



READER SERVICES

Our regular information service, including back issues, dealers guide and the latest subscription offer

120 How to subscribe

123 Dealer Guide

129 Dealer Directory

130 Back issues/ reprints order form

130 What's coming up in the May issue, on sale 31st March

REVIEWS

The very best kit reviewed and rated by the experts you can trust

34 JBL Everest DD66000

Awesome loudspeaker in every sense of the word from size to performance

38 Clearaudio Emotion SE

Turntable with a high build quality and plenty of accessories

43 Beyerdynamic T1

Auditioning a high-end headphone with a performance to match

44 Moon 750D

Could this be the world's first true 32-bit digital audio player

48 NAD C165BEE & C245BEE

A preamp and power amp combination that's a benchmark pairing

53 Pure Sensia

Probably the smartest and cleverest table radio currently around

54 Hanss Acoustics T-30

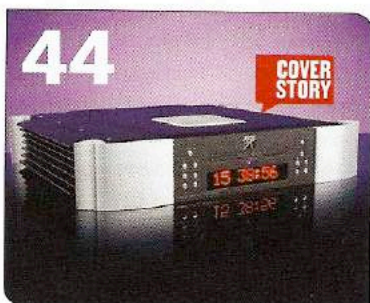
A high-mass turntable has never offered so much value

58 Puresound A10

A superbly involving and musical amp at a very competitive price

62 Waterfall Victoria Evo

There's nothing 'see-through' about the music from these glass speakers



PLUS...

118 FREE Readers' Classifieds

Buy or sell your hi-fi in our special second-hand section - it's free!





A glass act

Waterfall is confident that its glass speakers are anything but see-through. Dominic Todd listens in...

PRODUCT Waterfall Victoria Evo

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeakers

PRICE £2,695

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 25x101x25cm

⊗ Weight: 16.3kg each ⊗ Drivers: 20mm neodymium tweeter, 2x 150mm midrange/bass, 210mm ultra low-frequency ⊗ Acoustic Damping Tubes (ADT) ⊗ Acculinear treble filter

CONTACT ☎ 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?

LOOKING GLASS

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 benefitting from form.

All four drive units are made by the French company, Atohm. And, in case you were wondering, the fourth drive unit is an ABR passive radiator at the base of the cabinet. Made of ribbed, moulded plastic, the most intriguing feature of this ABR is the bolt-on weight system. By attaching the supplied weights you can, literally, add mass thereby tuning the bass response. Naturally enough, extra weight increases bass weight, but restricts the speed of response.

Both woofers are more conventional, although their die-cast aluminium chassis is extremely well-vented. This usually gives higher

point. Then consider that the speaker is made out of glass and the design becomes more impressive still. There are no sharp edges or awkward angles, just an immaculately finished piece of industrial design that's good enough to win design awards. The tinted glass with semi-mirrored finish and bevelled edges is of the quality usually reserved for expensive Italian glass furniture. Make no mistake, the Victoria Evos are speakers you'd be proud to have in your living room.

Although the quality of finish can't be questioned, the speakers' value for money possibly can. Rival speakers that offer

“Turn up the tempo and the Waterfalls respond admirably... a crisp, dynamic response and expansive soundstage.”

power handling and a wider dynamic response.

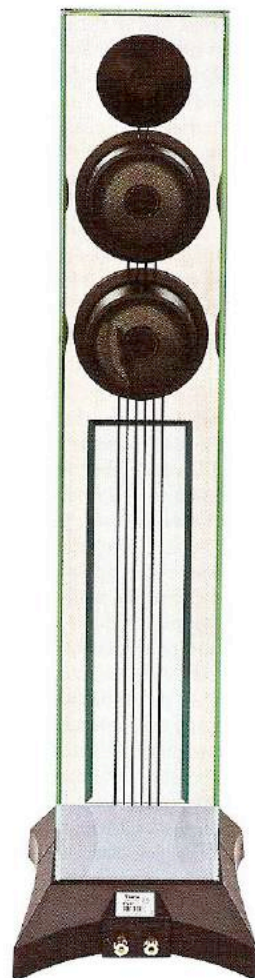
Of more interest than the woofers themselves is the way in which they are mounted. What Waterfall calls ADT (Acoustic Damping Tube) effectively amounts to a woofer sub-chassis. Made of die-cast aluminium with an open mesh at the rear, ADT has several advantages. It damps the rearward travelling airwaves so they don't become too 'excitable' within the glass cabinet. Combined with this is a certain amount of isolation from standing waves within the cabinet itself. It also mechanically isolates the woofer from the glass cabinet by acting as a sophisticated gasket. It's the effectiveness of this technology that will really test the Waterfall's ability not to sound brittle.

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.

That's the technology, then. How well it is implemented and how competently it stands up to the competition is another matter.

FIRST GLASS

Take the materials out of the equation and the Victoria Evo is still an extremely well finished speaker. Block connections aside, the design impresses with its thoughtful and thorough build. The way that the neat internal speaker cable routing actually adds to the design – resembling the strings on a cello – is a case in



■ 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.

