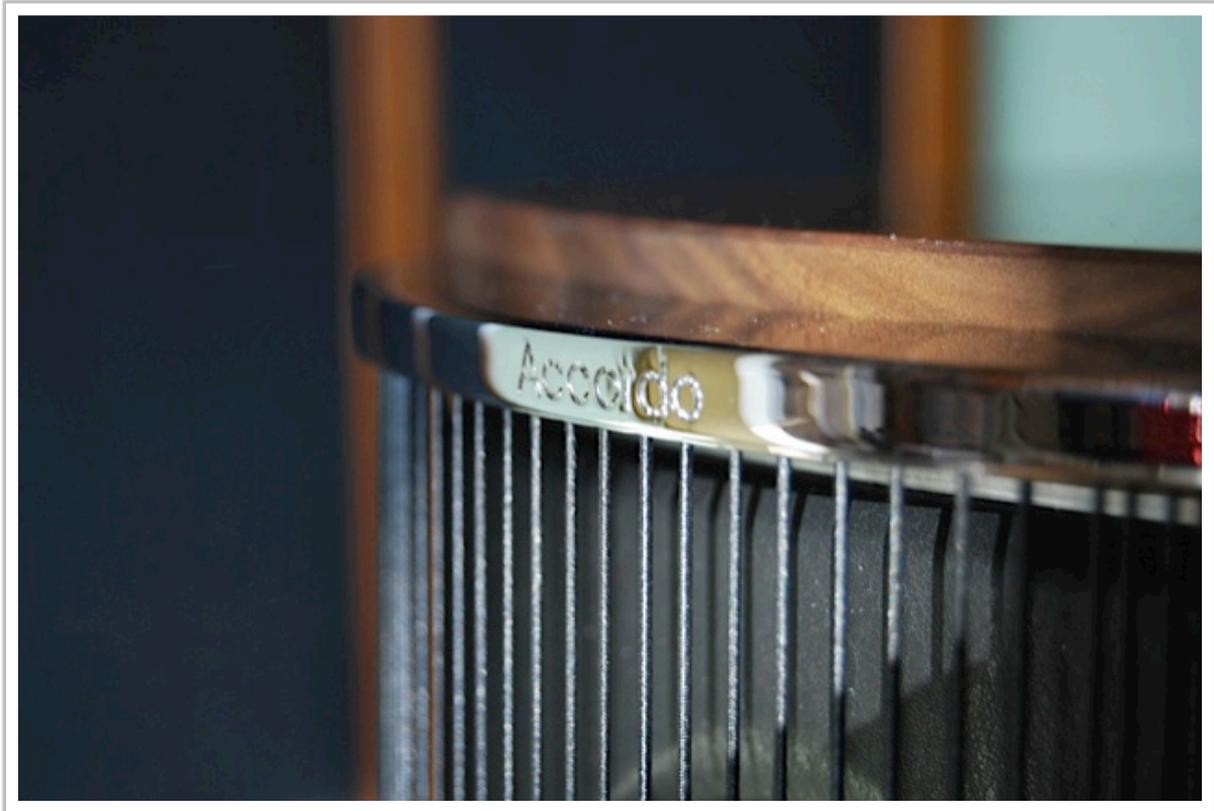


Franco Serblin Accordo  
test - review exclusive world first  
Legend, Artisan and object of art.



Accordo

I had this almost finished for quite a while, but due to other things it have to wait in the review slot. Thanks for all the emails you send in.

