SOUND & MUSIC

Joachim Pfeiffer's

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The Dragon Legacy from Peak Consult



THE DRAGON LEGACY

When you read again that manufacturer X has built the best speaker in the world with speaker Y, first check who is making that claim. Then you'll see and hear more clearly. The story of a speaker that truly opens a new chapter.

Text: Joachim Pfeiffer, photos: Peak Consult



PROLOGUE

udiophiles don't just appear out of nowhere; they've traversed a rocky path. A journey seldom marked by a straight road to their destination. Let's be honest. Along many stretches, they must have fallen prey to charlatans who deftly extracted hefty sums for what quickly turned out to be useless provisions. At times, this journey skirted dangerously close to the abyss, be it financially or personally. Partnerships failed, or other obstacles arose. Many gave up. It takes perseverance to hear the light at the end of the tunnel at the journey's end, finally arriving at the acoustic island of happiness, the ultimate refuge where all desires and visions merge with reality. Here, it's possible to revive entire orchestras, even those from bygone eras. A - perceived - genuine time machine where all hopes and bank account depletions converge. One enters this hobby, this passion, always innocently and unbiased. The realization that there were sounds of power and beauty beyond the volume of our family transistor radio from Schaub Lorenz, I owe to my (honorary) uncle. He also handed me a well-worn yearbook from Fono Forum, where I got my first technical terms and reviews of reproduced music. An idea formed in my mind, not through a stereo system, not even through my uncle Herbert's.

Orchestral musicians hear the symphonies in their heads, not from the speakers

Over the years, innocence faded as I, too, realized that those great concert pictures in my mind had at best an imperfect correlation with the reality before me - if at all. Despite delving deep into my wallet and a life far beyond my means as a student, worlds lay between desire and reality. During that time, rich in fantasy but rather poor in means, I developed an understanding that, for example, orchestral musicians rarely operate high-quality hi-fi systems: They hear the symphonies in their heads, not from the speakers. For years, I listened in a similar way. I devoted my professional life to bridging this gap. Since bargaining over money and goods was not in my nature, the only suitable role for me was that of an editor. When I entered the first editorial office, with a clear goal: to be able to work with the most powerful audio components. Not just as a two-dimensional image in one of my previously devoured hi-fi magazines, but in their actual listening rooms. The initial euphoria turned into disillusionment and even disappointment in the early years.

Conflict between real sounds and the idea we had of them

No, it wasn't the conflict between mental and hi-fi playback that was the problem, but between real sounds and the idea we had of them. Since then, I have full understanding for the critical minds that demand physics and punish charlatans. Renegade believers who sometimes go too far, not only propagating the supposed truths, perhaps explored in blind tests, but also becoming embittered.

They no longer allow emotions. They even alienate them. But it's the complex beauty of a sequence of tones that, when masterfully performed and reproduced, evokes feelings one cannot escape. But when I indulge in music, it's difficult for me because I've learned to pay attention to flaws in recordings and their playback by audio devices. When I listen and report professionally, I focus on the shortcomings, and music is just a means to an end. Driven by the longing, perhaps one day to come as close as possible to the ideal of high-fidelity reproduction. That happened in 2024.

HIFI SOUND & MUSIC **FACTS**

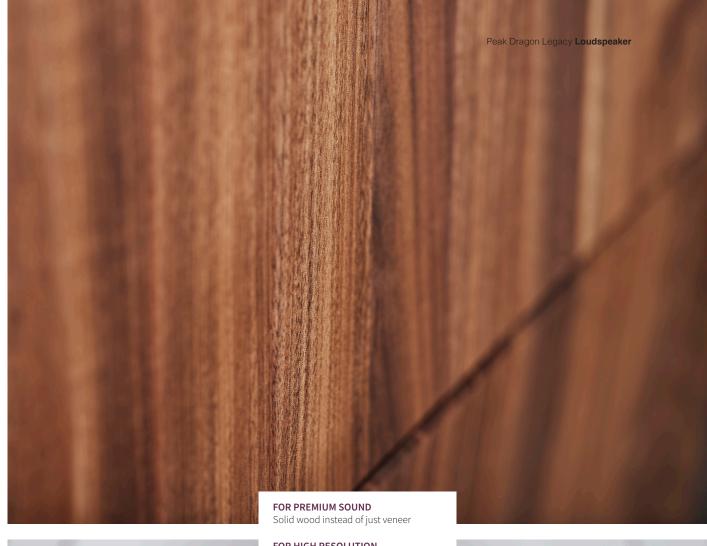
ManufacturerPeak ConsultModelDragon LegacyPrice185.000 Euro / pair

