

HI-FI WORLD

OCTOBER 2011

UK £4.10

www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

FREE READER CLASSIFIED ADS IN THIS ISSUE!



ESOTERIC C-03/A-03
pre-power amplifier **EXCLUSIVE!**



AUDEL ART CG 618
loudspeakers **EXCLUSIVE!**



NAIM NDX/ UNITISERVE
network music player



COMPETITION



WIN A TEDDY PARDO
TEDDYDAC WORTH £1,158!
(UK ONLY)

EXCLUSIVE!

MARTIN
LOGAN
ELECTROMOTION
electrostatic hybrid
loudspeaker

- > **OLDE WORLDE: PHILIPS N2521** cassette deck
- > **MUSICAL FIDELITY M1 VINL** phono stage **EXCLUSIVE!**
- > **GARTRIDGE MAN CONDUCTOR** tonearm
- > **DAG SUPERTEST: 8 models** compared

OCTOBER 2011



9 770961 766185

11 PAGES OF LETTERS - THE BEST WINS A PAIR
OF KEF Q100 LOUDSPEAKERS! (UK ONLY)



Fine Art

Adam Smith paints you a word picture of Audel's Art CG618 loudspeakers...

Only recently, after a work colleague was telling me about some Italian hi-fi separates he had seen on everyone's favourite auction site, the topic of the number of Italian hi-fi manufacturers in general cropped up. After I had rattled off Audia, Monrio, Zingali, Sonus Faber, Unison Research, Audio Analogue, MEL Audio and Vyger, I must confess that I was struggling to name any more. Although some have come to mind since, it seems doubly ironic that the small neat boxes that arrived at Smith towers recently, hail from that wonderful

country, the mainland of which is a regular holiday haunt for my wife and I. Audel loudspeakers are actually based a little further afield however, in Casteldaccia near Palermo in Sicily.

In true Italian fashion, these are most certainly *not* humdrum black boxes, and Audel state that "every Audel loudspeaker is produced to become an outstanding piece of art for your home, built with high quality materials and components, hand-made by passionate people and experienced craftsmen".

As I heaved the first one out of its box, I realised that the end product certainly lives up to this

description, being neat, incredibly stylish and receiving a firm stylistic thumbs-up from the whole household.

The CG618s are the centre models in the Reference range and make use of a 6.5in woofer and 27mm tweeter in an 18 litre enclosure, hence the model number. These are bracketed in the range by the CG509 standmounters that use a smaller 5in woofer and 27mm tweeter in a 9 litre enclosure and the CG Towers, offering twin 6.5in drivers in a floorstanding enclosure just under a metre in height. The cabinetry on all models is quite

unusual, consisting of layers of laminated birch wood, fitted together with high quality adhesives and then pressed and finely sanded, in an arrangement that Audel refer to as 'Multipanel'. The technology is used across all the company's products in the Reference series, as well as their Design range which includes the Fred and Ginger, which are in the shape of a male and female outline, and the Hi-Fido loudspeaker, which is styled in a decidedly canine manner. I promise you I haven't lost the plot – check out www.audel.it!

The CG618s however are more serious beasts and to this end come equipped with SEAS drive units, namely the HI456 bass driver that uses an edge coated cone of reed and paper pulp and a matching SEAS Prestige series tweeter. These are linked by a second order crossover network that uses good quality components including Jantzen Z-cap capacitors and, praise be, soldered driver connections with not a hideous push-on tag in sight.

Build quality of the loudspeakers

is very fine, although I was surprised to find a thinish screw-on wooden rear panel, which contrasts with the very solid and inert Multipanel cabinet.

One problem was that one of the review loudspeakers was making random odd noises; on removing the rear panel I found that the crossover components are located on what looks like a PCB, but actually has no copper track; all wiring is point to point. This is certainly no bad thing sonically, but on the troublesome unit some components had parted company with the board and were floating around inside, causing rattles. Relocating these easily cured the problem, but I hope this doesn't happen with subsequent examples of this loudspeaker.

The website shows optional matching stands for the CG618s but these were not supplied for the review, so instead I fitted the supplied spikes to the bottom of the cabinet and perched the Audels atop my Atacama SL600 stands in order to commence listening.

"I was instantly struck by their sheer verve, pace and turn of speed..."

