



The Beethoven Baby Grand Reference is the new iteration of the Beethoven Baby Grand model in the Concert Grand series from the Austrian speaker manufacturer, Vienna Acoustics.



## Highlights

The Concert Grand is the top-of-the-line series from Vienna Acoustics. Currently, there are three floor-standing speaker models in the series: the Beethoven Concert Grand Reference (\$13,495 per pair in standard finishes; \$15,495 per pair in rosewood finish), the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference (\$10,495 per pair in standard finishes; \$11,495 per pair in rosewood finish), and the Mozart Grand Symphony Edition (\$5,495 per pair in standard finishes; \$6,295 per pair in rosewood finish). The “Reference” designation on the Beethoven Concert Grand Reference and the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference models is to differentiate them from the previous iterations of the models. This review focuses on the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference model, which is the middle of the floor-standing speaker models in the series.

## Vienna Acoustics Beethoven Baby Grand Reference Speakers

- Simple yet elegant-looking, slim floor-standing speakers.
- Impeccable construction and finish quality.
- Balanced all-around performance.

### Introduction



The first sentence in the Concert Grand series product description page on the Vienna Acoustics website reads ‘We love crafting loudspeakers’, which suggests that the products are created out of passion. The founder and primary designer of the Vienna Acoustics speakers, Peter Gansterer, does not believe in creating a product just for the sake of changing. There has to be a pioneering and profound technical reason behind the creation of the company’s new product. The Concert Grand series is the fruit of rigorous design engineering and an extensive listening evaluation process, which can take years to complete. The fact that the company is located in Vienna also offers a unique opportunity to use live music played in some of the best halls in the world as a reference in the design process.

The Vienna Acoustics Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers reviewed here have a rather unassuming appearance with their tall-and-slim boxy-shape cabinet design. A closer look reveals the impeccable cabinet construction and finish of the speakers, which for sure will exude pride of ownership. I think the design can easily blend into any room décor, be it traditional or modern contemporary. As can be seen from the pictures, the review samples of the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers came in a gorgeous cherry finish. Other finishes available are piano black, piano white, and rosewood. The speakers overall radiate an elegant vibe in their simplicity.

