



## Review: DeVore Fidelity O/96 Loudspeakers

June 14, 2023 Michael Lavorgna



**T**here's a funny trend in the world of hifi reviews that seems to think being dispassionate is a sign of objectivity and that the less experience we have actually listening to a piece of gear the more value our opinions hold.

I say funny because this trend is so silly it hardly merits attention, other than to work as a nice introduction to my review of the DeVore Fidelity O/96, speakers I own, use, and enjoy on a near-daily basis and have done for two years *to the day*. This very day. What better way to celebrate our anniversary than in words.



with the Enleum AMP-23R

The DeVore O/96 are from the company's Orangutan line, that's where the big "O" comes from in their name. There are now four other speakers in this line including the similar and smaller O/93, which I owned prior to the O/96's arrival, the O/baby, the diminutive cube of a speaker, the micr/O, and the O/Reference flagship. DeVore also makes the gibbon line that includes the more commonly proportioned gibbon Super Nines and gibbon X floorstanders. I used to own the gibbon X and an older incarnation of the Super Nines called just The Nines and going back even further, a pair of gibbon Super 8s.



with the Constellation Audio Inspiration Integrated 1.0

Since they arrived two years ago, the O/96 have played partner to some 25 amplifiers of all shapes and sizes that have come through for review, from a few Watts to more than 400 Watts of output power. And that's one of the things I love about the DeVore O/96—they can play nice and lovely with a handful or a truckload of Watts. Tube, switching, or solid state.



with the Parasound JC 5 Stereo Amplifier

This freedom in partnering is due to their friendly load, represented by DeVore as 96 dB/W/M (that's where they get the "96" part of their name), with a higher than typical nominal impedance of 10 Ohms and a claimed frequency response of 26Hz-31kHz.



with the Audio Hungry Qualiton X200 Integrated Amplifier

The custom drivers in the two-way O/96 are made to DeVore's specifications by more than one company, while the cabinets are made in Brooklyn with the in-house designed and made crossovers, veneer, final assembly, testing, and burn-in all done at the DeVore factory in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Made in Brooklyn. Those drivers consist of a 10" paper cone mid/woofer with a phase-plug and a 1" silk-dome tweeter *with a powerful double-magnet motor system gently horn-loaded* that fires into a wool-damped rear chamber.



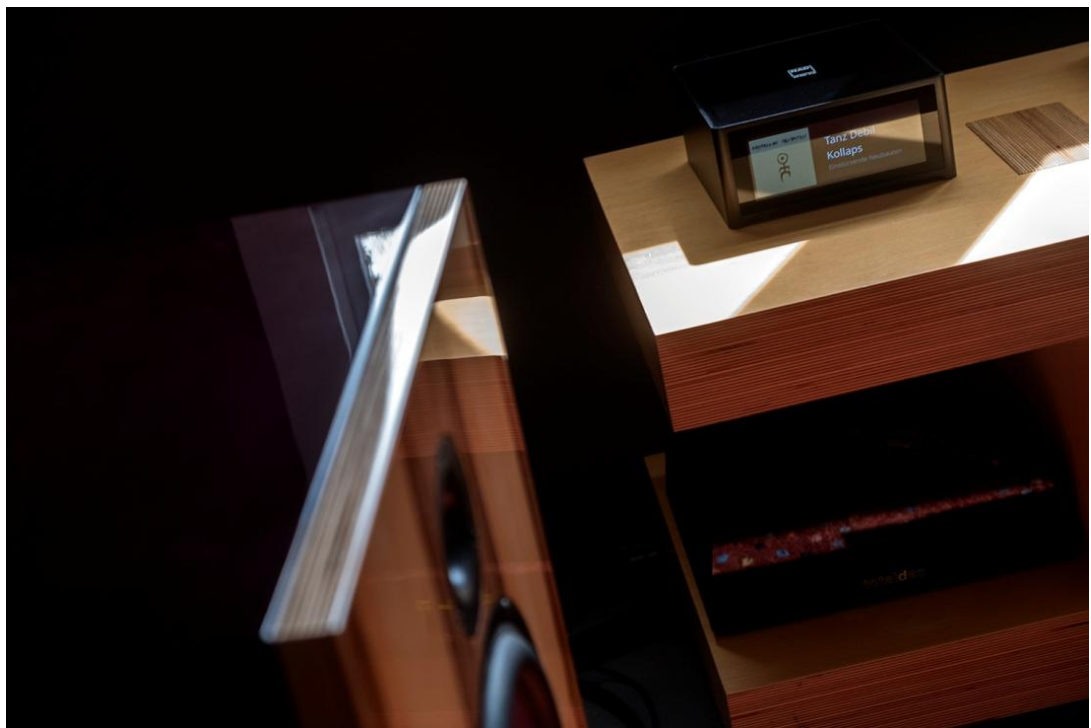
The O/96 stand 35" high on top of their included solid maple stands and a stout 18" wide. The front baffle is made from a solid slab of veneered Baltic birch ply, while the rest of the cabinet is constructed from a combination, a medley, of MDF, ply, and HDF.



Two ports reside around back, while the chunky copper Cardas binding posts are hidden in a recess under the cabinet.



