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WOLF VON LANGA SON





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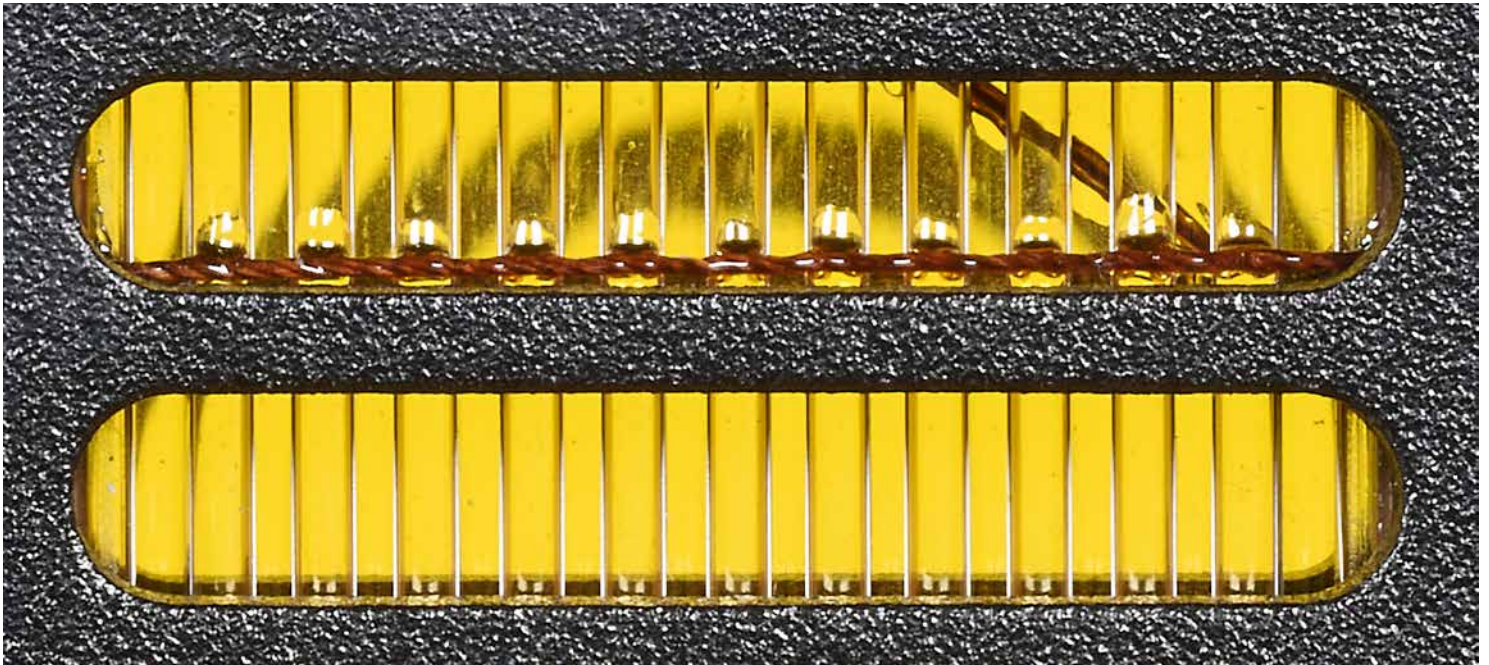


WOLF VON LANGA SON

SON MEANS SOUND

By Michael Vrzal. Photography: Ingo Schulz

A 10-INCH
CONE PAIRED
WITH A RIB-
BON—WHO
WOULD HAVE
THOUGHT?
WOLF VON
LANGA USES
THIS CONCEPT
TO CREATE A
FLOOR-STAND-
ING SPEAKER
IN ITS OWN
CLASS.



