



FRANCO SERBLIN Accordo

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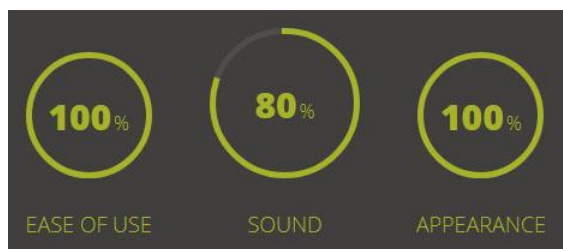
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Stand mount monitors

„I have always loved small speakers, for their discreet presence, for their suitability in less critical environments, for the “magic” which they often are able to create in music reproduction. With Accordo, I followed design patterns that are particularly dear to me. A sound, a voice capable of reaching the depths of the soul...” *Franco Serblin, 2011*

100% REFERENCE

Function and form



Franco Serblin Accordo measures only 36x19x36cm which implies ease of placement and physical disappearance in a room. Should you expect that you put the speakers on a shelf or a stand to the back of the room, you are completely wrong.

First, the Accordos sport a very complicated curvature. Apart from top and bottom boards there are no two surfaces parallel and there are no two surfaces just planar – all planes are curved to a precisely defined radius to the extent that the speaker practically does not show any apparent symmetry. In dark they look like a randomly grabbed piece of wood rather than something touched by a man’s hand. However, throw a little bit light on the speaker and it blooms to a unique form of art. You can simply feel the passion of Franco Serblin in every detail.

As said, not only is the craftsmanship attentive but it is a real work of art - a game that employs shapes and light to sculpt the unique enclosures and the unique sound. Sonus Faber speakers always tended to be much closer to a music instrument than to a sound making device and the same applies here. Seamlessness of the walnut cabinet is broken only by thin aluminum inlays that separate the cabinet’s bottom and top from its walls both visually and mechanically. Note that I used the word ‘walnut’ rather than walnut veneer as there is no veneer on the Accordos – everything is solid wood. The warmth of the walnut harmonizes pretty with polished aluminum that is used for grilles that are made from nylon-like strings in the typical Sonus Faber



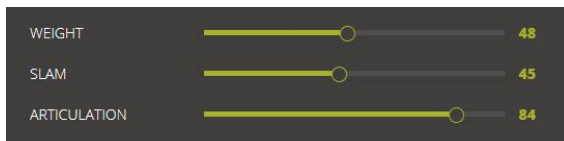
fashion and that are not removable. It is nothing that should bother you as the grilles are the most transparent and they are accounted for in final voicing of the speaker.

The speakers are ported with felt-lined ports firing to the back. At first glance the ports look elliptical but they are not and it is just the beveled rear panel that optically misleads an observer. Apart from the ports and serial number plates there is nothing else to be seen. No speaker terminals.



Well, this is the second reason why the Accordos cannot be considered bookshelf speakers – there is no way to get them play without the original stands. The monitors are connected to the stands with the help of a Speakon terminated cable that runs through the stand and then secured via two fixing bolts. The crossover assembly of low order is hidden in the lower parts of the stands, thus saving valuable space inside main cabinets to enable the Accordos go deeper with their minimum footprint. The speaker terminals are located at floor height and are not bi-wirable. Similarly to the main speakers the stands are also high gloss polished with Mr. Serblin’s engrave signature on them.

Bass management



I was surprised how deep the Accordos can play despite their diminutive enclosures and their positioning far away from the room’s boundaries.

Otherwise than its sheer volume and mass I did not miss anything on a double-bass in *Topsy* (Dick Hyman, *From The Age of Swing*) – the speed, tonality, articulation and attack was at least as good as with the best speakers I had auditioned. The Accordos provided me with extreme transparency that helped me to explore the tinniest details of the mix no matter if I listened to jazz ensembles or symphonic orchestras. Big drums take over around 2” into Saint-Saens’ *Danse Macabre* (Charles Dutoit, Philharmonia Orchestr) and the Accordos are efficient enough to get them under your skin. Of course, the scale is different as it is with any but the biggest loudspeakers, yet all aspects of the sound are minimized with elegance and truthfulness to the original. At lower listening levels I did not miss anything, when playing loud the Accordos were a bit short of breath.

Normally you would expect a lot of compromise from speakers of this size as it comes to playback of bass guitars – then you’d be very pleasantly surprised by how the Accordos could render Dave Ellefson’s bass in *Poison Was the Cure* (Megadeth, *Rust in Peace*). Living with four subwoofers at the time of this review let me learn how a successfully blended subwoofer can contribute to an instrument that has no prevailing energy in bottom two octaves, yet even without a sub the Accordos could provide extremely precise and tonally rich sonic picture that could challenge the best speakers irrespective of their class.

Clarity & delicacy



The Accordo is a two-way speaker with a tweeter and a midwoofer. The dome tweeter bears Ragnar Lian’s (of SEAS and ScanSpeak) signature and, despite its ordinary look, is easily among the best available

today. The midwoofer comes from ScanSpeak's Revelator line with a paper cone that is reinforced with cellulose and with spiral resin grooves that improve its dynamic behavior. It is claimed to be modified as it is for any of the numerous speakers around the globe.

Let me declare that my jaw dropped when I listened to the tambourines in *Source of Fire* of Hossam Ramzy. They know how to impregnate the domes in ScanSpeak and Ragnar Lian is said to do so over weekends when the factory is silent and empty to get the best result. Texturally the tambourines were comparable only to an unamplified live performance – the individual zils were depicted very accurately and almost holographically in space and I wish you could track a hand with the instrument moving in the air like I did. Should there be a reference speaker for accenting every nuance of spatial definition, the Accordo will be it.

Tonal accuracy



So far this review looks like a celebration of the small champions. The absolutely coherent sound, the ability to dissolve and disappear in the sound field, and the ability to get out of the way of sound are all

exceptional. Are there any trade-offs? Yes, there are. As mentioned, the Accordo's physical dimensions cannot exploit the full harmonic envelopes of instruments that operate in the low end of the frequency spectrum. A double bass provides a deep and exciting journey into techniques of plucking, depicts how resonances of strings rise and decay, yet you do not feel the body of the instrument. Similarly a Steinway is a downsized version of the instrument and a symphonic orchestra is rendered in a zoomed out perspective. I missed the flesh, the mass, the scale. This is not a criticism of the Accordo, rather the criticism of any stand mount speakers.

Spatial resolution



The Accordos are not what you call neutral speakers. They cast a tad of warmth and comfort on how they sound. In fact the prime focus of the Accordos is to connect a listener to the music; the high resolution is

a kind of bonus he or she gets for free. They are not exactly for group entertainment but rather for individualists – if you position them carefully and correctly then their sweet spot is really a spot and I recommend making an X-mark on it and do not move away. In principle the Accordos are not directional, yet the optimum balance, I mean outstanding balance, is achieved only in a relatively narrow listening window. There is no manual how to get the balance right – if it is right then you will simply know it as all music elements lock together and the only thing you would not want to do is to stop listening.