



9 April 2021

## Franco Serblin Accordo Loudspeakers

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Loudspeakers, Star Component Award

The Accordo Loudspeakers were the last Franco Serblin voiced before he died in 2013. Serblin was founder of Italy's Sonus faber (1983), maker of exquisite speakers with a reputation for the finest cabinetry in high end audio. Sonus faber practically invented artisanal cabinet making. Serblin left Sonus faber in 2006 and continued the high standard of art and design with his eponymous company.

I can report to you that the build quality of the Serblin Accordo is as good or even better than the glorious looking Sonus faber speakers. The mirror-imaged Accordos are small and beautifully balanced in design—they will pass any significant other test and fit into any decor. I'd like to thank Angie Lisi, Franco Serblin Loudspeakers distributor for shipping the Accordos across the country to the island. The Accordos are **\$12,995/pair incl. proprietary stands** (CAD \$18,999. W/stands pair).

### My Use

The speakers shipped in two boxes; one for the two monitors and the other for the dedicated stands. Much like my past reference Raidho XT-1s and their \$1000 (stunning) proprietary stands, the Accordos go one unique step further. The stands are equally good looking, but also

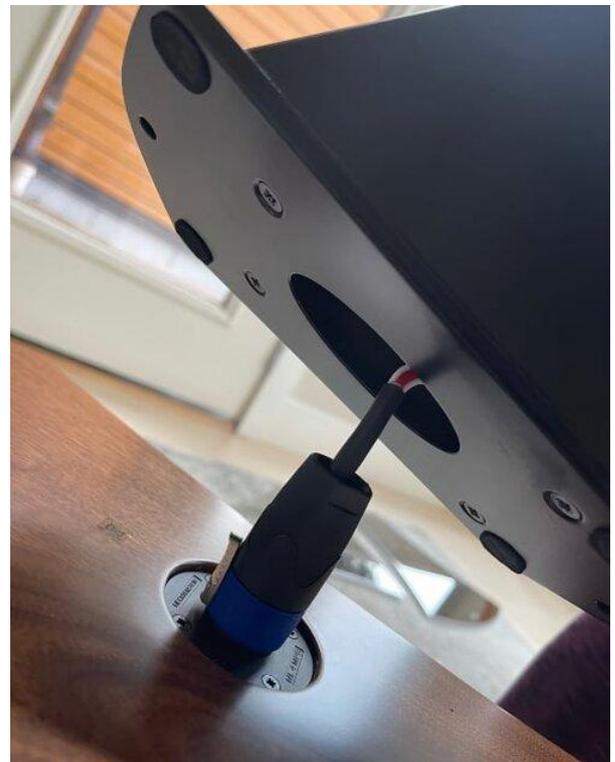


include the speaker's crossover with the stand attached to the base of the monitor by a Neutrik connector. Serblin says the stand frees '...the acoustical chamber from [the crossover's] presence; a definitive solution to avoiding potential interference with the drivers.'

The crossover design uses premium parts, adopts a minimalist approach, is low-order, phase coherent, and is tuned to achieve 'precise soundstaging, focus and depth of image'.

My wife, acting as company shipper, had the speakers

and stands out of the boxes and connected in a jiffy. Her comments during this quick construction were 'beautiful', 'clever', 'so easy', 'great fit and finish'. She was impressed before they sounded a note.