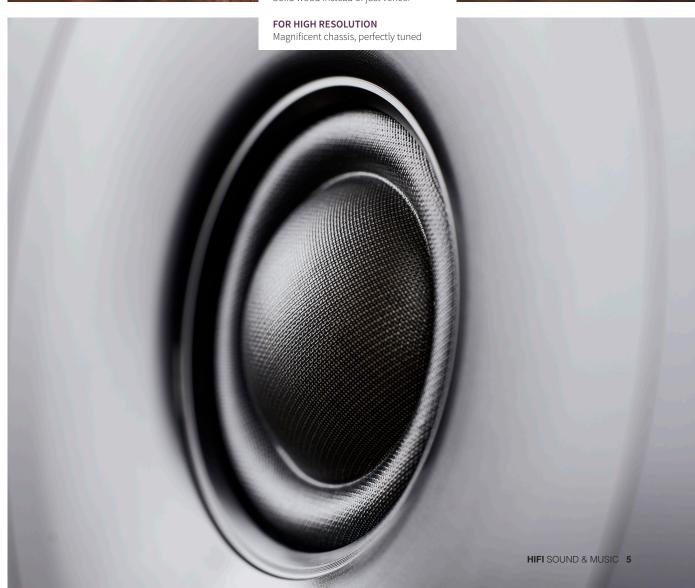
Feature Sand-filled crossover chamber

Design Passive 3-way floor-standing speaker,

bass reflex

Dimension 172,0 x 40,0 x 58,5 cm **Weight** 225 Kilograms





At first glance, the Peak "Dragon Legacy" doesn't appear particularly extraordinary or unusual. One might think: a typical generously sized loudspeaker with seemingly impressive bass strength, one of the usual flagships. Far from it. Certain speakers that have held their firm and historically justified place in the history of high fidelity were - except for one exception, which has a certain connection to the Legacy (see Epilogue) -

True greatness is not determined by dimensions

simply more imposing.

Do you remember the Infinity IRS or its smaller sister called Beta? Or the Genesis 1, conceived and made by the same designer? Gigantic pieces that, if placed in front of a window, could darken rooms but truly illuminate them acoustically. Or think of David Wilson's martial speakers. I remember with awe, joy, and nostalgia the day I visited David at his home in Utah and had the opportunity to engage with the version of the legendary end-time sound sculpture "Whamm." They looked, unheard, as if they could repro-

TECHNOLOGY

duce music incredibly well. You're already aware of the visual appeal a pair of Dragon Legacies presents as a "photo model."

One can easily imagine placing this speaker in the living room, regardless of whether the bank balance allows for such an investment. What isn't immediately apparent visually is the weight of the Legacy. It comes in at an impressive 225 kilograms - no, not the pair, but each piece. And not to boast or secure a place in the Guinness Book of World Records. Everything is aligned with one single goal: unadulterated sound. Any music, any challenge that characterizes all past and future music productions. Perhaps capturing instruments that aren't even sketched on the drawing board today, and just as those that made people laugh and cry centuries ago.

