

Oepi Immanence 2.5: the speed of sound

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Oepi Immanence 2.5 loudspeakers

Reviewing Oepi's standmount Transcendence 2 earlier in the year gave me a taste for the fast, dynamic and frankly thrilling sound of this Danish cable maker's loudspeakers, it didn't take long before a request was put in for something bigger. That bigger speaker is the Immanence 2.5, which is not the biggest that Joakim Juhl makes but it's a pretty serious beast with a meaty price tag. Expectations were high.

As so often is the case in these situations expectations were not met, not in the first place at least. It turns out that the Immanence models with their extra half a way and ribbon tweeters are more fussy about partnering equipment and set up than the two-way Transcendence, and as Joakim was not here to set them up this bit took a while to get right.

Oepi speakers have what might be termed a take no prisoner's presentation. Unlike the majority of commercial designs the high frequency doesn't gently roll off as it rises, it sounds as if they are fairly flat up to pretty high frequencies and in the wrong situation that can sound distinctly bright. Both Transcendence and Immanence models have this characteristic and it's what makes them so exciting, but the Immanence 2.5 is less forgiving of foibles in the recording, partnering equipment and system. This means that when all the ducks are in a row it delivers outstanding results that punch far higher than the price would suggest, the key is to get those ducks aligned.

Immanence 2.5 stands a metre tall on its spikes and weighs 22 kilos, so it's a medium sized floorstander that demands respect when you pick it up but is not too inconvenient to move about. It has a pair of seven inch Purifi woofers, one covering midrange and bass and the other dedicated to the lowest frequencies in classic 2.5-way operation. Unlike standard Purifi drivers the cones are untreated paper, in other words they are not doped which adds weight and changes the character of the material. During the research phase for this model the high

frequencies were covered by an AMT planar driver but this apparently didn't have the magic that Joakim got with the 100mm ribbon he chose in the end. He says it delivers dynamic contrast that you don't get with domes, even the tweaked domes found on Oephi's Transcendence models.

The cabinet has two internal chambers and sits on a small plinth to which it is loosely fixed inasmuch as the screws are not tightened which allows a small degree of sideways movement. Joakim calls this 'hard decoupling' because when the plinth is spiked to the floor the speaker is not rigidly fixed to the same extent as a conventional cabinet. The cable terminals are single wire only pure copper examples made by ETI, these connect to a crossover that uses high



quality components including low DCR copper foil and toroidal inductors alongside DC biased capacitors that are hard wired to one another. I don't think I have seen copper foil inductors of this size in a speaker before, they're monsters.

I tried out some of Oephi's cables with the Immanence 2.5 which as you might imagine Joakim is very keen to encourage, these included the Reference interconnects and Immanence speaker cables, I even dabbled with the Reference power cable which is a radical looking affair. These certainly work well with the speakers but I was also able to get spectacular results with my regular Atlas and Townshend cables so this is not a cable dependent speaker.

Sound quality

Using a B.audio Alpha One integrated amplifier with the Immanence 2.5s proved to be a good starting point and better than the other visiting integrated that was first tried. The result with this powerful French amplifier was solid, highly detailed and well balanced with superb timing. There was a slight emphasis on metallic sounds like percussion and electric guitars but this made sense in the context of the music. Then some low bass came along and revealed that these Oephis can move serious amounts of air at low frequencies, there are twin ports in the back so I had left a good 16 inches between them and the wall but felt the need to pull them further into the room at this stage. This happened many times in fact and got better, more controlled, when I put a really powerful amp on the end of them.

With my regular Townshend Allegri Reference and Moor Amps Angel 6 amps the sound was not quite so edge of the seat but timing remained a distinct strong point, along with plentiful



fine detail. Julian Lage's quiet Hymnal was particularly beautiful, the next track on his *Speak to Me* album, '76, has more get up and go and here the speaker's immediacy brought the music to life. The Immanence 2.5s are particularly good at refined energy, they have speed, power and huge transparency but don't appear to add any glare or grain to the end result. You just have to be sure to deliver a very clean signal otherwise any such characteristics will be obvious.

