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MARCH 2009

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Anat Reference is the
Best Speaker
in the World.
We see
if that's true...

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YG Acoustics Anat Reference II Professional

WES PHILLIPS

LOUDSPEAKER

You've seen the ads from YG Acoustics: "The best loudspeaker on Earth. Period." It sounds arrogant. But come on—high-end audio has never been a field of shrinking violets. When Ivor Tiefenbrun of Linn announced that the turntable, not the cartridge or loudspeakers, dictated the sound quality of an audio system, that was a man convinced that he was right and taking on the world. And was Krell's Dan D'Agostino any less arrogant when, in 1980, he introduced the KSA-100 power amplifier? In a world where small size and high wattage were the norms, didn't it take a pair of big brass 'uns to bring out a honkin' huge slab of metal that put out only 100Wpc?

I could go on: William Z. Johnson of Audio Research Corp., and Bill Conrad and Lew Johnson of Conrad-Johnson, bucking the solid-state hegemony of the 1980s with *tubes*. The insistence of Naim's Julian Vereker on the primacy of the power supply. Meridian Audio's Bob Stuart touting just about any of his unconventional designs (was there any other kind?). Progress is not made by reasonable men—and it's arrogance only if, in the end, you're proven wrong.

In the end, the question of whether YG Acoustics' Yoav Geva, in his ads, is arrogant or merely stating the obvious would be answered not by reading his ad copy, but by diving in and listening to his speakers—which is what I decided to do when Geva invited me to his factory in Arvada, Colorado, for an extended listening session.

In person, Geva was more modest. "It may not actually be the *best* loudspeaker in the world," he said. "I maintain that it belongs in the *category* of the best loudspeakers in the world." But he was unable to leave it there. "And it *is* the *best-measuring* loudspeaker in the world."

Oh. Really?

DESCRIPTION As reviewed, three-piece, three-way, modular, floorstanding loudspeaker with powered subwoofer. Drive-units: 1" silk-dome tweeter, two 6" paper-cone midrange units, 10" carbon/paper-cone passive subwoofer, 10" carbon/paper-cone powered subwoofer. Crossover frequency (Main Module): 1.75kHz. Frequency range: <20Hz–>40kHz. Frequency response: 20Hz–20kHz, –0.7dB. Channel matching: within ±0.2dB. Impedance: 4 ohms nominal, 2.7 ohms minimum. Sensitivity: 92dB/2.83V/m. Subwoofer amplifier: 800Wpc, class-A/B.

DIMENSIONS Main Module: 20" (500mm) H by 8" (190mm) W by 20" (500mm) D.; 48" (1210mm) H by 13" (330mm) W by 24" (600mm) D. Professional (Studio Module on top of powered subwoofer module): 69" (1740mm) H by 17" (430mm) W by 26"

(660mm) D. Overall height (Main Module on top of Studio and Professional Modules): 89".

Weights: Main Module: 108 lbs (49kg). Studio Sub: 172 lbs (78kg). Professional Sub: 160 lbs (73kg).

FINISH Aircraft-grade aluminum in either natural or black-anodized finishes.

SERIAL NUMBERS OF UNITS

REVIEWED Main: 222. Studio (passive subwoofer module): 219. Professional (active subwoofer module): not noted.

PRICE \$107,000/pair, as reviewed (Reference II Professional). Approximate number of dealers: 11.

MANUFACTURER YG Acoustics Computerized Loudspeaker Labs LLC, 4941 Allison St., Unit 10, Arvada, CO 80002.

Tel: (720) 840-6441.

Fax: (303) 420-0156.

Web: www.ygacoustics.com.



YG Acoustics Anat Reference II Professional loudspeaker

ERIC SWANSON

You're Camembert

The Anat Reference II Professional (\$107,000/pair) is a modular loudspeaker consisting of three discrete modules: the Anat Reference Main Module (108 lbs), the Studio passive subwoofer (172 lbs), and the Professional powered subwoofer (400W, 160 lbs). Yes, that's 440 lbs per channel. When you buy the AR II Pros, one thing you should expect is that your dealer install and position them in your listening room.

For all of the details on this loudspeaker, go to YGA's website, www.ygacoustics.com; here, I'll list a few of the highlights. Each YGA module is machined from aircraft-grade 6061 T651 aluminum; the front baffles of the Anat-series speakers are made of a "ballistic-grade" alloy of aluminum and titanium. Geva claims that this compound is stiffer and stronger than other aluminum alloys, and offers "faster propagation of sound and resonance evacuation." The Anat Reference's crossover uses a proprietary topology set at 1.75kHz, and offers a nominal load of 4 ohms (2.75 minimal). The Professional subwoofer modules that were supplied had the 800W class-

A/B amplifier module (a 400W version is available).

