery to [tina.leitz@harman.com](mailto:tina.leitz@harman.com).

- The preferred format is landscape orientation, showing the room in the widest angle possible.
- Make sure to include your dealership's name and address in the email.
- Please note that due to space limitations, not all submissions will be featured on the website.

We look forward to receiving these images of your amazing setups to highlight the breadth of spaces that JBL Synthesis systems can serve. Thank you in advance. And look for additional updates to come as we work to roll out the new website.

If you are a currently a JBL Synthesis dealer or thinking of becoming one, there is not a better time to be associated with this iconic brand.



## What's New

# Mark Levinson Partners with Award-Winning Chefs for New Ambassador Program

**By Tina Leitz, Senior Marketing Manager, Global Centralized Brands**

We are thrilled to announce the Mark Levinson Ambassador Program, featuring four award-winning culinary experts. The program will feature Top Chef alumni Chef Gregory Gourdet, Chef Tu David Phu, James Beard Award-Winning Chef Nina Compton, and world-renowned sommelier Tahira Habibi, who will closely collaborate with the Mark Levinson team to deliver experiences that heighten the senses and unlock a deeper appreciation of sound.

Throughout the program, Mark Levinson will release four brand new Mark Levinson Reveals episodes, each pairing a program ambassador with a local up-and-coming musical artist.

The Mark Levinson Reveals episodes will dive into the connection between music and food and showcase how the two can combine to enhance and inspire one another.



The episodes will focus on a deep exploration of culinary and musically inspired topics, including:

- Chef Gregory Gourdet will be joined by local Portland producer, Eprom, to discuss the similarities between building a unique dish and creating experimental sound design
- World-renowned sommelier Tahira Habibi will be joined by musical artist Jade Novah to explore the nuance behind sommeliers training their palette and musicians training their voice and ears
- Chef Tu David Phu will sit down with musician Lara Sarkissian and talk about the different ways texture affects both food and music
- Chef Nina Compton's episode will take place in New Orleans alongside musical artist Robin Barnes, where they will focus on the role food and music plays in shaping the city's identity

"Mark Levinson premium audio products reveal the layers and subtleties within great music – whether it's the slightest breath an artist takes or a never heard before hidden harmony. Similarly, chefs and culinary experts are focused on creating surprising flavor profiles with similar depth and nuance," said Bill Wyman, Vice President, Global Marketing at HARMAN. "Mark Levinson continues to raise the bar for high-end audio and we're inspired by our culinary experts who are elevating their field and bringing the complementary power of food and music to life."

Mark Levinson is also proud to announce a \$25,000 donation to the James Beard Foundation Open for Good campaign, which provides critical resources to help independent restaurants build the capacity to come back stronger, more equitable, more sustainable and more resilient. Mark Levinson believes in the healing power of food and music, and is honored to be able to give back to an industry that was so severely impacted during the pandemic. James Beard Award-Winning Chef Nina Compton will speak in-depth about the donation during her Mark Levinson Reveals episode, airing on August 2, 2021.

"The Mark Levinson brand is known for bringing true craftsmanship to transformative sound experiences, which as a chef is something I strive to bring to every dish and culinary experience I create," said James Beard Award-Winning Chef Nina Compton. "I am so excited to collaborate with a brand that encourages people to live passionately and purposefully, whether that's through music or food – or by giving back to places such as the James Beard Foundation that encourage others to do the same."

The Mark Levinson Reveals episodes began airing on June 7, 2021 and will run through September 20, 2021. Be sure to follow each episode at [instagram.com/explore/tags/soundsfromthekitchen/](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/soundsfromthekitchen/).

# Meet the Team

**Name:** Mark Glazer

**Position/Job Title:** Principal Engineer  
**With HARMAN Since 1989**



*With Meet The HARMAN Luxury Team, our goal is for you to get to know us better. In each edition we feature a different member of the team, and this month it's Mark Glazer, Principal Engineer.*

## **How would you describe what you do in your current role?**

I best describe myself as creating and developing the acoustic performance of loudspeaker systems for the audiophile community. Achieving this also branches out to a wide range of responsibilities such as: developing the concept with our marketing team, joining forces with colleagues and suppliers to define the working parts, writing documentation and specifications and keeping track of the schedule.

