



# Harman Luxury Update – July 2021

## Becoming a Music Evangelist

By Dave Tovissi, Vice President and General Manager

Did you know that in five years there will be a major transfer of wealth from Baby Boomers to those we commonly refer to as Xennials and Millennials? These generations will account for the majority of consumer spending world-wide. Economists predict that by 2026, they will represent over 65 percent of luxury consumer purchases.

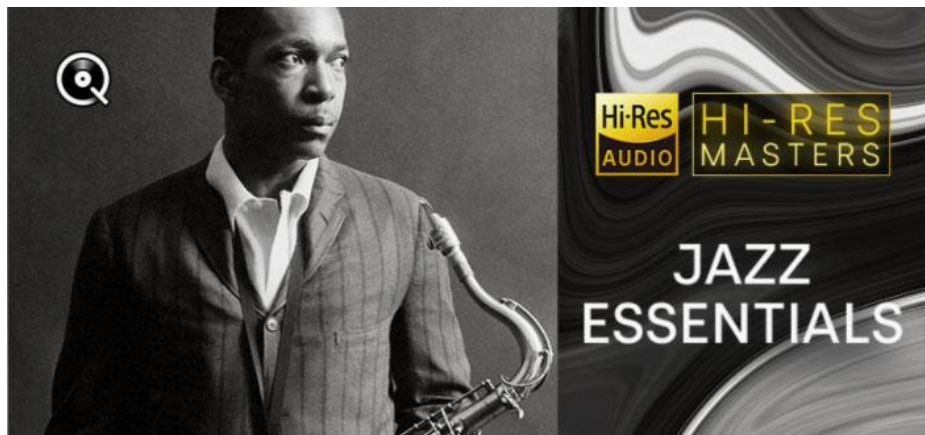
When it comes to premium entertainment services, the younger generations have been exposed to the benefits of higher bandwidth for searching the Internet and the enhanced viewing experience of watching their favorite programming in High Definition. Research tells us that these consumers are willing to pay more for premium entertainment service offerings. Research also states that over 60 percent of today's younger consumers are paying more for audio components than their parents did on average. While they want to tap into Hi-Res audio, unfortunately they are still streaming their music in compressed formats.

Why do you think that's the case? Could it be that they have never heard the difference? Could it be that they don't even know the difference? These generations have been listening to compressed music since birth. They grew up watching videos on their phone and listening on inexpensive headphones.



So what are we going to do about this dilemma?

Introducing new audio formats to consumers has always been up to the industry and the press. Back in the 1950s the industry was introducing FM radio to the market as a better way to listen to music over the air. Now, I firmly believe that it's up to us, as audio professionals, to introduce younger people to the benefits of lossless Hi-Res audio – both for streaming and for playback. Next month, at the ProSource Summer Conference, the Harman Luxury Audio Group will be launching our first ever, premium all-in-one music solution from JBL. Catering to music enthusiasts who prefer convenience and space over the complexity of traditional audio systems, we are anticipating a lot of interest from the Gen-Z consumer. We have engineered this exciting, evolutionary audio component to leverage all the great content offered by Hi-Res music services. To help expose these new customers to all that great content, we are partnering with Qobuz to include a 90-day subscription for anyone who purchases this new music system. We know once they hear the difference, they will appreciate the engineering that went into making this innovative new product and share that with their friends and colleagues.



By the way, this month's Tech Talk is written by David Solomon, Vice President and Chief Hi-Res Music Evangelist from Qobuz. Please check it out. We are excited to partner with companies like Qobuz and Roon to enhance the listener's experience of our great products. We encourage you to do your part to introduce and demonstrate the benefits of lossless audio in your showrooms and have these conversations with your younger clients. They are thirsty for what we have to offer and it's only a matter of pressing the play button to capture their attention.

Remember to take the Roon training course and pass the quiz to get your free subscription to Roon as well, and start to think about the fantastic business opportunities you'll be enjoying as we bring a new form factor to market that captures the grandeur and passion we all feel for music. Become a music evangelist and tap into a huge market segment that is ready for what we have to offer.

# Meet the Team

Name: **Manuel Caballero**  
Position/Job Title: **Senior Software Architect**  
With HARMAN Since 2021



*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 Manuel Caballero, Senior Software Architect.*

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

Improving the customer experience of our current luxury audio brand products and working with the wider HARMAN team in developing exciting new products.