Geva insists that by using the stiffest material he can machine, he can make his speakers "virtually" resonance-free; he claims that they're the "deapest, stiffest, strongest, least diffractive, and acoustically most desirable" speakers made. Using a sophisticated computer program of his own design, Geva says he has achieved "ruler-flat frequency response," making the YGA speakers "the only loudspeakers optimized in both frequency and time domains."

One last thing: Geva claims that his loudspeakers are not *voiced*, or otherwise created with any "human bias." Seeing my shocked expression, he hastened to add that he *verifies* by human experience, but establishes the speaker's performance solely through measurements. Does that mean that if he produced a speaker that measured right but sounded wrong, he wouldn't change it? "I would question the measurement in that case and refine my methodology."

You're a Coolidge dollar

Setting up the Anat Reference II Pros

is not for wimps. They're shipped in six custom aluminum flight cases, leaving you with a curbside weight of nigh unto a ton. YGA has no dealer in New York City, so they shipped the AR II Pros to my house. Sales manager Dick Diamond arrived to help me schlepp them inside and assemble them. Did I get preferential treatment? *Hell* no—I can't imagine any customer who can buy +\$100k loudspeakers winding up on the heavy end of a 172-lb subwoofer or having to clean and jerk a 108-lb Anat Reference to its mounting height of 5.5' atop the Studio woofer module which in turn sits atop the Professional woofer module. On the other hand, I did get a good look inside the Professional subwoofer—it needs to be partially disassembled on-site so that it can be rigidly bolted to the Studio. (No such disassembly is required to bolt the Anat to the Studio; their rail systems provide solid connections, and are then bolted solidly together.) The end result is a single rigid unit for each channel. Final adjustments in focus are accommodated by use of floor spikes of different size, a process best left to last: once you spike 'em, the YGAs aren't

MEASUREMENTS

I measured the YG Acoustics Anat Reference II Professional's behavior mainly using DRA Labs' MLSSA system with a calibrated DPA microphone and an Earthworks Zero Distortion preamplifier.

Because of the bulk and mass of the two woofer sections, I could perform a complete set of acoustics measurements only on the 108-lb upper-frequency Main Module. The woofer measurements were performed in situ in Wes Phillips' listening room, as was my reading of the speakers' spatially averaged response. For these measurements I used SMUG Software's FuzzMeasure 2 running on an Apple PowerBook, in conjunction

with a Metric Halo ULN-2 FireWire audio interface and a calibrated Earthworks QTC-40 microphone.

The Anat Reference II's voltage sensitivity was significantly higher than average, at an estimated 90.1dB(B)/2.83V/m, though it is a little lower than the specified 92dB. The impedance is specified as 4 ohms, with a 2.7 ohm minimum. However, while our sample was basically a 4 ohm design, the magnitude did drop to almost 2 ohms in the mid-treble—which is why WP felt the tubed VTL amplifiers lacked sparkle—and below 2 ohms above 25kHz (fig.1). The phase angle also varies widely, and the combinations of 4 ohms magnitude and -53° capacitive angle at 110Hz, and 4.8 ohms and -46° at 2.4kHz, mandate the use of a power amplifier that can deliver unrestricted amounts of current. As the Main Module is not fed from a crossover when used with the woofer modules, the former magnitude/phase combination will be unaffected.

The upper (passive) woofer module's impedance (not shown) featured a minimum value of 3 ohms at 200Hz, again requiring use with an amplifier capable of providing high currents. Of course, when used in the Reference II Professional, the upper woofer is driven by the amplifier housed in the lower woofer module, so that will not be a concern.

While the passive woofer module's impedance plot (not shown) indicated the presence of some midrange resonances, those in fig.1 are free from the discontinuities that would suggest the presence of cabinet resonances. Indeed, investigating the vibrational behavior of

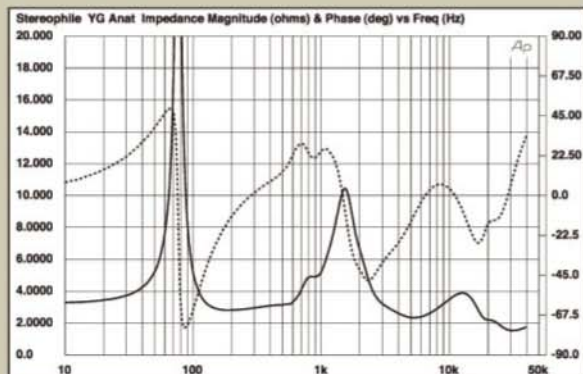


Fig.1 YGA Anat Reference II Main Module, electrical impedance (solid) and phase (dashed). (2 ohms/vertical div.)

going anywhere.

