

Tube pre/monoblock power amps & standmount speakers
 Made by: Jadis, Villedubert, Fr. and DeVore Fidelity, NY, USA
 Supplied by: Absolute Sounds Ltd
 Telephone: 0208 971 3909
 Web: www.jadis-electronics.com; www.devorefidelity.com
 Prices: £8498 (pre)/£6498 (power, each)/£13,500 (speakers)

AUDIO
FILE

TUBE AMP/SPEAKER SYSTEM

Jadis JPL MkII/SE300B & DeVore Fidelity O/96

First from a hand-selected portfolio of 'artisan' hi-fi separates, this pairing of low output tubes with high sensitivity speakers boasts a very special synergy... and sound
 Review & Lab: **Paul Miller**

System matching remains as much an art as it does a science. There's always the easy route – opting for a collection of one-brand separates with the promise of full technical compatibility and the expectation of similar 'voicing' throughout. Slightly trickier is the pairing of components from brands that have an overlap in their core design philosophies – a route that often leads to the most satisfying musical experience but which requires a depth of knowledge on the part of both enthusiast and friendly hi-fi dealer. The third route – random component selection and a reliance on blind luck is not one we'll be pursuing here!

So distributor Absolute Sounds' recent announcement [HFN Feb '21] that it was to begin curating a collection of individual components from disparate brands struck a chord. This artisan/system-building project, dubbed 'Ten', kicks off with two like-minded brands from opposite sides of the pond – Jadis, from France, and DeVore Fidelity, based in New York. Nothing in common?

Far from it: Jadis has a commitment to low-powered single-ended tube amps, represented here by the SE300B monoblocks (£6498 each) and partnered with the newer £8498 JPL MkII tube preamplifier, while DeVore specialises in high-sensitivity, easy-to-drive loudspeakers [see interview sidebar, p45].

The Jadis monoblock amplifiers are rated at a mere 10W courtesy of each chassis' parallel pair of 300B triodes – single-ended and therefore necessarily operating in 'pure Class A'. DeVore's £13,500 'wide baffle' Orangutan O/96 loudspeakers have a rated 96dB sensitivity and come in lacquered ebony wood, lace walnut, wild cherry and bird's eye maple finishes, complete with

matching lacquered wooden stands. A match made in heaven? Time to find out...

FLAMBOYANT FASCIAS
 With their chromed-steel chassis and gold-coloured faceplates, gold-plated brass controls, toggle switches and full-sized LED indicators, the Jadis pre/power amplifiers succeed in looking purposeful, distinctive and 'of an era' rather than ostentatious.

The JPL MkII preamp is simplicity itself with just five single-ended line inputs, a tape loop and preamp output, all on RCAs. There's no remote but the mute toggle is very useful and the beautifully weighted, detented volume control is a real delight to use. As I discuss in my Lab Report [p43] the JPL MkII is really two preamps in one – the four higher gain line inputs employing a pair of ECC83 triodes while the one marked 'CD' uses a single ECC82. All the tubes are

“Hi-fi is fun, and gibbons are funky and fun too”



RIGHT: Front of the Jadis SE300B monoblock showing PSU transformer [with chrome top] plus two 5U4GB rectifier tubes and blue PSU electrolytics [behind]

ABOVE: Rear of the SE300B showing RCA line input, gold-plated 4mm speaker outputs, 6SN7 driver tube and pair of 300B power triodes



LEFT: The O/96's fibreboard cabinets are fronted by a 1in-thick US-made Baltic birch baffle. The 250mm bass/mid unit features a Kurt Müller blue paper cone, joined here by a 28mm silk dome

lean over them with a cup or glass of liquid of any kind in your hand...
 The rear of the chassis hosts an RCA input and single set of 4mm speaker outlets for '4-8ohm speakers', although the transformer secondary may be reconfigured for 4ohm or less via a set of bus-bar interlinks inside the casework [see pic, p45].