This is a proper warts and all degree of resolution which delivers atmosphere, energy and engagement in spades. With a good analogue source the results can be electrifying, I spent a great hour or so playing old Led Zeppelin vinyl (I, II), and it was almost impossible to stay in my seat such was the excitement that this band managed to lay down in the studio. The sound may not be perfect, these are old recordings, but the energy is undeniable with a speaker of the Immanence 2.5's capabilities. I also played some tracks from *Physical Graffiti*, these had better/stronger bass which made for a particularly chunky bass line on Houses of the Holy, but not quite the thrill power of those earlier creations. It was still good though, very good in fact.

The extended high frequencies of the Immanence 2.5 makes them excellent at resolving fine detail, I heard nuances and harmonics on familiar records in particular that rarely make themselves clear. On Laura Marling's *Soothing* the voice and percussion are more obvious than usual, this track is usually dominated by the bass line and that was there in full effect, but these mid and high frequency details were also clear. Which might make them sound bright but they do not skimp on the bass and deliver strong, three dimensional imaging when the recording calls for it. When the recording is a bit rough you know it too of course, transparency is a double edged sword and if you want to play Zappa's *San Berdino (One Size Fits All)* make sure that the system is as finely balanced as possible because you will get the rough with the thrills. I found that one of the two copies I have of this album sounded notably less bright than the other, surging with the power of one of the greatest bands to ever tread the boards it's not the most refined of productions and the Immanence 2.5s made this very clear. They also provoked me to leave of the listening chair and leap about, to paraphrase Frank Zappa, that's what living is really all about.

Naturally the more polished the recording the better it sounds. Herbie Hancock's *River: the Joni Letters* is a great example and really shone in the Oephi's hands. His version of Court and Spark with Norah Jones on vocals attained a degree of magical realism that made it mesmerising. The Immanence 2.5s revealing cymbal work not normally clear thanks to their ability to deliver each note without blurring it's attack or decay, this resolves the spaces

Oephi Immanence 2.5

between the notes and results in the phenomenal timing that means every piece of music hangs together with magnificent coherence. The Oephi cables certainly didn't undermine this effect, if anything they enhanced it and while they are not critical to the end result these cables do offer an easier route to it than trying to mix and match other brands.

The Immanence 2.5s need high quality and preferably powerful amplification to achieve their potential, the bass in particular requires an amplifier that can control it and I would suggest that a stiff 100 Watts is a minimum. I got exceptional results with the 120W B.audio and the 150W Moor Amps.



Conclusion

The journey to audio ecstasy proved less straightforward with the Immanence 2.5 than it did with the Oephi Transcendance 2 but the rewards have been considerably greater, especially in terms of bass extension and sheer transparency and cohesion. Detail is nothing if it is not presented in a coherent manner, timing is critical and this is something that Joakim has managed to deliver superbly in this deceptively simple looking loudspeaker. If you really want to hear the magic in the music, the Oephi Immanence 2.5 is a direct route.

Specifications

Type: reflex loaded 2.5-way floorstanding loudspeaker

Crossover frequencies: not specified

Drive units:

Bass: 175mm Purifi with untreated cone

Mid/bass: 175mm Purifi with untreated cone

Tweeter: 100mm ribbon

Nominal frequency response: 30 – 40,000 Hz (in room)

Nominal impedance: 6 Ohms

Connectors: single-wire copper ETI binding posts

Sensitivity: 90dB (in room)

Dimensions HxWxD: 1000 x 185 x 300mm (inc spikes)

Weight: 22kg

Finishes: Oil treated oak real wood veneer standard. Walnut and custom finishes

Warranty: 5 years



The ear is all about great music and great sound. It is written by hard bitten audio enthusiasts who strive to find the most engaging, entertaining and great value components and music of the highest calibre. This really is what living is all about.