## **What did you study in school? Did you always imagine yourself doing something like what you're doing now, or did the fates just take you in that direction?**

In my early teens I developed a fascination with loudspeaker design and made my academic and career goal to obtain an engineering degree and become a loudspeaker design engineer.

## **How did your career path lead you to HARMAN?**

At the start of my career I obtained employment as an apprentice loudspeaker engineer for almost four years at Jumeita Labs in Vancouver, Canada. We designed and manufactured high-end loudspeakers. My next move was in the telecommunication industry as an electro-acoustic engineer.

In 1989, I made a major career jump to HARMAN by obtaining employment as a loudspeaker engineer for Infinity Systems. My next advancement with HARMAN was transferring to a new start up loudspeaker brand, Revel, in 1996, where I have been responsible for its loudspeaker engineering to this day.

## **What is the most important thing you have learned over your career?**

Regardless of your personal loudspeaker design successes, "it takes a village" of specialists to design and manufacture our great loudspeakers

## **Any other advice you would offer people just starting out in this industry?**

Connect with a mentor in the audio industry and learn from them. This type of experience is priceless.

## **What are you most proud of in your life?**

To have met and even exceeded my goal from my early teens of becoming a loudspeaker engineer. A big part of my success is being so fortunate to have spent over 32 years at

HARMAN in high-end loudspeaker design. My proudest accomplishment to date, the Revel Salon2, even after 12 years is still considered one of the top loudspeakers on the market.

**When did you first realize you had a passion for music or audio? Was there any one song, band or movie that did it for you?**

As a teen, I enjoyed listening to music on my family's stereo console. In 1971, I attended an audiophile show and was amazed to hear the wide bandwidth and dynamics from speakers such as the JBL Paragon and Acoustic Research AR 3a. The music was Santana *Abraxas*, Strauss *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and Bizet *Carmen Suite*. I can still envision that sight and sound 50 years later.

**What kind of gear are you rocking at home these days?**

I have Revel Salon2 speakers with Mark Levinson associated equipment.

**What current technology impresses you the most?**

Music streaming. Using Qobuz, this amazing technology sounds great and has essentially replaced my CD collection with an even much more expansive library.

**What's your favorite music genre?**

Classical music, followed by traditional jazz and opera.

**The desert island question, of course. If you were marooned for eternity and could listen to only three albums, what would they be?**

- Mussorgsky/Ravel: *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Reiner, Chicago Symphony. Classic Records Remaster
- Dave Brubeck: *Time Out*, Acoustic Sounds 45 rpm remaster
- Mahler: *Symphony No.2*, Mehta, Vienna Philharmonic, Decca, Project 45 rpm Remaster

By the way, I would also require my Revel-Mark Levinson sound system.

**You have the floor. In closing, tell us anything else you want us to know about yourself.**

In writing, I look back at my long career at HARMAN. Being involved in amazing audio products, participating in industry events worldwide and working with great people. I tell myself, "Only at HARMAN could I have ever achieved all this."



# Dealer Profile

## Starpower

Dallas-Ft. Worth and Scottsdale

### President and CEO

David K. Pidgeon

### Key Statistics and Information

Opened: 1995

Harman Brands Supported: Arcam, JBL Synthesis, Lexicon, Mark Levinson, Revel

*The HARMAN Luxury Audio Group is proud to have some of the best high-end consumer electronics partners across the globe. Each month, we have the pleasure of learning a little bit more about one of our dealers or distributors. This time we spoke with David K. Pidgeon, President and CEO of Starpower, which has locations in Texas and Arizona.*

### How long have you been in business?

The first showroom opened in Dallas in 1995.

### How many locations do you have?

Starpower has four locations. Three in the DFW area and one in Scottsdale.



### **How did Starpower get its start?**

The original concept when we started our first store was to be a step above the big box stores with more knowledgeable staff and nicer product lines. We weren't necessarily higher end, but our focus has always been to give our clients more service than what they were used to. As we evolved, we discovered that our clients didn't just want better equipment and better service, they also wanted better installation. They were looking for the whole package. So, we have developed the capacity to handle larger and larger orders.

### **How many people are on the Starpower team?**

150

### **Thoughts on the importance of training?**

Training is key for the luxury sales expert and technicians. Staying up to date with the latest technology and software from the manufactures allows us to provide the best service for our clients.