## Vienna Acoustics Beethoven Baby Grand Reference Speakers SPECIFICATIONS

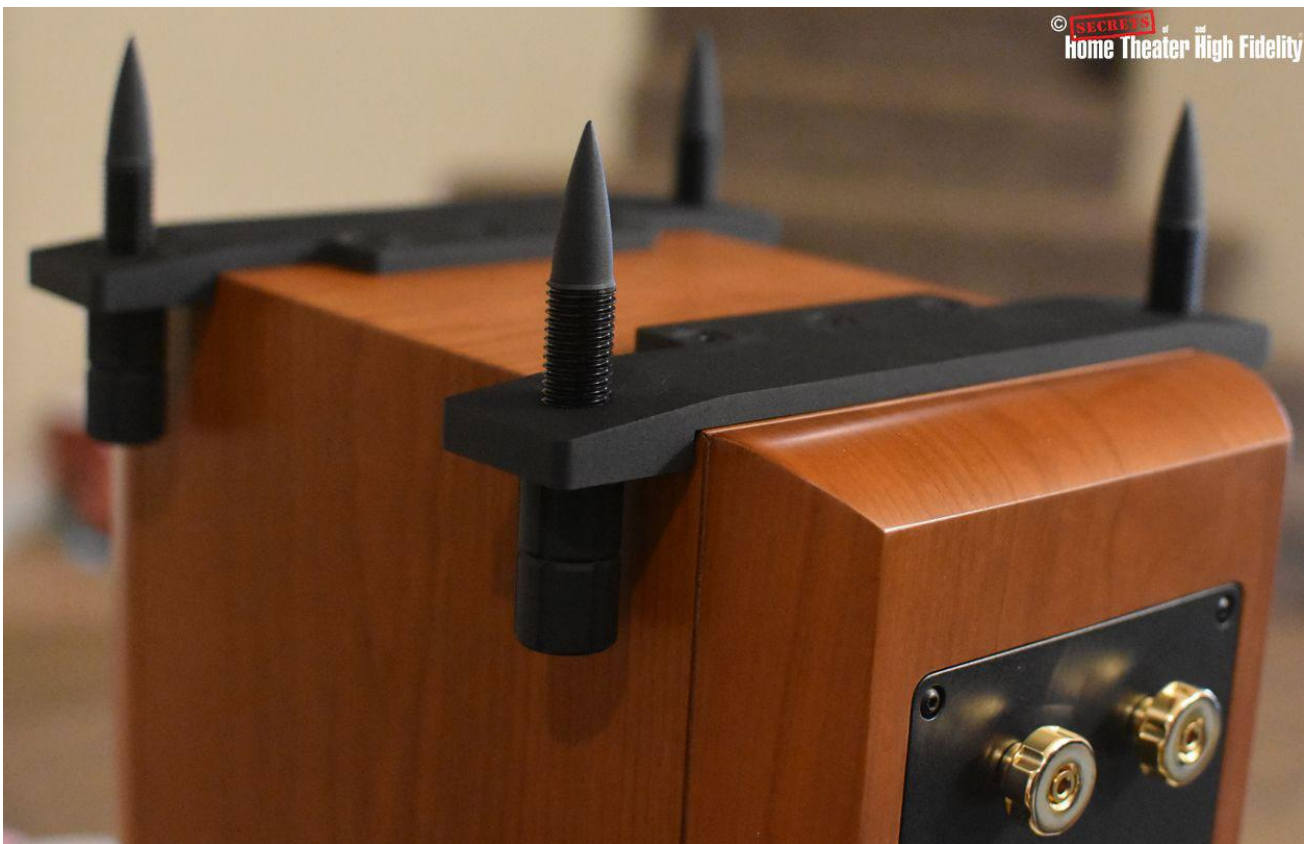
<b>Design:</b> 3-way Bass Reflex	<b>Crossover Function:</b> 3-way, 6 dB, and 12 dB Bessel
<b>Impedance:</b> 4 Ohms	<b>Weight per Pair:</b> 115 lbs (52 kg)
<b>Frequency response:</b> 33 – 23000 Hz	<b>Dimensions (W x H x D) inches:</b> 7.2 x 40.4 x 13.1 (without base assembly) 10.2 x 43.1 x 13.1 (with base assembly)
<b>Sensitivity:</b> 89 dB	<b>Finishes:</b> Cherry, Piano Black, Piano White, Premium Rosewood
<b>Recommended Amplifier:</b> 40 – 300 Watts	<b>Website:</b> <a href="#">Company Site</a>
<b>Midrange:</b> 6" Composite Cone: flat X4P Spidercone with recessed fabric center-cone	<b>MSRP:</b> \$10,495/pair (standard finishes) \$11,495/pair (rosewood finish)
<b>Woofers:</b> 6" (2) Composite Cone: flat X4P Spidercone with recessed fabric center-cone	<b>Company:</b> <a href="#">Vienna Acoustics</a>
<b>Tweeter:</b> 1.1" Hand Coated Vienna Acoustics Silk Dome	<b>SECRETS Tags:</b> 2022 Speaker Review, Vienna Acoustics, Beethoven, Baby Grand Reference Speakers, Beethoven Baby Grand Reference Speakers, Speakers, Baby Grand Reference
<b>Bass Function:</b> Impulse Optimizing QB 3 (Quasi-Butterworth)	

## Design



The Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speaker employs a three-way bass-reflex design with its port on the back. In this iteration of the model, the new and improved drivers are utilized with the goal to improve the sonic performance of the speaker. The tweeter in the speaker is a custom design 1.1" hand-coated silk dome variety, which is said to complement harmoniously the three brand-new 6" drivers, one serves as a midrange and the other two as woofers. These midrange and woofers utilize Vienna Acoustics' patented flat spidercone within the all-new Composite Cone construction, consisting of two distinct cones: the flat outer cone, which is glass fiber reinforced to make it extremely stiff, and the inverted dome middle part, which is made of double-coated woven fabric. Vienna Acoustics claims that this enhanced and unusual-looking driver offers precise, solid piston-like movement of its diaphragm. The combination of these enhanced drivers and carefully-selected crossover circuitry design/components helps to achieve the goal of the vision for the speakers, which is to deliver a high-performance sonic reproduction.

