

## Cometh **Bösendorfer!**

The \$25,000 Bösendorfer VC 7 horn-loaded loudspeaker system

### Part II: THE REVIEW

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#### Manufacturer:

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#### Specifications:

##### Type:

Horn-loaded, 3-way 6-driver dynamic  
loudspeaker system

##### Frequency Response:

25 ~ 27kHz,  $\pm 3$  dB

##### Sensitivity: 91dB/1W/1m

##### Impedance: 4 $\Omega$

##### Crossover Frequency:

130Hz, 2.5kHz

##### Music Rating (RMS):

360W

##### Dynamic Peak: 720W

##### Dimensions:

52.4 H x 7.7 W x 15.9 D (inch)

##### Weight: 80lb each

BÖSENDORFER (bûr-z&n-'do-f&r) VC7

Auditioning of the Bösendorfer VC 7 loudspeakers took place amidst the presence of amplifications as typified by the 100lb+, \$79k Audio Note Ongaku integrated amplifier, the 3-chassis, \$64k M10 preamplifier and a single-chassis, \$34k M8 preamplifier. Combak's \$24k, Harmonix Reimyo PAT-777 300B stereo amplifier, Nagra's \$11k Pyramid Monoblock Amplifiers and Linn's \$9k Klimax Chakra 500 Twin also offered additional insights.

The single-wired Bösendorfer's exhibited a lesser extent in extremity than the Audio Note's. For while Audio Note's \$12k Sogon LX™ speaker cables accentuated the intrinsic beauty of each driver, Combak's \$3,100, single-wiring Harmonix HS-101 SLC "Sophisticated Listener's Choice" speaker cables consolidated each driver's output into a more coherent whole, albeit a dynamic stance slightly less so than that of the Sogon LX™.

Digital sources were headed by the \$26.8k, 47 Laboratory PiTracer CD transport, in connection to either the \$59k DAC5 Signature or the \$34k DAC5 Special. Wadia's \$10k, 27ix v3.0 Decoding Computer served to provide perspectives from the angle of a high-computational-power, algorithm-based engine. Digital connection from the PiTracer to either DAC's was via the Combak Harmonix HS-102RCADG "Harmonic-Strings" RCA digital cable. Audio Note's Sogon™ interconnect provided primary analog linkage between the DAC and preamplifier, or the Ongaku integrated.

While both the Ongaku and the PAT-777 were plugged into the wall directly, AC filtering for the digital sources and preamplification via Furutech's \$980, 6-outlet, e-TP609 AC Director yielded appreciable increase in low-level details and dynamic contrasts.

In positioning, as is the case with speakers equipped with side-firing drivers in my 12-foot wide room, the Bösendorfer's require particular attention to its interaction with side walls, and more particularly so when those of Bösendorfer's side-firing mid-woofers operated between 130Hz and 2,500Hz.

Rather than resorting to a proliferation of unsightly acoustic treatments alongside the sidewalls, I positioned the VC 7's into the approximate distances of 26 inches from each sidewall to a VC 7's rear outer edge, 52 inches away from the front wall to the same outer edge, and a distance of 69 inches from the left tower's tweeters to the right tower's, plus applying a virtually complete toe-in in which the tweeters were firing almost directly at the listening position. This reduced considerable levels of sidewall interaction with the side-firing drivers, correlating to a dramatically enforced spatial and tonal definition.

Designer Hans Deutsch's unique, narrow baffle concept on the VC 7 worked undoubtedly to address and alleviate much of front-baffle reflection in the application of the two tweeters, not to mention the accompanied, stunning level of décor-friendliness. Yet, because of the toe-in measure, the two 1-inch, front-firing silk-dome tweeters on each tower, despite the minimal front-baffle diffraction, began to exhibit a slight but audibly more pronounced magnitude of energy within the listening distance.

Solution came in the form of the oval-shape, neoprene ring of Audio Ideas Guide Imagers II from Andrew Marshall. According to the AIG [website](#), each self-adhesive soft ring is to be attached over a tweeter for absorption of front-baffle reflection. The AIG Imagers II can also be removed easily with no residue. Fitted around each VC 7 tweeter, the black, oval AIG Imagers II were unobtrusive visually, and regulated the on-axis output of the Bösendorfer tweeters to definitive performances in the confines of my 12-foot wide listening room. For a total cost of \$30, these little amenities represent an ingeniously passive solution for tailoring a certain degree of a loud-speaker's dispersion pattern and output to the listener's preference.

