

## Peak Consult Sinfonia: music is the essence

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### Peak Consult Sinfonia speakers

Peak Consult is probably not a brand you come across often in your local hi-fi shop, unless your shop is a Peak Consult dealer of course. The Danish manufacturer of high-end audio speakers has a long and at the same time short history that can be traced back to the three most important people behind the brand. During my visit to Hans Audio, a Peak Consult dealer in Hoorn (Netherlands), I had the honour of enjoying a long listening session with the Sinfonia speakers. But first a little bit of history.

#### The beginning

Peak Consult dates back to 1996 when Per Kristoffersen, a Danish woodworker and carpenter, started building speaker cabinets for himself and his friends. With the idea that manufacturers are often forced to cut corners, Per saw opportunities to improve existing designs and later on Peak Consult models that he had designed from scratch began to emerge. In 2021 two investors took over Per's company in order to expand it, one is Lennart Asbjorn, the current CEO, responsible for production and administration. He is a true audiophile, formerly involved with haute cuisine restaurants, with a keen eye for detail and presentation of a dish. The other investor is probably better known: Wilfried Ehrenholz, former owner and CEO of Dynaudio. After selling Dynaudio, he is now back in business with Peak Consult. Wilfried is responsible for product development, business strategy, marketing and distribution.

It is mainly Wilfried who develops and fine tunes the loudspeakers. No longer bound by the constraints of a large company, he has set his sights on developing a loudspeaker that meets his personal requirements; a music source that engages the listener with the music, a loudspeaker you want to keep on listening to. Technology, measurements, frequency range, are

all side issues; the essence is enjoying whatever music you play. From the first track to the last, that is what it takes to make every Peak Consult loudspeaker a personal statement from the man who made Dynaudio a world leader in both pro audio and domestic hi-fi.

### Earning respect

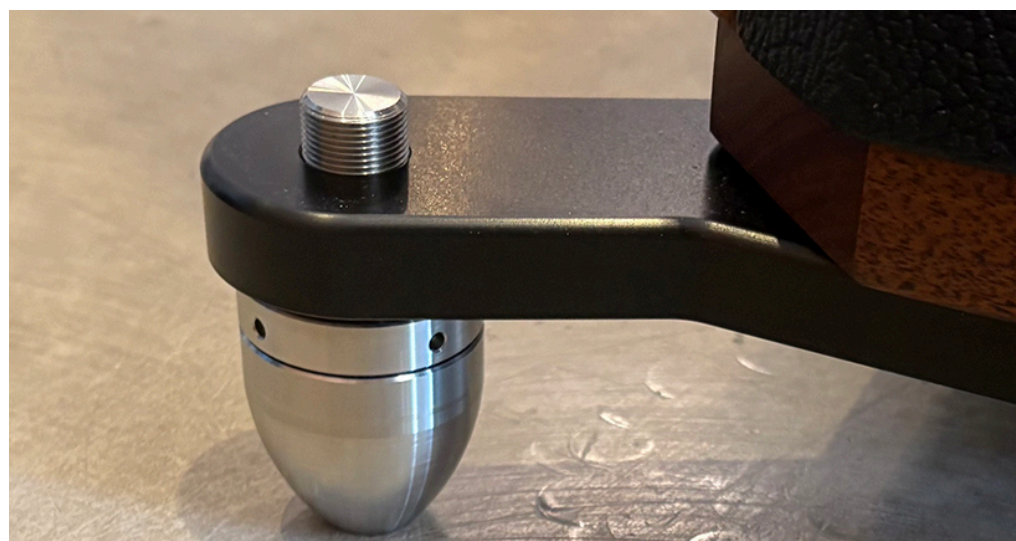
Each Peak Consult speaker is built with three 15mm thick HDF panels, glued together with a tough adhesive to create natural damping. Inside damping is provided by sheep's wool. Crossovers are hardwired, divided into sections per driver on a separate HDF board and hidden in a separate enclosure filled with a special kind of sand. To give you an idea, a Sonora is actually a standmount, even though it looks like a floorstanding model. Halfway up inside the cabinet is a sloping partition, below which is the sand-filled compartment with the crossover. This results in weight of 68 kilos even though it is the smallest model in the catalogue. Peak



Consult uses Scan-Speak's top-of-the-line tweeters in all cases, while for midrange and woofers they opt for the Danish brand Audio Technology.