For a relatively slim floor-stander, the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speaker feels rather hefty at about 57 lbs. each. A simple knocking test reveals that the cabinet is sufficiently braced and very well damped. The quality of construction and finish of the speakers is nothing short of exquisite. The cherry finish of the review samples is gorgeous. The other finishes offered are piano black, piano white, and rosewood. The rosewood finish version carries a \$1,000 premium compared to the other finishes. The grilles to cover and protect these speaker drivers attach magnetically, so removing and replacing them is relatively easy.



The speakers are also equipped with a metal base foot assembly that attaches using six screws to the bottom part of the cabinet. Each base foot assembly comes with four good-sized screw-in spikes that raise the speaker about 2" to 3" above the floor (adjustable). Metal discs to be put



underneath the spiked feet to prevent them from scratching the floor are also provided. With the base feet properly installed and adjusted, the speaker becomes less prone to toppling and feels very stable.

The binding posts of the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference are located near the bottom of the speaker on the rear panel. Only a pair of binding posts are available for each speaker, which means that it does not accommodate bi-wiring/bi-amping. It is not a big deal if you ask me, but for audiophiles who dwell on the advantage of bi-wiring/bi-amping so much, this might be something to consider.

## Setup

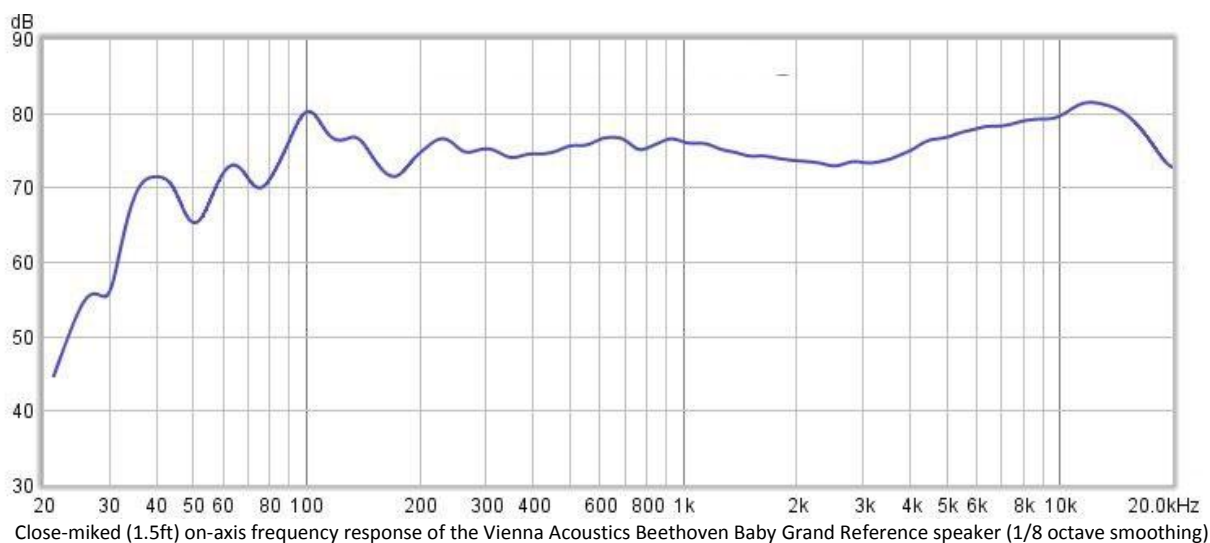
During the review, the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers were evaluated in various setups driven by the Michi X3 integrated amplifier, which supplies 350 W/channel to the speakers (nominal impedance of the speaker is 4 ohm) and a combination of PS Audio BHK Signature preamp with the PS Audio HCA-2 amplifier (225 W/channel) or with the Bel Canto Ref500S amplifier (500 W/channel). The sources used were the PS Audio PerfectWave Transport and the AURALiC Aries G1 streamer feeding the PS Audio DirectStream DAC. All the combinations tried led to satisfying results, albeit with subtle differences in the sonic nuances. The main sonic traits of the speakers were pretty much the same, however different front-end component combinations fleshed out different subtle sonic characters. Surprisingly the combination of the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers with the PS Audio BHK Signature preamp driving the oldie-but-goldie HCA-2 amplifier produced the sonic characteristics that I liked the best, yielding the right level of warmth and background darkness of the musical presentation. I could only speculate that perhaps the HCA-2 amplifier happened to have the best synergy with the tonal characteristics of the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers. Your mileage may vary though, as my taste of sound will likely be different than yours.



