



S O U N D R E B E L S

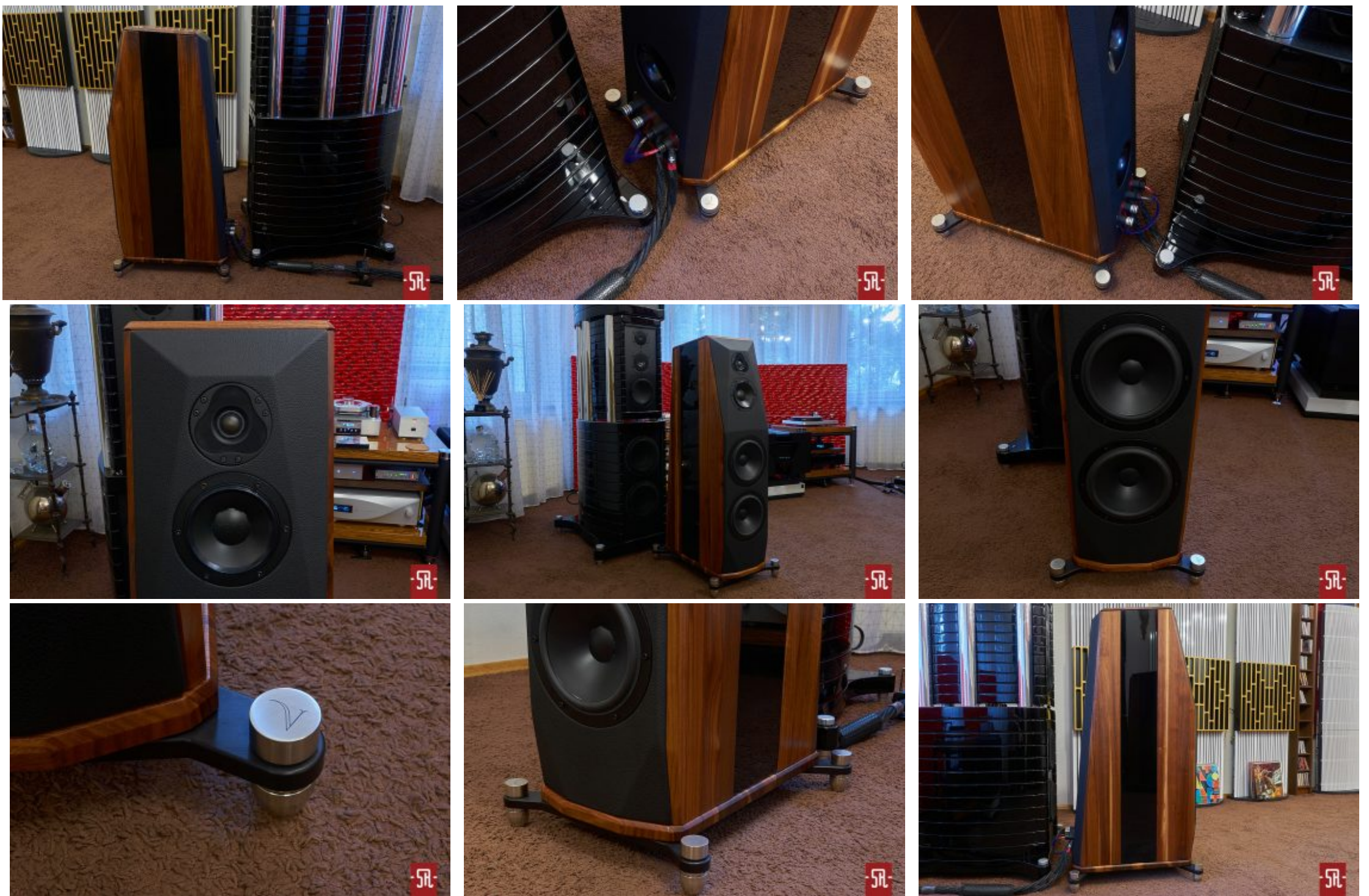
Peak Consult El Diablo English ver.