## **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?**

At University I studied Electronic Systems Engineering. Working in audio has been a long-term plan of mine but as it's quite a niche industry, I've worked in the video streaming and broadcast fields for most of my career.

## **Share with us a little bit of your career arc?**

My career has been in the broadcast and streaming industry, the high point of which would have been heading up the living room devices group at Amazon (which really is a place like no other). Since then, I have somewhat changed direction to align more closely with my passion for audio.

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

Never stop learning, be inquisitive. Always have a Plan B.

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

Do it because you love it, not for the money. There are easier ways to get rich.

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

First and foremost, my family. In terms of personal achievements, independently developing the Waldorf Kyra music synthesizer was a personal achievement I had wanted to do for many years.

## **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?**

My "ear opener" music for me would be Jean Michel Jarre's Oxygene and John Williams' soundtrack for *Star Wars – A New Hope* back in 1977, which was my first experience in multichannel audio. Jeff Wayne's musical version of *War of the Worlds* also gets honorable mention.

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

As I'm relatively new to HARMAN, I've just had an Arcam AVR30 arrive and a pair of Revel 226Be speakers, but I'm really excited to add more speakers for a full multi-channel experience.

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

EVs like the Tesla.

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

Pretty much anything really except manufactured pop and country & western. If I had to pick something it'd be in the rock to melodic metal genre range, but I also listen to a lot of jazz, electronic and AOR.

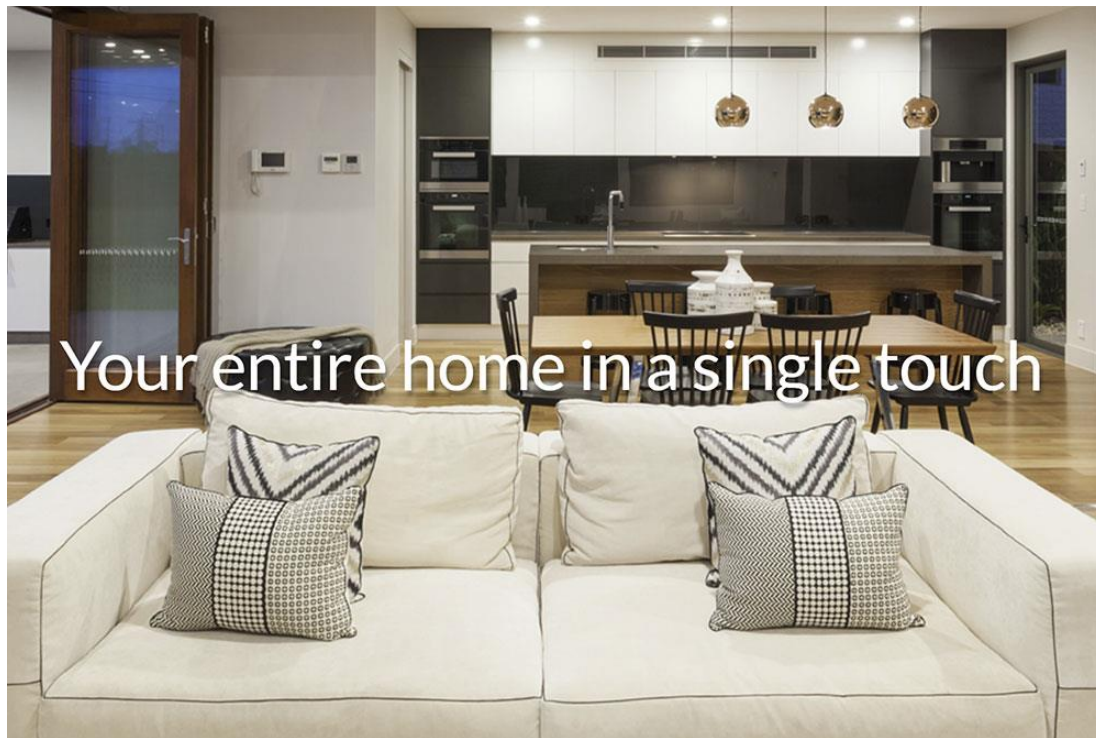
**The desert island question, of course. If you were marooned for eternity and could listen to only three albums, what would they be?**

- R.E.M. – *Automatic for the People*
- Massive Attack – *Mezzanine*
- Pink Floyd – *Wish You Were Here*

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

It's just week two – I'm looking forward to getting started and making a difference!

