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MARTIN COLLOMS

# Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg

## LOUDSPEAKER

**A**s founder and chief designer of Sonus Faber, Franco Serblin designed and manufactured many loudspeakers of acclaimed high quality, mainly in box form. Nevertheless, he remained painfully aware that such conventional rectangular parallelepiped constructions inevitably possessed an inherent and hard-to-suppress resonant signature characteristic of box-form cabinetry, significantly differing from that for a musical instrument. Franco had long obsessed over the sound and construction of classical string instruments, violins, violas, and cellos made by grand masters over centuries. He valued highly those richly resonant, expressive, complex sonic signatures.

Most loudspeakers have, to some degree, a characteristic voice or color, partly stemming from their materials and construction. While designers have become skilled in controlling those voices, especially working to decolorize enclosures, some of that characteristic parallelepiped struc-

tural signature remains; we sometimes use the word “boxy” to describe this. Such an acoustic signature is largely foreign to a musical instrument, and if noticeably present, may impair the sound.

Painstaking trials by Serblin led to the development of elaborate enclosures that moved beyond the typical box commonly tasked with containing an air space and supporting the drive units. He advanced the concept of a working acoustic structure whose behavior relating to vibration, and the resulting sound radiation, would be well-controlled and musically consonant. Even the Ancients knew that curved structures sound more harmonious and consonant with the timbre of a musical instrument. Over decades or more, there has been a search for harmony with an absence of challenging “wolf” tones.

*Stereophile*'s Larry Greenhill interviewed Serblin at CES Chicago in June 1992. Serblin explained that in childhood, he had some experience of classical music, as his master-carpenter



## SPECIFICATIONS

**Description** Two-way rear-ported bass-reflex loudspeaker with laminated wood cabinet.

Frequency range: 39Hz–23kHz.

Impedance: 7 ohms nominal,

3.8 ohms minimum, at 5.5kHz.

Sensitivity: 87dB/2.83V/m. Mini-

mum amplifier power: 40Wpc.

**Dimensions** 16" (405mm)

H × 9.5" (240mm) W × 16.9"

(430mm) D. Stand height: 29.1"

(74cm). Weight: 27.5lb (12.5kg)

each loudspeaker; 17.6lb (8kg)

each stand.

**Price** \$13,475/pair + \$2500/pair

for stands. Warranty: 3 years

parts and labor for defects

and issues other than misuse.

Number of US dealers: 12.

**Finish** Solid wood with parts made of chrome and aluminum.

**Serial number of units reviewed**

Numbered pair 371 (auditioned),

326 (measured). Manufactured in

Vicenza, Italy.

**Manufacturer**

Franco Serblin/Laboratorium,

Via Riviera Berica 628 p/1,

Vicenza, Italy 36100

Web: francoserblin.it/en

US distributor:

AXISS Audio USA

2190 Nolensville Pike Suite C

Nashville, TN 37220

Tel: (866) 295-4133

Email: sales@axissaudio.com

Web: axissaudio.com

father had a piano. When he later came to experience the extant commercial standard of audio sound quality, he was fascinated, frustrated, and determined to do better. Thus did he pursue a lifelong personal ideal of audio perfection.

Franco's first success after establishing Sonus Faber was with the Minima, a compact, somewhat original design intended for shelf or stand. He explained that while the Minima went against the grain—or at least of then-current US ideals—of greater size and power, if optimally located in smaller spaces, it could nevertheless operate “exquisitely and musically.”

Franco felt that a great design could enjoy an extended production lifetime. “We should not be enslaved to the treadmill of constant commerce-driven design renewal,” he said. He revealed that the Minima was an early example of a refined, minimalist, “6dB” (crossover slope) design, which aimed to blend the driver acoustic outputs with only mild phase shifts and minimal transient overshoot or ringing for a more natural sound.