At this point, we ran into a snag. Dick Diamond asked me for two identical pairs of speaker cables—one for the biwired Anat, one for the Studio subwoofer (the Professional sub was hooked up with balanced interconnect). Well, geez, even audio interconnects (this one, at any rate) don't have two identical pairs of expensive speaker cable just lying around. We compromised on a pair of Kimber Monocle jumpers to connect the Anat Studio's binding posts to the amplifier output posts on the Professional module.

At first, I'd assumed that Diamond's insistence on an ultra-high-quality 6' length of speaker cable was pickiness, but as I continued to listen to the AR II Pros, I discovered that they could reveal extremely small differences—sometimes surprising ones. Any setup tweaks you

might normally perform will pay huge dividends. Ayre Myrtle wood blocks under the Ayre K-XR preamplifier? *Huge*. Cable dressing? Ditto.

And cables themselves? Puh-*leeze*—let's not even go there. One afternoon, VTL's

hear little difference, possibly none at all. *Au contraire*—the bass was audibly better integrated with the rest of the audioband. And another of my certainties bit the dust.

AS I CONTINUED TO LISTEN TO THE AR II PROS, I DISCOVERED THAT THEY COULD REVEAL EXTREMELY SMALL DIFFERENCES—SOMETIMES SURPRISING ONES.

Luke Manley, my friend Jeff Wong, and I were playing silly audiophile tricks. We substituted Shunyata Research Python Helix Alpha AC cables for the stock pair feeding the Anat Professional's powered subwoofers. I expected to

As the French would say, "de trop"

I initially auditioned the Anat Reference II Professionals with the VTL TL-6.5 line-level preamplifier driving my reference Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista

measurements, continued

the metal enclosure's panels revealed an almost entirely nonresonant behavior: the only mode I could find with an accelerometer was on the side panel at 652Hz, but

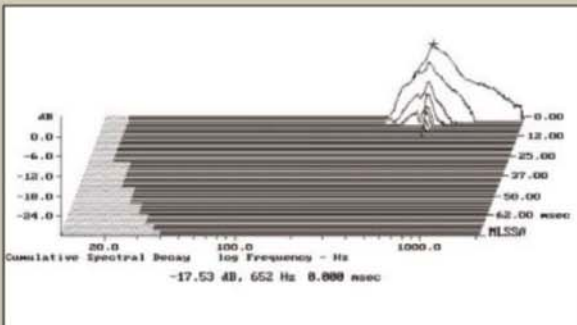


Fig.2 YGA Anat Reference II Main Module, cumulative spectral-decay plot.

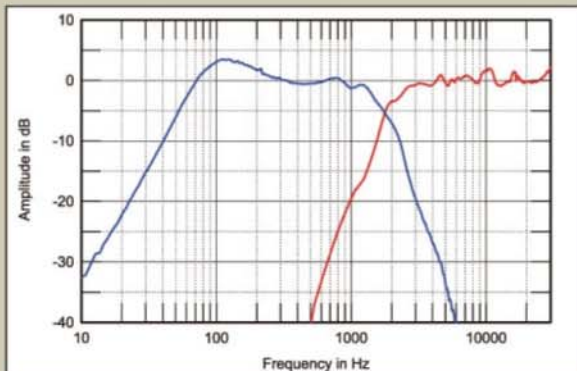


Fig.3 YGA Anat Reference II Main Module, acoustic crossover on tweeter axis at 50°, corrected for microphone response, with nearfield response of woofer (blue) plotted below 300Hz.

was well down in level (fig.2). It is also high enough in frequency that it will not have any audible consequences.

Fig.3 shows the individual responses of the Anat Main Module's tweeter (red trace) and woofers (blue), spliced to the woofer's nearfield output below 300Hz. The latter's peak at 3dB in the upper bass is entirely due to the nearfield measurement condition. The satellite's woofer tuning is therefore maximally flat, with a -6dB frequency of 75Hz, the same as that of the magnitude peak in the impedance plot (fig.1). When used on its own, the Anat Main Module may well sound a little light in the bass. Higher in frequency in fig.3, the crossover can be seen to be set at 1750Hz, as specified, with symmetrical acoustic slopes close to 18dB/octave. Both the tweeter and the twin woofers are impressively flat within their passbands.