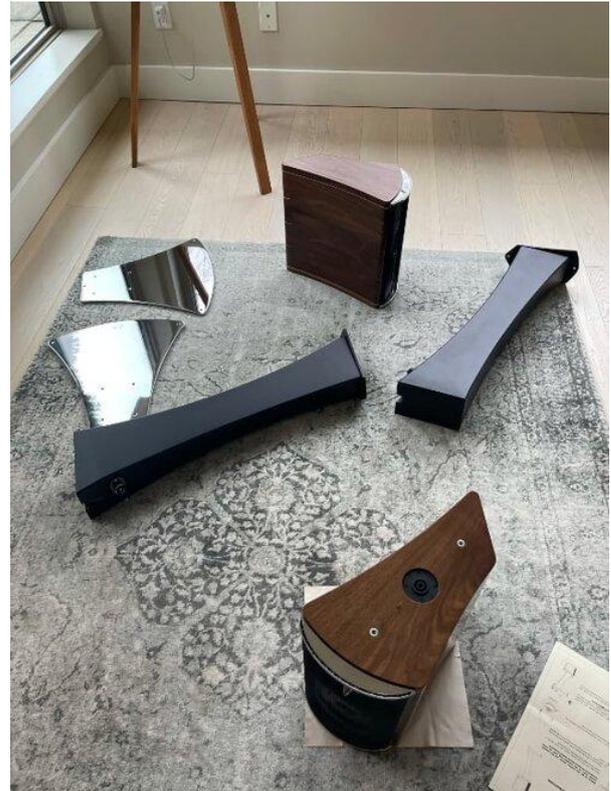
A crossover isolation solution that I've never seen before and ingenious; connection from monitor to stand crossover by Neutrik connector.

Franco Serblin's visual aesthetic was very refined; just look at his speakers. But, he also had a very specific aural aesthetic. As such, the Accordos are very 'Serblin specific' to placement.

More specific than any speaker I've reviewed. This care offers musical dividends that will erase the time you have spent to set up. Be patient. And also with break in.

The first few dates with this beauty will be coffee and lunchtime walks only. No dinner, no shows and definitely no overnighting.

Worth it? You bet.



The next step was not so easy.

To quote Sig. Serblin:

*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.*

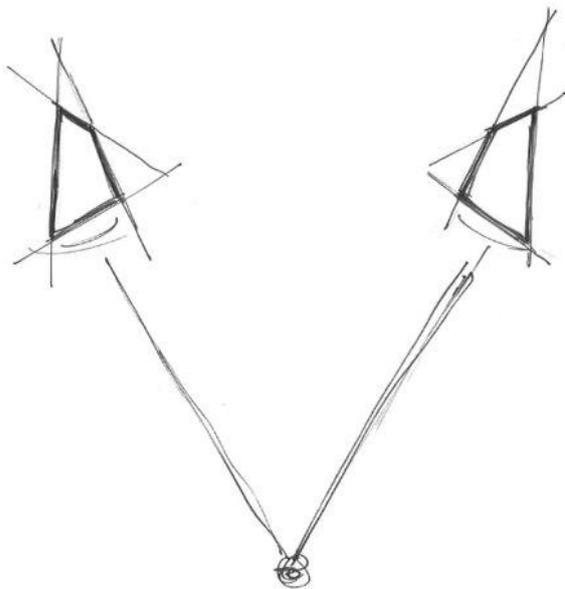
It turns out my ‘less critical’ environment worked perfectly for the Accordos. My fairly small music room works well and is dampened appropriately. It turns out the Accordos were a perfect fit. They loved the room.

And, good enough for me, because, as of 2018, they serve as the reference speakers in Mozart’s house in Salzburg. What an honour.



Serblin, by all accounts, was meticulous about the design and build of his speakers. The Accordos are made from solid walnut with the wood dried up to six months to attain correct stability. Even the brilliant chrome treatments are adhered chemically in the Vicenza factory. Back to set up. Serblin is specific about the ‘chord’ (in Accordo) and explains it:

*The chord is one of the foundations of music, essential for the tuning of a musical instrument.*



*Without preconceptions, if we consider a large orchestra, a single instrument or a piece of music, there is a chord at the base of it all. Voicing a speaker involves the tuning and harmonising of the different parts into something uniquely expressive and coherent: from the drivers to the crossover parts, from the cabinet to its support, the singularity of each element blends into a whole, a presence capable of giving to listeners the “quality of illusion”.*

Serblin’s drawing for the Accordos’ optimum placement.