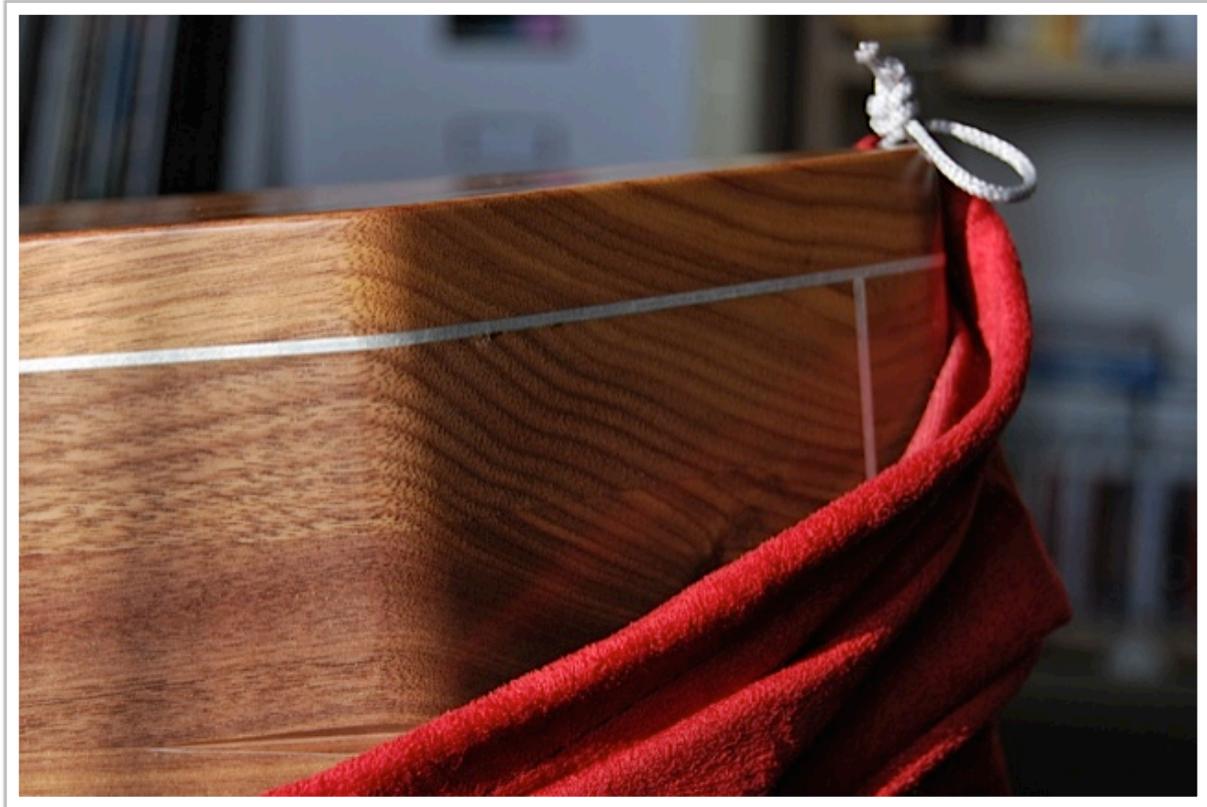
### **Art of love**

Franco Serblin needs no introduction. He's a synonym not only for Italian speaker design, but also as for one the finest speaker artisans of modern days. His impact is not strictly limited to the boundaries of audio, but extend to interior design, architecture etc. This is a man with a broader view. Just take a quick Google search about his past and current creations and you'll get the deeper picture his impact into the environmental spaces of domestic, work and public living landscapes.

Many know Franco for his famous Stradivari loudspeakers, a true works of art. Being shaped as a two lutes jointed in mirror like design they represent one of the most beautiful speakers ever built.

Those who know and followed Franco's work closely over the years

learned by heart, that he always preferred small monitor speakers. Just remember Snell's, Sonus Faber Extrema, Electa Amators, original Guarneri and Minimas.



