

Review no. 1



When we hear about loudspeaker units with stands, almost every time our mind's eye shows us the image of typical little shelf monitors, which together with their stands would fit a rather small Suzuki Swift trunk. In addition, such picture is usually confirmed by their performance and this only strengthens such stereotypical associations. However it is worth to remember the other side of the coin, "the other side of the moon" in terms of a musical analogy, which refers to completely different products. For instance models such as Spendor's SP100R², Harbeth's Monitor 40.2 Domestic or PMC MB2-SE not only deserve, but also define a designation of stand mounted monitor, especially when considering their historical background. As if that was not enough, our ISIS Trenner & Friedl that we use in our editorial office are also monitors, however the fact that they do not need any type of pedestal is a completely different story. Anyway, it is pointless to cling to details and argue on size, as it is not the most crucial aspect here. A type of canonical, an loudspeaker column design approach is what counts, and this is what the guests of

today meeting represent - our domestic Avcon's Avalanche Reference Monitors, abbreviated as ARMs.

There is no denying that this time we had the opportunity to host in our editorial room a loudspeakers that was so distinct and unconventional, that no one will confuse them with any other product on market after having seen them once. Naturally, an idea to use a multi-layered sandwich of the thickest plywood you can get is not new and one can easily recall brands such as Audel, Art Loudspeakers, or not to look too far, our domestic, however somewhat forgotten manufacture - Proa Systems with their Anna Maria Jopek Edition speakers. The aim is however to not to try to be original at any cost. Yet how many times can you strive to reinvent the wheel... Its better to focus on improving the existing instead and others have gone this way with lesser or greater success. It seems that Przemek Nieprzecki - brand owner and chief designer - adheres to similar philosophy of life, as he proposed an indisputably intriguing and renewed incarnation of Avalanche Reference Monitor without even slightest change to its undoubtedly renown name.

At the first glance, compared to first, 3-way version the set of drivers remains unchanged. An Aurum Cantus ribbon tweeter is responsible for the higher tones, the mid-range - a 15cm Seas Prestige, while the bass range is handled by 26cm woofer of the same series. The enclosure is a completely different deal. Instead of a classy wooden box used until now, he decided to go for a much more labour-consuming and hence costly solution consisting of multiple layers of precisely CNC cut thick plywood sheets. To be fair, the result is indeed impressive. And when combined with intriguing bevels of base and upper surface, together with equivalent, matched in inclination and delightfully carved stands, we can safely consider this as quite an example of excellent design. I already mentioned the drivers used, so let me just draw your attention to a precision machined bass reflex opening located on front wall. The backs of column bear no surprises, which is not so obvious in the era of "sound effective" tweeters enhancing spacial experience. There is nothing more than a ordinary quality aluminum name plate integrated with double loudspeaker terminals. Luckily the terminals are not only located wide apart, but also lacking the UE-recommended protective collars, so connecting any assembled or even naked cables should cause no difficulties.

By this occasion the listening sessions were conducted so to say two-fold, as after a couple of days on struggling the odds in our place Jacek and I have packed the ARMs and took them to our second location. Let's go back to the

