



S O U N D R E B E L S

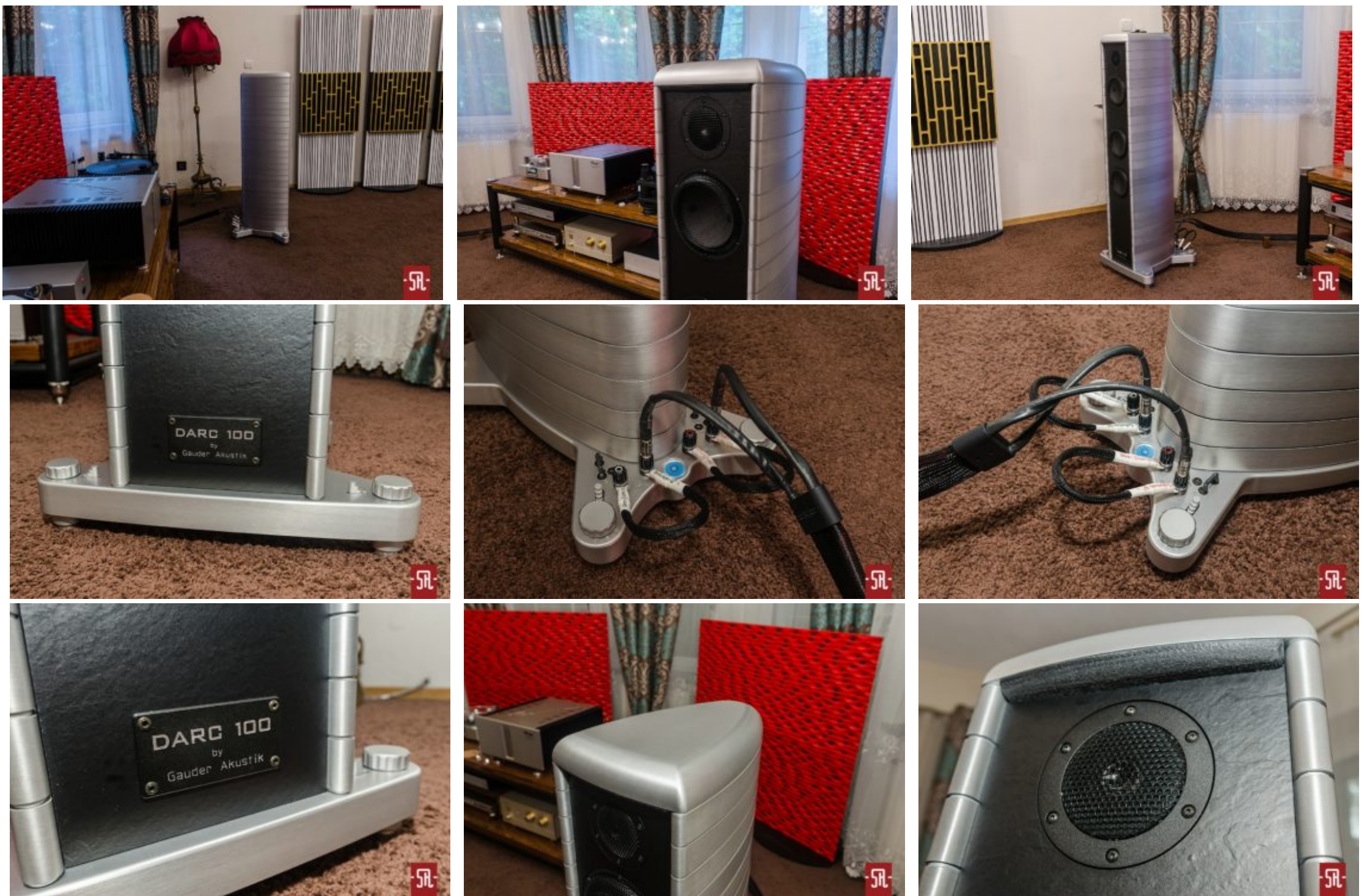
Gauder Akustik Darc 100 English ver.



