



Devore Orangutan 0/93

John Devore's primate-named loudspeakers have built up quite a reputation among music lovers and audio enthusiasts. The drummer-turned-speaker designer opened Devore Fidelity's doors in 2000, and today produces an extensive array of loudspeakers, of which the Orangutans are perhaps the most unconventional.

I say unconventional only because the Orangutan 0/96 and the slightly more compact 0/93 feature a wide baffle and a relatively shallow enclosure, at a time when almost every hi-fi speaker, stand-mount or floorstander, seems to opt for a narrow baffle and a deep enclosure.

The 0/93's shape suggests a certain old-school charm, reminiscent of those big, full-range, single-driver designs of the 1950s, which had to employ a wide baffle to accommodate the large driver they typically hosted. The retro impression is underlined by the real-wood finishes, combining thick, multi-layer bonded plywood baffle finished in real walnut veneer with dark-stained maple veneer for the top, side and rear panels.

Indeed, the Orangutan exudes a certain bespoke, hand-made charm that is quite different from the high-tech, precision-machined, computer-perfected world of mass-production speakers.

The rich real-wood finishes aside, other 0/93 hallmarks include two small, rear-firing bass ports, exiting close to the base of the enclosure, and framing a single pair of nicely machined, solid copper binding posts. Magnetic protective grilles are available as an option.

Unusually, the cabinet is located on four small, stubby wooden feet, as opposed to coupling spikes – the one aspect of the 0/93 I don't like. They make stable location of the speakers difficult, especially on carpeted or uneven floors.

But more tellingly, making sure the speaker is vertical and adjusting its tilt angle entails Heath Robinson-style adjustments using bits of wood and paper – and as it turns out, those small adjustments are critical to achieving optimum performance. More about that a little later.

The wide baffle allows the use of a



generous, 250 mm mid/bass driver featuring an untreated paper cone and a phase plug. The driver is a bespoke design, manufactured to Devore's specifications, and is partnered by a twin-magnet, horn-loaded 25 mm silk dome tweeter. The crossover point appears to be in the 2 kHz region.

The 20 kg weight of each speaker suggests ample bracing and internal damping, while Devore states that the proprietary, hard-wired crossover employs pure silver wiring and oil-filled capacitors.

Positioning the Orangutans was a more complex enterprise than I had anticipated.

The *AV Magazine* listening room has pretty standard dimensions, and doesn't suffer from any significant acoustic anomalies. Over time I've found that almost all loudspeakers end up in a very similar position – about 150 to 180 cm into the room, some 50 cm away from the side walls, and slightly toed in.

That's more or less where I initially positioned the O/93s too, but with the assistance of local importer Ricata's Trishend Kamaran, the speakers were positioned more precisely relative to their distance from the listening position, and tilted back slightly to raise the soundstage.

These small adjustments made a huge difference to the final performance – which is why adjustable spikes would be such a big boon.

For this review, much of the listening was done with a Line Magnetic LM-518A (review pending), a 22 watts per channel Class A SET amplifier. However I also successfully ran the Devores with a Primare PRE32/MM30 pre-amp/Parasound Halo A21 power amp duo.

Thus, any notion that the Devores are only suited to low-output tube amps should be approached with some circumspection. Put it this way: if you're going to spend this amount of money on a pair of speakers, at least audition them with your intended amplification, and some alternatives, to gain a frame of reference.

However, it's also true that the O/93s are efficient speakers, and that as such, they can be successfully driven by modest amplification – as long as modest, in this context, is limited to the power output, and not to quality: the Devores deserve and even demand superior quality amplification and source signal if they're to deliver on their sonic promise.

That I settled on the LM518A was more a case of synergy: it's a fine amp, but despite being a single-ended triode design with a relatively modest 22 watt-a-side output, it has pace, slam and dynamics in abundance. It also loved the Devores, and the combination was indeed a match made in sonic heaven.

Sources varied over the time that I listened to the Devores, ranging from my

Staging was generous
in all dimensions and
directions, but presented
with a transparency
and a wholesome
authenticity that
encouraged an
holistic engagement
with the music...

trusty Oppo BDP-95EU universal deck and Marantz CD-KI Pearl Lite CD/SACD deck to the tiny, giant-killing Musical Fidelity V-DAC II, which upsamples all incoming digital data to 192 kHz/32-bit.

The Marantz, by the way, can also act as a standalone DAC via its coaxial and Toslink optical S/PDIF digital inputs, and utilises the Cirrus Logic CS4398 DAC chip to natively decode digital music files up to 192 kHz/24-bit.

I spent the best part of a week listening, moving the speakers a bit, listening some more, and generally experimenting with placement, sources and cabling, until I finally felt I'd found the sweet spot and sat down for the first of a series of more structured auditions. The observations that follow are a compendium of those sessions.

The rich timbre, airy acoustics and tonal range of The Hot Club Of San Francisco's *Yerba Buena Bounce* (Reference Recordings 176,4/24 WAV) can sound fantastic when

VITAL STATS

Enclosure type.....	Bass reflex, rear ported
Drive units.....	1x 25 mm horn-loaded tweeter, 1x 250 mm paper pulp cone mid/bass
Bi-wiring	No
Impedance.....	10 ohms nominal
Sensitivity	93 dB/watt/metre
Frequency response	30 Hz – 31 kHz
Dimensions (HxWxD)	902 x 381 x 245 mm
Weight.....	20,5 kg

Price

R113 000

Verdict

A real ability to translate the essence and substance of the music. Generous in every respect: pace, dynamics, tonal range and utterly immersive staging. A speaker that engages like few others.

