

Playboy On The Scene

WHAT'S HAPPENING, WHERE IT'S HAPPENING AND WHO'S MAKING IT HAPPEN



Sonic Outlaw

In Blackie Pagano's workshop, DIY and high-end audio come together in custom-designed stereo treasures

As you approach Blackie Pagano's shop on Ludlow Street in New York City's Lower East Side, ignore the chopped-out motorcycle sitting outside the window. Same goes (this is harder) for the mint 1957 Porsche GT parked in front. Why? Because the really good stuff is inside. Pagano's work space is a riot of multimeters, oscilloscopes, drill presses, saws and World War II military surplus, all packed into a long, narrow storefront smaller than some people's bathrooms. From these rude electronic guts Pagano brings forth devices that are one part stereo equipment, one part sculpture—like Victrolas that play MP3s and monoblock amps made of circular saws that sound the way Milla Jovovich looks. Having cut his teeth building and repairing guitar tube amps for everyone from the Strokes to David Bowie for 13 years, Pagano creates works that could easily hang with the audiophile in-crowd—and at \$3,000 to \$20,000, they're priced to match. But Blackie has no interest in seeing his work in snobby high-end audio showrooms. Rather, his aim is to custom design and hand build something unique for each client. "I like to hang out with the person, have dinner with them, find out what kind of music they listen to," he says. "Then I can build them something. If someone's giving me five grand for an amp, I can't give him the same thing I gave the last guy." Plus, it's an investment: "When I build something, it's guaranteed for life. You should feel like you never need to buy another amp." See more of Pagano's work at tubesville.com. —Scott Alexander

