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# Waterfall
## VICTORIA EVO

*Glass speakers that add a touch of style to plain-looking systems*

**Price** £2,695 per pair **Contact** Invision UK Ltd ○ 01359 270280 ○ www.waterfallaudio.com

Previous speakers made from glass have tended to sound rather brittle and bright, but then the construction of a glass speaker is an extremely bold move. Not only is the production process highly complex and expensive, but there are also serious sound quality concerns. But, by incorporating sophisticated damping techniques, Waterfall has refined the process to the point where its latest Evo range is in no way compromised by the material itself. Instead, what you get is a distinctive speaker with the positive benefits of glass, such as high density and rigidity. The question is, can function truly benefit from form?

All sides except the bottom are made from tinted, six millimetre glass with bevelled edges. The glass panels are bonded together to form the cabinet. A secondary front baffle adds an art deco-style motif, additional rigidity and improved damping. At the base is a die-cast aluminium plinth that not only anchors the cabinet, but also acts as housing for the crossover, passive bass unit and spikes.

The crossover is generally of a high quality, if conventional construction. Although not bi-wireable, it features expensive components such as polypropylene capacitors and insulated inductors. Less impressive is the line of block connectors that link the crossover to the drivers' cables.

Of note is the Acculinear treble filter. The special type of plastic used in this filter is designed to improve treble smoothness and is just one of the ways in which Waterfall counteracts the natural sonic tendencies of the glass cabinet. A metal plate not only hides the crossover from sight, but also protects it from standing waves; yet another example of function benefiting from form.

Both woofers are more conventional, although their die-cast aluminium chassis is extremely well vented. This usually gives higher power handling and a wider dynamic response. The tweeter features a silk dome protected by a metal mesh grill. The die-cast rear plate should help isolate it within the cabinet much in the way that ADT works with the woofer units.

Although the quality of finish can't be questioned, the speakers' value for money possibly can. Rival speakers that offer similar component quality and cabinet size tend to cost around £2,000. The PMC FB1i, Opera Seconda and Proac D18 are all exceptionally fine-sounding speakers with the Opera, in particular, also expensively finished. None have any serious sonic vices and all will sustain several system upgrades before they get out of their depth. If the Victoria Evos are to justify their additional £700 they will have to offer some sonic benefit over and above their unique looks.

### SOUND QUALITY

The first listen is a great relief. With Claire Martin's *Man in the Station*, we weren't overwhelmed by an overly bright balance or excessive vocal sibilance as we had feared we might be. Waterfall appears to have suppressed the natural tendency of glass to ring so well, that the resulting balance and natural harmonics would embarrass many a conventional cabinet.

Whether male or female, the vocals are especially well-articulated with excellent projection into the room. If anything, there is a slightly forward bias to the speakers but it's not relentless, and it's more explicit and revealing of the music. Whatever the genre, the Evos are particularly adept at expressing and layering it. Only at very high levels does a little congestion set in and even then it is mild.

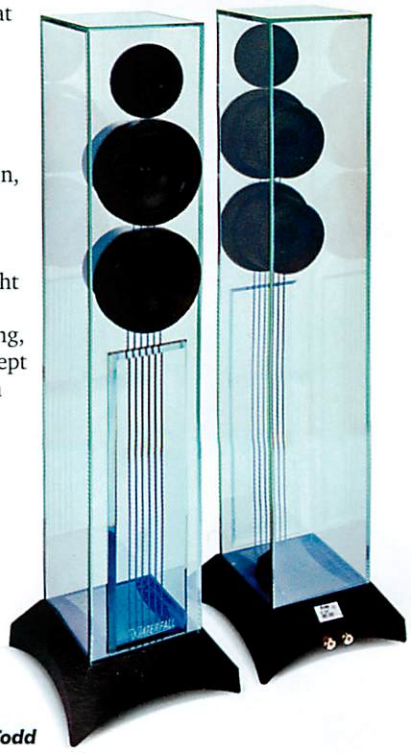
Turn up the tempo and the Waterfalls respond admirably. A crisp, dynamic response provides excellent timing, and matching that faultless timing, is an expansive soundstage that competes with the best in its class, not just for width but depth of sound, too. Very deep bass is a little lacking, yet this doesn't diminish the Victorias' zeal in ripping through the music with conviction.

*"The type of speaker that will hook you in for a full night's listening"*

Classical music reveals a surprisingly sweet violin timbre. The combination of silk treble unit and Acculinear filter certainly appears to have done the trick in providing a well-integrated and smooth treble response. Perhaps, as a result of this, the balance occasionally sounds just a little too smooth. Some of the 'space' around instruments seems lost. We suspect that a decent ribbon or panel would pick out a little more detail in the high end. Nevertheless, the Waterfalls do a good job in staging the orchestra and its taut timing ensures that a sense of drama and scale is always maintained.

That the Waterfalls look striking and are exquisitely constructed can't be denied. Given the unusual construction, their sound quality is impressive, too. Despite some minor criticisms levelled at frequency extremes and a slight congestion of sound at higher levels, the Evos sound engaging, well integrated and just as adept with a full scale orchestra as a female vocalist.

In short, these are the type of speakers that will happily hook you in for a full night's listening. Yes, a handful of slightly cheaper speakers can also match the sound, but none are as visually arresting. Clearly, these are the perfect speakers for the design-conscious audiophile.



Dominic Todd