Supplied by

Ricata
073 900-2471

e-Mail

trishend@ricata.co.za

Website

www.ricata.co.za

OUR RATING: 88 / 100





played back on a suitably lucid, high-resolution system – but here, the Devore's seemed to grasp more than just the sound: they connected with the music itself.

The delivery showed an ease of pace and flow that made for instant accessibility and created a real rapport between the listener and the music. Staging was generous in all dimensions and directions, but presented with a transparency and a wholesome authenticity that encouraged an holistic engagement with the music, rather than merely analysing the way it was being delivered.

Indeed, it was a relief to simply immerse myself in the way the speakers filled the room with full, rich sound, and to enjoy the way that sound appeared to be 'real' in both its dimensional presentation, and the sense of presence created.

In that process, both the speakers and the electronics disappeared, leaving only the vital, vibrant music behind. That music was presented with both sonic and emotive cohesion, achieving a thrust and purpose that believably transcended what we term 'hi-fi'.

The Orangutan O/93s had a knack to make violins sing and soar, to let guitar



Software

The Hot Club Of San Francisco – Yerba Buena Bounce (Ref Recordings)
Rimsky-Korsakov – Dance Of The Tumblers Minnesota Orchestra, Eiji Oue (Reference Recordings)
Dire Straits – Love Over Gold (Mercury CD)
Diana Krall – All For You (Impulse CD)
Cat Stevens – Tea For The Tillerman (CD)

Associated Equipment

Marantz CD-KI Lite CD/SACD player
Olive One network music player
Musical Fidelity V90 DAC
Line Magnetic LM-518A SET integrated amp
Primare PRE32/MM30 pre-amp/DAC
Parasound Halo A21 power amp
KEF R500 loudspeakers
B&W PM1 loudspeakers
KEF LS50 loudspeakers

notes shimmer and scatter, to allow the upright bass to bounce and bound about with unbridled enthusiasm. Indeed, they provided the space, the scope and the lucidity demanded by real, red-blooded music.

But could the Devores maintain that illusion of realism and immediacy when faced with a large-scale, full-scored performance? Rimsky-Korsakov's 'Dance Of The Tumblers', performed by the Minnesota Orchestra under Eiji Oue (Reference Recordings 176,4/24 WAV) was the perfect test: it's a big, bold, swashbuckling piece of music, designed to rattle doors and crack windows.

Somehow, the Orangutans managed to exude the sense of scale, of momentum and dynamics vital to approximate the authority, the pace and the sheer power of the performance – despite their relatively compact size, and the physical boundaries of the listening environment.

There was nothing forced or overbearing about the delivery: the orchestra was

spread wide and deep, while making full use of the O/93's expansive tonal range, allowing the full majesty of the performance to be enjoyed.

At the same time, the Orangutans revealed a talent for revealing detail and nuance, albeit always in a musically meaningful context. There was an organic essence to the music that seemed to reflect just the right body and presence, further adding to the compelling nature of the speakers' performance.

The Devores sounded full and seamless across the entire frequency spectrum – but the depth of the lower frequencies was always well controlled, juxtaposed with a sense of unexpected, succinct agility that ensured ample control without stymying the music's inherent energy.

As much as Diana Krall has become a hackneyed choice for audio reviews, her performances on *All For You* (96/24 FLAC) are superb: heartfelt vocals, slick arrangements, superior backing from her band, and a great recording.

The Devores made full use of all these attributes, bringing the music to life and treating each instrument with a truthfulness that made for compelling listening. Anthony's Wilson's guitar on 'Gee Baby Ain't I Good To You' sounded vivid and real, but never artificially emphasised, while Krall's piano was delivered with substance and poise.

The subtlety of the upright bass was upheld, but while doing full justice to its depth and power, which remained at the very foundation of the music. Krall's vocals were up front and frank, a bit like listening to her from the front row, and no less compelling for it!

Another reviewer's favourite, the Dire Straits classic *Love Over Gold* (96/24 FLAC) has been played half to death. But that made the ability of the Devores to rediscover the heart and the soul of the music all the more impressive.

Again, the delivery mitigated against microscopic analysis – instead, it presented the music in its entirety with such coherence that there was no need to focus on one element at a time.

It wasn't just a case of a few aspects



impressing, either: the Devores commanded fantastic pace and attack, linked to an almost tactile tonal depth, utter transparency and an ability to resolve and present subtle shifts and details.

I could go on and on: the Devores have a way of persuading you to haul out old recordings for rediscovery, and I have an extensive collection. Suffice it to say that the Orangutans were never tripped up; that they always sounded engaging and

exciting without becoming overbearing; and that they aren't intimidated by scale.

The Orangutan O/93 is a compelling performer that vindicates its asking price with a delivery that is as intriguing as it engaging and entertaining. Finely integrated imaging, a sweeping tonal range and panoramic staging all conspire to make this one of the most engaging, most entertaining stereo speaker sets I've heard.

Deon Schoeman