
PEAK

SIGNAL FROM THE SIDELINES

Few high end enthusiasts have Peak speakers on their list. The recently redesigned Sinfonia is set to change that. Under new leadership, the Danish manufacturer is making a bold statement in the high end market.

Text: Matthias Böde

It goes without saying: What works perfectly inspires you and is simply more enjoyable than something mediocre. The same is true when testing hi-fi components. Setting aside our professional perspective, we get a lot of enjoyment out of optimal performance. And when a product crosses our path that exudes, down to its very core, the spirit of audiophile passion, meticulous refinement, and material sophistication, that's when you'll find us getting really enthusiastic.

That brings us to the Sinfonia floorstanding speaker from the Danish brand Peak. It has just undergone a comprehensive technical overhaul and, at first glance, doesn't seem to offer much that's particularly exciting. Okay, the elaborate cabinet—which reportedly takes about 80 hours of labor to build per pair of speakers—is flawlessly crafted, but it exudes a serious, elegant charm rather than a glamorous one. Perhaps it would be different in high-gloss white or black, which are available as alternatives to our test pair's dignified walnut veneer, among other options.

But when the first notes emerge from the three custom-built drivers of the Sinfonia—which weighs a hefty 78 kilograms—you realize where its true magic lies. It's rare to find a speaker that sounds as transparent and precise as this one does, yet doesn't come across as dry or analytically dissecting, but rather as a holistic, seamless whole. At least when it's set up correctly—no, with millimeter precision. If this isn't the case, the Danish speaker already lets you sense its potential and, in a sense, spurs the listener on to get the most out of it. Although we have a wide and high-quality selection of speaker cables in this category, we opted for a very specific one because we suspected it would push the Peak to its absolute height—which is exactly what happened.

Strong substance – new ambition

Then, for example, „Estate" from Ana Caram's „Blue Bossa" album—captivatingly recorded by Chesky Records—exuded its enchanting charm; the Brazilian singer's voice was distinctly defined, present in every facet, yet seamlessly woven into its colorful surroundings, whose pronounced tonal substance did not in the least detract from the agility or the airy, breezy ambience. Overall, the performance was homogeneous, as if meticulously sorted across its entire range with the tips of one's fingers, and its refined grandeur left a lasting impression on us.

And this is all the more significant given that, although Peak has been around since 1996, it remained largely under the radar—at least here—while the brand has long enjoyed greater attention from the audiophile community in the U.S. as well as in many parts of Asia. But that's set to change under the new leadership. Since 2021, Wilfried Ehrenholz—once German co-founder of Dynaudio, known for its honest „Danes don't lie!" speakers—has been steering Peak's fortunes alongside a business partner.

As a result, the company gained not only substantial expertise in speaker development but also additional know-how regarding international sales operations. Incidentally, the „Drei H" distributor in Hamburg has recently taken over distribution of Peak products in Germany.

While Ehrenholz & Co. made a devilishly good impression at the „High End" 2023 with the „El Diablo"—which had already piqued our interest—the Sinfonia, priced at around 45,000 euros per pair and positioned above the Sonora, is the second-smallest model in the Peak lineup, which is crowned by the imposing, € 185,000 Dragon Legacy. But that means



A torque wrench included in the delivery ensures that the drivers are securely fastened.



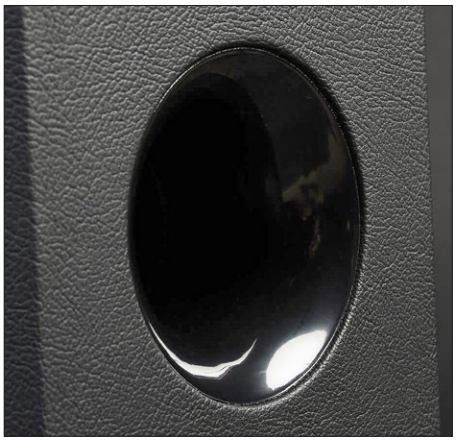
To make it easier to move the heavy speakers, smooth floor gliders are included.

nothing, since it already combines all the advantages of Peak loudspeakers. The cabinet consists of three layers of HDF and MDF panels of varying densities, with a total thickness of a remarkable 36 millimeters. These are bonded with a special, soft-curing adhesive, creating a substrate that is both broadband and highly damping. On top of this lies a 14-millimeter-thick layer of hardwood, bringing the total thickness to 50 millimeters. The narrow acrylic glass panels, inserted vertically on both sides, are part of this anti-resonance design.

