

Living Voice R25A Floorstanding Loudspeakers

Living Voice loudspeakers, originating from Derbyshire in the United Kingdom, were something I had only encountered at exhibitions and similar audio-focused events until now. They were characterized by a mature and refined sound presentation with extremely high aspirations, which, however, somewhat contrasted with their austere and even simple appearance. Despite the fact that we have not had official representation for this brand in Slovakia until now, these loudspeakers have still found their way into the audio systems of some local audiophiles. Based on personal experience, I can say that they have continued to perform their role more than well to this day.

The Living Voice product lineup is divided into three groups: the ultimate VOX series, the R80 series, and the more traditional Auditorium series. The latter includes a total of five speaker variants (R25A, Avatar R4, IBX-R4, IBX-RW4, and OBX-RW4). I intentionally use the term “variants” because at first glance, the individual models appear almost identical. The key differences lie in their technical construction, tuning, and the drivers used, with the highest model featuring fully separate crossovers housed in independent enclosures. From the current distributor for Living Voice in the Czech and Slovak Republics, analogueatelier.cz, I received the entry-level model from the Auditorium series, the R25A, for testing. This model was first successfully introduced at the High End show in Munich in 2019, marking the company's 25th anniversary – which is also reflected in its name.

However, what I have here today is its modernized and next-generation improved version.

Design & Build Quality

Visually, the R25A speakers appear rather unassuming-in a sea of ultramodern designs, they could easily be overlooked. However, a closer inspection reveals that this is a product crafted with the highest ambitions and an exceptional attention to detail. The cabinet workmanship is exemplary, including mirror-matched veneer pairing for the left and right speakers. Typologically, this is a two-way design featuring two identical mid-bass drivers with a tweeter positioned between them. The drivers are sourced from the renowned Danish manufacturer Scan-Speak. The mid-bass units use lacquered paper cones with a diameter of 170 mm, while the tweeter features an impregnated textile dome with a diameter of 26 mm. The driver layout evokes the D'Appolito configuration, but in this case, it is more accurately a symmetrical driver arrangement (the company refers to it as MTM – midrange, tweeter, midrange), since the tweeter is significantly offset from the vertical axis of the two mid-bass units. An important aspect of this setup is that it inherently determines which speaker is intended for which stereo channel – they are tuned accordingly and must be positioned with the tweeters facing inward toward each other. The rear panel of the speaker features a bi-wiring terminal for connecting speaker cables and a simple bass reflex port. The front panel can be fitted with the included frame covered in acoustically transparent

fabric, though I strongly recommend removing it during listening for optimal performance. The speaker cabinet is placed on a simple black metal stand, which has integrated threads at the bottom for mounting spikes – these, along with opposing cups, are included in the package. Although I initially found this setup somewhat too simple and unsophisticated, I came to appreciate the quick and, more importantly, safe installation of the entire system. I first positioned the stand with the spikes and cups in the desired spot in my listening room and then placed the speaker cabinet on top. In my case, optimal resonance coupling between the speaker and the stand was achieved – following the distributor's recommendation – using eight discs made of a blue plastic compound. These discs effectively stabilized the entire structure while allowing fine adjustments to ensure both parts were perfectly aligned. Any further repositioning or tuning of the speaker must be done with great care to avoid separating the two components, but on my smooth wooden floor, it was exceptionally easy thanks to the polished undersides of the cups.

Listening Experience

These floorstanders truly seem to have a split personality. One side, the outward appearance, is extremely modest, unobtrusive, perhaps even a bit timid. But the other, the essential and defining one, immediately grabs attention with its energetic character, mature expressiveness, assertiveness, and liveliness. During my short-term experience with the R25A, I often had to subconsciously remind myself of this contrast,

as I was constantly seeing them in front of me. And it was precisely this combination – the settled, understated visual impression versus what they delivered sonically – that kept astonishing me! With all serious music genres, the Living Voice speakers offered an immensely engaging and thrilling performance, enriched by the presence of fine details as well as prominent, resonant musical elements – all with a strong overall sense of rhythm and pacing. Since all of these attributes are integral to what defines top-tier audio reproduction, you can probably imagine the joy and anticipation with which I kept sitting down in front of them.

