

MONSTER BASIS

It's hard to build
better than you can
buy anymore—
except subwoofers

by TOM NOUSAINÉ

back in the good old days, construction projects were staples in the lives of most audio enthusiasts. I first became interested in audio when a friend celebrated his wife's promotion by buying himself a \$1,200 stereo system. I was bowled over by its performance, but at the time I didn't have that kind of money to spend on audio equipment.

Like many of my peers, I began indulging myself in the Heathkit catalog, hoping to supply my own labor and save a bundle of bucks on the way to good sound. There

were also the construction articles in *Audio* and other enthusiast magazines and hobbyist clubs, such as SMWTMS (the Southeastern Michigan Woofer and Tweeter Marching Society), where rolling your own was an article of faith. I was an easy convert.

But as time passed, audio manufacturing efficiency and technological progress removed many of the incentives for home constructors. In 1985, the founder of SMWTMS, a medical doctor who had built a complete DIY (do it yourself) system a couple decades earlier, mused in passing that "design and construction just isn't as much fun anymore when anyone with

enough dexterity to plug an NE5534 into a socket can make an essentially perfect pre-amplifier."

Indeed, wave soldering, large-scale integrated circuits (LSIs), surface-mount technology, and digital storage media have made rolling your own less appealing in terms of both dollars and performance. People once built amplifiers all the time. Now it will cost you more to build one than to just buy one, even if you rip the design straight off the schematic.

The last bastion of DIY audio has been speakers. Well into the late '80s, many of us felt we could easily build loudspeakers that

