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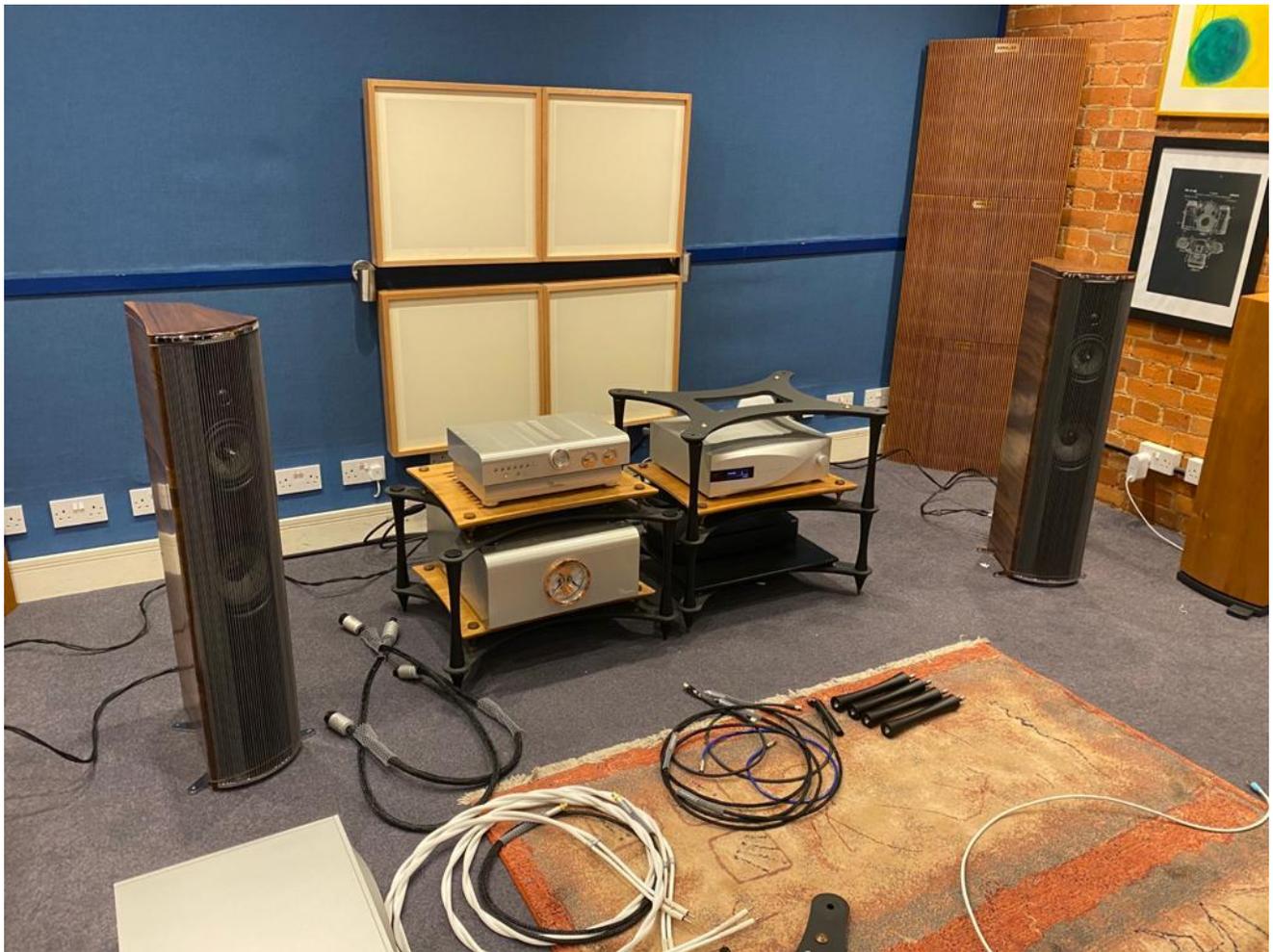
BEAUTY IN SOUND – FRANCO SERBLIN ACCORDO ESSENCE LOUDSPEAKER

First off, apologies. I appreciate that it is no longer Monday and that my update is a little on the late side but the system that I have been auditioning was well and truly worth the wait! With great excitement, I would like to share with you my thoughts on the brand new Franco Serblin Accordo Essence.

