

Mature Performance

On the occasion of its company anniversary, Audio Physic has revamped its Virgo loudspeaker. Our exclusive test reveals the improvements that have matured this audiophile highlight and explains why it now produces an even better sound.



by Matthias Böde

It's often said that only by changing can you stay true to yourself, which is proven by Audio Physic's reinvention of its successful Virgo model, arriving on the market especially for the 25th anniversary of the loudspeaker specialist from the German town of Brilon. The Virgo 25 is indeed the second anniversary loudspeaker to be produced by the German company, following on from the Tempo 25 (from 3750 Euro per pair, tested in STEREO 1/10). Nevertheless, while the Tempo model, which has predominantly been upgraded with a higher quality tweeter in this context, can only be recognised as a "25" model at second glance, the new Virgo stands out in every respect. In addition, unlike the normal Tempo which is still available at a price of around 3000 Euro per pair, the previous fifth Virgo version, costing approximately 6000 Euro, has immediately disappeared into the past.

A Boost to the Virgo in Price and Size

The Virgo 25 has indeed advanced in terms of its price and size, costing 1500 Euro more per pair and being a good 5 cm larger. It is, however, also a tiny bit less deep; albeit just a centimetre. The loudspeaker has retained its basic shape, with the curved edge cabinet that becomes broader towards the rear and the slim baffle that tilts backwards at an angle of exactly 7°, which offers a perfectly elegant solution for aligning the midrange driver and tweeter mounted in the upper section of the cabinet with the woofer drivers, which are, as previously, side-firing. This is essential for precise timing, namely the simultaneous reproduction of all frequencies to the listening position.

KEYWORD

"SSC" Suspension: The "String Suspension Concept", made of synthetic fibre material, converts movement into pull energy, thus intercepting resonant circuits.

Just like in Audio Physic's larger and also new Cardeas (from 18,000 Euro per pair), the front drivers of the Virgo 25 are embedded in a solid aluminium plate with a thickness of one centimetre, which is designed to prevent any loss of detail resulting from unwanted vibrations. After all, chief designer Manfred Diestertich is well aware that the 'mechanics' surrounding the drivers take high precedence. Therefore, he has additionally suspended the tweeter in tautly stretched "SSC" mesh netting; therefore the contact points of the tweeter are decoupled from the basket and plastic screws in neoprene plugs ensure that the driver is attached in a way that is particularly advantageous in terms of acoustics, as was proven by Audio Physic's listening tests.

These tests also revealed the advantages of the pricey "next-gen" connecting terminals, produced by the specialist company WBT from Essen, Germany, against simpler solutions leading Audio Physic to use them as standard in the Virgo 25. And last but not least, the tweeter was also given a particularly high-quality and mechanically stable foil capacitor manufactured by the British supplier ClarityCap, which 'sounded' the best and has a long input lead that is directly connected to the positive terminal posts



The "Hyper Holographic Cone Tweeter" contains a double basket system made of metal and plastic (see the cutaway model on the left). It is specially attached and decoupled (see above).

of the connection terminal and the tweeter. In fact, it doesn't get more direct and low-loss than this. Only a couple of resistors placed directly on the driver and used for level adjustment remain in the signal path.

Of course, all this effort only makes sense if no compromises are made when it comes to the drivers. The midrange driver and tweeter therefore use improved versions of the "Hyper Holographic Cones". These are produced according to Diestertich's specifications by Wavecor, the young and upcoming company of the former Vifa chief designer Allan Isaksen, which is extremely open to meet special requests.

Fine-Tuned Drivers

Correct, the "HHCT" (tweeter) and "HHCM" (midrange driver), with their intricate double basket construction in which metal and plastic complement each other in a ingenious manner in terms of resonance, were also present in the previous Virgo model. Nevertheless, the tweeter has since been modified and is more precisely selected. The alterations made to the midrange driver are more significant, corresponding to those made in the Cardeas. Its optimised magnet system moves a voice coil former made of plastic reinforced by fibre glass and wrapped in copper-

The Virgo Evolution – Inspired by Constant Change



A slim baffle and side-firing woofers – this has been the basic concept of the Virgo ever since it was introduced in 1990. Since then, the loudspeaker - versions 2, 3 and 5 of which are shown in the photographs above (from left to right) - has been developed time and time again, yet has remained true to its roots.



These capacitors for the crossover network are special editions made exclusively for Audio Physic by the British manufacturer ClarityCap.



The midrange driver and the tweeter each have their own separate chambers, which protect them against the pressure waves of the woofer driver. Part of the crossover sits in the front chamber at the base.

plated aluminum wire, which, unlike the former aluminium component, prevents eddy currents and therefore also all 'magnetic brakes'.

Is this influx of technology making your head spin? Sorry, about that, but this background information is essential in order to really understand just how much detailed work has gone into the new

Virgo. This detailed work was necessary in order to meet the ultimate aim of not gradually outdoing the excellent former model, but outperforming it as explicitly as possible. We certainly didn't need to explore for long in order to test this, given that the previous Virgo model is one of our favourites among the loudspeakers that we use at work. It provides a clear, pure and uncompromised sound reproduction, delivering top-class resolution and genuinely supplying the three-dimensional spatial soundstage promised by the "Hyper Holographic Cones".

