

Oephi Acoustics Transcendance 2 stand-mount loudspeaker

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Go to the Oephi website and its cables, cables and more cables but scroll down to the bottom of the home page and you get to special order products where there are not only custom cables but amplifiers and loudspeakers. Joakim Juhl was a speaker guy long before he became a cable guy.

Today Joakim builds a range of loudspeakers including stand-mount and tower varieties several of which employ his own tweeters, the Transcendance 2 is the mid model stand-mount and sits in the range below the flagship Immanence models. The names mirror those found on Oephi cables with which these loudspeakers are naturally designed to be partnered, I wasn't able to do that but got some rather exciting results nonetheless.

Purifi drive

You may have heard about Purifi drive units, one of the designers of which is no lesser audio guru than Bruno Putzeys, the man behind Hypex Class D modules and Kii Audio among others. Purifi drivers have created quite a buzz as a result but there are as yet not many loudspeakers on the market that use them, the first we saw were the Lyngdorf Cue 100s but this is the first I have had the chance to hear at home. If the Transcendance 2 is any indication, the hype was not for nothing.

These drivers are distinguished by an uneven or irregular suspension surround but this is apparently only a small part of the equation, Purifi claims that their Ushindi drivers have ultra low harmonic and intermodulation distortion, constant force factor, constant inductance relative to voice coil position, ultra low current distortion relative to amplitude and a smooth response with 'excellent' dispersion. This is probably why these drivers cost considerably more than most of the alternatives on the market. Oephi have a custom Purifi driver made for its loudspeakers that omits the polypropylene coating of the standard unit and leaves the paper cones bare, something that is not uncommon among conventional drivers.

No braking

As mentioned Joakim makes his own tweeter for the Transcendance models, this starts out as a SEAS metal dome design which is stripped down and rebuilt with a non-conductive voice coil former that is said to "decrease mechanical losses and improve transient handling, leaving the diaphragm's movement to the motor and amplifier rather than having a constant 'braking' caused by the voice coil former's movements in the magnetic gap". It's a technique used by other brands but generally only larger ones who build their drivers from the ground up.

The crossover has been designed for the most accurate phase-tracking between the drivers as Oephi considers the time domain to be the most critical parameter, as well as "general tonal integration". They have opted for a flat response rather than the dipping high frequency response favoured by many manufacturers for its forgiving nature. They use unusual crossover parts including wax damped copper foil inductors and a proprietary capacitor technology where multiple parts are combined to emulate a single capacitor. I also asked Joakim about the unusual placement of the tweeter on the baffle, this apparently delivers the best diffraction pattern and a more uniform power response up to 20kHz. The cabinet is relatively light because Joakim feels that mass slows the sound, while the tweeter is placed lower than usual so that it's close to the main driver and 'sees' an asymmetrical baffle.

Thrill power

I dropped the Oephi's into the system atop 60cm Hi-Fi Racks stands and connected them to the Moor Amps Angel 6 power amplifier. I was a bit concerned because they followed Bowers & Wilkins' mighty 801 Signatures in the system, speakers which are literally ten times the size and weight if not price (just nine times that!). However it wasn't long before I was hooked by the most compelling timing that I have encountered in a loudspeaker for many a moon. Along with this came a degree of exposure, even ferocity that meant a bit of positional tweaking was needed to calm the balance. It seems that these speakers are only >>

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» supposed to be gently toed in so as to avoid sitting directly on axis. Once that was done the thrills came pouring out of virtually every piece of music that I played.

The Oephis need a bit of driving. In fact, they sound significantly better at higher levels; those looking for background listening should look elsewhere, the Transcendance 2 is immediacy incarnate and not for the feint of heart. They have a degree of coherence that is quite uncanny, this is presumably a result of the driver selection but Oephi have done everything they can to deliver this crucial quality and they have succeeded. They aren't just about mid and treble either, it's easier to make a speaker with limited bass extension sound fast but that is not the case here, in fact they have surprising power and extension. This gives the better recordings an authority and substance which allows the immediacy and clarity of the mid and treble to captivate the listener in no uncertain terms. When the voice comes in on Ryan Adams' 'Magnolia Mountain' after a long intro (live version) it's genuine magical realism, voices are so well handled it's uncanny.

The Transcendance 2 is very sensitive to tension because of this, you feel what the artist feels if that person knows how to communicate as much, and many do when the conduit is this clear. Tom Waits' 'Swordfishtrombones' is magnetic, it's vivacity totally captivating and the poetry of the song unusually well defined. You can hear deep into the mix and appreciate what all the instruments are doing but the message is placed front and centre, this Oephi manages to combine extreme transparency with perfect timing in a way that few others can. It's not just about high energy either, fragility is equally well served, the emotional vulnerability of an artist is as clear as day. But the temptation to put music with drive on is powerful, a good example being the Gary Burton New Quartet's 'Open Your Eyes, You Can Fly' where the brilliance of the playing from every musician is as clear as the genius of the composition and the excitement it generates.

Twisted folk

Modern recordings benefit from the monitor style balance that the Oephi presents. Everything from Nils Frahm's *All Melody* to Felix Laband's *The Soft White Hand* has a presence and physicality that is just so real and solid that you can't help but be drawn into the music. I particularly enjoyed a rather leftfield album of twisted Scandi folk by the Erland Apneseth Trio (*Salika, Molika*) that has always had some appeal but seemed to gain a new lease of life.

I tried a different amplifier in the shape of an Ayre AX8 2.0 integrated that's less powerful than the Moor Amps but managed to drive the Oephis without trouble. The result was equally compelling, the song and the tune taking precedence over the sound in the best Rega tradition. I was surprised at how convincing the thunder sounded on Michael Chapman's 'Rainmaker' and beguiled by his guitar playing over it, the scale and clarity of the delivery made the tune sound pretty damn special for a streamed CD rip. I found a few tracks where the limitations/character of the recording did not gel with the exposure on offer from the Oephis, synths can sound a bit crunchy for instance and Frahm's live album *Spaces* reveals the limitations of cassette recording that are often smoothed over by more forgiving designs.

Who's right

The Oephi Transcendance 2 lets you hear a lot more than most but this inevitably shows up the shortcomings in some recordings. Yet the vast majority of the many pieces I played through them made me want to sit up and take notice, the music was given primary place in the room just as it should be. Some will find the Oephi's edge of the seat style challenging but no one that really loves music will find these anything less than fabulous, they confound expectations and deliver the musical message in all its ragged glory. +

Technical specifications

Type Two-way, two-driver stand-mount monitor with rear-ported bass reflex enclosure

Driver complement In house developed metal dome tweeter, one 6.5 inch uncoated Purifi mid-bass driver

Frequency response 40Hz–27kHz (in-room)

Crossover frequency 3kHz

Impedance 8 Ohms

Sensitivity 87dB (in-room)

Dimensions (H×W×D) 350 × 185 × 300mm

Weight 8kg/each

Finishes Oil treated oak real wood veneer standard. Walnut and custom finishes at additional cost

Price from £4,995

Manufacturer Oephi Acoustics

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