In the decades that followed, he grew Sonus Faber into a very substantial company, culminating in an expansion to a massive modern factory at Arcugnano,



Vicenza province. Suffering the pressures of modern business and finance, Franco changed gears,<sup>1</sup> deciding to pursue an alternative, more easily managed enterprise, initially producing high-end silver-palladium alloy cables under his new brand Yter, in association with his engineer son-in-law, Massimiliano.

Looking back to Franco's classic Guarneri Homage, it is remarkably similar in enclosure size and driver complement to the Accordo Goldberg, as this review demonstrates, though separated by some 30 years of evolution.

### The Accordo Goldberg

A more powerful loudspeaker derived from the smaller extant Accordo, the Accordo Goldberg comes with a must-

<sup>1</sup> After a third of a century at the company he founded, Franco enjoyed a period of retirement from that near-lifetime of research and manufacture, but then the creative urge once again took hold. In 2006, Franco started a new venture with his son-in-law, beginning with high-end precious-metal loudspeaker cables of original design (YTER), followed by the exquisitely finished Accordo compact loudspeaker. A second loudspeaker followed, the Kiema, an ambitious floorstander with concave sidewalls, which I reviewed in 2011 (*HiFiCritic* Vol.5 No.3). In July 1994, I reviewed for *Stereophile* what could be considered the predecessor of the Accordo Goldberg: the Sonus Faber Guarneri Homage. You can read that review at [stereophile.com/standloudspeakers/487/index.html](http://stereophile.com/standloudspeakers/487/index.html).

## MEASUREMENTS

I measured a different sample of the Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg loudspeaker to those auditioned by Martin Colloms. Mine had the serial number 326. I used DRA Labs' MLSSA system, a calibrated DPA 4006 microphone, and an Earthworks microphone preamplifier to measure the quasi-anechoic frequency- and time-domain behavior in the farfield. I used an Earthworks QTC-40 microphone, which has a 1/4" capsule, for the nearfield responses.

The Accordo Goldberg's voltage sensitivity is specified as 87dB/2.83V/m. My B-weighted estimate, measured on the tweeter axis, was usefully higher, at 88.6dB(B)/2.83V/m. The Accordo Goldberg's nominal impedance is specified as 7 ohms, with a minimum value of 3.8 ohms at 5.5kHz. The impedance magnitude (fig.1, solid trace), examined with Dayton Audio's DATS V2 system, remained above 6 ohms from the low bass through the mid-treble region, though it dropped below 4 ohms between 4kHz and 8kHz. The minimum impedance was 3.8 ohms at 5kHz. The electrical phase angle (fig.1, dotted trace) is occasionally high, which means that the

effective resistance, or EPDR,<sup>1</sup> drops below 4 ohms in several regions in the bass and below 3 ohms between 2.3kHz and 5.6kHz and above 7kHz. The minimum EPDR values are 2.84 ohms at 109Hz, 1.81 ohms at 3.4kHz, and 2.1 ohms at 12.5kHz. The Accordo Goldberg is a relatively demanding load for the partnering amplifier.

Some very small discontinuities in the impedance traces imply the presence of cabinet resonances of some kind. When I investigated the enclosure's resonant modes with a plastic-tape accelerometer, I found a low-level mode at 375Hz on the longer convex sidewall (fig.2) and an even lower-level mode at 656Hz on the shorter, concave sidewall. It is extremely unlikely that this behavior will have audible consequences.

The saddle centered on 40Hz in the impedance magnitude trace suggests that this is the tuning frequency of the port on the speaker's rear panel. The blue trace in fig.3 shows the woofer's response measured in the nearfield; it has the expected notch at the port tuning frequency. The port's response, plotted in the ratio of the square root of its radiating diameter to

that of the woofer,<sup>2</sup> is shown as the red trace in fig.3. Its output peaks almost an octave higher than its tuning frequency, before rolling off cleanly, other than a low-level peak between 400Hz and 600Hz.

<sup>1</sup> EPDR is the resistive load that gives rise to the same peak dissipation in an amplifier's output devices as the loudspeaker. See “Audio Power Amplifiers for Loudspeaker Loads,” *JAES*, Vol.42 No.9, September 1994, and [stereophile.com/reference/707heavy/index.html](http://stereophile.com/reference/707heavy/index.html).

