

Spread the word. Go out and tell your family and friends about the Vandersteen 1C. Because here is a most rare and special creature: the ideal speaker for both the non-audiophile music lover who wants superior sound (without having to devote his or her living space, retirement fund, or life to The Quest), and the budding audiophile in search of an entry level speaker (\$800/pr.) that will sound good with modest to inexpensive associated components, yet will also blossom with the best gear available.

For anyone familiar with Richard Vandersteen's designs this is not an especially surprising recommendation. Vandersteen's history and great success rest on the fact that every speaker he has built--and we eagerly await his new flagship Model 5--is a superb value for the money, fits with almost any decor, and presents music, no matter what one's taste, in a consistently satisfying way.

The fact that Vandersteen can pull this off in the \$1400 price range (with his most famous design, the 2Ce) is remarkable. The fact that he has achieved an equal level of success under \$1000 is, to this writer, a goal which other designers should aspire to. Most speakers in this price range have a major weakness. The 1C has none. Most speakers in this price range suffer from exaggerated bass, or a boxy midrange, or aggressive highs. The 1C does not. With the 1C there is never a sense that the speaker is being forced to do more than it naturally can--that it has been designed to impress by artificially pumping up one area of its performance over another. Instead, this floor-standing, two-way design

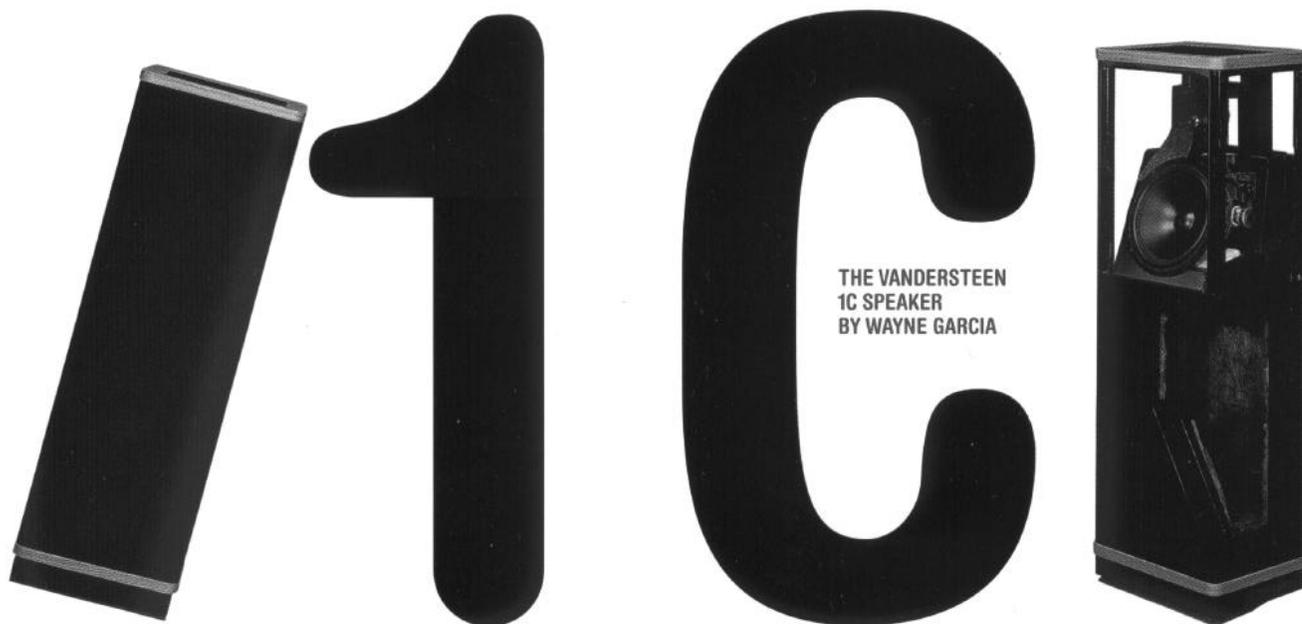
possesses that sense of *rightness* which allows us, at the right moment, with the right record, to forget about it just long enough to fall into the music and forget about hi-fi--a rare achievement for any speaker. Its 8" woofer--which handles a fair amount of midrange duty--goes respectably low (in my room, I'd estimate 38 cycles) and has a satisfying sense of weight, but it never booms, sounds strained or out of control.

To hear what I mean listen to a variety of music with different bass instruments, from the deep, cleanly recorded electric bass and drums on the opening track of R.E.M.'s latest, *New Adventures in Hi-Fi* [Warner Bros.], to the exceptionally well recorded upright bass of Sam Jones on DCC's gold edition of *Bags Meets Wes!*, to the e-flat rumblings that begin the classic Solti recording of Wagner's *Das Rheingold* [Decca/London]. The Vandersteen 1C remained consistently articulate and tuneful. The electronic strains of R.E.M. were exceptionally well reproduced by the 1C, with a satisfying--not nauseatingly exaggerated--sense of bottom end heft. Sam Jones' acoustic bass was big, weighty, and resonant in a way that a fine acoustic instrument can be. And on *Rheingold*, at each stage of the prelude, when another section of the orchestra joins with the strings and horns of the Vienna Philharmonic the speaker retained the aquamarine-like clarity that is so important to the music's suggestion of swirling water and cavorting nymphs while never churning up a muddled bottom-end sludge of confusion.