On the left of fig.4 are shown the nearfield responses of the bottom, powered (Professional) woofer module

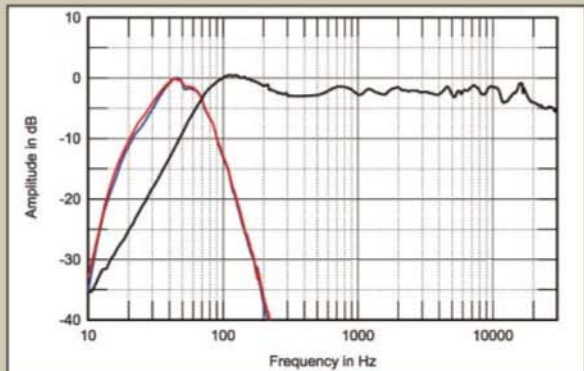


Fig.4 YGA Anat Reference II, anechoic response on tweeter axis at 50°, averaged across 30° horizontal window and corrected for microphone response (black), with nearfield responses of upper (Studio) woofer (blue) and lower (Professional) woofer (red), with Main Module woofer response plotted below 300Hz (black).

300 power amp, with my Ayre C-5xc universal disc player as a source. After a week or so, Luke Manley dropped off a pair of VTL MB-450 II monoblocks, and I inserted those in the system. The VTLs added a dollop of slam down below, but I began to question the lack of sparkle on top—especially after jazz bassist extraordinaire Jerome Harris dropped by one day and gave them a listen. “Um, are they a tad light on the overtones?” he asked. He continued listening attentively. “No, there’s lots of detail, after all.”

But I knew what he meant. The detail was there, but it didn’t float—whether in triode or pentode mode. I went back to the Nu-Vista, and there the sparkle was again. John Atkinson later dropped off a pair of Parasound Halo JC 1 monoblocks, and *that* was a match made in heaven: humongous slam, with

such sweet, extended highs that I like to die, as we say down south. The point here isn’t that the AR II Pros were so darned good at letting me hear differences among components (although they were), but that they weren’t a particularly good match for tube output sections, even such superb ones as VTLs—probably something to do with where that 2.75 ohm drop is located.

The first thing I noticed about the Anat References was how completely effortless music sounded—all music, whether chamber music, large orchestral showpieces, or kick-ass rock’n’roll. When I listened to Bobby Hutcherson’s vibes on “Mirrors,” from *The Kicker* (CD, Blue Note 21437), the harmonic overtones floated on a springy cushion of air—and they just never died. Joe Henderson’s tenor sax was adrift in its own pneumatic cushion, and the dialog

between Hutcherson in the left channel and Henderson in the right was as intimate as a whisper. You want a speaker that’s sensitive to nuance? You’ll love the Anat Reference II Professional.

In “Feather,” from Eric Dolphy’s *Out There* (CD, New Jazz/OJC OJCCD-023), Dolphy’s alto sax floated above Ron Carter’s bowed cello and George Duvivier’s pizzicato bass—and all three were life-sized. When Dolphy breaks out of the dreamy, mournful-sounding A section of the piece, his alto leaps aloft into an outburst of birdsong punctuated by Duvivier’s deep, deep sauntering (it ain’t exactly walking) bass line. Golly gee, the AR II Pros reminded me of how alive Dolphy’s music still sounds, 45 years after his death. Most high-end speakers can do that, but the YGAs made it sound freshly minted.

“Only Then,” from Jerome Harris’s *Rendezvous* (CD, Stereophile

(red trace) and the upper, passive (Studio) woofer module (blue), driven by the amplifier in the lower module. (The crossover settings were those chosen by Wes Phillips rather than the ones YGA’s Dick Diamond had used when he set up the speakers in WP’s room.) Despite the different enclosure shapes, the two woofer modules offered identical frequency responses, both being down 10dB at 20Hz. The upper woofer module’s impedance plot suggests that the sealed-box loading is tuned to the relatively high frequency of 45Hz, which in turn suggests that YGA is using equalization to extend the module’s output below resonance. While peaks were evident in both woofer modules’ responses at the frequencies of the midrange peaks in the impedance plot, the crossover suppresses these to more than 40dB below the reference level, in which case they should have no audible consequences. The crossover, as adjusted by WP and allowing for the nearfield boost in the satellite’s output, is set to 75Hz, with asymmetrical slopes. The Main Module’s

frequency response, averaged across a 30° horizontal window centered on the tweeter axis (fig.4, black) is extraordinarily flat. Enough said!