## Dealer Profile



# Audio Impact



San Diego, Los Angeles and Cabo San Lucas

## Founder

Ryan Lipkovicus

## Key Statistics and Information

Opened: 2000

Harman Brands Supported: 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 Ryan Lipkovicus, Founder of Audio Impact, which has locations in San Diego, Los Angeles and Cabo San Lucas.*

## How did Audio Impact get its start?

At the age of six, our Founder, Ryan Lipkovicus, found a passion for electronics when taking apart his first telephone to create booby traps throughout his home. At 10 years old he installed his first AI phone for his grandparents.

During his high school and college career, Audio Impact began with car audio upgrades including speaker improvements, addition of equalizers, LED lighting, security systems and custom speaker box fabrications. Audio Impact expanded into the world of home theater, multi-room audio featuring FM and 5-disc CD players and analog security cameras. As technology evolved and there was more of a need for residential home networks, iPads, smart homes and automation, this was second nature for Audio Impact as Ryan graduated from San Diego State University with a degree in computer information decision systems.

Today, Audio Impact maintains a steadfast hold in the Southern California and Baja markets where we serve our clients backed with 24/7 support and a team of 30+ members each sharing a passion, care and enthusiasm in the various segments of our industry.

Our average project allows our client to interact with Audio Impact as one vendor who has in-house specialists for IP video distribution, streaming multi-room audio, architectural planning and drawings, documentation, system design, smart lighting control systems, motorized shades, enterprise grade networks and surveillance systems, all with single smart home app simplicity. Audio Impact's clients benefit from our involvement from the beginning of the design to their first night's sleep in their intuitive, easy-to-use smart home.





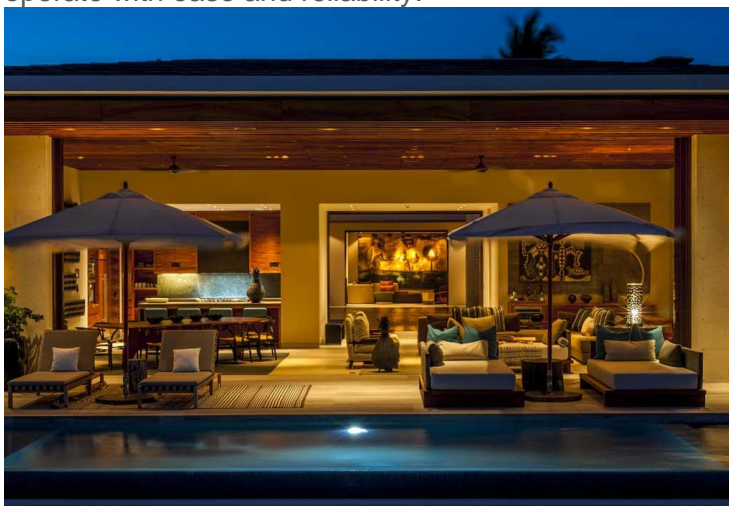
### **How many people are on the Audio Impact team?**

We have over 30 employees, with dedicated in-house programmers, dedicated network specialists, in-house shade design team and installation, in-house lighting design team and installation and dedicated 24/7 support staff.

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

Audio Impact prides itself on the importance of training with all of the manufacturers we provide, in particular from the HARMAN Luxury Group as it touches on so many parts of our industry. We have found that using a combination of in-person training, online training, video conference-call training and good old hands-on training serves our various team members' needs. This includes being informed of new releases, features and options, most reliable installations, and best practices to help our team be creative on projects and prepared for any curve balls that might arise on any project.

One of the amazing things about our industry is it is rapidly and constantly changing. This is where training becomes an important component to ensure we design and install systems that operate with ease and reliability.



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

The first and most important is our personal relationship with various parts of the HARMAN Luxury Audio Group. The quality, service and support that we receive enable us to design, install and support all of our systems from the average home audio system to the custom home and theater audio systems.

Eric Leicht and Martin Byrne of AV Partners have become our true friends that offer unparalleled support on all aspects of our project implementations, and help ensure we have everything we need to go above and beyond to provide the best solution for our clients.

