

Evidence Master



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"Upper Class"

Test: Loudspeaker Dynaudio Evidence, ca. DM 140,000

Test Report Dynaudio Evidence, By Joachim Pfeiffer

Just like Mercedes with its Maybach saloon, with the "Evidence" Dynaudio unleashes a no-holds-barred attempt to create the unconditional best. AUDIO has given these superb transducers a world-exclusive first test.

The "Evidence", price: ca. DM 140,000 (\$85,000 US), is Dynaudio's new flagship. And it wasn't built just to showcase the Danish loudspeaker manufacturer's technological competence. No, it's intended to attain a serious market share in the ultimate loudspeakers segment.

A growing number of loudspeaker manufacturers are trying to raise their profile with XXL speakers. They are following a trend which can also be observed in the car market. Why does Mercedes contemplate a project like the Maybach seen in our lead photo? As living (driving) testament to the technological competence of this brand rich in tradition, of course. The Maybach is a credible competitor to the current supplier of cars to the superrich, Rolls-Royce. And that fine company doesn't just build those ultra-expensive limousines, it also manages substantial sales in its target market. The Mercedes Maybach will find its customers in this niche, too - if only because of the fact that its name exudes tradition and, right, competence. Would its clientele so much as take a glance at a Korean hyper-car, no matter how well designed?

In the hi-fi business, there are close parallels to be found. The role of Rolls-Royce is here filled by premium brand Wilson Audio, which builds loudspeakers up to the DM 400,000 price level. And David A. Wilson is selling his behemoths, too - which is not that usual: most giant loudspeakers never leave the prototype stage and are never built in numbers.

Will Dynaudio's "Evidence" find its fate as a lonely showpiece in audio shows, or does it have what it takes to compete against its rivals? The conditions under which this project was conceived certainly give it a head start. For example: Dynaudio builds its speakers with a high depth of manufacture. The Danes don't lie when they tell you that they build their transducers themselves, from the ground up - including the drivers. The competition generally has to buy in those essential ingredients from suppliers such as Scan-Speak, Via, Focal or even Dynaudio. Incidentally, Dynaudio has more or less pulled out of the OEM business, concentrating (almost) all resources on its own-brand products.

If the team led by chief designer Mark Torup spends six years to build a reference transducer and has access to all resources of the company (including driver development), the result should satisfy the most demanding requirements.

The professionals having completed their work, the audiophile world is looking expectantly towards Denmark - to be shocked and delighted at the same time. That Dynaudio would create a transducer which is beyond reproach from the aesthetic and the measurements side was taken as given. That the firm would move the goal posts in several important criteria, few could imagine - including the staff of AUDIO.

For that, the "Evidence" seemed, at first glance, too conventional, too - as one colleague said - tame. But it took only a second glance to find the first shimmer of an explanation. Why did Torup invest in two identical-looking tweeters? Did they have a stock surplus? The two tweeters are working in tandem up to a certain frequency, the lower one is then faded out and leaves the rest to its upper twin. This design element is repeated for the two symmetrically placed midrange drivers and the four 8" woofers. The drivers, not to forget, are either completely new designs from first principles, or at least substantial developments of existing drivers, which in this form are used exclusively in the "Evidence".

The reason behind the use of a symmetrical driver layout for all frequency bands is to give the speaker a radiation pattern that actually makes sense under real-world conditions. In most applications, the Danish towers will find their home in large rooms - at least as far as width and depth are concerned. As to height, there is much less variation between rooms, whether the floor surface be 60 or 100 m².

This aspect is problematic. If all drivers radiate acoustic energy equally in all directions, there will be a panoply of reflections from both the floor and the ceiling - uncontrolled, chaotic, diffuse. Dynaudio's clever use of a symmetrical layout will reduce the angle of radiation upwards and downwards. Consequently, sound will be much more focused in the direction where it's needed, towards the listener's ears.

We experienced the beautiful result in the AUDIO listening room. A space which never remained empty ever since the "Evidence" arrived. No editor wanted to miss the noble Dane's performance; everybody wanted to savor it as much as possible. Fed by such excellent sources as the Wadia 860 CD player or the superb digital allrounder Krell KPS 25s, amplified by the great Cello "Audio Suite" preamp and - last not least - the mighty stereo power amp Class "Omega",

the "Evidence" really opened up acoustic windows which had remained firmly shut until now. And opened them wide! Entirely free of enclosure sound, the Dynaudio informed with unprecedented clarity about what the recording engineers had put onto a CD. Okay, when we compared it to the Wilson Audio "Maxx" in the AUDIO listening room, the latter had more fire and could move more air in the bass, but in the midrange and especially in the upper octaves the "Evidence" was more informative, more detailed and reproduced tonal color even better. Software permitting, this made for sound experiences which put everything heard before in the shade. With overproduced CDs, it could occasionally have the opposite effect. On "The Best of Paolo Conte" (EastWest/Warner) the extremes can be found on a single disc. On the track "Via con me", piano strokes were reproduced on the button, as was the alcohol-drenched voice, transporting the listener straight to a shady bar in Sansibar; on the track "Happy Feet", which suffers from uneven equalization, the listener was left unmoved.

This is a well-known phenomenon for AUDIO. Real high-performance components compensate nothing, they don't give an illusionary soundstage which is not on the recording, they don't hide recording mistakes, and they don't flatter recordings which have been released to the public with unpleasant distortion. The Dynaudio "Evidence" tells the truth, and nothing but. It is thus predestined for the sound of the next millennium. A time when the present digital standard will have been replaced by a new, much better one.

In some aspects, the Dynaudio "Evidence" is beaten by the Wilson Audio, in other, it is its superior. Altogether, it achieved a dream result. Even though it was substantially leaner than the American transducer in the deepest bass, the end result was 102 points. The Danish super speaker leaps to the very head of the field and proudly stands next to the legendary Wilson Audio "X-1 Grand Slamm". There is now a choice at the very top. Maybach or Rolls-Royce, Wilson Audio or Dynaudio. With either, you can't go wrong.

The Dynaudio "Evidence" only plays at its best with top electronics and carefully selected software. It uncovers mediocrity as mercilessly as no other speaker. It won't lend a soft sheen to the music, nor hide imperfections. Given this performance, it is good to know that the DVD consortium has finally reached an agreement on a new digital standard. That is sorely needed if a speaker like the "Evidence" is to realize its fantastic potential.

Lab Results

Perfect: except for some slight accents in the bass (room resonances) an ideal result.

A record: measured in our listening room, the Dynaudio "Evidence" astounded with a ruler-flat frequency response, at least in the mids and highs. No other transducer of this class has ever shown a better result. Entirely without digital processing, purely in the analog domain. The quite low AUDIO index of 57 shows that the "Evidence" can be driven by medium-powered amplifiers.

AUDIO sound rating

Neutrality: 100 points
Precision: 110 points
Airiness: 105 points
Aliveness: 100 points
Bass foundation: 95 points
Total: 102 points

AUDIOGRAM

Sound: excellent, 102 points
Finish: excellent
Reference Class: 5 Ears

Special features: Modular construction