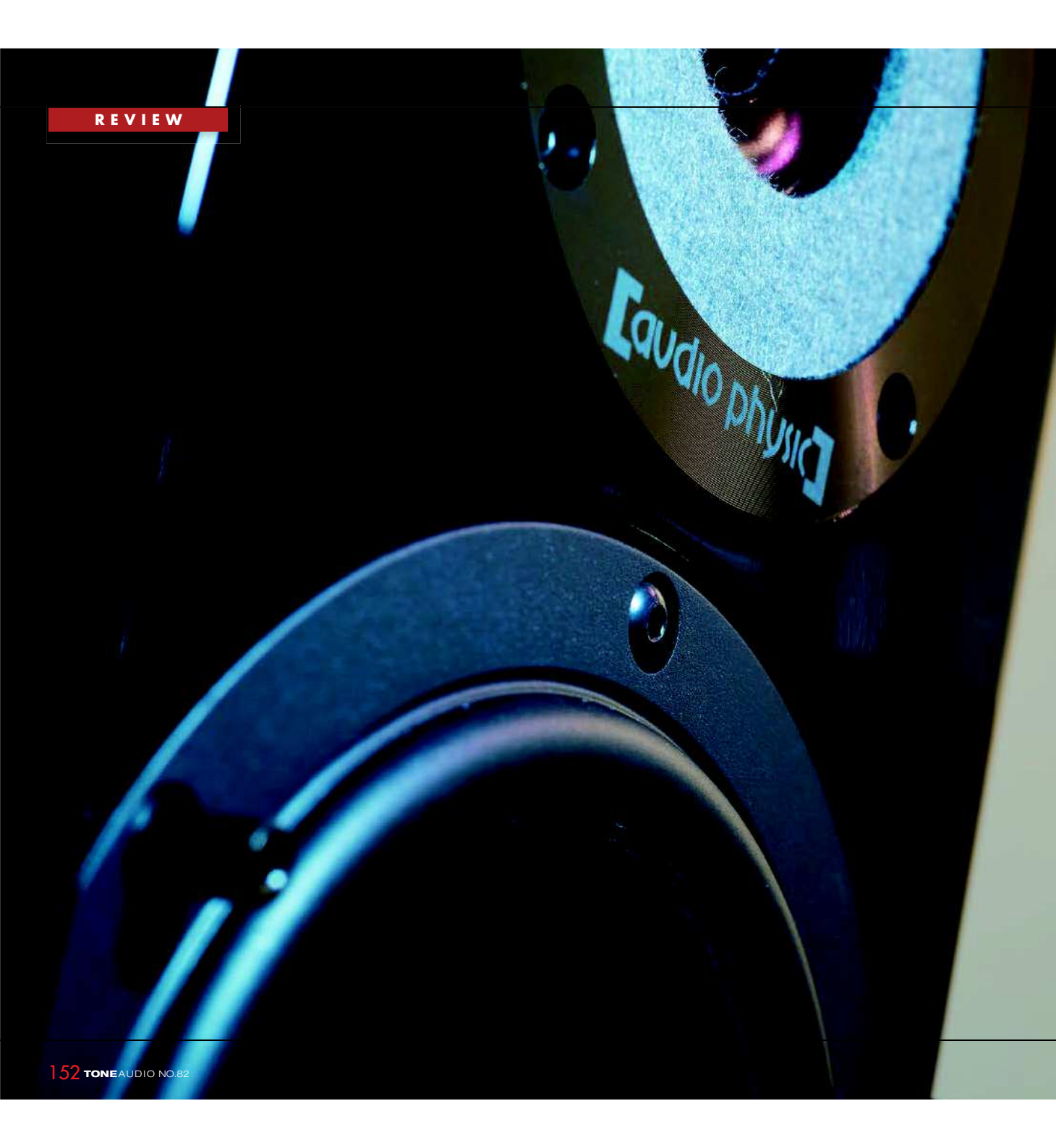




Audio Physic Tempo plus Speakers

Super Sound That Won't Break the Bank

By Rob Johnson

In the nineties, I owned and loved a pair of Audio Physic's Virgo speakers. Their warm and engaging musical portrayal overshadowed their limitations at both ends of the frequency range. One thing they did excel at was a massive stereo image representation, making marathon listening sessions a regular and always enjoyable experience. A friend still uses this very pair of Virgos today, so she can attest to the fact they have performed flawlessly for over two decades. Superb engineering, build quality, and sound delivers an unbeatable combination. That speaker is a tough act to follow, but the Audio Physic designers have never rested on their laurels.

