

# Xavian Corallo Esclusivo standmount loudspeakers

by Jason Kennedy

Infinite baffle loudspeakers seem to be a bit like buses, you wait literally years and then two come along at once. First the cast iron Jern11 and now the aesthetically more conventional Xavian Corallo Esclusivo. This is a new name to me yet the company has been making loudspeakers since the 1990s, which goes to show just how crowded the market place is. What differentiates Xavian is that it manufactures in the Czech Republic, a part of eastern Europe that has little in the way of track record when it comes to audio equipment, and that the brand was founded by an Italian called Roberto Barletta.

The construction of the Corallo Esclusivo certainly has some Italian pedigree, it's made out of oak staves in the same fashion as models from Chario and Diapason (albeit those companies use walnut) and the fit and finish are to a very high standard. I particularly like badge on the back of the cabinet. According to the literature this model was created to fit into smaller spaces and situations where close to wall placement is necessary, which probably describes the scenario that many music lovers find themselves in and thus would seem to be a rather good idea. Xavian makes three ranges of loudspeakers and glancing through them I found two other infinite baffle designs alongside the Corallo Esclusivo, which is the latest addition to the line. Xavian is in a select group of speaker designers in using both loading approaches, the only other members of this club that come to mind are ATC and Harbeth, but there are probably a few more.

The Corallo Esclusivo cabinet is a solid beastie that stands 33.5cm (13inches) ▶





*“I was duly impressed by the Mundorf capacitors and substantial air-core Jantzen inductors.”*

► high with post-formed edges all round to minimise diffraction, it weighs a respectable 10 kilos and is fitted with a single pair of high quality binding posts with deep gold plating. The tweeter is an AudioBarletta, which means that it is manufactured in Italy to Barletta’s specification. The features include a large 29mm voice coil made of flat aluminium wire, a thick copper ring on the ‘motor’ which consists of an “extreme ceramic magnet”, and the whole thing is supported on a die-cast chassis shaped for controlled dispersion. Oh, and it’s a soft dome. The large size of this dome means it can be used down to 2.5kHz where it hands over to another AudioBarletta driver, a 175mm chassis containing an impregnated paper cone with an aluminium phase plug, cast basket and “low distortion magnet structure”. What the brochure doesn’t mention is the pleated surround on the mid/bass unit which is quite a rare feature on two-way designs. Xavian included one of its crossovers in the box with the speakers so that I could see the quality of construction and parts, I was duly impressed by the Mundorf capacitors and substantial air-core Jantzen inductors that the company uses in what it calls a Fase Zero topology. The system is specified to offer 87dB sensitivity with an 8 Ohm impedance making it just about bang on average, however the infinite baffle element will probably make it a tougher load than a reflex design with the same figures.

Xavian have also considered the fact that pretty well any bookshelf design needs a stand, albeit sealed examples are the most well suited to actually sitting on shelf, with or without books. They make a stand in the same solid wood as the speaker itself, or in some of its finish options at least. There are six finishes available for the speaker but I couldn’t see as many for the stands. The speaker comes in three shades of oak, a striped Marina option and both gloss white and gloss black.

I put the Xavians close to the wall, the closest corner of each box being 10cm away, with the toe-in angle leaving more space on the outer side, then I hooked up a Leema Tucana II integrated amplifier and let them bed in for a while. When I came to listen however the results were not very inspiring, it was probably a mismatch with the amplifier or maybe me being a bit tired but the sound was quite forward and failed to engage. So I left it until the next day when I pulled out my regular amplifiers, the Townshend Allegri Reference preamp and ATC P2 power amp. Then things started to get really interesting, so much so that I started to see why Martin Colloms considers all forms of vented speaker cabinet a compromise. The first thing that strikes you is the timing, the rapid roll off of bass from sealed boxes means that this end of the spectrum is as fast as the rest of the band, something that’s quite hard to achieve in a ported enclosure and very enjoyable to boot.

