



LOUDSPEAKERS



STANDMOUNTING LOUDSPEAKERS

AUDIOSOLUTIONS OVERTURE O202B

With unusual looks, delightful finishes and some fine sonic performance, these high-quality standmounts from AudioSolutions are an inspiring introduction to this European brand.

The Overture O202B is this small Lithuanian company's entry-level offering, and it's an unusual speaker, to say the least, mostly because of design decisions made by founder and lead design engineer Gediminas Gaidelis.

EQUIPMENT

Indeed you only need look at the exterior of the AudioSolutions Overture O202B to know that it's built like no other loudspeaker, because there are visible 'joints' at all the cabinet wall intersections. This is because the various panels, according to Gaidelis, slide into each other, then lock in, creating what he calls a 'self-locking cabinet'. "Such a concept exhibits great stability and once assembled, becomes monolithic," he says. This unusual cabinet construction method also

enables AudioSolutions to offer an unprecedented range of 13 cabinet colour options — ice white, cream white, textured white, red, high-gloss black, textured black, dark oak, light oak, tinted oak, matured oak, high gloss olive, high gloss ebony — plus a finish AudioSolutions calls 'rotted zebrano', which we'd call zebrawood.

It only takes a brief glance at the O202B to show that Gaidelis has employed the rare 'inverted' driver array, where the tweeter is mounted below the bass/midrange driver. Although this array is rare, it's not unknown, being a feature of Dynaudio's Confidence C1 Platinum and on many models made by Mission. One reason for doing this is to enable equal path lengths from the two drivers' acoustic centres to the ears of the listener when the top of the speaker is below seated ear height (which is generally the case when small speakers are used

on stands). When Henry Azima was at Mission, he said they did it to ensure a smooth phase response through the crossover point. Gaidelis says one reason he puts the tweeter underneath is that floors usually have carpets, making them better absorbing surfaces than ceilings, so putting the tweeter closer to the ground means avoiding the high-frequency flutter echoes that can occur when a tweeter is closer to a ceiling. However mostly it was to do with time delay.

"In order to avoid a complex and obviously sound-harmful time-delaying crossover, we decided to make reference point at midbass level," he said. "Lowering the tweeter gave us the average delay we wanted."

As for the drivers themselves, the tweeter is a custom 25mm silk dome custom-made for AudioSolutions by Swedish manufacturer SEAS. The bass/midrange driver is made for AudioSolutions by Tympany. It's a 150mm paper-coned unit with a Thiele/Small diameter of 107mm, resulting in a cone area (Sd) of 90cm². The crossover point between the two is at 1.95kHz, using a crossover network that's built in-house by AudioSolutions.

Both drivers are recessed into the front baffle so their surrounds are flush with the baffle. This has allowed Gaidelis to get the two drivers as close as possible to ensure point-source sound. In fact they're so close that the tweeter's chassis almost touches that of the bass/midrange driver.

If you look at photographs that show the front of the O202B you might notice something strange.



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Although the speaker comes with a grille, fitted with a grille cloth and can be used with or without that grille, it also comes with a second 'grille' that does not have a cloth at all, just two holes cut into it through which the drivers 'fire' into the room. The edge of each of the holes is bevelled to provide a 'horn' for the tweeter and to ensure minimum diffraction for the cone driver's output. Gaidelis calls this device a 'detachable baffle'. The two baffles are identical, except that one is covered with black acoustically transparent cloth. Because the baffle improves the performance of the speaker AudioSolutions says you should use one or the other of them, depending on whether you want the drivers visible or not. It says the performance will be identical, whichever one you use.

The hole in the baffle that forms the horn for the tweeter does more than simply improve the efficiency of the tweeter.

"The mini-horn counteracts an unwanted soft dome resonance problem with the happy result of not only removing the resonance but also lowering THD, increasing sensitivity and providing additional damping," said Gaidelis.

The reason Gaidelis developed his 'detachable' baffle solution was that his customers wanted the speakers in the Overture range to have grilles, but he knew that if he used a standard grille, the reflections from the grille frame would result in "inevitable sonic degradation". With his unique detachable baffle, you get the best of both worlds.