Opinion 1

I assume, that we all do perceive Denmark as a kind of breeding room for all kinds of electronics and loudspeaker companies, that are well known around the world. I could now spend some time naming those companies, but being aware of your sparse time, I will only mention the [Gryphon Apex Stereo](#) I own now, and the recently owned [Dynaudio Consequence](#) as examples. Those are brands that are almost having cult following, without which, some audiophiles think, no joyful listening to music is at all possible. But those are by far not all companies populating the Danish audio market. So what company am I thinking about? Well, about the equally outstanding, but having a bit of a hard time in the Polish market, yet well known by all audiophiles, brand Peak Consult. Do you think I am exaggerating? Not at all, as when I got those speakers for testing, and we published the [introduction](#) on our web page, I immediately got a plethora of phone calls with requests to have a listen. So what did we get for testing, that had my phone going red hot from calls? Looking in the catalog of the company, the Polish distributor Quality Audio started from a high note and offered us a meeting with the top model from it, the Peak Consult El Diablo – please note, that there is one higher model, but made only upon order, the Dragon Legend. Are you interested? I think this is only a rhetorical questions, because judging by the received interest, I think many of you are.





As you can see on the photos, the tested speakers are mid-sized floor standing loudspeakers. Their weight, around 90kg, compared with their size, suggest that the company was combatting the harmful vibrations and standing waves inside the cabinets; this is further supported by the cabinet walls not being parallel. Except for the side panels, all the remaining ones are either fully (the back and top panels) or partially (the front baffle) tilted. This might have led to the creation of a monstrous cabinet, but the design of those speakers makes it look very nicely. The used tricks are the covering of the baffle and back panel with chic black leather, covering the multilayered HDF cabinet with solid, walnut panels, adding visual accents by using vertical acrylic panels on the sides and finally placing the speakers on transverse beams with regulated spikes on their ends, to add stability. Talking about technicalities, the Danish speakers were equipped with custom Audio Technology speakers – two bass drivers and one midrange, and a Scan Speak tweeter, made exclusively for them. On the back panel we have two bass-reflex ports and a set of proprietary, very thought out wire terminals, placed on the bottom. Those terminals do not allow us to have two pairs of spades touch each other, and also have interchangeable nuts – you can use the plastic one when utilizing banana plugs, while a set of aluminum ones, with a plastic washer, will push the spade connector against the active surface mounted on the back of the speaker. The El Diablo are, according to the manufacturer, three-way speakers, with 90dB sensitivity, the impedance not going below 50ohm and a frequency response of 20 – 30000Hz.

Now, after I provided a few loose technical details, we have arrived at the clou of today's meeting. I am now obliged to describe, and then discuss, based on a few examples, how the beautiful Danish speakers fared. And this time, I have an issue with that, or better said, maybe not an issue, but a kind of uncertainty, how to phrase those, to make them understandable for you. If I would be utilizing the opinions of people visiting me, I would say those are “safe” speakers, as music never stung my ears during listening, regardless of the volume level. But to understand that statement correctly, I need to mention, that this safety was not due to killing off the joy of listening, which is often a result of softening of the sound reproduced, but by showing, how you can transmit the most important aspects of a given event, while being an advocate of the more noble approach to painting the musical world. This is a kind of marriage between water and fire, as on one hand the sound was far from becoming oppressive, or from chasing any competitiveness, but on the other, I got the full range of information recorded in the source material. Without looking for appraisal by splitting the hair in four, yet with everything you need to get completely lost in listening to your beloved music. Music easily consumed in large batches, for multiple hours, when the only result of this would an imprint on your buttock from sitting so long, without any signs of being tired. Of course I am aware, that currently all producers are trying to squeeze all out of music in terms of transparency and immediacy of showing everything on a silver plate, so the Peak Consult speakers may not be “trendy” enough for the beginners in the audio game, but I say – kudos to the Danish for making their product for the true, mature music lovers, and not the painted ones. The true one does not need any fireworks and sonic games to put his soul in the hands of the music listened to, but only coherence and delicacy of how the music is presented, showing the natural fullness of the presented material and mastery of the artists. And the tested speakers are completely fulfilling those tasks. Away from being adventurous, thus nicely soothing the soul of the listener. How? First of all – offering a very coherent, in terms of timbre and essence, and yet very energetic picture. Secondly – keeping the high registers on a leash, while allowing them to reproduce their full spectrum. And thirdly – despite their significant size, building a bookshelf speaker like, very wide and brilliantly deep, virtual stage, managing 3D imaging easily. I must confess, that I was very surprised, in a positive way, with the last point. I like nice depth of the musical world painted in my room, and I placed my speakers in such a way, that they lost a bit of the stage width for the depth, but what the Scandinavian speakers offered in that aspect, was amazing. It was not overdrawn, and at that, fully subdued to the virtual sources. A true fairytale. But which one exactly?

