

Raidho Acoustics X-1 Loudspeaker

by A N T H O N Y U K E - R I S H , C A M B R I D G E M A S S A C H U S E T S
in L O U D S P E A K E R S



Creating a one off, great speaker is difficult. Creating a range, a family of great speakers is harder still. The basics of fine speaker design has to be there, of course, but an eye and especially an ear to tune a 'house' sound within boxes various takes great skill.

In the last few years, Wilson Audio has done it to near perfection, and, after a longtime house sound that did not float my boat, Focal/JM Labs created its incredible 'Utopia' line. Toronto's Hansen Audio and Minnesota's Magneplanar are at the top of the page, too. Add Danish company, Raidho Acoustics to this short list.

I've reviewed most of the Focal line and now the same with Raidho. Raidho's team began production with its C and D lines, D being the most expensive (28K and up). Hearing both, I wondered at times why pay extra for the wonderful D line when the C sounds so good? Well, just like everything worth having in life, the steps to get to an audiophile's decision are long, tedious, and can be painful.

A good dealer will ask your budget, listening habits, room logistics, etc, and point you in the right direction. If your room is not too large and budget limited (in audiophile terms), then happy news. Raidho has produced a speaker for you, too.

Getting the Raidho sound (more about this below) from a small monitor must have taken some doing. They began with their proprietary ceramic driver (this thing is bullet proof and sounds divine — their upgraded diamond driver in the D Series has to be heard to be believed) and added their ribbon tweeter. 'Uh oh', you say? That old chestnut of matching standard drivers and ribbon tweeters.



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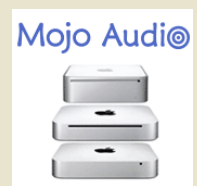
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Let's step back fifteen years. Do you remember ProAc? The great British speaker company founded by Stewart Tyler in 1979. He made some of the greatest monitor-style (not to be confused with studio monitor) loudspeakers (the Response One and Tablette, to name but two). Then, after years of getting raves in the press for his house sound, he switched to ribbon tweeters. Kerplunk! To my ears, a huge ProAc fanboy, the speakers never sounded the same. A failure for the great man. Trust me, I tried to love them. 'It's not you, it's me'. We broke up.

Jump forward to the present day. No worries whatsoever with the Raidho ribbon tweeter and its relationship with its circular brother. Totally seamless. With typical brilliant Raidho voicing of the crossover, you'll be hard pressed to tell what's going on technically. All you'll be concerned with is the music. And, what music this diminutive masterpiece produces.

Setup

As the X-1s had been used gently as a new demo at my local audio store, they were (thankfully) broken in. You can purchase the accompanying stand (pictured above and below), they match the speakers perfectly and boast the same mirror-finish, piano black. All Raidho speakers like a toe in of about 10 degrees. I complied.



One of the best piano black speaker finishes in the business.

I'm a Transparent Audio cable fan and subbed my entry level set for a pair of single wired, Transparent Reference speaker cables. Yes, they are brilliant. And, expensive. I also have a set of Antipodes Reference on order. I'll report back to you about our cable shootout. Note that Raidho uses Nordost for all all internal wiring.

House Sound

The Holy Grail of great sound across a range of box speakers as captured by the designers at Raidho is instructive. Much like Wilson Audio and Magico (who let the ball slip ever so slightly with their larger speakers), Raidho's drivers are proprietary, an audiophile term with a large variance of definitions. For some, it means 'I receive the driver from one of the mainstream (read Scandinavian) manufacturers, change

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a wire, et voila!'. 'My design'. Some make major changes, but companies like Raidho design and manufacture in house. The care shows. It takes a lot of acumen, time and capital to produce such drivers, let alone manufacturing and harmonizing with ceramic, diamond dust and ribbons.

The sound profile of Raidho Acoustics is right on the street where I live. Beautifully clear, wide and deep sound stages, superb imaging (even on the largest speaker), no coloration that I can hear, super dynamic range, eye watering timbral accuracy, and, most of all, they're coherent. As the boxes get larger, coherence is very difficult to achieve. Just like conversation between two interesting couples at a dinner party, sparkling and understandable — add two more couples and things get a little more confusing. Same with drivers. That the Raidho gang manage it so beautifully says a lot about Danish personality. Danes are forthright, don't suffer fools gladly, and say exactly what's on their minds, but in the most self-effacing and charming way.

So, how does the starter Raidho X-1 rate in their range? As a 'monitor', it has a 'handicap', or so people assume. So small, so cute, so 'little' — an oft used descriptor by audiophile writers — 'what a great, "little" speaker'. Talk about damning with faint praise. This speaker will receive no apologia.



