

The Amphion Argon7LS

TEST13 -07-2018 by Alek Rachwald



We test loudspeakers, the sound of which surpasses run-of-the-mill solutions. Even more so than their elegant design.

The Finnish manufacturer of Amphion loudspeakers occasionally finds its way onto our website. Not very often though, for the Company does not tend to surprise with lots of novelties, and their products catalogue changes only occasionally. Thus, introduction of a new model (or rather, if you look at the name, a new version of the existing model) seems like a good opportunity to once again present to our readers the new product from this superb manufacturer.

Amphion does not manufacture a lot, but its products are lavish! Their motto seems to be *very-good sound at a reasonable price*, and personally I like this approach much better than flooding the market with mass-produced stuff, of which we have too much already. So far, I have had the opportunity to test smaller models of loudspeakers by this Finnish manufacturer, but this time I got a real windfall: rather-large floor sets, the second model from the top of their range, and, as it seems, also extremely well suited to my amplification and to my listening room. It would be a sin to reject such a proposition!



I have no intention to say again what my fellow editors have already said, so I am not going to elaborate on the history of the firm. The founder, Anssi Hyvönen, also prefers to talk about music and emotions rather than about details and technical solutions. Behind Amphion products, like behind many of the best Scandinavian engineering products, there is not only a specific technological solution, but also a philosophy. The essence of the Amphion's philosophy is this one sentence - *"Music is Everyman's Right"*. To stay on the market, while keeping in line with this philosophy, one must provide a state-of-the-art product - otherwise it would not turn out serious. And this is the mission of the Amphion Company. How does it work in practice? I cannot speak for the world, but can say that I have never heard an unfavourable opinion about this brand's speakers. In order to make a statement that music and access to it is a human right, one must feel the power to follow up on this principle. The Finns in Amphion apparently found in themselves such power. Please, God, give us more people with such noble ambitions...

Design

Amphion Argon7LS are rather large loudspeakers, but their design is neat and ingenious. The narrow boxes are high, but the classic symmetrical configuration of the loudspeaker units means that a normal-height chair is enough to listen from. The configuration of the loudspeakers clearly relates to the well-known *d'Appolito solution*, in its most-classic MTM version (midbass-tweeter-midbass). In addition to the loudspeakers' layout, the Argon models also feature, typical of d'Appolito design, low frequency of division (1600Hz), which means that the key part of the diameter is processed by the tweeter. All this should result in an improved directional pattern on the vertical plane. In addition, to improve

consistency over time, and to increase the efficiency of the tweeter, the latter is placed in a not-very-large but clearly visible tube. All these features, based on just the visual overview (with no sound), make us expect coherent sound with above-average stereo effect.

Very well, carefully designed, implementation of the metal loudspeakers. A great solution with passive membranes, plus the extremely elegant design of the boxes, which will perfectly fit in with any living space.

However, the real assets of these loudspeakers do not end on their fronts. At the back there is a surprise: two passive membranes, which have replaced the bass-reflex ports present in the previous model of these column speakers. The membranes are small (which is due to the width of the box), so it is not a stadium-like solution in the old SF-Extrema mode, but still, there are two of them... It should be interesting to listen to the low tones of the Argons. Below the passive membranes there is also a pair of interestingly designed loudspeaker terminals, sourced against the trend not from the rich WBT boys, but from Argento Audio. Again Scandinavia; this is a fine product from a Danish specialist provider. How it all works will come out in the wash, but the single terminals made it possible to connect the EWA LS-25 cables without jumpers, which is always appreciated.

The loudspeaker columns are mounted on black plinths, slightly wider than the columns themselves, with screwed-in spikes. This is generally standard, but in the case of Amphion products we are dealing, as usual, with high-quality craftsmanship.

