JULY 2014

EDENA

Country of Origin: FRANCE

Reviewer: Srajan Ebaen
Financial Interests: click **here**
Source: 2TB iMac 27" quad-core with 16GB of RAM (AIFF) running OSX 10.8.2 and PureMusic 1.94g in hybrid memory play with pre-allocated RAM, Audirvana 2.01 in direct/integer mode 1, Metrum Hex, SOtM dX-USB HD with Super-clock upgrade & mBPS-d2s, AURALiC Vega, Apple iPod Classic 160 AIFF-loaded, Cambridge Audio iD100, Pure i20, Pro-Ject Dock Box S Digital, RWA-modifed Astell&Kern AK100
Preamplifier: Nagra Jazz, Bent Audio Tap-X, Esoteric C-03
Power & integrated amplifiers: FirstWatt S1 monos, SIT2; Crayon Audio CFA-1.2, Bakoon AMP-12R, Goldmund/Job 225, Gato DIA-250, *Clones 25i* [on loan], Aura Note Premier
Loudspeakers: soundkaos Wave 40, Boenicke Audio W5, German Physiks HRS-120, AudioSolutions Rhapsody 200, Zu Audio Submission, *Grand Cru Audio Horizon* [on review loan]
Cables: Complete Zu Event loom; KingRex uArt, Zu Event and Light Harmonic LightSpeed split USB cables; Tombo Trøn S/PDIF; Van den Hul AES/EBU; AudioQuest Diamond glass-fiber Toslink
Powerline conditioning: GigaWatt PF-2 + Vibex Two 1R on amps, Vibex Three 11R on front-end components
Equipment rack: Artesania Exoteryc double-wide three tier with optional glass shelf, Rajasthani hardwood rack for amps
Sundry accessories: Extensive use of Acoustic System Resonators, noise filters and phase inverters
Desktop system: iPod/AK100 digital transports, Aura Note Version 2, Gallo Strada II + TR-3D
Room size: Irregularly shaped 9.5 x 9.5m open floor plan combines the living/listening room, kitchen and office. Added to this space the speakers see the air volume of the entry hall and a long corridor plus the 2nd-storey 6 x 9.5m loft. Wood-panel ceiling slopes up to the loft. Parquet flooring. Lots of non-parallel surfaces ('vertical gable' windows, twin-angle ceiling, spiral staircase enclosure, fireplace enclosure). For a pictorial tour see **here**.
Review component retail in Europe (no VAT): starting at €6'500/pr depending on finish

Apertura at Munich HighEnd 2014

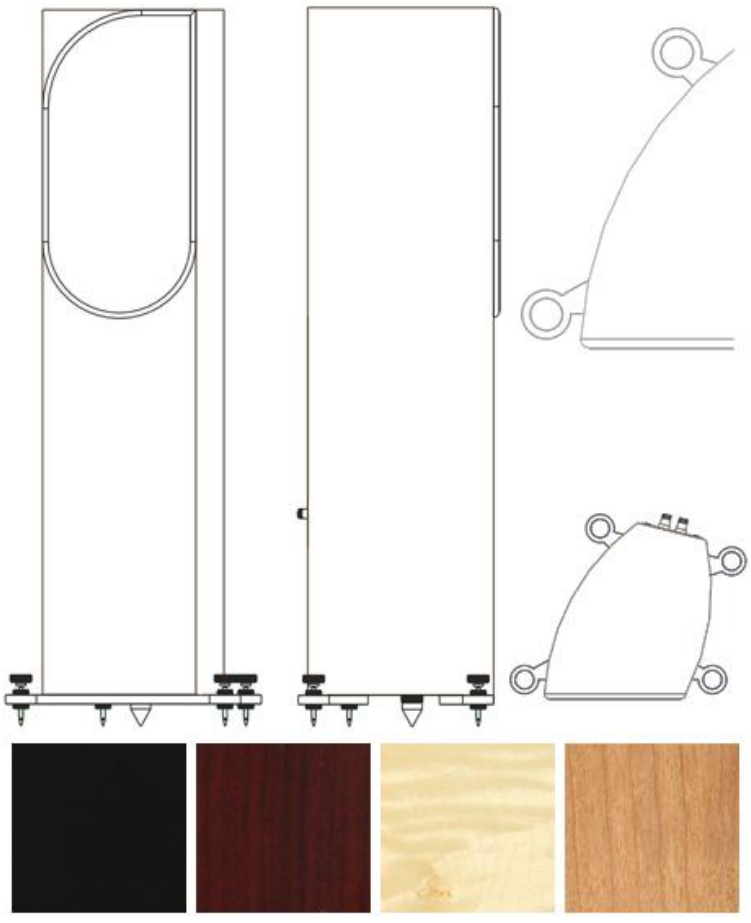
French speaker brand Apertura had been on my radar ever since Jefferson Torno delivered his €12'500/pr Grand Cru Audio **Horizon** speakers for review. That's because he and Apertura's Christian Yvon both use ribbon tweeters; favour two-ways; and exploit progressive crossovers. Yvon describes his as *dual resonant intermodulation minimization* aka DRIM filters. These multi-elliptic Cauer networks use independently adjustable ripple behaviour in both pass and stop bands. A triple transition slope begins at 6dB. Then it progresses to first 12dB then 24dB/octave steepness to net a stabilized rejection ratio of nearly minus 40dB. Prior to Apertura Yvon had co-designed with Georges Bernard the Goldmund Dialogue, Apologue and Epilogue speakers. His present third-from-the-top model on active display at the 2014 Munich show started at a sticker essentially half of the Horizon's whose sound I had admired. Hence I was keen to see what 'shared design DNA' might sound like from Yvon. München provided just that opportunity.