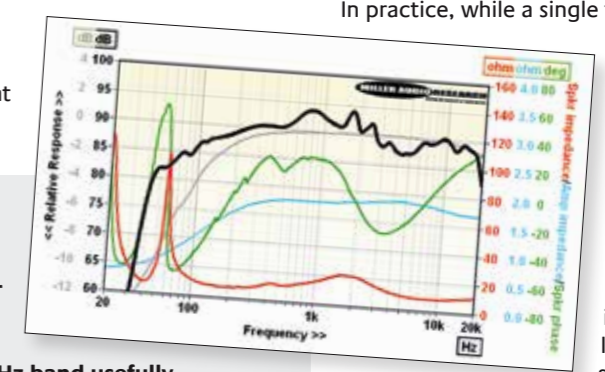
ARE YOU A BELIEVER?
 Now I'll address the elephant in the room – 10W for a £13,000 stereo pair? On some level, SET (Single-Ended Triode) amplifiers feed into a niche audio belief (our Ken would call it a cult) that a single 300B triode – a paralleled pair in this instance – offers a purity of performance and simplicity of design that cannot be achieved by pentodes, push-pull or ultralinear modes of operation.

Much of this is guff, of course, and I'll point out that Jadis itself is not proselytising from this particular pulpit. In practice, while a single tube and transformer has the air of elegance about it, a successful implementation revolves almost entirely around the design – the dance between permeability, inductance, leakage, LF saturation and HF response – of the output transformer. Jadis, by all accounts, has this nailed, with proprietary transformers 'hand-made on a digital winding machine' before being potted in a vibration-damping resin.

selected and matched by Jadis, including those used in the power supply, just as the passives – capacitors, resistors, etc, [see pic, p45] – have been chosen after countless hours of auditioning. 'Voicing' is a core principle of all Jadis amplifiers.

The same principles apply to the partnering SE300B monoblocks – the 300Bs are sourced from Electro Harmonix and the 6SN7 driver triodes, running at

400V here, are obtained from (I believe) a Russian supplier. Ordinarily all the tubes are protected under square, perforated cages although they can be removed (as illustrated in our pictures) if you live in a pet/child-free environment and are confident that you'll never



SYSTEM MATCHING

For its Orangutan O/96 DeVore has achieved the 'holy grail' for what is otherwise a relatively conventional (ie, not horn-loaded) two-way moving-coil loudspeaker – high sensitivity with a relatively easy-going amplifier load. The O/96's impedance [red trace, inset Graph] is toughest through the bass, but the broad 20Hz-200Hz band usefully coincides with the Jadis SE300B's lowest 0.40-1.52ohm output impedance [cyan trace]. The SE300B's source impedance rises to 1.9ohm from 400Hz-10kHz exactly where the O/96's impedance trend is >8ohm and within +19/-28° [green trace]. Otherwise the O/96's minimum impedance is still a safe 7.15ohm/190Hz coupled with a negligible -9° phase angle. And where the angles do swing to a maximum +52°/53Hz and -63°/73Hz, the impedance remains at a super-easy 31ohm and 22ohm, respectively. So the SE300Bs with their limited 2.3A maximum current and ~11W output are not especially troubled, achieving a predicted 99dBA SPL from a pair of O/96s, without boundary reinforcement, auditioned at 3m in an average listening room. In practice, the SE300B's 'shaped' source impedance [cyan trace] and unloaded response [grey trace] combine with the O/96's variable load and frequency response [Graph 1, p47] to deliver the overall system response measured here [black trace, inset Graph]. PM

JADIS JPL MKII/SE300B



ABOVE: Gold-plated rotaries for input, balance and volume stand proud of the polished gold and chrome fascia. Toggles offer source/tape monitoring and muting

top-seller. Designer/owner John DeVore has no particular 'primate fixation', he assured me, 'hi-fi should be fun and gibbons are funky and fun too. Plus, the O/96's wide orange baffle reminded me of an orangutan'. Well, I'm pleased that's now all cleared up...

