

Haydn Seek



Adam Smith auditions the latest version of Vienna Acoustics' compact standmounting loudspeakers, the Haydn Grands...

Given that we all buy a hi-fi system on which to play music, it is no surprise that many manufacturers use something of a musical nature to identify their models. It started a long time ago when Pye came up with the 'Mozart' moniker for their new amplifier in the 1950s and has continued ever since. Over the years, from one manufacturer or another, we've had the likes of the Minim, Cello, Stradivarius, Chorus and Crescendo and, frankly, I think Cerwin Vega are missing a trick by not coming up with something suitable for their products. Personally, I'd be happy to consider a pair of 'Motorhead' floorstanders, possibly in conjunction with a 'Sepultura' centre channel...

The people who appear to have taken it the furthest, however, are the chaps at Vienna Acoustics in Austria, as their range of conventionally

styled loudspeakers is named after various composers. We reviewed the floorstanding Bach Grands last year in our March 2007 issue and this time it is the turn of the standmounting Haydn Grands to come under the spotlight.

Vienna Acoustics were formed in, ermm, Vienna in 1989, and have gained an enviable reputation for high quality designs that are beautifully made with meticulous attention to detail. Importer REL also informed us that the entire range has undergone something of a tweak to give them a bit extra verve for the keener European ear, which sounded promising.

The smallest model in the range, the Haydn Grands measure 361x174x265mm and tip the scales at a solid 10kg apiece. Driver lineup consists of a 6in (150mm) bass/midrange driver and a 1in (25mm) soft dome tweeter. The bass driver

uses a cone made from a material dubbed X3P, which is a reformulation of Vienna's own XPP cone; adding three thermoplastic polymers to the TPX material that forms the basis of XPP. The result is transparent and has quite interesting self damping properties. During manufacture, each side of the cone is subjected to high temperatures, making the outer layers harden but leaving the centre more malleable - the result is a 'sandwich' type cone made from one single material - most ingenious.

The tweeter is more conventional, but used a hand coated silk dome and ferrofluid damping, with a very light voice coil and compact neodymium motor system. The two drivers are linked via a simple crossover that uses high quality, tightly toleranced components.

Part of the reason for the compact tweeter is to allow the use of Vienna's 'wedge' port, which I am

thankfully assured has nothing to do with Austin Princesses. Instead it means that the port comes up behind the tweeter and splits into two to exit either side of it in a carefully designed flare. Vienna claim that, as well as being a more compact arrangement, this improves phase coherency and gives a 12dB reduction in port noise.

Finish of the Haydn Grands is stunning, and they are available in Piano Black, Maple and Cherry, as well as the supplied Rosewood. A very sturdy single pair of terminals are provided for connection duties and the grilles feature a v-shaped diffuser running along their length to improve dispersion. Vienna state that this can be used as an additional tuning device and that the grilles can be left on for "all but the most critical listening". Also supplied by the importer were a pair of very sturdy matching stands, that were used for the review. These are not available in the UK at present, but REL recommend massy items around 28in high for best results.

SOUND QUALITY

Having been thoroughly impressed by the Bach Grands last year, but with the caveat that they could be a little too laid-back at times, I was delighted to hear that the voicing carried out has perked up the Haydn Grands very nicely indeed. They still offer the sort of flowing ease and sense of purpose that the Bachs offered, but are now more than willing to let their hair down a bit when required.

Lari White's vocals on 'Nothing but Love' from her 'Green Eyed Soul' album stepped expertly out of the compact cabinets and took up residence very solidly indeed in the listening room. The little Viennas had no problem coping with the deep bass line behind her either, and turned in an assured and confident performance. Moving along a few tracks further to 'High' showed that the Haydn Grands do indeed love a good rhythm, and they positively lapped up this track.

Part of this good result is undoubtedly down to the Haydns' low end which really is most accomplished. Bass lines were tight, fast and impressively weighty, with the wedge port offering a good dose of additional heft without any unwanted noises. Whether banging out a fast beat or revealing the intricacies of each note from the acoustic bass on the Naim label's new Nicholas Meier release, 'Silence Talks', the Haydn Grands took it all in their stride.