Based in Brilon, Germany, and sold in North America by VANA, Ltd. Audio Physic continues this tradition of excellence with their newest speakers, improving substantially on their past designs. Taking advantage of trickle-down technology from AP's bigger and more expensive siblings, the Tempo plus preserves the family legacy of great sound and construction at a price point that makes these speakers accessible to a wide range of music lovers.

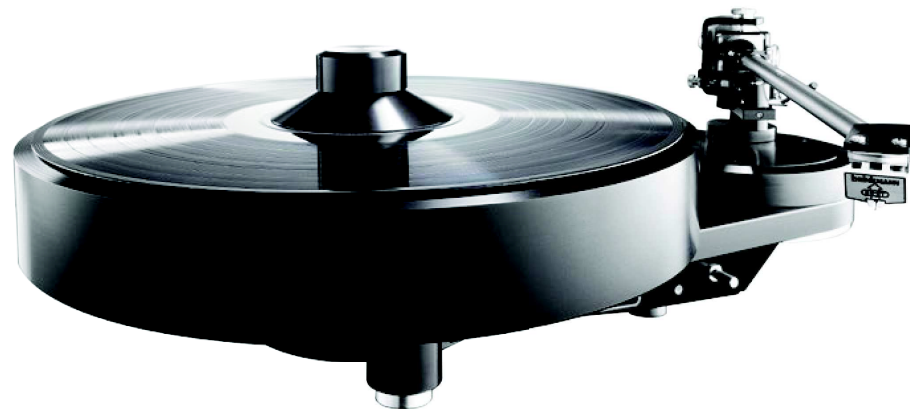
Looking backstage

Tempo plus speakers are available in a range of colors to best match your décor. The most economical finish choices are the cherry or walnut wood veneer at \$5,995/pair. Black or white gloss and ebony wood will set you back a modest \$500/pair upcharge. Our review samples in black gloss are stunning, flawlessly executed. No matter which cabinet finish you choose, you cannot go wrong.

Tempos feature a three-driver design. As with most speaker layouts, the tweeters are stacked above the midrange at the top front of the speaker body. Audio Physic's third generation 1.75" (39mm) tweeter design, dubbed the Hyper-Holographic Cone Tweeter (HHCT III), is comprised of ceramic coated aluminum. The same material graces the 5.9" (150 mm) midrange driver. *(continued)*

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REVIEW

Deviating from a traditional layout, the Tempo's woofer assembly aims a pair of 7" (180mm) drivers out the lower sides of the speakers. While this driver placement is not new to Audio Physic speaker designs, the new woofer construction brings welcome sonic changes. Improved vibration control and cone dampening give these woofers greater articulation and definition. Now, the Tempo plus delivers bass notes solidly down to 32Hz. In my room, some roll-off becomes evident at the lower limit. However, the bass remains in splendid balance with the rest of the frequency spectrum. Those audio fans craving subterranean bass notes may want to consider the addition of a subwoofer, or perhaps the larger speakers in the Audio Physic lineup.

According to the Audio Physic team, the narrowest possible front baffle improves the Tempo's sound-stage definition. Therefore, the type, size, and placement of the Tempo Plus driver complement allows Audio Physic to achieve a slim cabinet face, measuring just a scant wider than the midrange driver itself. The larger woofers placed on the speaker sides require more breathing room. As a result, the Tempo's depth, 12.6" (320mm), is almost twice its width. *(continued)*