Acoustically isolated crossover

Added to this are internal reinforcements, as well as, of course, the separate chambers for the midrange and tweeter drivers, designed to protect the midrange driver in particular from the pressure waves generated by the woofer. To minimize their harmful effects on the crossover—which is mounted on three MDF boards—, it is housed in a separate compartment filled with sand at the bottom of the Sinfonia. This compartment connects directly to the speaker's well-designed and effectively implemented foot system (see box).

The thus acoustically isolated crossover can be connected via a single-wire terminal that accepts both banana plugs and spade connectors, and whose silver contacts are designed to ensure the lowest-loss signal flow. These are supplied by connection specialist Argento Audio, also Danish. As a former Dynaudio man—



Its bass reflex port sits ion the rear of the Sinfonia, which is leather-clad like the baffle.

where this approach has always been standard practice—Ehrenholz, who is in illustrious company in this regard, is well aware of the sonic losses that occur when a bi-wire connection, common in this class, is fed by a single speaker cable.

That's because you'd then have to use adapters or short cable bridges. In the worst-case scenario, the thin metal bridges used by the corresponding manufacturer—which often serve as the connections right out of the box—remain in place, which primarily comes at the expense of homogeneity and spatiality. In short: Peak avoids this pitfall. But take note: Anyone who actually wants to set up bi-wiring or even bi-amping on the Sinfonia can order it with a corresponding bi-wire-terminal of the same quality—at no extra charge. Now that's what we call good service!

The Danes take an equally thorough approach to the issue of gradual sound degradation caused by the drivers gradually loosening. This happens almost inevitably over time due to vibrations and temperature fluctuations. While other manufacturers simply mention—though, of course, the point is usually left entirely unmentioned—that their screws should be tightened from time to time, Peak includes a torque wrench with the Sinfonia that's also suitable for securing the foot crossbars. This ensures a secure hold while also preventing you from overdoing it. After all, it's not uncommon for overzealous „clumsy types" to have already stripped screws or ruined threads in the process.

In fact, almost all of the bolts on the drivers of our test speaker could be tightened a bit more before the wrench gave way. And that had a direct impact on the definition, which—not only, but especially—in a speaker as meticulously refined down to the last detail as the Sinfonia suffers even from a slightly loose driver.

Professional analysis tools

But smaller manufacturers like Peak can't handle everything on their own. That's why the Danish company maintains a close partnership with the Fink Audio-Consulting center of expertise, based in Essen, Germany. In addition to a wealth of knowledge on all aspects of loudspeaker design, the center employs state-of-the-art measurement and analysis methods—which were used, for example, in the design of the three drivers recessed into the Sinfonia's leather-covered, solid, and acoustically optimized baffle.



After the sale of Dynaudio in 2014, Wilfried Ehrenholz–pictured here with the first Sinfonia–soon found himself itching to get back into the game. At Peak, he's taking his ambitions to the extreme.

TEST DEVICES

Turntable: SME Model 35/Series Vi with EMT JSD Novel Titan G MC cartridge

Phono preamp: Nagra Classic Phono

Streaming preamps: Meitner MA3i, T+A SDX 3100 HV

Integrated amplifiers: Audionet WATT, Symphonic Line RG14 Edition MK 5 S

Preamplifier: Accustic Arts Preamp V

Power amplifiers: Accustic Arts Amp VI, Aesthetix Dione

Speakers: B&W 801 D4, DALI Epikore 11

Cables: Boaacoustic Black.sonic-25, Crystal Cable Diamond Series 2, HMS Gran Finale