<sup>2</sup> See [stereophile.com/content/measuring-loudspeakers-part-three-page-6](http://stereophile.com/content/measuring-loudspeakers-part-three-page-6).

Stereophile Franco Serblin Accordo Impedance (ohms) & Phase (deg) vs Frequency (Hz)

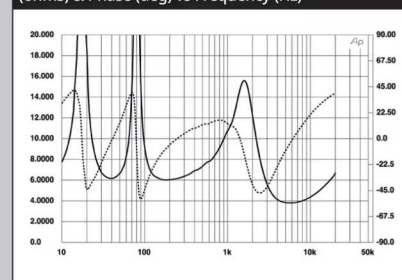
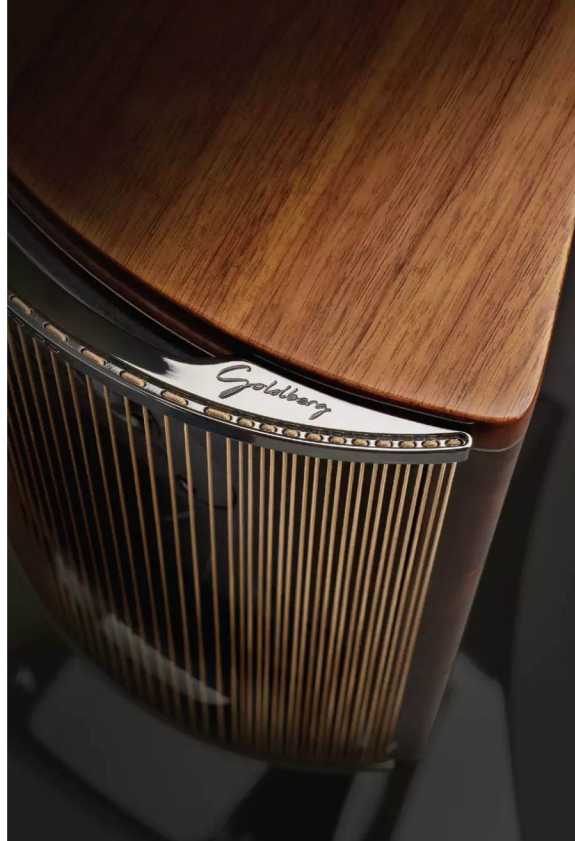


Fig.1 Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg, electrical impedance (solid) and phase (dashed) (2 ohms/vertical div.).

have accessory: a stylishly flowing stand in black and chrome. Taking account of this loudspeaker's curvaceous, real-wood cabinetry and its eye-catching proportions, the combination is more like a luxury room accessory than our industry's typical and rather boring slab-sided loudspeaker monoliths.

But would this critic be seduced by this eye-catching creation? Initially, I was surprised by their looks, but their appearance grew on me over the review period. It is well known that even the color of an enclosure can influence opinions on sound quality. Our tests are not blind, so reviewers have to work patiently with the test sample in plain sight until possible preconceptions are dispelled and the essence of the design is revealed.

What about the stand? Although it is marketed as an "accessory," I consider it essential; much of the speaker's spatial performance quality will be lost with wall or



shelf mounting. The Accordo Goldberg is no less than a sound-reproducing component engineered as Italian haute couture. If you buy the loudspeakers, get the stands.

Guided by Franco's teaching and underlying design philosophy, Massimiliano has taken up the challenge of continuing Franco's heritage<sup>2</sup> while cognizant of new developments in drive unit technology, enclosure design, and electroacoustic analysis. The product is now distributed in 30 countries. While building on the design premise of the smaller Accordo, with its 150mm bass-mid, this larger Goldberg variant benefits from a 180mm driver, with 44% more radiating area, from the same Scan-Speak audiophile series—mounted, of course, in a larger enclosure. Great benefit accrues from these two factors, including

<sup>2</sup> Serblin died in 2013. See [stereophile.com/content/franco-serblin](http://stereophile.com/content/franco-serblin).