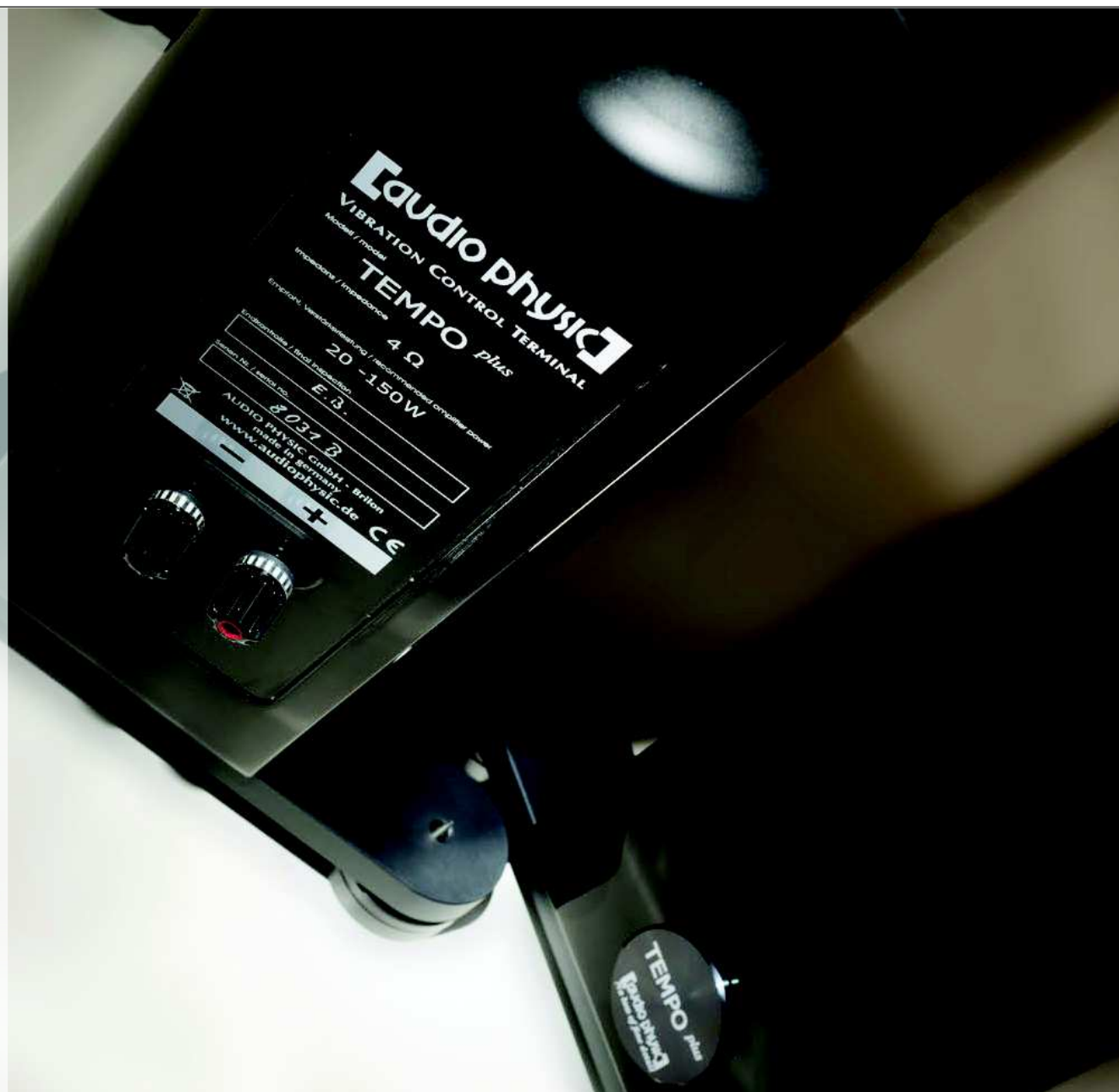
REVIEW

Assisting further with time alignment and sonic coherency, the entire speaker body leans slightly backward, putting the midrange a bit closer to the listener than the tweeter. Even though the various Tempo drivers may fire in different directions, angles, and distances from the listening seat, the overall musical presentation remains cohesive. The music coming out of these 39.4" (1,000mm) tall speaker bodies flows with ease and grace, rendering the technology behind them transparent. Audio Physic recommends pairing the speakers with an amplifier delivering 20-150 watts into four ohms. While each listener has their amplification preference, the upper end of that power range offers a bit more sonic authority and control. With the amp in place, connecting the speakers is a breeze. A single pair of five-way binding posts protrudes from the rear of the speakers, facilitating connections to banana, spade, or bare wire speaker cables.

