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'13 MAILLONS DE RÊVE'

ENSEMBLE ONDIVA SILVER



VINCENT COUSIN

Their modest volume and unusual appearance do not necessarily work in their favour. Once listened to attentively these preconceptions are overturned and doubts regarding the performance of a two-way system that is anything but conventional or musically banal dispelled. This result owes nothing to chance. Based in Aesch (Switzerland), Urs Wagner sees his Ensemble system as a coherent whole, from the source to the loudspeakers by way of the amplification. He does this by taking an interest in everything that cannot be seen but which helps to open up the music: on the one hand, dealing with the vibrations that affect the smooth running of the electronic circuits and loudspeakers; on the other, bringing all the electrical masses to the same potential and bringing them together at a single point. This includes a connection linking the two 18 cm bass-midrange drive units to the same common potential.



Speaking of the Ondivas, their designer refers to their sculpted shape, modelled to remove any marked directivity, as exhibited by a natural music source, freeing listening from the constraints of a one and only optimal listening position. Despite their apparent modesty, with an 18 cm driver in a reflex ported enclosure, combined with a 28 mm impregnated textile dome tweeter, the Ondiva "behave like large loudspeakers, particularly in terms of controlled bass extension, while excelling in precise reproduction of transients and 3D imaging", such is the promise. No fewer than a combination of seven different materials make up the cabinet. The tweeters are matched and the crossovers, on anti-vibration mounts, link the two drivers at 1'800Hz, 12dB/ octave, with inductors and Ensemble ProCap capacitors. The bandwidth extends from 38 Hz to 25 kHz (- 6 dB), and efficiency is 88.5 dB (8 ohm). The centrepiece is gold plated. With the top model, Ondiva Gold. the entire woofer diaphragm is gold plated. Finally, by their dynamic spring loaded design the Ondiva ARC speaker stands absorb resonances in tandem with excellent decoupling.

Listening

It took place in Paris at Volume Audio, using the Ensemble Massimo Fuoco hybrid integrated amp (see Diapason No 737) and the Soulnote Z-3/D-2/X-3 streamer/DAC/clock trio. The marriage is enhanced by Ensemble cables for both modulation and loudspeakers.

Space and depth, atmosphere and definition, just like at a concert

This is the third time I've listened to these loudspeakers, at three different times and in three different places, and the term "experience" is not over-stated, the dominant feeling is one of listening to music without fetters. Set up in medium to large rooms, or even very large rooms with varied acoustics, the Ondiva loudspeakers succeed each time in freeing themselves from the conditions to which they are subjected by imposing their three-dimensional reproduction with an exploration of the spectrum, including the bass, that their appearance would never suggest. A real cocktail of depth and calm, of refinement and quality in the definition of timbres and ambiances, in the meticulous rendition of changes in transient regimes and of recording locations, recreating all manner of different climates perfectly rendered by the Ondiva. Apart from the extreme bass, the bass sensation is there, the balance with the top of the spectrum is preserved each time and the absence of boxiness staggering. Listening to Ligeti's Requiem by the WDR Sinfonieorchester and the Rundfunkchor Köln with the SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart conducted by Peter Eötvös (BMC Records) will remain engraved in our memories forever. The intensity and veracity of the performance are staggering. An immersion in the real.

Thanks to Daniel Hamou for his availability.