## measurements, continued

The black trace below 310Hz in fig.3 shows the complex sum of the woofer's and port's nearfield responses, taking into account both acoustic phase and the fact that the port is on the enclosure's rear. The peak between 70Hz and 140Hz will be due to the nearfield measurement technique, which assumes that the baffle extends to infinity in both horizontal and vertical planes. The Franco Serblin speaker's woofer tuning is maximally flat, but the low frequencies will sound somewhat lightweight without boundary reinforcement.

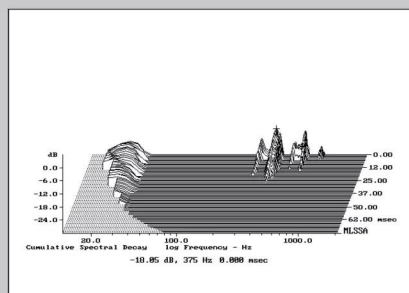
The sum of the Accordo Goldberg's nearfield responses in fig.3 is spliced at

310Hz to its farfield response, this averaged across a 30° horizontal window centered on the tweeter axis. There is a lack of energy in the lower midrange, which might be due to insufficient baffle-step compensation in the crossover.<sup>3</sup> There is then a slight lack of energy in the presence region and a slight excess between 4kHz and 11kHz. Predicting the effect of this behavior on perceived sound quality is difficult, as this will depend both on which frequency region the listener takes as a reference, which in turn will depend on the music being played. If the levels in the upper midrange and mid-treble are perceived

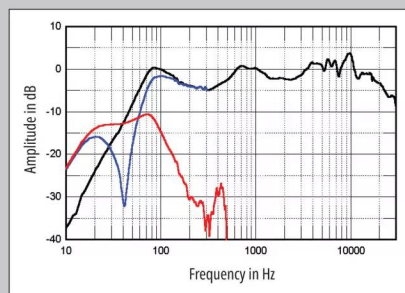
as being correct, the loudspeaker will sound lean and polite. If the lower mids and the presence region are heard as correct, the upper mids will sound exaggerated, though this may also be interpreted as added detail.

The perceived balance will also depend

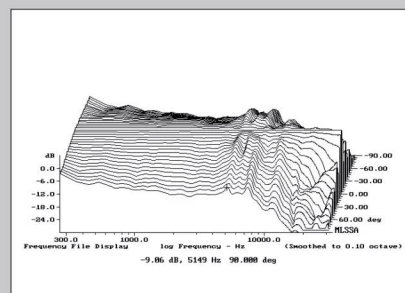
<sup>3</sup> A woofer is omnidirectional at low frequencies, due to the fact that the wavelengths of the sound are much larger than the size of the baffle in which it is mounted. As the frequency rises to where the wavelength is of the same order as the baffle's dimensions, the radiation pattern becomes more directional. As more energy is now being projected in the forward direction, the on-axis response rises, which results in the upper-midrange output being higher than that in the lower midrange.



**Fig.2** Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg, cumulative spectral-decay plot calculated from output of accelerometer fastened to the center of the longer sidewall (MLS driving voltage to speaker, 7.55V; measurement bandwidth, 2kHz).



**Fig.3** Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg, anechoic response on tweeter axis at 50°, averaged across 30° horizontal window and corrected for microphone response, with the nearfield responses of the woofer (blue), port (red), and their complex sum (black) respectively plotted below 350Hz, 500Hz, and 310Hz.



**Fig.4** Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg, lateral response family at 50°, normalized to response on tweeter axis, from back to front: differences in response 90°–5° off axis, reference response, differences in response 5°–90° off axis.

improved sensitivity, maximum loudness, lower distortion, and the ability to drive larger acoustic spaces. Meanwhile, it retains the elegantly slim and curvaceous proportions, remaining far removed from a conventional box: a boring old parallelepiped it is not.