Let's dance

As with all speakers, the Tempos cannot deliver their best voice without appropriate placement in the listening room. Audio Physic offers a helpful setup guide on their website which proves very useful in getting the most from their speakers. I suggest starting with the manufacturer's guide and fine-tuning accordingly should the need arise.

Once placed optimally, the speakers do a marvelous job of casting a broad and accurate stereo image both side-to-side, and front-to-back. Even when moving my body a few feet to the left and right of the "sweet spot" listening seat, the music retains a very pleasant sound and precise stereo imaging. Those audiophiles who regularly listen to music with friends or family, or who use their main speakers as part of a home theater setup, will enjoy this characteristic. Supplementing their musical capability, the Tempos are likely to reduce the number of household arguments about who gets the best listening seat!



REVIEW

Sing to me

One of the most remarkable sonic characteristics of the Tempos is that sound never bunches up around the physical speaker bodies. Instead, music seems to emit all around them, seamlessly projecting a convincing stereo image. It is rather eerie to have a speaker disappear in the soundstage like the Tempos do. They are among the best speakers I've experienced in this respect.

The Tempo's sonic signature leans to the warmer side of neutral. Especially for older and harsher-sounding tracks, the voicing engineered by AP is a welcome choice. The Tempos take what music is thrown at them, and makes the most of it. For instance, listening to Fugazi's *13 Songs*, "Margin Walker" never turns a harsh-sounding corner, while retaining all of the punk rock energy encapsulated in the recording.

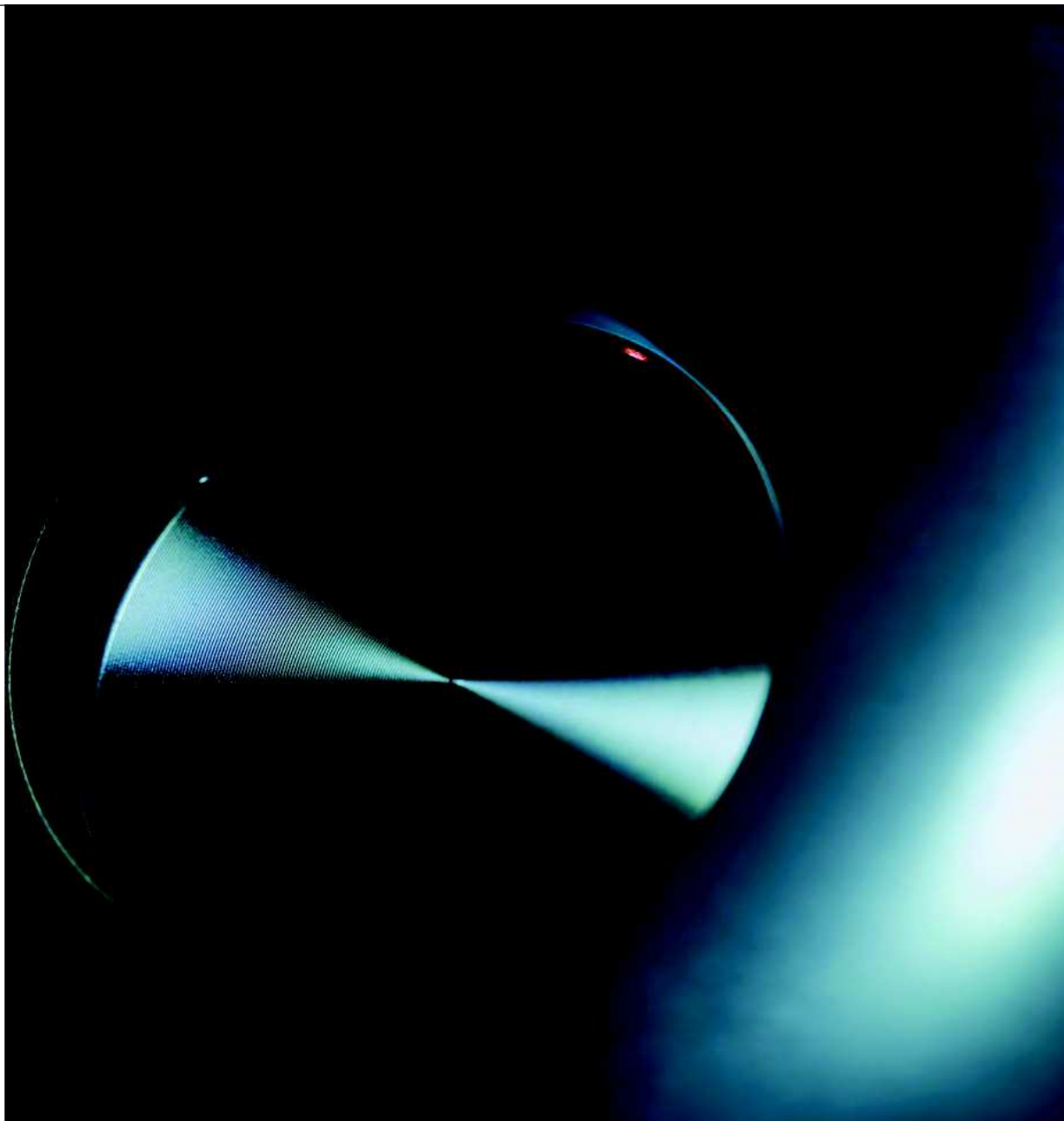
Jumping genres, *In a Silent Way* from Miles Davis, portrays instruments with delicacy and subtlety. Similarly, female vocals like those on Bliss's album *No One Built This Moment* are rendered without etch, glare, sibilance or stridency. What is projected captivates, and it is easy to settle into the Tempo's voice. Like me, you may find yourself couch-locked and want to listen to entire sides of albums. (continued)