The Anat Reference II’s horizontal dispersion is shown in fig.5. Other than a very slight off-axis flare between 5 and 7kHz, the contour lines in this graph are evenly spaced, and the output increasingly but gently slopes down in the highs with increasing off-axis angle, which is textbook behavior. The short waveguide around the tweeter dome results in the drive-unit’s output rapidly dropping off-axis above 12kHz. Only younger listeners might be bothered by a lack of air in the Anat Reference’s in-room balance, however. The upper-frequency dispersion in the vertical plane (fig.6) is wide and even, but the use of spaced twin woofers results in severe upper-midrange suckouts more than 20° above or below the tweeter axis. For the most even balance, the listener’s ears do need to be pretty much on the tweeter axis.

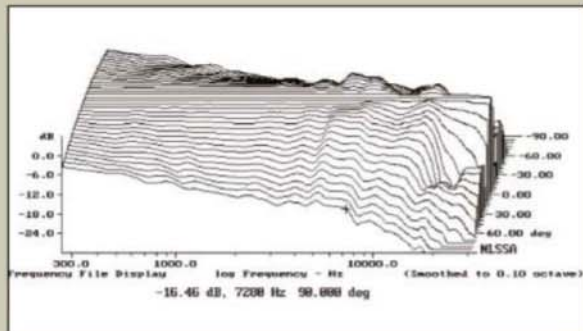


Fig.5 YGA Anat Reference II, lateral response family at 50°, normalized to response on tweeter axis, from back to front: differences in response 90–5° off axis, reference response, differences in response 5–90° off axis.

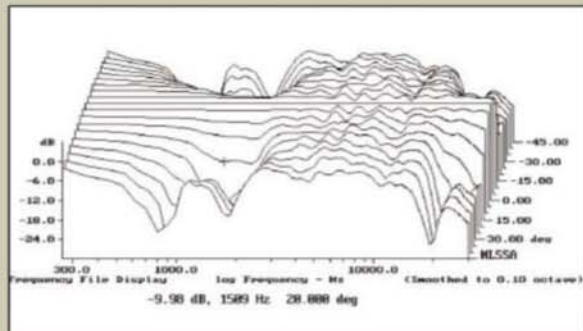


Fig.6 YGA Anat Reference II, vertical response family at 50°, normalized to response on tweeter axis, from back to front: differences in response 45–5° above axis, reference response, differences in response 5–45° below axis.

STPH013-2), is another track whose somber, expectant mood the YGAs seemed preternaturally capable of mining. Billy Drummond's vintage Zildjian cymbals and Gretsch drum kit had never sounded more distinctive to me—I'm sure that some of his most subtle, muted cymbal work had never been as apparent to me, even when I was present while JA mixed this recording. And the subtlest differences in the ways Steve Nelson caressed his vibes into life—well, wow.

I know this recording. My freaking name is on this disc. Hearing it through the AR II Pros was a revelation.

I'm a broken doll, a fol-de-rol, a blop

This is the part of a *Stereophile* review where the writer compares and contrasts the subject of the review with a similar known (that is to say, previously reviewed) component. In the case of

that would be one of the spectacular contenders at the top of Class A of *Stereophile's* "Recommended Components"—say, the Focal Utopia Be, B&W 801 Diamond, or Wilson Audio Specialties Alexandria. For a variety of reasons, but primarily because none of *Stereophile's*

I KNOW THIS RECORDING. MY FREAKING NAME IS ON THE DISK. HEARING IT THROUGH THE AR II PROS WAS A REVELATION.

the Anat Reference II Professional, New York-based writers had review

measurements, continued

Fig.7 shows how these quasi-anechoic measurements added up in WP's listening room, again with woofer settings by WP rather than Dick Diamond. The Anat Reference II Professional's spatially averaged response at the listening chair is superbly flat, falling within ± 1 dB limits from 300Hz to 7kHz. Above that region, the speaker's output smoothly slopes down, due to the increasing absorptivity of the room's furnishings at higher frequencies in conjunction with the fact that WP sits relatively distant

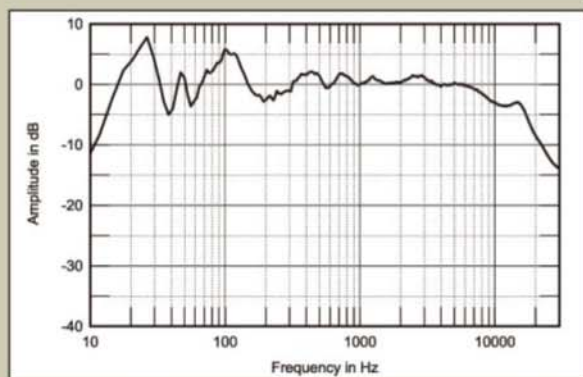


Fig.7 YGA Anat Reference II, spatially averaged, 1/6-octave response in WP's listening room.

