

Xavian Medea stand-mount loudspeaker

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Last year's Virtuosa Anniversario was one of the biggest surprises in speakers and, alas, had very limited availability, with only 50 pairs produced. Can Xavian replicate the shock and awe with the Medea, a two-way, stand-mounted, non-limited version of the same? Knowing that the Czech brand's owner, CEO, and chief designer, the Italian-born Roberto Barletta, has maintained the same uncompromising approach with his latest creations, the signs appear promising from the outset.

Those who interpret the terms 'two-way' and 'stand-mount' as significantly cheaper and easier to accommodate are likely to be disappointed. While they initially offer exceptional value from a material standpoint, the Medeas are priced at €11,990 for the pair, with the matching stands costing €3,190. The total is nearly equivalent to the retail price of the floorstanding, three-way Virtuosa Anniversarios, and this also applies to the amount of space they occupy, assuming no one would be foolish enough to actually place them on a bookshelf...

No Mini In These Monitors

These are certainly not your typical stand-mount speakers – a category that has largely been reduced to mini-monitors since large, rectangular boxes with an eight-inch driver covering the lower part of the frequency band have fallen out of favour in light of slim columns utilising two or more smaller bass units to achieve the same purpose.

They are not rectangular; their baffles slope like those of the Anniversarios and any other speaker from Xavian's long-standing 'XN' line, with the top panel descending towards the rear at a 90-degree angle. However, by 'modern' stand-mount speaker standards, they are certainly big and bold. Accommodating the same 22.2 cm (approximately nine inches) Scan Speak Ellipticor woofer as the Virtuosa Anniversario, they are not particularly slim and are as deep as they are high.

That's a substantial amount of (very nice) walnut veneer on display, particularly on the sides. The weight comes in at a hefty 27.7 kg, and that's without the stands – which arrive in boxes the same size as the actual speakers and weigh almost the same at 25.6 kg (including 10 kg of sand filling)!





Like the Anniversarios, the Medeas feature a large, front-mounted, elliptical bass port, now oriented in landscape rather than portrait.

» Coupled to the speakers using four M8 bolts each, and resting on a generous footprint with adjustable Soundcare Superspikes (featuring integrated footers), the result is something that one's cats certainly won't knock over; indeed, a 150 lb Danish Mastiff probably wouldn't manage it either... Like the Anniversarios, the Medeas feature a large, front-mounted, elliptical bass port, now oriented in landscape rather than portrait.

Driver Delight

Similar to the Virtuosa Anniversario, the driver complement includes the highly advanced (and expensive) Scan Speak Ellipticor drivers—the previously mentioned 22 cm woofer and a 38 mm high elliptical dome tweeter. In fact, it shares the same driver complement as the Anniversario, apart from its 18 cm midrange. The low-frequency driver features six neodymium magnets arranged in a star configuration around an elliptical voice coil, which moves a paper membrane shaped in a manner reminiscent of a horn wave guide, rather than adopting a conical form. This design results in exceptionally low distortion figures across the entire bandwidth and dynamic range, as well as impressive impulse response.

The removal of the dedicated midrange driver with a single crossover point at 1,750Hz permits a crossover filter that is even simpler than that of the three-way Anniversario. Instead of five elements, it comprises just three, and, like the Anniversario, none of them is a capacitor. The specified frequency response for the Medea is from 39Hz to 20kHz, virtually identical to that of the Virtuosa Anniversario. This initially raises the question of where the extra driver and additional litres of internal volume the latter possesses have gone.

A potential explanation lies in the sensitivity rating, which at 87dB (2.83 V/1m) is a significant 5dB

lower than that of the Anniversario. This, along with a 4 Ohm impedance rating (identical to that of the Anniversario), led me to believe that the smaller Xavians would not pair as well with my single-ended 300Bs as the Anniversarios did. As we shall see later, I needn't have worried (so much).

Engaging And Direct

Although their ultimate dynamic range may be somewhat limited compared to larger multi-driver systems, two-way

speakers utilising minimalist crossovers are

frequently lauded for their engaging, direct, and emotionally compelling approach to music, which certainly proved to be the case for the Medea. The Virtuosa Anniversarios already displayed exceptional clarity, transient speed, and detail, and their smaller counterparts are *at least* equally proficient in these aspects.

However, the genius of the Medeas lies in the fact that this has not been achieved by thinning out the tonal balance and soundstaging. The detail and 'pinpoint' imaging, so cherished by audiophiles primarily guided by their left-brain thinking, are not artificially enhanced by making everything slightly smaller and thinner. That's the sort of expectation

one might have when a full-sized loudspeaker is condensed into a smaller package ('of course, they won't have the full-bodied sound and sheer impact of the full-size version - but do listen to the *precise* imaging and all that detail...') - but that certainly isn't Barletta's approach.