The columns I received for review were covered with natural wood veneer in the walnut colour. This is an optional finish as standard you get slightly lower-priced white or black boxes. It's also worth mentioning that the low-mid range speakers (Seasa aluminium cones), as well as the titanium dome, are permanently covered with elegant meshes in the style of the ceramic Accuton loudspeakers. It looks good, acoustically it is probably neutral (or rather taken under consideration while tuning), and it protects against the wild ideas of cats and children. Speaking of which, a bit of a pity that the membranes at the back have not been subjected to the same insulation. But it can be assumed that the back is not as popular with the home Jumanji menagerie, as it is not so easy to reach there.



The parameters of the loudspeaker columns provided by the manufacturer are impressive, since they declare equalled impedance at the level of 4Ω , and a high efficiency of 93dB (especially in the case of the classic loudspeaker columns in basically closed cases). If this is so, my Leben CS-600 with its 30 Watts and the system of power output matching the impedance of the receivers, should wag the Amphions like a cartoon character wags a sword. *"Will you believe, Don Rumat, that I can go on like this for hours with no effort at all?"* - I have seen it somewhere... How the wagging will go I will know in a minute, and you are invited to join me. Since the descriptive part is behind us, let's move on and listen.

How does it sound?

Starting with the ease of control and coordination with the tube amplifiers: it is not difficult, certainly not, although it was easier for Leben with Spondors. To achieve a similar sound level, I had to turn the stroke potentiometer in the CS-600 by one or two teeth further clockwise (even though the impedance selector moved correctly to the 4Ω position). Quite likely the efficiency of these sets is slightly overstated on paper. Nevertheless, the Amphions are still loudspeakers which can be driven by a tube with no difficulty, for the main knob, even during the biggest excesses, never went beyond twelve o'clock.

I have already got used to the loudspeakers flat like a wooden board in the greater part of the bandwidth, and slightly rolled up at the edges. The 1/2 Spondor is a long-standing model of studio neutrality in my home hi-fi. Having such a background, it is not difficult to identify the specificity of any other loudspeaker columns. With the Amphions one notices right away a more-extended and slightly stronger bass - no rolling up, for sure.

The bass range of these loudspeakers makes a very-good impression, in terms of both quality and its presence in relation to the rest of the bandwidth. A drop of life in the low registers makes listening more engaging, and the subcutaneous rhythm of the bass becomes more audible, and this is good. Bass never dominated, it did not push to the front, but it gave a good drive. It was pleasant, fast, but not showy. Deep but not absurdly abundant, and under control. I can see some signs of tweaking up, but it is a great compromise in relation to the ideal, which for me will always be a large membrane with a small stroke. Passive membranes on the rear must have had something to do with it. Listening to jazz ensembles with double bass or piano, and drums, was emotional, with a nerve and with life. Sometimes it turns out that if designer is competent, the 30cm in bass is not really necessary. Pity, - we don't see it very often.



The sound of these loudspeakers is, in my opinion, natural and organic. There's no less romance and softness (when needed), than with a Sendor textile dome and polypropylenes. And yet here the whole bandwidth is rendered in metal, with the key parts of the vocals supported by a titanium dome. Considering what I heard during tests, it does seem really unusual, and for this sound one feels like hugging every guy and girl from Seas. No aggression, nothing unnatural, just beautiful sound - in the diameter - even lyrical. Climbing up the bandwidth like a cat up a ladder, the sound reaches, at some point, very-high tones, in certain circles called "trembles." They are subordinate to the general character of the sound of the loudspeakers, which means they present a "compelling neutrality." In no way do they push themselves onto the poster, neither do they try to dominate the message (it would not be the Finnish style), but they are

present everywhere, where they are supposed to be, in the similar amount as I have with Spondors. However, they are of better quality.

In my opinion, the titanium Seas (or at least this application) wins here, with the silk Scan. The sound is sonorous, contains more silver, and is very satisfying. The tweeter range is present not in a pushy way; rather with class. Should this be the motto of our politicians, we would be living in a different, undoubtedly better world.