### **What do you like most about HARMAN Luxury Audio products and which lines do you feature?**

We feature all the HARMAN Luxury lines. The range of solutions, from Revel theaters to Mark Levinson two- channel, make it one-stop shopping for audio needs. JBL Synthesis theaters are the ultimate solution to wow our clients in every showroom.

### **How do you think the luxury audio industry is currently doing?**

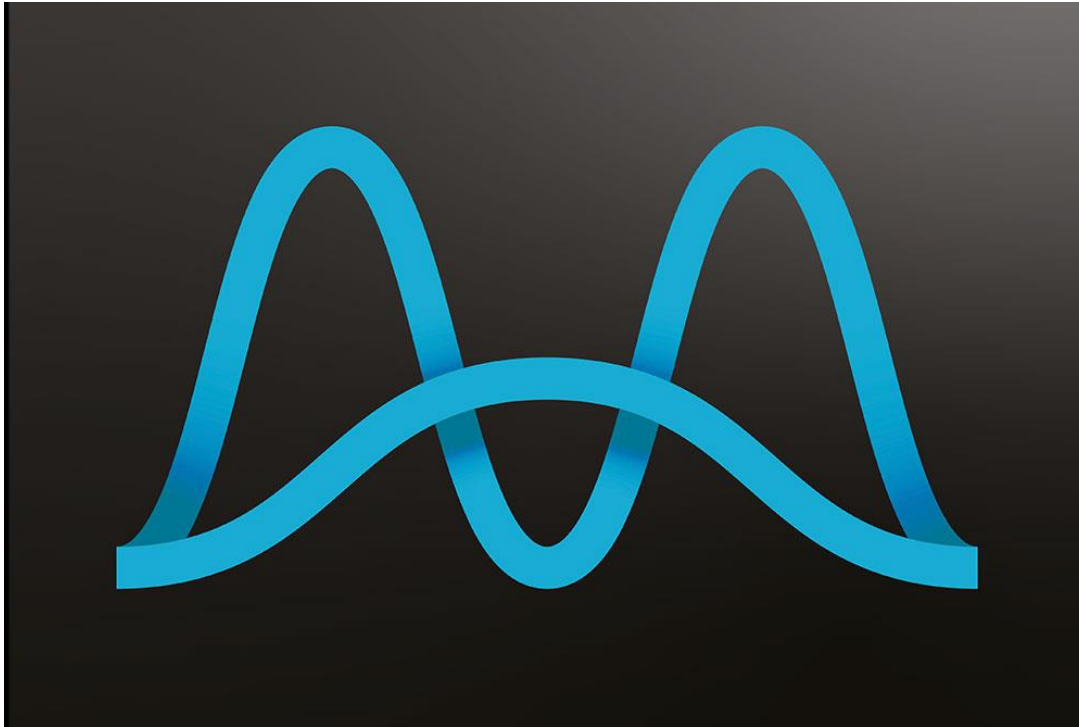
Seeing a surge as people are spending more time at home and focusing on better audio for their in-home experience.

### **What is Starpower's mission?**

Starpower's mission is delivering luxury products and innovative solutions that enhance our customers' lives.

[Star-power.com](http://Star-power.com)





## Tech Talk

# Customer-Driven Development

**By Paul Williamson – Principal Software Engineer**



MusicLife development started in 2014. At the time, the scope for the app was fairly narrow: facilitate playback to a product using UPnP. There were a number of design decisions taken with this in mind.

Over time, more features needed to be added: Google Cast playback, streaming services and so on.

While these new features were a net benefit to customers, they came at the expense of adding complexity to the app.

You only get one chance at a first impression of using a product, and the more you work with the product, the farther you are from that first impression. Usage flows that make sense to you with your experience may not make sense to a new customer that has no experience with the product.

## **Design Decisions**

We are always looking for ways to improve the user-experience and were aware that some customers were not finding the app immediately intuitive. It's not always easy for customers to quantify why a user experience is difficult to navigate, but through some hard work by Customer Service, Sales and Research & Development, we were able to build a picture of the main blockers our customers encountered.

We had already intended to redesign the flow of the app, but we wanted to ensure we were doing this for the right reasons rather than just for the sake of pushing pixels to get something new.