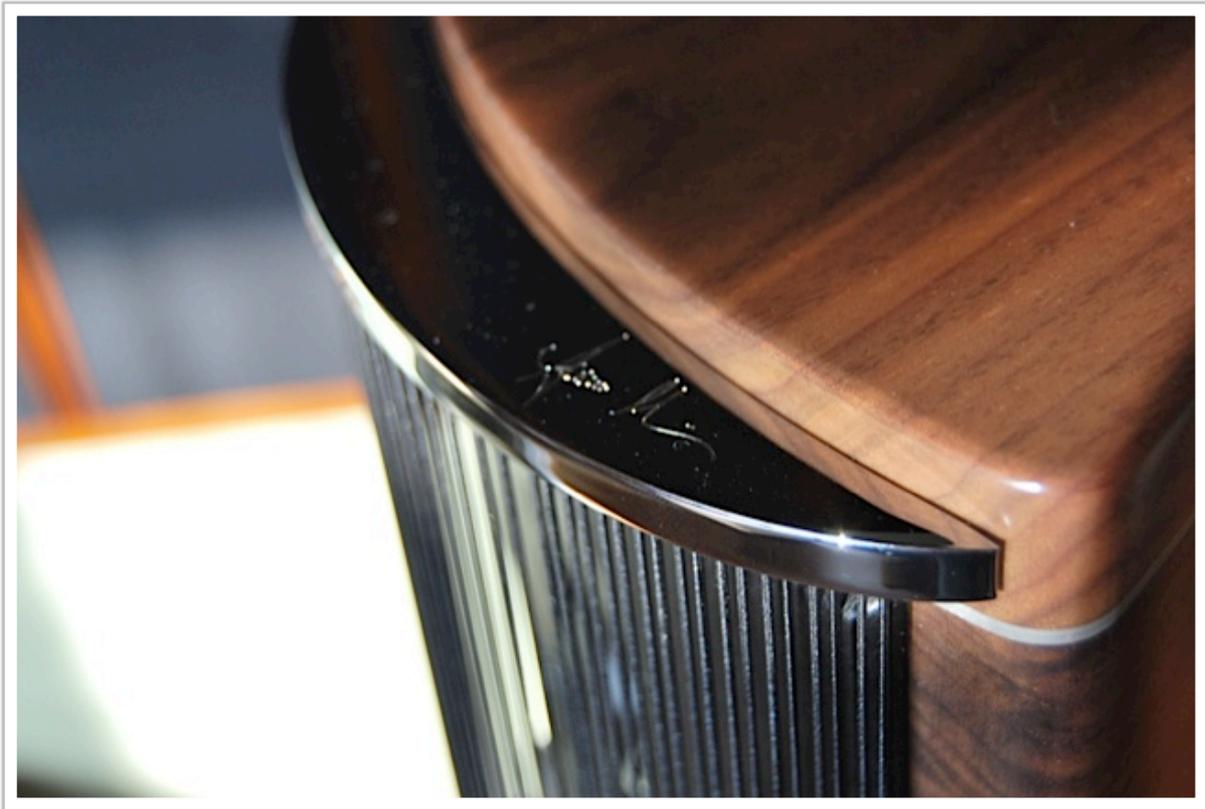
Unpacking

After his highly rewarded Ktema stand mount speakers, his next artistic fruit is a two way monitor speaker called Accordo, that translates as musical arrangement or musical chord. The whole design concept of Accordo translate very good as a complete harmonically captured object.

### **Past and present**

I'm not sole in my feelings, that Sonus Faber lost a lot when Mr. Serblin left the company. They shifted to some other, new and so-called modern classical direction. As if they wanted to keep up with the worlds rushing's in last decade and I'm not sure, that is right path for both world and audio. We might say, that people and tastes changes and I can agree, but this better ad hoc. Sonus Faber Amati Futura and Guarneri Evolution are a new breed of Sonus Faber direction. While their appearance is striking and Sonus Faber still holds the unrivaled title for the best speakers finishes in industry, they sonic character have changed to what it become a kind of an contemporary high-end standard; dynamics, resolution, high-tech etc. These are all good attributes when used correctly, but as with the shift of modern DAC's sound things are going towards high-res audio universe,

that I cannot stand being in for a longer exposure of both time and music. I guess, this connected with the time we're living at presently. Everything is becoming so fast, at once, fast-forward, dynamic, multiplexing etc. We're at rush to some fictional end point in this quest of speed and is only killing our emotions and deprive us of being as human as we supposed to be. Nowhere slow, but as hyper fast rate stress is becoming number one enemy of ours.