Built on an industrial park in Brooklyn, New York, the O/96's cabinets are fashioned from a mix of MDF (rear panel), MDF/ply (bottom), HDF for the sides and top, with a machined US-made Baltic birch for the 1in-thick baffle. Lace walnut is the default veneer (as pictured here) with up to ten coats of hand-polished lacquer applied across all the cabinet surfaces except the underside, the latter playing host to inset 4mm Cardas-copper speaker terminals and wooden runners that locate the speaker into DeVore's matching solid maple stands.

These are also lacquered to a glorious piano-black finish and have no metal spikes or fasteners, so the speakers are both mated and decoupled to/from the stands' surface by four small pellets of white tack at each corner. Incidentally, the standard veneer – quite stunning in its own right – is pressed in batches

BELOW: CD input offers far lower gain than the four line inputs, joined here by a tape in/out monitor loop and preamp output – all single-ended on RCAs



of 100, but custom finishes are easily accommodated as illustrated on DeVore's Facebook page.

DRIVE OF YOUR LIFE

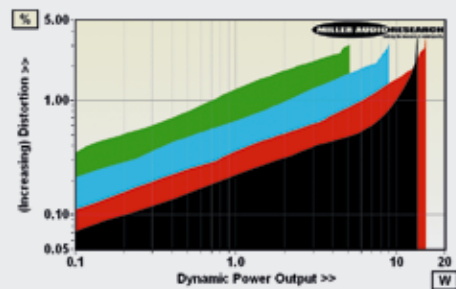
The custom drivers are produced for DeVore by long-term partner SEAS and include a 28mm silk fabric dome tweeter and a long-throw 250mm paper-cone bass/mid driver with soft rubber surround. The treble dome works into a wool-damped rear chamber, is equipped with a double magnet and is gently horn-loaded, the flare only really taking effect below 7kHz or so [see Graph 1, p47].

The bass/mid unit is really something special and those readers steeped in audiophile lore may well recognise the classic Müller blue paper cone [see <http://www.kurtmueller.com/index.php?id=41>]. This uses a similar pulp to the larger of Tannoy's iconic coaxial drivers, untreated here except for some reinforcing lacquer at the cone's throat where it's bonded to a multi-layer copper voice-coil and Kapton former. Behind this there's a large ferrite/ceramic magnet – so no fancy rare-earth materials here.

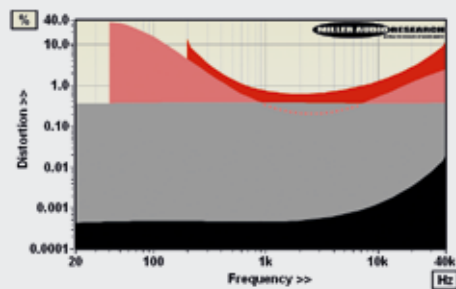
John DeVore is somewhat less eager to release details of the O/96's crossover except to say it's a 'minimum reactance, compound-order' network derived directly from his earliest work on the first, non-commercial, Gibbon loudspeaker. ☺

It's not part of the sales pitch, and you'll not read this in any other reviews, but Jadis is offering us two preamplifiers in one with its JPL MkII. It all comes down to the choice of CD versus Aux/Line inputs. Sure enough there's the expected difference in overall gain (+6.5dB for 'CD' and +19dB for 'Line' – neither close to the specified +25dB) and while the A-wtd S/N ratios are almost identical at 90.5dB (re. 0dBV), the difference in tube complement – a single-stage ECC82 for 'CD' and two-stage ECC83 for 'Line' – results in markedly different trends of THD vs. frequency and output. Choose 'CD' for full-on tube colour with distortion at ~0.35%, or 'Line' for a solid-state-like linearity of 0.00035-0.0035% [re. 0dBV, 20Hz-20kHz, see Graph 2]. Output impedance is a high ~950ohm (though the SE300B's 100kohm input renders this moot) while the response is slightly more rolled off via 'Line' at -0.1dB/20kHz to -2.4dB/100kHz.