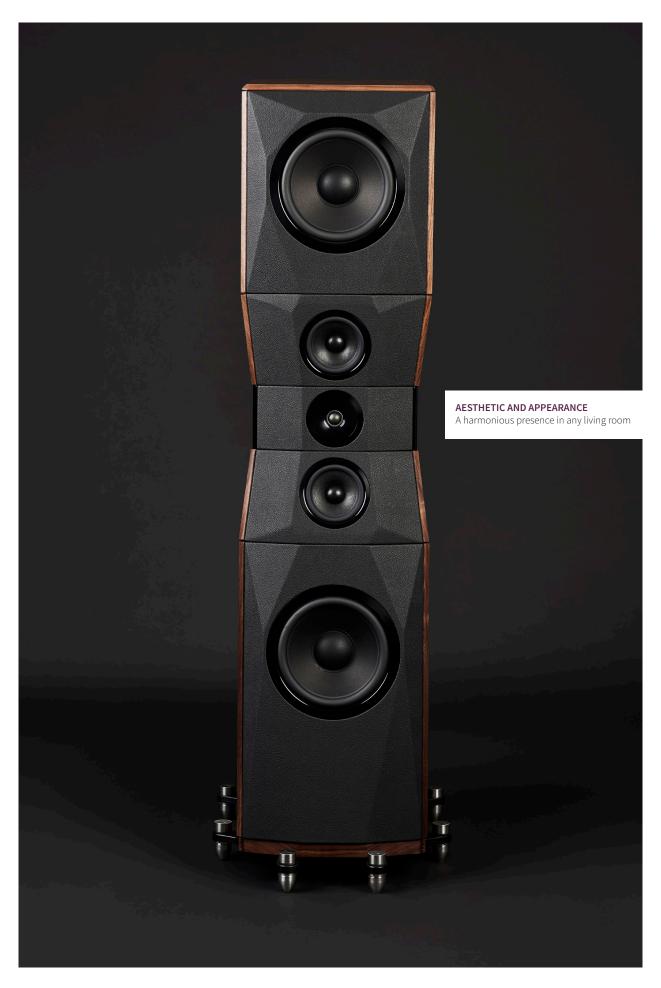
Long live Maria Callas forever Bringing back a Maria Callas and

accurately portraying vocal wonders born years later, as precisely as possible. Because that's the goal of it all: to create a speaker that sounds like life but not like a speaker. 225 kilograms help with

that. The sidewalls of the Big Peak are made of four layers of highly damping materials, with a thickness of 46 millimeters. The connection of the five individual segments alone measures 82 mm. Beautiful, yet conservative and indebted to the tradition of the Danish manufacturer, the visible side walls are clad with solid walnut.

Opportunity may make thieves, but truly sovereign developer personalities sometimes openly reveal the ingredients of a loudspeaker. The first serial sample of the Dragon Legacy made its mark in the acoustically optimized listening development temple of Karl-Heinz Fink. As is obligatory during testing phases, I was able to get an idea of the two frequency crossovers that were still outsourced. Not a real, so no photo. Wilfried Ehrenholz, co-owner of Peak, and Karl-Heinz, who shouldered the development, didn't explicitly forbid it, but it's just not done. It's often read and repeated that only the best ingredients were used in building the crossover, but in this case, the message is true. It is the best. Period. ▶









And a sound-oriented decision to house the crossover in a specially damped, sand-filled chamber inside the enclosure. A construction intended to help minimize microphony effects and ensure constant temperature conditions - even when things get hot, in the literal sense of the word, i.e., at

The chassis of the Dragon Legacy are symmetrically arranged, which certainly contributes to the tall speaker acoustically behaving like a point source and - as a pleasant side effect - eliminating floor and ceiling reflections.

extremely high levels.

Built by the Danes are two woofers with a diameter of 28 centimeters, along with two 15inch midrange drivers and a new tweeter featuring what's known

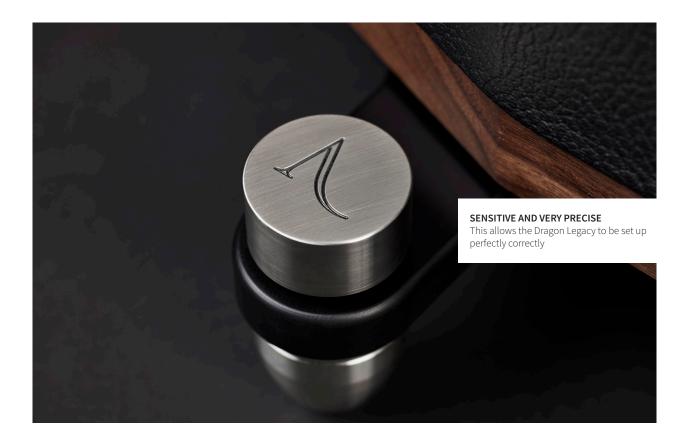


as Waveguide technology. And that's not something to underestimate.

"Waveguide" offers improved directivity, reduced distortions, and more precise high-frequency reproduction. The directional sound radiation extends the reach of the speakers while ensuring uniform sound coverage throughout the room. Overall, the application of Waveguides contributes to improved sound quality and consistent sound reproduction. The fact that Waveguide was implemented at the highest level is attributed to the brilliant work of Karl-Heinz Fink, his team, and their recognized measurement and simulation techniques.