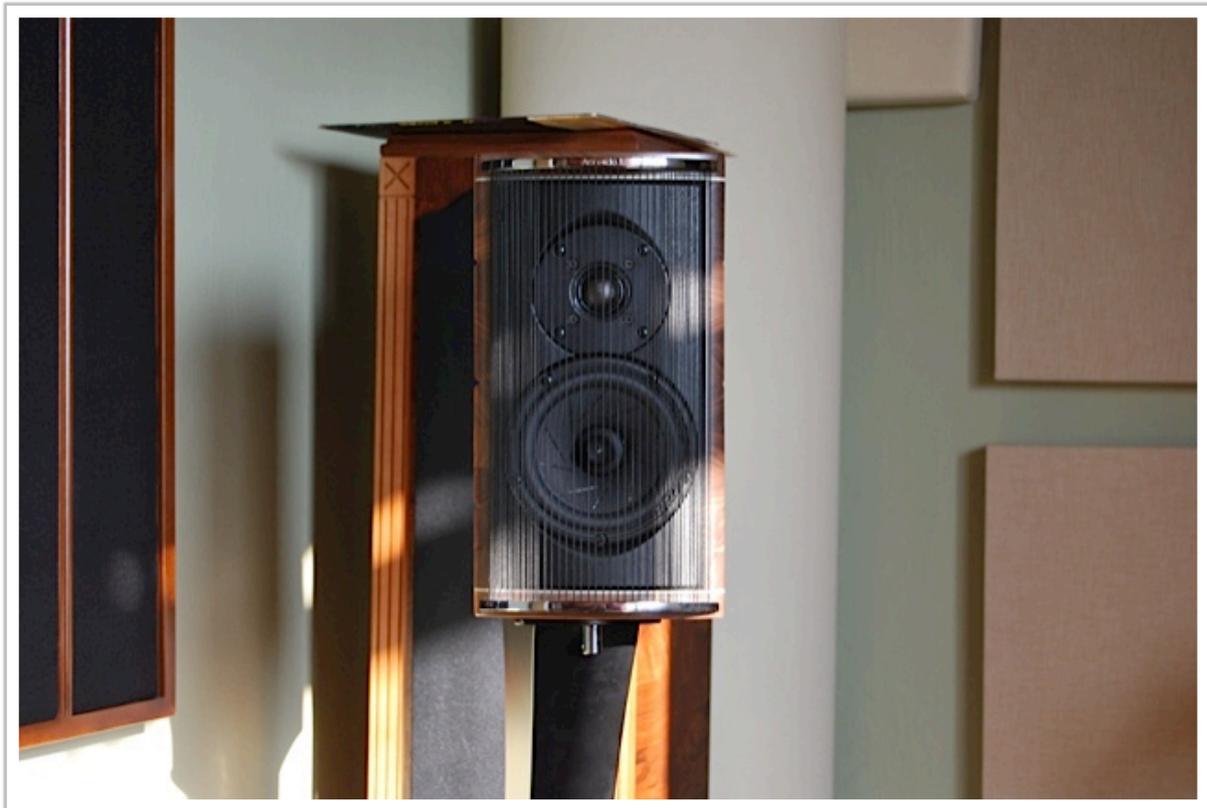
Franco Serblin's art of trade signed

Do I want to be a part of that race more then I have to be? No! Music and enjoyment of music should be relaxing, healing, lifelike and as a real musical event, holistic and harmonically evoking.

To not being totally pessimistic and pressing too hard on Sonus Faber I do have to admit, that new Sonus Faber Elipsa Red differs. This is perhaps one of the best looking speakers, that are voiced differently and even priced within "affordable" range. I'm falling for their appearance on each rande and dejav vu with them.

## Accordo

Franco Serblin Accordo might be considered light feathered when compared to some other two-way monitor speakers. Even with their gorgeous stands they're still not heavy to move when their need to be adjusted within the room. Weight shouldn't be all that important... It's all in the construction; know how and at the end in the sound that should matter the most. Your affection to Accordo's might vary. With their unique arch shaped enclosures they're breathing with different aura, but for me this is one of the best looking small monitor speakers. Their elegance, the Italian playful lines, integration of mirror brushed aluminum and chrome. Everything feels so refined. Accordo's acts as a true Barons with their appearance, elegance and noble heritage. There is nothing casual about them. For their appreciation you'll have to move out of labeling and go all art passionate, even Tuscany feeling like. There is certainly no mistake about, which brain hemisphere is in the work here.



Ready for music in a tuned Mono & Stereo demo room

Since their shape needs a certain positioning, there is no swapping in installation. Both left and right speakers have their own exact positioning and placement. This gives Accordo's a certain fixed role and helps in imaging and with their disappearing in a room. Two things striken me at once when they played first notes through my amplification; their disappearance in the space and natural sound. Ktema's character or the absent of it re-entered