After talking to general manager Eric Poyer about the most appropriate model given my new 100m² sound room, he pointed at their 8-inch two-way *Edena* playing, not their d'Appolito flagship. He called the Edena the model most tightly aligned with Christian Yvon's ideal design ethos. As I said in my show report, "...this was very good hifi sound with just the right degree of musicality to marry precision, transparency and capacious staging with satisfying tone and substance. The unusual cabinet cross section with no parallel vertical panels and the finish quality were added highlights. As showgoers admitted about Sven Boenicke's little W5—on not needing more speaker based on its room-filling performance—this was another such reminder. The vast majority of folks with standard to good-sized rooms could call it a day with the Edena and leave the monkey coffin vanity speakers for those still enamoured by excess. And let's not kid ourselves: €6'500 for a pair of speakers is considered affordable only by wacky audiophile standards. Yet there we are. Give me this speaker over Magico's equivalent two-way tower any day of the week."

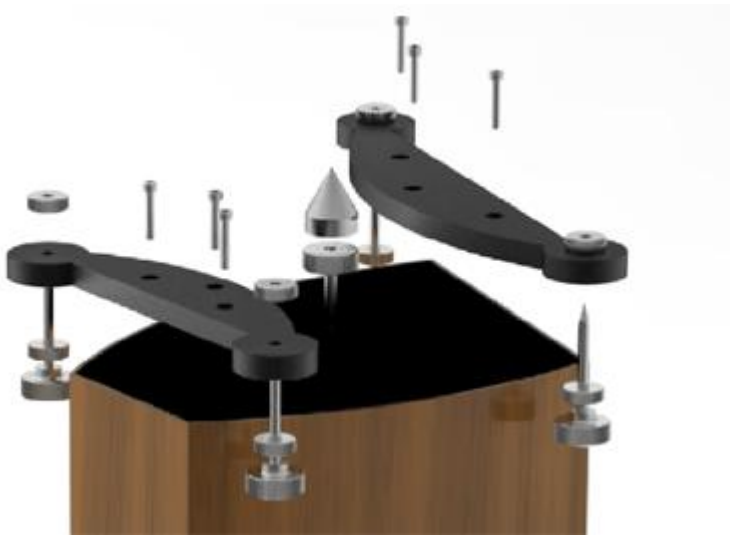
In his post-show follow-up email, Eric reconfirmed mutual interest in the proposed review and offered the actual show sample because it was fully broken in; or a pair in another colour if I preferred. Being into white speakers these days I said so but also that since a preconditioned loaner was mandatory, I'd hesitate putting them through the additional trouble and would happily accept the show pair. Then I let go of personal finish preferences to wait on what would show up. On June 16th Eric confirmed that their Munich show pair had been inspected and repacked. It was ready for temporary importation to Switzerland.

Whilst my exhibit photos show single-wire terminals and rear porting, they don't begin to telegraph how unusual the Edena's cross section is to avoid the dreaded parallel vertical panels. And though the asymmetrical plinth's four pointy footers appear to be the primary or sole support, there's actually a central fifth cone at the bottom. This is claimed to coincide with the cabinet's center of gravity. The four outer contact points are supposed to act as mere stabilizers, the hidden central one as the main anchor to provide a grounding path for vibrational energies like Goldmund's scheme of mechanical grounding. This notion also mirrors recent conventions at Triangle Electroacoustique.

The drawings at right show the hidden cone as well as the cross section. The cheeks are of dissimilar length and curve outward, the front and rear baffles are overtly angled relative to one another to create toe-in if the back is set parallel to the front wall. The four standard finish colours are shown too.



In the current iteration, the grill magnets are concealed beneath the veneer.



The Edena combines a 4.8cm² 18mg light Neodymium-powered ribbon tweeter and 22cm composite polypropylene mid/woofer called *isotactic matrix* with 13cm Titanium-former voice coil. The cabinet uses high-density MDF from 25-44mm thick braced with four window-pane dividers. The filter network set at 2.8kHz employs Jantzen inductors and polypropylene capacitors on a board with 130 micron traces. The internal hookup wiring is Apertura's own. The grill is magnetically fixed at five points. Claimed bandwidth is 35-30'000Hz ±3dB, sensitivity 88dB. Nominal impedance is 8Ω, dimensions are 24.8 x 30 x 110cm WxDxH, weight is 33kg/ea.