While Audio Technology manufactures the 20-centimeter woofer and the 11-centimeter midrange driver, the fabric dome tweeter comes from the equally renowned supplier Scan-Speak. All drivers are built according to parameters developed in collaboration with Fink. These are tested both virtually using specialized simulation software and in practical listening tests. Particular attention is said to have been paid to the midrange driver—which is crucial for the naturalness of the sound reproduction. At times, such as when selecting the best-sounding crossover components, only the human ear can make the decision—and it always has the final say. Our lab could only confirm the meticulous care taken with the Sinfonia in terms of measurement performance: The frequency response is exceptionally balanced. The tiny three-decibel bump between 200 and 300 hertz adds a touch of richness to the taut, well-defined sound, and the flat bass roll-off ensures that even very low frequencies are not lost.

A high-class lab appearance

In addition to its excellent omnidirectional dispersion—high frequencies show virtually no roll-off at angles of 30 degrees compared to the axis—the unusually smooth impedance response stands out. Thanks to the „Peak Linear Impedance Control" (PLIC), the impedance of the Sinfonia—which comes without a front grille—remains within a narrow range of four to around seven ohms. Combined with its respectable efficiency, this makes the Peak an easy-to-handle partner for the vast majority of amplifiers.

In addition to integrated amplifiers, we naturally put our reference system (see test devices box) through the paces with the Danish speaker. It was neither impressed nor overwhelmed by them. Of course, we first looked for the Dynaudio tradition in the Peak's sound. Aside from the fact that it, too, truly surpasses itself as the quality of sources and amplifiers increases, the Sinfonia reveals a commitment to unadulterated naturalness and exemplary clarity. However, it complements these qualities with punch, musical passion, and heartfelt intensity, effortlessly filling our large listening room with energy.

If you want to find out what a 20-inch woofer is capable of, you have to hear the Peak and its high volume capabilities: its well-defined richness, expressive tonal color, and substantial impact will surprise even experts. Indeed, this is a speaker with extraordinary potential. This is par-



Photos: STEREO, manufacturer

If you unscrew the screw cylinders that secure the fork terminals–which are to be inserted into the lower slot–from the pole terminals (right), the opening is clear for bananas, even those with a large diameter.

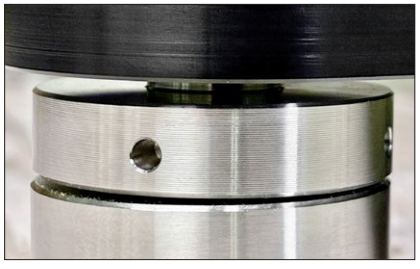
TUNING WITH THE FEET

A Stainless-steel rod stands on a ceramic ball–the sophisticated support construction of the Peak Sinfonia.

A vivid example of the effort Peak has put into the Sinfonia is its complex base system. While other speakers–even high-end models–offer solid metal arms with screw-in spikes, Peak takes this approach a step further with a comprehensive and consistent design for energy dissipation. This is by no means an exaggeration, considering that, based on experience, the transition from the speaker enclosure to the floor is one of the most critical points for sound quality in the entire system.

It starts with the fact that the 20-millimeter-thick, black anodized aluminum crossbars do not rest directly against the housing. Instead, narrow rubber strips provide a cushioned transition. For this to work, the mounting screws must not be tightened too much. Of course, it's hard to gauge this by feel, which is why the torque wrench supplied for tightening the chassis to the specified torque isn't just there to „fit" into the Allen heads.

An ultra-hard ceramic ball is inserted into the flat, hollow steel cones at the base of the foot. A steel rod rests on top of it with a defined amount of pressure and single-point contact. Two circumferential rubber rings keep the rod at a distance from the shaft. On the opposite side is a threaded section that screws into the crossbar and also serves to align the speaker. A cap bearing the Peak logo counters this from above, with a ring made of damping plastic in between, thus ensuring a firm, wobble-free hold; this is because the round plate surrounding the rod is not intended to act as a resonance bridge and must therefore not rest against the boom. The solid metal parts weigh in at nearly one kilogram–per foot.



The outer ring of the foot rod should maintain a small distance to the crossbar.