### Sinfonia inside out

The Sinfonia is a three-way model with a bass reflex port and a 200mm woofer, the midrange and tweeter are mounted on the sloping section of the baffle. The crossover is described as a Peak Linear Impedance Control (PLIC), a filter that ensures a no hassle impedance, nominally 5 Ohms with a deviation of  $\pm 1$  Ohm. This means that any amplifier can be used, including tube amplifiers. Argento connections for single-wire connection (bi-wire is a no cost option) are







set low on the rear panel. The 114cm high cabinet stabilises on feet that are damped inside and rest on a ceramic ball in a bearing. The side panels are finished in black, white or hardwood and acrylic. The front and rear panels are covered with real leather.

Hans Audio set up a decent system for the Sinfonia, consisting of an Aurender N20 streamer as the source, an Esoteric N-05 XD DAC, a Bryston BP-19 preamplifier and two Audio Analogue Donizetti mono-switched power amplifiers, the latter delivering one kilowatt per channel. All cabling is made by Airtech, a subdivision of Audio Analogue. For the review I played music from Qobuz.

### **Music, music**

In an unfamiliar room, with a system that is new to me, I always take my time and started with album by Lori Lieberman, and from the off one thing is immediately clear: this is not a hi-fi loudspeaker but a part of a music system with a soul. Lori's voice is very convincing, easily standing out from the band in a very natural way. Lively, human and slightly hoarse, that's exactly how Lori sings. The lower notes are solid but not overpowering. This allows the bass drum to assert itself in a band playing a big, tight sound, and that's probably close to how it actually sounded in the studio.

Les Kapsbers Girls, is an early music group which consists of two sopranos, a cellist and a more general plucker of strings who leads the ensemble. The soprano voices are presented in a special way on the track *Il Primo Libro de Madrigali*, with the main voice in the front and the second behind her. The instruments remain clearly present, not dominating the vocals, and once again, the music sounds very natural, pure, and expressive. Although the vocals are compelling, the string instrument plays an increasingly important role.

Lucie Hörsch produced the album *The Frans Brüggen Project*, she plays the recorder together with the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century. A recorder is a difficult instrument to reproduce, but not for the Peak Consult Sinfonia. Fluent and easy, while the orchestra in the background stays in contact with the soloist, meanwhile controlled bass follows from the orchestra since the basses and cellos both contribute generously. The flute is placed at the correct height in the stereo image and the music manages to detach itself from the loudspeakers. The stereo image may not be very wide, as in the previous tracks, but the stage is large enough to impress. Perhaps keeping it a little tight is part of the intimacy the speakers manage to create. There are lots of details in the soft blowing of the recorder, its sound is completely recognizable. This is absolutely not always the case, a recorder is often rougher, less pure, reaching the point of irritation. With the Sinfonias it's easy to appreciate Lucie's real talent.

### **French fancies**

Time for Patricia Kaas with *Le mot de pas*, a combination of chanson and rock with passion and conviction, her unique voice evokes fond memories of her concert in Utrecht many years

## Peak Consult Sinfonia

ago. The Sinfonias let the orchestra and bass growl while the piano remains clear and present above the strings. The music and vocals are sometimes intimate and subtle, at other times powerful and overwhelming. Une Derrière Fois brings her husky voice when she talks about her late mother, singing her wish to perform for her one more time, beautifully accompanied by simple instruments and a French accordion. What strikes again and again is the way music and vocals are brought to the listener. In no way is this a technical, bare, ultra-detailed sound. Peak



Consult ticks the music box with every track. Pure music, from complex to simple, flowing towards the listener.