While on the subject of 'colour', the partnering SE300B monos painted their test results with a vivid palette! Power output meets the rated 10W at 10.5-11.5W into 8-4ohm loads at 1% THD, increasing marginally to 14.5W at 2% THD and 15.5W at 3% THD and, under dynamic conditions, to 13.5W, 15.5W, 9.0W and 5.1W into 8, 4, 2 and 1ohm loads [see Graph 1]. Overall gain is +26dB and the A-wtd S/N ratio slightly below average at 82dB (re. 0dBV) while midband distortion increases gently with level from 0.08%/100mW to 0.22%/1W and 0.52%/5W. Versus frequency there's a steep rise in THD below 300Hz to 4.5% at 200Hz, 14.5% at 100Hz and 35% at 40Hz – all at just 1W/8ohm [pink trace, Graph 2]. I discuss the impact of the SE300B's response and output impedance with DeVore's O/96 speakers on p41. PM



ABOVE: Dynamic power output versus distortion into 8ohm (black trace), 4ohm (red), 2ohm (blue) and 1ohm (green) speaker loads. Max. current is 2.3A



ABOVE: THD vs. freq. for the Jadis JPL MkII (CD in, grey; Line in, black) vs. SE300B (1W/8ohm, pink; 5W, red)

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Continuous power (<1% THD, 8/4ohm) | 11.5W / 10.5W (4-8ohm tap) |
| Dynamic power (<3% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm) | 13.5W / 15.5W / 9.0W / 5.1W |
| Output imp. (20Hz-20kHz, pre/power) | 950ohm / 0.40-1.88ohm |
| Freq. resp. (20Hz-100kHz, pre/power) | +0.0 to -2.4dB / +0.1 to -12.2dB |
| Input sensitivity (for 0dBV/0dBW) | 112mV (pre) / 141mV (power) |
| A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBV/0dBW) | 90.5dB (pre) / 81.8dB (power) |
| Distortion (40Hz-20kHz, 1V/1W) | 0.00035-0.0035%/0.21-35% |
| Power consumption (idle/rated o/p) | 160W / 163W (28W, preamp) |
| Dimensions (WHD, Pre/Power) | 430x175x345/203x229x531mm |



JOHN DEVORE

Founded by president and chief designer John DeVore (the self-styled 'Top Banana') in 2000, DeVore Fidelity began life – in the fashion of so many boutique brands – thanks to the passion and vision of an individual. 'With interest growing in low power 845 and 300B-based tube amplifiers in the 1990s, supplied by the likes of Cary Audio, Audio Note and Octave Audio [see p68], enthusiasts were forced towards legacy high sensitivity (horn) speakers from Klipsch, etc, to find a match' says John. 'There were no modern alternatives and the speaker landscape needed shaking up from the trend of skinny towers with lowish sensitivity.'

John was inspired to design a speaker that offered contemporary styling, high sensitivity and an easy-going 8ohm+ impedance. Aimed initially at a very local market it also 'had to work in the average New York apartment'. The form factor suggested itself – 'three-ways are so much trickier for a single-ended tube amp to drive', observed John – while the increased baffle width maintained a decent cabinet volume despite its relatively shallow depth.

