

The YG Acoustics Anat II Studio

A Wealth of Information

By Jeff Dorgay

There are probably about 20 or so serious speakers in the \$70,000 - \$200,000 range that receive the most attention in the HiFi press, and these could be accurately described as "destination" speakers. I think the chances are good that if you are flying in this rarefied air, these speakers could very well be the last set of speakers you buy. I know we've all told our wives that story, but when you get to this level, you should get it all – big dynamics, spot-on tonality and resolution in spades. In short, a mega speaker should take you somewhere you've never been.


Even if you've only paid attention to the mega-speaker world peripherally for the past few years, you've probably seen the ads proclaiming YG Acoustics to be "the world's best speakers." How many times have we heard this before?

Their flagship Anat II Professional carries a \$107,000 pricetag, but the model we're reviewing here is the Studio, priced at \$70,000 per pair. The difference between the Studio and the Professional is the addition of a second powered woofer cabinet in the Professional, with an additional 400 watts worth of amplifier power. YG claims that both speakers have a very similar frequency response, but the larger speaker is intended for a larger room and slightly higher ultimate SPL.

I've chosen to concentrate on the Studio version, as the Professional already has had substantial coverage and probably is too large for most rooms. I also feel that combining the Studio with a great amplifier and source will produce a pretty amazing system for slightly more than the price of a pair of Professionals. But hey, if you've got a big room, and room on your AmEx Black Card, go all the way.

Off to the Factory

Last March, I made a pilgrimage to the YG factory in Arvada, Colorado, to see what they were up to and to have a cursory listen of their product. The sound I'd heard at the various HiFi shows had always been quite good, but never what I would have come away calling the "world's best." In all fairness to YG, I've never heard *anything* at a HiFi show that I'd consider the "world's best," and that puts most of these speaker manufacturers at a disadvantage. *(continued)*



The speaker cabinets are machined from billet sheets of aircraft aluminum, and the front panels, which are about two inches thick, are machined from "ballistic-grade" aluminum.

People come to the shows to be wowed, and it's very difficult in that environment. However, I was very curious to meet the man who made these claims.

I was indeed impressed with what I saw (and heard). YG is one of the few manufacturers in North America to possess a five-axis CNC milling machine, so it has the necessary hardware to build their all-aluminum cabinets in house. A quick trip to the YG website reveals an extensive tour of the factory and assembly of the speakers.

Company principal Yoav Geva has an interesting past. As well as having a strong electronics background, he's always been a machinist as well. "I always felt that if I combined two areas of expertise, I would be much more marketable when I entered the workforce," he told me over lunch at our first meeting.

The speaker cabinets are machined from billet sheets of aircraft aluminum, and the front panels, which are about two inches thick, are machined from "ballistic-grade" aluminum. Geva explained that this material is used on the nose cones of missiles and is even more rigid than the stuff making up the rest of the cabinet. A slight knuckle rap on the front or the side reveals an incredibly inert cabinet.

The speakers are available in silver or black anodized finish, with custom colors available upon request. Our test pair came in silver, which I found attractive and understated. All drivers are covered with spider-like grilles that stay in place magnetically. You'll either love or hate these, and I was in the latter camp. Take the grilles off, gorgeous. Fit and finish on the test speakers were exceptional, with all the edges smooth and tight. Most visitors to my studio really enjoyed the stark, industrial design of the Anat's; even the wives of a few friends commented on how well the YG's matched the aesthetic of my Burmester gear.



Setup

Despite the speakers weighing about 270 pounds each, thanks to the woofer and mid/tweeter modules being separate, they are much easier to setup than the spec sheet might suggest. I used a set of thick nylon pads under each speaker to move them around to the optimum position. When sales manager Dick Diamond arrived, he confirmed that I had indeed found the sweet spot.

The Anat's come packaged with two sets of spikes, a large pair that elevates the speakers about three inches off the ground and a set that elevates them only about an inch off the ground. After some experimentation, we decided on the shorter spikes on the supplied nylon pucks. This brought the last percentage of image focus and bass tightness to the presentation.

Because the woofers are powered, you will need to run one pair of speaker cables from your power amplifier to the mid/tweeter cabinet and a pair of interconnects (RCA or XLR) to the woofer cabinet. *(continued)*

This will require that you have a preamplifier with a second set of variable level outputs. My Burmester 011 offers a set of balanced XLR outputs and a pair of RCA outputs which have 6db lower gain than the balanced outputs, which required cranking up the levels on the Anat's woofers almost to their maximum.

When I switched this combination with my other reference power amplifiers that have RCA inputs (using the higher output XLR connection to the Anat's), I was able to move the level control back to the middle of the range. For those of you with a Burmester 911 power amplifier, a quick call to the factory revealed that there is an internal setting on the 911 to adjust the gain and optimize it for use in a situation like this.

The remaining adjustments on the back of the woofer cabinet control crossover frequency, level, phase and EQ to fine-tune the woofers to your system and room.