With the foot removed, its parts reveal the complexity of the setup system.

ticularly evident in its audiophile qualities—from the explicitly neutral, immensely nuanced, and thus delicate midrange reproduction with its pronounced integrity, to the graceful highs that are fanned out down to their finest nuances and never sound the slightest bit exaggerated, all the way to the richly nuanced, edgy bass that breathes with powerful resonance through the large rear reflex port.

With love and expertise

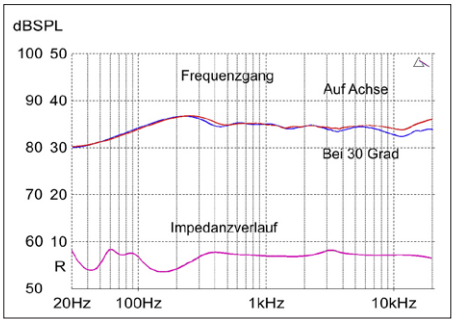
And hardly any speaker showcases the character of speaker cables as clearly as our meticulously set-up Sinfonia. To enhance its strikingly defined, refined performance, we asked Crystal Cable—keyword: the desire to test the limits—for a set of Diamond Series 2 cables, which build up pressure without adding any excess richness or faking volume through muddiness. With this setup, the deep-reaching Peak really gained traction and punch without drifting into something pale or thin.

There's no doubt about it: When working with the Peak, which reacts to even the slightest change, every detail takes on special importance. A loose driver, feet that aren't properly secured, sloppy setup, or the wrong cable—if you correct these mistakes, the difference becomes abundantly clear.

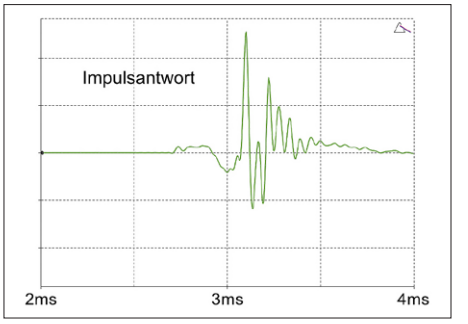
The fact that the Peak Sinfonia also manages to combine a sense of spaciousness with a vivid, sharply defined focus further underscores the impression that this high-end speaker was crafted with great love and even greater expertise. ■



As an alternative to the single-wire terminal, you can order a bi-wire version at no extra cost.



Extremely smooth frequency response with virtually no narrowing in the highs, flat impedance.



Slight ringing, but within half a millisecond everything is over.

TEST RESULT: PROFOUND. CRITICAL. TRANSPARENT.	
PEAK SINFONIA	
Product type	Floorstanding loudspeaker (passive)
Website	www.peak-consult.dk
Price in euros	45,000 (with single- or bi-wire terminal)
Dimensions (W x H x D) in cm	28 x 113 x 38.5
Weight in kg	78
German distributor	Drei H, www.3-h.de
Phone	+49 40 37507515
Principle	Dynamic, 3-way, bass reflex
Terminal	Single- or bi-wire optional
Info on recommended placement	large distance from the rear wall, slight toe-in
MEASUREMENTS 40 %	**good 1.8**
Frequency response	very good
Sensitivity (in decibels)	satisfactory (86)
Impulse response	good
Minimum impedance	very good (4.0 ohms at 115 Hz)
Distortion at 63 / 3k / 10k Hz (in percent)	good (1.27 / 0.089 / 0.2)
Compatibility	very good
EQUIPMENT & HANDLING 60 %	**satisfactory 2.7**
Placement	good
Quality of the manual	very detailed, but only in English
Initial setup	good
Sound correction possible	no
Cabinet finishes	5 (high-gloss white & black, walnut, wenge, light ash)
Scope of delivery	foot system, floor gliders, torque wrench
Haptics & workmanship	very good
Warranty (in years)	5
PRACTICAL GRADE	**good 2.3**
Sound description	extremely natural, spacious, orderly and at the same time homogeneous sound with audiophile finesse
SOUND SCORE	**92 / 100**