Opinion 1

Did you read my previous review? If yes, then I could say, with clean conscience, the phrase “I told you so!”. What is this all about? Do not tell me you do not know. Anyway, I will explain now. While I was reviewing the American speakers **YG Acoustics Hailey 1.2** I almost proved to you, that if you want to have a strong position in the loudspeaker market today, you need to utilize something, that was viewed only as a kind of curiosity in this part of the market, while it is standard for amplifiers, sources, or other audio gear – aluminum. And it does not matter, if we are dealing with a small company, or a seasoned player on the market. Lately, on certain level of sound quality, this material is seen as a standard, and even such renowned constructors like Roland Gauder do not try to prove otherwise, but show, how much can be gained in terms of the generated sound, when this material is used properly. So what am I hinting at? Well, after some sparse information in the form of a reportage from the headquarters of the Katowice based distributor, RCM, about the model DARC 5, we had the opportunity to have a closer look at the model DARC 100, positioned much higher in the company hierarchy. Probably everybody knows the series based on wood-like materials (Arcona, Berlina) so some fundamental questions arise: “Is the overall sound quality following the path set by previous models? Did it maybe take a destructive step back?” If you are interested in my adventures with the DARC series one hundred, to learn about their strengths and weaknesses, I encourage you to read the paragraphs below.





As you can clearly see, the tested loudspeakers were made based on the idea of a multilevel sandwich, with a cross-section reminiscent of the shape of a lute; composed of many, not so thick layers. Of course all those layers, besides having the connecting elements sealed, are tightly bolted together and placed on a stable base. The mentioned base is not only a support for the speakers with typical cones, but besides the stabilization of the DARC's it carries the double wire terminals, there are also sockets for jumpers used for adjusting the amount of bass, a spirit level to aid leveling using cones, regulated from above with ornate dials and indicators showing the amount of unscrewing. Looking at the photographs one might have the impression, that we deal hear with a closed cabinet. But I must rectify this assumption, as the tested speakers do have a bass-reflex port, yet firing down, to the floor, so we can slightly regulate the amount of bass by moving the mentioned cones. Having described the base and the sides and back of the German speakers, as both are made from the same elements, let us move to the front. It is a bit recessed compared to the side walls, in contrast to the current trends, and is made in a way eliminating harmful reflections of the sound by exposing the pores and intended imperfections of smoothness on the surface of the MDF and black slate. In terms of drivers, those were supplied by the brand Mr. Roland likes best, Accuton, in case of this model two ceramic bass drivers and one midrange, which are supported by a beautifully looking diamond tweeter. The whole is finished with an ornate plaque with the model name and its origin, placed just above the base. I am almost certain, that most acolytes of brand will not believe in what I will write now, but without stretching the facts I am claiming, that the newest series of speakers, with the shadowy name DARC, is advocating a way of sounding which is very close to its name, dark. There is no obtrusiveness or brightening, Gauder speakers are often accused of, we just get a sound, which is very strong and directed to release the energy of the recording. You do not believe me? Frankly speaking I was also surprised and could not believe my eyes, or rather ears, that a company constructing loudspeakers, very well known to me, put some extra meat in their products. Well, I will also immediately cut short any suspicions about mudding. There is absolutely nothing like that in the sound. In this idea for reproducing notes we have everything. Beginning with strong bass, loaded with seismic energy, through surprisingly dark, I would even call it juicy, for ceramic drivers, midrange to beady treble, thanks to the diamond tweeter, which soothed my ears. But how does this fare when confronted with music? I assure you, it looks very interesting, but different depending on the repertoire. All music emphasizing rebellion and, so called, kick, was for sure the grist to the mill of those speakers. The creations of groups like Massive Attack or Acid were just phenomenal. When the musicians tried to move my furniture with low, synthetic murmurs, I always had to hold the pile of CDs placed on my table to prevent them from falling. And in situations, when vocals entered, interrupted with whizzes and swishes, I got a solid part of throat action. This was really something, comparable with the best speakers I heard to date. What was most surprising, even after prolonged period of loud listening (you are supposed to listen to such repertoire loud) I did not have ear fatigue due to shouting, analytical sound or similar, it was just a natural reaction to the music, which was tonally balanced. Yes, yes, listening to the newest product of Mr. Gauder there is no mercy. No blah, blah, but a clash with music like on a live event. Of course, if someone wishes to have some background music he will get it too. But in my opinion this will just waste the potential of those speakers. On the other hand, it is always good to have an ace up your sleeve, and when you have the right mood, you can have an energetic, unconstrained concert right in your living room. There is one condition though, your neighbors need to tolerate this. Otherwise you will have a visit from your friendly neighborhood police officer and the concert will be over. A similar situation was when a disc with rock music, like for example Metallica, was put into the drive. The wealth of low guitar riffs and strong drums just massaged my guts, and this is all such music is about. It was a bit different with the German speakers when more ethereal and emotional Baroque music was played. Not that it would be dull or too light. Rather this world was shown a bit too literally by the DARC-100. The Gauder showed this repertoire very binary. So when there was a more energetic pull on a string of the baroque guitar, or a stronger hit on the drum, I got a shot in my ear, while it should have been a bit slower in the intentions of the artists. Of course such attention to punctuality and definition of the notes recorded cannot be regarded as an issue, but from experience I know, that when you try too hard, it sometimes goes awry. Yet I do not see this a negative aspect, only as a different point of view on the church music, which is in itself, directed towards soulfulness. So did I find any weaknesses? Yes, one. But not a sonic one, but a hardware one. You will not drive those speakers with a run-of-the-mill amplifier. Those are very demanding constructs, and if you treat them without proper attention, the result might be a complete energetic disaster, with mudding all over, which will not show you even half of what I heard during the test. And from there, there is a very short way to blame the tested speakers for the setback, something they absolutely do not deserve.