— Achieving impressive wattage used to be quite expensive and involved enormous effort—it's hard to even imagine these days. But Class-D technology has smashed the once mythical 1,000-watt ceiling to smithereens and reduced this to a rather banal number. The amplifier can achieve 1 kW? Cool—the rest can tag along and enjoy the ride! From a nostalgic perspective, I find this a bit of a shame. Somehow, it makes things too easy. Another thing missing in the low-power days of the 1920s and 1930s was permanent magnets. However, people did know how to create immensely powerful magnetic fields using a coil and an iron core. In turn, the first dynamic

loudspeakers featured field coils. These designs meant that the field strength develops in the magnetic gap as soon as current is flowing. Therefore, this enabled the horn drivers and paper cones at the time, streamlined for efficiency, to easily do their job: fill movie theaters with sound.

These days, people use neodymium and work in kilowatts. As such, there's no need to bother with expensive and complex field-coil technology. However, Wolf von Langa does, and does so with unparalleled dedication and commitment. This high-end mastermind from Franconian Rödlas constructs his chassis

himself and consistently utilizes field coils throughout. He says this is for two reasons. First is the stability of the magnetic field. An electrically generated field is less sensitive to extreme operating situations than that of a permanent magnet, which positively affects linearity. Second is the flexibility involved. Whereas a conventional chassis has fixed parameters which will influence the loudspeaker manufacturer's choice of housing and crossover design, the field-coil drive enables you to intervene through the power supply unit. Adjusting the current and thus the drive force directly alters the central parameters of the chassis. In particular, the so-called

Seasoned drivers: Wolf von Langa makes the 10.5-inch cone driver (top left) and the passive radiator in-house. The top part of the SON is finished with a Mundorf AMT. This sits inside of a magnetically attached acrylic panel, which can be moved ever so slightly on the top of the housing. This enables the user to finely adjust the treble.



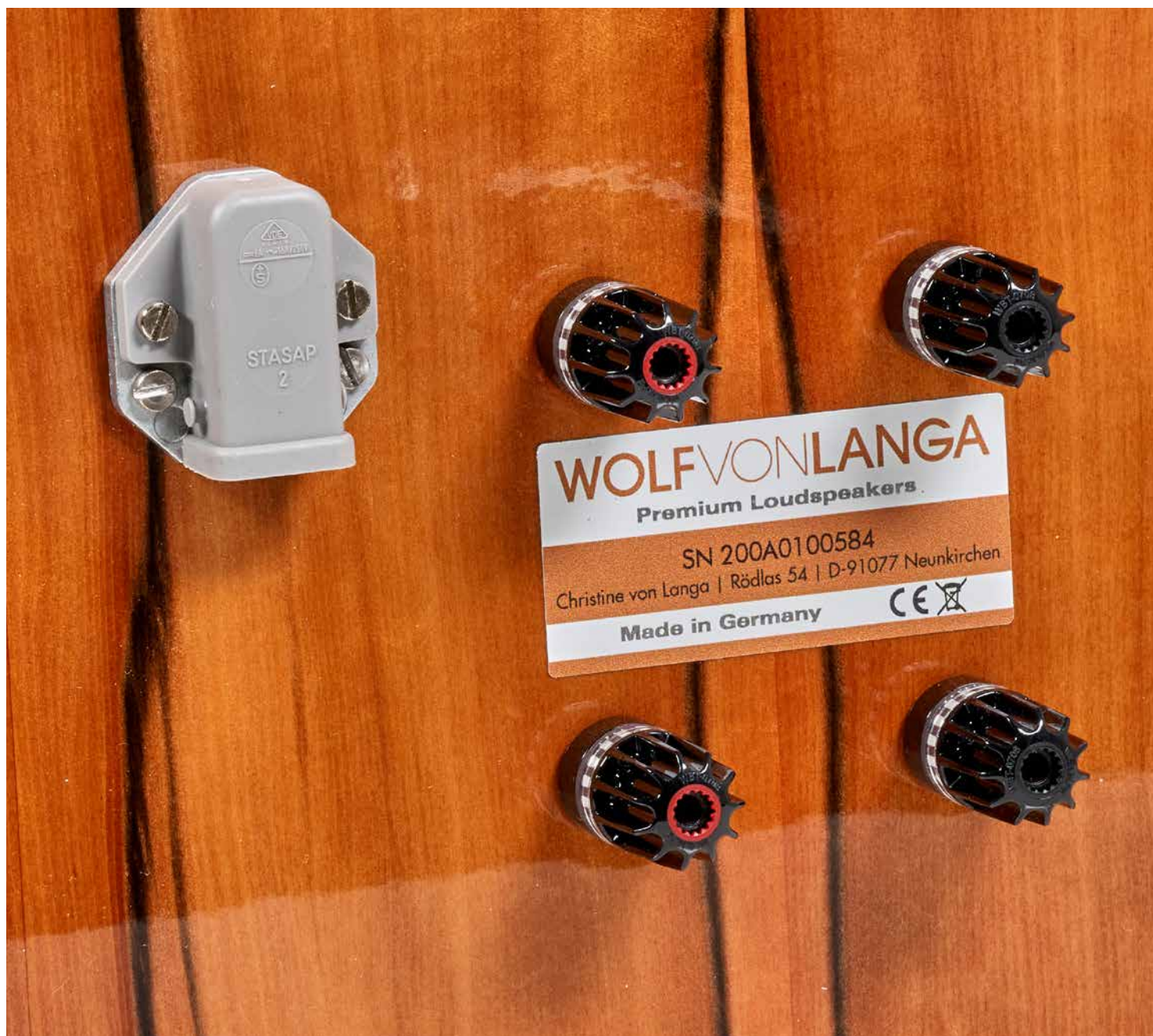
quality factor is altered (referred to with the letter Q in technical documents regarding loudspeaker drivers).

