

Sveda Audio Blipo

DESPITE ITS NAME, THE ACTIVE-DRIVE BLIPO LOUDSPEAKER IS MADE IN POLAND AND IS THEREFORE VERY COMPETITIVELY PRICED, AS PAUL MESSENGER DISCOVERS

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HIFICRITIC
AUDIO EXCELLENCE



A name like Sveda Audio might indicate that this large stand-mount speaker is of Swedish origin, but in fact it's a (mostly) Polish creation from a designer called Arek Szweda, which has several (mostly positive) implications. The most important is probably the price, which at around £5,298/pair seems reasonable enough for a large loudspeaker with active-drive; the hefty (arguably mandatory) partnering stands cost an extra £534.

The configuration seems logical enough. It's a sealed-box, stand-mount, with a vertical d'Appolito array of two nominal 175mm (7in) drivers and 130mm diameter coarse-textured paper cones, mounted above and below a solitary 30mm soft-dome tweeter. All three drivers are fine examples of Scan-Speak technology. Our review speakers (well run in ex-show examples) came finished in a bright yellow, and also appear to lack any form of grille.

Although the front view is quite slim – indeed little wider than that required to accommodate the main drivers – the speaker is exceptionally deep, and comes with equally deep stands. The latter, crafted from sheet steel, comprise two box-section verticals ‘in line astern’, sandwiched between flat plates. The top plate nearly matches the speaker's footprint; the base is a little wider, for superior lateral stability..

The input to each channel is *via* balanced XLR sockets with a built-in 6.3mm jack socket. An adapter is required, so the importer/distributor supplied a phono-to-XLR link (labelled Ring Audio), to connect to the 4-pin-DIN-to-phono Chord *Sarum T* lead that comes out of my Naim *Statement* pre-amplifier. (I could have used the *Statement's* balanced outputs, but didn't have the required length!)

This *Blipo* model looks a very similar to the original Sveda Audio studio monitor called *D'appa* (aka *Dapo*) but deliberately has a “more friendly sound” with wider sound distribution than the notably detailed and analytical *D'appa*. (Incidentally, I was shown a still ‘friendlier’ version called *Blipo Home*, at this year's Munich show.)

The rear (amplifier) panel of *Blipo* has quite a collection of switches, alongside some generous yet sharp (and invariably quite warm) heatsinks. The switches give various adjustments: an 8-position rotary changes the overall gain, while three toggle switches provide earth lift, bass boost, and ± 1 dB treble cut

or boost (using a three-position toggle). Apparently the three Class A/B amplifiers are 300W, use large toroidal transformers, Siemens NOS capacitors, and connect to the drivers using 6N copper cables.

Measurements

The measured performance proved a shade paradoxical. While the ‘flat’ setting was quite exemplary, and the treble ‘plus’ and ‘minus’ settings appeared to work precisely as advertised, the same could not be said of the ‘bass boost’ settings, which might have boosted the bass above 40Hz, but actually cut frequencies quite strongly below this point, measuring -10dB at 20Hz (to avoid overload at high volumes).

The ‘flat’ settings delivered an impressively smooth and even in-room far-field tonal balance, which was held within tight ± 3 dB limits 50Hz-15kHz. Output is maybe a little strong in the low bass below 50Hz, and a tad weak in the mid-bass (60-140Hz), but those are characteristics of my room rather than criticisms.

Sound Quality

In most respects *Blipo* performed admirably to these ears, though it's only fair to mention that one visitor was less impressed. However, I myself was particularly taken by the *Blipo's* studied neutrality and freedom from any boxiness, plus decent transparency and fine imaging, though I was also conscious of some reduction in dynamic expression compared to expectations, which came as something of a surprise.

The reason for the latter might have had something to do with a fuse fitted to the speaker's built-in amplification. While setting up the speakers I (stupidly) managed to blow one of the fuses, and although I managed to replace it with something similar, the replacement wasn't quite identical to the blown example, and had a slightly higher rating than the original. Whether this had any effect upon the dynamics of the speaker is impossible to say.

Conclusions

This is a thoroughly impressive and professional package, combining exceptional neutrality with very low coloration and fine imaging. All this comes at a reasonable enough price in view of the built-in active power amplification, so an Audio Excellence rating seems appropriate.