Because I'd made the acquaintance of the Grand Cru Audio Horizon speaker *before* the Apertura Edena whose Christian Yvon had clearly inspired both his former dealer Jefferson Torno and his former subcontractor Joseph Szall with his crossover invention, I thought it important to get more background on the true progenitor of the DRIM filter. But first, some general information on Apertua. "The special shape of our cabinets meets two requirements. One, reduce as much as possible the surface of the two most emissive walls which, contrary to widespread belief, are the top and rear walls. We must keep in mind that a speaker cabinet is no musical instrument and should be as neutral as possible. Two, add an aesthetic signature that's easily recognizable and distinctive to Apertura.

Screen capture of YouTube video in which Christian Yvon explains his background during HighEnd Munich 2014.

"The mechanical design of a speaker cabinet is not equal in terms of sonic signature. Our laminar structure is far more efficient for vibration damping because of induced break-up modes in the material thickness and mechanical constraints of our molded panels. Our curved cheeks consist of multiple layers of thin high-density MDF foils bonded and molded at high temperature on dedicated presses. Depending on model, certain sensitive panels like the bottom and top will double up. Internal damping is mandatory for good performance. Too many speakers pay no or insufficient attention to the importance of good internal damping which isn't merely a question of randomly placed small pieces of foam or glass fiber. Ask yourself what happens to the acoustic radiation inside a box which equals that in the room but occurs in a far smaller cubic volume? By what miracle should we expect no influence or feedback on the drivers or the behaviour of a bass-reflex tube? Contrary to audiophile myth, having no parallel walls does not cancel or reduce standing waves.

It merely modifies their envelope. And no internal damping does not serve a clearer more relaxed sound.

Quite the contrary. Hence properly engineered internal damping is one of the most important steps in the process of Apertura speakers. Here we use several types of material at very specific quantities and locations.

We prefer two-way architectures compared to which three-ways are far more complicated and costly. The qualitative gain of a 3-way speaker is almost always seriously reduced or zero compared to a properly designed 2-way and always to the detriment of far more complex filters. Here simplicity is better. Which gets us to manufacturing consistency to insure that every customer of a given model buys *the same speaker*.

"

"Don't assume that drivers in a batch are perfectly identical. They aren't. Hence our speakers get matched driver pairs which are then measured together in a test enclosure with a dedicated *adjustable* xover. We successively modify the value of certain parts until the measured response of the pair matches the reference unit. This filter adjustment matched to specific drivers is time-consuming and expensive but the only guarantee for consistency.

"Mass is good for cabinets but not for drivers. Hence we only use drivers of the lightest possible moving mass joined to high-performance powerful motor systems. Because all diaphragms must exhibit high self damping, this becomes a compromise between weight and damping ratio. But in general all heavy material must be rejected to avoid high break-up modes on woofers. We use long voice coils for wider linear excursion. Music consists of transients, hence playback must accelerate and brake hard. There are many myths surrounding ribbon tweeters and they can indeed sound dull when incorrectly filtered. But they are wonderful drivers of superlative speed and musicality which simply suffer no fools in their filter networks. Due to great advances made with Neodymium magnets, this type of driver can now also be used in smaller speakers. Christian Yvon has worked with ribbon drivers for 15 years. Thanks to his proprietary crossover, he can take a ribbon tweeter to a lower cut-off frequency to extend its benefit over a wider bandwidth."

"Take nothing away from the signal but above all, add nothing to it. Contrary to conceived notions, the hardest part by far is adding nothing. This is the essence of Apertura's philosophy. Speaker drivers are electro-mechanical devices which generate sound waves from diaphragm motion. In theory the driver gasket is the mechanical reference of this device. In reality sound waves are also generated at the back of the driver but in opposite phase. These excite the cabinet and generate vibrations which propagate inside the cabinet material to create structure-born noise and distortion of the mechanical driver reference. Drivers themselves are subject to mechanical constraints and forces which produce vibration and torsion on their sub-assemblies. To summarize, one must consider vibration damping and dissipation as part of one's mechanical design. As a non-exhaustive list of dedicated vibration treatments in Apertura speakers, we can mention the heavily braced cabinets; the damped driver diaphragms with locking gaskets; baked coil wires and heavy parts glued to the filter PCB; and one-point plinth drainage at the center of gravity with the floor.

"Neutral parts are another myth. All parts—capacitors, coils, wiring, damping, diaphragm materials—have their own sonic signature. Some differences can be measured, others can only be determined by ear. We use quality parts to arrive at the least colouration in the final mix of complementary qualities. This is the principle of the right part in the right place. Even the most exotic costly parts are rarely ever best and will only give a marginal improvement versus price compared to very small adjustments in internal damping or the length of a port tube. But a 2mm shorter vent lacks all buzzword compliance compared to boutique filter parts."

"A speaker's brain is its crossover. It defines its drivers' bandwidth, attenuation, correction and phase coherence. No common structure—Butterworth, Bessel etc—will match ideal parameters to a real-world environment. That only happens in simulation software. 25 years ago Christian Yvon developed a proprietary topology so flexible that it allows him to precisely shape the response of each driver.

His DRIM filter can even cut at 90° with full phase coherence but isn't applicable to actual production because it is far too susceptible to driver discrepancies. Here we protect our IP since pale imitations are so many.