Music Tested

Given the high sensitivity of these speakers, the manufacturer recommends pairing them with a tube amplifier or a solid-state amplifier operating in Class A – and based on my experience, I fully support this suggestion. Both amplifier types allow the speakers to unlock their full potential, especially in terms of subtle, three-dimensional, and tonally accurate detail rendering. It's not that a standard transistor amplifier wouldn't be a suitable match – they certainly can be – but in my case, a tube amp seemed to give them more reason to perform with joy and greater emotional depth. The sound became fuller, juicier, richer, and somehow more dramatic. At the same time – likely due to their monitor-like design – the speakers proved relatively forgiving when it came to room acoustics and didn't demand pinpoint positioning within the room or strict adherence to an

optimal listening spot. Both of these traits are excellent indicators of how effortlessly these speakers can integrate into a user's home environment. A favorite recording of mine, Carmen with Maria Callas (conducted by Georges Pretre, released by Warner Classics), lit up and enlivened my listening room in a splendid way through the R25A – something I absolutely did not expect from such relatively modest floorstanders. The presentation was rich and cohesive, with no hint of smearing. The top octaves were smooth yet assertive enough. Vocal intelligibility was exemplary, and the tonal accuracy of the voice was superb. This is where the benefits of a two-way design truly shine – the precise monitor-style tuning offers incredible clarity and definition, even of the finest nuances. What surprised me most, however, considering the speakers' compact dimensions, was their volume potential and the scale of the soundstage they delivered. I genuinely didn't expect this level of presence and energy from such unassuming speakers.

Further Listening Tests

Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto featuring Sviatoslav Richter (conducted by H. von Karajan with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, released by Melodiya) was a lucky find – I picked it up for just 3 euros in a music store, undeterred by the telling label "Made in USSR." A performance with a legendary pianist under Karajan's baton? That couldn't be bad, even if it tried! And I was right – it's a magnificent recording. The grand piano is rendered down to the finest tremors and

reverberations; the notes flow through the space, at times in picturesque ripples, at others in powerful surges. The melodies are supported by solo woodwinds that seem to emerge from a mysterious distance. The orchestra plays with a hard, raw edge – unmistakably “Karajan-esque” – with razor-sharp entries that brilliantly contrast with the piano’s romantic tone. The R25A speakers manage to portray this musical and dynamic whirlwind with poise, calm, and composure – yet also with escalating passion and intensity. Once again, a contrast that’s both unusual and incredibly desirable! Saint-Saens’ Symphony No. 3 “Organ” (Michael Stern conducting the Kansas City Symphony, Reference Recordings, 45 RPM) is a well-known test piece for pushing the limits of an audio system. After all, capturing the full breadth of a large symphony orchestra, complete with piano and full-range pipe organ, is no easy feat. The symphony features a cyclic recurrence and variation of its main motif, making it both memorable and accessible. The organ finale-bolstered by timpani, piano, and brass fanfares at the end of each phrase, alongside an intensifying rhythm-is immensely captivating to listen to, but brutally demanding for any audio chain. Maintaining clarity and cohesion here is absolutely essential. For the compact R25A speakers, one might assume this is too tall an order – but the opposite proved true. In a relatively nearfield setup, they maintained full control over the musical action while delivering a sonically captivating and even physically palpable experience – the music could be felt in the listener’s chest. The organ came through alive, rich, and majestic, yet with a smooth top end. Beneath it, the timpani thundered, and suddenly, like lightning, crashing cymbals exploded with

such force that it made me flinch. Outstanding!

Conclusion

The Living Voice R25A are exquisitely tuned loudspeakers that allow their user to reach genuinely high levels of faithful sound reproduction. They excel in the rare balance of monitor-like precision in detail rendering, combined with natural tonal richness and an unexpectedly compact yet powerful soundstage. Their overall presentation is refined, dignified – one might even say “gentlemanly” – steering clear of any superficial, flashy, or gimmicky sonic effects. In this respect, their understated, even shy design perfectly mirrors their musical philosophy. Yet in all other performance aspects, they go so far beyond what their modest appearance suggests, it’s almost hard to believe!