

TOUGH LADIES



Derived from the legendary Tidal speakers, the Vimbergs' diaphragms are made of ceramic or even diamond.

The decoupled baffle for the 30mm and 90mm ceramic diaphragms is milled from solid aluminum. ▶



Tidal Audio has a huge reputation in the hifi industry. That is no surprise, as their speakers, most of which are hand-made near Cologne, are always built without the slightest compromise. Highest grade mechanical as well as electrical engineering meets top acoustics, with both being joined together using only the very best materials. The sinfully expensive drivers with diamond diaphragms are exclusively made by Accuton, which is located just around the corner. They are, of course, manufactured and modified according to Tidal's specifications and carefully selected – nowhere else are deep black Accuton drivers to be found!

For each individual driver there are extensive measurements available, as all of them have been archived – and whilst speaking of perfection, just take a look at the finish of a Tidal Audio: three millimeters of perfectly hand-applied piano paint!

This cannot be cheap! And indeed, their flagship “La Assoluta” is in fact located in price-regions where you’d rather expect to get a house than a loudspeaker in



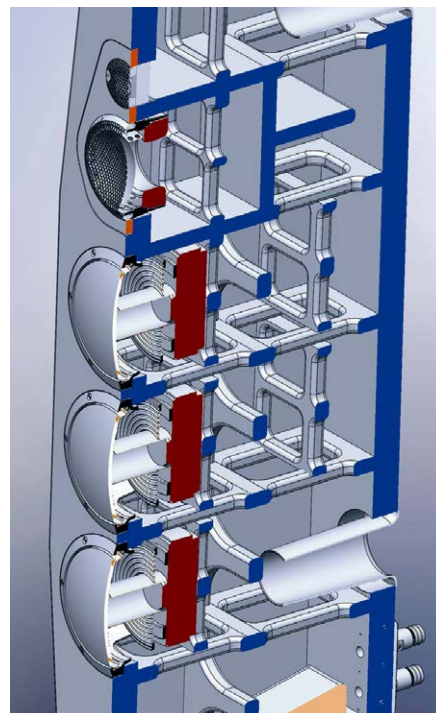
▲ The rear legs of the Vimberg Mino are made from such a block.

return. 490,000 Euros are due for the pair, while even for the smaller “Akira” still 189,000 Euros are to be estimated. However, first of all one has to bear in mind the costs for the chassis alone as well as for “only” the internal components, like e.g. the five kilogram Duelund cast-silver capacitor. Further considering the quasi-individual production, the seemingly outrageous price is put into perspective – at least slightly. After all, hardly anyone is upset about Bugatti, Leica or Lange & Söhne prices, although they are only affordable for some very few people.

Following the frequently expressed wish to offer loudspeakers at prices well below those of the Tidal portfolio, mastermind Jörn Janczak decided to make targeted savings where there is as little compromise as possible. For example, a special machine was purchased for applying a finish which is half as thick as on the originals, but nevertheless still looks outstanding. For “socio-ecological” reasons, it was out of the question to purchase the 34 mm HDF cabinets from China. The polished stainless steel was replaced with aluminum and in the standard version the drivers now use ceramic instead of diamond diaphragms which come from the Accuton standard portfolio. Further, some parts of the development have already been done for Tidal and don't have to be charged again. These considerations led to “Vimberg”, a kind of “little sister” to Tidal Audio. So far there is the floorstanding loudspeaker “Tonda”, which was directly derived from the Akira and can therefore be easily compared in paper form, as well as the slightly smaller “Mino” with a 30mm-ceramic dome, 90mm-ceramic midrange



▲ A picture from the production shows how well equipped the crossover of the Mino are.



▲ A stabilizing skeleton is found in the usually hidden interior of the Vimberg.

driver and three 168mm-ceramic sandwich drivers – latter of which STEREO brought into the listening and measuring rooms for our test.

With base prices of 27,000 euros and 22,000 euros respectively, the “Vimberg Tonda” is at one seventh and the “Mino” at almost one ninth of the price per pair that is quoted for the original – although still with most careful planning and production. Tidal has always been, is and remains a “cost-no-object” brand, in

THE TOP OF THE FEASIBLE?

Tidal Audio was founded in 1999 by Jörn Janczak and Swen Wasserrab. Even though after 2003 the founders separated their businesses, not least because they moved to Hürth, they remained close friends, and Wasserrab occasionally checks in at the Leipzig branch, which is responsible for the cabinets and paintwork with four employees. Development and final assembly are carried out in Hürth, where, in addition to the male and female bosses, a further four workers are employed. The company also has showrooms and two listening rooms (photo) in which various setups of Tidal and Vimberg



loudspeakers, including their own electronics, are ready for demonstration.

which first the best possible result is realized and only then calculated into a final price. Vimberg's development is, for the first time, based on a target price. Silver connections and Mogami wiring are there anyway! Vimberg is to be sold exclusively through selected specialist dealers. In the listening room we never had the feeling, not even for a fraction of a second, that we were dealing with "slimmed down" or "economy" model. Actually, quite the opposite!

