



It has taken us a bit of scheduling, but after a few months of planning, we finally found a matching time and date for the review. ICHOS Schallwandler is located about 300km away from Mono and Stereo headquarters and Robert Rothleitner, the owner of ICHOS Schallwandler has personally delivered a pair of an Ichos N° THREE speakers in beautiful and vibrant orange finish.

## **ICHOS SCHALLWANDLER - THE SOUND CONVERTER**

A quest for the perfect sound is not an easy task. Sound can't be verbalized. The most straightforward and probably only valid way is to experience it through the listening.

And this is how ICHOS Schallwandler speakers were materialized. After years of gaining experiences and comparisons with existing loudspeakers, ICHOS Schallwandler felt ready to start their production of the speakers' range. Under the brand name ICHOS (which in Greek translates to SOUND) they've launched the series of speakers, looking back at the first beginnings in 1986!

The main stand out characteristic of ICHOS Schallwandler speakers is closely connected with the construction of their proprietary drivers.

The membranes are treated in numerous steps with specific balsamic oils and various violin varnishes. This permits a well-balanced emittance at mid pressure as well as an outstanding naturalness and dynamism. A similar treatment has been used for hundreds of years for high-quality violins like the famous „Stradivari“.

ICHOS Schallwandler loudspeaker enclosures are as well-executed and handcrafted. Various wood materials and thicknesses have a positive effect on the sound attunement. The bass-sound radiates through a backloaded horn system to the ground. This guarantees an easy and uncomplicated room placement.



## ICHOS SCHALLWANDLER PASSIVE SPEAKERS

ICHOS Schallwandler speakers are well defined and customized horns that radiate sonic energy downwards.



This is where high efficiency comes from and relates to greatly focused bass performance, that was carefully tuned.

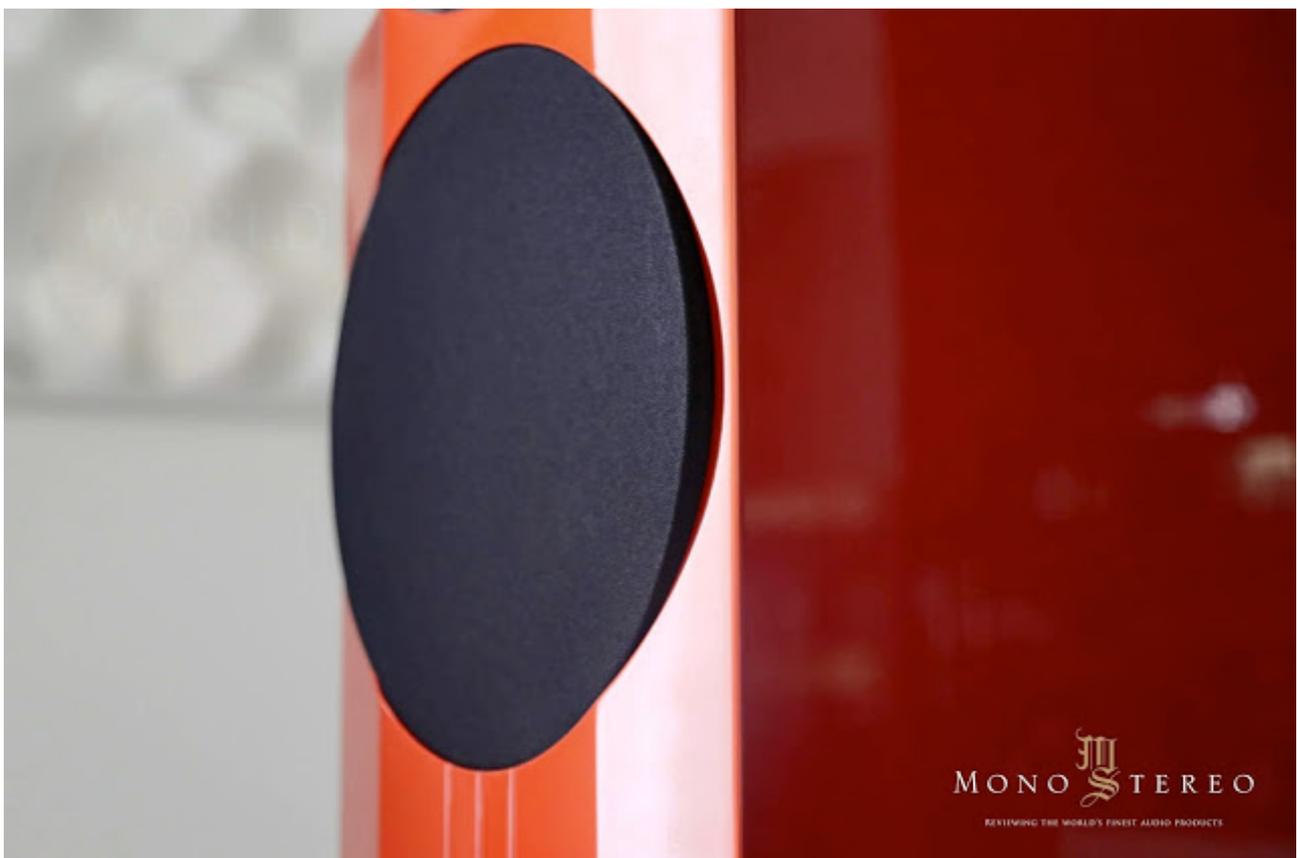
The overall effect brings a vibrant natural acoustic pattern with an accurate rather than

