

FREE!

CANADA HiFi

June/July 2012

Digital Music Without Compromise!

Bryston BDP-1 Digital Player &
Bryston BDA-1 Digital to Analog Converter



Choosing a Compact Speaker System To Complement Your HDTV

+ Suggested Quality Compact
Speaker Systems

The Art of Listening + Key Qualities You Should Look for in an Audio System

Reviewed Inside!

- Paradigm SHIFT E3m Earphones
- Alpha Design Labs Cruise
Portable Headphone Amplifier
- Furutech Destat II



Plus an Awesome New Speaker From Audio Physic!

Audio Physic Sitara 25 Loudspeakers



George de Sa

It was late in February when I received a much anticipated visit from Reinhard Goerner of Goerner Communication, the North American distributor for Audio Physic. Reinhard had driven from Montreal to my home, just outside Toronto, to personally deliver the set of Audio Physic Sitara 25 loudspeakers, for this review. A friendly conversation ensued, as Reinhard took the time to set-up the speakers in my listening room and explain the product. Not only had Reinhard delivered a brand new set but I greatly appreciated that he'd taken the time to give them an adequate break-in. Things were off to a good start.

Audio Physic was founded over 25 years

ago and is based out of Brilon in Germany. The name of the company caught my attention. Audio was clear enough but what did Physic actually mean. Well, "physic" does not carry the same meaning as "physique" nor is it pronounced the same way. Phonetically, physic would be spelled as "fiz-ik", and generally defined as: "a medicine" or "to relieve or cure". From this, I'd gather that the name, Audio Physic, implies that the company strives to offer a remedy or cure to ailments that some of us audio enthusiasts face in our quest to attain audio bliss. The company slogan is "no loss of fine detail", which adds to the impression that its focus is to also do no harm.

There are four Audio Physic loudspeaker

lines, ranging from the least to most expensive they are: the TV line, Yara line, High End line and Reference line. The Sitara 25 is the smallest floorstanding speaker model within the High End line, which sits just below the company's flagship Reference line. To commemorate Audio Physic's recent 25th anniversary, a number of its speaker models were revised and given the "25" designation; the Sitara 25 being the most recent in the High End line to receive this update.

The Sitara 25 review set came finished in a special Macassar ebony veneer (\$5,490) but is also offered in a number of standard real-wood veneers (\$4,990), including oak, cherry, walnut and black ash. The optional veneers include the aforementioned ebony

as well as high gloss black or white, each at a \$500 premium over the standard finish. I personally found the ebony veneer in a satin finish absolutely stunning. Not only was it aesthetically striking but the veneer quality, application and finish was impeccable, up there with the best. Even my wife offered her unsolicited nod of approval on first sight. As Audio Physic believes in phase time alignment of drivers, the Sitara 25 has a 7-degree rear-ward lean from top to bottom, giving it an assertive parallelogram side profile. With a flat face and top combined with curved sides and stylish out-rigger feet, the Sitara 25 conveyed personality, without speaking a word. The drivers, in black, are unpretentious yet elegant and didn't require the provided push-on covers to keep them looking smart, I kept them off for the duration of the review. This brought me to the rear, where I found a single 2.5" flared bass port, set mid-back. Below the bass port, an aluminum terminal plate houses a single set of gold-plated WBT five-way binding posts. With a single set of terminals, the Sitara 25 can't be bi-amped nor are there jumpers to upgrade. However, you can be assured that the path to the crossover will always be according to Audio Physic design.

The Sitara 25 is a compact 2.5 way floorstanding speaker that utilizes a three driver (tweeter, midrange and mid-woofer) arrangement, within a rear ported bass-reflex cabinet. With modest dimensions of 38.6" (H) x 5.8" (W) x 8.7" (D) and a weight of 37.4 pounds, the Sitara 25 is primed for use in small to mid-sized rooms, from 160 – 270 feet squared. The speaker has a minimum impedance of 4 ohms, sensitivity of 89 dB, and frequency response of 36 Hz – 40 kHz, with a recommended power handling of 20 – 120 watts. What I was impressed to discover was that the various models in the High-End line (including the demure Sitara 25) take advantage of the same advanced drivers that are used in the substantially more expensive Reference line, namely the Hyper-Holographic Cone Tweeter II (HHCT II) and the Hyper-Holographic Cone Midrange (HHCM).

