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AUDIO REVIEWS

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KRELL Resolution 3

Reviewer: John Potis

Analog Source: Rega P9 turntable, RB1000, Benz Micro MC Silver, Rega Super Elys & Garrott Bros Optim FGS cartridges

Digital source: Pioneer DV-535 DVD player/ Bel Canto DAC2

Preamp: Shindo Partager

Power Amp: Art Audio Carissa, Bryston 7B ST

Speakers: Ohm Acoustics Walsh 4 with 4.5 mk.2 upgrade, Horning Perikles

Cables: JPS Labs Superconductor and Superconductor FX interconnects and speaker wire, DH Labs D-75 digital

Power Cords: PS Power AC, Analog AC, Digital AC and Kaptovator power cords, ZCable Heavys & Black Lightnings

Powerline conditioning: Balanced Power Technology 3.5 Signature Plus with ZCable Heavy Power Cord

Sundry accessories: Vibrapod Isolators and Cones, Ultra & Heavy ZSleeves, Auric Illuminator

Room size: 12' by 16' with 9' ceiling

Review component retail: \$4,000/pair



"John, come to the front desk."

When I got the call that the Krell Resolution 3 loudspeakers had arrived, the FedEx lady was still nearby and gasping for breath as I approached the front desk. As usual she found the energy to throw me that *inviting* look of hers - the one inviting me to relocate to another carrier's route. I'm used to it. But today I felt sorry for her. I had seen the pictures of the Resolution 3s and while they looked a lot like your usual 6.5-inch two-way, I knew that they used 8-inch mid/woofers. Still, I expected one good-sized box containing both speakers. What I found was two surprisingly large boxes, each of them an unwieldy 55 pounds.



Are you're looking at their picture and thinking "mini-monitor"? *Fuhgeddaboutit.* These speakers surprised the heck out of me. They are massive and at a very minimum 50% larger than any stand-mounted speaker I've ever used - with the exception of the JMLab Mini Utopia. So much for names. The 45-pound Resolution 3 stands 16 inches high, a shade better than 11 inches wide and 16.7 inches deep. The curvaceous cabinets are formed of heavily braced 1-inch thick MDF with a 2-inch thick baffle. From the listening seat they look comfortably substantial but stand up and look down on them for a better impression of their magnitude. I usually enjoy my speakers nude but the Resolution 3s look fantastic with their grills on and I detected absolutely no sonic penalty with their use. By the end of my first day, I had even overcome my desire to strum the elastic grill strings with each passing.

You can get the Krell Resolution 3s in any finish you want as long as it's Cherry. My review pair came in Cherry and I highly recommend it. It shows a subtle grain under a satin finish - very nicely done. A nice deep-gloss lacquered finish (not available) would kick things up a notch but other than that, finish and fit (particularly fit) are first-rate. I don't suppose one should expect anything less from Krell.



Behind those grills are some drivers seriously handsome in their own right. The Vifa ring radiator tweeter (with waveguide - said to increase dispersion) is

becoming more and more common in some really excellent speakers. This is, however, my first experience with the SEAS 8-inch Magnesium mid-woofer with its solid brass phase plug said to control dispersion at the top of the driver's operating range. I shouldn't be concerned with such items but that silver and brass sure did look good from behind those grills and surrounded by all that curvaceous Cherry. All in all, the Resolution 3s present their mass with a generous allotment of grace. Well done, Krell.



Setup

In the listening room, I placed the speakers on 24-inch Platinum Audio dual-pillar sand/lead-filled stands. With the grills, they ended up standing 39 inches from the wall behind them. I used no toe-in. Just for fun, I tried out the 16wpc Art Audio Carissa power amplifier but that didn't last long. I replaced it with a pair of the Bryston 7B ST monos rated to deliver over 800 watts into the Krells' reportedly smooth 4-ohm load via those big beautiful WBT input terminals. Krell recommends 125 watts or thereabouts for the Resolution 3 with its 88 dB specified efficiency and they responded with glee to all that power. Krell specs a frequency response of 45 Hz to 22 kHz +/- 3 dB and that seemed completely legit to me.

Prepare To Be Impressed

Word is that the Resolution 3s take about 25 hours to break in. However, my review pair came completely broken in and right out of the box, the speakers put a big smile on my face. These speakers were *fun* right from the get-go. I'll accept Krell's rating of -3dB at 45 Hz but they sound more robust than most speakers of similar rating. These speakers have solid and full bass down to their lower limit and they effortlessly energize a room. Part of their fun-factor is due to the fact that they like to play loud. They don't *need* to go loud but their robust and seemingly bulletproof nature invites it as they convey a character that is anything but fragile. Credit

the added displacement of the 8-inch mid-woofer? I suppose. In any case, they are more dynamic than any other monitor I've used save, possibly, for the aforementioned and almost twice-the-price JMLab.