„dry“ bass-playback. Due to this rather elaborate construction a very high reinforcement inside the chassis was obtained, so that feedbacks and vibrations can be maximally excluded.

The initial idea was the optimization of passive loudspeaker's concept. It all boils down to in-depth research and implementation of the smallest detail, backed by the Austrian handcraft perfection.

As with all of the transducers, the broad-bands drivers are a subject of particular processes. ICHOS Schallwandler firmly believes that frequency separating filters work as a „brake“ mechanism and are not integrating such „brakes“ into their speakers.

Just the opposite... The broad-band frequency spectrum performance is directly connected to the exit-point of the amplifier and is, due to the particular treatment, able to guarantee an optimal emittance without any distortion up to approximately 6,5 kHz.



Consequently, the key-factors like timing, dynamic behavior and time coherence of music reproduction remain preserved. The low-range frequency is converted through horns loading that points to the ground and delivers an uncompromising sonic force extension.

The outcome of this is an extraordinary compact construction with an optimal expansion of the bass into the listening environment.

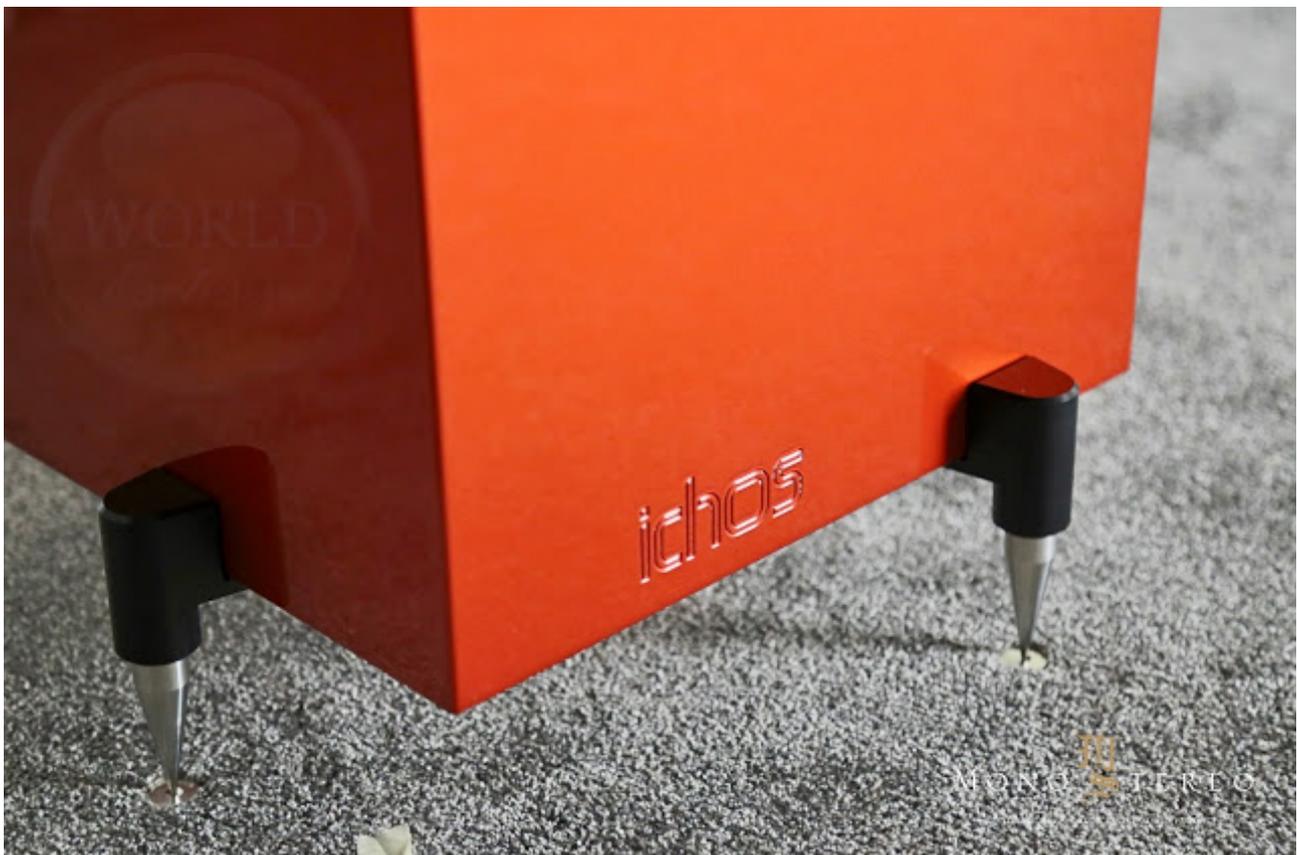
In essence, the epicenter of ICHOS Schallwandler gestalts is a broadband speaker's driver.