Nevertheless, this model is clearly lagging behind the Virgo 25. Having already applauded the old model for its exquisite reproduction of midrange frequencies, we must nevertheless say that its successor adds a previously unknown natural sweetness to

the clarity of the sound. There is no artificial reinforcement in sight, but rather a pleasant sonority with an absolutely authentic sound, which makes the timbre of its predecessor sound cooler, more technical and even a tiny bit harsh. As a result, the Virgo 25 projects Esther Fellner's distinctive voice on the STEREO Review CD VI further, more full-bodied, giving it a smoother transition into the lower midrange region and thus increasing its power, tone and force.

The Virgo 25 even gains more power in the lower frequencies, whilst still remaining relaxed, defined and unstrained. There's no trace of sluggishness or sloppiness, the tell-tale signs of loudspeakers with excessive bass. On top of this, there is no compromise necessary when it comes to the loudspeaker's low frequency adjustment, not even in terms of its level performance. Our measuring technician could barely believe his eyes when he saw what the two 5" woofers, which are given more breathing space by a reflex port in the base of the loudspeaker, were able to achieve. They remained fully prominent, even at the lower frequency measuring limit of 20 Hertz (see frequency response). The older, even slightly less susceptible model reached its minus-three-decibel point at a frequency of 60 Hertz, which explains why it seems more feeble and short-winded when it comes to large orchestral compositions.

A Highlight in the Class of Audiophile Loudspeakers

The new Virgo model also successfully manages the balancing act of simultaneously developing its analytic skills, with the "25" model giving a stronger differentiation to the quietly chatting audience and further separating it from the band performing in the forefront in terms of spatial depth in Red Norvo's live track "Saturday Night", which is simply bursting with details. As has already been seen in the smaller Tempo 25, all of this occurs with no artificial brightening of the sound. Indeed, you can't actually hear the "Hyper" tweeter, with its extremely delicate resolution, at all, in the sense that it does not add its own sonic signature to the music, not even the tiniest hint.

As a result, the Virgo 25 has stormed past the old model, making its 1500 Euro increase in price seem fully justifiable. With this new model, Audio Physic has added yet another highlight to the range of top-class audiophile loudspeakers on the market. Setting the tone in this premier league of loudspeakers has been the challenge faced by every Virgo and, with its recent improvements, this model has again met the challenge, keeping up the Virgo traditions.

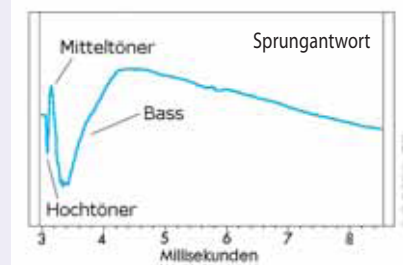
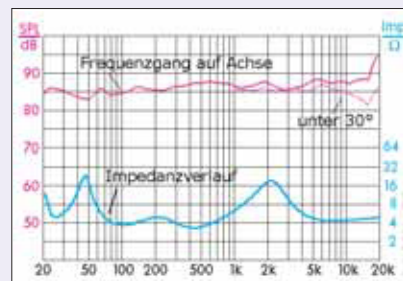


AUDIO PHYSIC VIRGO 25

from 7500 € per pair (four veneers)
W x H x D: 23 x 105 x 38cm
Warranty: 10 years
Distribution: Audio Physic
Phone: +49(0)2961 - 96170
www.audiophysic.de

The woofer power of this loudspeaker certainly packs a punch, but it is not only this feature that makes it a real stunner! As a '25' model, this Virgo also delivers a sound that is substantially more balanced and mature than that of its predecessor, setting a new benchmark in excellence. To top it off, its midrange is sheer poetry! This loudspeaker is simply superb!

MEASUREMENT RESULTS*



Nominal Impedance	4 Ω
Minimum Impedance	3.3 Ω at 453 Hertz
Maximum Impedance	22.9 Ω at 48 Hertz
Average Sensitivity (2.83 V/m)	87.1 dB SPL
Efficiency at 94 dB(1 m)	6.57 W
Lower Crossover Frequency (-3 dB)	18 Hertz

LABORATORY

An extremely linear frequency response, reaching bass frequencies that are extremely low given the size of the cabinet. The steep increase of high frequencies above 16 kHz plays no role in terms of acoustics, also due to the fact that, as the 30 degree measurement shows, it only leads to a significant peak when measured directly on axis. The loudspeaker has a balanced impedance curve. The fact that it falls slightly short of 4 ohms around a frequency of 450 Hertz should not pose a problem for any amplifier. An excellent step response: The tweeter and the midrange driver, which transmits right through to the higher bass frequencies, work in practically perfect synchronisation.

STEREO-TEST

SOUND PERFORMANCE 86%

PRICE / PERFORMANCE



EXCELLENT

* STEREO Club subscribers can access data and diagrams at www.stereo.de

The single wire terminal contains "next-gen" jacks made by WBT. It's well worth using Audio Physic's "VCF" feet (at a price of 240 Euro for a set of eight) rather than spikes, given that they provide better spatial imaging and homogeneity.