A few months ago, a customer reached out to us asking if there was a way to reduce friction from app launch to playing a radio station. This was the final piece of the puzzle that heavily influenced the design decisions we were to make in the redesign – and yes, we really do consider all the suggestions and feature requests our customers make!

## **Analysis**

To begin, we took radio playback as a starting point and focused on how much interaction was required to begin playback.

- Open MusicLife
- Tap Streaming Services
- Tap Radio
- Tap Favourites
- Tap on a radio station
- Tap Play Now

Assuming that you had previously used the app with a product and the app would reconnect to that product on launch, a total of six interactions were required to begin radio playback. While the steps above would only take 10-15 seconds to perform, we still felt like this could be optimised.

So how could we streamline this flow?

## **First Steps**

A quick and easy first step was to flatten the streaming services menu – adding the different services directly to the home screen. That reduces one interaction already.

The average customer may have a handful of radio stations they regularly listen to, so how can we make it easier to jump directly to these stations? The most efficient way would be to allow customers to add specific stations directly to their home screen. This significantly streamlined the number of interactions required:

- Open MusicLife
- Tap your favourite radio station
- Tap Play Now

Great! So how do we extend this simplification? Well, a good start is by expanding the same home screen persistence feature to albums and playlist. This required a little more thought as we can't make any assumptions about what streaming service, or UPnP server a customer may prefer, so we have to support all options transparently.

At this point we were acutely aware that displaying all this extra data in a single-column list view was an inefficient use of the limited space available. Instead, by separating the data out into a grid view we were able to make the user experience cleaner and simpler, while still ensuring a customer could jump easily to the content they wanted.

### **Responding to Feedback**

At this point we pushed out an alpha build to our internal stakeholders to physically try out the design. We feel the hands-on approach gives a much more natural 'feel' for using an app than static design images.

During this initial test, one of our Quality Assurance engineers suggested we expand the home screen to also include recently played items. This made it much easier to discover new favourites and quickly access content that is in heavy rotation.

Unlike favourites however, this section is ephemeral. Over time older content will be replaced by new content, so it makes sense to pair this with the favourites section.

We decided to limit the recently played items to whole 'containers', for example; an album, playlist, podcast or radio station, in order to prevent polluting the recently played sections with single songs, and therefore reducing its usefulness.

### **Exploring all Options**

Now we felt like we had a much-improved experience for the vast majority of our customers, but we didn't want to stop there. How could we improve the experience for some of the edge cases? Consider the following use case – a customer who predominately plays content from a UPnP server, with occasional radio playback.

The current layout would show six streaming services that the customer doesn't use. While leaving the services on screen helps familiarise a customer with the services available to them, if they have no intention of using streaming services, then it is a waste of space.

The result was we added the ability to hide services a customer does not need, which provides a much cleaner look overall. Of course, in the future, a customer may decide to subscribe to a streaming service, so we also added the ability to "Show Hidden" services so the visibility can be toggled at a later date.

### **Summary**

Redesigning an app is not a decision that can be taken lightly. While it is fairly easy to iterate mobile apps and continuously deliver updates, you need to be acutely aware of how your changes may affect customers.

Improving the ease of use for new customers makes a lot of sense, but these same decisions can alienate or confuse customers with a long history of using the app. Ensuring existing customers can still find their way through the app is equally important.

Overall, we feel like we have achieved the goals we initially set out, and initial feedback from small test groups has been very positive. Listening carefully to customer feedback and reacting appropriately has huge benefits for both the end customer and business at large.

MusicLife app available here:



# Training Tips

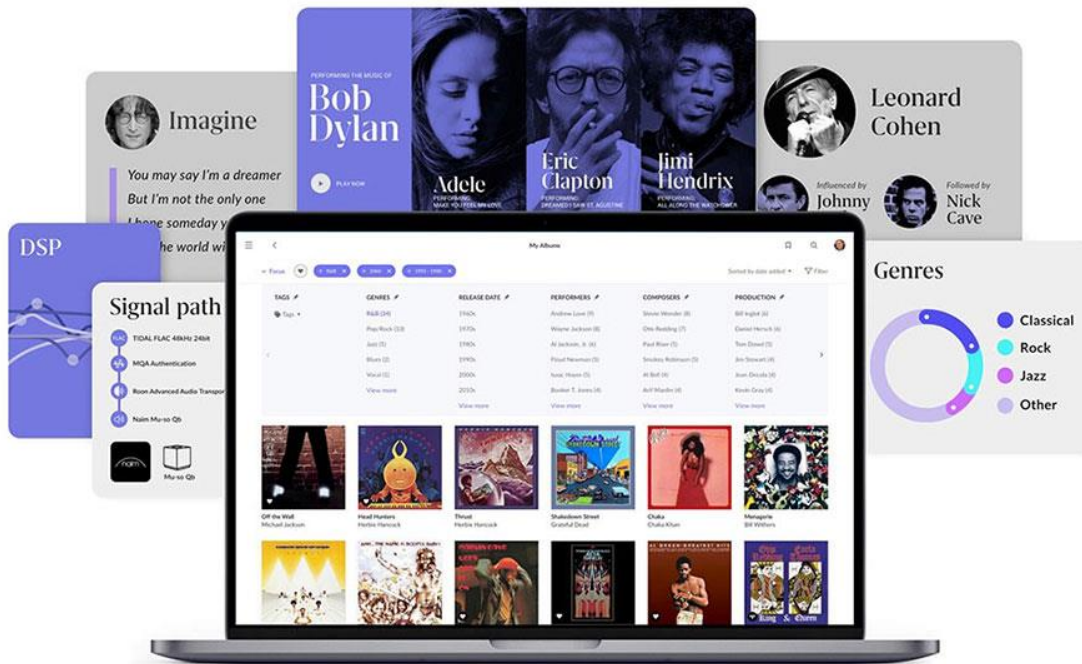
## New Trainings for Roon and JBL Studio 6

By Kevin Kent – Field Technical Trainer



In partnership with Roon Labs, a new training module will be released that demonstrates the seamless integration of several digital source components from HARMAN Luxury Audio. We'll look at the system anatomy and detail on what makes the Roon system special, including the ways it enhances the music listening experience, as well as the increased business opportunities for our dealers.

Roon was founded with a goal to help people have an easier time enjoying their music, and so far, we think they've done exactly that... and then some. We already love the sonic quality of what our Roon Ready devices can achieve and we're excited Roon can provide your customers with the option to expand to numerous music systems around their home using one convenient app.



Being told about Roon is exciting, but this is a system that is best understood through experience. Therefore, Roon is offering a FREE one-year subscription upon passing the quiz at the end of the lesson!

But that's not all... One lucky winner will be randomly selected to receive a Roon Nucleus, a high performance music server dedicated to your digital library and streaming services.



**JBL Studio 6**  
June 2021

The JBL Studio 6 series of in-room loudspeakers represents the entry into high frequency compression driver speakers that produce JBL's signature sound. We will take a quick look at the JBL legacy of engineering excellence and demonstrate how we employed traditional technologies while progressing forward with the advances in today's acoustics. The Studio 6

line combines legacy technology with the HDI Horn and a completely redesigned cabinet, creating a speaker that looks beautiful and delivers the low-end power and huge dynamics that are the core of the JBL signature sound. With the number of options available in the Studio 6 line, you can mix and match, making it convenient to suit your customers' budgets and needs for an unlimited number of applications. The details of the Studio 6 speaker line revealed to you in this training should not be missed.

**Access the site at <https://harmanuniversity.talentlms.com/>**

*Once you sign in, if these courses are not populated on your home page, click "Go to Courses" to sign up. Stay tuned next month as more training becomes available for Arcam, Mark Levinson and JBL Synthesis.*

