

# AN OPEN WINDOW TO MUSIC

South African Vivid Kaya 45 has a look like no other speakers I know of, but it was the sound that really made me gasp.

Text: Roy Ervin Solstad / original article: <https://view.joomag.com/stereo-stereoplussno-2-2021/0921484001615901831?short&>

What is the most iconic speaker design you know about? Is it Quad's ESL-57, the electrostatics that were launched almost 65 years ago? Or is it Tannoy's huge Westminster with its dual concentric, where the treble sits in the middle of the large bass and midrange driver? Maybe it is the Bose 901 with its many small drivers, or the two-enclosure Wilson Watt / Puppy?

All those speakers can rightly be called legendary and iconic, but for me there is one speaker design that stands out from everything else. The first time I saw Bowers & Wilkins' Nautilus speaker, I just stood there yawning.

The Nautilus was introduced more than 25 years ago, and it looked like a huge snail shell with some long rudders sticking out behind the treble and midrange elements. I have admittedly never heard them play, but they are the type of speaker design that can be seen as a masterpiece in industrial design. Later I learned that the design of the Nautilus speakers was not made to look beautiful or special. The design had a single task, to get the speaker to sound the best possible.

The man behind Nautilus was Laurence Dickie, who worked at Bowers & Wilkins' laboratory. He had taken his electronics education at the University of Southampton in the South of England, but thinks the education became too technical. He himself had grown up with Quad tube amplifiers and Tannoy speakers, so his interest in sound came early.

However, Dickie did not stay at B&W. It was actually due to one of the company's owners, Robert Trunz, who emigrated to South Africa in 1996. There, Trunz met the three gentlemen, Philip Guttentag and Bruce and Dee Gessner, who had previously run sales of high-end hi-fi in South Africa. Now they wanted to build high-end speakers instead. Trunz advised the three to bring in Laurence Dickie to design the speaker elements rather than buying OEM products from already established element manufacturers.

With Guttentag on the sales side and Dickie as designer, Vivid Audio became a reality, and in 2004 came the first speakers, Vivid B1 and Vivid K1. Vivid in 2008 launched its top model Giya G1, which later was followed by three smaller versions, G2, G3 and G4. The Giya series has brought with it some of the snail shell design, and is often a great success at hifi fairs around the world.

The latest series, called Kaya, launched a few years ago and is also the most affordable series. The series has three floor standing and one standmount speaker. The subject of this test is the Kaya 45, the middle of the three floor-standing models.

---

## Kaya45

While most speaker manufacturers make their cabinets out of wood derived sheet material and either veneer, cover them with vinyl or varnish them, Vivid moulds their cabinets. It provides a far better opportunity to create exactly the shape of the cabinets that is proven to provide the greatest acoustic gain. The cabinet itself is made from a composite material that is reinforced with glass in a sandwich construction, where the thickness of the cabinet also varies according to where it gives the greatest effect with either thinner or thicker cabinet walls. The reason is that you reduce the weight where it can be done, and reinforce the cabinet where it is needed, so that you reduce vibrations in the panel. Here it is obvious that someone has thought and researched what works.

The speaker itself stands on as many as six spikes, which is due to the rounded base. This means, of course, that putting them on spike protectors is more difficult than if you only have three or four, but with a little help, it goes relatively well. The round and slim shape of the speakers means that they do not seem large in the room, even though they extend just over 115 centimeters above the floor, a width of almost 30 centimeters and a depth of almost 40 centimeters. The weight is no more than 25 kilos, so they are not very difficult to handle.

In total, there are four drivers in each speaker. A 26 millimeter aluminium tweeter, a ten centimeter cone-shaped midrange, also in aluminium and a five-inch bass driver on each side of the cabinet. The cross over frequencies are 300 and 3000 hertz while Vivid states the frequency response to be from 37 to 25.000 hertz (-6dB).

The nominal impedance is 6 ohms, but dips down to 2,8 ohms. The sensitivity is stated at 87 decibels, but measurements made by it American hi-fi magazine Stereophile, may indicate that they actually measure both better and worse with 2,4 Ohms dip at 122 hertz and 90 decibels sensitivity, respectively. Vivid states that an amplifier with a minimum of 25 watts should be enough to power the speakers. The speaker terminals are located at the very bottom, almost below the cabinet. It is a bit knotty, but since it is only possible with single wiring and the terminals point straight back, it is easy with banana plugs. Spades should probably be well angled to get in place.