Due to labor-extensive treatments of the membranes with mineral based-material and several oils and specific varnishing the drivers gain special properties and characteristics. It takes up to eight weeks to apply this particular treatment.

Before fitting into the high-grade and handcrafted cases every driver needs to run through several hours of “playing” time.

Combined with the tweeter, a crystal clear and subtly nuanced reproduction with generous dynamic and impressive sound pressure level is possible.

ICHOS Schallwandler speakers are envisioned as a true work of art, that is the result of complex manual labor.



Fine-tuning of ICHOS Schallwandler speakers is consorted with the help of exceptionally gifted musicians and it extends throughout several listening sessions.

Additionally... ICHOS Schallwandler takes a lot of pride in providing custom solutions if the customers' listening environment calls for particular settings.

## LISTENING PLEASURE

ICHOS Schallwandler's main focus is the delivery of the high-grade natural reproduction of music and not merely a basic sonic reproduction. Their complete range of speakers was designed from the ground up to deliver durable experience and fatigue-proof listening-pleasure independent what kind of music someone prefers.



ICHOS Schallwandler is also offering a perfectly tuned high-end audio cables, that are matched to the particular speaker model. This warrants that every element of sound-chain is perfectly in synergy and the possible level of sound reproduction is achieved.

The same high standards are applied with the selection of all components and accessories that are incorporated in the ICHOS Schallwandler speakers.

ICHOS Schallwandler strives to deliver a great balance sound-price-relation and is willing to follow up on the special requests like specific front plates, luxurious inlays, and different varnishings.

## ICHOS N° THREE

With only 28 cm wide, the ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE possess very slick aesthetics.

### ichos N° THREE

ICHOS Schallwandler initial concept takes the listening room profoundly into an

equation thus the particular horn radiation into the ground was chosen. The expansion into the ground facilitates a much more homogeneous and inobtrusive reproduction of the lower frequency. This also allows a way more friendly placing of the speakers.

The newly developed 25 cm broadband driver is combined with the dipole-tweeter mounted in a new aluminum case, which is also used in ICHOS Schallwandler's bigger models.



This approach allows a higher level of dynamic impact and much lower bass intensity as well as more precise accuracy, which is usually reserved for much bigger loudspeakers.

ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE speakers were designed from the beginning to offer the same level of high-fidelity no matter the room size. As you can read on in *The Music*, this was confirmed with all genres of music without sacrificing micro or macro details at low or very high volumes.

## THE MUSIC

There is no escape to the music challenge. Over a prolonged time, I've had with ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE speakers, digging deeper into the music universe was a seamless task.

N° THREE permitted a longer than usual, fatigue-free listenings that always invited for more returns. Rothleitner is an avid music lover and

favors all of the music genres. This audibly reflects with ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE chameleon-like nature. No matter what music was played, there was an underlying and identifying quality across all of the music's repertoire.

With Rothleitner we both share an affection for the timeless and iconic Dire Straits debut self-titled album that was released way back in 1978 by Vertigo Records. For yours truly all of the tracks on the album are still as unfaded as they were at my initial discovery and I regularly love to return to this masterpiece.