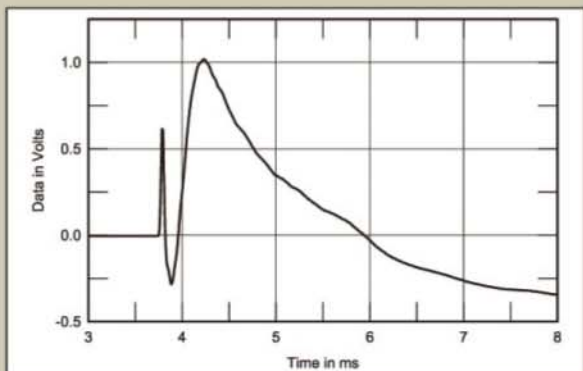


Fig.8 YGA Anat Reference II Main Module, step response on tweeter axis at 50° (5ms time window, 30kHz bandwidth).

from the speakers. Below 150Hz, the peaks and dips are the residual effects of the room's resonant modes that have not been eliminated by the spatial averaging. It appears that WP set the level of the powered woofer modules a little high, but he was probably doing so to get the midbass region in the correct balance with the upper frequencies, and accepting the effects of the consequent boosts in the upper and low bass. Certainly the low-bass boost is not going to be much of an issue, given how little energy there generally is below 30Hz in music, Kanye West and Bach's organ works notwithstanding.

In the time domain, the Anat Main Module's step response (fig.8) indicates that the tweeter and woofers are all connected with the same acoustic polarity. The decay of the tweeter's step is smoothly integrated with the start of the woofers' step, correlating with the excellent frequency-domain integration of their outputs shown in fig.4. As usual, the tweeter output leads that of the woofers. I haven't shown the woofer modules' step responses, as the polarity is adjustable with a rear-panel control. Overall, the cumulative spectral-decay plot is superbly clean (fig.9).

In its ads, YG Acoustics states that the Anat Reference II Professional is "The best loudspeaker on Earth. Period." Its impressive measured behavior doesn't detract from that claim.

—John Atkinson

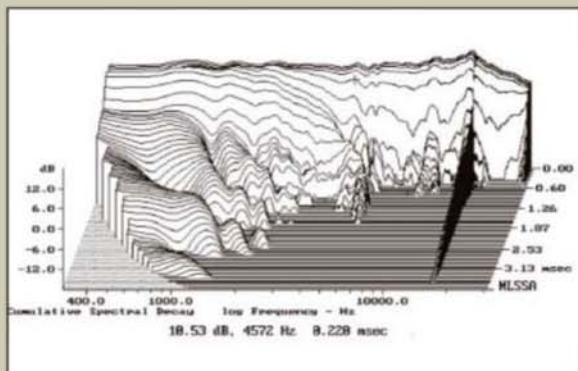


Fig.9 YGA Anat Reference II Main Module, cumulative spectral-decay plot on tweeter axis at 50° (0.15ms risetime).

samples of any of these to lend me, I was unable to do such a comparison. I've heard all of those speakers in some detail, and would certainly put the YGAs on the same plane, but we don't review "by memory" here, so I won't even attempt to compare any of them. I'd rather spend more time discussing more precisely why the AR II Pros so impressed me.

Erick Lichte, artistic director of the male choral group Cantus, and engineer John Atkinson graciously burned me a hi-rez version on DVD-A of Cantus's most recent release, the superb *While You Are Alive* (CD, Cantus CTS-1208). The YGAs floated the nine singers deep in the acoustic of Goshen College's Sauder Hall, anchoring the aural group portrait with astonishingly authoritative personifications of basses Timothy C. Takach and Tom McNichols. One thing that immediately leapt out at me was that this incarnation of Cantus was not the same as the first one I heard, in 2000. Only Takach, baritone Adam Reinwald, and tenor Michael Hanawalt remain from that group, and while the ensemble sound has remained true to the original group's principles (phenomenally stable bass lines, for instance), the YGAs enabled me to hear how different the sound of the current lineup is.

But most of all, the YGAs were so adept at presenting dynamic details that, instead of simply making the music come alive, they presented living, breathing musicians making music in my living room.

Speaking of dynamic detail, recordings that I normally might have found melodically interesting but dynamically two-dimensional, such as Yolanda Kondonassis' *Air: Music of Debussy & Takemitsu* (CD, Telarc CD-80694), were anything but. Let's face it, harps are pretty, but dynamically limited—at least, they come across that way on recordings. However, I've heard in concert halls, such as Carnegie or the Metropolitan Opera, how a single harp can cut through massed strings with amazing clarity. On record, not so much.