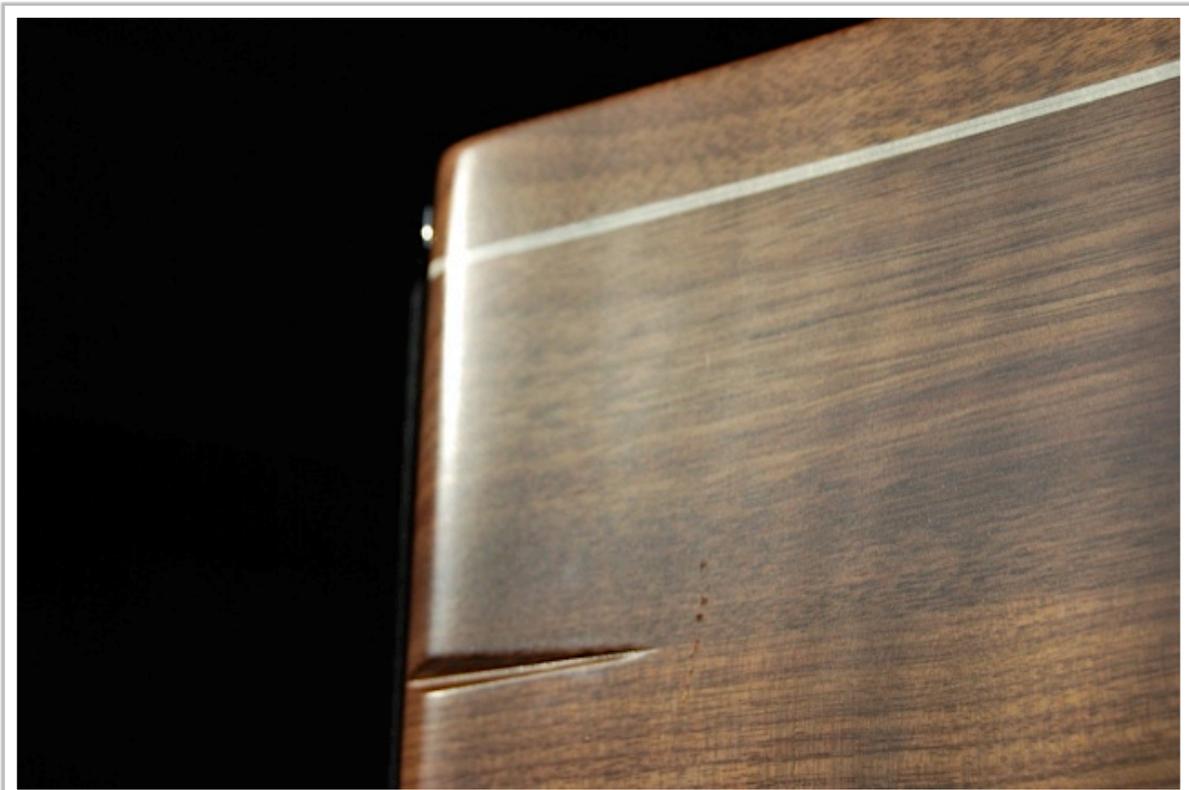
into my memory. With both Ktema and Accordo Serblin managed to voice both speakers very lifelike and close to the real sense of music.

## **Drivers**

Legendary Ragnar Lion 29 mm soft dome tweeter was heavily modified specially according to Franco specification and 150 mm woofer comes from Scan-Speak Revelator series. This combination works well under the well guided rules of amplification, but let me elaborate on this later on.