course of the facts. When unpacking the mentioned loudspeakers together with the manufacturer and placing them on (as we thought back then) standard target locations, that is 50cm from rear wall and one meter from side walls, and remembering of what the previous version was capable of, I was worried about quite good (at least until that moment) relations with neighbours. A little swapping with my Gauder and ... something must have went wrong. A quick inspection of cabling didn't provide a clue about any obvious lack of extreme ranges. The medium range surely was there, but what about the rest? It looked like the journey from Grodzisk Mazowiecki to Grochów on the other side of Warsaw did some apparent damage. Well. I left them connected to power supply for two days and ... it almost went better, however still nothing that could be easily accepted. Then it was the turn to start swapping locations across the room, bend them degree by degree, but eventually it ended in juggling the connected electronics and that was it! An integrated Accuphase E-470 that was delivered for simultaneous testing has squeezed all out of ARMs more efficiently than a steam press would squash an olive. Mentioned extreme bands finally appeared where they at least theoretically should be from the very beginning, and I could start with listening with peace of mind instead of wondering about the crux of the problems. Although the lowest frequencies sounded like the 26cm woofer was working in close box housing, but this remark can be safely regarded as a compliment, as at least there were no problems with possible interferences with front-located bass reflex ports. The sound was rumple-free, and when listening to classical repertoire such as Kodo „TaTaKu Best of Kodo II 1994-1999”, or more synthetic-based sound track of “The Dark Knight Rises” bass handling and control was simply on definitely satisfactory level. In addition the extraordinary homogeneity and integrity of reproduced band came into play. Despite a 3-way design and the fact that ribbon used is definitely “faster” than conventional domes, it would be a great achievement to indicate the moment when Seases' 15cm stop working and Aurum Cantus takes over. Therefore I could enjoy with pleasure a characteristic Skin vocal in the acoustic version (Skunk Anansie's “An Acoustic Skunk Anansie - Live in London”), which would often squeak in matt. Luckily a certain - typical to the ARMs manner of branded cultural enhancement of transferred stream makes that the sound are safe for the ears of the listener and do not cause irritation while at the same time do not cause loss of sensation of reachability and ease. When comparing to my AMT tweeter-enhanced Gauders one could easily mention a slight relaxation of the highest components, however evaluation of such treatment depends both on reference point as well as on own preferences and I mention this only for your own assessment. It is also worth mentioning that after careful bending and placing the ribbons in a listening position exactly fitted to me the precision and ease of creation of multiple planes and focusing of apparent sources deserved highest appreciation. The sound stage started almost at the column axis and extended gradually well beyond that, which for large orchestra such as easily classified as such eclectic album of Miuosh x Jimek x NOSPR “2015” allowed for quite natural tracking of both the whole track as well as part of individual instruments. As I was able to find out during second listening stage in our second studio of almost double volume and using high-end Audio Tekne system (as specified in hardware signature of Jacek), saturation and “temperature” of provided contents can be easily described as natural. Larger, and seemingly too large room for the monitors featured in this review and lamp amplification that is many times less effective should be a proverbial “nail to the coffin”, however ... the flagship Avcons just seemed to catch more wind in the sails. Not only have they easily filled the room with deep and coherent sound, but also have happily transformed the presence from culture and linearity unveiled during first testing phase to a surprising volume of generated sound. It seemed like they used a kind of tarot, voo-doo or other witchcraft to be able to scale up and accommodate inherent dynamics to ambient spacial features. This phenomenon was both interesting as well as desired, especially when one expects moving to a new apartment and is not sure how the columns will behave in new place. In addition the Japan-made lamp amplifiers have filled Avalanche with such amount of carmel sweetness that even when listening to vinyl edition of “Re-Machined - A Tribute to Deep Purple's Machine Head” one could easily point out fineness and very adorable aesthetics of shouted-out aliquots.

The brand-new incarnation of Avcon's Avalanche Reference Monitors seems to be not only more acoustically mature than its ancestors, but also considerably more visually acceptable, which is primarily due to enclosures created somewhat from scratch. Slightly oldschool rectangular coffins hardly accepted by our female life companions went into oblivion and their position (that means coffins', not our significant's others') was assumed by intriguing, while due to its nature at the same time relating to scandinavian aesthetics curved plywood monolyths. And this, together

with attractive appearance and audible sophistication places increased requirements on accompanying electronics, but this is not to be regarded as reason for despair but rather an excuse for further changes and researches.

Marcin Olszewski



Review no. 2

The brand presenting its product from the loudspeaker range has been known to me since the beginning of its existence on the high-end audio equipment market. I will not discover a major mystery here by stating that almost every company at the beginning of its activity has its shorter or longer five minutes of occurrence in the consciousness of audiophile society. However the introduction on the market of this review's protagonists from this brand portfolio has produced such interest that two of my friends have become some of

the very first satisfied owners of them. Unfortunately all my current conclusions, due to the level of relevancy, could be only based only on outside demos and presentations and I was not able to fully determine if it was my type of deal. The speakers have performed greatly, but only a direct clash with my own electronics could provide a finishing touch to this review. And as it usually happens, after enough time has passed and these speakers have waited enough to see a new incarnation, I was finally able to invite them for a little friendly match on an one-to-one basis, or rather to be attended by my pair of ears. So as to not to debate too much, you are welcome to read a couple of words on a renewed design of widely known amongst audiophile company columns named AVALANCHE REFERENCE MONITOR by our domestic workshop brand AVCON.