The O202B is a bass reflex design, the 57mm diameter, 70mm port tube on the rear baffle above the rear terminal plate which houses two pairs of high-quality gold-plated multi-way speaker terminals linked by buss-bars that can be removed for bi-wiring or bi-amped applications. At the base of the cabinet are four felt feet. Why felt? Because rubber feet can mark furniture.

PERFORMANCE

We have to say that we preferred the look of the AudioSolutions O202B with the 'sans cloth' detachable baffle, though its black textured painted surface, combined with the same surface being used on the top and rear and rear of the speaker, along with the gloss black side panels fitted to our review sample, gave the speakers what architects might call a 'brutalist' look. We'd opt for coloured side panels, even given the added cost.



The Overture O202B has an attractive range of cabinet colour variations available, 13 in all.

The sonic benefits of AudioSolutions' careful attention to driver placement are clearly audible from the get-go, because the ability of the AudioSolutions O202B to create a stereo image is outstandingly good. And it's not a 'sweet spot' image either... it's extraordinarily large. It also doesn't collapse when you move your head around. This means that when you're listening, it's as if you're in the best seat at a concert, and you can hear instruments to the right and left, and feel the depth of the stage, while all the while the star performers are stage centre.

Bass extension was obviously in keeping with the design — a very small bass/midrange driver in a small cabinet is necessarily restricted in bass extension by the inevitable laws of physics, but designer Gaidelis hasn't attempted to compensate by putting a lift in the upper bass, with the result that the bass you do hear is very accurate and clean, with tonally-true reproduction that has plenty of the rhythm and pace you need to ensure excitement and dynamics from bass lines and percussion. Listen to the first few bars of Mr. Big's *Free* and that crisp bass drum sound, and then, at 0.28, Billy Sheehan's fantastic bass guitar line, and that's all you'll need to hear to prove that the O202Bs can deliver great bass.

We thought that after its imaging abilities, the midrange was the co-star of the O202B's show, because it's sweet, nicely balanced and has a very natural presence. One of our favourite albums for testing midrange sound quality is 'For the Stars', the collaboration between mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter and Elvis Costello. Not all the tracks... some are miserable, but listen to von Otter sing Kate McGarrigle's *Go Leave* with the AudioSolutions O202Bs and you'll swear she's there in the room with you. At the same

time you can marvel at the controlled inflexion of her vocal delivery, revealed here in minute detail.

We don't know how AudioSolutions arrived at its above-average sensitivity specification of 90dB SPL, because in our A-B sessions with other speakers, the O202B's sensitivity proved to be only average: somewhere around 87dB SPL. This means it would be better to have a higher-powered amplifier driving them if you want maximum dynamics... say 50 watts per channel or so.

You will find SEAS tweeters in the world's most expensive loudspeakers, so you shouldn't be surprised at the quality of the highs you'll hear from the O202B's tweeter during your own audition sessions. Listen to the intro to Tears For Fears' *Shout* and we predict you'll hear what we heard — highs with a delightful 'air' around them, and a bright shimmering quality to the h.f. synth sound.

CONCLUSION

We loved the wide range of colour options that make it easy to personalise this speaker so it suits your personality (and décor) and essentially becomes of a 'one-off' design rather being just another 'me-too' loudspeaker. We also loved the sound quality, which is all we could have hoped for from such a design. And we simply adored the imaging. So lots of reasons to buy a pair then! ■

AudioSolutions Overture O202B

- Customisable
- Imaging ability
- Outstanding midrange

- Brutalist black

Price: \$2500 pair (some finishes extra)
Frequency response: 48Hz-26kHz (In-room)
Sensitivity: 90dB SPL (2.83V/1m)
Nominal impedance: 8 ohms
Minimum impedance: 6 ohms @ 300Hz
Crossover frequency: 1.95kHz
Drivers: 25mm silk-dome tweeter, 150mm paper cone mid/bass
Cabinet alignment: Bass reflex
Port location: Rear
Dimensions (HWD): 340 × 191 × 310mm
Weight: 8.5kg

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