My suspicions about power requirements were confirmed by the relatively high level that the volume had to be turned to, they soak up power even when playing at the medium levels they were designed to produce. My room ►

*“My first experience of a Xavian loudspeaker has put the brand in a very positive light.”*

► is medium to large in size so not ideal for the Xavian which was made with small rooms in mind, yet I got some fabulous results if I didn't try to push them too hard. They have an correctness of presentation that is very engaging, everything seems to coalesce perfectly and complex arrangements are easy to understand and follow. Voices in particular are stunning, Joni Mitchell's on 'All I Want' (*Blue*, A&M) being so beautiful that it brought a tear to the eye, and I was inclined to sing along. A fortunately very rare situation given my total inability in this department. But it was a 'wow' moment nonetheless and one that had me seeking out other voices in an effort to get a similar impact. This didn't happen with The Who's 'Baby Don't You Do It' (*Who's Next (Deluxe Edition)* HR, Geffen) where it was Townshend's guitars that supplanted Daltrey's voice for sheer intensity of expression, with one in each channel reinforcing the effect. Moon's drumming pounding away in the background made a strong impression too despite the limited dynamics of this speaker.

Image depth is very strong with the Corallo Esclusivo but they don't throw the sound up particularly high or wide compared with some alternatives, the soundstage is generally more intimate albeit some recordings did push energy out beyond the bounds of the boxes. But voices kept coming back as the highlight experiences, I have played 'Dualism (1)' by Conjure [*Music For The Texts Of Ishmael Reed*, American Clavé] many times but not until now have the words of what is a poem actually made sense, and this isn't because they became more clear-cut but because of the depth of resolution across the midrange, it's really quite beguiling. I was not therefore surprised that Gillian Welch's latest album which is a collection of covers [*All the Good Times*, Acony] sounded superb, the duets with partner David Rawlins being particularly well rendered, with each presented in fully rounded, heartfelt form.

With the Nick Bartsch Ronin album *Awase* [ECM] where piano and other percussive instruments build powerful soundscapes largely by repetition the dynamic limitations of the Xavian were more obvious. However, the rhythmic aspect of the composition was still very strong and the drums impressively powerful. This may not be a headbanger's speaker but that's solely because it's not designed to play at high levels, in all other respects it's a killer. I also tried a bit of Zappa's 'Pygmy Twilight' like you do [*Roxy by Proxy*, Warner] here it was made crystal clear that there are two drummers in the band and that this is a live performance by some musicians who qualify as Mothers. It wasn't as open a sound as you get with a similarly priced reflex or transmission line speaker but has a cogency that is hard to achieve with any design.

Finally I tried a more modest Rega Brio integrated with the Xavians and it worked remarkably well, letting them show off their timing skills if limiting the potential volume level. It was a very enjoyable combo, particularly when Bill Evans played 'Waltz for Debby (take 2)' [*Waltz for Debby*, Riverside], the rhythm section delivering real drive and the whole thing sounding particularly

vivacious. Keith Jarrett's piano also sounded particularly expressive, so much so that I was drawn in to the piece to a remarkable degree given the affordable nature of the amplifier.

My first experience of a Xavian loudspeaker has put the brand in a very positive light; its quality-first approach to component and cabinet selection has resulted in a very engaging and coherent loudspeaker that works a treat even in larger spaces than it was intended for. If you like your listening to be intimate and enthralling the Corallo Esclusivo is a real treat. +

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Type:** 2-way, two-driver stand-mount monitor with infinite baffle enclosure

**Driver complement:** One soft dome tweeter, one 175mm impregnated paper mid-bass driver with aluminium phase plug

**Frequency response:** 59Hz–20kHz

**Crossover frequency:** 2.5kHz

**Impedance:** 8 Ohms

**Sensitivity:** 87dB/W/m

**Dimensions (HxWxD):** 355 × 230 × 236mm

**Weight:** 10kg/each

**Finishes:** Natural oak, Cognac, Dark oak, Satin white, Satin black, Marina maple & walnut

**Price:** €2,068.42/pair, Marina finish €2,490

**stands:** €564.51/pair

**worldwide shipping:** €40

**Manufacturer:** Xavian Electronics s.r.o.

**Tel:** +420 734 528 189

**URL:** www.xavian.cz