The easy pacing "Six Blade Knife" is invariably on hand to assess any of the loudspeakers. This track congests a lot of the energy in the very epicenter and can sound too quickly top mediocre. In the absence of proper balance Knopfler's vocal becomes muddy, the bass starts to wobble, electric guitar loses its grip and the horizontal projection decreases posthaste.

ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE was far from any traits of deceased power or spatial congestion. Bass was tight and focused, Knopfler's guitar cut through the mix with the needed sharpness and the recognizing analog DNA was adequate and easily recognizing.

High spirited Monty Alexander - *Montreux Alexander* is among my favorite live jazz albums. Alexander's fire cracking, octane-high lively renditions are jaw (ear) dropping. I'm not talking about only the lighting fast playing. Many jazz pianist can show speedy tricks, yet not many can display such an energetic rhythm constant as Alexander.



"Feelings" might be the track that reflects Monty Alexander's qualities in the best way. It starts very softly and gradually develops to the part where piano (around 2.50) notes start to take full forte. For no speaker, this is a minute endeavor, regardless of the price.

N° THREE followed the tempi with unexpected ease and let the amazing

interplay with the double bass and drums to bloom abundantly.

You wouldn't believe how many speakers smear the piano notes with *Montreux Alexander*. Not the N° THREE" ICHOS Schallwandler voicing conceded the formation of attacks, decays, and delays that are pivotal for believable piano rendition. The notes overlaps could form a delicate harmonics and the decays were properly prolonged. Not a small feat at all!

A related challenge is connected with the crash cymbals. Speakers without real potency would portray them as muffled and unlively. N° THREE revealed the crash bursts with rich and explosive impact, letting little to wonder about right and wrong and without the need to analyze FFT spectrum... Crash cymbals need to strike with the energy and recognizing metallic timbre and without pushing the speakers into collapse. N° THREE ability to accomplish this assignment was of the stand out characteristic.

Along with fantastic production, great mastering and most importantly fine crafted music Fleetwood Mac - *Rumours* percussions were also recorded



with outstanding quality. This track is of true reference-quality and shows to a great extent any of the speakers' reservations.

Why is this particular feature so important you may ask? It's all about energy distribution. When cymbals expand in their given field complete sonic projection can instantly faint. *Rumors'*

"Dreams" is a great example. A casual listener might not even notice the sonic balance departure. But... A true audio aficionado will at once jump from the sitting spot nodding in disapproval.

ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE accomplished to reproduce "Dreams" with a higher-order punctuality, permitting the music to steadily develop.

The same quality of both music's impetus and ability to render commanding highs was strengthened with The Doors - *L.A. Woman's* "Riders On the Storm". On the opposite side of crash cymbals, the rides have a bit different propensity, that might be or not revealed properly with any of the speakers.

Doors' subtle and mysterious rhythmic march is from the very introduction accompanied by the soothing ride cymbal rhythmic pulsation. Again, "the proof is in the pudding". This timeless arrangement requires quite an interlocking to inspire. Speakers need to be firmly bound to slowly evolving and greatly mastered "Riders On the Storm".

# DOORS



# L.A. WOMAN

The Rhodes piano/guitar interplay can too quickly congest the needed shimmering, sustaining of ride cymbals when the speakers' drivers are in virtual energy push-pull momentum. Not with the ICHOS Schallwandler. N° THREE's resolved with a feather-like gait-music-flow without sacrificing neither the resolution nor the dynamics.

Splendidly recorded "Ghost Riders In the Sky" from the album *Lento* by Youn Sun Nah offer a thunderous dynamics and N° THREE was no shy with presenting of the voice and instruments with a soulful equilibrium.

Dynamic contrasts were easily audible and performed without unwanted tension or slowing down.

Sun Nah's vocal believability factor was at the forte with a vivid distinction of it's dedicated position in spectra and impressive three-dimensionality. ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE exhibited a métier vocal quality. Not something I would expect at this price point and the speaker's size"





Beautifully and mesmerizing Bugge Wesseltoft/Henrik Schwarz's "Kammermusik" from the album *Wesseltoft Schwarz Duo* balloons into the listening environment with the perpetual immersion.