SOUND QUALITY

With the GC618s thoroughly warmed up and run in, I was instantly struck by their sheer verve, pace and turn of speed. It is often said of turntables that the models with impeccable timing seem to make records seem as if they are spinning faster; listening to the Audels I half wondered if my CD player was doing the same. Give the CG618s something smooth and languid and they flow beautifully, but turn up the wick and they almost feel like they are going to leap off their stands and bounce around the room with excitement. Jazzanova's 'Takes You Back' pumped out with feeling and fine impact, and Music go Music's 'Light of Love' almost took my breath away with the speed of its delivery.

Moving to more insightful programme material, and the second thing I noticed from the GC618s was their incredible imagery. Like my own Leak 2075s, the Audels are handed, with the tweeter on each cabinet offset, and setting the loudspeakers up so that these are towards the

FURUTECH

PURE TRANSMISSION

Ultimate Performance Ultimate Refinement Ultimate Luxury



Furutech makes a wide variety of OEM parts known the world over for their quality construction and superb sound. Our engineers examine every part of the signal and power path no matter how small and optimize each and every connection.



Torque Guard Binding Posts

Never over-tighten your speaker cables again with Furutech Torque Guard Binding Posts. It's the most overlooked but weakest link in the quest for tight, low-distortion signal transfer. Change your cables a few times and binding posts quickly loosen up. It's bad enough in modestly-priced speakers where the simple remedy is to unscrew the back plate and tighten the nut behind the post. But with expensive, stand-mounted monitors or larger, more costly speaker systems why take the risk? The Torque Guard's secret is a ratcheting mechanism that prevents them from being over-tightened so you achieve a totally noise-free and undistorted Pure Transmission signal path.



FURUTECH Co., Ltd.
Tokyo Japan
e-mail: service@furutech.com
URL: www.furutech.com

Sound Foundations
25 New Road, Blackwater
Camberley, Surrey, GU17 9AY
Great Britain
Tel: +44(0)1276 601 392
info@soundfoundations.co.uk

Black Rhodium

The Phantom and the Opera



Phantom DCT++
"hauntingly real rendition of whatever it's asked to play"
HIFI WORLD

Opera DCT
"lovely detailed sound with oodles of air and space"
HIFI WORLD

Black Rhodium Phantom DCT++ stereo interconnect has been developed from our award winning Illusion (What Hi-Fi? *****) and Illusion DCT (Hi-Fi Choice Awards 2009 Winner) to give your music even more life resulting from our advanced DCT++ cryogenic process.

Black Rhodium Opera DCT stereo interconnect demonstrates the musical qualities of 99.99% pure silver conductor wires, enhanced by Deep Cryogenic Treatment.

Please visit our website below to find your nearest Black Rhodium dealer and arrange a demonstration of these outstanding cables.

www.blackrhodium.co.uk
01332 342233 sales@blackrhodium.co.uk

THE Missing Link

Designers & Manufacturers of British Hand Built Audiophile Cables
www.the-missing-link.net
01623 844478 or 07967 858333



Superb Combination of Vincent SP31-MK & SP331-MK Pre & Power Amps
Both Reviewed in this Issue of Hi Fi World
Available Now for Demonstration
in our Music Room

Vincent Audio
'Hi Fi World'
Standards

Missing Link
'Hi Fi World'
Standards

centre throb performers vividly into the centre of my room. Having recently rewatched one of the old 'Star Wars' films, I was actually reminded of R2D2 beaming the holographic projection of Princess Leia's "Help me Obi-Wan" message – the Audels seemed to be doing exactly the same with everything that I put through them!

The upshot of this was that the CG618s had no trouble filling my room with sound. My Naim Supernait was given an easy time thanks to their high impedance load and the result was an overall sense of stress-free music effortlessness. Orchestral



character, but they are not in any way uncouth, speaking volumes for both the quality of drive units, and the efficacy of the way in which they have been mated. As a result, flutes were bright and clear but not aurally assaulting, and violin strings were palpable and vivid but without any sense of screech or discomfort. Furthermore, the crucial crossover region, which can make or break vocal performances in particular, was even-handed and smoothly fluid, leaving singers projecting expertly above the backing track.