The HHCT II, is a 1.75" cone tweeter. Cone tweeters were commonly used in the past but have been abandoned, for the most part, in all but the cheapest speak-

ers. However, Audio Physic claims that the dome tweeter used in many speakers today is more vulnerable to ringing distortion that results in adverse coloration of the high frequencies. With the advent of stiff and light weight materials, Audio Physic found that cone tweeters (their HHCT II uses a ceramic coated aluminum diaphragm), could supersede dome tweeter designs in the areas of low distortion and holographic portrayal of high frequencies. In the Sitara 25, this novel cone tweeter is complemented by two HHCM 5.9" drivers that perform the midrange and mid-woofer duties. The HHCM utilizes a unique basket construction that combines a die-cast aluminum outer basket with a plastic inner basket. The aluminum provides mechanical and thermal stability, while the plastic offers maximum dampening. Like with the cone tweeter, a ceramic coated aluminum diaphragm is used and surrounded by a U-shaped elastic ring that is fitted around the cone rim, to tighten the diaphragm and prevent resonances. All this attention to construction and design, according to Audio Physic's website, "have only one goal in mind: to achieve a perfect marriage of ultimate resolution performance and absolute freedom from coloration." Resulting in, as the names of the drivers suggest, a holographic quality to the music produced.

Enough said on aesthetics and technical promise, let me now share my perceptions of their sonic virtues. For the duration of my listening, the Sitara 25's were powered by my resident Bryston BP6 / 4B-SST2 combo, paired to my Rega Apollo CDP. The speakers were positioned to form a triangle with my listening seat and toed in substantially, with the focal point being just in front of my seated position, as per the recommendations in the Audio Physic manual. I kept the speakers just over 1.5 feet from the rear wall and more than 3 feet from the side walls. I made sure that the Sitara 25's were properly levelled, thanks to the clever and handy keyring bubble-level accessory provided with the speakers.

I put on Melody Gardot's *Worrisome Heart* album and selected the third track, "Gone". I was fed a banquet of detail on this track, with every intonation in Melody's voice apparent – her breath and the



smack of her lips over the mic evident in an unpretentious manner. The plucking of the guitar strings came across with detail and speed, the tension in the strings easily perceived but there was also the harmonic completeness that you would hear in a live situation, rather than thinness that some so-called detailed speakers might offer. The violin brought its characteristic timbre, including natural warmth, as you would expect from a wood-bodied instrument. Moving to track four, "Sweet Memory", the brushes on the drums sat fairly deep in the soundstage, while remaining clear and firmly planted. The layering of the soundstage with the violin, guitar and voice all presented at different depths, was very convincing. Reverberation within the recording venue was evident, giving a clear sense of space.

Next up was the Chris Botti – *In Boston*, live album. Hitting play, “Ave Maria”, shocked me with the utter realism of the applause. It wasn’t only the detail of the claps and their various placements across a broad soundstage but more so the way the claps sounded. They didn’t sound clicky and anodyne as I’ve sometimes heard but rather had a humanness and realistic impression. The trumpet’s sound with its upper midrange resonance was both beautiful and mesmerizing. The soundstage was vast and surprising given the small size of the Sitara 25. I was also impressed by the fact that when I stood up, the soundstage remained solidly in place, as if I was standing in the audience before the performers...though I didn’t get anyone yelling at me to sit down. Moving to track three, “Seven Days”, I got to hear a voice that I know so very well - Sting. Again, the opening applause surrounded me, with individual hand claps easily perceptible and positioned in a broad aural panorama. Sting’s voice was clear, well defined and accurate. The soundstage was expansive, with instruments taking various places within and well separated. Percussion was tight and snappy with good depth. The maracas had their raspy and distinctive graininess but also depicted a sense of the seeds moving within.