## **Positioning**

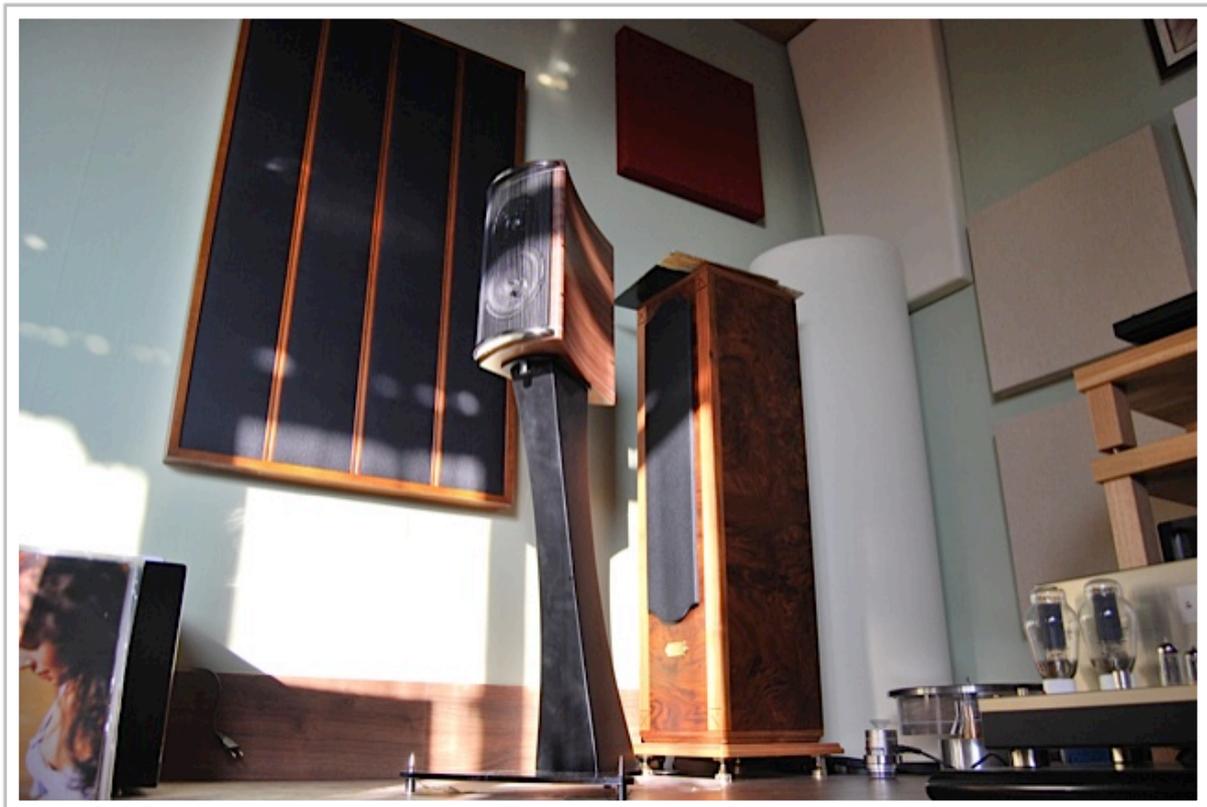
My demo room is threated with many acoustical add on's. From Advance Acoustics, etc. and I managed to refined reflections, delay, bass and whole balance of the sound to the level where the character of speaker is shown very quickly. Bass can be very controlled and direct if positioned right within my demo-listening room. Accordo's demands a bit more care and pin pointing in their positioning. I would strongly recommend more or less a triangle placement as classical golden rule for small monitor setup. In this way you're experience the direct flow and impact of the music as sudden as it should be. It's also much easier to keep bass tight, fast and controlled with keeping the overall balance of the sound in right proportions so to speak.



Carved details

## Natural/Neutral

I'm not sure that all people understood the Franco's intention and design philosophy of both Ktema and now Accordo under review. This speaker comes from a man who deeply loves and appreciates acoustic music, small ensembles, violins, opera etc. Accordo need to be seen, heard and taken as such. This doesn't mean, that it wont play other music, but it will excel and breathe life when connected with the music of natural spaces, instruments and voices. All this is closely connected with the required amplification. As with past Sonus Fabers, people often complained at how low Serblin rated minimal power needed to drive his speakers. As a past owner of quite few Sonus Faber speakers I know, how they can be driven with or without enormous power behind them. As with all things in this life things do come with a built in trade off. Franco always used mostly low powered tube amplifiers for his voicing and while designing the speakers. And as of now he's having Einstein components as his chosen darlings. To understand the whole insight, design merits and goals of his passion I thought this short elaboration was needed at least to some extend.



In action

As you already know, Mr. Serblin is in no need for recognition or gaining funds. He's a wealthy gentleman with artistic creational endeavor and vast heritage left behind him already. Understanding his art of sound reproduction opens up realms of Franco's intimate musical and audio

world. I strongly advise you're leave any precognitions and boxed rules outside the entrance. If people cannot tune into something as Accordo, I would friendly advise them to step beside and work within their own labels. People draw conclusion so fast. If anybody is in the need and urge of judging things, he can at least do things as they're supposed to be done. Find the right gear, that give life to the speaker. It's like car testers would review formula one tires on domestic car for example. Nonsense. This is why High-End audio is having such a hard time becoming something else, then just a race of opinions. I try to see music reproduction and High-end as an art itself and as pure as the music is. But we'll have to move our butts more then often to do the things in right way. I surely hope for more people without precognitions and self apposed lazy boundaries. Those who need to be in their safe measured spaces should left emotional impacted creations as Accordo out of their way for the best of audio world. Isn't this the same thing as happen with Ktema's reviews? Not all understood this speaker. Perhaps some mileage is needed and the absence of quickly grown ego to appreciate this different audio art creation of natural music reproduction.