# Solutions Center

## HARMAN Luxury Audio Customer Service Moves into the Cloud



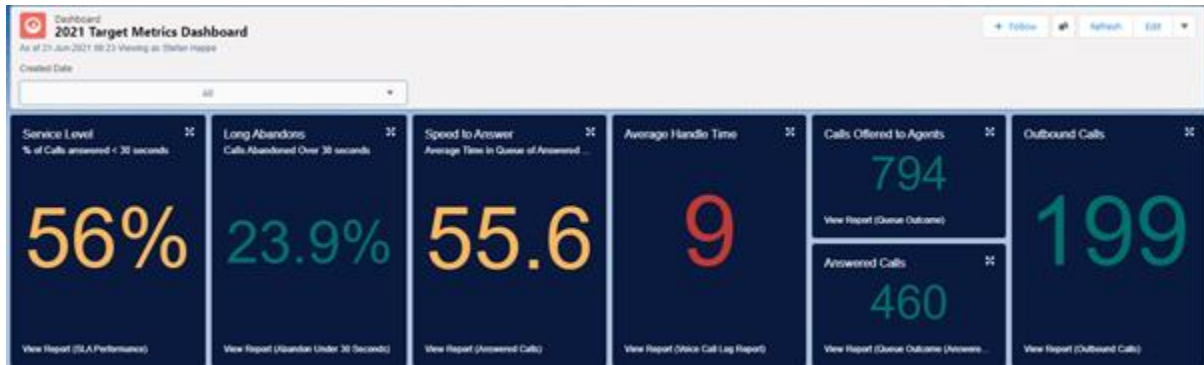
**By Stefan Happe – Customer Service Manager**

For the past few years since the acquisition of the Arcam brand, the Customer Service team for the HARMAN Luxury Audio BU was not only divided by location and time zone, but also by the tools they had at their disposal. The phone systems between the U.S. and the EU based parts of the team were not compatible. A U.S. based customer was only able to contact Luxury Audio Customer Support during the U.S. office hours, an EU based customer could only do so during UK office hours, without facing long distance charges.

In 2020, we were facing a number of issues when working from home became the norm. Many customers now had the time during the day to look after their home audio system and were able to call Customer Support while they were right in front of their unit, which caused a higher demand in phone availability.

In 2019, Lifestyle Customer Service started looking at future investments in our phone systems and this spike in demand in 2020 helped us to move forward far quicker than anticipated. It was thanks to our lifestyle leadership that we could secure the funding and were able to start a "Test Setup" within the smallest of the Lifestyle Customer Support Departments, the Luxury Audio Department.

In January, the integration of the new system started, by setting up a sandbox testing ground for the new cloud-based Amazon Connect and Salesforce Voice setup. We decided to enlist the help of the integration specialists at Neuraflash to build this new channel into our existing Salesforce CRM setup, which was finally rolled out into the real world in May 2021. This direct integration of telephony into our CRM system meant that all service agents were working within the same system with the same tools along the same guidelines, no matter their location. This finally enabled us to provide phone coverage from UK AM to U.S. West Coast PM for all customers globally.



In addition, we now have new reporting capabilities, which gives us new, never before available insights into our performance as a Customer Support provider. In the past, all we could do was estimate the number of calls we receive during any given period of time.

With the new system we can now, for the first time, see how many calls come in, how long the average waiting time is, how many customers prefer to leave a voice message and how many calls have been abandoned (customer hung up after waiting to get through). This is all incredibly useful information that shows us where we need to concentrate our future efforts.

We now also have the ability to see what is involved in handling a call, how long the average call lasts and how many calls are handled for a single case in order to be resolved.

Lastly, as a cherry on top, we now have all calls recorded and transcribed, enabling us to better hand over a case to another agent that might have more experience with a certain product.

The introduction of this new phone system was the first step into becoming a fully global Customer Support Team. As we look towards the future, we will be adding new channels like Whatsapp and Chat and continue to enhance and improve the system so that we can provide the best possible support to our global customers.

**Contact Luxury Audio Support:**

[luxurysupport@harman.com](mailto:luxurysupport@harman.com)

U.S. Toll Free: +1-888-691-4171

International: +44-1707-668-012

# From the Audio Files

## Revel Performa Be F328Be Product Review

The Our flagship floorstanding loudspeaker in the award-winning Performa Be Series is the Revel F328Be. This product performs at the highest level of excellence with unparalleled detail and accuracy. For Stephen Hornbrook of *Reference Home Theater*, the experience of reviewing them made a lasting impression. Below is a highlight:

“At first glance the F328Be appears to be the F228Be with an added bass driver. The lower frequency extension and increased bass performance are great, but Revel didn’t stop there. They have managed to squeeze even more performance from its 1” Beryllium dome tweeter and the ceramic-coated, cast-aluminum Acoustic Lens waveguide is now in its 6th generation. All this attention to detail has resulted in a world-class loudspeaker. Hands down, this is the finest speaker I have had the opportunity to audition at home and could easily see it being the last speaker I’d ever need.”



Read the whole review:

<https://referencehometheater.com/review/revel-performabe-f328be-loudspeaker-review/>