Moving to the Pat Metheny Group’s *Still Life (talking)* album, I again received a spacious soundstage, with breadth reaching well beyond the outer edges of the speakers. The second track, “So May It Secretly Begin” was enthralling with the opening cymbals reaching significantly forward of the front plane of the speakers, almost within arms reach. I really like it when a speaker can provide forwardness when it’s called for and this is what the Sitara 25’s were capable of. The sound of a guiro being played, with its woody tone was fun and convincing. The piano sat deep right and had a realistic pitch and fullness, while Pat’s electric guitar sat higher, wide and towards the rear of the soundstage. This can be a busy sounding track but here it was portrayed with an undeniable ease, having a lovely tonal balance and density – the Sitara 25’s could clearly maintain their composure.

I also tried the O-Zone Percussion Group’s album, *La Bamba*. This is an exceptionally well recorded and mastered

CD and a top reference for transient response, timing, dynamics, detail, soundstage and tonal balance. I went straight to track ten, “Jazz Variants”. Once again, I was presented with an immense and delineated soundstage, with instruments delivered in a holographic manner. There was a harmony and coherence across the spectrum. Dynamics – yes, and wow. The overall punch and impact was well beyond their size and bordering on the explosive in nature. Detail, detail and more detail; however, delivered in a non-spot-lit manner that you had to actually listen for, as it came so integrated within the whole. I can only postulate that this was thanks to the exceptionally low distortion in the high frequencies and effective integration between the drivers.

The Audio Physic Sitara 25 is a remarkable speaker that brings with it an almost mystical and lucid portrayal of recorded music. It is worthy of the company’s slogan “no loss of fine detail” and brings this detail with veracity and remarkable musical ease, while never sounding etched. You find yourself almost immediately convinced, by this ease of delivery that you’re listening to something in the flesh. Imaging is holographic, within generous soundstages. The Sitara 25 provides a tonal density, complexity and natural warmth, akin to finely balanced red wine as opposed to a heavy red, rose or white wine. This speaker also has speed and dynamics that add to the excitement and engagement, when a recording so provides. Are there



any negatives or restrictions? Sure, there always are. If you want to shake the walls or dig into subterranean depths, the Sitara 25 is not the usual suspect and it won’t fill a large room amply. It also won’t please those who actually prefer a light, simple and detail etched presentation – there are those that prefer white wine. Nor, will it satisfy those seeking a very warm, weighty and robust flavour. All this said, the Audio Physic Sitara 25 is worthy of tasting but be sure to drink sensibly, lest you become intoxicated.

sidebar

Upgraded Feet Option

While reviewing the Sitara 25 I exclusively used Audio Physic’s optional sound optimizing Vibration Control Feet (VCF) II M8 which were installed by the distributor. They retail for \$220.00 for a set of 4, hence 2 sets are required for a speaker pair. Post-writing, I had only a brief chance to compare the VCF to the standard included spikes. Installing the spikes resulted in the high frequencies and upper-mid losing some ease and taking on a more chiselled character, while bass frequencies acquired additional tautness. Which was superior? The jury is still out but cost aside, my lean would be towards the VCF feet.

quickinfo

Audio Physic

www.audiophysic.de

Distributed in Canada by

Goerner Communication

514-833-1977

info@goernercommunication.com

www.goernercommunication.com

Audio Physic Sitara 25

Loudspeaker

Price: \$4,990 CAD (Oak, Cherry,

Walnut, Black Ash finish), \$5,490

CAD (Macassar Ebony, High Gloss

White or Black finish)

THE NEW [AVANTERA]



For over 25 Years



[audio physic]

No loss of fine detail



Contact your Audio Physic dealer

For more information please visit:

Distribution: Goerner Communication

today to schedule an audition.

www.audiophysic.de

info@goernercommunication.com