

## VIVID AUDIO

### Freedom from resonance and reflection

### Overwhelming airiness and openness

### And the enclosure disappears

By Nobuyuki Fu

This object with the whole body covered with curves is Vivid Audio's latest model GIYA. This is Vivid Audio's flagship model which suits Vivid Audio that declares "Most speakers today still uses rectangle boxes assembled with boards only from the issue of cost" **"To succeed, new speaker manufacturers need not only innovative engineering but also unique products."**

Two people from Vivid Audio came to Japan with this speaker. They are Laurence Dickie who is the designer and Robert Trunz who is the managing advisor. I had a reunion with them for the first time in 15 years. When I met them for the first time, they were the designer and the president of B&W. While listening to the final prototype of Original Nautilus that was set in Mr. Trunz's home, I received explanation about Original Nautilus from Mr. Dickie who put his whole soul into designing it. In those days, I was using the full-range ribbon speaker "Apogee" in my home and therefore I was bothered by many normal speakers' enclosures that were crying. But Original Nautilus was different. The diaphragms of the dome and the corn sounded like as if they were floating in the air. And when I listened to GIYA this time, my memories of 15 years ago awoke in once. GIYA also sounded like as if the diaphragms were floating in the air.

Both Mr. Dickie and Mr. Trunz left B&W after developing Original Nautilus. Mr. Dickie established a studio monitor speaker company and became a consultant of Turbo Sound that handles speakers for concerts and increased his experience as a speaker designer. Mr. Trunz expanded into music business such as planning concerts. He immigrated to South Africa and has produced almost 80 titles of African music CDs so far.

They reunited and founded a company in 2001, which is Vivid Audio. Products such as K1 and B1 were released three years later. One feature of Vivid Audio is that the designer is the designer of Original Nautilus. Another feature is the rarity of the production base's location that is in South Africa.

For your information, the word "GIYA" is from the Zulu language that means "classical dance."

### Fine and rich texture

### Music blows from the speaker like a wind

Mr. Dickie forgot to bring his business cards from the hotel for the presentation party and also for our coverage on the next day. Mr. Trunz protects him and says laughing, "He is the true engineer." I asked Mr. Dickie to talk about the concept that he requires to the sound. His answer was simple. It is "Freedom from resonance and reflection." This concept comes from Original Nautilus. As a matter of course, this concept was inherited to Vivid Audio's existing models and is more ensured for GIYA.

Now, lets listen to GIYA that is designed by this "true engineer."

Two GIYAs were towering in the Stereo Sound Magazine listening room. The Borollo red color is rather appealing. This is the same color with GIYA that made the cover of Stereo Sound Magazine Issue No.167. However, GIYA on the cover is the final prototype and the details are different from the commercial production models. For example, the magnets attached to hold the punching metal grill around the three-way (mid-bass, mid-high, tweeter) are still exposed.

Before auditioning, I compared the difference between the sound with the grills on and the sound without grills. The grills have a very high aperture ratio. I heard that the frequency response by the actual measurement with the grills attached was 15kHz and the observed attenuation was only 0.5db. But I decided to audition without grills because the tone becomes slightly bright.

I sit down at the centre in front of the towering two GIYAs. I am very curious about how they will sound like because the shape and the color are unique. Will they sound unspeakably sophisticated or will the sound of resin be added to the sound...?

Judith Owen (HAPPY THIS WAY: LINN Records / AKD299) started to sing a ballad without introduction and accompaniment. The sound flowed out from GIYA so easily in a smooth and a soft way. **It was more like a gentle breeze blowing from the speaker than a sound coming out from the speaker.**

**There is absolutely no enclosure flavor and no boxy impression at all. The shape and color of GIYA is unique to the eye but there is no presence of the enclosure in the sound. The sound is blank and open. There is no weird glossy resin sound added. The vocal has a good temperature feel. As for the background sounds, the textures of piano, strings and woodwinds are fine and rich. There is no metallic flavor coming from the aluminum used at each diaphragms of the four-way speaker unit. As a speaker, the S/N feelings are extremely high and it precisely expresses the nuance of the low level as if it is gouged. As a result, the music sounds natural and real. It is unconnected with any kind of snobbish and distant sound like "sophisticated" sounds. Fashions of singing and breathing are both clear as if I can see her facial expression.**

The transition of sound frequency is smooth too. I don't hear any peculiar sound from each speaker units that asserts itself. **Sounds from the upper three-way reach the listener in blended combination. It is like a "single shot full-range."** GIYA is 170 centimeters high and the three-way is placed a little higher from the middle but there is no feeling of pressure making someone feel that the sound is falling down from a high place. There is no feeling that the sound is coming directly out from the units.