Their overall frequency balance is exceptionally neutral - muscular but neutral with just an added degree of welcome warmth. Lean or threadbare are two words you'll never hear associated with the Krells. Linear and smooth all the way up through the edgeless/grainless treble, the Resolution 3 is the kind of speaker you can listen to all day. While nicely detailed, they lack the razor incisiveness and aggressiveness of the aforementioned JMLab Mini Utopia. (That's a good thing.) The upper midrange-to-treble transition is as good as I've heard (word has it that Krell's Dan D'Agostino is no stranger to crossover design -see sidebar) resulting in a balance that is energetic yet completely without sizzle. While never overtly rolled-off, the Res 3's treble is smoothly detailed yet slightly restrained. Propagating a carefully calculated amount of treble energy, the Resolution 3 sounds complete while accentuating nothing. *Pelican West*,

Haircut One

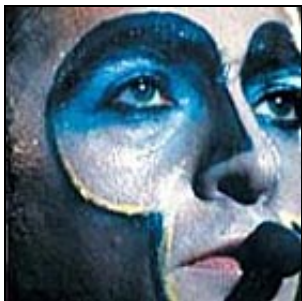
Hundred's 1982 release [Arista AL9607] can scorch eardrums on the wrong system. It's fast and lively but also bright and edgy. Via the Krells, it was tolerable but the Res 3s don't editorialize enough to make this LP sound genuinely smooth and fatigue-free. They won't exacerbate but don't romanticize either. I don't quite detect the same degree of air above or between the notes that some other speakers conjure but the 3s compensate with consistent listenability and a spectacular degree of space - but I'll get to that.



I was immediately delighted by the Resolution 3's high degree of focus and, well, *resolution*. Surprisingly transparent and clean, here again they deliver that easy-on-the-ears brand of highly musical and natural detail.

They also image like champs. Image focus is very good and soundstaging is vivid without getting unnaturally etched. Here they really give me delight. They regularly throw what is possibly the tallest and most lucid window on the music I've ever enjoyed in my room. Most often, that window was as wide as my room. It's spectacular but not in a way that causes a loss of credibility. Soundstage depth is good though not quite as arresting as height and width. All in all, these maxi-monitors perform as well as the best minis. Right off, the Resolution 3s sound *believable*.

Peter Gabriel's 1983 *Live* LP [Geffen 2GHS 4012E], though not the most transparent of recordings, nevertheless evidenced a huge and expansive soundstage with a very solid center image. Indeed, at times I was reminded of the wide yet stable soundstage one gets from a good multichannel system. The Resolution 3s immersed me in a cavernous sense of space. The Krells' stated 45Hz bass floor found itself belied by bass lines that ebbed and flowed in intensity but always sounded satisfyingly full. "Intruder" was one such track; it sounded big and rhythmic and had a taut bass fullness that was difficult to reconcile with the physically unobtrusive Krells. It also had a focus that gave it a rock-solid presence in the room.



When you combine expansive soundstaging, excellent focus, a satisfying power response and effortless dynamics, what you get is a speaker that does *scale*. From the intimacy of David Qualey's solo guitar on "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" from *A Winter's Solstice* [Windham Hill WH-1045] to the sprawling and bombastic *Braveheart* soundtrack [London 448 295-2], once adjusted for volume the Resolution 3s scaled each piece of music as appropriately as the recording allowed. Small and intimate stayed that way and big got big. Here again the Krells just exude *credibility*.

I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of Resolution 3 users won't use them with a subwoofer. They will

gravitate toward these speakers both because of their understated size and potent full-bodied presentation. It's a stand mount that doesn't sound like a stand mount. But this is exactly why the speaker will succeed so admirably with a subwoofer. Many stand-mounted speakers are long on detail and clarity but short on dynamics - particularly down low. So even when paired with a sub, at loud volumes the bottom of the speaker's range will start to break up prematurely and that perfect transition between speaker and sub becomes less than perfect as the speaker's mid/woofer begins to compress. This is another area where the Resolution 3 will excel. It's so strong and so dynamic down low that it'll maintain that transition like few other speakers of its ilk. That makes it a great choice now for use on its own and a great speaker to have on hand if and when that sub becomes a reality.



In my experience and in its class, the JMLab Mini Utopia is the speaker that comes closest to the Resolution 3 in my room. In some ways the Mini Utopia is an engineering marvel but it doesn't approach the Resolution 3 in terms of musical enjoyment. It's way too analytical, aggressive and mechanical for my blood. Where the JMLab is a speaker that aggressively slices and dices its way through the music and lets you hear everything on the recording no matter how musically irrelevant, the Krell is one of those speakers that gets you as close to the music as you need to be but no closer. They accomplish this by creating a large, nicely detailed and transparent window on the midrange and then flanking it with a rich and warm yet not overblown midbass on one end and a well-balanced and smoothly relaxed treble on the other. Based on comments in his recent review of the Overkill Audio Encore, our editor and Big Kahuna Srajan seems to think that this is an absurd

position. If it was captured on the CD, it should be retrieved by the playback system. Theoretically, he has a point. Certainly on very well recorded discs, these super speakers can sound stunningly good. But most of the music I listen to isn't that well recorded and the average multi-tracked disc can sound distracting at best and unlistenable at worst. Over such super speakers the artifacts of the recording process are forced to the fore and the illusion of a real performance in space is shattered. Even on good recordings this type of speaker gives you

a very front-row perspective. Most people don't pursue the first several rows in a concert hall because they know that the orchestra doesn't blend from that close proximity. I usually experience the same phenomenon when listening to hyper-detailed speakers.