Overall, the YG's were easy to set up and only required minimal adjustments to dial in completely. Thanks to the wide dispersion of the speakers, they will provide great results even when not perfectly optimized. This is not a fussy speaker. All of the Anat speakers are accompanied by a visit from a trained YG representative, so that they are optimally set up. This is a nice touch, as it should be when making this level of purchase.

How do we define the best?

If you've read any of the charts and graphs that YG and Stereophile have produced, you know

the Anat's certainly measure up well. Geva has developed an algorithm that has allowed him to optimize his crossover network for flat frequency response and phase coherence, which he feels is the key to the heart of all YG speakers. The drivers are sourced from

I was constantly surprised when listening to familiar recordings at the extra layer of detail that was present.

Scan Speak, built to his proprietary specs. The engineering time spent on the bench certainly contributes to the highly natural sound of these speakers.

On one level, the world's best speaker might be the one that reveals the most music in the most natural fashion, and if this were our only criterion, then the YG Anat may well be one of the world's best speakers. It does a number of things very right. Geva and company definitely achieved their goal in terms of midrange clarity and an immersive soundstage. As someone who loves the panel sound, I must admit that this is the first speaker I've had the opportunity to audition that offers the gigantic, walkthrough soundfield that my reference MartinLogan CLX speakers provide, albeit at three times the price.

The Anat also does an excellent job of providing lifelike dynamics, which I feel is an essential part of creating a musical experience. Thanks to their relatively high-sensitivity and powered woofers, you won't need a huge amplifier to achieve high sound-pressure lev-

els. The Studio was a perfect fit for my 16 x 20 room and would play as loud and deep as I needed them to go without using my Gotham subwoofer. Those of you needing even more output can step up to the Professional with its additional powered woofer cabinet. This is

also a handy option in case you find yourself in a larger room at some point, just add another pair of woofers.

The Sound

From the first time you press play on your CD player or drop the needle on the turntable, you'll be plenty impressed with the Anats, as I was. They offer a big sound and have exceptional resolution. This was what grabbed me instantly about the speakers: they seemed to reproduce more fine detail than anything I've ever experienced. Cymbals faded out a little further, the bass had just a little bit more texture, etc., etc. The Anat really does a great job of offering this much detail without being harsh, grainy or feeling like the HF response is "tipped up" to get the detail.

As I mentioned earlier, the Anat's threw a huge soundstage in all three dimensions, almost to the point of sounding like a good 5.1 system, but with only two speakers. I was constantly surprised when listening to familiar recordings at the extra layer of detail that was present.

Tonality was excellent throughout, and I felt the Anats did not embellish or subtract from anything I listened to, whether the music was electronic or acoustic. Mids were gorgeous, highs very detailed without crossing the line of harshness, and the bass was extended and powerful. At the factory settings, the bass was slightly overdamped for my taste, but a little experimentation with the subwoofer controls allowed me the freedom to adjust the bass to taste. However, it's important to note that I tend to like bass a little bit more on the rich side of the spectrum, so this is more personal preference. A number of audiophile buddies that listened to the Anat's preferred the bass performance at the factory settings.

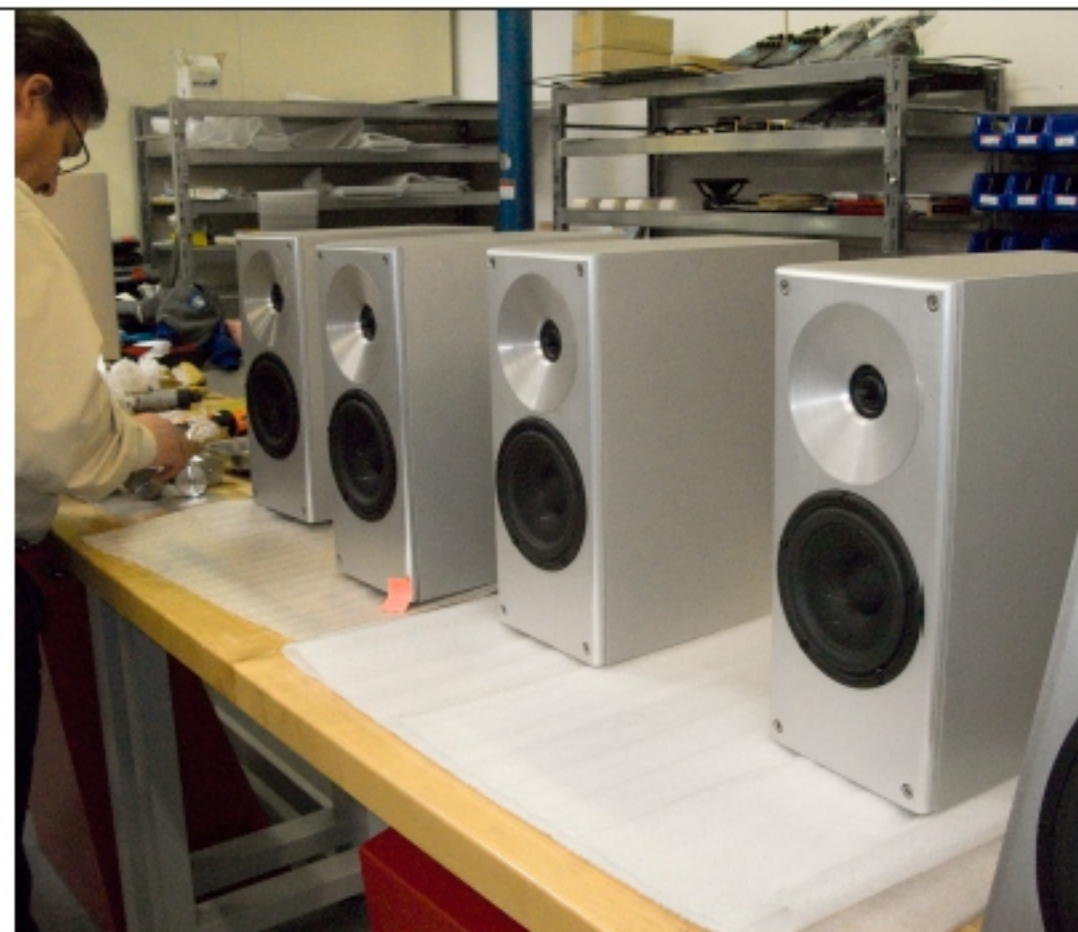
In the end, being a panel sound junkie, the three-dimensionality and the clarity of these speakers was what kept me so intrigued. I could easily write another page describing specific passages from a long list of records. But suffice to say, everything I played, and