The original solid brass spikes of the speakers proved too short for anchoring the structure on my thickly carpeted listening room, thus impairing the speakers' ability to reconstruct sounds of instrument. The result was an overbearing bass response and a crippled transient. Placing two \$430, quadruplet sets of Combak's metal top, cherry wood-base RF-909X "Base X" Harmonix Tuning Feet un-

## FROM THE TOP

Of the 6 drivers in each VC 7, only the two tweeters were mounted on the front baffle, at mid-height, and the spectral coverage of these tweeters was expansive beyond belief. Responsible for the daunting frequency range of above 2,500Hz to 27,000Hz, the two small 1-inch front-firing tweeters produced some of the most coherent and dynamic portrayal of all instruments I've thrown at it, from the airy triangles to awe-inspiring tympanis, and from a powerful solo piano to the picturesque full orchestra.

While I am not aware of any speaker manufacturer seeking to mimic the sound of ribbon speaker technologies with dome tweeters of any variety, the Bösendorfer's twin acrylic-permeated silk domes posed a collective sparkle and tone so balanced and colossal in outputs and seamless in transition, they have surpassed what the ribbons had offered me.

Not silver-wired like the \$20k Audio Note AN-E SEC Silver's silk-dome, the Bösendorfer tweeters possessed less of the hyper-detail character of the AN, but were resplendent with a consistent manifestation of a ribbon-like clarity and spaciousness, on top of a liquid tonality married to one of the liveliest dynamic transients ever produced by silk domes.

Yet, these silk dome tweeters did far more than the afore-mentioned. My dazzled affair with these drivers stemmed not merely from the astonishing dynamics that no other 1-inch silk dome's have ever displayed, nor from the fact that the Bösendorfer tweeters could traverse such an unheard-of range, but from the persistently clear and superbly-defined textural and tonal delineation these acrylic-permeated silk dome tweeters provided unswervingly. Whether it was the striking transients of a piano or the lingering staccato of a solo violin, the Bösendorfer tweeters produced each sound with a virtual tangibility that was utterly mesmerizing to behold.





Each Bösendorfer's four 5-inch low-midrange drivers were charged with providing support to the front tweeters from the cutoff frequency of 2,500Hz down to 130Hz, and what feat these little drivers accomplished. If the front tweeters broadcasted the beauty of the music, then this quadruplet of wonder conveyed the subconsciousness of the sound thus transduced. For every note of a piano generated by the tweeters, an enveloping ambience of complimenting scale and matching transients, the likes and scale of which I never experienced from any speakers, would permeate along.

These four miracle drivers' characteristics are hard to fixate upon not merely because their role in ambience support were of such refinement and seamlessness, but also because of the fact that their very function entailed considerable integration with the bottom-end. In a design when 6 small-diameter drivers of minimal crossover correction were chosen to fully depict any instrument whenever called for, the invention of the HornResonator with Acoustic SoundBoard marked an act of utter ingenuity in preserving the musical and operational integrity of the drivers while delivering the seemingly impossible bottom line.

Bass reproduction of the Bösendorfer was via two precision-manufactured and strategically situated piano boards primarily, called Acoustic SoundBoard, each fastened to the main cabinet via 6 bolts at 75cNm of torque, flanking the sides of the speakers toward the rear. What can two piano boards do

The high-precision positioning of the said piano boards in relation to the cabinet formed such shred of an air gap that, when the air in between is excited by the first burst of bass energy from the port, the force of propagation would coerce the tuned piano boards into creating such bass outputs as to qualify as a most elegant implementation of the fabled bass horn, sans the unwelcome physical dimensions.

All speakers I've used in the past all employed large woofers to recreate bottom-end's; one exception was the Apogee Duetta Signature, which utilization of a full-height woofer ribbon panel would flood the listening space with a most surreal sense of bass. Yet, this ribbon technology of the 80's as displayed by the Apogee was no comparison to the efficiency, extension, force, transients and variance achieved by the Bösendorfer.