Likewise, the all-important middle frequencies are clear and open--here is where I

hear the greatest improvement over its predecessor, the model 1B, which was just a bit slow and clouded through the mids. The 1" dome tweeter has been modified to give a smoother, more extended response. The 8" mid/bass driver has been realigned in both the horizontal and vertical planes to bring it closer to the tweeter. The crossover has a number of improvements to the circuit and its parts which have contributed greatly to midrange clarity and driver integration. And the 1C's cabinet structure has been refined in its diffraction and internal absorption characteristics. Finally, the 1C's predecessor was not designed to be placed on a base, although due to the sonic improvements that come with the use of a well designed pedestal--increased rigidity, a reduction in cabinet vibration and interaction with the floor, plus the ability, via adjustable spikes, to eliminate rocking--it almost always was. The result was a speaker that had to be carefully adjusted (tilted backward) in order for the two drivers to properly converge at the listening position, and the farther back the listening area the more crucial was the need for the tilt. The new 1C was designed to face straight ahead when coupled to its base, resulting in greater coherence, as well as consistency of set up.

These improvements were immediately evident on a naturally recorded (live to two-track) CD like Roseanne Cash's superb *10 Song Demo* [Capitol.] The balance on Cash's voice seemed just right, neither too chesty (boxy, heavy) nor too light and nasal sounding. And the accompanying instruments (piano, bass, guitar, percussion) were all presented with a surprising sense of realism that



contributed greatly to the emotional openness of Cash's voice on this sparse but wonderful set of songs.

Or try a jazz record with lots of complex instrumental textures like the gorgeous and historically important *Miles Davis/Gil Evans: The Complete Studio Recordings* [Mosaic LP-also available on Sony CD]. On the fifth LP (*Sketches of Spain*) there are some extremely subtle exchanges between Miles' muted trumpet and flugelhorn, the other soloists, and Evans' orchestra. On the opening track, *Concierto De Aranjuez*, the oboes, flutes, tuba, French horn, tambourine and other percussion instruments always sounded as if cut from one sonic cloth, as opposed to sounding pieced together and disjointed, as they can on many lesser speakers. Again the 1C simply sounded right, and it allowed the mesmerizing beauty of this great record to come through in a way I'm used to hearing over some state-of-the-art contenders, but which I rarely experience in the under \$1000 range (and if I do, it's usually with mini-monitors which, despite other virtues, never have the bass and dynamics of the 1C).

The 1C also has a civilized and sheen-free top end. Whenever I hear live acoustic music, no matter how often and no matter where, I don't hear the kind of sparkly, Windex-polished highs that most loudspeakers exhibit. Oh, there's plenty of air and detail--a single triangle can cut through a Mahlerian orchestra during the most ecstatic climax--but it never stands out and seemingly apart from the music the way we so often hear it when reproduced by our systems. On all the recordings previously mentioned the 1C easily distinguished wooden from metal, acoustic from electronic instruments, while retaining a sense of liveliness and detail without the added brightness and sparkle that accompany so many other designs. Richard Vandersteen must again be applauded for selecting musical naturalness over hi-fi pizzazz.

I should also note that the 1C is one of those rare speakers that, although it will be used mainly, and appropriately, with associated equipment of a similar price point, will also perform extremely well with high resolution equipment. Most of my listening was done with the excellent Rotel RA 970BX integrated amp, a Rega Planar 2 'table, and Naim CD-3 player, all connected by Monster Cable's latest, and very fine I must add, M Series 1.25 speaker cable (\$125/pr.) and 9501 interconnects (\$125/pr.). But I also placed the 1C into my current reference system consisting of the Audio Research LS-10 preamp,

Pass Aleph 3 amp, and Goldmund Mimesis 39 CD Player with astonishingly good results--tube lovers note that the VAC 30/30 amp was also a fabulous match. Now, I'm not advocating using \$800 (including the bases) speakers with a \$10K+ set of electronics. But rest assured that if and when the urge to upgrade should grab hold of you, the Vandersteen 1C will easily allow you to experience the increased musical pleasures that great components have to offer.

I've experienced all of the various versions of Vandersteen's Model 1 over the past dozen or more years, and although I've always found them to be excellent values and hard to beat, I was always more appreciative of their virtues in an intellectual sense than in love with them because they involved my emotions with the music. Thanks to the changes that Richard Vandersteen has brought to the 1C, I can now say that here is a speaker I can respect, love, and recommend--without hesitation. Fi

MANUFACTURER

VANDERSTEEN AUDIO
116 WEST FOURTH STREET
HANFORD, CA 93230
TEL: 209-582-0324

DESIGNER:

RICHARD VANDERSTEEN

Price: \$800 pair including bases

Warranty: One year, extendible to five with registration

Drivers: 1" critically damped, dual chamber metal alloy dome Ferrofluid voice coil cooling tweeter; 8" die-cast basket with curvilinear polycone 1.5" two-layer voice coil with ventilated aluminum former 40 oz. focused gap magnet structure

Dimensions: 36"H x 12"W x 10"D

Weight: 44 lbs. each

SPECIFICATIONS

Impedance: 6.8 Ohms +/- 2 Ohms

Efficiency: 90 dB with 2.83 Volts of pink noise input at 1 meter on axis

Recommended Amplification: 20 - 100 watts per channel

Frequency Response: 38 Hz-22,500 Hz +/- 3 dB

Dispersion: 38 Hz-15,800 Hz +/- 3 dB at 30 degrees off axis

Crossover Frequency: 2800Hz, 6 dB per octave

Video Applications: Main or surround. The Model 1C is not magnetically shielded and should be positioned at least 10 inches from any direct view TV.



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