This is where the marketers blended with the designer and left the musicians out of it. Nothing wrong with reading lovely, curated words to describe an expensive item. But, I’m guessing the work to create its crossover and the speakers’ voicing was a lot more grunt work than the flowery words describe.

Be aware, the speakers work superbly as near field speakers but do not need the equilateral triangle suggested by the da Vinci-like drawings on the very smart website to sound their best. But millimetres do make a difference. My situation was not quite an equilateral triangle, but



close, with many of the minute changes I made ensuring the tweeter had an exact, happy fit with my ears. Once placed, the imaging, timbre and their coherence are enviable.

Most of you will know how Serblin (and Sonos faber, originally) grill strings work. They do not effect the sound and are iconic. The stands sit atop hefty chrome, spiked bases. The entire structure is very stable. It was a new experience attaching the Allnic Audio ZL-3000 speaker cables’ bananas into binding posts on the base of a speaker stand.

Much has been written about the look and fit

and finish, but close scrutiny of the smallest details will give you an idea of the build quality of your investment.

Even screw heads unseen get the gorgeous finishing treatment.



Ancillaries were all top of the league including Allnic Audio, Bergmann Audio, MBL and Alta Audio among others. About 150K's worth. I doubt the Accordos ever had it better. They shone with their accompanying friends. Whether tubes or digital, CDs or vinyl, the Accordos always made their contribution known.

Because of the speakers' voicing, the specific placement, the room synergy, and how they react to exactly what you are feeding them, a visit to your dealer with a fistful of software and listening to some professional guidance would not go amiss.



The Accordo is a two-way, bass reflex loudspeaker. Even the bass port, which never chuffs, is finished exquisitely.

### Features & Specifications

**Cabinet:** Super-rigid, arch-shaped solid wood structure decoupled with aluminium/magnesium parts to obtain resonance control.

**Tweeter:** 29 mm transducer silk-dome by Ragnar Lian.

**Mid-woofer:** Custom made, 150 mm sliced paper cone, optimized for the best control of cone break-up. Symmetrical drive motor system.

**Frequency Response:** 40 Hz - 33 KHz

**Nominal impedance:** 4 ohm

**Sensitivity:** 87 dB

**Minimum power amplifier:** 20 W / ch minimum

**Speaker dimensions:** 36 cm x 19 cm x 36 cm (HWD)

**Stand height:** 74 cm

**Weight:** 32 Kg/pair - stand included

### Sound

Like a fine Italian wine, the Accordos need a gentle touch and some unwinding. I was assured these were broken in, but only popped my head into the room a couple of times while a CD was on repeat.

From first look and their reputation, I knew these speakers would offer a key to unlock a secret room where great chamber music and acoustic recordings thrive.

First up was a DG LP of the original Tokyo String Quartet playing Haydn. The balance, cohesion and string timbre were outstanding. Tingle time. As I expected, the speakers get completely out of the way, and your ears carve a natural position in the soundstage that's both comfortable and exciting. The middle interplay between 2nd violin and viola sounded as important as the solo and cello (bass) line. This is not always captured on quartet recordings, where the players often get in the way of each other. The stories are endless of petty jealousies impeding the ebb and workflow. I'm not sure if the Tokyo four ended imploding like many, but here the original members play and sound like angels. And the typical perfunctory DG recording held no fears for the Accordos.

Next, a 180. I decided to throw a rock into the mix. 'Immigrant Song' from *Led Zeppelin III*. Here, the Serblins conveyed the energy and the timbres but not quite the substance. John Paul Jones' bass is the magic on this track and at a 40 Hz published bottom end, simple physics won't let the bass thunder. Much the same for my Raidhos. What makes the slightly larger Altas pound my room is designer Mike Levy's XTL technology. Very effective. And down to a measurable 29 Hz. Yet, though the Altas image very well, they don't compete with the pinpoint Accordos.

