to installing high-fidelity equipment, but for others the wall was simply too "way out." Aside from the fact that it jogged firmly established concepts in home décor, it also took considerable doing to be successful structurally, functionally, and aesthetically. What's more, it took considerable cash. And for people with unsympathetic landlords, the "music wall" was clearly impractical.

An alternate solution, charted when designers and craftsmen began seriously to relate timber to timber, was a simple addition to home audio gear: the freestanding, self-contained equipment cabinet. As it has evolved recently from the casually conceived and mass-produced box to the precisely designed and hand-crafted custom job, the equipment cabinet has become something of a three-part invention.

One part is concerned with basic functions, and to the extent that any cabinet performs these functions, it may be said to qualify as a useful adjunct to a high-fidelity system. These functions, in the main, are: 1) housing and protection for equipment against harmful exposure and accidental damage; 2) assisting in the logical arrangement of components and thus facilitating their convenient use; 3) serving as an installation aid from the standpoint of proper functioning—specifically in the shock-mounting and leveling of turntables, the correct positioning of tone arms, proper orientation of components for minimum interference and spurious interaction such as hum pickup or heat transfer, and finally in providing adequate ventilation for critical units, particularly power amplifiers; 4) permitting removal of parts for servicing.

Obviously, a cabinet that fulfills these ends is not like any other piece of furniture ever devised. However attractive it may be to the eye, it must put function first. Without primary regard to its use as equipment housing, the cabinet fails or, at best, can prove very troublesome and frustrating to the unwary buyer.

There are cabinets—and cabinets. One common type is a simple, boxlike affair with two doors, swinging or sliding, and one shelf, usually adjustable. Actually, this is an "all purpose" cabinet of fairly uninspired design. Such a cabinet is likely to be shown in the furniture section of a large store as a "high-fidelity equipment cabinet" and in the music and record department as a "record storage cabinet." Strictly speaking, it is neither, although with some effort and additional cost it could conceivably be adapted for these functions. To use it as an equipment cabinet, the buyer has to supply and install the fittings for a record player, drill holes to ventilate the amplifier, and so on. For record storage it should be fitted with vertical partitions spaced about five or six inches apart so that the records will be held upright without undue pressure from one to another. (With this much do-it-yourself involved, one might as well design and build his own cabinet from scratch. Indeed, for an example of what one handy audiophile did with hand tools and material from the local lumberyard, see page 97 of this issue.) In any case, and leaving aside matters of appearance and possibilities for future expansion of the system—which may or may not be of importance to the individual buyer—the only appeal of the "general purpose" cabinet is relatively low cost. In fact if one is really economy-minded, something like an unpainted toy chest with a lift-up lid—and a sales tag of about $20—can, with some effort, be made as suitable for installing equipment as the higher-priced "all purpose" cabinet. Most people will, however, feel that the housing needs of, say, a $200 amplifier or a $100 turntable and pickup, or a $450 tape system are not quite the same as those of a set of building blocks, or a pile of linens, or a collection of potables.

The second part of the three-part invention to which I have referred involves a special aspect of cabinetry: the question of whether the housing is to serve as the final dress-up for the system, or, rather, as a frame into which the owner can slip different components and accessories as his taste dictates and his budget permits. Cabinet people who take their work seriously, striving for good design while meeting the requirements of good audio prac-

Wood grain and roughly woven cloth provide texture contrast for this finely proportioned custom-built cabinet. The turntable drawer lies above tape deck. (By Gray Sound Corp., New York City.)