We enjoy the harmonious end-to-end solution that the HARMAN Luxury Audio Group offers from their speakers, subwoofers, cabling, audio matrixing, and Dolby Atmos surround sound processing.

The results are award-winning systems for Audio Impact's clients and an audio-visual ease-of-use experience that clients have never had before.



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

What used to be only available in large commercial spaces, is now being designed and available for residential properties with very diverse customization that allows for great quality audio throughout a home, but can still be seamless and invisible.

The quality of luxury audio even on a small scale allows for calibration that was once only available in movie theaters and concert halls to now be available in the luxury of our clients homes and allows them to share this experience with their close friends and they are more accessible for the average music enthusiast.

### **What is Audio Impact's mission?**

One of Audio Impact's core principles is to evolve, educate and deliver to our clients state-of-the-art systems without compromise, while exceeding their expectations.

### **You have the floor. Anything else you want to share with us about Audio Impact that you would like the world to know?**

Audio Impact is a truly one-of-a-kind establishment comprised of passionate, driven, old-fashioned teamwork. We take care of our team and community, creating a cohesive second family environment and openness to continue to better ourselves and the systems we deliver and the support and education of our customers.

We pride ourselves on being there for each other and offering our clients unprecedented around-the-clock support and concierge service like no other company. We enjoy being fast and agile and always working to improve our results in all areas of our business, and evolving with new trends and technology.

[AudioImpact.com](http://AudioImpact.com)

## **Tech Talk**

### **Hi-Res Reality Check**

***16/44 vs Hi-Res: Can you hear the difference?***

***Better still, can the difference improve recording quality?***

**By David Solomon – Vice President, Qobuz**



The idea of streaming bit-perfect Hi-Res audio has been a dream of music lovers for many years and now it's not only possible, but a reality. The Hi-Res albums that many of us bought for big money are almost all available on Qobuz for the price of a subscription.

Now that they are available, many forums on social media are posting confusing information that has little to do with the actual practical application of recording music in Hi-Res.

Perfect digital and theoretical numbers are quoted all the time regarding digital audio. "Can you hear the difference between 16/44 and Hi-Res recordings?" Then they quote the 16/44 TOP spec of 96dB signal-to-noise (dynamic range) and up to about 20kHz frequency response, but these often-quoted top digital specs have never been achieved and are purely theoretical. Many will take these numbers as a reality in the playback process. They are not. In reality, and in practical usage, the very best Redbook CDs usually top out at 700-1,000 Kbps. Some even lower. 16/44 in a perfect world would yield 1,411Kbps to achieve the dynamic range quoted in



the sites that say 16/44 is more than enough resolution and dynamic range. And while a perfect 16/44 recording could produce 96dB of dynamic range, there are no 96dB dynamic range CDs.



# qobuz

So, if you ever want to achieve the specs of a 16/44 recording at its highest level, it's much more likely to happen with a 24-bit slate. Everything needs headroom. If you want to drive a car at 70 mph, you don't buy one with a top speed of 70 mph. By the same token, if you want to hear what 16/44 can really do, you don't start out with a max 16/44 recording.

Hi-Res, by comparison, is a much better tool for recording engineers so they have headroom during the recording process, so they make a better recording to begin with.

Recording in 24/96 will not yield

144dB dynamic range because there's no system that could deal with that kind of swing, or any mic that could capture it. However, Hi-Res does give engineers more room to record before clipping the digital signal trying to get too close to its top range.

We've all heard very skilled engineers produce some astonishing 16/44 content in the early days of CDs. They were somewhat rare, but now young engineers on digital audio workstations are getting great results in their bedroom recording in Hi-Res, because of this headroom now afforded. One such recording is Billie Eilish's *Don't Smile at Me*, recorded by her brother in a room in their house. Take a listen [here](#). Until recently, it was near impossible to get a recording that sounded this good unless you were at a top studio with a top shelf engineering staff.

Hi-Res simply makes it easier for engineers to make great recordings. If you've been paying attention to original recordings in the last five years, we've come a long way and the sound quality of a music file is likely to be much more relaxed and extended these days than in say 1990. We now have some of the best recordings ever made because of Hi-Res and almost everything is being released today is with extended resolution.