What you get is the same rich tonality and easy-going balance aimed at real-world listening rooms, rather than purpose-built auditoriums. There's top-to-bottom consistency and commendably deep, impactful bass, with all but the very lowest octave present at full force.

You also experience the same believable sense of scale, with life-sized voices and instruments, as offered by the Virtuosa Anniversarios. »





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» The main difference is those five decibels of sensitivity, which will likely translate to a similar difference in dynamic headroom (the low-frequency unit and the upper end of the recommended amplifier power rating range being the same between the two models). However, this is pretty much a non-issue for those of us living in apartment buildings or terraced housing who don't tend to retreat into soundproofed, windowless basement rooms to listen to our music.

To The Nines

Replacing the Audio Note Quest monoblocks (which deliver all of nine watts according to their manufacturer, though that's likely a bit of an exaggeration) with my custom Pink Faun Tube Pre from the 'big' system for my default 'baseline' Copland CSA 28 60-Watt hybrid amp (an oldie but a goodie) did not lead to any softening of transient impacts; a prime example being Front 242's *Headhunter* on 12-inch vinyl; a multilayered electro workout with a bassline derived from a string sample and relentlessly pounding industrial beats that can tend to become rather chaotic on speakers needing a firm hand from the driving amp(s) to keep them in check.

Not so here: at sound levels that were still vaguely sustainable in a domestic environment (admittedly in a listening configuration best described as 'semi-nearfield'), the Medeas' rendition was one of almost shocking directness—only surpassed by very large horn systems in appropriate rooms, and then not by much—while maintaining total control and lucidity in the midband, with Jean-Luc de Meyers' sneering voice distinctly standing out in its own virtual space against a busy background of percussion and whooshing electronic sounds, being that bit more intelligible than I am used to. Vocals are something of an eye-opener, in any case.

The relative lack of interference from crossover components in the signal path and the remarkable linearity—at least among loudspeaker drivers—of the Scan Speak Ellipticor drive units certainly contributes to highlighting the special qualities of a single-ended, non-feedback 300B triode amplifier design, particularly that wonderfully tactile, grain-free midband. I wouldn't unreservedly recommend this combination, mind you; under more standard conditions, I would concur with Xavian's recommendation of 20 watts amplifier power as a minimum, which is rather accurate. However, in situations where it performs well, the outcome is truly something to behold. The Medeas may not boast the above-average

sensitivity rating of their larger siblings; however, this does not suggest that they present anything less than a (tube-) friendly amplifier load.

Cheerleading?

At the risk of coming across as a cheerleader for this tiny, artisanal Czech company that is rarely found at the major international high-end audio events (the cost of maintaining a presence there is likely prohibitive given the scale of the operation) - this first non-limited edition speaker from the reinstated and rejuvenated top-of-the-range XN series demonstrates that Roberto Barletta has in no way suffered from the 'difficult second album syndrome'.

The Xavian Medea is as revealing, impactful, and agile as it is friendly, coherent, and engaging in typical domestic settings; it is as precise as it is comprehensive. Furthermore, it offers transparency—particularly by avoiding the addition of grain and texture that might obscure lower-level information—allowing it to do justice to very high-end sources and amplification devices, whilst not being excessively punishing to more modest devices. In fact, during everyday use, it delivered background sounds from a distinctly lo-fi internet radio player that were quite enjoyable, providing body and scale, if not refinement. And, as with all truly exceptional hi-fi components, it raises challenging questions regarding the necessity for 'more' in terms of size, complexity, and expenditure. +

Technical specifications

Type: two-way, standmount, front ported speaker

Driver Complement: 1x 120 mm Scan-Speak Ellipticor silk dome tweeter, 1x 222 mm Scan-Speak Ellipticor woofer

Sensitivity: 87 dB

Impedance: 4 Ohms

Frequency Response: 39 – 20,000 Hz (-3 dB)

Recommended Power: 20 – 200 W

Dimensions (H x D x W): 54 x 26 x 52,5 cm; stand 57 x 34 x 51 cm

Weight: 27,7 kg; stand 25,6 kg

Price: Medea, walnut (pair) – €11.990, textile magnetic cover grille (pair) – €399, Medea stand (pair) – €3.190.

Manufacturer Xavian Electronics s.r.o., Prague (Czechia)

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Distributor Official worldwide Xavian e-Shop

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