So, what I loved about my Raidhos, the same may be said for the Accordos. Except, the Serblins, at a \$5000 premium, give you better imaging, more refined timbres and even a deeper and wider soundstage. And though the piano black finish of the Altas and Raidhos are among the very best, there is something unique, Italian and very beautiful about the look of Serblin's Accordos. The walnut is rich and the chrome is bling but class. As Jan said, 'sexy'. Piano black is never sexy.

Now we have the very low bass discussed, let's focus on what is benchmark about these speakers.

*Mein Vaterland (Má vlast)* by Smetana is represented on a magnificent ESOTERIC SACD and played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rafael Kubelík. The 6 tone poems are highly nationalistic and convey the beauty of Bohemia by the somewhat complex and emotionally tortured composer. All are varied in micro to macro (max!) dynamics and sounded beguiling, powerful and completely natural within the glorious acoustics of Symphony Hall.

Timbres, whether the perfectly in tune brass or the BSO's individually distinctive woodwind soloists, are replicated with love and affection; the pinpoint imaging is a truth teller. Quite remarkable. And though this is a benefit of many monitor-style speakers, Serblin's very fine, proprietary drivers deliver his personal sound brilliantly. With the BSO's basses, all of whom use a low C extension going down to 33 Hz, the listener is not missing much bass; maybe that last ring of resonance as a low E bounces off the rear wall of the hall.

'Dead Already' from Thomas Newman's soundtrack to *American Beauty* was missing the very low bass. And it's on this type of 'bass buster' track that folks with a predilection for House,

Electronica and Hip Hop may have to look elsewhere. Be sure to understand what you'll be giving up for that extra 10 Hz. A lot. And from most genres.

So, why not add a sub? Even the very best subs? Attaching to the very refined Accordos, I think of it in these terms; imagine Heifetz playing an exquisite solo on his Strad and grandpa shows up with his Walmart bass ukulele ready to jam. Sorry sub fans.

Back to its many strengths. *Satchmo Plays King Oliver* is a wonderful Sterodisc LP. It was a gift, so I can't tell you its provenance. I can tell you it's mesmerizing in its engagement of the listener by the immediacy of the recording and Armstrong's musicianship both on vocals and trumpet. The cylindrical bore of the trumpet doesn't hold too many terrors for the recording engineer, but gravelly old vocal cords supported correctly by the diaphragm do. The Accordos sounded very beautiful here. No musical inflection on the instrument or vocally was missed. More truth telling. The opening track 'St. James Infirmary' could be mistaken for a slow walk accompanying a New Orleans funeral. The emotional essence of the track is heard without any driver 'interpretation' or weakness.

The same for well recorded piano music like an old, \$5 Philips Sequenza find—Claudio Arrau playing the Chopin *Preludes*. My sessions with this LP were completely intoxicating.

I think you'll experience that sort of reaction with many of your favourite CDs and LPs.

## Conclusion

As you'll invariably read with reviews of rarefied Italian gear, whether HiFi, couture, wines, food or cars, accompanying the best things in life are compromises. A Barolo has to lay down for at least five years (much longer, really) to get maximum flavour and bouquet, most Italian suits are cut for narrow frames only, and if you don't know about owning any model of gorgeous Alfa Romeos, have a Google, not forgetting a Ferrari's 25K brake job every 5000 kms!

As such, if you want a monitor that looks and images like the very best and gives you superb, accurate timbre, texture and soundstage, then you will have to forgo some deep bass (happily, no audio tricks like a 'mid bass bump' that tend to blur imaging). But for those folks with a taste for the good things in life, La Dolce Vita of HiFi, **\$12,995/pair with stands** is not an exorbitant amount to pay for it. My suggestion is to arrange that audition we talked about. Don't be surprised if you fall in love.

Further information: [\*\*Franco Serblin\*\*](#)