Through the YGAs, *Air* was a revelation. Kondonassis is the exception that tests the rule: her harp is expressive, incisive, and haunting. The *faux japonaise* of Debussy, and Toru Takemitsu's harder-edged real thing, make for a remarkable program; whether performing solo, or interacting with flutist Joshua Smith or the ensemble Oberlin

21, Kondonassis is the center of melodic and, yes, dynamic expression. Wow—a speaker that makes me reevaluate an entire instrument's capabilities.

Telarc's *SACD Sampler 6* (Telarc SACD-60013) proved a garden of wonders. Kudos to Telarc for so fiercely championing the SACD format. From the delicacy of guitarist David Russell's performance of *Malaqueña* to the explo-

music through them is not an exercise in "spot the recording flaws" (although you will). In recording after recording, I was impressed by how emotional my response to the music was. On one of the last days before I began writing this review, my wife and I were relaxing in the listening room, reading and idly listening to Ruggiero Ricci's *Paganini's Dreams* (CD, John Marks Recordings

THE YGAs WERE SO ADEPT AT PRESENTING DYNAMIC DETAILS THAT, INSTEAD OF SIMPLY MAKING THE MUSIC COME ALIVE, **THEY PRESENTED LIVING, BREATHING MUSICIANS MAKING MUSIC IN MY LIVING ROOM.**

sive orchestral and choral orgasm that is Michael Gandolfini's *The Garden of Cosmic Speculation*, the YGAs produced the goods, alternating scale and impact to match the performance. The *Adagio* of Bruckner's Symphony 5, performed by the Philharmonia Orchestra led by Benjamin Zander, was intense and massive, the soundstage so huge I could have walked into it and wandered around for an hour or so.

Lest you get the impression that *neutrality* is audiospeak for *lack of affect*, I must note that, while I have no doubt that the YGAs *do* measure ruler-flat, they are emphatically not what audiophiles like to call *clinical*. Listening to

JMR 11, now available from www.ArkivMusic.com—yippee!). Somewhere around Ricci's setting of Chopin's *Souvenir de Paganini*, we had essentially stopped reading and were listening in slack-jawed wonder at the violinist's gorgeously tone and the power of the music.

"That's lovely," my wife eventually commented. "Have I heard this before?"

"Not like this," I said. "Not quite like this."

But baby, if I'm the bottom, you're the top

Flaws? The YGA Anat Reference II Professional is freaking big. It doesn't like tube power amplifiers. A pair of them won't blend into the décor—although the silver ones I auditioned faded into the background about as much as two 440-lb, nearly 8'-tall loudspeakers can. And they're *expensive*. Those aren't complaints. They're just facts.

In building the Anat Reference II Professional, YG Acoustics invests a lot of money in research, materials, and labor. You might not be able to afford them (me neither), but it's hard to argue that they're overpriced. Could you be satisfied with a less expensive loudspeaker? Sure you could. I could, too—in fact, sometime in the near future, I'll have to. But in the meantime, when I want to hear what a recording *really* sounds like, I'll want to hear it through the Anat Reference II Professionals.

Like my pappy used to say, it ain't braggin' if you can actually do it. ■

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

DIGITAL SOURCES Ayre C-5xe universal player, Ayre CX-7e CD player.

PREAMPLIFIERS Ayre K-XR, Parasound Halo JC 2, VTL TL-6.5 Signature.

POWER AMPLIFIERS Moscode 402au, Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista 300, Parasound Halo JC 1, VTL MB-450 II.

CABLES Interconnect: AudioQuest William E. Low Signature, Shunyata Research Aeros (single-ended, RCA), Stealth Metacarbon (balanced).

Speaker: AudioQuest William E. Low Signature, Shunyata Research Aeros, Stealth Dream. AC: Shunyata Research Python Helix Alpha.

ACCESSORIES Ayre Myrtle wood blocks; Ayre L-5xe line filter; Furutech eTP-609 distribution box; Furutech RDP panels, RealTraps Mini & Mondo Traps. —Wes Phillips

YG Acoustics Anat Reference II Professional

Editor:

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Wes Phillips, John Atkinson, and the staff at *Stereophile* magazine. The efforts involved in evaluating, writing, measuring, and certainly lifting, are greatly appreciated. Reviewing products in the high-end category is not a trivial assignment; it's a ton of work. We have long been fans of the writings of Wes Phillips; the experience and care evident in his reviews have been beneficial to many an audiophile. John Atkinson's considerable talents and knowledge have given our industry a true sense of community.

We appreciated Wes Phillips' comment that he did not receive preferential treatment by our visit. With the purchase of any Anat Reference II Professional speaker, we are delighted, upon request, to provide personalized setup at no charge. We also run an analysis of the customer's listening space to optimize positioning and settings.

