

Vandersteen Model 7 Preview

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Vandersteen Model 7 Loudspeaker Preview

Robert Harley



One of the "must-hear" systems at CES was Richard Vandersteen's all-new Model 7 loudspeaker. The buzz surrounded not just the exceptional sound the system produced, but the radical departure that the Model 7 represents for Vandersteen Audio. The \$45,000 Model 7 is an advance not just in technology and sound quality, but also marks Vandersteen's entry into a completely new price category after more than 30 years of producing value-oriented loudspeakers.

Walking into the Vandersteen room, I was surprised that the Model 7 is actually smaller than Vandersteen's Model 5. I was also surprised to see the speaker finished in a bright red, high-gloss

paint.

The Model 7 is a four-way system employing a 12" powered (400W) push-pull woofer taken straight out of the Model 5. The midrange, mid-bass, and high-frequency drivers, however, are made from a three-layer sandwich of balsa wood flanked by carbon fiber. Even the ScanSpeak Illuminator tweeter uses Vandersteen's sandwich dome. Vandersteen makes the cones and ships them to ScanSpeak, who builds the drivers. Vandersteen has applied for patents on this cone and dome technology.

The enclosure is made from five layers of carbon fiber in a constrained-layer-damping configuration that is then bonded to a carbon-fiber skeletal structure. The faceted shape makes it difficult to apply wood veneers, but Vandersteen intends to offer veneered versions in the future at a price premium.

The crossovers are fully balanced (each leg of the balanced signal is filtered) and the capacitors are battery biased with a small amount of DC. Of course, the crossovers are all first-order to maintain the time and phase coherent nature of all Vandersteen loudspeakers.

The Model 7's sound was extraordinary: coherent, open, uncolored, dynamic, and with a purity of timbre that was striking. But the Model 7 really excelled in resolving very low-level details such as reverb decay and the sense of space around instruments. I've heard Stevie Ray Vaughan's *Couldn't Stand the Weather* on many systems over the years, but I've never heard the sense of presence to his guitar, the vivid impression of a guitar amplifier in the studio, and of the fine texture of the instrument's decay that I heard from the Model 7.

Incidentally, the rest of the system included the Aesthetix Io and Callisto line and phono stage, Aesthetix Atlas solid-stage amplifiers, and the Clearaudio Statement turntable. There was no digital playback in the room.

Vandersteen Model 7 Specifications

Frequency response: 22Hz–40Hz +/-2dB.

Sensitivity: 85dB at 1 meter with a 2.83 volt input.

Recommended amplifier power: 40–300 watts per channel into 8 ohms for the upper section, 400-watt subwoofer amplifier (integral)

Impedance: 4 ohms nominal (3.5 ohm minimum).

Crossover: 100Hz, 600Hz, 5000Hz and adjustable H.F., 6dB per octave.

Phase: All the drivers are connected in positive absolute phase and piston in pass-band.

Upgradeable modules: Totally modular design. The driver, crossover and amplifier modules can be removed to accommodate future upgrades.

Dimensions: 44" high, 14" wide, 20" deep.

Weight: 170 pounds net, 215 pounds gross, each.