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The Virgo Has Long Since Come of Age

The Virgo is the perennial best seller in Audio Physic's sales range of loudspeakers /
Announcing the new "25plus" loudspeaker

When it comes right down to it, German loudspeaker producers are individualists, whether they operate almost on an industrial scale or more like a small manufacturer. That is probably the reason why their locations are scattered all over Germany, as opposed to typical "clusters". One of the big names is located in Germany's Sauerland region, or to be more precise: in Brilon, and the name of the company is Audio Physic. In 2010, the company celebrated its 25-year jubilee – and used the opportunity to mention in passing that one of its most traditional loudspeakers, the Virgo, has long since come of age. A perfect occasion not only to celebrate the Jubilee with the Virgo 25 – as the youngest generation in a series of further developments – but to also unveil another member of the series at this year's High End exhibition in Munich, the Virgo 25plus, which we would like to elaborate on below.

In the Audio Physic sales range, the Virgo falls in the upper third, namely in the Reference Class, in which it represents the introductory model at around 7,500 Euros per pair for the 25 and around 10,000 Euros for the 25plus. For the Avantera (around 13,000 Euros), not to mention the flagship, Cardeas (around 18,000 Euros), you really need much deeper pockets indeed. The mid-range High End 25 series (including the models Step 25, Sitara 25, Tempo 25, and Scorpio 25) runs from 1,700 to 5,000 Euros per pair, and a brand-new addition is the Classic Line, as the lowest price segment, whose three models (Classic Compact, 20 and 10) run between 1,300 and 1,800 Euros. Each of the three series also includes centre loudspeakers for multichannel applications.



Sweet sounds: Virgo 25plus

Manufacturer's photo

For over two decades, the Virgo has seen several fundamental design innovations also featured in its latest version: the slightly backward-sloping cabinet intended to compensate for the delay time in the drivers, the side-mounted woofers and the characteristic round feet on which the cabinet is resting. They are the most obvious

outward signs of a precept that has guided Audio Physic's chief designer Manfred Diestertich from the beginning: the need to systematically eliminate all mechanical influences on the loudspeaker that negatively affect sound quality. Thus the tweeter of the Virgo, for example, is mounted in a solid aluminium plate that is decoupled from the cabinet. The crossover network of the 3-way loudspeaker is divided into modules, placed next to the drivers – naturally also decoupled – and the tweeter and mid-range driver feature a resonance-eliminating double basket construction (the outer basket is made of metal, and the inner basket is made of special plastic); this design is referred to as HHC, Hyper Holographic Cone.

The control terminal was also acoustically decoupled from the cabinet. Due to the fact that even mechanical energy is transmitted via loudspeaker cables, Audio Physic uses the latest version of the WBT "nextgen" connectors featuring fine silver conductors. These connectors not only eliminate ground storage effects and eddy currents but, thanks to sound interrupters, are intended to even dampen micro-vibrations. The base, which with suspended feet guarantees a sturdy position on the floor and has a damping effect, was even completely borrowed from the Virgo's much pricier big sister, Avantera.

Diestertich also believes that all the membrane materials used in a loudspeaker ought to be uniform. In the Virgo, he uses cone diaphragms out of aluminium with a dampening silicone-rubber ring, even on the tweeters, which of course goes against conventional wisdom. What looks like a usual dome is nothing more than a dust protection cap. The

midrange driver beneath it is 13 centimetres, and both woofers measuring 16 centimetres in diameter – operating in phase – are placed on the left and right sides. Which means the 1.03-metre high cabinet is nice and slender with a width of no more than 23 centimetres. The cabinet has a sweeping curvature on the backside (an effective remedy against internal vibrations) and is powerfully reinforced; the drivers work behind fabric covers in their own separate chambers, and for the first time in the bass chamber of the Virgo 25plus, Diestertich is using for dampening an open-pore ceramic foam (silicon carbide) – a material he predicts will have great future in loudspeaker engineering. There are no double cable clamps, and a bi-wiring terminal as an option (for separate cable routing to the tweeters/mid-range drivers and woofers) costs 600 Euros for the 25plus. The cabinet comes with a choice of five perfectly crafted veneers; ebony wood, however, carries an additional price tag of 1,000 Euros, just like the high-gloss black and white varnish.

The Virgo 25plus can be placed practically anywhere, thanks to the side-firing woofers and the opening of the bass reflex tube facing the ground. Perhaps it ought to be positioned a small distance from the wall and turned in slightly to face the listener, and the fun can begin. The loudspeakers from Audio Physic have always been renowned for their particularly superb spatial imaging. The 25plus is of course no exception. With its sensitivity of 89 decibels and impedance of 4 ohms, it is not entirely undemanding as regards amplifier power. If you take this into consideration, it reciprocates by flourishing and delivering a highly-concentrated, yet never ostentatious, musical timbre. You never have to worry about bass power in the 10,000 Euro price category, and the Virgo 25plus delivers here as well, without sounding too thick or imprecise. The mid-range drivers and tweeters, made of similar materials, dovetail smoothly with the system – Audio Physic's slogan, "No loss of fine detail" is no empty promise –

the homogeneity in reproducing large orchestras is exceptional. The tone colours are exquisitely differentiated, when for example the Ulster Orchestra, conducted by Yan Pascal Tortelier, performs an enchanting rendition of the potpourri of light-hearted works by the French composers Milhaud, Poulenc and Ibert (CD Chandos 9023). Pierre-Laurent Aimard's grand piano, rendering Bach's "Art of the Fugue" (DG 477 7345), is amazingly placed in the room as if it were truly there. You cannot do anything wrong by buying a 25plus, in fact you can only do everything right. For tradition is nothing without maturity: The new model is compelling proof of this after Virgo's 21-year presence in the market.

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