From my experiences with Accordo and Gryphon Atilla, Mactone MH-300B, Aaron xx and few other amplifiers on hand, that you have to choose the amplifier wisely. Not to powerful and not to little. When driven with 400 watts of solid state Accordos seems to simply slump. Be careful with impedance as Accordos are rated at  $4\Omega$ .

Now, given the right amplification and in the combination with small or medium sized room, Franco Serblin Accordos can sing their hearths out. In a larger room you'll be hard pressed with application of acoustic treatments to achieve the right balance.

As I wrote in Franco Serblin Ktema reivew, Accordo is also very open and neutral sounding speaker. This sound might come as totally inverse to some of contemporary Sonus Faber hard core speaker owners, but Serblin's small and larger speaker are very neutral and open sounding. I remember how shocking it was for me to move from my Sonus Faber Guarneri Memento speaker to Acoustic Preference Maestoso 2.0 speakers. This was an excursion in linearity. No matter how attached and emotional I was about Memento's I had to admit the logical progression for my testing needs. I guess it might be the same with many of audiophiles contacting me and asking about next paragraph subject...

## **Franco Serblin vs Sonus Faber Guarneri Evolution**

These are two completely different speakers and yet in a way they're both connected somehow. While Sonus Faber Guarneri Mementos are still in production Sonus Faber Guarneri Evolution can be seen as logical successors of them. Something like a third generation Guarneri's. Both speakers are remarkable sight candies and true eye catchers. Red violin on Sonus Faber Guarneri Evolution is one of the kinds and finish alone is making it the most prominent looking speaker when it comes to the share quality and aesthetics of wood finish and lacquer. Now, if we take size of those two under the scope it's obvious, that Guarneri Evolution will be a quick winner in reproduction of lover bass notes, octaves and their impact on music reproduction. Guarneri Memento's had an enormous bass; way beyond their physical size and many people was always looking for hidden subwoofer. There was none. It's the same with Evolution. Combination of great stand and speaker alone is working greatly in the service of bass. Guarneri Evolution will also performed much more friendly in larger listening environments then Accordos. No brainer here.



Reference turntable, Accordo, Acoustic Preference Maestro 2.0

Now when it comes to the sound Accordo holds its pace. As already written. I'm no fan on the late sound and voicing of Sonus Faber. Especially about Amati Futura and Guarneri Evolution. This is sound, that took the strange root and it's hard to pin it down into the impressive realms. Some things remained as with older Sonus Faber speakers. There is still a certain bump in frequencies although it's less obvious, that in the previous series. On top of that, there is this wicked open character, that is voiced to be used in combination of modern amplifiers. What does this mean exactly? Take a Vitus RI-100 for example. This is the so-called new breed of integrated amplifiers, which fits the bill of contemporary design of speakers (DAC's etc) that I'm raving about. We have an ultra open high-res character that needs to be driven with closed sounding amp. Now take any of those components regardless being speaker or amplifier and mix it with a good neutral component. Sonic disaster. No wonders how many people are frustrated with the sound of their system regardless of price. And no wonder how many mails I'm having under a strict confidentiality about system matching.

Let us also forget for a minute about gorgeous wood finish of Evolution's. When taken their appearance as whole both Amati Futura and Guarneri Evolution looks bulky and strangely proportioned. I've seen all of them many times in the same room and it's hard not to give credits to Serblin for Ktema and Accordo design. With both speakers he managed to carve a fluid and pleasing objects of the art. They're both a shining ray with unique esthetic aura of complexion, harmony and wholeness. Amati Futura and Guarneri Evolution seems like unfinished and refined at their last stage of design. Their proportions struggle with each other. Just take a classical Guarneri Memento and compare. Memento's were and still are poetry in motion.