It's not just the enclosure that is special with Vivid speakers in general and the Kaya 45 in particular. Behind the treble and midrange elements, there is also what Vivid calls the Tapered Tube, ie a pipe that goes all the way to the back of the cabinet. Both the bass and midrange drivers also have Super Flux Magnets with a large opening in the centre. It allows the air from the driver surface to go undisturbed straight back into the absorbent tapered tube behind the driver. Vivid believes it removes both reflections and resonances and provides more transparent and clear sound.

---

## The sound

The gods must know that they have succeeded in just that, because I think I have never heard anything like this transparent sound in my own living room. I was simply completely captivated by how airy, dissolved and transparent the sound is. Vivid suggests that music is the space between the notes, and I have never heard that space as large here at home as with Vivid Kaya 45.

This also applies to a large extent to holography. The sound releases the speakers completely, and spreads to enormous depth and width with precision which is absolutely magical. This magnitude and clarity are the same in the entire frequency range, but without there being a type of "false" transparency through extra level up the treble. Admittedly, there is a lot of energy upwards, but the sound is extremely well balanced. There is no downside to either the light or the dark. Here it is excellent balance and a wonderful homogeneity. One thing is the air and clarity, but the Kaya 45 delivers so many details that I have hardly heard the like. When the speakers have a snap in the midrange that is reminiscent of my own reference speakers from PMC, it is difficult to remain clinically objective. The dynamics are absolutely wonderful, both at the macro and micro level. I just sat and loved music, and found music I had not heard in years and days.

The bass also has a very good draft and lots of details. The speakers do not go super deep, but in normal rooms and in most of the music, this is actually all you need. Not even when I played Yello did I miss what happens down to 20 hertz. The fact that Vivid uses two five-inches also means that the bass is super fast, and thus is in line with the speed and openness of the midrange and the treble.

---

## Conclusion

Vivid Kaya 45 is a special speaker. It stands out both in terms of design and sound. If you are in the market for a speaker in this price range, these must be on the list of speakers you should hear before you decide. Chances are that you too will be totally rocked, as I was!

---

## EQUIPMENT USED:

- Preamplifier: Musical Innovation MI23.5
- Power amplifier: Vera Audio P150 / 600
- Turntable: Bergmann Galder
- Tonearm: Bergmann Odin
- Pickup: Lyra Etna
- Turntable amplifier / riaa stage: Burmester 100
- Streamer: Aurender NIOOC
- Digital converter CD / SACD player: Esoteric K-01X
- Signal cables: Vovox Sonorus Direct, Blue Jeans Cable Belden 1800F, Lilleeng Cables
- Speaker cables: In-Acoustics LS4004 AIR
- Power cables: Lessloss DFPC Signature, Supra LoRad
- Power cleaner: Supra MD-08DC
- Tweaks: Audiophile Vibration Control, Sonic Design

- Acoustics: RPG Acoustis Broadsorber, GIK Acoustics Corner Bass Traps, Eli Acoustics Fussor 3D
- Rack: USM Haller
- Other: Own 16A-course stereo system

## SPECIFICATION:

- Type: Three-way floor-standing bass reflex speaker
- Cabinet material: Glass-reinforced sandwich construction with Sorick core
- Treble: 26 millimeter Tapered Tube Loaded metal dome
- Middle tone: 100 millimeter Tapered Tube Loaded metal cone
- Bass: 2 x 125 millimeter metal cone driver
- Sensitivity: 87 decibels
- Nominal impedance: 6 Ohm
- Minimum impedance: 2,80 hm
- Frequency response: 37 - 25.000 Hertz
- Sharing frequencies: 300 and 3.000 Hertz
- Recommended amplifier power: 25-500 watts
- Size: 115,3 x 29,8 x 38,5 cm (HxWxD)
- Weight: 25 kilos per piece
- Finish: Black piano lacquer, pearl white and matt gray (other colors can be specially ordered)

<p><b>WHAT WE LIKE:</b> Shockingly open and detailed rendering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Fantastic holography</li> <li>· Incredibly good dynamics</li> </ul> <p><b>WHAT WE DON'T LIKE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Does not play the deepest bass</li> <li>· Not everyone will embrace the design</li> </ul> <p><b>STEREO+ OPINION:</b> you will be looking a long time for a more transparent music reproduction.</p>	<p><b>CHARACTER</b></p> <p>Ease of use 9 Quality impression / design 8 Performance / price 9</p> <p>Overall: 8.9</p>	<p><b>VIVID AUDIO KAYA 45</b> PRICE: Kr. 180.00, - DISTRIBUTOR: Norsk Audio Teknikk LINK: <a href="http://www.norskaudioteknikk.no">www.norskaudioteknikk.no</a></p>
--	--	--

The original article was published in Stereo+. For those who like Norwegian:  
<https://view.joomag.com/stereo-stereoplussno-2-2021/0921484001615901831?short&>