

VIENNA ACOUSTICS Imperial Liszt

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Floorstanding loudspeakers

The Imperial Liszt is a 3-way loudspeaker. It features the brand new version of Vienna Acoustics' proprietary Flat-Spider-Cone coincidental driver that is derived directly from The Music, the company's flagship model. The tweeter and the midrange driver share their acoustic centers, alike the drivers that have been successfully implemented by KEF or TAD. In the Imperial Liszt this coincidental driver assembly occupies a separate chamber. By separate I mean that the chamber is actually a piece atop the main enclosure - an aluminum mechanism allows it to pivot.

The Flat-Spider-Cone is the result of collaboration with Danish ScanSpeak. The midrange employs a flat driver using polymer material strengthened by glass fibers, which further gains structural rigidity from twelve large 16mm reinforcement "Spider" ribs. Thus Vienna Acoustics achieve necessary stiffness from rather soft plastic cone. The driver's motor comprises of neodymium magnet assembly and a massive 50mm voice coil.



The tweeter is a silk dome and it is installed at the center of the midrange driver. The aluminum pivoting mechanism helps a listener to perform minute toe-in adjustments for an optimal listening field.

On paper the Vienna Acoustics Liszt is a 4 ohm speaker with an impedance minimum of 3.1 ohms at

100 Hz. This plus 91dB sensitivity makes the Liszt not demanding load for any amplifier. The owner will not be limited by anything but his own sound preference. The finish of the speakers is flawless and all the finishes on offer - cherry, redwood, black gloss and white gloss - look terrific. I have to mention excellent binding posts that were designed in-house and are delight to work with, or easily adjustable spikes that allow all adjustments to be performed on-the-fly without a necessity to tilt the speakers.



The pivoting mechanism does not allow tilt, like The Music flagship, but it is a very clever thing nevertheless. The top unit is vented for better transient response and higher sensitivity.



When I looked into the manual I was surprised at 28Hz bottom end specification - the rather slim enclosure does not look like that. The explanation is in their depth, 40cm is more than with other speakers.

The Imperial Liszt's sound is analogue - it exhibits warmth that brought my attention to humans behind instruments. The way they approach music is similar to Sonus Faber speakers - it is the rich sound that enhances tonal colours but does not bury details. The bass of the Liszt is confident and critical recordings, like *Come On In My Kitchen* of Cassandra Wilson, sound spectacular. I wished for a bit more transient speed and definition but other than that there was nothing to complain. The thuds of a kick drum were like a fist punching my belly, very physical and weighty. However, the moment when the mallet kicked the skin was less articulated than with the best speakers in the category.



The coincidental speaker provides quite a good level of sonic transparency. The top range is a bit tilted up which lends spark to the music. This plus the rounded bottom end gives the sound plasticity and certain liquidity. Microdynamics and the tiniest textural details are not the Liszt's strengths but who cares if the music flows so beautifully in the room.



I mentioned that the Liszts are tonally very rich speakers but this richness is built by fundamentals rather than higher harmonics. Depending on the music that I listened to I either missed the colour blooms or not. If you prefer listen to you music collection without audiophile aspirations (read: without analysing every bit of sound) then the Liszts are the right speakers for you. The aforementioned Cassandra Wilson was delight to listen to musically, but when I switched to Audio Physic Avanteras for comparison, it was clear how much remained hidden sonically. I assume it would be pretty safe to pair the Liszts with analytical sounding amps or cables - that could be a good partnership to bring the balance between the musicality and audiophilia.



The depth is big with the Liszts, with the soundstage moved far beyond the speakers plane. I had an opportunity to switch between Bowers & Wilkins's 802 Diamonds, the Imperial Liszts and Focal's Maestro Utopias - both the competitors were more forward sounding than the Liszts. This may be due to subjectively recessed midrange (or tilts at the frequency extremes, depending on what you take for a reference). Thus the soundstage of the Liszt may sound bigger than it really is and it is imaged from a x-th row perspective. I never had the impression that I sat in the first row with the Imperial Liszts.

By pivoting the top section one can change the ratio of direct and





reflected sound. Not only for very directional highs, but also for less directional midrange. I could not find the setting that would be the best in universal way - recording by recording the Liszt's head seduced me to adjust it a bit. I think that sooner or later many owners of the Liszt will have a list of settings that suit best the music genres they listen to. Some material from 80's, like otherwise well recorded and highly dynamic Duran Duran's *Notorious* were too agile until I rotated the top units for severe toe-in when their axes met in front of me. I assume that the possibility to play with the Liszt's top unit is unique and great.

Price as reviewed: 297 000,- Kč

Recommended resellers

Kohut Audio, Košice, tel. +421 905 642 156

Manufacturer's website: <http://www.vienna-acoustics.com>

Associated components

- **Sources:** Accuphase DP-510, Ayre CX-7e MP
- **Amplifiers:** Accustic Arts AMP II MkII / Accustic Arts Tube II, Accuphase C-2820 / Accuphase A-65
- **Loudspeakers:** Jmlab Focal Maestro Utopia, Bowers & Wilkins 802 Diamond, Audio Physic Avantera a Vienna Acoustics The Music
- **Interconnects and speaker cables:** AudioQuest Niagara a Oak
- **Power cables:** Cardas Audio Clear a Golden Reference
- **Power conditioning:** Accuphase PS-1220