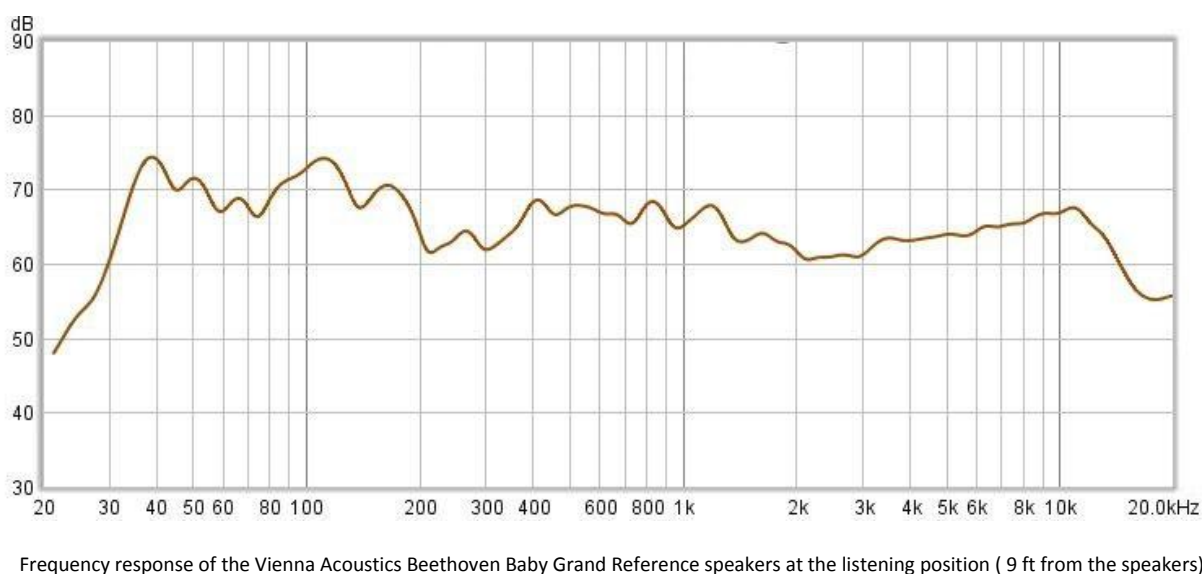
As the speakers have their ports on the rear, their placement from the wall behind them will have a significant effect on the resulting sound. First of all, these speakers are capable of producing a strong bass response, and hence, the placement against or too close to the wall will result in too much bass. In my room, to avoid the overpowering of the bass response, I needed to pull the speakers such that their front baffles were at least 4 ft from the wall behind them. The left and right speakers were set up about 8 ft apart from each other and the middle point between the two speakers was at 9 ft from my listening position. The speakers were slightly toed-in to the point that gave me the best imaging and soundstage results. Not much toe-in was needed actually to achieve this, maybe only 10-15 deg inward or so. I could still see a good part of the inner side panels of the speaker from my listening position.

A quick in-room on-axis close-miked frequency-response measurement using REW software and calibrated microphone revealed that the speaker produced relatively flat upper bass and midrange responses with slight midbass and lower-treble emphasis. The lower-treble emphasis might be due

to the placement of the microphone for the measurement which was just slightly below the tweeter center axis. There was no obvious treble emphasis that I observed during the listening evaluation. This measurement also showed that the speaker did produce solid bass response extended down to the mid-30 Hz range. The room interaction might accentuate the slight midbass hump observed.