A very good example for the brilliance of reproducing the reality of well recorded grand scale musical events, was the “[Swan Lake](#)” spectacle, directed by Efrem Kurtz and with Yehudi Menuhin on the solo violin. This is a very fluent, and at the same time very emotional story, but, and this is very important, can become hard to digest, when not presented well by the audio system. What do I mean with that? The first two aspects seem to be very obvious, so I will have a look at the last one. Of course, the reason for drawing attention to that aspect, is my wish to describe, how well those speakers are handling material recorded on a big stage, and that despite having calmness written in their DNA. Yet, the speakers were fully capable of showing the full spectrum of orchestral sonic nuances. One time it was an interesting showing of the placement of an individual instrument, while at other times groups of instruments, and the accolades encapsulating all, was the ability to present even the faintest sounds of the solo violin, played by the mentioned maestro, in a completely readable fashion. During the first encounter of this music with the tested speakers, I had the impression of a weird, as rarely seen, stoic calmness. But it was just a deceptive appearance, because under the coat of nostalgia, some deep emotions were hidden. It does not matter if a given loudspeaker can shine more, when in the end it turns out, there is not much music in the played sound, because the system placed more emphasis on competitiveness than on coherence.

Unfortunately, even when there is a wow effect with the first kind of sound, it does not work in the long run. This is why it is so important to allow the speakers to show their true colors, their true personality. And in this case, this personality was pure essence and timbre of the music listened to.

For the ending something completely from the opposite musical pole, Black Sabbath “13”. Was this a failure? Not at all. And that because even during the natural “culturalization” of this music, the sound did not lose any of its expressiveness. Yes, the cymbals were ticking a little less, but instead, they were phenomenally, palpably placed in space. In addition, Ozzy’s voice gained some nice power, the guitar riffs some extra gut, so this whole madness still had my full attention to every instrumental and vocal phrase, despite a change of direction from harshness to smoothness.

Summarizing what I wrote above, I hope everything is clearly understandable. The tested speakers Peak Consult El Diablo are a product for a person, who is absolutely certain, what emotional perception of music means. This is not a transient shot in your ear, but a very coherent showing, of how the projection of music influences its final perception. If you are looking for excessive competitiveness, you will never understand, what the musicians really want to convey in their music. Yes, sometimes a temporary dazzling of the listener has its assets, but for sure, this will not be the means for long term listening. Fortunately for many of us, the Danish seem to understand that, and despite the speaker name (El Diablo), they proposed us real angels.

Jacek Pazio

Opinion 2

Until recently the name “El Diablo” brought me two, or maybe three, associations. The first one, was the contemporary version of the model FXRT from 1983, equipped with the Milwaukee-Eight™ 117 1923cm3 engine, limited Harley-Davidson Low Rider™ El Diablo. Another, the no less intriguing, belonging to the DC universe, character of a certain Chato Santana, who uses such a nick name. And the third – this a bit stretched, as it does not have the “El” prefix – the top Danish integrated amplifier – [The Gryphon Audio Diablo 300](#). Now there is time to add another devil to the list, or better maybe two. I am talking about the Danish, and for some cult, loudspeakers Peak Consult El Diablo, supplied to us by the Chelmza based distributor Quality Audio.





Looking at the Danish Devils, despite trying to keep my objectivism, I cannot. So fully subjectively I must tell you, that the tested Peak look absolutely gorgeous. A combination of leather with natural wood and uncommon shapes of the cabinets do not leave space for indifference. A characteristic, that allows the mentioned devil's seed to stand out from the competition are the massive, and very work intensive cabinets, made from multilayered sandwiches from HDF plates connected with vibration dampening glue, with the total thickness surpassing 30mm (even 40mm in the El Diablo). Inside those cabinets there are appropriate, specifically designed, reinforcements, that make the whole become incredibly rigid. If that would not be enough, the side and top panels are covered with 14mm wooden staves (in our case a beautiful American walnut), and the front and back are covered with leather, what reminds me of the best masters of Italian design. Our eyes are also caught by acrylic inserts, in the form of vertical lines, running through the side walls. So it should not come as a surprise, that making one pair of the loudspeakers, takes the Peak team eight to sixteen weeks. The whole is then mounted on bolted, massive transverse beams (you can see them during the [unboxing](#)), equipped with solid, rounded, conical feet, which not only allow for the speakers being perfectly leveled, but make moving them around surprisingly easy.