"Finally Apertura today are a family-type business of Stentor SAS located close to the city of Nantes on the western coast of France. Our cabinets are sub-contracted in Asia. The main reason is *not* cost but that the know-how and tooling required to manufacture cabinets as complex as ours have migrated to Asia. There they also have a long tradition of top-quality lacquering which is no longer common in Europe.

"We have two sub-contractors who work to our quality standards. Our drivers are from Seas in Norway for all our mid/woofers whilst the ribbon tweeters are from Fountek in China. China holds more than 80% of the world's reserves of rare-earth metals needed for Neodymium magnets, hence nearly all ribbon manufacturers are located in China. All our coils are from Jantzen in Denmark. Our capacitors are from various sources like Jantzen, Mundorf, LCR, Intertechnik and others. We use our own proprietary cables of OFC or silver-plated copper with PTFE dielectric. All our measurements, PCB assembly, speaker assembly and QC checks are performed in our Nantes facility."

About Christian Yvon's CV, "he was always surprised how existing loudspeakers were unable to recreate—from his point of view at least—the experience of live sound. In 1978 he created his own laboratory to conduct research on sound and acoustic. He then developed several new technologies of which the proprietary DRIM crossover topology is one. In 1979 he worked for Goldmund where he developed the Dialogue, Apologue, Analogue and Epilogue speakers. He also worked for Focal, Sonus faber and many others. In 1982 he decided to develop his own models under the brand name Apertura. Like the name, this became an opening towards a new concept of reproducing the purest sound with no additional resonances, colorations, phase errors or impulse response delays. The first Apertura model was 1983's Reference. It was soon followed by many others, amongst them 1990's Tanagra and the Kalibrator in 1999. Over 25 years then, Christian had developed a complete line of speakers.

"By late 2009 he ended his work with the company which manufactured his speakers when quality and strategy no longer met his expectations. By 2010 he and Eric Poyer set up Stentor to manufacture and sell a completely new line of Apertura models. Eric Poyer had worked for many years with a well-known high-end manufacturer before creating his own OEM firm 15 years ago. At Stentor Christian is responsible for all acoustic design, Eric oversees mechanical design and production.

Apertura Kalya from fairaudio's show report

Between 2010 and 2013, their partnership has already netted the five floorstanders Armonia, Onira, Ariana, Edena and Enigma. 2014 will still see the production launch of the Kalya monitor previewed at the Munich HighEnd show in the La Rosita exhibit. Christian's early work on filters was prompted by dissatisfaction with the lack of attenuation, efficiency and versatility of then common crossover structures. He was looking for a subtle but powerful tool that would be capable of effective modeling, carving and slicing of the signal without erratic compensation.

"To exploit the trail of the resonators never used at that time appeared obvious to him. However he quickly realized that simple adaptation of the Cauer filter topology would not reach his goal of subtlety and precision on the razor's edge. Some amount of adaptation and damping should be inserted into the ellipse to compensate for the non-linear profile of impedance and frequency. After much research it became clear to him that the configuration of the resonator to achieve the corrections and multiple slopes he wanted relied on a specific additional circuit. This finally created the dual-resonant intermodulation minimum or DRIM filter capable of a brutal 90° cut-off as well as complex compound-slope attenuation. Christian subsequently launched his first company Prologue Research & Development. Its purpose was not manufacture but the study and design of loudspeakers for various brands, occasionally direct competitors.

"His first project was the Dialogue Logos. It enjoyed great success in the US and was in fact the first speaker for Goldmund whose appointed designer he became for many years. Amongst his other clients were Focal/JM Lab, Point Source, Auditor, Joseph Szall of today's Capriccio Continuo, Einstein, Sonus faber and others for whom he oversaw crossover development for their luxury high-end models. During the early 1980s, nobody in the industry had experimented with such deep crossover attenuation yet. Thanks to his DRIM structure, Christian could design transition slopes which mirrored so closely that even reversing the polarity of a drive unit left the summing phase almost unchanged. The phase rotation was in fact there but occurred over a frequency range so narrow that it almost became a rotation in the void."

For those mathematically inclined, here is US patent 6854005 for another form of elliptical filter which combines a notch and low-pass filter.

Schenker delivery was by pallet to minimize shipping risks. Without a pallet strapper, I would have to use rope or basic plastic wrap for the return. Eric Poyer had included extra wrap for just that purpose. Proper packaging is a very unsexy subject to talk about. Yet little disappoints an expectant client more than receiving brand-new toys damaged in transit because of insufficient packaging. Until the right number of badly settled damage claims convince them otherwise, the latter is quite common for newer companies. For Europe, no such worries with Apertura's triple-boxed scheme with hard-foam end caps, hard-foam lateral skeleton, cloth bag, a separate foam layer for the magnetized grill and a separate inner cardboard box for the plinth hardware.

Folks with hardwood floors will flinch in agony whilst staring at the massive spikes. Proper receiver shoes from the UK's **Track Audio** are one perfect antidote but hoisting the weaponized speaker upright whilst inserting the protectors should still be done by two people to avoid costly oops. Once the speakers are leveled, lengthening their central 'energy-drain' footers until they become weight-bearing finishes off.