Heard at my local dealer, I was drawn to the wide dynamic range coming from such a small frame. It had heft and weight, but not slam. The X-1 is rated (very conservatively) down to 80Hz, but usable low frequencies 'felt' lower. As a remarkably accurate piece of equipment with very fine tolerances, the X-1 is very attuned to electronics and the vagaries contained within. Your Raidho dealer will match you up correctly if needed.

Like all the Raidhos, the X-1's midrange is hypnotic. Add an upper tessitura that seems to have no end coupled with very tight and clear bass, and the total soundscape is magnificent. It images like a demon and like many monitors, the soundstage is has wonderful depth. Yet, it's the 'speed' of the drivers that really wows. Nothing escapes. It's like an audiophile black hole for leading edge transients (high hats, latin percussion, and resin attacks on strings). Of course, you'll hear things that you've not heard before (I heard for the first time the slightest cough

from the very back of a recording studio floating innocuously in the soundstage on a recording heard hundreds of times through many speakers), but it's the way you hear them. Fast, fast. And, wait 'till you hear the initial strike of mallets on timpani.

As I was leaving the store with the speakers, my dealer said quietly, 'you may need more power'. This lady knows of what she speaks. My Audio Research Corporation VS110 Stereo Amplifier is a very fine amp and drives the speakers well (86dB efficiency), but the store's more powerful Jeff Rowland Design Group amps drove them to heavenly heights.

My Audio Research danced and sparkled with them, but the \$7.00 Naxos gem of Vaughan Williams' Sinfonia Antartica (No. 7) with the Bournemouth SO and Kees Bakels almost caused a scene. This is one of the most demanding recordings in my collection, both as bass hammer and massive orchestral volume. The ARC VS110 with 100 a side handled it quite ably, but with a little less 'ease' than I'd heard with the 200 watt a side Jeff Rowland amplifier. No matter what a dealer or manufacturer will tell you, 86dB efficiency can be a hell of an ask. All other CDs I listened to, no power problems noted.

Disc rotation included the ubiquitous: Shelby Lynn, Harry Belafonte, Muddy Waters, Doug MacLeod — you all know why. Additionally, Toots Thielemans – The Brasil Project, Vol. 2 and Pat Metheny's The Road to You were used, both of which stretch the bass response. The lowest octave is missing, but the clarity is undeniable. That said, you'll hear string bass clearly and with authority. Black Sabbath fans may want to look elsewhere.



Front baffle detail.

Just when I thought I'd put the musical portion of the review to bed, I heard something that really surprised me. I'm sure it was coincidence, kismet, what have you, but it was there and has to be reported.

Stay with me, here. If you leave the first finger of the left hand down on middle D on the flute, it does not vent the flute properly and 'thickens' up the tone. It's a common mistake with young flute players and jazz doublers, where the first finger on any sax is always depressed. But, there it was, heard by me for the first time on John

Pizzarelli's Bossa Nova 'The Waters of March' cut. Over dubbed alto flute as played by a sax player. And, clearly resolved through the Raidhos. It had me smiling and loving these speakers.

Conclusion

Let's be clear about loving these speakers. At the house, I listened. When I was working, I wanted to listen. When out of the house, I was thinking about them. They are that wonderful. And, it is not infatuation. I love the design, I love the look, I love the sound.

'So, if you love them so much, why no "Audiophilia Star"?'. Good question. They are limited in scope and size and the bottom octave is missing. A 'Star' denotes a well nigh perfect product, a trifecta of design, sound and value. The sound is there. It's fantastic. But, with no very low bass and coming in at plus US\$8000 (with stands), they are expensive for a speaker with such a small footprint.

However, you will be purchasing loudspeakers from a first class company with a record of innovation and success. The Raidho Acoustics X-1s will hold their value, you'll have a good warranty and they will give many years of musical and audiophile enjoyment. So, no Audiophilia Star in my role as Editor but as reviewer, they are now a permanent fixture in my home. As such, they receive my personal highest recommendation.

The Raidho Acoustics X-1 Loudspeaker

Manufactured by Raidho Acoustics
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Denmark

Tel.: +45 98 24 76 77

[website](#)

[email](#)

Source: [Distributor loan](#)

Price: CAD\$7300 (\$899 for matching stands)

Specifications

Size: 145x320x230 mm

Weight: 8.0 kg

Freq. response: 80Hz-50kHz

Impedance: > 6 ohm

Crossover: 3.5 kHz 2. order

Enclosure: Vented design, port in front panel

Drive units: 1 sealed ribbon tweeter, 1 x 100 mm ceramic driver

Finish: Black piano

Amplification: >30watts

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