But let us concentrate on things we can see with our own eyes, because there is a lot to digest. Starting with the slightly oblique front, through the non-parallel walls, the whole makes a very dynamic impressions, what is even enhanced by the battery of drivers visible on the front baffle. Each of the loudspeakers has a 26mm tweeter, a paired with 0.1dB precision Illuminator D3004/662000 Scan-Speak with enlarged magnet, modified to specifications coming from the Middelfart based manufacturer, a 5" midrange from Audioteknology, with the distinctive dust cap carrying the company logo and a pair of 9" Audioteknology woofers. Of course the midrange and woofers are not your typical off the shelf speakers, but custom made, where the midrange has a special process of optimalization, where the magnetic slit and pole pieces are adjusted. The woofers have bigger magnets and improved baskets. The cabinet's back plate has two bass-reflex ports and double, proprietary wire terminals mounted.

Compared to its predecessor, introduced in 2007 to the market, the electrical parameters were adjusted. First of all, the cross-over frequencies changed from 200Hz and 4.8kHz to 350Hz and 2.4kHz, secondly the impedance was lowered from 7 to 50hm, and thirdly, the sensitivity changed from 94 to 90dB. So the amplifier load became a bit harder, although, at least on paper, it still remains vastly acceptable for most amplifiers. The cross-overs themselves are second order, with 12db slopes. The weight of the speakers increased though – from 85.5 to 90kg a piece. The internal cabling is no longer uniform, and instead of the previously used Stereovox, specific wires were used for the relevant sections. For the bass OFC copper solid-core were used, for the midrange OFC braid cables and for the tweeters – silver plated copper OFC wires. To dampen the separated, asymmetrical chambers for the individual speaker sections a new solution was employed – bitumen felt, and this change could account for the weight increase of the speakers.

Putting the technicalities and the above average design aside, you need to take into account, that most buyers will not make their call based on, even the most sophisticated, almost quantum physics based solutions, or the opinion of the interior decorator (wink, wink, you know whom I mean by that), but using their own ears. Because a loudspeaker may look good, but it absolutely must sound well. And there is no going around that. Fortunately, the El Diablo do not bring any shame to the Danish, who do exist in the high-end ecosystem, but in the contrary, they are a very successful and exclusive business card for the brand. And I am writing this being fully aware of what I am doing, as while

the Peak Consult portfolio encompasses a flagship model called Dragon Legend, standing 188cm tall and bringing 382kg to the scales (each one of them), I feel, that the price tag attached to those (a modest 190 000 €) can work miracles in cooling down the urge of owning a set. And the “devils” are not only more easy to handle, but also three times less expensive, and yet do not shame any audiophile owning them. And they do catch your ears and make you addicted to them, as if those were hard drugs, and not loudspeakers. From the first notes it comes to light, that they can do something, that seems obvious, but in the meantime became either forgotten or skewed, on the path of understanding what High-End really means, and what it really should be. Instead of following the current standard of truly pornographic overdraw and upscaling of the minutest of details to gargantuan sizes, under the motto, that bigger means better, the Peak are all for naturalness and normalness, come as close to the true sound of the reproduced instruments and musicians, as possible given the technical and financial constraints. Do you see the major difference? Here it is not about competitiveness, showing something bigger than it was in reality, playing notes not in the score, or, half-jokingly, performing the “Minute Waltz” (Waltz D-flat major Op. 64 no.1) from Chopin under 45 seconds, instead of the usual 2 minutes, like for example **Lang Lang** does it, but about being true to the original. And while at first glance, we can have the impression, that instead of the expected, mind blowing and booming techno rollercoaster we get only noble, slow driving with a road cruiser, with a Strauss waltz playing, we very quickly get to the conclusion, that this is absolutely not slowing down, but a normalization of the sound. Does this characteristic remind you of something? Not? It does not matter – I will give you a hint – the same kind of esthetic is proposed for years by the Japanese C.E.C. And it does not mean, that things are lethargic or lacking drive, because even the thrash metal “**Ballistic, Sadistic**” from Annihilator sounded with appropriate, for a metal piece, aggression and phenomenal weight. Weight that de facto defines the nature of the El Diablo, in their approach, the saturation and slight lowering of the center of gravity activates and intensifies the energy sleeping inside the source material, and does completely not mud anything. The kick, and in general the drums, bestially treated by Fabio Alessandrini, hit like the hammer of Hephaestus himself, and in the fiery guitar riffs, there is the expected power of large amplifiers. Yet, despite all that might, the whole does not tire with excessive offensiveness and clamor, because the top end, although it cannot be accused of being insecure or withdrawn, emphasizes on quality and refinement, instead of multiplied amount of information and a maddened attack on our senses. It is also worth mentioning, that against appearances, and my previous remarks about avoiding any gigantomachy, the Peak play with a big, but not exaggerated, sound, one that could be described as “adequate” to the reproduced material. The offered size of the sound is not rescaled to the room they are placed in, also not kept on a median, artificial level – as some manufacturers envision. Here the Canadian thrashers are making truly cacophonous clamor and a wall of brilliantly differentiated and not confluent sounds, although the lower octave does have a tendency to a certain roundness, known, amongst others, from the recently reviewed **Dali Kore**. But it suffices to reach out for grand symphonics like the Telarc album “**Tchaikovsky: 1812 Overture, Op. 49, TH 49 & Other Orchestral Works**” by the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, to hear with your own ears, what a tutti of an orchestra, composed of a few dozen musicians, means, and how a gradation of planes should be properly reproduced. By that I mean the creation of the stage to the sides and in depth, and I am not even mention the obvious thing, that nothing is moving out of its rightful place, as it is absolutely defined. And when we want to extract any party from this coherent whole, or follow the doings of a given orchestra section, we can easily do it – we just need to focus our attention on it, just like in a real life setting. Because when sitting in the auditorium, we experience the same kind of cognitive dualism, where we perceive the orchestra as a whole, only occasionally extracting some more intriguing soloists, or looking at a more expressive conductor. So there is no way, that the individual musicians are carved out with laser precision and we can experience the overwhelming package of details, like on a 4 or 8K demo, we just get a vividness like in a live event, or in a cinema. Due to that, even multiple hours of marathon listening is not tiring, in contrary, those allow our nervous system, deteriorated with our daily stresses, to regenerate.