My samples were ex-demo and well run in. At 16" high, a slim 9 1/2" wide, and just less than 17" deep, this certainly is a compact design. Each solidly built speaker weighs 27.5lb, each stand 17.6lb.

### Technology

For most loudspeaker driver cones, the sound-radiating element is conical in profile, the optimal shape for maximizing sound-power delivery for a given moving mass and input power. But the precise shape and profile has a profound effect on the sound. Here, one of the most respected and costly mid-bass designs has been chosen from Scan-Speak, a highly regarded Danish producer that in recent years has become an independent division of Eastech.

Near-legendary driver engineer Ragnar Lian and his colleagues had practiced their art at Scan-Speak, from the 1980s, designing low-distortion motor systems that led to many patents. Pioneering details included eddy-current-suppressing copper shading rings and caps as well as "T"-cut magnet pole pieces and low-distortion magnetic alloys. Some of these details may be regarded as precu-

sors of the all-encompassing design approach pursued by Purifi, seen in the mid-bass driver of the recently reviewed Thrax Siren. Scan-Speak also patented that now-familiar radially curved "sliced" cone design, which sought to solve the primary higher frequency "breakup" resonance, which was embraced by Wilson Audio and many other manufacturers.

For the latest variant, the composition of the processed-fiber pulp of the cone is reinforced by the addition of mineral microspheres, for response extension and a matching increase in resolution. A final touch is a hemispherical alloy dome over the voice coil; this proverbial "dust cap" benefits the output by helping to reinforce the cone apex.

Frequencies above 2.5kHz or so are handled by the excellent D2905/970000 29mm silk-dome tweeter, also by Scan-Speak and boasting a low resonant frequency of 330Hz via an energy-absorbing rear chamber combined with a very low distortion magnet design. Both drivers are customized to specifications set by Franco Serblin, the company.

Refined over years of development to not sound like a rectangular box, the enclosure is undoubtedly special. Front, back, and sides are antiparallel and strongly curved. Massimiliano explained that structural resonances are controlled by a massively laminated construction comprising 24 solid walnut planks for each enco-

### measurements, continued

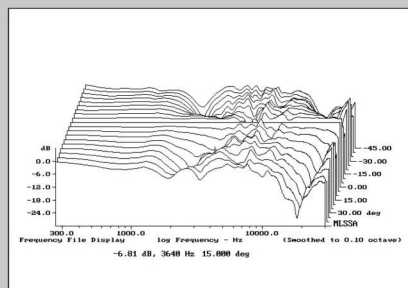
on the speaker's horizontal radiation pattern. This is shown in fig.4, normalized to the response on the tweeter axis, which therefore appears as a straight line. The tweeter's dispersion narrows sharply in its top octave, but the mid-treble region evens out to the Accordo Goldberg's sides. (The manual suggests that the tweeter "intensity" can be lowered by increasing the angle of toe-in so that the tweeter axes cross in front of the listener.) The even spacing of the contour lines below 5kHz will correlate with stable, accurate stereo imaging. Fig.5 shows the Accordo

Goldberg's dispersion in the vertical plane, again normalized to the response on the tweeter axis. A suckout between 2kHz and 3kHz develops more than 10° above and 20° below the tweeter axis, which suggests that the crossover frequency is in this region. However, the lack of presence-region energy is accentuated more than 10° below that axis.

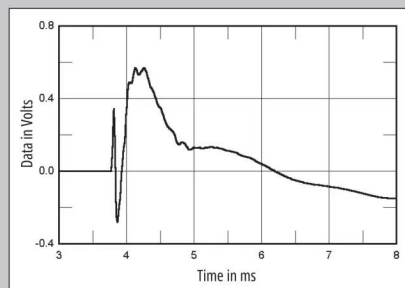
In the time domain, the Serblin speaker's step response (fig.6) indicates that the tweeter and woofer are both connected in positive acoustic polarity. The tweeter's output arrives first at the microphone, and

the decay of its step cleanly merges with the positive-going start of the woofer's step, which indicates an optimal crossover topology. Other than some low-level hash in the mid-treble region, the Accordo Goldberg's cumulative spectral-decay, or waterfall, plot (fig.7) is superbly clean.