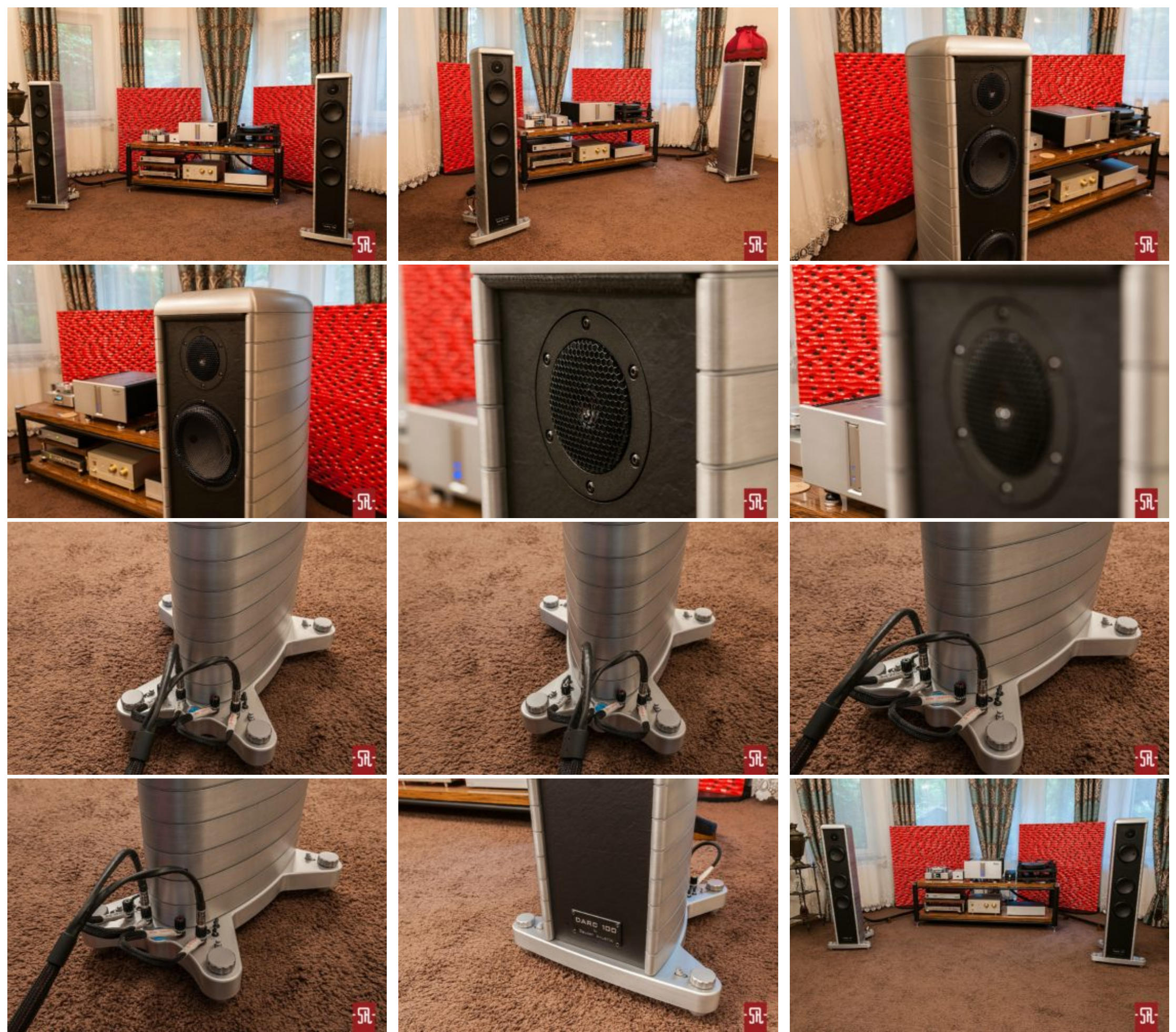
As you can see from the text above, the loudspeakers that came for testing, the Gauder Akustik DARC 100 enchanted me in most of the repertoire without any problems. When needed, the listening room walls were moving, and when artificially generated music tried to deafen me in the higher frequencies, my ears suffered as they should. Yes, in delicate musical genres, the beautifully looking German speakers were too literal, but I assure you, this does not mean they cannot handle it. Why? Please take into account my musical preferences and a much more in-depth analysis of this kind of artistry, than the average Smith would do, and you need to look at my remarks with a certain filter.

