



electric bass, kick drum — sounding as good as they get. You want detail? These speakers deliver it. As with the other recordings, the distortion was noticeable...for its virtual absence.

We were eager to see what the technical tests would reveal. Would we be surprised?

The major surprise can be seen in the frequency response curve shown above. The Oscar just doesn't measure the way it sounds with music. Between 63 Hz and 20 kHz, it has no deviation worse than ± 1.5 dB, except for a dip at 160 Hz that is a room mode. That is an impressive

performance, especially at the high levels we test at: 100 dB at one metre at a reference frequency of 1 kHz.

Subjectively the response goes way down to 16 kHz, but if you watch the results on an octave analyzer you can see that below 30 Hz the output is dominated by harmonics, not by the fundamental frequency from the generator. However the image at upper right shows a 30 Hz tone at reference level. It's not quite pure, but not many speakers can do as well. Incidentally, as we moved up the scale we heard a lot of stuff rattle alarmingly, but none of it in

or on the speaker itself. These things are well bolted together.

Well...what's going on here?

In a conflict between our ears and our instruments, the ears carry the day. We assumed there would be a gently rising top end in the tweeter, but in fact it is admirably flat. We stand by what we heard of course, but we withdraw the suggestion of simply dialing back the energy going to the tweeter. There's a difference between steady-state tests, reflected in our graph, and the very complex rapidly changing information that is music.

The Oscar is a wonderful speaker in many ways. Can it be tweaked to be perfect?



CROSSTALK

These aesthetically attractive speakers, seated on anodized aluminum supports that reek of robustness, seem to promise great moments of sonic pleasure. Would they keep their promise?

My expectations were entirely fulfilled. Impact, firm attacks, power, brio, a generous image, good depth, a vast dynamic palette, excellent definition, clear lyrics and inflections. If some highs are a touch shrill, the bottom end is full of richness: the bass drum, the tympani and the double bass have lots of weight. I liked the shine of the brass. The rhythm pulled me through an array of different emotions. True, female voices exhibited a zest of harshness, but *only* a zest.

Still, I know you don't want me to hide my true feelings. In one splendid musical selection, I felt as though a procession were advancing toward me, letting me hear from afar the faint sound of percussion and the subtlest of sounds, and then approaching

more and more toward a superb crescendo.

In short they were all there, those details that are still capable of surprising us, if only because loudspeakers of lesser talent hide them from us.

—Reine Lessard

In creating these superb-looking speakers, I can just imagine the intense emphasis on details that must have driven the designers. *Never enough*, they must have said. *Listen to that whisper*, to that intake of breath, how clear they sound now. *Let's have more of it*.

In so doing they achieved beauty with which you won't miss a thing. What am I saying, you'll probably hear what the recording folks *themselves* never heard.

But at the same time you'll miss something else, and it has to do with the beauty *within* the music. It starts with sounds being natural. Not just impressive, not extra sharp, just simple and natural. Don't *carve out* the

words, *sing* them.

On rapid percussion sections they shine, however. They have an assurance found only in the best speakers. Just tame the intensity of those highs, and they'll be great.

—Albert Simon

The list of qualities of these gorgeous loudspeakers is *very* long. Indeed, it has more qualities than anything else. The bottom end is at once solid and tight, the midrange is so clear it makes other speakers sound thick and distorted, and the highs... Well, the highs...

Actually the highs are beautiful as well, with a smoothness that contrasts with the artificial peakiness of many tweeters. To my ear there's a little too much of them, but what there is can only be called admirable.

Fix that, please. You're nine tenths of the way to a lopsided victory.

—Gerard Rejskind