After a couple of hours, I wasn't fatigued from harshness. But the level of detail that these speakers revealed was so exciting that I found myself somewhat exhausted from my brain processing so much information. Excited but exhausted. Much like a Ducati Desmosedici RR motorcycle, (another great way to spend \$70,000), the Anat's are a thrill ride that can take you to places you've never been. But it can also rattle your kidneys on the way to lunch on a less-than-perfect road. It took a few long listening sessions to get used to the extra information at my disposal, and again like a very high performance vehicle, I soon became acclimated to the resolution these speakers were capable of.

This extra helping of resolution made it easy to use the Anat's to evaluate other components. I could stick a wad of chewing gum underneath the shelf that holds my CD player and hear the difference. So these speakers are an excellent tool in that sense. Much like with the recordings, the price you pay is that the YG's will only give their best when paired with the world's best electronics. But I'm guessing that if you have 70 large to spend on a pair of speakers, you have a room and system to match, so this would be a moot point.

Even though the Anat's possess a high (92db/1watt) sensitivity, they are not terribly tube friendly, at least not friendly to modestly powered tube amplifiers. I tried my usual compliment of amplifiers from ARC, McIntosh, CJ and Prima Luna with not terribly good results; in most cases I got weak, rolled-off treble. The Prima Luna Dialogue 7 monoblocks did the best with their two-ohm taps, but they just didn't have enough resolution to make me happy. The sound was warm and romantic, but at this point, you're throwing out most of the resolution offered by the Anat's. I did not have a chance to use any higher-powered tube amplifiers during the review period. If you are a tube lover, I would suggest a demo with your amplifier specifically before making the purchase. *(continued)*



The YG Acoustics Anat Studio
MSRP: \$70,000/pr.

MANUFACTURER
YG Acoustics

www.yg-acoustics.com

PERIPHERALS

Analog Sources Spiral Groove SG-2 w/Triplanar arm and Lyra Skala cartridge, TW-Acoustic Raven Two w/ SME iV.Vi arm and Clearaudio DaVinci cartridge, SME iV.Vi arm and Dynavector XV-1s cartridge

Digital Sources Naim CD555, Wadia 781 SE, Simaudio Moon 750, Sooloos Music server

Preamplifier Burmester 011

Power Amplifier Burmester 911MK.3, McIntosh MC 1.2KW's, Simaudio W-7M's, darTZeel CTH-8550

Cable Shunyata Aurora interconnects, Shunyata Stratos SP speaker cable

Power Running Springs Maxim and Dmitri power conditioner, RSA HZ power cords, RSA Mongoose power cords, Shunyata Python CX power cords

The \$70,000 Question

This is usually the point in the review where the reviewer makes the statement, "Are these speakers worth 70 thousand dollars? I don't know because I can't afford 70 thousand dollar speakers." Though I actually own a six-figure HiFi system, it's still hard to talk about value at this level. The YG Acoustics Anat Studio is certainly built to the same level of quality as their competition with the same – and sometimes much higher – pricetag, so on that level, they are definitely worth the price asked.

While I haven't heard every pair of \$40,000 of speakers on the market, I've heard quite a few and in my experience, I haven't heard a \$40,000 speaker offer up the level of resolution that the Anat's do, so in this respect, I feel the pricetag is justified.

The remaining questions would be: do you like the aluminum finish, and do you have a system worthy of speakers that can deliver this level of performance? If the answers to these two questions are yes, the YG Anats are a must-listen. ●