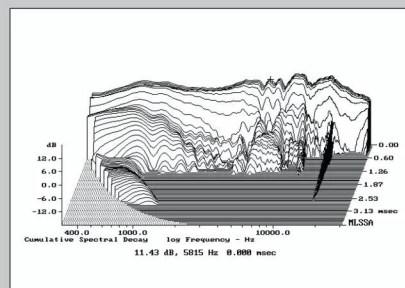
There are positive aspects of the Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg's measured performance, such as that impressive waterfall plot. But its departure from a flat frequency response suggests that its sonic character will depend on system matching and setup.—John Atkinson



**Fig.5** Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg, vertical response family at 50", normalized to response on tweeter axis, from back to front: differences in response 45°–5° above axis, reference response, differences in response 5°–45° below axis.



**Fig.6** Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg, step response on tweeter axis at 50" (5ms time window, 30kHz bandwidth).



**Fig.7** Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg, cumulative spectral-decay plot on tweeter axis at 50" (0.15ms risetime).

sure. Made in laterally symmetric matched pairs, each batch (sufficient to make 100 cabinets) is seasoned for four months before the final build, which includes laminated interlayers. The internal wiring is silver-plated copper. High-power MOX resistors fine-tune the gentle (6dB/octave) crossover slopes. The 20 liter (5.3 gallon) interior volume is damped by polyester wool and tuned by a rear port 2" in diameter and 7.8" deep, fitted with an absorbent lining of thin fiber and tuned to about 48Hz. The crossover frequency is fairly low, at about 2kHz, while the audiophile-grade crossover employs close-tolerance OFC copper wire, air-core inductors, and polypropylene-dielectric capacitors of 3% tolerance. Connection is single-wired—biwiring or biamping is not possible—via audiophile-grade WBT terminals serving spades or 4mm plugs.

### The sound

Experience with the Accordo Goldberg has reacquainted me with Franco's pursuit of truly natural timbres. From the first few notes, I heard an unstressed, communicative delivery that quickly drew me in. While rock and electric jazz played as well as most designs of this size, power handling, and compact category, such material could not reveal the full measure of the quality on offer here.

It was with simple recordings of natural sounds that these speakers' true excellence was revealed. Here, the Accordo Goldberg proved capable of effortlessly differentiating recording and production methods and the resulting sound quality. Fine recordings with dense orchestration exploded into life, belying the compact size of the reproducers. At times, it was much like experiencing a top-class laser projector in the domain of sound; it felt very close to sonic holography. Even with a large orchestra, the perception of individual-instrument focus and perspective was compelling. The Tony Faulkner recording of Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* (CD, Telarc 80387) was sumptuous, demonstrating a huge soundstage filled in with an extraordinary quantity of microdetail. Near-pinpoint imaging was heard over the whole soundscape.

Additionally, a convincing sense of scale and power belied these loudspeakers' compact dimensions. The musical performance was highly expressive—at times near heart-stopping. Here was a seductive recreation of a shimmering acoustic space with image depth in spades, extending way beyond the confines of my room. Not one of my listeners dared speak until the conclusion. Microdynamics were state of the art and beautifully nuanced. I could not stop listening to these loudspeakers and expended many more days than I anticipated. There was

a dynamic expression and naturalness to the midrange akin to a full-range electrostatic.

The Goldbergs are ruthlessly transparent and read the quality of all that was used with them. Sources, amplification, supports, cables, and formats were easily differentiated. We heard less an analytic dissection of the shortcomings of our equipment and more a clear exposition as to how it all could be better. While not wholly neutral in the manner of a top-class studio monitor, the Goldbergs are more than sufficiently revealing to be used in acoustic recording sessions with smaller forces. They tell you much about hall acoustic, microphone placement, floor and wall reflections, and the rest.

I learned still more about my favourite recordings with these modestly sized speakers, even excerpts that had been played hundreds of times in multiple sessions involving many products.