- 1. THAT'S HOW PEAK CONSULT BUILDS, PART 1 Solid wood instead of MDF
- 2. THAT'S HOW PEAK CONSULT BUILDS, PART 2 Even in the smallest model "Sonora"
- 3. THAT'S HOW PEAK CONSULT BUILDS, PART 3 Perfection in detail. The bass reflex port
- 4. THAT'S HOW PEAK CONSULT BUILDS, PART 4 Best connections. The materials matter



The Music

Described by the music magazine "Rondo" as "an impressive testament to his extraordinary piano playing and deep musical integrity," the legendary recording "The Salzburg Recital" with Grigory Sokolov from 2008 enthralled critics. The author of the review rightfully admired the "subtle shading," nuanced expression of the Russian pianist, and his ability to grasp and convey the emotional depth of the music. Sokolov's masterful performance of Mozart's F major piano sonatas KV 280 and 232 is hailed as a "demonstration of his outstanding technique and deep understanding of Mozart's music." Particularly impressive are the slow movements, which the exceptional pianist shapes with "remarkable delicacy and grace." It is precisely this "delicacy and grace" that hi-fi systems can preserve or even enhance. They can also disturb or destroy it.

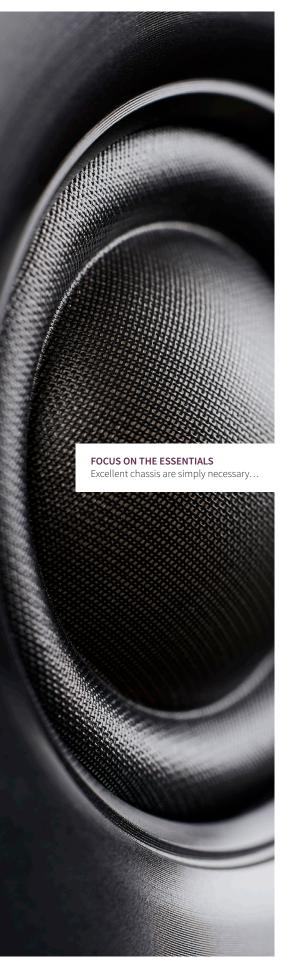
Alone with Sokolov?

Privileged to listen to music with good components, I remember attending a concert by Grigory Sokolov in my hometown. I was certainly fascinated by Sokolov's virtuoso performance. You simply "must" hear him once in your life. Nevertheless, the recording, be it the CD or the high-quality stream via Qobuz, can evoke more emotions than the live concert. Because you're closer to the artist, watching over his shoulder and sharing feelings directly. Being alone with yourself and the music, this is hardly achievable in many concert halls.

The essence of classical music often lies in the fact that exploring a work never reaches a conclusion but is repeatedly approached anew. This is influenced by one's own mood or disposition, but also by the chain of music reproduction. Simplifying things, with a speaker like the Peak Dragon Legacy, one might

think that owning it alone would allow for an authentic experience of the work in question. This is true and - thankfully - also false. "False" in the well-meaning sense, because a decent hi-fi system is already capable of reproducing the essence of this performance in a way that sends shivers down your spine one after another. For instance, pairing an old Braun tube amplifier, the CVS 60, with an efficiency-oriented transducer like the Daniel Hertz "Amber" works wonders. As a source, I use a MacBook Air, with a simple D/A converter from Block serving between it and the vintage amp. So, the level of this setup is decent, with no typical hi-fi discipline standing out - and that's a good thing when Grigory Sokolov gives a living room concert.

With much more ambitious high-end setups, however, I venture with him at the Steinway D into areas that show me the ▶



opportunities and limitations in my hearing. Through my certainly high-resolution two-way loudspeakers Intonation Terzian, I "see" or rather "hear" better into the Salzburg concert hall, delighting in the richness of detail and transparency, pinpointing the instrument very precisely, but also noting that the frequency range doesn't reach lower registers and the dynamics can't match reality. With alternative speaker systems, I hear different deficiencies, especially with complex multi-way speakers, which rarely deliver energies precisely where they should. As paradoxical as it may sound, with many of Grigory Sokolov's recordings, who primarily performs live in concert halls without orchestral accompaniment and never in the studio, less (hifi) can mean more (emotion).