Additionally I will remind you, that the whole set I have, from the source to the loudspeakers was tuned for that kind of music, and when I plugged into that something so energetic like the German boxes, which are real volcanos of energy, the Gauder made the music sound a bit too blunt. And I remind you, that each test is just a coincidental configuration, what makes us immediately think, that even a small change in the electronics or cabling would be able to satisfy even my imagined needs. So to whom I would address the tested speakers? Theoretically to all the representatives of the Homo Sapiens species, who can supply appropriate signal from the amplifier. This is not an offer for those, who use low power amplifiers and high efficiency speakers, but a product, which can move mountains, provided it has enough juice. And this will make those loudspeakers stay in our system for years and years.

Jacek Pazio

Opinion 2

While on the extreme High-End level any kind of compromise, at least officially, should not happen and no constructor, if sane, will not freely confess to make any, yet not all buyers will be happy with the aggrandizement happening in this segment. Reference has many names, and while some people can afford to buy the slender **Dynaudio Evidence Master** or the large **Trenner & Friedl Duke**, this does not mean, that he or she needs to have such large boxes at home. This is the reason, that the mentioned manufacturers are making all effort, to fit also such tastes. Hence many kinds of reference stand mount speakers, like the recently debuting Borresen 01, through classic pieces like the Franco Serblin Accordo to the nice, microscopic floor-standers from the same brand Ligneia. Of course, if you do not have such need, you can ignore both extremes and choose something with, tersely speaking, “normal” size, what still is accounted to the top level constructs. That was the reasoning of Dr. Roland Gauder, who finished working on his flagship series Berlina and devoted his attention and knowledge to another, absolutely new project, which has all the characteristics of the reference brethren, while having much more compact body. Hence the Darc series was born, from which the middle model, Darc 100, we have now the pleasure to describe.



As we already managed to show you in our **photo preview**, the 100 arrive in quite modest, standard looking cardboard boxes. No wooden chests, flight-cases or other fancy stuff. Pure cardboard and necessary spacers made from hard foam. That is it. At least theoretically, as when we tried to move them, it turned out, the quite small, 124 cm high, loudspeakers weigh 72 kg (net) each. If that would not be enough, the Gauder must be transported upright, what prevents them to be loaded on a family station wagon or even a big SUV like the **Volvo XC-90**. But when we decide to spend 40-50 thousand Euro, then we would not need to worry about logistics, this will fall on the distributor, and not us. We will just need to provide appropriate place for the speakers, what we empirically tested in the **RCM headquarters** and in our listening room, needs to have at least 35-40 square meters and have quite neutral acoustics. And I do not mean we need to make an anechoic chamber out of our listening room, but it is advisable to get rid of the parasitic mods in it.