My practiced listening partner requested that old Decca (Argo) warhorse, the vinyl Vivaldi *Four Seasons* conducted by Neville Marriner. And we thought that we knew this recording to the last semiquaver—Ouch! How wrong we were! We were reminded of that Goldmund Reference turntable review when we first experienced this work in its full glory decades ago—or so we thought at the time. Now, from that same recording (and at CD resolution), it was evident there was still more music to experience. There is the first onset of a note, a steep transient as the bow excites a string. There is then that rich, nasal resonance when it sings into life. Then there's the power and timbral authority as "Summer" builds

and as the Goldbergs transport the band into your room with vibrant musicality.

Simply put, these speakers do not sound like audio machinery working. That subtly nuanced harpsichord continuo and its body casework was perfectly imaged, almost as a solo piece. You could almost feel Summer's shimmering warmth. The violins were not just voiced; they sang with a rich sonority and natural dynamic expression, seducing listeners and demanding their attention. Was this thanks to the complex curved musical-instrument-related casework?

While sounding lovely on rock, including *Gravity* by Rickie Lee Jones (on CD), with no added hardness or cone "shout," the Goldberg does not quite deliver the punch and bassline drive required for a full rock experience. It fights back with extraordinary introspection and vocal clarity. So, while rock may be compromised in terms of the sheer power of the live stage experience, the Goldberg rewards handsomely by transporting the listener to the musical event. Vocals are notably more intimate and less electronic, less mechanical sounding. The female singing



voice in particular is something of a revelation, in purity, dynamics, and expression. The Goldberg brilliantly showed off Suzanne Vega's stunning performance on *Solitude Standing*, played here on the original LP issue (A&M SP-5136).

The Franco Serblin Accordo Goldberg effortlessly reveals recorded technique details including mike placement, plus the hall acoustic in considerable scale, illuminating far boundaries. Sampling the Dorian issue of the Mozart Organ Fantasy in F Minor, K. 608, with the wonderful Jean Guillou recorded at the fantastic Cathedral of St. Eustache Paris, the Accordo Goldberg sounded unusually dynamic and excellently expressed the truly cavernous acoustic. Here was transparency in spades (with room lights off for the best effect). I was amazed by the magnificent dimensionality matched by the almost hyperreal voicing of the tin-alloy pipes, even if the full weight of the tallest flutes was a little muted.

I tried a heavy dance track that had succeeded with the Magico A5. At more than moderate volume, the Goldberg said no thanks.

Few individual recordings could show all that is possible from the Accordo Goldberg, but on "A Nightingale Sang in Berkley Square" from *We Are In Love* (CD, 466736 2), Harry Connick Jr. shows off amazingly communicative vocal skills, and that string bass solo is near heart-stopping in expression and presence. You can enjoy the sound quality and the musical performance in equal measure. Rhythm and timing are as good as they get.

"Lightning," sung by Janice Pendarvis on Philip Glass's *Songs from Liquid Days* (CD, CBS MK 39564), was notably unstrained, well timed, and rewardingly expressive. Many loudspeakers trip up on this recording. We also played *Pyramid*, by the Modern

## MARTIN'S MEASUREMENTS

Basic measurements were undertaken to confirm the condition of these UK review samples and help coordinate with John Atkinson's full tech report on his US examples. I checked the effect of the near-vestigial grille; I found little to note save errors of less than 1dB in the mid-treble from its addition, increasing to 1.5dB at 15kHz. I consider such changes negligible, as I could not reliably hear the effect. I think that is because the strand spacing is wider here than when I had previously encountered this design detail with a Sonus Faber design.

Consistency of output was very good both on and below axis, the latter consonant with the designed high-stand elevation. If you stand up, expect a loss of a few dB from 2–6kHz, heard as a mild dulling of the primary treble. For auditioning, please take a seat!