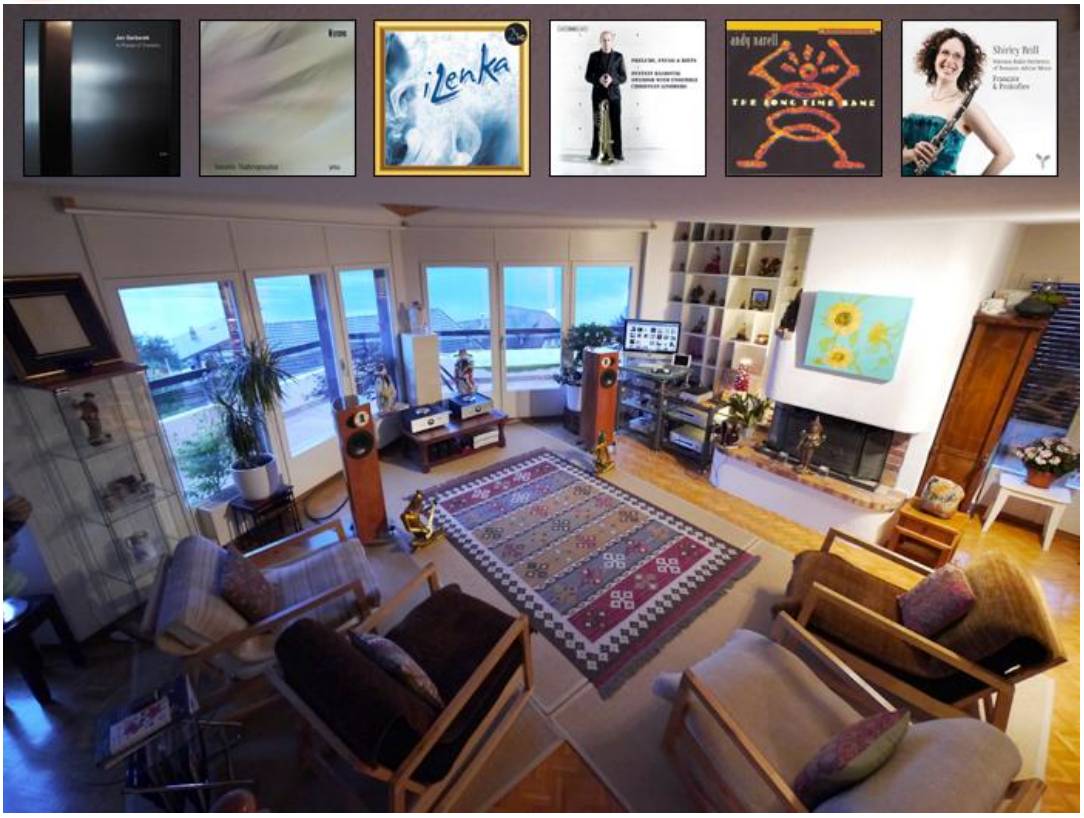
Wiring up takes standard not biwire cables whilst the rear port benefits from front-wall distance. Because of the cabinet's unusual geometry, having the narrow spine parallel to the wall automatically creates a mild toe-in of the front baffle. That and the fact that the absorbent felt crescent next to the ribbon tweeter belongs on the outside to minimize sidewall reflections makes it obvious which speaker goes left and which one right.

On to predictive basics. As an 8-inch two-way, the Edena's surface area for the mid/bass frequencies is 50% larger than that of a common 6" bookshelf speaker. Super monitors like EnigmAcoustic's Mythology 1 and Kaiser Kawero's Chiara get a solid 40Hz response from such smaller drivers when ported or loaded by a passive radiator. That the Edena's larger enclosure alone would support a lower F3 is self-evident. The *main* advantage or difference of its larger midrange then is tonal fullness. Compare the 5", 6" and 8" Rethm widebanders from Jacob George to illustrate this. From Trishna, Maarga to Saadhana, they're all augmented by active bass arrays. They all behave full bandwidth when matched properly to room size. The key changes from scaling up those widebander diameters become tone mass, textural lushness and general chunkiness.

Pushing a midrange's diameter beyond 8 inches as do Zu with their 10.3" Eminence-based platform or classic Tannoys with their 12-inch or 15-inch dual-concentrics diminishes presence region clarity. For utmost speed and lucidity in the band where human hearing is most keen, a 4-inch midrange like Anthony Gallo champions is arguably as big as you want. This is where priorities and compromises enter. To overdraw for emphasis, speed freaks get an Accuton 4-inch, lovers of vintage valve tone a 10" or bigger paper driver. With his Edena, Christian Yvon's largest two-driver 2-way goes for eight inches. The Armonia and Onira models which bracket it get one or two paralleled 7-inchers. The 8" shows up again doubled up in the top model Enigma. Clearly that's Yvon's favoured midband artillery.