Khatia Buniatishvili plays a piano sonata by Chopin, actually a funeral march. Solo piano fills the room at high volume, these speakers allow so much power that I have to turn down the volume just to save my ears. The recording sounds dry on the Sinfonias, I notice little to nothing of the room acoustics. Regardless, the grand piano has an enormous impact, not many speakers can handle this much dynamic energy with such ease. As always, it turns out that a large speaker is needed to reproduce a large instrument.

### Pop and jazz

Billie Eilish's Happier Than Ever is spoiled by too much pumped-up bass, which makes it hard for the vocal to remain intelligible, it was probably mixed for the smartphone generation, nevertheless it is playable on real, large loudspeakers and Peak Consult has succeeded in keeping the bass tight. With power too, those who want to be punched in their stomachs can safely turn up the volume. No Time to Die is a haunting track with an electronic background that swells, after which Eilish raises her voice and manages to hold her own. Bombastic is the word, the track gets louder and louder up to the climax, only to suddenly drop almost to a whisper, the Sinfonia delivers both music and dynamics with ease.

Anouar Brahem and Anja Lechner both appear on the album After the Last Sky. Anouar on oud, Lechner on cello. The latter puts a lot of weight on the Sinfonia, which extends far into the lower frequencies and is able to deliver a lot of energy. That's the advantage of a large woofer in a big enclosure, yet at the same time it's a limitation; a system like this needs space. A large room is a requirement, if that's not an option you would be better off with the smaller Sonora. And since every model has the same design, is made for music and allows the listener to enjoy whatever is playing, that's not a problem. They are not about technical wizardry, only the performance counts. An older album by Brahem features the track The Lover of Beirut, with a bass clarinet. Mystical, floating, penetrating and compelling, the Sinfonias recreate the atmosphere of the Middle East, thanks to this beautiful ECM recording.



I want to end calmly and make up my mind about the system in front of me. I therefor choose Holly Cole, whose laid-back voice and the easy on the ear instruments used to play on vinyl in my past, but today are streamed by Qobuz. While the music keeps playing softly, I find myself involuntarily looking for similarities between Peak Consult and Wilfried Ehrenholz's roots in his Dynaudio days. Regardless of whether it was ever his intention, you can't help but recognize some of the DNA of earlier Dynaudio models from the days when Ehrenholz could really focus on research and development. The warm sound, the enveloping reproduction, the ability to enjoy music, not focusing primarily on technology. Enticing the listener to dream away from everyday life into beauty, emotion, and the creativity of the performers. This essence is fully captured in the Sinfonia, mission accomplished.

### Music is the essence

At the end of a long day, what remains is committing to paper what I was privileged to experience. To try to give an impression of what Peak Consult has done with the Sinfonia, what musical information has been processed and partially stored in my brain. I wonder was the time taken enough to make a severe judgment, or I should ask the distributor to lug these substantial speakers to my apartment on the third floor?

What I learned and will try to convey to the reader is that Peak Consult develop speakers for music lovers. Not for a studio or a critical technician. The essence of conveying music, with captured emotion and expression, with or without words, is exactly what the Sinfonia manages to achieve. Captivating the listener from the first note of an album to the last, preferably without interruption, in peace and quiet. At the same time, the Sinfonia is not comparable to speakers that are often given the label musical, which often have pleasant colourations or deviations to seduce the listener.

Ultra high quality drivers mounted in enclosures that leave nothing to be desired. The crossover parts were not chosen based on cost, but rather on performance in order to realize the dream of the designers. The knowledge of speaker cabinet construction is added to the experience of a globally respected speaker developer. Seasoned with passion, elegance and the eye for detail of an haute cuisine audiophile.

Peak Consult does not focus on business, but only on a desire to make the best loudspeaker for themselves. The fact that their designs can be placed in a living environment due to their luxurious finish is a big plus. Anyone appreciating the sound quality of the Sinfonia, understanding its essence, is willing to follow the philosophy, has the budget for a pair and the space available, is blessed. In terms of sound reproduction Peak Consult stands out from the crowd.