Like I already mentioned, the Gauder are quite small, even slender, four-driver, three-way loudspeakers ventilated to the bottom. Their overweight, at least compared to the size, comes from the materials used to construct them, as its chassis, narrowing to the back, is made from aluminum ribs, bolted together vertically, with wood-like elements in-between. The front is a sandwich made from MDF with 3mm of slate. The treble is handled by a ceramic, or like in the tested units, a diamond tweeter from Accuton, working in a closed chamber together with a porcelain midrange driver. The pair of woofers have their own, separated, 30 liter space. The stability of the speakers is provided by an integrated base, which is available in standard version, meaning it extrudes beyond the speaker only to the back, and wide version – present in our tested pair, with a revolutionary system of regulated cones in the front and back. And because the Darc do not have a proper back plate, the double wire terminals WBT-Nextgen were moved to the base, and next to those there are jumpers used to adjust the sound of the speakers to the room characteristics they will be placed in. There is also a very handy spirit level embedded in the base. Each of the frequency ranges received its own PCB of the cross-over, which, like we are used to in Gauder speakers, has very steep cross-over slopes of more than 60 dB/octave. Another recognition sign of the speakers created under the overlooking eye of Dr. Roland is the company “sufficient” efficiency. Although I found in the Internet some information, that the tested speakers have an acceptable efficiency of 85.2 dB SPL, but I would propose to approach this information with a grain of salt, as values around 80-82 dB are much closer to the truth. It is worth to notice, that with such efficiency and 4 Ohm impedance, you will need solid amplification to power the Darc.

Fortunately it turned out, that our own power amplifier Reimyo KAP-777 was living up to the challenge, and the reserve, powerful class A **Abyssound ASX-2000** could just stay a spectator. Leaving aside the fact, that we have taken the Gauder from Katowice straight from the system they were plugged in, we knew, they were very “fresh” so we did leave them for a week to burn-in and format in our system. But even spontaneous, plugged into the system straight after the move, they showed a bit different, yet coherent with what we heard in RCM, characteristic. In short we could say the Darc 100 are impersonation of condensed power just waiting to be released. Like the fairytale genie in Alladins’ lamp they are ready to get released from a small housing and prone with full power. At first you can have the impression, that the scale, volume of the sounds generated by the 100 is not fitting them, as it seems to alleviate the laws of physics. Because we get a big, really big, spectacle from the loudspeakers, which seem to be dedicated to 20-25 square meter rooms, and yet, in our almost 40 square meter big octagon, with the prog-metal “**The Astonishing**” Dream Theater almost everything shook, with an intensity able to wake up the seismographs in the Polish Academy of Sciences institute located about 20 kilometers away. This is to a large extent attributable to the bass, which went down in regions, usually inhabited only by hellish three-headed Cerberus chasing reprobates’ skulls, thrown to it by the Master of Darkness himself, just for joy. Additionally, in contrast to the common opinion, it could not be accused of being dry or matted, things that are attributed to Accuton drivers by “friendly” opponents, as it evidently operated on the darker side of the force, emphasizing on coexistence first, and only later on contour. All kinds of buildup of guitar riffs supported by drum passages and extended ensemble of the FILMharmonic Orchestra Prague were reproduced with full impetus and dynamics, which could be expected from much larger speakers. But you could feel a slight, very slight, but still, insufficiency resulting from the fact of “gluing” together of studio recorded material with an orchestra, something we did not experience while moving to the disc “**S&M**” Metallica and “Wagner Reloaded: Live in Leipzig” Apocalyptica, where the scene was surrounded by a screaming crowd, which uttered a primal scream time after time.