Wolf von Langa has designed an entire family of five loudspeakers based on his chassis. The SON, barely coming up to your waist, is his number two—a compact, two-way floor-standing speaker with a dynamic 10.5-inch bass-midrange cone and an AMT ribbon tweeter featuring a folded film diaphragm. The cone driver is an in-house developed chassis with a field-coil drive, whereas the tweeter is from Mundorf. The rear features a passive radiator designed to support the bass. Wolf

von Langa has also been building this himself since the latest overhaul of the SON.

The SON is a floor-standing speaker because it doesn't require any stands. Other than that, it shares little with these types of speakers, which usually tend to be spindly, towering constructions. This speaker is no taller than 90 cm which, given that it's 40 cm wide, makes it quite a stocky little dumpling, sitting on its spherical feet as if nailed to the floor. The tweeter is housed in a resilient crystal-clear acrylic panel which sits atop the bass cabinet. The tweeter accounts for nearly none of the device's 42-kilo overall weight. The majority of this instead stems from the bass unit. The cone

chassis alone weighs 16 kilos. The intricately reinforced, closed cabinet is made by von Langa from a wood fiber material with impressive internal damping. The underside features six threaded bushings that provide the user with an unusual amount of freedom when positioning the feet. In addition, the bass-midrange can be concealed behind a magnetic cover. And further magnets are concealed on the top. These center the treble module which can in fact be repositioned in terms of its depth. Fixed cables connect it with the bass module, where the crossover can be found. The loudspeaker terminals are top-of-the-range WBT models (nextgen PlasmaProtect). ►