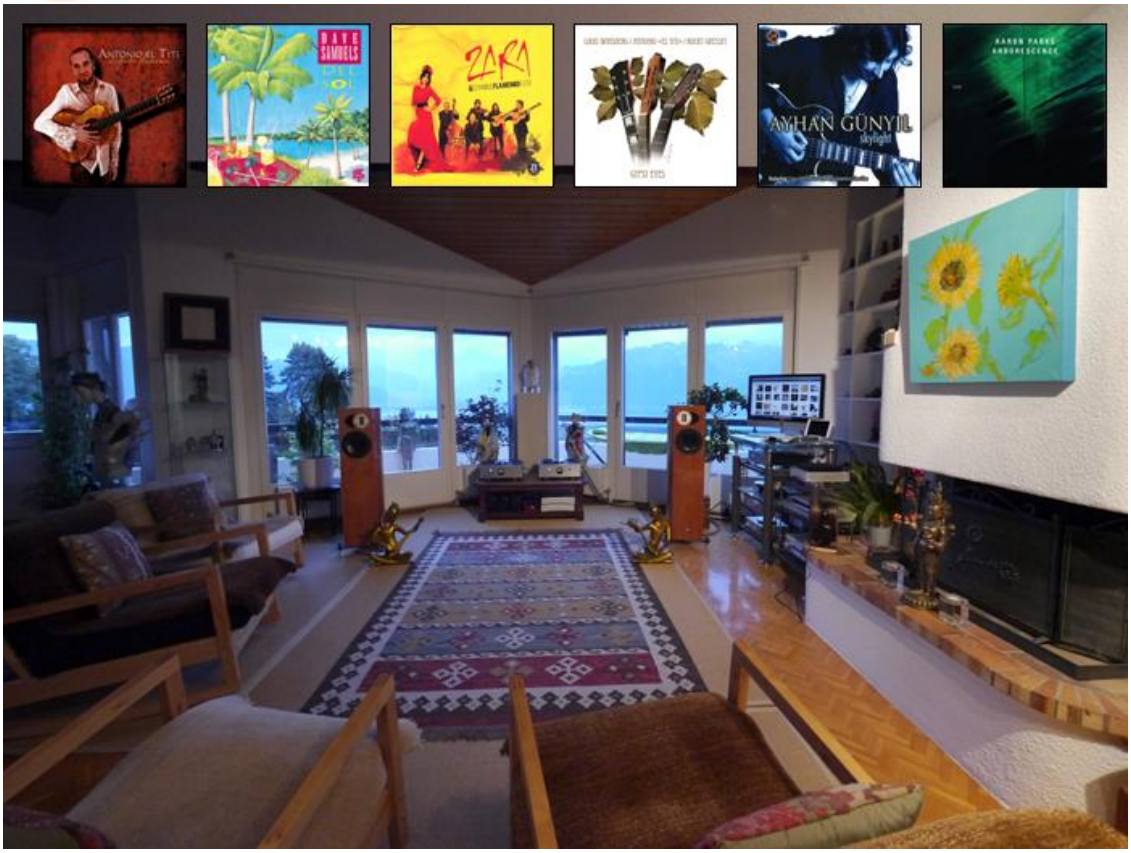
Jefferson Torno's twice-priced Grand Cru Audio Horizon prefers dual 6.5" mid/woofers and hornloads its ribbon but also gets a compound-slope frequency divider. One *very* significant difference of his filter is parts count. It's *at least* four times higher than Christian's (38 junctions of which some use multiple parts to arrive at the desired values). As we discuss sonics of two speakers with shared design genetics—Yvon's representing the peer or tribal elder—remember these differences. At the same time we're mindful that no reviewer or standard listener should ever assign categorical cause and effect unless they can strategically alter discrete parameters to adjudge their relative contributions on the overall performance. Obviously changing crossovers, drivers and cabinets is completely beyond our purview.

Though beauty is more than skin-deep, it starts there. The Edena's glossy veneer work proved to be wickedly good. It not only was stringently book-matched on the fronts. It also matched across all four cheeks. Very classy eye candy indeed! Grand Cru's original paint paled by comparison; their rectangular boxes with profiled fronts were quite basic by contrast. One probably looks for the Horizon at smaller production runs completely outsourced to Italy; plus higher parts density and their matching labour for the potted filter networks as two factors to explain the serious price delta. Sonically the Edena and Horizon diverged just as much. On perceived exactitude and articulation, the latter behaved as a pseudo ceramic-driver box. The former excelled at harmonic envelope. Envision two or more instruments. They play in *perfect* octave-matched unison. Their intonation is spot on, tone changes are immaculately sync'd. Yet they parallel each other only over parts of a musical phrase. Such teamwork acts as fluctuating overlays without really giving things away. It's a subtle game. Here the Edena was truly brilliant at sleuthing out not only how such compound timbres were created but exactly where their various contributors phased in and out. Following Jan Garbarek's saxophone, Anna Lechner's cello or Anouar Brahem's oud in another session, I entered deep inner space whilst admiring their many subtle tone modulations. Here the Edena painted from an admirably expansive palette. The upper registers of a piano also had proper weight to avoid getting overly metallic.