Guarneri Evolution might be the dynamic slacker, but Accordo is much more neutral and natural sounding. My conclusions were the same with Ktema and Amati Futura. Instantly I can hear the basic difference in voicing and sound of those two. Everything is just prolonged with Guarneri Evolution and Accordo. Do note, the price difference between Evolution and Accordo. People will likely want to associate and compare Accordos with Sonus Faber Auditor M line, but then again Accordos are around 6.500 which in half way down from Guarneri Evolution and another half way down to Auditor M. You'll have to draw the line. Mine was to finish the red line...



Just in the right angle

Accordos are very open and they disappear in the room like no monitor speakers I heard so far. Perhaps a part of this might come as psychological imprint of their arch like shape. Anyhow, placebo and imprints disappear after some time and their physical absence while listening was still strong and circled boldly red with marker in my listening notes. I guess they're for different set of ears than Guarneri Evolution's. It's hard to give any labels and I'm trying really hard not to fall in any of audio guru resemblance. Then again expression have to be written and I dare to conclude, that Accordos are made for uninterrupted enjoyment of acoustical music. They're refined instruments for those seeking an intimate exchange of emotions between performers in real spaces with real instruments and listener.

Do take a time and listen to Evolution and Accordo. As they say, different strokes for different folks. I'm in no shame, confirming my strong affection for Accordo's.

## **Conclusion**

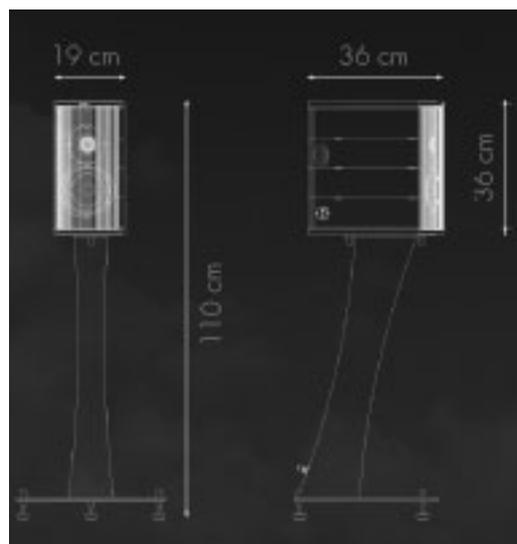
Franco Serblin Accordos are his second objects of audio art endeavor in his late sole artistic venture. It's hard to say, that Franco didn't follow any guidelines from contemporary speaker building. After all magnesium, aluminum, chrome in combination with wood are not exactly classical

materials. When talking trends standards do not forget who first introduce string front baffle cover and how whole industry copied it. The same happened with use of shiny chrome and polished aluminum. Just recall how quickly after Mr. Serblin revealed the shiny parts on the Ktema, Sonus Faber announced Amati Futura and Guarneri Evolution with the silver add-ons. Small world. Isn't it?

As a reviewer I couldn't only relay on Franco Serblin Accordo as my instrument, given their size and some of the restraints regarding room space, but as a avid music lover I could happily live with them on daily basis for good. They're musical machines, an art child of Franco and wooden jewels to be cherished when invited into any living space.

**Text and photos: Matej Isak matejisak (@) gmail.com**

### Tech specs:



- *Geometry: Mirror-image, 2-way compact speaker*
- *Cabinet: Super-rigid, arch-shaped solid wood structure, decoupled with aluminum-Magnesium part to obtain resonance control. Hand-crafted by master artisan.*
- *Stand: Specially designed to encase the crossover network. The ultimate solution to avoid transducer interference.*
  - *Tweeter: 29mm silk-dome by Ragnar Lian, one of the greatest masters among transducer designer. An ongoing project for 30 years.*
- *Mid-woofer: Legendary, custom made, 150mm sliced paper cone, optimized for the best control of cone break-up. Symmetrical drive motor system.*
- *Crossover: Minimalist approach, low-order, phase coherent, finalized to achieve precise soundstaging, focus and depth of image. Selected premium parts.*



*Frequency Response: 40Hz-33KHz, in room*

*Nominal impedance: 4 ohm*

*Sensitivity: 87dB/1W/1m*

*Minimum power amplifier: 20W/channel*

*Speaker dimensions: 36x19x36cm (HWD)*

*Stand height: 74cm*

*Weight unpacked: 16Kg speakers + 16Kg stands*

*packed: 20Kg speakers + 20Kg stands*

*Finish: Solid walnut - Metal parts of chrome and aluminum.*

*Grey Multilayered hardwood - Metal parts of chrome aluminum.*

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