Across the mid, that slight

lift in output around 1kHz [see MEASURED PERFORMANCE] works wonders on bringing vocals to the fore. As mentioned, Lari White sounded sublime, and the Viennas also cut through the rather densely recorded 'Intervention' from Arcade Fire, to bring Win Butler's lead vocals out of the mix very nicely indeed. However, continuing to explore vocal material I did become aware that the Haydn Grands do have a slight 'dryness' to their presentation. Whilst this never affected the emotiveness or presence of singers, it could occasionally make the likes of Norah Jones and Diana Krall sound a little huskier than they might normally. However, this could not really be considered as a fault, but more of a character trait, and I suspect that a warmer sounding amplifier than our Electrocompaniet PI-2 would ameliorate it nicely.

At the top end, treble was smooth and detailed and yet, had an underlying crispness that is only rarely found; only then with the best soft dome tweeters. The rise in output towards 15kHz imparts a lovely sparkle to proceedings and the Haydn Grands miss absolutely nothing in terms of



Exploded view of the Haydn Grands' wedge port and tweeter assembly

highly and so generally find that smaller units really do not cut it for me, even though they may offer advantages in other areas.

Consequently it's always nice to find a pair of small loudspeakers that really do impress, and the Vienna Acoustics Haydn Grands are such a design. They are small, unobtrusive, stylish and superbly built, yet the sound they make transcends their dimensions in a very convincing manner.

REFERENCE SYSTEM

Pioneer PLC-590/SME M2-10 turntable
Ortofon 2M Black cartridge
Trichord Diablo phono stage
Cambridge Azur 840C CD player
Electrocompaniet PI-2 amplifier

"they should be very high on your audition list - truly a virtuoso performance..."

top end detail but add no artificial gloss to anything. Where the tweeter really scores, however, is in terms of adding atmosphere to the sound. As I listened to various different material, the word that kept popping into my head was 'spacious'. The Haydn Grands really are impressively atmospheric in their performance and set up a commodious image with virtually anything they are asked to play.

CONCLUSION

Regular readers will know that, when it comes to loudspeakers, as far as I am concerned, the bigger (and usually, uglier) the better. I value the dynamics, bass weight and large soundstage of a big speaker very

VERDICT

Confident, dynamic and atmospheric standmounters that will even appeal to fans of larger loudspeakers.

VIENNA ACOUSTICS
HAYDN GRAND £795
REL Acoustics
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FOR

- bass weight and pace
- atmospheric treble
- build and finish

AGAINST

- slight dryness to vocals

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

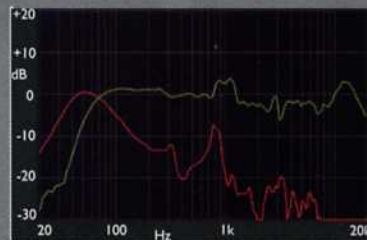
The Vienna Acoustics Haydn Grands are not as flat as some in measurement terms but do have some interesting aspects to their performance. Most notable is the lift at around 800-1,200Hz which should add definition to vocals, and the dip in the area above this will help to minimise any harshness. However, this does stretch up to around 9kHz before the tweeter starts to peak in output and so may make itself known in character terms. Above this, the rise in treble output will add good top end presence.

At the low end, the Haydns perform very well for such a small enclosure. The main driver operates down to around 70Hz, before handing over to the port, which is tuned to around 45Hz. As a result, the Viennas should have good low end heft for their size.

Electrically, the Haydn Grands are quite well damped and, other than an inductive peak at around 3kHz, are very well behaved. Average impedance comes out at 6.2 Ohms, dropping to a minimum of around 4.5 Ohms so they do represent a genuine 4 Ohm load. Measured sensitivity was 84dB,

a long way short of Vienna's quoted 89dB, meaning that they will soak up a reasonable amount of power. As a result, 50 Watts or more would be wise. AS

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



Green - driver output
Red - port output

IMPEDANCE