Capture the Steinway D in all its facets

Since 2009, I've experienced the Salzburg Recital of the keyboard genius with some limitations. At times with less - especially when exploring monumental speaker dreams like the Wilson Audio Alexx V, which came very close to my ideal but couldn't sustain it over the duration of both piano sonatas with their six movements. Even the candidates in my own listening rooms, led by the Bowers & Wilkins top models, the wonderful creations of Dr. Gauder, and even the highly esteemed MF-4 by Strauss from Switzerland, couldn't maintain the illusion of reality throughout the entire playtime.

The Peak Dragon Legacy manages to perfectly showcase something seemingly very simple: a grand piano in a concert hall with two piano sonatas by Mozart on the program.

The Danish wonder speakers can masterfully reproduce the "Salzburg Recital," including the Chopin Preludes and six breathtaking encores. It's as if they were created solely for this purpose and had the exclusive license to electronically perform this concert. With my current knowledge, the Peak Dragon Legacy is indeed the only one I would attest to this capability. Not a single note, nor any sequence of strokes, diminishes - as is usually the case - this magnificent concert.

A speaker system that can faithfully reproduce a Steinway Model D-274 in terms of tonal colors, dimensions, and dynamics without limitations is unlikely to stumble with other genres.

Take the best seats at the concert

Let's dive into symphonic music and see if the Dragon can also conduct an orchestra in what's called "A-strength." Such an ensemble typically consists of 70 to 100 fully trained musicians, including string, woodwind, and brass players, percussionists, as well as optional instrumentalists such as harpists or pianists. It is simply impossible to gather all these performers in a 1:1 scale between the two Peak Dragon Legacy speakers due to physics. Hi-fi cannot do that, nor does it want to. Here, the opportunities - and also the risks - of high fidelity are revealed. Let's call it a "chance" lies in the work of experienced sound engineers who skillfully capture a musically complex work with an array of microphones in such a way that the consuming listener later gets the impression that they are seated in the preferred seats, for example, in the middle of rows 7 to 9 in the Berlin Philharmonic. However, many recordings in recent years shed a sad light on the risks: "Thanks" to digital technology and the associated ease of "cutting" or rather mutilating musical works, there are hardly any recordings where the musicians play together as an ensemble. Busy sound technicians prepare concerts down to indivi-

dual notes, adjusting here a little, there a little more, resulting in a recording whose contents somehow come across as sterile or even "lifeless." Emotions do not arise with such productions. A small group of "upright" individuals, on the other hand, tries to fight against this trend, swearing by so-called one-point recordings, where only two optimally positioned microphones capture an orchestra.

Meanwhile, the divine and ingenious Peak reveals the downside of this supposedly audiophile coin mercilessly: Without skillfully placed support microphones, instruments lose their shape depending on the volume played; they shrink in quieter passages and swell in louder ones. What struck me very positively when such dubious material was served: it didn't sound repulsive but rather reconciled directly with the Dragon Legacy. An art that cannot be valued highly enough. This sets the Peak apart from typical studio monitors, which are calibrated to detect errors. With the Peak, you clearly perceive the small and larger idiosyncrasies but you simply "brush them off" with a smile.

However, what happens when a recording is professionally captured in the audiophile sense? There are examples, although they are rare. The legendary "Paganini Variations" with which Boris Blacher (1903 to 1975) created an outstanding piece of orchestral music hits the nail on the head for me. Especially the recording that was released as "Pure Music, Volume 3" by Audio magazine. The core and purpose of the Pure Music series was to make complete uncut and dynamically uncensored productions accessible to hi-fi enthusiasts. Such title CDs sometimes had editions of 70,000 to 100,000 copies, which, in the case of the Paganini Variations, incurred considerable costs because -

note Mr. Blacher's year of death - GEMA fees in dizzying heights were due. The Pure Music CD was recorded by the legendary Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra under Marek Janowski, the aforementioned "Variations" were from a concert in April 2004 at the Berlin Philharmonic. In these 13:55 minutes, virtually everything is included that a classical orchestra has to offer in terms of instruments, as if in fast forward, the listener even experiences various musical styles and bathes in a sea of tonal colors and unrestrained dynamic waves (up to 60 dB!).