And what of future projects? Most likely to see the light of day this year is a new Orangutan model, pitched above the O/96 and incorporating ideas from the flagship O/Reference, including a version of the cast bronze woofer basket and horn for the tweeter and super tweeter. 'It will look like a prettier O/96', says John, but with 'new stuff going on inside the cabinet'. Its working title is the O/Bronze. PM



Finally, should you wish to conceal this beacon of blue – the cones will likely change to a darker or greenish colour with UV and time – then DeVore also supplies a magnetically-attached grille [see pic, p46]. The frame and coarse Tygan-like fabric are not without some subjective consequence

ABOVE: Inside the JPL MkII preamp showing EL84 and EF86 tubes in the PSU [top right], a single ECC82 double-triode for the CD stage [top centre] and three ECC83 line stage triodes [left]

however, so these speakers are best enjoyed naked, if you get my drift...

While you are wondering what to wear, I'll also add that SET amps should not be left idling for too long as the full Class A current will be 'sunk' by the tubes sitting patiently amplifying the sound of silence. There's a trade-off between switch-on time, listening time and tube life so it's fortunate that the SE300Bs 'warm-up' very rapidly indeed. This also means you can swiftly find yourself immersed in the whirlwind of gossamer-light detail and rich, rolling bass developed with disarming ease by this incredible Jadis/DeVore combination. But I am jumping ahead of myself here...

ART MIMICS LIFE

Long before I had the O/96s singing so sweetly they'd reminded me of another wide-baffle two-way speaker that I used throughout the 1990s – the AN-E from Audio Note. Many of you will have seen and heard this bluff-looking but sophisticated-sounding box at hi-fi shows where its ability to cast very plausible stereo images over a wide listening area has made them a go-to choice for 'group listening'.

The O/96s have a similar ability although they are less inclined to favour a corner or near-wall siting, delivering their most open and transparent sound when positioned clear of boundaries and toed-in towards the listening position. This suggests they ⇨

LEFT: Underneath the point-to-point wired SE300B monoblock showing PSU [bottom], SE output stage [top] and impedance selector configured for 4-8ohm operation [centre]



TUBE AMP/SPEAKER SYSTEM

DEVORE ORANGUTAN O/96



LEFT: The O/96 comes with a set of wooden-frame grilles that 'stick' to the lacquered baffle via four hidden magnets. Most listeners will find the loudspeakers sound better unadorned

this combination. A quality that's leveraged to typically jaw-dropping effect by, surely, every one of your favourite vocal-driven albums. If you ever wanted to contrast the vocal styles expressed in Kate Bush's *50 Words For Snow* [Fish People FPCD007; 96kHz/24-bit] with Rebecca Pidgeon's 'Spanish Harlem' [*The Raven*, Chesky; 96kHz/24-bit] and Jennifer Warnes' 'Way Down Deep' [*The Hunter*, Private Music 261974; 44.1kHz/16-bit] then this Jadis and DeVore pairing will conjure each of these performers for a very up-close and personal inspection. Every breath, every subtle sibilant, every lick of the lips – 'vivid' fails to convey the startlingly palpable presence of these voices in the room.

BREATHE THE AIR

Its reproduction of ambience and atmosphere is similarly tangible. Listening to Mike Oldfield taking a trip back down a 40-plus year-old memory lane with *Return To Ommadawn* [Mercury; 96kHz/24-bit], the progression of some 23 instruments and associated styles – an evolution of Celtic folk through to progressive pop – was also a 'living' exploration of the musical capability of the Jadis/DeVore system. There was exquisite subtlety here, and delicate shades of colour, the ambience not only immersive but also filled with pin-sharp images. And there was power too, a realistic sense of edge and bite where notes would rise without inertia and decay without haste.

It was at once lyrical, engaging and relaxing while leaving the listener in no doubt that whipcrack percussion or the surge of raw, thrilling strings could pounce at any second. The power was latent while

'Notes rise without inertia and decay without haste'

the atmosphere was confidently relaxed – it's a bewitchingly engaging combination.

And so, two-thirds of the way through this 21-minute tour, the room was shaken by African table drums. There was no suggestion that these under-powered SETs had lost their grip or control over the resonant impact of percussion, no loss of puff, just as there was no distorted modulation between the thrilling acoustic strings or background synth. Each layer in the multi-track was explicitly clear and utterly in harmony with its partnering

'performers', albeit played and sync'd by just one man.