Another intriguing thing was the midrange, which had a more palpable, than in the bass, contour and brilliantly reproduced the realism of string instruments and vocal parts. Additionally the sewing together with the bottom and top of the frequency spectrum gave the whole incredible homogeneity. The mentioned Apocalyptica were in fact violas with an orchestra (MDR Sinfonieorchester) and, against appearances, a significant part of the event is happening in the midrange. And, in contrast to Metallica, we did not have a clear separation into, let us call it, electrified and acoustic instrumentation, but a few players operating in the same kind of esthetics as the supporting orchestra. This is the reason why precision of focusing of the virtual sources and handling a very worked out ensemble of the orchestra turned out to be key and showed the class of the Gauder speakers. The polyphonic “**Canticum Cantiorum**” Les Voix Baroques, so a less big position and much more focused on concentration and playing with silence, showed slightly more lyrical and laid back face of the tested speakers. Support of the lowest octaves was minimized, as both the brass instruments and vocals operated on higher frequencies, and while the bass background added appropriate nobleness to the whole, without etheric first plane suspended in space and the characteristic second reverb, we would have not a substitute, but a caricature of that, what is in the source material, while here the impression of being there and now was undeniable. Here the reference – diamond treble came to voice, which had a resolution that could be described as remarkable, unreachable for most conventional drivers. All kinds of aliquots, or sounds reaching the threshold of audibility had crystal clear cleanness, they were lacking any kind of granularity and at the same time had an unmistakable combination of the mentioned resolution and velvety smoothness. Just listen to “**Round M: Monteverdi Meets Jazz**” where Roberta Mameli operates in registers which make crystals shatter, and with the Gauder you listen to this album with pleasure, and the treble, although there is a lot of it, for obvious reasons, cannot be accused of any aggressiveness or blatancy. It is referentially precise, diamond clear and almost drilling into our head it brings an incredible amount of information.

Frankly speaking the Gauder Darc 100 should be only an introduction and clear the field for the **Berlina RC9**, hiding just behind the horizon, but the tricky faith, or better said Dr. Roland Gauder, decided to cross our plans and change our rankings. It turned out, that those small, even for German reality, speakers, instead of giving us a taste of what to expect in the flagship series, provided with over the top dynamics and outstanding resolution can bring us “audiophile nirvana”. And that from speakers which have an acceptable size. Of course it is worth to remember that you need to have appropriately powerful and current capable amplifier, but let us be frank – the Gauder are chosen by people who know, what this game is about, but also aware of their own expectations. So if you were looking at the **Berlina RC8** or the mentioned 9, but due to the owned house, or other constraints, were not able to place such big speakers in your listening room, then please go ahead and appoint a listening session of the 100, because all signs on heaven and earth tell, it can be the bull’s-eye.

Marcin Olszewski

System used in this test:

- CD: CEC TL 0 3.0 + Reimyo DAP – 999 EX Limited TOKU
- Preamplifier: Robert Koda Takumi K-15
- Power amplifier: Reimyo KAP – 777
- Loudspeakers: Trenner & Friedl “ISIS”
- Speaker Cables: Tellurium Q Silver Diamond, Statement
- IC RCA: Hijri „Milon”,
- IC XLR: Tellurium Q Silver Diamond
- Digital IC: Harmonix HS 102
- Power cables: Harmonix X-DC 350M2R Improved Version, Furutech NanoFlux NCF Furutech DPS-4 + FI-E50 NCF(R)/ FI-50(R), Hijiri Nagomi
- Table: SOLID BASE VI
- Accessories: Harmonix TU 505EX MK II, Stillpoints ULTRA SS, Stillpoints ULTRA MINI, antivibration platform by SOLID TECH, Harmonix AC Enacom Improved for 100-240V, akustyczne: Harmonix Room Tuning Mini Disk RFA-80i
- Power distribution board: POWER BASE HIGH END
- Acoustic treatments by Artnovion

Analog stage:

Drive: SME 30/2

Arm: SME V

Cartridge: MIYAJIMA MADAKE

Phonostage: RCM THERIAA

Distributor: **RCM**

Price: basic version 40 000 €, reviewed version 48 000 €

Technical Details

Construction: 3-way, highpass-filtered bassreflex system
Nominal impedance: 4 Ω
Power Handling: 490 W
Dimensions (HxWxD): 124x 24 x 35 cm
Weight: 72 kg

Link do tekstu: [Gauder Akustik Darc 100 English ver.](#)