At the low end, Audel have again judged the CG618s' tuning well overall. They have not made any attempt to wring the very last ounce of bass from the compact box, but the fact that the enclosure is wider and deeper than many other ostensibly similar standmounting designs means that a little extra oomph is available where it is most needed. Consequently, bass was punchy and solid, with the speakers' overall bright character adding a decent dollop of upper bass clarity and insight to everything. The only area in which the CG618s stumbled at all was when playing punchier material. It was possible to feel the rear board playing along whereas the rest of the cabinet was

material coalesced into a delightfully cohesive performance across the front of my listening room, with the Audels projecting a highly ordered sense of scale and spatiality. In fact they layered the instruments of the orchestra into vivid rows more easily than many loudspeakers I have heard at the price, resulting in a palpable sense of depth and atmosphere. The upshot of this was an impressive sense of intimacy during the more languid passages, but a front row seat in the heart of the action when things became more vivace.

Undoubtedly aiding in this cohesiveness are the high quality drive units, which rendered instruments very well indeed. Snare drums had a delightfully snappy sense of immediacy and cymbals were crisp and shimmering in their metallic decay, but without falling prey to any splash or sibilance. The rise in treble output noted by Noel in the measured performance can indeed be heard as an overall brightness to the loudspeakers'



inert. Unfortunately this translated into very subtle bass overhang at times, with a firm thump losing a degree of tautness. The frequency range affected seemed narrow, so this aspect only reared its head occasionally.

CONCLUSION

In many ways the Audel Art CG618 loudspeakers showcase the best of the country from which they hail. They are innovatively designed, come wrapped in a typically Italian stylish exterior and are never less than thoroughly entertaining to listen to. Just like their Italian automotive brethren, the overall package is addictively enticing. I enjoyed my time evaluating them and, frankly, my listening room will be a more drab place once they're gone. Admittedly, they are rather expensive; their style comes at a price so value will be in the eye of the beholder.

REFERENCE SYSTEM
Garrard 301 turntable
Inspire X100 tonearm
Ortofon Kontrapunkt b cartridge
Anatek MC1 phono stage
Naim Supernait integrated amplifier

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

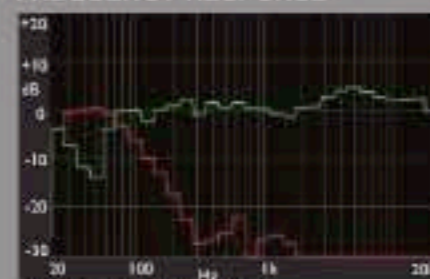
The CG618 has a flat and even frequency response up to 3kHz our analysis shows. Audel have lifted treble though, in the usual attempt to improve apparent speed and detail, and with output peaking by +5dB at 5kHz this will be aurally quite obvious. The CG618 will have a bright balance and may sound sharp at times.

Bass output was even down to 65Hz, below which the port takes over, extending output down to 25Hz, a low value for a small loudspeaker. The port is broadly tuned so will exert good damping and this promises firm and even bass, free from boom. Better still, bass distortion was very low, measuring 2% at 40Hz from the drive unit and 7% from the port. All in all then the CG618 has a good measured bass performance.

The decay spectrum was none too even in spectral distribution so some colour or 'character' may be apparent. Sensitivity was a little low at 86dB, mainly because impedance was excessively high at 12 Ohms; this under utilises amplifiers.

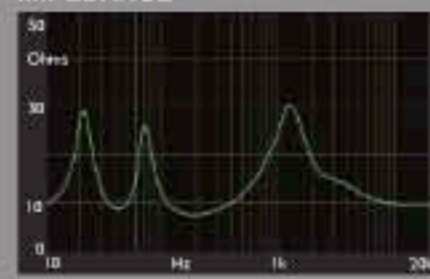
The CG618 turned in a good set of results in most areas, but has limitations, excessive treble and high impedance being to the fore. NK

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



Green - driver output
Red - port output

IMPEDANCE



VERDICT ●●●●●
A welcome addition to the market, these loudspeakers are an impressive blend of style, pace and imagery.

AUDEL ART CG618 £1,925
Quadral GB
© +44 (0)1785 748 446
www.quadralart.co.uk

FOR
- magnificent imagery
- punch and verve
- styling and finish

AGAINST
- needs careful partnering