Playing Devil's advocate, if you really want to catch out these components then you can. There is necessarily a limit to the available headroom, and the DeVore O/96s, sensitive though they

are, can sink more power than the SE300Bs are capable of offering. Select '67000mph' by Phronesis [*Parallax*, Edition Records; 88.2kHz/24-bit] and wind up the wick just a little too far and you'll hear Anton Eger's explosive drum intro veer from taut, powerful and strikingly ambient to 'uh oh, I've bust a skin...'

Keep within its limits – loud enough for those New York apartments – and the contrast between the thump of drums and crack of sticks on rims is stunning in its separation and detail. As the remainder of this Anglo-Scandinavian jazz trio join at, well, 67000mph the double bass and piano duck and dive but never collide.

STEALTH TACTICS

Very deep, under-the-radar, bass can remain invisible to the SE300Bs. There's no segue from slam to sludge here, but listening to the 2012 remix of Massive Attack's 'Unfinished Symphony' [*Blue Lines*, Wild Bunch Records; 96kHz/24-bit] I was conscious of the opening salvo being somewhat diminished in its gravitas. There was punch and depth here, and the anticipated firm, metronomic rhythm, but the O/96s are capable of digging deeper and lifting heavier. I know this because: 1. I measured them, and 2. I sneaked in a quick session with the Constellation Audio monoblocks...

And yet I was still eager to return to the Jadis/DeVore pairing for the sheer

LEFT: The Jadis SE300B seen from above showing, from left to right, the AC mains transformer, a pair of 5U4GB rectifier tubes and PSU caps, the custom resin-potted output transformer, paralleled 300B triodes and single 6SN7 driver tube



LEFT: Two 75mm reflex ports extend bass below 40Hz. The speaker locates into its matching stand via two wooden struts fitted to the underside of the cabinet [see below]

the Australian Pink Floyd Show. Again, it's this Jadis/DeVore combo's ability to resolve the exquisite fragility of the background percussion while juggling the surge of strings, the biting edge of guitar and Rick Wakeman's trademark life-of-their-own keyboards that's so, well, exciting.

ABRACADABRA

So while the figures for harmonic distortion [see p43] are high (and, sorry SET fans, there's as much 3rd as 2nd here) the perceived timbres of these disparate acoustic and electronic instruments are as clear as the proverbial bell, or bells. I've certainly heard many a purported low-coloration system sound more dynamically compressed,

pleasure of hearing music replayed in a fashion that almost always elicited an emotional connection. Yes, they have their foibles, but not so much that you'll find your choice of music unduly restricted.

For example, these (relatively) compact speakers are more than capable of hosting a very grand stage, as the 'Symphonic' version of Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* [London Orion Orchestra; Decca 478 9517] served to illustrate. Skip over Alice Cooper's vocal intervention to the ethereal, glittering intro of 'Shine On...'. Here the glockenspiel, strings and horns – the orchestra conducted by Peter Scholes – sets the scene for the by-now iconic four-note mantra struck up by guitarists loaned from

less spatially coherent and plainly more muddled than this ostensibly leftfield combination.

It's not magic, but neither is the deeply compelling, emotionally engaging and thoroughly addictive sound of this system entirely predictable by currently received science and engineering wisdom. Which, of course, is all part and parcel of the fun and 'mystery' of hi-fi, and why we audiophiles love to mix 'n match our separates. And long may it remain so.

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

With performance aspirations seemingly well beyond its capacity, this marriage of French SET amplification with New York's least demanding loudspeakers still delivers on its promise. To every audiophile wedded to high power and statuesque floorstanders, I say this: negotiate yourself a Hall Pass and spend an evening with this baroque partnership instead. You're guaranteed a (musical) experience you'll not forget!

