



LP MAGAZINE

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ENGLISH

Dancing with the vacuum.

The German distributor writes on the brand-new Apertura speaker: "This is what your tubes dream of!". I'm not entirely sure about the unconscious processes involved with vacuum tubes, but it's true: this loudspeaker and a good tube amplifier - that's a dream combination. My first "professional" encounter with a loudspeaker from the French manufacturer Apertura was about a year ago. And since testing the "Edena Evolution", I have had a great deal of respect for these designs, which only look like ordinary floor standing speakers at first glance. This is definitely also true of the brand new "Forté" model, which costs 7500 euros per pair. I admit that after 45 years of dealing with loudspeakers, I have to work pretty hard to be tempted by a medium-sized floor standing speaker with two 18-centimetre bass units arranged symmetrically around a dome tweeter. The Edena Evolution did it back then, the Forté does it even more now.

When a manufacturer waves the "tube compatible" flag, I'm interested. Over the years I've seen enough power-hungry speakers, relying on the performance of modern electronics to drive them. But speakers that make do with ten watts or less from tubes in single-ended mode, that's more interesting.: efficiency is a sign of constructive intelligence, it allows the use of excellent sounding amplifier concepts that would otherwise have to be left out. And if such a loudspeaker has a format suitable for the living room and is not a collection of adventurous horns straight out of a science fiction classic, then it has a chance. The Apertura Forté is just that. With an efficiency level in the region of 93 decibels, there is a certain degree of single-stroke compatibility. The fact that it is a four-ohm design relativizes the efficiency somewhat, but still. The usual weak-chested tube single-ended drivers like loads with a rather high impedance, so practice will have to show whether it still works.

Housing:

The body of the approximately 115-centimetre high floor-standing speaker follows Apertura's usual design language: no parallel walls. This means that the baffle and rear wall are arranged at an angle to each other and the two side walls are convex. This provides a lot of stability and also makes life difficult for standing waves inside.

There are also various bracing panels that further improve rigidity. The "knock test" makes it clear: the boxes are really rock hard.

Housing insulation at Apertura is usually quite a complex matter with different materials used in different places. A look inside the Forté revealed that another variant has been added to the mix of

materials - namely bubble wrap, which is actually intended as packaging material. Which is probably a good idea.

The bass section is a bass reflex construction. The vent tube is large enough to avoid flow noise and exits further up on the rear wall (and not towards the bottom of the enclosure). This vent tube position is optimal in terms of performance and precision.

Drivers

A look inside reveals that the bass-midrange drivers are products from the Norwegian manufacturer Seas. These are fairly heavy-duty types with a pleasantly low moving mass (14 grams), which benefits the efficiency. The 39-millimetre diameter voice coil is particularly light and the paper cone, which is reinforced with reed fibres only at the edges, also contributes to the weight reduction. All this is housed in an elegant alloy basket, which helps to reduce losses. At the rear is a powerful ferrite drive unit that allows for decent excursions - up to 22 millimetres if you put your mind to it.

At 3.1 kilohertz, the ensemble consisting of two parallel-connected drivers transfers to the tweeter. This comes from the highly respected supplier SB Acoustics and is not a ribbon tweeter, as is usually the case with Apertura. However, the word "dome" thrown loosely into the room at the beginning is only half true: it is a dome-shaped membrane, in the form of a ring, fixed at its centre which therefore does not vibrate completely. This is why the whole thing is also called a "ring radiator".

Crossover:

The filtering is of a minimalist nature and is limited to first-order networks. Little complexity at this point is something that favours the use of tube amplifiers, which usually don't like complex filters. The Forté is connected via a high-quality pair of screw terminals, there is no bi-wiring or similar gimmicks.

Sound:

Let's get straight: the Forté and the Unison Simply 845 - that's it. With no other combination have I achieved such a fine, smooth and super-relaxed sound as with this one. Hardly anyone can prove this better than Paul Desmond and Jim Hall with their 1964 collaboration "Easy Living". The term "euphony" was invented for this album. With this setup, its meaning is self-explanatory. Infinitely soft, yet perfectly detailed, the two gentlemen give their all. The contrast between the delicate alto sax and Hall's perfectly defensive guitar sound could not be greater, despite the similarities in sound aesthetics. And since the whole thing is mixed "double mono", i.e. the guitar is consistently on the left and the sax consistently on the right, you can experience two completely different sound universes at the same time. I find it highly remarkable that the chain can do this so naturally. With a small Parasound combination, which I briefly borrowed from my "Hifitest" colleagues, the magic is much less noticeable.

Actually, I'm not a big fan of the Scandinavian ring radiators that provide here the high frequency range. Here, however, I have to apologize. The drums sound so finely chiselled, completely free at the top and without any harshness - that's exactly what you want. The cymbals on this recording,

some of which swirl endlessly through the room, are a real audiophile highlight. The bass sounds tight, pleasingly voluminous and colourful. The entire speaker suggests tight timing, discipline and perfect docking of all frequency ranges. While I'm usually quite good at estimating crossover frequencies in multi-way systems, I find it quite difficult here.

I consider Rainbow's 1977 double album "On Stage" to be one of the best live albums in the history of rock music, both musically and sonically. I don't play it too often and when I do, I prefer to do so on large systems that at least allow me to get close to the live experience. This only works to a limited extent with the Apertura. But after just a few bars of "Catch The Rainbow" you're in. To give you goose bumps! Dynamically explosive, with a lot of feeling in Ronnie James Dio's voice, a pleasingly restrained but no less gifted Ritchie Blackmore on guitar - this is a highly emotional affair. And those drums: tight, precise, but with the raw power of the live impression.

It's brilliant! This speaker really hides its secrets! My compliments to France!

CONCLUSION:

The promise is not an empty one: The Apertura Forté proves to be an ideal playing partner for tube amplifiers of all kinds: from ten watts upwards, the Apertura Forté delivers excellent performances. The sound is firm, sustained in the bass, perfectly integrated and the atmosphere is absolutely convincing.

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