I happen to think the O/96 are simply lovely to look at from every angle and distance.



with the NAD M10 V2 Streaming Amplifier

I've also heard other pairs of O/96 in the wild at hifi shows, at friend's places, and at the DeVore factory in the Navy Yard. The O/96 first showed up on the hifi scene in 2011 so I've heard them partnered with countless systems in dozens of places. Since the O/96 are my reference, they have also played with all of the other gear—DACs, phono stages, etc.—that has come through for review. I did a quick count and that adds up to lots (and lots), so when it comes to the O/96 and experience, real experience listening, I have lots (and lots).



with the LSA VT-70 Integrated Tube Amplifier

I'll begin my listening notes with an observation, one that is only afforded by living with the O/96 for years and being a hifi reviewer simultaneously—no matter the speaker here for review, regardless of the systems heard at shows, I am always excited to put the O/96 back into my system and just sit and listen. That's not to say they are somehow better than every speaker I've reviewed in some objective way, but that is to say their combination of strengths make the DeVore O/96 completely satisfying as a conveyor of music's heart and soul (cue Hoagy Carmichael).



with the Feliks Audio Arioso 300B Integrated Amplifier

More than most speakers I've had the pleasure to spend time with, the O/96 offer a direct connection to the humanness of the music being made, those aspects of music's communicative powers that exist beyond an accumulation of sounds, every single time I sit in front of them. For years on end, without fail.



with the Mola Mola Kula Integrated Amplifier

Regular readers, and even more so people who follow the TM Instagram feed Stories where I post a track a day (every day), know that I listen to a lot of music and a lot of different kinds of music. My taste in music is omnivorous and I've been listening to records, in one form or another, most days for the last 50+ years of my life. Music is, for me, an essential ingredient of the day and my hunger for it never wanes. Like food, music is sustenance. And when I want to plug into whatever music has captured my attention, I know that the DeVore O/96 will deliver what it has to offer, from whisper to power, all rich, delicate, and bruising, as emotionally and physically involving as I want things to get.



with the Bel Canto E1X Integrated Amplifier

No matter the record, regardless of genre, regardless of recorded quality, I know that whatever music I play through the O/96 will be brought into the Barn in living form for all my senses to enjoy. No holds barred.



with the Audio Note Cobra Integrated Amplifier

Getting back to and expanding on an earlier thought, because the O/96 are so easy to drive, with just a few Watts if you so desire, they come alive at low volume levels. Music eases out of the O/96 and comes alive with stunning immediacy whether I'm listening low or loud.



with the Leben CS600 Integrated Amplifier



My daily driver for the DeVore's is the Leben CS600 integrated amplifier, which I've outfitted with 4 Genalex Gold Lion KT77s for about 30 Watts of power, and this combination is as winning a combo as I've heard. Lush, luscious, spider web fine, big wave power. With the Leben CS600, the DeVore's come alive just above whisper levels and can rise up to Barn shaking power in a flash. Like lightning.



with the ModWright KWH 225i Hybrid Integrated Amplifier

In Barn, every speaker needs care in placement and I'd say this is the case for every speaker in every room and the O/96 are no exception. Once dialed in, something I can now do in a few minutes since I know their sweet spot in Barn and have moved them in and out of it too many times to count, the O/96 disappear as well as any speaker I've heard anywhere. They also create a vast and perfectly constructed sound image, its exact size and specificity limited only by the information contained in the recording.



with the Soulnote A-2 Integrated Amplifier

I've certainly heard speakers that can move more air, that offer even greater physicality, but this additional whomp has always come at the expense of the O/96's grace and seamlessness, their ability to convincingly create low end electronic growl, richly hued timbre, lighter than air movement, and startling presence. By comparison, some larger multi-driver speakers have sounded boisterous at the expense of balance and nuance, two more of the O/96's standout strengths. In my experience, speakers that initially impress but lack grace and ultimate balance fail to hold my attention over time and in the worst cases limit the kinds of music I want to hear. The DeVore's work in the opposite fashion, even after two years of constant use, inviting the limitless exploration of what ever music I care to hear.



with the PrimaLuna EVO 300 Hybrid Tube Integrated Amplifier

I've also heard speakers that can go convincingly lower, some sporting powered subwoofers, and for people who crave rave bass, the DeVore's sub-30Hz in room response may not suffice. I'm more of a quality over subsonic rumble kinda listener so the O/96's bass response fulfills my needs.



with the Riviera Labs APL10 Preamplifier & AFM25 Monoblock Amplifiers

That said, I had the opportunity to hear a pair of prototype DeVore O/Reference speakers here in the Barn, that come with a pair of stand alone powered bass units, and that was among the most physically and emotionally moving listening experiences I've had. Beauty and the beast.

Of course I have other [favorite speakers](#) and even more that are not on that list. But when it comes time to just listen, when my complete and total attention is focused on the music at hand, the DeVore O/96 meet my wants and needs as well as any speaker I've heard. The fact that I've only grown to enjoy them more two years on after countless hours of listening is a testament to the only kind of performance metric that really matters when it comes to hifi.

From the first [AWSI](#) I wrote for *Stereophile* c.2010:

*Let's redefine high fidelity as being faithful to the passion for and discovery of music. This means that the best hi-fi is the one that perpetually fans the flame of this passion.*



with the BAT VK-80i Integrated Amplifier

It's like shoes. Or in my case boots. You can't not wear 'em so ideally you want to find a pair that you don't mind slipping into for work, and another pair for pure comfort at home. The ideal use case being they'd be one and the same. Going on two years, the DeVore O/96 are my favorite speakers for sussing out how other pieces of hifi kit sound while doubling as my daily drivers to explore the endless reaches of music for pure unadulterated pleasure.



### **DeVore Fidelity O/96 Loudspeakers**

**Price:** \$15,900/pair

**Company Website:** [DeVore Fidelity](#)

### **Specifications**

Frequency Response: 26Hz-31kHz

Sensitivity: 96 dB/W/M

Impedance: 10 ohms

Dimensions: 12"d x 18"w x 35.5"h including stands