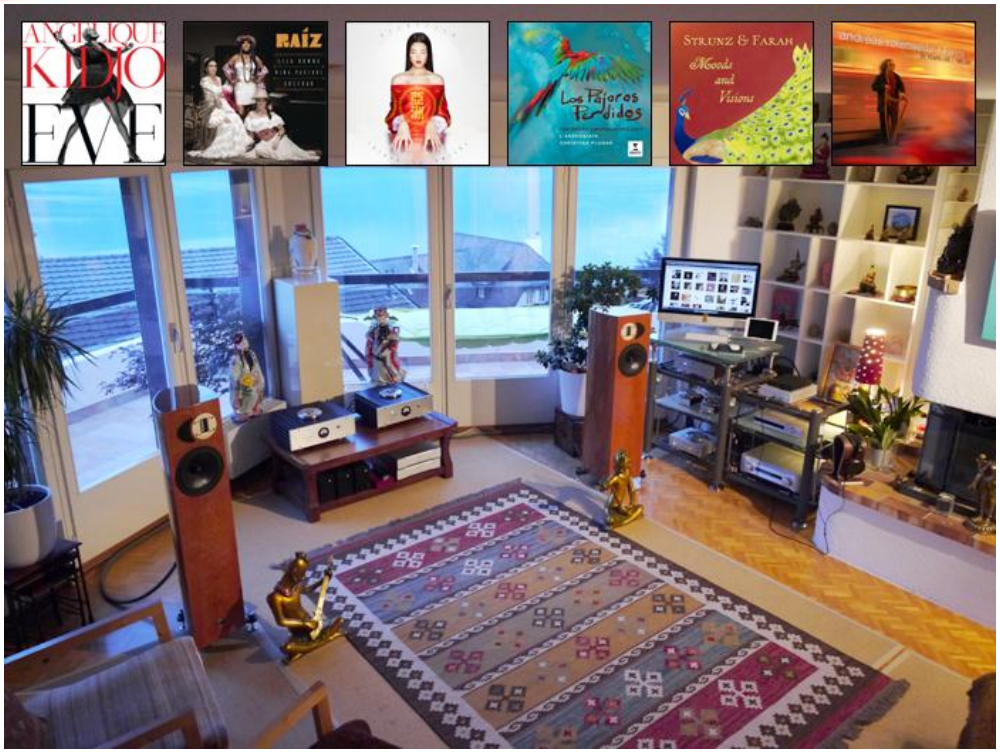


The Horizon played it clearly drier and more damped. The Edena was decisively lusher, more fluidic and elastic. Against the earlier proviso of attempting cause/effect connections, I'd be inclined to point at a much more complex filter to explain that trait of the Grand Cru. In the ±3kHz band the Horizon was sharper and leaner to get more incisive. Here the Edena was warmer and softer without sacrificing the ability to lock onto soloists in strong 3D. In fact ambient recovery was in no way second. The Horizon simply felt starker as though its recreation of recorded space occurred with shorter decay times. With two duelling ribbon tweeters at hand and being familiar with the Serbian Raal ribbon from long-term use of first Aries Cerat's Gladius then soundkaos' Wave 40, Grand Cru's evinced more metallic elements. This must have contributed to the more incisive nearfield handling of transients. My Swiss owners and the current French loaners sounded 'tweeter-less' or sweeter by lacking this tell. In the bass both French were comparable on mid-30s reach but diverged again on textures. The Horizon was drier and tighter, the Edena more redolent, generous and mighty.

Both speakers could cover our two chairs in stereo as shown but the Edena had the slightly broader window. It didn't shift the center at all whilst the Horizon moved it a bit for each off-center seat. The social aspect of listening in a *living* room tends to get short shrift. Here it's useful to mention when speakers are excessively demanding of a solitary sweet spot. These aren't. Using small-signal valves in the preamp followed by vertical power Jfets in the amps, the Apertura produced the far more compelling tonal substance. Whilst in my setup the Horizon left me wanting a bit on that score to wonder what a push/pull valve or hybrid amp might do, the Edena categorically silenced such musings. This was a speaker whose tonefulness materialized fully with transistor kit. Now we'll remove the Grand Cru from consideration.



If you agree that live sound beats hifi playback on sheer *substance*—tone density, bass power, dynamics—whilst most modern hifi means to compensate primarily for the loss of actual vision (unless we're doing concert videos); and how this shifts our perspective from being a participant to being an observer, from gut-level feel to more mental abstraction... then Yvon's choice for the Edena was substance over ultimate visuals. Extreme separation during playback gets better than actual live sound. It assists our starved visual faculties to fill in the gaps. Unfortunately it also separates us from emotional involvement. We turn into watchers and music competition judges. We stand aloof not immersed. When we feel like being *in* the music not as surround sound but with our attention, we focus less on particulars. That's just like admiring your home's exterior. You must step out of the house and walk far enough away to turn around and look. And the Edena weakened that impulse to step *out* of the music to inspect it. I responded more like I would during a concert where even hard-boiled career audiophiles must finally give up thinking about soundstaging, imaging and all the silly rest of it. [For a lengthier essay on this subject which I wrote for John Darko's site, click **here**.)



When inquiring into why/how the Edena prompted this—or why my wife reading a book on the balcony sang along with every cut she recognized to soon have me play her favourites just to watch; or why she danced a bit to the music whilst hanging laundry indoors—I'd point at this chunky meaty substance. It's built upon strongly saturated tone colours and chewy textures to become the antithesis to bleached, pale, nervous and wiry. This was a musical speaker, not a hifi box. Now clearly playback is a cleverly manufactured illusion. It's supposed to entertain us. There's nothing at all wrong with creating a personalized version of this illusion. Whatever pleases us most. If we fancy better-than-life outline sharpness, separation, focus, treble detail and 3D-ness, I'd call it 'hifi' not in judgment but because it exceeds concert sound. That's very popular but not what the Edena goes after.