In fact, the Bösendorfer's slender profile concealed its most potent aspect: its bottom-end prowess. For the "HornResonator with Acoustic Soundboards" technology of the Bösendorfer reproduced the *Cantate Domino* (Proprius) church organ's bottom-end in mind-boggling definition and depth as I have never heard from any other speakers. The force with which the rumbling notes being churned out carried incredible speed and the most surreal display of output variance.



The Bösendorfer's prowess in bottom-end tonal distinction was also realized most effectively and effortlessly via the fundamentally and tonally passive Acoustic Soundboards. For the musical experience from the combined factors of the amplification magnitude of the speaker and tonality passivity of the Acoustic Soundboards was such that the church organ was reproduced in *the* most contrasting and *the* most powerful manners I've experienced. To this day, I continue to be startled each time the VC 7's flexes their muscles as driven by the 7Wpc Harmonix Reimyo PAT-777, and the degree of differentiating tonal layers of the church organ gave way to the idea that perhaps these Bösendorfer's were made to reproduce a church organ in the most truthful manner in a home.

In addition, recreations of spatiality of instrument with intrinsic lower midrange to bottom-end contents, by the mid-cabinet positioning of the quadruplet of side-firing midrange/bass drivers on each VC 7, attained a mid-air dimensionality so utterly surreal, that the air above and around the speaker was infused with unprecedented level of energy, making it utterly conducive towards a fulfilling listening experience.

## SUMMARY

The Bösendorfer VC 7 loudspeakers displayed their mastery in creating enormous spatial scaling that befitted their status as the piano maker's crowning achievement in its first foray into the audio industry. While the Bösendorfer's weren't the smallest speakers creating the weightiest bottom-end and scale, they were the first speakers with the smallest footprint in creating a full-range presentation, the likes of which surpassed every make and model I've heard. And the fact that the VC 7's displayed equal aptness in reproducing classical piano and vocal, as well as the force of electric bass and drumming in American heavy-metal, was an iron-clad testament to their agility and finesse.

Perhaps because the Bösendorfer loudspeaker was born of a classical lineage, its attention to and delivery of the piano sound was beyond immaculate. In resolution, while few speakers could reproduce the tonal complexity of instruments than the Audio Note, or the scale in immensity of the Tannoy, the Bösendorfer VC 7 emerged as a virtual melding of the two, taking the classical piano listener to a new dimension of virtual realism, fully resplendent in a consummate portrayal of the instrument's scales and tones. Having this Bösendorfer in my listening room playing piano music vanquished my longstanding fancy of hiring a pianist to play on the actual Bösendorfer piano in front of me.

And what bottom-end the Bösendorfer's conveyed. I've never heard a loudspeaker pumping such bottom-end definition and weight before as driven by a 7Wpc SET amplifier, with a level of dynamic variance as I've never seen from any speakers. The piano maker's loudspeaker achievement in this criterion alone warrants a raving recommendation.

The Bösendorfer reenacted the most aurally enveloping and layered top to bottom-end tonal variations, so surreal that the varying outputs and pitches of the piano made me realize how little of the CD's cache of richness I have experienced until now. Energies and loudness of a myriad of orchestral and instrumental pieces featuring the most superfluous of playing of instruments were reproduced by the Bösendorfer's accurately and unwaveringly, as if all excessive sibilance as seen by other speakers I've used to date was now cleanly transferred for the first time by the Bösendorfer.

Of all the classical instruments, the violin is the other solo instrument capable of speaking into the listener's heart with its lamentations, and the Harmonix Reimyo-driven Bösendorfer's refined portrayal of the string showcased an extremely well-balanced persona in recreating instruments in their utmost persuasiveness. The breathtaking contrasts that the Bösendorfer cast between a violin and a piano accorded the listener an appreciation of the frailty of the violin and the piano's communicative fluidity.

The \$25,000 pair of ultra-slim Bösendorfer VC7 is the most extraordinary loudspeaker I've encountered. Its presentations possessed me, and it offered the highest level of tonal coherency, surpassing that as rendered by all speakers I've heard, delivering a degree of spectral wholeness the likes of which denotes a musical integrity and sonic purity that is immediately arresting. They are the only speaker available that allowed audiophiles to enjoy full range, hugely diversified tonalities from an SET-friendly, unmistakably full-size and extremely décor-friendly package.

