

LISTENING ROOM



JAS OSCAR SPEAKERS

There's Chinese, and then there's Chinese. Hong Kong left the British Empire for China a decade ago, but its industrial culture remains distinct from that of the mainland even today. Take the case of hi-fi. There are lots of great-looking Chinese loudspeakers

today, but these are...very clearly New Territories.

Particular care has been taken with the enclosures. Notice the sculpted sides, which hint at their thickness and at the mass of internal bracing. What you might not notice is that the speakers are not rectangular. They are wider

at the rear than at the front, broader at the bottom than at the top. The solid aluminum supports, anodized in flawless black, would be the envy of many a competitor with upscale ambitions. Are those WBT binding posts at the rear? No, though they are a convincing knockoff. There are just two of them, not four, which suggests a series crossover, which cannot be biwired.

As for that lacquered finish... Well, China needs no lessons from the rest of the world on *that*.

JAS refers to the Oscar as a "two and a half-way" system, which we take to mean that the two woofer-midrange drivers are not simply connected in parallel but play an overlapping role. The tweeter, shown in closeup on the next page, is a double aluminum ribbon, covering the range from 2.5 kHz to a claimed 60 kHz.

We gave the Oscars several days of break-in time, even though we were told they were not brand new, and then set them up in Our Omega room. Initially we placed them exactly the way our Reference 3a Suprema reference speakers are placed. We put on the first of half a dozen LPs, Walton's tone poem *Façade* (Reference Recordings RR-16) and had an initial listen.

They didn't sound right, with a little too much top end and not really enough bottom. Worse, they seemed lifeless, with all of the good humor sucked out of the performance. The tone was dry and overly analytical, which is of course not the way real music sounds.

Perhaps backing the Oscars up closer to the wall would help. We did and then we tried the same recording again. At this point they were alarmingly close to the rear wall, and they didn't seem happy being there.

At Albert's suggestion we pulled them forward again, several centimetres *closer* than our reference speakers had been. At the same time we pulled them farther apart. Because of the angled placement in our room, that had the effect of positioning them even farther from the rear wall. We were clearly on