On *in*sight for example—penetrating the musical weave from the outside in as it were—Sven Boenicke's 3-inch wideband tweeter for his W5 crossed in at 600Hz digs deeper and unwinds more threads. That's the price to pay when using an 8-inch mid. Vapour Sound's Aurora makes the same big choice. How the W5 adds redolence is with its sidefiring 5-inch long-throw woofer. It energizes the ambient field earlier than a front-firing equivalent would to enhance tone exactly like subtle reverb on a mixing console enhances pale vocals. Gallo's Strada II with its d'Appolito 4-inchers is more electrostatic of resolution but also leaner and cooler on colour temperatures. I'd not call the Edena dark per se. That expertly exploited ribbon tweeter won't allow it. But it's fair to invoke hints of darkness as they pertain to the upper midrange. That makes for a very non-fatiguing sound which won't get frisky even on hot fare. It's easy listening also because it doesn't blur. I would speculate that this and the lovely harmonic richness are functions of a phase-coherent crossover which doesn't put fundamentals and their overtones through a coarse time scrambler. To see how much vigour the Edena was capable of, I replaced my FirstWatt SIT1 monos with the Crayon Audio CFA-1.2 and Job 225 amplifiers.

Roland Krammer's Austrian champ took the crown as the best match from my amp collection. It honed articulation and focus and with it a greater sense of forward projection. By tendency the Edena staged very deeply behind its base line. The Crayon didn't alter that perspective. But it did project sound more strongly across space. The static induction transistors had me reach for it. That's not a fancy verbal distinction. It was an actual perception. It even held way off-axis behind my work desk. That's four meters past the left speaker in the same open space. Another improved parameter were microdynamic inflections. With the 60wpc Crayon there was more microdynamic contrast. On raw loudness the 10-watt Yanks had been more than sufficient. I never listen to more than 90dB peaks and tend to stay around 70dB median levels. But without undermining its naturally wet tone, the Crayon had the Edena sound 'faster' and more vigorous for an ideal dovetailing of qualities.

Looking at my writing desk in front of two paintings by Ivette.

Or to put it back into earlier terms, the Edena starts with a musically very *material* foundation. This can subsequently be seasoned to some extent with certain more hifi-ish qualities. If desired, I'd pick a very wide-bandwidth direct-coupled fast gain circuit as enabler. The speaker's innate virtues remain dominant however. It'll never be a dry, prickly, lean, whitish or monochromatic performer. In my book that's high praise indeed. Here it reminds me a bit of Kevin Scott's upper-end Living Voice Avatar models. Textures, colours and the expressivity derived from them are the priorities. There's nothing pushy, jagged or hyper-pixilated about any of it. If subjective detail count is a bit lower than much of what HighEnd Munich 2014 proposed as the going rate, that would seem to have been a very deliberate design choice to shift emphasis on other virtues.

Conclusion. From the outside in with its fancy veneers, sterling finish, complex asymmetrical cabinetry, quality drivers and advanced filter, the €6'500/pr Apertura Edena offers a lot in today's high-end currency. Despite its seeming modesty of just two drivers, this cleverly appointed box acts full-range for 95% of applications. It really is all the speaker most serious music lovers would ever need. It comes on song at lower volumes to cross off early morning or late night sessions amongst family and neighbours. Its off-axis response is generous enough to produce a fully centred soundstage for two chairs spaced a bit apart. Most importantly, it majors on the musically fundamental qualities which so much of modern hifi turns its back on: harmonically developed fleshy tone and wet textures; weightiness not from tacked-on subwoofer bass but from actual *substance* in the midrange which won't turn a poorly recorded piano into a tinkle machine; a very fine gossamer treble that lacks any metallic or grey textures; and the kind of temporal elasticity that has far more in common with Chopin and nothing whatsoever with Techno's drum machines.

With Crayon's CFA-1.2 in the hot seat, Goldmund/Job 225 and Clones Audio monos in standby.

Being earmarked for review by its designer and not their flagship or second in line when my room would have supported either is also telling. Whilst I can't be certain without working my way through their catalogue, I'll wager an educated guess: this model is their hottest buy. It sports what clearly is Christian Yvon's favourite midrange driver; doesn't rely on a d'Appolito array to keep things pure and simple; and has sufficient coverage or room-fill power to lack for naught even in a 100m² space. Colour me impressed. As my show sighting had suggested, Apertura's Edena really *is* entirely my kind of loudspeaker. If it were a postcard, it'd be signed *from Nantes with love.* I'm of course ignorant on how available Apertura the brand might currently be outside France. Based on my two encounters with this model, I'd simply say that foreign markets without representation would be foolish not to look closer at Christian Yvon's lineup. His Edena isn't yet another box in the usual sonic vein. It's for those who feel that somewhere, modern hifi has made a wrong turn and never really gotten back on track. If that resonates whilst you're reading this, here's a speaker that pulls in the other direction.

Srajan Ebaen

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