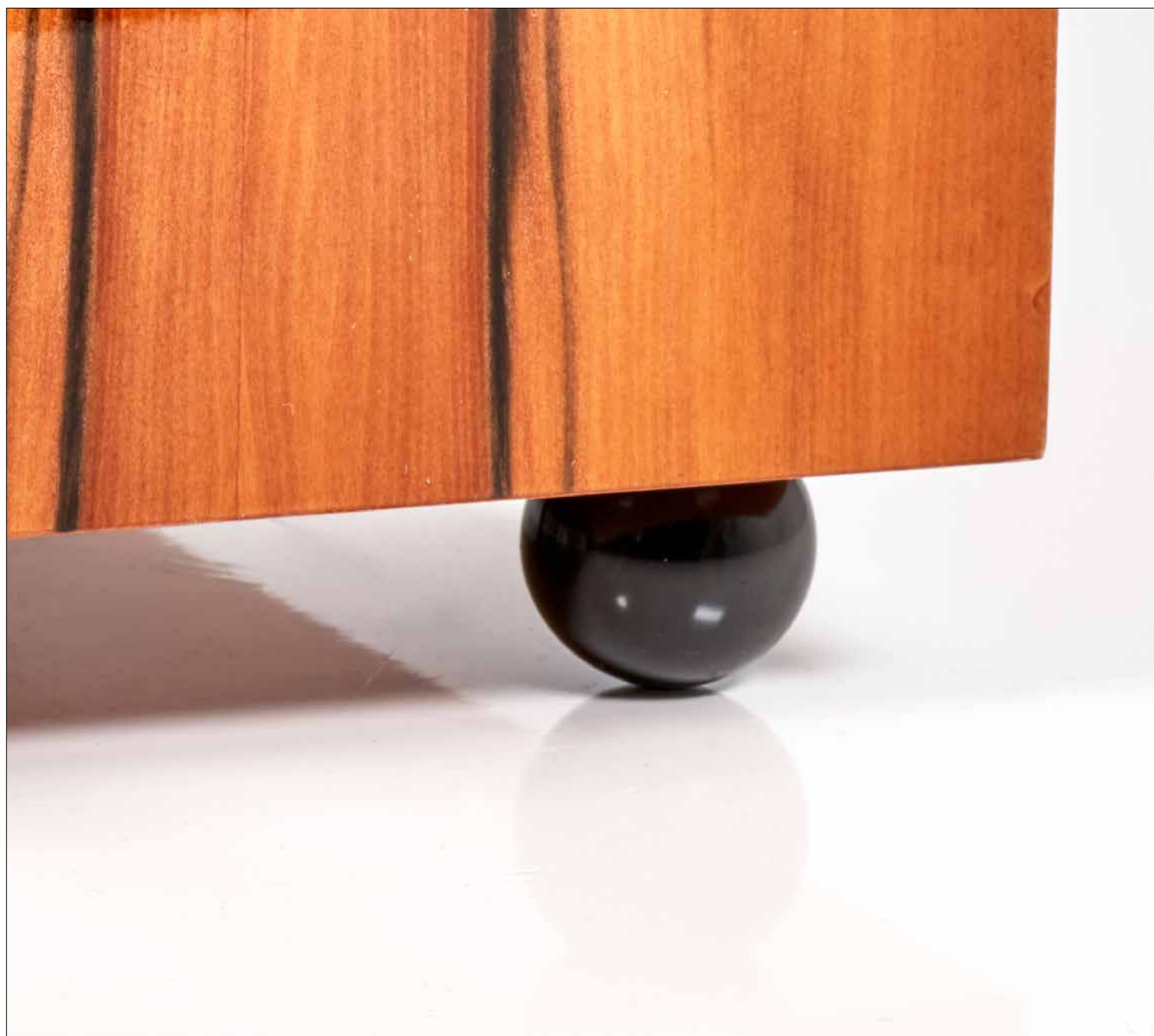
The SON's two speaker sections can be driven directly via the bi-wiring terminal. To the left of the loudspeaker inputs, we can see the power connector for the bass driver's controllable field coil.

They're doubled up for bi-wiring/bi-amping. However, they come with the appropriate WBT power bridges as standard. Wolf von Langa describes the crossover as an "acoustically optimized minimum phase filter with just one passive component in the signal path in each case."