THE GLASS ROOTS

The first listen came as a great relief. With Claire Martin's *Man in the Station*, I wasn't overwhelmed by an overly bright balance or excessive vocal sibilance as I had feared I might be. In fact, 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.

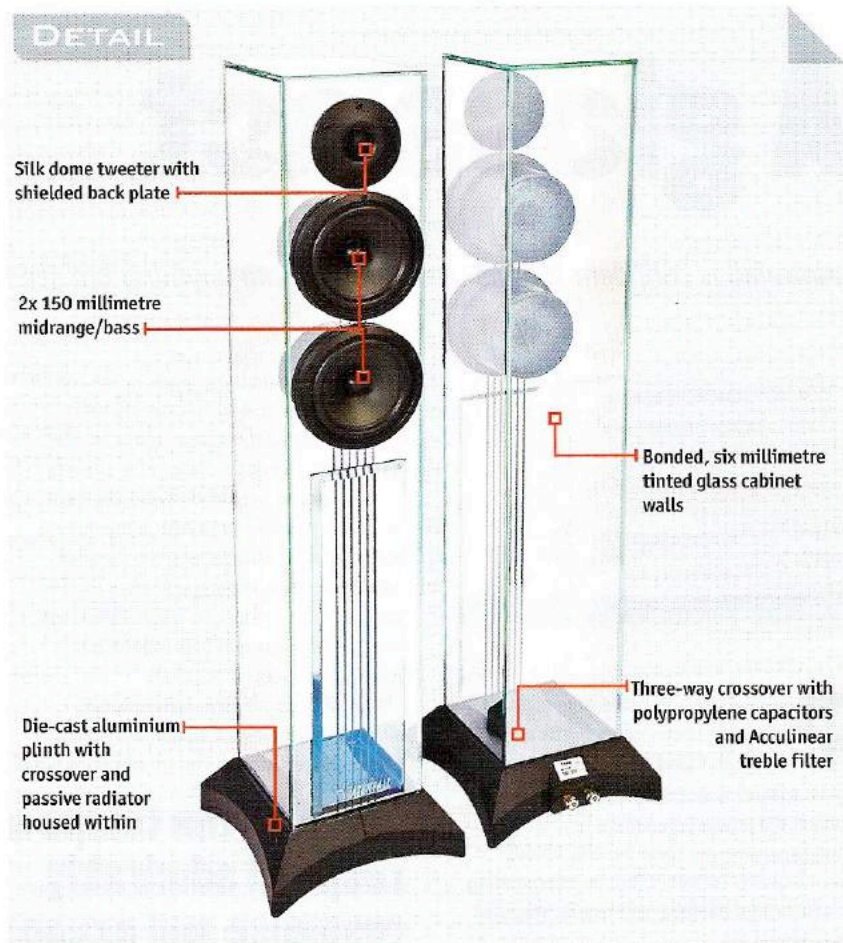
TALKING POINT - LOW FREQUENCY TUNING

Take a look at the passive radiator on the base of the speaker and you'll notice a central thread. This is for bolting on additional weights to improve the frequency response. There are four weights supplied (two per speaker), two of which are 27 grams each, the others seven grams. 'Unweighted', Waterfall claims a low-frequency response of 50Hz. This drops to 45Hz with the seven gram weights attached and 40Hz with the 27 grams. In practice, I found the 27 grammers made the sound too turgid, but the seven grammers usefully improved the bass depth without affecting the timing too much. It's a great idea and one that's safe and easy for the listener to experiment with. One word of warning, though – don't go adding larger weights as, over time, the foam surrounds will lose their elasticity giving you a very sloppy sound!

How it compares – PMC FB1i

What I find most striking about comparing the PMCs with the Waterfalls is not their differences, but their similarities. Both have a smooth treble response and even balance. Both will go fairly low but sacrifice ultimate bass weight for speed of timing. Each has the ability to sound like a high-end standmount speaker with a sound quality that's spacious, pacy and involving. On the downside, both can sound a little congested when put under pressure.

Both are costly to construct, but have overcome this with immaculate finishing and thoughtful detail. Where the Victoria Evos lose out is in terms of value for money. At £2,100, the FB1i is nearly £600 cheaper. Depending upon your taste, that's either a lot of money for a glass cabinet or well worth it for a product that's still cheap by designer furniture standards!



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.

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. I 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 match the sound, but none are as visually arresting. Clearly, these are the perfect speakers for the design-conscious audiophile. **HFC**

Dominic Todd

VERDICT

SOUND



EASE OF DRIVE



BUILD



VALUE



PRO

Stunning looks and excellent finish, matched by an involving, well-balanced sound, plus the added bonus of their unique and stylish cabinets, make them highly recommended.

CON

Such style and quality is expensive and there are other cheaper speakers on the market.

CONCLUSION

Form and function in perfect harmony. For a premium price, you get speakers that have an engaging sound to match arresting looks. Overall then, these speakers offer the audiophile and his wife the best of both worlds.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE



Search for the best price at www.techradar.com/reviews