As for the position of the acoustic centre, it is almost at the same height of the listener's face. **Either sitting on a sofa or sitting on a rather high chair, the sound image is positioned at almost the same height of the face. As a result, there is no presence and the speaker units disappear.**

**Also, the steadiness of the centre position's focus of the sound image is like magic. The sound image does not sway even if you shake your head from side to side. And even if you stand up and walk right and left, the stereo sound field does not distort in a large way. It appears that the sound waves radiated from the right and the left speakers are blended seamlessly and thickly and even if you walk right and left, the sound pressure does not sway discontinuously. This sound image focus and sound field feelings are achieved because there is no flat baffle surfaces and sharply angled edges on the enclosure. Yes, the enclosure has disappeared.**

I would like to name GIYA “invisible speaker” after “invisible man.” Mr. true engineer has created a speaker that disappears when it starts to make sounds.

The absence of the speaker means that the sound is coming out lightly. I'm not saying that the sound itself is light. I want to say that the way of the sound comes out is blank and open and the sound comes out lightly and smoothly.

Sensitive and precise.

Full and warm.

Unconnected with analytical and inorganic expression.

Contrary to lightness, the bass of GIYA is heavy. I have opportunities to audition various speakers here in Stereo Sound listening room. But it was a rare experience for me to listen to a speaker that expands ultra low bass so easily. I think that the woofer part has succeeded to achieve the advantages of high efficiency of the bass reflex, extension of deep bass and bass without resonance by using tube.

Also as for the bass, the S/N feelings are fine. Since I didn't hear the enclosure crying or the duct making air noises, I felt compelled to raise the volume. Then I felt that the listening room's air became saturated and swaying with the deep bass of the orchestra's tutti. While enjoying Tchaikovsky “Violin Concertos” (Gramophone Germany / UCGG7103) by Vienna Philharmonic orchestra conducted by Previn with Mutter's playing of the violin, I became overwhelmed by the sounds of the players' steps that happened to be recorded because they sounded magnificent as the pressure feelings of deep bass.

Now I play Brian Bromberg's “Downright Upright” (Sevenseas / KICJ503) loudly that I usually use to check the bass. Both wood bass and electric bass sound unconstrained and also light. If you expect audacious bass sound, you might feel short but the edge of the attack does not stand out too much and sounds heavy and deep. Before auditioning, I was concerning about that GIYA's woofers are looking towards the sides and they are far away from the upper three-way. But there was no need to worry. The bass did not sound like it was reflected from the surroundings and got delayed. For your information, the distances from each right and left GIYA to the walls were around 1 meter.

I put my palm on the enclosure while playing Bromberg's wild bass performance. I don't feel the enclosure expand and compress by being synchronized with the bass rhythm. This is a different feeling from putting my palm on the enclosure of a normal wooden rectangular enclosure. Rather than the bass vibration, the middle range of the rhythm's attack sound reaches my palm. This is common to Original Nautilus but I think that GIYA is more dead and the vibration is smaller.

For me, GIYA is a speaker that makes very natural sounds, but if I daringly try to find it's characteristic tone, I would say it is the full and warm middle bass. The sounds of both instruments and vocals do not get thin at all. It is unconnected with nervous expression, stimulating sound and analytical and inorganic expression. Although GIYA has a high-tech configuration, you cannot find any dry musical expression that is associated with high-tech. So you can enjoy various musical genres equally.

Since I am usually listening to Original Nautilus, maybe the readers will not allow me to finish this review without writing about Original Nautilus vs. GIYA. OK. I will write

about it by comparing with the sound I listen in my home. The bass of Original Nautilus is more soft and gentle while the bass of GIYA is more dynamic and active. As for the full-range dynamics from the bass to the high, GIYA is pretty more powerful. If I compare the edge of the sound image's focus to a pencil, Original Nautilus is 2H and GIYA is F. It's notable that GIYA can be used with just one stereo power amplifier because it has a built-in passive crossover. The input of GIYA can be bi-wired. So even if you are bloated, you don't need more than two sets of power amplifiers.

Translation Note: There are some parts that make technical explanations in this review. But these parts were not translated because you know about the technical matters more than anyone.