

audio physic Classic 30 Loudspeakers

HiFi Wigwam review 08/12/13 by James Palmer



I've been using these **Classic 30's** for well over a month now. I really could live with them long term. There are caveats to that, and I will expand on their short comings later, but for now I would like to tell you why they are worthy of your attention, and perhaps your investment – should you be in the market for an achingly modern and stylish floor stander in the £3k price bracket.

Glass walls..

Glass walls? Yes, glass. Thick toughened glass over a shiny paint finish (in this case dark clay colour), the glass gives a translucent piano gloss finish which I find very attractive indeed. Mrs WigWam is very much enamoured of the styling and I do feel that I could almost get away with buying these using the joint account! What AP are trying to pull off here is a high end speaker, with high end aesthetic design credentials.. The aesthetics speak for themselves. It works! Incredibly good looking with all the style of a Milanese furniture shop, available in a range of colours, and with the classic AP narrow front and deep profile, they are a large speaker by volume without feeling imposing. The cabs are up on little plinths, with a space at the bottom which is a bass reflex “port”. The diagram below gives a clear idea of the layout. The woofers are inside the bottom of the cabinet. This certainly aids the aesthetic, but may also contribute to the one small draw back in SQ that it almost feels churlish to mention given the quality of bass from these speakers.

Sound Quality

That's what we all really care about. The Anne Hathaway looks are all very nice, but pointless if they sound like a loud hailer in a washing machine.

Sound Quality is it, and these have it in spades. Quality is the word. That's the one word review: “Quality”. You know from the off (make sure you hear a well run in pair, they took 3 weeks to really get going) that you are listening to quality drive units in a stiff box. The 1.2” tweeter is the real star of the show here, it's as good an implementation of a soft dome tweeter as I have heard in any speaker, at any price. It truly is stunning. The Audio Physic tag line is “No loss of fine detail” and they are not kidding. Fast, detailed and adds sparkle when needed, without ever sounding edgy or bright unless the recording wilfully sets out to be so. It is totally honest and insightful, a true joy. Listening to difficult recordings such as Goat's World Music on vinyl really brought out the best in AP's. This kind of busy sounding psychedelic rock will trip up any slow speaker, resulting in a muddy sound. No such problems here, one can listen to the music as a whole or pick an instrument and follow it through the track, enjoying the individual sound it makes.

Mid-range can seem a tiny touch recessed. Voices don't quite project beyond the rest of the music as they can with some lush sounding speakers, but with that said, listening to Diana Krall (where the voice is clearly the star and therefore up in the mix) shows how faithful these speakers are to the recording. Equally Dave Gilmour's voice is full and rich right now, singing Smile. A full, warm and lush sound fills the room and you wonder where the analytical speakers you were just listening to went. It's only then that one realises cold recordings sound cold and warm recordings sound warm – you are getting a lot of honesty for £3k.

Soundstage is open and precise, the speakers are more than capable of disappearing, the band tends to stay between the drivers, this just adds credibility to the honesty. So often an ultra wide soundstage seems artificial. I can place the artists and they remain in place throughout each track. Leftfield's Leftism isn't performed by a real band, and here the soundstage goes crazy. Sounds pinging off walls and the treble almost like a rotating lazer, firing beams of sound around my head. Great fun!

Like many others, I prefer to sit in the "off axis of evil" (Alan Sircom's brilliant phrase not mine dammit), sitting front and centre means the middle of the sofa bolt upright. For me listening means lounging, more across than on the sofa, and this is just fine with the Classics. You pay a price, of course, but it's still a satisfying and coherent sound.

The bass is tuneful and if needed thunderous, but even such a big speaker doesn't over power my room. If there is a weak point with the AP's (and I am clutching at straws here) it's that any thumpiness in the recording can translate into a slight thud in the listening room. But only at the very margins, Leftfield pushes the limits on the bass front and it really is only at the extremes (with the ModWright wound up to 11) that this slight weakness is audible. And it's only when the recording itself is at fault, it's the price one pays for honesty I guess. At this price, seriously, live with it. You'll only hear it once in a blue moon and everything else this unusual bass configuration delivers across the lower frequency spectrum is superb, it's really a small price; oh and my Meadowlark's do the same thing, so it may well be my room. Listening to Song of Life (from the same album) now, the opening bass lines are phat and moving around the room in an almost globular form (in a very good way!), while the voices soar into the ceiling space, The beeps, boings and drum kit sound real and have visceral attack and decay. I want to go on and on about how good they are.. this morning The Fall's Mark E Smith was in my living room banging on about not being from Bury. Perhaps there's a price to be paid for such an honest sound!

Bowie, Live at the Beeb is a fantastic recording, and the Classics really take you to the gig. The audience are around me, these speakers love live music. Talking Heads Stop making sense is equally engaging, listening to Dave Gilmour live in Gadansk now and I want to close the lid of my lap top and slide down me seat to soak it all up.

Summing up.

When I wrote this review I had the price down as £3995.00. It was only on proof reading and double checking that I discovered they are actually £2995.00. I felt them to be good value at £4k. At £3k these are a serious bargain.

True high end sound quality coupled with stunning looks and the ability to work in difficult rooms. A worthy audition. At 89db they are perhaps not the easiest load ever presented but anything over 35Watts will grip them nicely. I did enjoy using them with my old Beard P100, the extra lift in the mid range the valves brought made for great synergy. If you can find a powerful enough valve amp, that grips the bass, then you are in for a real treat here. For me, my Modwright Valve pre and Bladelius Solid State power amp make a fair compromise between bass control and mid range warmth, In short, I will have fond memories of these and heartily recommend a demo. These are very accessibly priced and will be keepers. I do not expect to see tons of these on Ebay any time soon.