When we look at the columns presented today, one can easily see that the designer gave up on easy to assemble veneered MDF boards and decided to try a glued with great effort thick sheet that was previously hollowed out on the inside to reach required internal volume. Additional design feature was clever breaking with typical cuboid shape by using slanted upper and lower surfaces connected by a wide arch. This of course required a visually supplementing stands that also allowed to level the columns properly,



but I am confirming in advance that these are integral part of the product tested. This may be not reflected properly in the images, but starting from first material contact this concept seems to be very interesting, and after closer encounter it fully soars our approval. To extract the absolute beauty of untreated wood, the AVALANCHEs enclosures were sparingly covered only with a clearcoat, which is in line with nature's spirit of our times. Making a neat step to the drivers used, let me announce that at the front, in a look contrasting with the enclosure there is a

black set of: 26cm bass unit, 15cm middle range driver and relatively small Aurum Cantus ribbon tweeter. The whole unit is vented with a bass-reflex port carved out in solid material, located at the very bottom of the enclosure. In order to avoid unnecessary overloading with shining bling, the backs of the columns were decorated only in silver nameplate integrated with bi-wiring ready double speaker terminals. This is how the newest version of AVCON's reference monitors known for a longer time looks.

The time is merciless and passes surprisingly quickly, which considering our reports from usually outgoing meetings, has always clouded the news on details of sound produced by the tested equipment. The fact of change in material used to construct the enclosure did not help either in predicting the final outcome of today's encounter, so I can safely admit that I began the test with a clear slate. Of course it is worth mentioning that the testing room was slightly oversized for the guests of this review, but after a dozen days of joy I am quite certain that even a cubature that is slightly too large hasn't diminished their sound generation capability. When looking at the musical image I can surely admit that the speakers perform rather homogeneously and consistently. The effect of consistency reaches such advanced state that the ribbon tweeter employed here even in the most complicated musical fragments hasn't performed more than was expected and that was really irrespective of the number of sibilants recorded in the source audio materials. Please do not get that as tendency to suppress the sound message, but I cannot deny that there were moments where I expected a slightly higher "spark" in the drummer's metal plates. This was however at the very beginning of our testing sequence, and after a closer insight and acceptance it was gone. It's just that the designer has strived to avoid misalignment of individual ranges and has forced the often screaming ribbon tweeters to perform on his conditions as determined during designing stage. When I look at the mid-range, I have no slightest remarks, as it followed the so much loved by me path of smoothness and pleasurable filling. By approaching the lowest registers I wish confirm that before the test I also had concerns about a room that was too large for the sound system. However, when the source material required, as at Ray Brown's double bass part these monitors were, as the name suggests, without difficulty able to produce a bass background sufficient to reflect the spirit of such instrument. The play on both the strings as well as on sound box, which has intrigued me during my first encounter with this musical material and consequently encouraged to experiments without restrictions. It is obvious that the sound volume alone would not equal to my ISISEs, but surprisingly the overall aspect of playing of both products bore many similarities. As I venture through my record collection together with the equipment tested, turntable is often filled with various genres without avoidance of difficult pieces that would seem unnatural. This has clearly shown that the mentioned tone of uniform playing hasn't caused problems to any of them, irrespectively of the genre. Each of them would benefit from the blessing of uniformity, was it rock, jazz, pop or the early music. What use would it be from over-frantic upper band - well suitable for electronic music, if such one was employed here, if during vocal part of baroque music sung on full breath blood would run out of one's ears. Or coming to the very bottom, what use would it be from artificially-enhanced, floor-shaking bass in rock drums, when one is not able to distinguish its separate pulses. After many backstage, personal talks during numerous presentations it seems to me that the mentioned aspects according to many listeners sometimes fade to the background, because as they see it the music has to relax and stimulate, which I can hardly approve. Indeed, when required the mentioned statements are surely very important, but a consistent correlation affecting their reception is of more importance. And probably this cunning sewing all ranges together is the highest value of tested loudspeakers. I know that each person has his own type of musical hobby, but if you are able to put aside these prejudices - read preferences - earned over years, it may turn out that despite naturalness that is boring to many persons, the AVCON's world is quite interesting. Approaching the end of our meeting I would like to mention the advantages of the monitors, that is how easy they can construct a sound stage that is clear in many vectors of three-dimensional world and sound separation from the columns taking place almost like according to a detailed distributor. The AVCON brand hasn't failed in these area, as its product seemed to stoically confirm the referred axioms throughout the whole test. Bravo!

After a few years I had genuine pleasure of playing with AVCON monitors on my own playground. I am not able to determine with full certainty what changes to the sound were produced by redesign of enclosure and crossover. During an interview with the designer he stated that an improvement was made in lowest registers, which considering the size of my listening room may indeed be true. Regardless of the quantitative range of this

improvement, the representation by the set of AVALANCHE REFERENCE MONITORS was very interesting experience. If you are looking for a target set of columns and you expect uniform playing with good bass background meeting the requirements of my room, you'd better consider contacting polish manufacturer that is well known thanks to his other loudspeaker builds. I am not sure if that will be the bull's eye for you, but I am certain that the tested set is worth a closer look.

Jacek Pazio