REVIEW

Listening to bass-heavy tracks like "Way of Life" from Kick Bong offers surprises through the Tempos. Those 7" side-firing woofers certainly do their job to fill the room with substantial, and well-controlled bass.

After a few weeks with these speakers playing almost non-stop, enjoyments are many and quibbles are few. One cannot expect the world for under \$6,000. More expensive speakers, including those in the Audio Physic lineup, can offer a listener a greater magnification of musical detail, and more robust bass in the lowest octaves. For those who enjoy live musical performances, think of it this way: The Tempo's sound is akin to a seat several rows back in the auditorium, with ample detail and texture to capture the emotion of the music. However, those wishing to hear in detail every string pluck, and every microsecond of cymbal decay might prefer the front row seat at the concert.

Personally, I prefer the voicing choice made by the AP design team, favoring a view of the proverbial forest rather than scrutiny of the moss patches on each tree. Despite a few restrictions inherent in a speaker design required to meet a budget-conscious price point, the



REVIEW

Audio Physic
Tempo plus speakers
MSRP: \$5,995–\$6,495

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Amplification

Burmester 911 mk3

Preamplification

Coffman Labs G1-B

Speakers

GamuT RS3, JL Audio Dominion Subwoofers

Cables

Jena Labs

Power

Torus AVR 15 Plus, RSA Mongoose power cords

Accessories

ASC tube traps, Mapleshade Samson audio racks, Coffman Labs Equipment Footers, AudioQuest Jitterbug, Atomic Audio Labs Mac Mini stand

Tempo plus speakers do so much, so well, it's easy to forget about nitpicks and get lost in the grip of music. Regardless of musical genre, the Tempos sing with a beguiling and satisfying voice as dictated by the recording at hand.

Take a bow

If it's not obvious by now, let me just say it. I'm a big fan of the Tempo plus speakers. For all the musical satisfaction Tempo plus delivers at \$5,995 they represent a terrific value. They offer fantastic sound; they image exceptionally well, and their forgiving sonic signature will mate well with a variety of components. As better upstream gear trades in and out, these speakers have the potential to rise to the challenge and deliver the musical goods. If you are seeking speakers in this price range, be sure to audition the Audio Physic Tempo plus. Once you do, you may find these speakers in your home for many years to come.

Ed. Note: We had so much fun with the Tempo plus, that we've asked the folks at VANA to send us a pair of the smaller, bookshelf version, the Step plus. Watch for this review soon!