I hope, that from what I wrote above you can see, that the devil is not as black as he is painted, and the Peak Consult El Diablo do not try to torture the listener, but try to make him or her comfortable and allow to relax, proposing a very refined and coherent sound, with incredible depth and emotional load. Is this a sound for everyone? Of course ... not, because lovers of laboratory coldness and splitting a hair in fours can be disappointed with low amount of analytics. But all people searching for musicality, swing and intrinsic calmness in music, and the de facto neutrality, can reach for the Danish devils without a second thought. However you need to keep one thing in mind, you need to have powerful amplification at hand, as the Peak absorb Watts and Amperes like sponges, so weak tube amps and etheric solid states may not be sufficient. It is also worth to leave them some space, as the bass reflex ports on the back are not for show, and already without the aid of the walls the El Diablo have sufficient amounts of bass.

Marcin Olszewski

System used in this test:

Source:

- transport: CEC TL 0 3.0
- streamer: Melco N1A/2EX + switch Silent Angel Bonn N8
- DAC: dCS Vivaldi DAC 2.0
- Master clock: Mutec REF 10 SE-120
- reclocker: Mutec MC-3+USB
- Shunyata Research Omega Clock
- Shunyata Sigma V2 NR
- Preamplifier: Gryphon Audio Pandora
- Power amplifier: Gryphon Audio Apex Stereo
- Loudspeakers: Gauder Akustik Berlina RC-11 Black Edition
- Speaker Cables: Synergistic Research Galileo SX SC
- IC RCA: Hijiri Million „Kiwami”, Vermouth Audio Reference
- IC XLR: Tellurium Q Silver Diamond, Hijiri Milion „Kiwami”, Siltech Classic Legend 880i

Digital IC: Hijiri HDG-X Milion

Power cables: Hijiri Takumi Maestro, Furutech Project-V1, Furutech NanoFlux NCF, Furutech DPS-4.1 + FI-E50 NCF(R)/ FI-50(R), Hijiri Nagomi, Vermouth Audio Reference Power Cord, Acrolink 8N-PC8100 Performante

– Table: BASE AUDIO 2

– Accessories: Harmonix TU 505EX MK II, Stillpoints ULTRA SS, Stillpoints ULTRA MINI, antivibration platform by SOLID TECH, Harmonix AC Enacom Improved for 100-240V, Harmonix Room Tuning Mini Disk RFA-80i

– Power distribution board: POWER BASE HIGH END

– Acoustic treatments by Artnovion

Analog stage:

Drive: Clearaudio Concept

Cartridge: Essence MC

Step-up: Thrax Trajan

Phonostage: Sensor 2 mk II

Polish distributor: **Quality Audio**

Manufacturer: **Peak Consult**

Price: 55 000€

Specifications

Design: 3-way ported double bass

Crossover Frequency: 350 Hz / 2400 Hz

Frequency response: 20 – 30.000 Hz

Sensitivity: 90dB @ 1 W / 1 m

Impedance: 5+/-1 Ω

Dimensions (H x W x D): 115 x 30 x 54 cm
Weight: 90 kg each

Link do tekstu: [Peak Consult El Diablo English ver.](#)