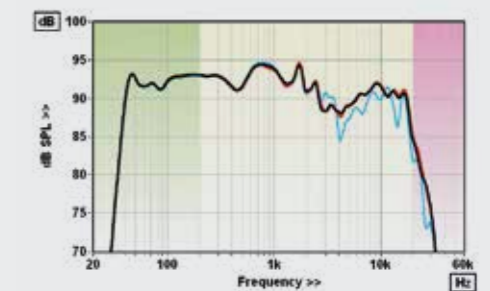
Sound Quality: 90%
0 - - - - - 100



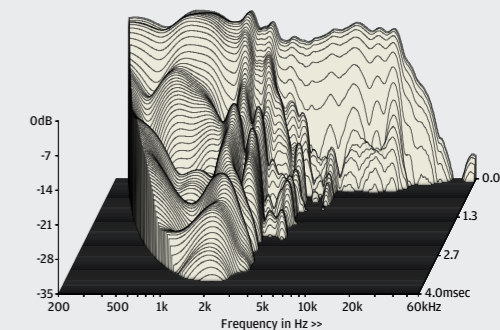
ABOVE: 4mm cable binding posts are inset into the base of the speaker. Batons locate the cabinet into the frame stands

DeVore rates the O/96's sensitivity at a high 96dB/W/m but also its nominal impedance as 10ohm which brings the specification closer to 95dB at the more usual 2.83V/1m – this was nearly met on test at 93.8dB/1kHz although the mean from 500Hz-8kHz is a lower 91.5dB. The latter reflects the O/96's strong lower midrange but mild depression through presence and lower treble [see Graph 1]. Importantly, this high sensitivity is not achieved at the expense of a punishing load, and a genuine 8ohm nominal is warranted here [see boxout, p41].

Optimum response is achieved some 6in above the tweeter axis – or head height for the 'average' listening position – where the errors amount to a moderate ± 4.8 dB (200Hz-20kHz). Pair matching is excellent at ± 0.4 dB (aside from a short-lived blip of 0.75dB/4.2kHz) but the magnetically-attached, fabric-wrapped frame grille brings its own influence, including the -3.6dB dip also at 4.2kHz and further loss through the presence and treble [blue trace, Graph 1]. Some minor resonances were detected on the impedance/phase spectra at 130-650Hz [see p41] and two linked to the 10in pulp bass/mid cone at 1.7kHz and 2.4kHz (crossover) are visible on both the forward response and the CSD waterfall [Graph 2] although THD through this critical region is exceptionally low at <0.1% (re. 90dB SPL). Aside from a -3dB dip at 450Hz – visible on both corrected nearfield and farfield responses and as a 'bump' on both impedance/phase plots – the bass unit has a flat and extended output, augmented by the clean 43Hz tuning of its two rear-firing ports to yield a steeply rolled-off but deep bass extension of 37Hz (-6dB re. 200Hz). PM



ABOVE: Response inc. nearfield summed driver/port [green], freefield corrected to 1m at 2.83V [yellow], ultrasonic [pink]. Left, black; right, red; w. grille, blue



ABOVE: Modes associated with the bass/mid cone are present at 1.7kHz and 2.4kHz but treble is very clean

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83V - 1kHz/Mean/IEC) | 93.8dB / 91.5dB / 89.3dB |
| Impedance modulus: minimum & maximum (20Hz-20kHz) | 7.15ohm @ 190Hz / 108ohm @ 20Hz |
| Impedance phase: minimum & maximum (20Hz-20kHz) | -63° @ 73Hz / +52° @ 53Hz |
| Pair matching/Resp. error (200Hz-20kHz) | 0.75dB / ± 4.9 dB/ ± 4.7 dB |
| LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz) | 37Hz / 19.3kHz/19.7kHz |
| THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m) | 0.5% / 0.08% / 0.5% |
| Dimensions (HWD inc stand) / Weight (each) | 902x457x254mm / 25kg |