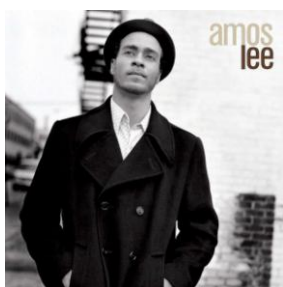
The sonic character of the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers could be described as full and well balanced across the frequency spectrum. There was a sufficient sense of weight in the sonic presentation of the speakers, which was contributed by their strong bass response. Considering that these were medium-size and lean tower speakers equipped with only dual 6" woofers each, the bass response was quite remarkable and one of the strong points of the speakers. A quick frequency-response check at the listening location (see the figure below) with the speakers positioned for listening evaluation (the front baffles were 4 ft from the wall behind them) confirmed this very point. Useful bass extension down to about 30 Hz was observed. Even though the bass was abundant, it never sounded bloated or sluggish. Probably due to relatively small-diameter woofers, the bass produced by these speakers sounded agile, punchy, and articulate.



Besides the strong bass response, the speakers also exhibited natural midrange, which was free from harshness. They sounded clearer with their grilles off, and that was how I listened during most

of my evaluation. Even though these speakers might not have the last word in transparency, the clarity of the sonic presentation was still above average and very good overall. The treble presentation exhibited sufficient detail and sounded smooth. There was a trace of warmth in the overall tonal character of the speakers, which was rather seductive and made me tend to listen longer. These are the speakers that can be enjoyed for a long time without listening fatigue. This does not mean that the speakers sound subdued and lacking in texture. In fact, my experience in listening to these speakers points to the opposite. The Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers possessed sonic characteristics that were rich in textures. The capability of the speakers to paint a steady image and flesh out the sense of space in the recording was also exemplary.

### **Amos Lee “Debut Album (2015)”**



If you get the impression that I was impressed with the solid bass reproduction of the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers, you are not wrong. But the bass was not the only thing that impressed me. The speakers' strong midrange performance was another admirable aspect of the speakers. Vocal presentation in music was especially delightful and always sounded right. Amos Lee's vocal in the song *Arms of a Woman* from his debut album (2015) sounded natural and palpable through the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers.

There was no added nasality or extra sibilance observed, which made the whole vocal presentation sound just right. The speakers also portrayed the intimate small stage and extracted the sense of space from the track nicely.

### **Tan Dun and Yo-Yo Ma “Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon soundtrack (2000)”**



The Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers' prowess in resolving dynamics in the recording was commendable. The speakers easily navigated through the soft and loud passages of the title track of the *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* album (2000) without missing a beat. They did not miss the details and microdynamics of the soft passages and were able to present the loud passages with all their glorious textures.

The layering of the sound of the musical instruments in the soundstage, from the main cello by Yo-Yo Ma up front to the woodwinds and percussion instruments in the back, was portrayed beautifully in a convincing fashion.

### **Céu's “Um Gosto de Sol album (2021)”**



The Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers were also quite nimble in conveying the sense of pace, rhythm, and timing (PRAT). Paired with the right electronics, they could easily make you sway with the music. Listening to the track *Teimosa* by the Brazilian singer Céu from her *Um Gosto de Sol* album (2021), which contains bossa nova style of music, made me toe-tap and move my body with the music. The intimate musical atmosphere reproduced by the speakers together with the conveyance of the just-right pace and rhythm information was unmistakable and easily transported me

to the moment.

## Conclusions

**The Vienna Acoustics' Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers are not inexpensive, but they offer excellent craftsmanship and strong all-around sonic performance.**

The Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers are easy to like for various reasons. As speakers, the main reason to like them is of course for their sonic performance, and the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers definitely make a strong case in this department. With a touch of warmth in their sonic characteristics complemented by their excellent midrange/bass responses, the speakers excel in rendering the spatial information in the recording and in delivering the right sense of pace and rhythm in the music. Other reasons to like the Beethoven Baby Grand Reference speakers, which are more complementary in nature to the main reason above, are their visual appearance and quality of craftsmanship. To me, the speakers look simple yet elegant. While I understand that this is subjective and everybody may have different tastes, there is no denying that the quality of the craftsmanship of the speakers is first-rate. Their build quality and finish are nothing short of excellent. While their asking price is not cheap, Vienna Acoustics seems to make sure that you do get your money's worth.

### Likes

- Excellent built quality and beautiful finish
- Simple yet elegant appearance
- Magnetically attached grilles
- Excellent conveyance of rhythm and timing accentuated by the quick and extended bass response
- Strong imaging capability with an excellent rendition of space
- Slightly warm yet detailed and non-fatiguing sonic characters

### Would Like To See

- Improved sonic transparency