There was some diminution in axial output by 20kHz, here reading –3dB, but the output was otherwise flat to 16kHz marred only by a mild 2dB trough from 1.5kHz to 3.5kHz. This characteristic is often preferred, as it smooths the power transition from the over-the-crossover region. The primary

frequency response from 400Hz to 15kHz measured very well, with a  $\pm 2$ dB uniformity in  $1/3$ -octave analysis, ultimately leading to a deep if audibly harmless cancellation notch at 22kHz.

For a lateral 5° off-axis, the speaker again offers impressively uniform output from 200Hz to 16kHz  $\pm 2.5$ dB.

Sensitivity was measured at an average 87dB/2.83V/m, and the pair was seen to be well-matched. Off axis, the output was remarkably consistent, confirming excellent driver integration. Off-axis response begins to tail off beyond 9kHz.

Measured in room, with spatial averaging, the Accordo Goldberg achieved quite good bass reach, to 50Hz at –3dB and 40Hz at –6dB. Subjectively, the bass extended quite well to 40Hz in my large, open-plan room while avoiding any boominess. It was reflex-port-tuned to a low 41Hz with a sensibly overdamped alignment, in anticipation of some room gain at lowest frequencies. A moderate harmonic mode associated with the port was present at 800Hz, reading –18dB.

These results suggest that the bass output for this compact should be less critical of room placement than with other loudspeakers.—Martin Colloms

## ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

**Analog sources** Linn LP12 turntable with Keel chassis, Karousel main bearing, Radical motor control, Naim ARO, and Lyra Delos cartridge.

**Digital sources** Naim UnitiCore network server and S/PDIF source. Roon Nucleus+. Naim ND555 Streamer-DAC with dual 555PS(DR) power supplies.

**Preamplification** Townsend Allegri Reference, Naim SuperLine-SuperCap DR phono preamplifier.

**Power amplifier** Naim NAP250 2024 series.

**Loudspeakers** FinkTeam KIM, BBC LS3/5a 15 ohm, Magico A5.

**Accessories** Several 4- and 5-tier point contact Naim Frain racks; Transparent XL MM2, Naim NAC A5 speaker cables, Naim standard and Super Lumina interconnects, Transparent MM2 and van den Hul Carbon TFU interconnect cables. Transparent XL series, Naim Powerline Lite and Powerline mains supply cables.—Martin Colloms

Jazz Quartet (Atlantic 1325-2), on CD. This minimalist 1960 stereo recording was stripped bare by the Goldberg and was all the better for finding the musicians starkly illuminated, with superb focus and timing. This famously dry 1959–60 Rudy van Gelder analog-recorded acoustic was faithfully portrayed, sounding entirely authentic in reproducing these fabulously upbeat performances captured more than half a century ago. This band sounded as if

it was starkly present in my room, immediate, superbly focused, and captivating; the sense of excess dryness on this recording was quickly dispelled. Also on CD, "Cross the Heartland" by Pat Metheny, from *American Garage*, sounded lyrical, sympathetic, and utterly engaging.

Choral music was exceptionally well rendered, including "There is a flower" from *Songs of the Nativity* by the Cambridge Singers and the City of London Sinfonia, John Rutter conducting (CD, Hyperion CSCD510). Here, the hall acoustic and choir were beautifully placed and balanced.

I listened to the Accordo Goldberg over many days and almost every evening for weeks.

## Conclusion: Quality not quantity

A summary of this loudspeaker's qualities cannot do justice to the actual listening experience. While it is not the loudest in its class, nor does it have the deepest bass, it might just be the most beautifully made and finished speaker I've encountered. But the Accordo Goldberg manages to transcend the build technology and the machinery within to build a closer relationship with your ear. It plays with a superbly natural timbre, especially violin, piano, and voice, while defining wide, deep, and well-focused sound images that almost breathe with life. With the Goldbergs, you can readily distinguish wholly analog sources from digital.

But that is as nothing compared with their supremely tactile microdynamic and seductive quality, which draws the listener into the musical performance. On its own terms and at a modest scale, there is more satisfaction to be derived here than with many a larger, far more costly technical powerhouse. Highly Recommended. ■