Everything here is designed for accuracy and timing. The speaker should omit nothing, while also never reinterpreting or adding color to anything. Janczak doesn't even want to add a hint of warmth, as to him that is the task of musicians and sound engineers: 100 % resolution, 0 % sound!

Therefore, the engineers dedicate themselves with admirable enthusiasm to the transient response and the corresponding tuning of the drivers, which is visible from the absolutely outstanding step response, not only for a three-way system. In addition, the characteristics of the individual drivers, such as the resonance behavior in the mid-range, are analyzed and specifically corrected via a suction circuit in the crossover, without the impulse

behavior suffering overall. Instead of a foam plug supplied with many loudspeakers, Vimberg provides each one with a very precisely closing plug with handle, which is mounted as standard and can be removed to vary the bass reflex tube. Without, it may seem a little less precise, however e.g. Supertramp profited considerably from the gained "Boom" – a matter of taste. The Mino's bass is extraordinarily precise and contoured, you could call it slim in comparison, however that is not really the case, as visible in the frequency response. Rather it is honest, and that's what distinguishes the entire speaker. It embodies pure neutrality. The timing of "In My World" by half of the Fleetwood Mac line up Buckingham/McVie, for example, is almost unbelievable, as is the attention to detail and the pinpoint accuracy over the entire transmission range. Seamless dynamics, but also exquisite tonality should please the fans of classical music.

"Every developer gets the amplitude frequency response, but the timing is also absolutely crucial for perfect, unadulterated music reproduction," says Janczak. In fact, this speaker is sensationally accurate, making it exciting and extremely fun!

For 7000 Euro surcharge you can also get the Mino with 30mm diamond dome. However, you really don't have to, as it is also a 72 kilogram dream of a loudspeaker in complete ceramic equipment. Further – as a, so to speak, "Tidal light" – for some it's a dream much more realistic than its role model, however playing a lot closer to the "original" than one might expect for a good ninth of the price. What an experience!

Tom Frantzen

TEST-COMPONENTS

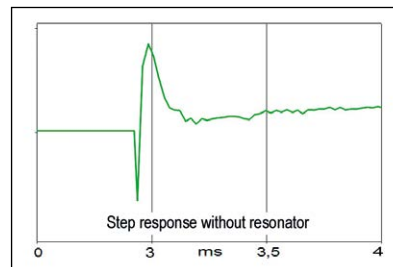
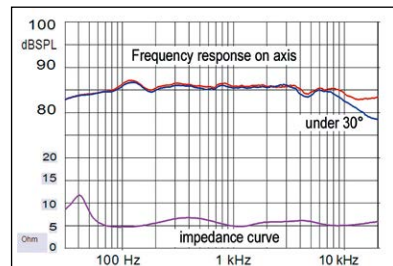
Turntable: AVM Evolution 5.3
 CD player: T+A MP 3100 HV
 Preamp: Octave HP 700
 Preamp: Accoustic Arts AMP II Mk3
 Loudspeaker: B&W 800 D3
 Cables: Cardas, HMS, In-Acoustics, Supra

VIMBERG MINO

Price: from 22000 €
 Dimensions: 43 x 126 x 53 cm (WHxD)
 Warranty: 10 years
 Contact: Tidal
 Phone: +49 2233 9669226
 www.tidal-audio.com

Vimberg speakers offer almost the same quality as their expensive Tidal sisters, but at a fraction of the price. In fact, the losses are manageable, and the extremely neutral and precise Mino plays in the uppermost echelons. Plasticity, dynamics and accuracy in exquisite material quality.

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| DC resistor | 4 Ohm |
| Minimum impedance 4.3 Ohm at | 90 Hz |
| Maximum impedance 8 Ohm at | 52 Hz |
| Sound pressure level (2.83 V/m) | 89.4 dB SPL |
| Power for 94 dB SPL | 7.1 W |
| Lower cut-off frequency (-3dB SPL) | 37 Hz |
| Distortion factor at 63/3k/10k Hz | 0.3/0.1/0.1 % |

LAB COMMENTS

The frequency response documents the extreme balance, which also applies to the slightly angled speaker. The impedance is uncritical, the efficiency slightly above average. Such a step response is absolutely outstanding, not only for a three-way speaker, and shows the excellent timing.

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY **97%**

PRICE/PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆
EXCELLENT