It has been a few weeks since the Accordo Essences were carried over the threshold here at Oxford Audio. Unfortunately, Jon Harker had claimed his right to “Prima Nocta” and snatched them away from us before nary a sound could be heard! I have gotten used to this phenomenon over the years, whereby Jon suddenly descends upon fresh cardboard like an antipodean bird of prey, and these days take it as a good omen for the performance of a new item. Finally returning the speakers to the store, Jon announced that he had “run them in” and that they were ready for demonstration, I had never before witnessed such a display of such true altruism.



Unboxing the speakers, I can confidently say that photos do them no justice. The asymmetry and lustre of the speaker draw the eye, the flowing arch of the cabinet invite you to run your hand down



the flanks and the elegantly strung grills and bright metal hardware add accents and contrast to the beautiful hardwood cabinet. The time required to finish a loudspeaker to this degree is obvious from the merest of glances and reinforce the notion of this being a brand that values passion and artisan process almost as highly as it does musicality and sonics.

This is not to say that technology plays second fiddle to art, with drive units being sourced from the likes of Ragnar Lian, of ScanSpeak fame!

I had set up a rather special system in order to listen to the Franco Serblins – The Dan D’Agostino Progression Pre and Power Amplifier partnered with the dCS Vivaldi DAC, Upsampler and Clock. The combination of the delicacy and insight of the dCS allied with the depth and sheer might of the D’Agostino forms one of my favourite systems: one that can make almost any speaker sparkle and bounce but allow the best to truly shine and dance.

In positioning the Accordo Essence, I found them to favour a good amount of free space from boundary walls – with



no hint of congestion or bloom when positioned around 80cm in to the room and roughly 70cm from the side walls as is to be expected to get the best results from a rear-firing enclosure. In our room, using Agnes Obel's beautiful Aventine as a test track, the soundstage snapped into focus with the speakers towed to cross just behind the listening position, striking the perfect balance between both width and depth of soundstage and precision and intimacy of vocals.



Finally it was time to have a proper listen to these Accordo Essence! I dived straight into Stevie Ray Vaughan's incredible version of Hendrix's Little Wing, the Essences providing a rich yet tonally dark portrayal of this total mastery of the guitar. The speaker seemed to thrive on recreating all the distortion and texture of the electric guitar whilst offering up great depth and dynamics to the accompanying drum player, the two playing in tandem credibly in our demo room with the speaker recreating the acoustic of the recording space and transporting me away somewhere else entirely!

I found myself playing a huge breadth of music through the Essences. After Stevie Ray Vaughan came Cream, came Bowie all

recreated in the room with a sumptuousness and depth that was simultaneously revealing and yet forgiving to the older productions, as if walking a tight-rope. Moving on to some more modern music, the Essences showed no difficulty with complicated rhythms and time signatures such as Heater by Flume. Whilst lacking in the dynamic range of “proper” music Heater is a seemingly random collection of electronic synths and samples held together and underpinned by a chest-thumping bassline – to which the 180mm bass-driver gripped expertly – this speaker is no slouch! Hot Chip’s Ready for the floor is similarly delivered with a pace and tightness that gets the foot tapping and, as more layers are gradually added into the track, the soundstage blossoms out into the room. Truly this is a multi-faceted loudspeaker, if you are after romance and intimacy or energy and scale the Essence is more than happy to turn its hand to the request.



Before I would accept the fact that I could not spend the entire day hidden in the demo room like some reclusive hermit, I had to play a few more tracks. I flitted between folk and rock and jazz and electronica until my jaw dropped. I had stopped on Gregory Porter’s Liquid Spirit, the Accordo Essences had seemed to step up a gear – the soul clap of the track made truly infectious and the deep, raw voice of Gregory Porter made real in the confines of the demo room. The jaw-dropping, reach-out-and-touch-them performance suddenly made the name make sense. What this speaker delivers is the very essence of the music, with all of the emotion, passion and energy of the artists that made those pieces so engaging, alluring and captivating. Never will this speaker disseminate and destroy recordings that you cherish and remember fondly, but instead it polishes, refines and ameliorates them, breathing new life into records you thought you knew.

I think I might be in love

Alasdair