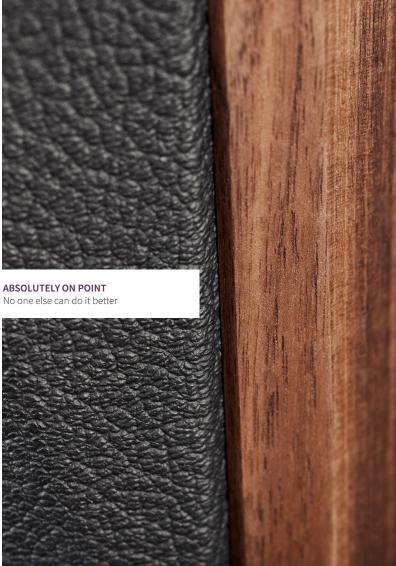
What you hear, you never forget I have been "working" with this stroke of genius for so many years, have come to appreciate hi-fi configurations with it, but have also explored their limitations. As with Grigory Sokolov, with the Peak Dragon Legacy, the many personally experienced concerts in this glorious Berlin concert hall merge with the revealing performance of this ultimate high-end system. It all comes so unusually close together that not even a proverbial leaf can fit between them. From here, the way back to acoustic everyday life is bitter: even days after the "resurrection" of the concert through the Peak, the melodies, harmonies, and the naturally perceived dynamics refuse to leave my mind. All attempts to reproduce the experience with alternative speakers have failed. On the contrary. With the Paganini Variations, it is directly difficult to accept other hi-fi players and speaker protagonists.

Which ones? Honest answer: All of them. ▶









CONCLUSION

Anyone seriously interested in the Peak Dragon Legacy is likely to have a rich archive of various recordings, LPs, CDs, maybe the occasional master tape, and certainly a streamer with excellent performance. Among the physical sound carriers are some that often only rotated once in CD drawers or on turntables. Because they failed to captivate the listener, take them along, make them laugh or cry in these premieres. I seriously envy anyone who wants and can afford the Dragon Legacy or another speaker from this manufacturer.

Peak speakers are tools that push the boundaries of high fidelity at currently benchmark-setting levels. Listening to music with them playfully charming, demanding the listener, but never over or under-demanding musical works in context. You will have a delightful time enjoying witty hits, marveling at the craftsmanship of some soloists, and being deeply moved to your core when encountering real geniuses in music. Because you understand them.

EPILOG

This article has prompted me to reflect on a speaker that shares a certain kinship with the Dragon Legacy: the Dynaudio Evidence Master, which, until now, has been the best speaker in my professional engagement with high fidelity. It might have been capable of presenting the Russian piano artist in all his glory. I sense it, but I don't know for sure - because the last time I heard the Evidence was over 20 years ago.

The performance of the Evidence Master has left a lasting impression on me. It gave me an inkling of how good a reproduction through hi-fi can actually be. All subsequent tests had to conform to this realization.

Everyone perceives differently. Nevertheless, I advise like-minded high-end enthusiasts to take advantage of all opportunities to listen to speakers like the Dynaudio Evidence or now - and even more compellingly - the Peak Dragon Legacy at trade shows or through dealers. It's beneficial, it enriches. Those who recognize what hi-fi can achieve

at the highest level will gain valuable insights into how to improve the quality of their own setup. Yes, they may have to make compromises even after experiencing the Peak Dragon Legacy, but they will be wiser about which ones to make.

Listening at trade shows, in particular, is not without its challenges. Speakers with the potential of a Legacy always run the risk of falling far short of expectations (which I am also now fueling). This is something they share with the Dynaudio Evidence. In my experience, these outstanding speakers either play exceptionally well (rarely) or fall flat on their faces, directly contrasting. This is understandable because even the slightest otherwise insignificant disturbances in the supplying electronic configuration are transmitted with ruthless clarity. By the way, the common link between the Dynaudio Evidence and the Peak Dragon Legacy is Wilfried Ehrenholz. He was a co-founder of Dynaudio and, together with Lennart Asbjorn Jensen, took over the Danish manufacturer founded in 1996 a few years ago. ■

Peak Consult Dragon Legacy

» Most speakers hailed as the best in the world are at best on their way there. They take cues from true milestones but fall short. However, this stroke of genius serves as the new beacon for them and all audiophiles. «