The power supply unit for the field coils is located in an aluminum housing which is very securely closed with a multitude of screws. The electronics are designed as a constant

current source. You can easily adjust the current level with a potentiometer, and the value can be read on the outside of the device on a small ammeter (the "Enhanced Power Supply" available for an additional fee). The recommended value is 2.45 A. However, von Langa suggests playing around some, specifically within the exceedingly broad range of 2.1 to 2.7 amps – field-coil driver flexibility is the name of the game. The manufacturer's specifications state that the SON has a high efficiency of 94 decibels.

This provides its crisp nature and the two-way design, and all I can say is that it's right up my alley. I love loudspeakers that make things easy for the electronics and that perform just as well with a low-power tube as with a powerful transistor. As soon as I hear "field coil", old German and American chasses spring to mind. And I've had the pleasure of experiencing many over the past few years, whose sound was particularly effortless and vivid. In other words, I was approaching this review with high expectations.



The SON sits on three spherical screw-in feet, which can be used to level the bass housing in no time.

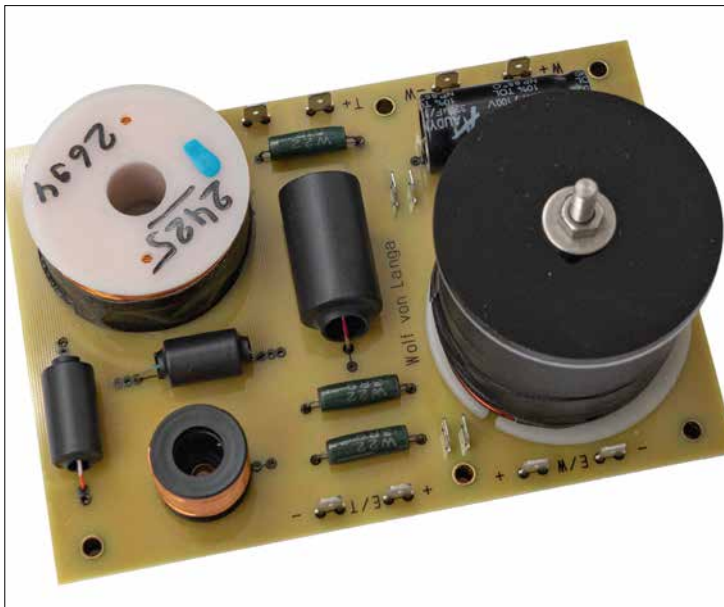
The WOLF VON LANGA SON is a sensual speaker, yet simultaneously a David giving many high-end Goliaths a good kick in the shin. Its sensuality comes across most clearly where the gut decisions are made: in the bass. The 12-inch beast goes deep and with gusto. It teams up with the passive radiator to casually and quickly play forward, and it lays the foundations for a sound profile designed to make the listener grin. For years, I have used Ayon Seagull/c speakers as my benchmark. They may not produce any less accurate tones with

their ceramic diaphragms, but my critical ear couldn't help but wonder: Isn't this a tad too dry, even academically clinical? Where is the thumping big bang? The SON is truly wonderful at delivering that thumping big bang. The field-coil cone is the stuff of dreams, and it doesn't disappoint. Larger rooms than my 20-m² music room won't cause the speakers any problems at all.

Another form of sensuality: the SON's spatial reproduction sounds world class.

The stocky build and the transparent treble panels may contribute in part to the allure as, from a visual perspective, the extremely physically robust loudspeakers nearly blend into the background. Acoustic spaces shine even brighter still, as sounds seem to project free and weightless in both the bass and treble frequencies.

The AMT tweeter (an incredible design originally developed by Dr. Oskar Heil), which connects with the air over a much ►



larger surface area than a classic dome tweeter, is famous for its exceptional dynamics, resolution capability and lack of distortion. I remember AMT-equipped loudspeakers sounding incredibly fluid and smooth. The SON boasts each and every one of these properties. The treble sounded dynamic, on point, present and high-resolution, yet also soft and, yes, smooth.