I made my first observations with Joe McQueen's album "*Ten at 86*," recorded on the IsoMike system, released on gold - full professionalism and sophisticated pleasure. To make the loudspeakers work harder for a change, I gave them Erik Serra's music (a compilation of the composer's film scores). Electronics, bass, space, twanging and buzzing, which is a big challenge for any loudspeaker. And yet with this album the Amphions have stretched their wings even further. Power and subtlety, these are the words for today. The music of the album "*La musique des films - Eric Serra*" is diverse, full of dynamic jumps, strong beats, and long sonorities. Amphions have rendered all this with enthusiasm and professionalism. Enchanted, I listened to how my room was being filled with music. The album is full of stereo effects, which these loudspeakers rendered beautifully, and even low tones were spatially varied, also in terms of height, which was particularly impressive. I should not even mention the virtual sources going beyond the loudspeakers, the acoustic system of transducers, and the minimal width of the loudspeakers, favour a good stereo effect.

My perception of this album was the feeling of power, airiness, space. Of course, I listened to the whole thing. Still, writing about the equipment is a labour-intensive job. I will add, to supplement the information about stereo, that the best effect I had was with the loudspeakers directed at the listener. It is probably a matter of these tweeter tubes, that with such a layout the stereo effect was optimal, the sources were stable and the stage was wide.

During the listening, I also used an analogue gramophone as a source, and among others, there was also a two-record album by Cat Stevens. The recording (and Kuzma's insert as well) did not save on the high tones, but still the sound was full, and I listened to it with real pleasure. The Amphions (together with the gramophone by J. Sikora, Kuzma's arm, and the Abyssound preamplifier) showed the specificity of this recording, but did not do it any harm. The voice of Stevens (originally Steven Demetre Georgiu, aka Yusuf Islam), high and a bit hoarse, was rendered in a perfect way, and his "Lady d'Arbanville" squeezed tears out of the eyes of even the old sweats. Listening to these loudspeakers also helped me to decide on the correct position of the gramophone arm, which I was not

sure about before. The Amphions, although friendly and enjoyable in sound, are what I call clear loudspeakers. With this album, once again, the phenomenal stereo effect of these sets came out.



The "Sevens", like any good loudspeaker columns, do not unify the recordings. Serra sounded sonorous and powerful, Stevens first of all fresh, and the Allman Brothers (*"Brothers and Sisters"*) unfortunately quite grey. This album is like that though: a wall of sound, but a lot of plasterboard in it. You could listen to it, but there was a feeling of a lack of power. In this situation, I have added the power. Two teeth further on in the amp, a pipe with a good tobacco, and the gun metal roared (or rather guitars), and the sound of the black disc carried me out, into completely new fields of meditation... I spent a lot of time with these loudspeakers, but it wasn't enough for me.

Summary

To briefly sum up. The new Argon7LS Amphions are great pieces of equipment. Very-well, carefully designed, implementation of metal loudspeaker units, a great solution with passive membranes, plus the extremely elegant design of the boxes, which will fit into any living space. In my case, the columns were operating in a 25-square-metre room, but this is rather the lower limit, and I am sure people with living rooms of 30-40 square metres will also be satisfied.

The sound of these speakers is even-more striking, and above average, than their design. Finnish minimalism plus musical momentum, combining almost studio-like neutrality and fidelity to the music, with authentic listening pleasure. I could not recommend more these loudspeakers than by telling the truth - I want to have them!

Verdict The Amphion Argon7LS

- **Sound quality**
★★★★★
- **Quality / Price**
★★★★★
- **Craftsmanship**
★★★★★
- **Potential**
★★★★★

Pros Great sound, universal parameters, elegant design

Cons None

In general The distinguishing features of the Amphion Argon7LS loudspeakers are Finnish minimalism together with the musical momentum and almost studio-like neutrality.

Overall rating



PRODUCT

Amphion Argon7LS

TYPE

Floor loudspeaker columns

PRICE

PLN 21.990 (pair)

WEIGHT

30 kg (one)

DIMENSIONS (W × H × D)

191 1160 305mm

DISTRIBUTION

Audio Klan

www.audioklan.pl