If you then take one of these exceptional Hi-Res recordings down to 16/44, not many would detect a big difference, but that's not really the point. 16/44 is no longer even a standard and has no reason to exist. So why would anyone want to take the original Hi-Res recording and convert it at all? We now have the space, we have the speed, and we have Hi-Res music services. Just push the button and enjoy.

Older recordings can benefit from Hi-Res as well, and many are very well done. These Hi-Res recordings are the ones we bought, and prior to streaming were highly sought after and quite expensive.

One of my favorite vintage recordings is Illinois Jacket, Swing's the Thing. This was released in 1957 and the Hi-Res version is much better than the 16-bit version. We have them both on Qobuz. So it's an easy process.

Another is the 1963 classic, [Midnight Blue](#) by the great Kenny Burrell.

Having said this, there are plenty of albums that have been re-released that sound no better and sometimes worse than the original. I don't like it, but that's how some of the labels have dealt with their older content. Going forward, there's not much reason to re-release current Hi-Res albums, because it's likely they will stand the test of time and sound great the way it was recorded.

Bill Schnee, Grammy-winning engineer who has a discography of more than 500 albums, including Steely Dan's *Gaucha*, says that the first time he recorded in Hi-Res was the first time the glass was removed in the studio between himself and the musicians. [Here's](#) a release that has much better sound quality than the original 16-bit version. Both are on Qobuz for easy comparison.

This is a great time to be alive if you're a music lover, but Hi-Res recording is not about theoretical numbers or the resolution you choose to play it back in. It's about the undeniable leap in recording quality and the benefit you get from that part of the process. So yes, in listening and in practical terms, Hi-Res does make a big difference.

So the next time you hear or read that systems can't keep up with Hi-Res, know that it doesn't have to keep up with theoretical numbers. Your system just has to play back what is now possible. That is simply better sound from the original source itself.

## Training Tips

### Arcam Solo Uno: The Intelligent Streaming Amplifier Offering More Opportunities for Music

By Chris Robinson – Global Training Manager



Streaming amplifiers have flourished in popularity in recent years and Arcam joined this category in 2020 with the introduction of the Solo Uno. Solo Uno brings Arcam's "music first" design philosophy into an elegant, intelligent streaming amplifier that is easy to use, with comprehensive music listening options.

Performance and convenience highlight the applications of the Solo Uno with the opportunity to provide easy access to music for a single room with traditional speakers to more whole house and custom applications. Whether accessing music from Chromecast, Airplay2, MusicLife or Roon, the Solo Uno works seamlessly with other Luxury Audio products and those that may already exist in one's home.



While we posted a short non-narrated module last year on the Solo Uno, the new narrated version of this training provides better insight on its features and how you can present this system and the category to your customers. Check it out soon on the Luxury Audio training site.



## Coming Soon: New JBL Architectural Speakers

Yes! We have more JBL Architectural speakers that will focus on home theater and 2-channel in-wall systems. Using the same compression driver and woofer technology from Studio 6 in-room speakers, this new line will enhance your ability to design in-wall compression driver theater systems.

Priced below the JBL Synthesis' expanded SCL series, you will now be able to offer systems at virtually any price point and applications with any of the Luxury Audio brands from JBL, JBL Synthesis and Revel.

The training will be posted early next month and these products will be in production this fall.

Access the new Solo Uno course and our recently posted Roon class [here](#).

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 new JBL speakers being announced soon.

## From the Audio Files

### JBL Synthesis SDR-35 review

JBL's classy SDR-35 is a clear cut above the AVR norm *Tested at £6000*

★★★★★ By [What Hi-Fi?](#) 14 days ago

[f](#) [t](#) [p](#) [r](#) [m](#) [c](#) Comments (6)



(Image: © Future)

## JBL Synthesis SDR-35 5-Star Review in *What Hi-Fi?*



What Hi-Fi? had plenty of great things to say in their 5-star review of the JBL Synthesis SDR-35. Below are a few highlights:

“JBL’s classy SDR-35 is a clear cut above the AVR norm.”

“If you’re building a high-end home cinema, the SDR-35 should be the first AVR you audition.”

“Supremely clean, clear sound.”

“Thrilling mix of subtlety and scale.”

Read the full review [here](#).