The design with the movable panel enables seamless and continuously variable time alignment of both transmission paths. Wolf von Langa recommends using a CD case for the spacing – the 142-mm side reliably

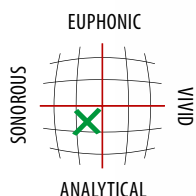
guides the distance from the AMT to the bass housing front edge. I experimented with the positions and realized that, despite the magnetic attachment, the acrylic panels could even be positioned at an angle on the speaker cabinets. In turn, I listened to see if I could notice any audible effects as far as how the two transducers worked together. Would the (from the tweeter's perspective) now angled tear-off edge of the bass cabinet become noticeable? With the woofers playing practically straight into the room, and the tweeter panels angled at the listener, the two different drivers played as if they were one.

The SON speakers kept their promise of achieving high efficiency. They sounded just as relaxed and groovy with the 8 watts of my 300B-equipped Silbatone JI-300B Mk III tube integrated amplifier as with the 150 watts generated by the transistors of the Rowland power amp. I would have no reservations about letting them loose on the WvL speakers. The SON speakers' ability to deliver that loud, live-music feel is truly one of their best features. Anyone saying that they only really wake up and get going after the 90-decibel sound pressure mark would be doing an injustice to their impressive ability to play music

Page 110—clockwise: top left is the power supply unit of the field-coil drive with its display, then the control electronics, a glimpse inside of the power supply unit (complete with toroidal transformer) and finally the wonderfully equipped crossover.

WOLF VON LANGA SON

A different kind of two-way speaker – Wolf von Langa has conjured an explosive world-class speaker using his mighty field-coil cone and an exquisite tweeter.



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at low volumes. However, they enjoy creating heavy-metal explosions and symphonic climaxes between your four walls so much that you would be forgiven for thinking that they had PA-system DNA running through their veins.

But they don't. The SON speakers are genuine high-end beauties capable of handling any challenge without batting an eye. Moreover, they reward the user for carefully tinkering around with the positioning, the tweeters, the field-coil current and even that classic quality of the bi-wiring bridges with soundscapes that are nothing short of incredible. ■

Loudspeaker | WOLF VON LANGA SON

Concept: electrodynamic 2-way floor-standing speaker with passive radiator | **Equipment:** AMT ribbon tweeter, 10.5-inch bass-midrange with field-coil drive, flat passive radiator | **Frequency range:** 25 Hz to 25 kHz | **Impedance:** 8 Ω | **Efficiency:** 94 dB | **Connections:** bi-wiring/bi-amping terminal | **Special features:** movable treble unit for time alignment, controllable field-coil power supply, Enhanced Power Supply with display (additional fee of approx. €629) | **Finishes:** standard finish high-gloss black; for an additional fee (approx €1,143) high-gloss olive, plum, tinea | **Dimensions (W/H/D):** bass-midrange module 40/70/30 cm, treble module 40/17/8 cm | **Weight:** 42 kg | **Warranty period:** 5 years (upon registration) | **Price for pair:** approx. €15,575 (test model high-gloss

black with field-coil power supply unit and 2 x 3 m power cable)

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ACCOMPANYING EQUIPMENT

Turntable: Bauer Audio dps 3 | **Tonearm:** Bauer Audio Tonarm | **Cartridge:** Lyra Kleos | **Phono preamplifier:** Hagerman Trumpet Wood | **MC transformer:** Consolidated Audio Silver/Nano | **CD player:** Electrocompaniet EMC 1 UP | **Music server:** Innuos Zenith Mk III | **DAC:** Aqua La Voce S3 | **Switch:** Silent Angel Bonn N8 | **Preamplifier:** Silvercore linestage two | **Power amplifier:** Rowland Model 2 | **Power conditioning:** AudioQuest Niagara 3000 | **Loudspeakers:** Ayon Seagull/c | **Cables:** Fadel Art, Ansuz, Sun Audio, AudioQuest, Solidcore | **Accessories:** granite bases