Paramount in our design philosophy is a belief in the correlation of science and performance. We fully believe that true technical precision can deliver sound that is

perfect in the way it conveys musical emotion and the excitement of a live performance. It is an honor for us that a person of Wes Phillips' experience found music's true emotions, as well as transparency and detail, in our loudspeakers. With this honor we are reaffirmed in our technical direction.

One of the beauties of having an active subwoofer is that it can be adjusted to the room's acoustics. In the bass region, the anechoic response and the in-room balance are not one and the same. The lower-limit frequency response noted in the review (-10dB at 20Hz) was aptly selected by Wes Phillips in order to achieve a flat balance in his specific room (as is evident in the in-room measurement performed by John Atkinson). We would like to emphasize that the bass is fully adjustable to achieve a flat response to below 20Hz in any room; *i.e.*, the speaker is completely full-range. It should also be noted that while we recommend the active version of our subwoofers (room adjustability), they are also available in passive configurations for those who would like to use their own outdoor amplification.

A real benefit of the YG Acoustics modular design is the ability to purchase

the speaker in stages, thus reducing the required initial investment and making the speakers accessible to a larger audience. The Anat Reference II Main Modules can be used as standalone high-performance compact monitors. The Anat Reference II Studio, a medium-sized floorstander, consists of the Main Modules atop Studio Subs. The addition of the third module, the Professional Sub, creates the flagship Anat Reference II Professional. This is the configuration that Wes Phillips reviewed.

Thanks again to Wes Phillips for mentioning the investment "of money in research, materials, and labor" involved in making our speakers. Yoav Geva and the team would like to invite anyone interested in our speakers to contact us for a visit to our factory, where you can witness firsthand what goes into the production of our speakers. Plus, we enjoy the diversion of having a nice chat with a fellow music lover.

Thanks again to *Stereophile*, and especially to Wes Phillips and John Atkinson, for all their efforts and extraordinary talents.

Dick Diamond,
Director of Sales & Marketing
YG Acoustics

equally full-bodied and free of artifice, particularly his sibilants. The dramatic "I'll Be Your Lover, Too" was *deep* and delicate, with particularly fine microdynamic acoustic guitar shadings and overall articulation. The 16/44.1 CD version was very good, but not nearly as dimensional and transparent as the 24/192 file.

In an A/B comparison, the file and

the original LP were very, very close but, not surprisingly, not identical. How could they be? The file was generated by running the Manley Steelhead's variable output across the room through about 16' of unbalanced/balanced cable to my computer, then playing it via an equal length of balanced cable running back to the darTZeel

preamp. But the original LP signal went from the Steelhead's fixed output through about 1m of TARA Labs Zero interconnect to the darTZeel.

No, the sounds weren't identical, but they were awfully close; the digitized version lacked just a *touch* of body and warmth and added only a bit of brightness. However, the digital file had its own strengths, brought about what sounded like the tiniest of omissions. Believe me, you'd love either of these albums played by my Continuum Audio Labs turntable, Cobra tonearm, and Castellon stand. Next up will be some recordings made with a microphone preamplifier and Pure Vinyl providing the EQ. *That* will be interesting.

Now, if there were a way to get Pure Vinyl 24-bit/192kHz files onto the Sooloos music server, with the album artwork and the touch-screen accessibility played back using a super-high-quality DAC in close proximity to the rest of the audio system, that would really be something. Meridian bought Sooloos last December; might Meridian's Bob Stuart be thinking what I'm thinking?

- 1) Bob Dylan, *Tell Tale Signs*, Columbia/Legacy 180gm LPs (4)
- 2) Lou Reed, *Berlin: Live at St Ann's Warehouse*, Matador 180gm LPs (2)
- 3) Deerhunter, *Microcastle/Weird Era Continued*, Kranky LP
- 4) Rickie Lee Jones, *Pop Pop*, Geffen/ORG 180gm LPs (2)
- 5) Death Cab for Cutie, *Narrow Stairs*, Barsuk/Atlantic 180gm LP & 7" 45
- 6) The Byrds, *Live at Royal Albert Hall 1971*, Sundazed 150gm LPs (2)

- 7) Alejandro Escovedo, *Real Animal*, Back Porch/Manhattan LPs (2)
- 8) David Grubbs, *An Optimist Notes the Dusk*, Drag City LP
- 9) Laura Nyro, *New York Tendaberry*, Columbia/Legacy/Pure Pleasure 180gm LP
- 10) Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Tamla/Speakers Corner 180gm LPs (2) & 7" EP

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