There is a particular Jing/Jang quality that calls for highly resultative and well-balanced speakers. ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE authorized a

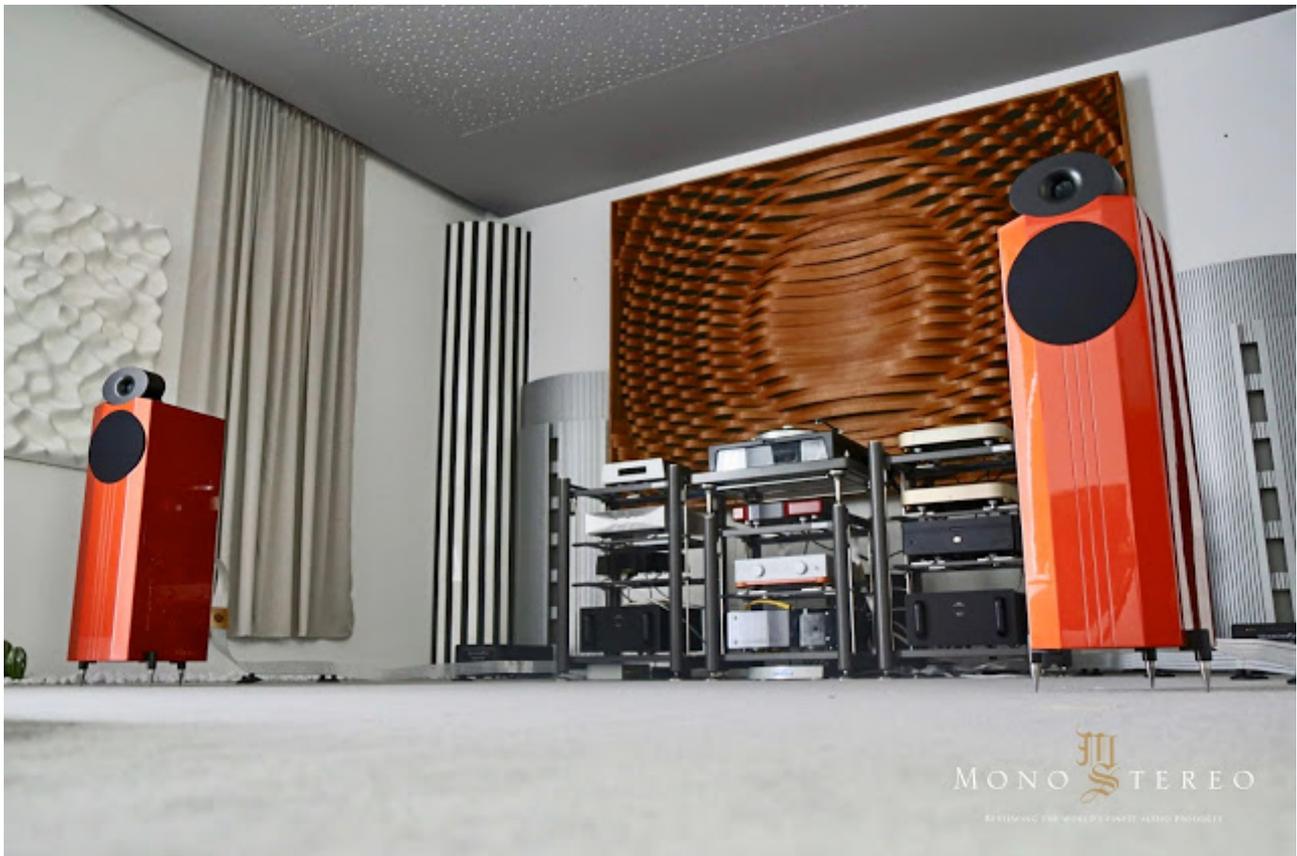
full aural gamut to expand and sonic magnitude to thoroughly materilize, bestowing predominantly the music importance without stepping into the analytical realms.

At the end of the day, such a balance is and should be the sole orientation of any high-end audio loudspeakers.

# THE CONCLUSION

I'm always revived, when a pair of review loudspeakers opens new frontiers and causes a paradigm shift. While a certain level of performance can be envisioned from lurking into the technical specs, one can never truly know how well will the speakers under evaluation behave in the reviewer's reference system.

I don't mind if a speaker designer wants to come and install the product personally. It's usually a great starting point and getting direct feedback on speakers' system integration and synergy directly from the manufacturer gives a clear idea of what exactly was the sonic design goal.



We took the needed time for installation and finding the optimum room spot and when Rothleitner told me: "We're at 85%" we both smiled. During the review period, I've tried to experiment with various room placements, but I've eventually ended practically at the same spot that we originally pinpointed. Interestingly, it's also the preferred placement for the Radio D4.1 speakers.

It's not often that relatively small speakers can mirror the qualities and impact of bigger, floor-standing transducers, yet ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE filled my almost 50m2 room with surprising ease.

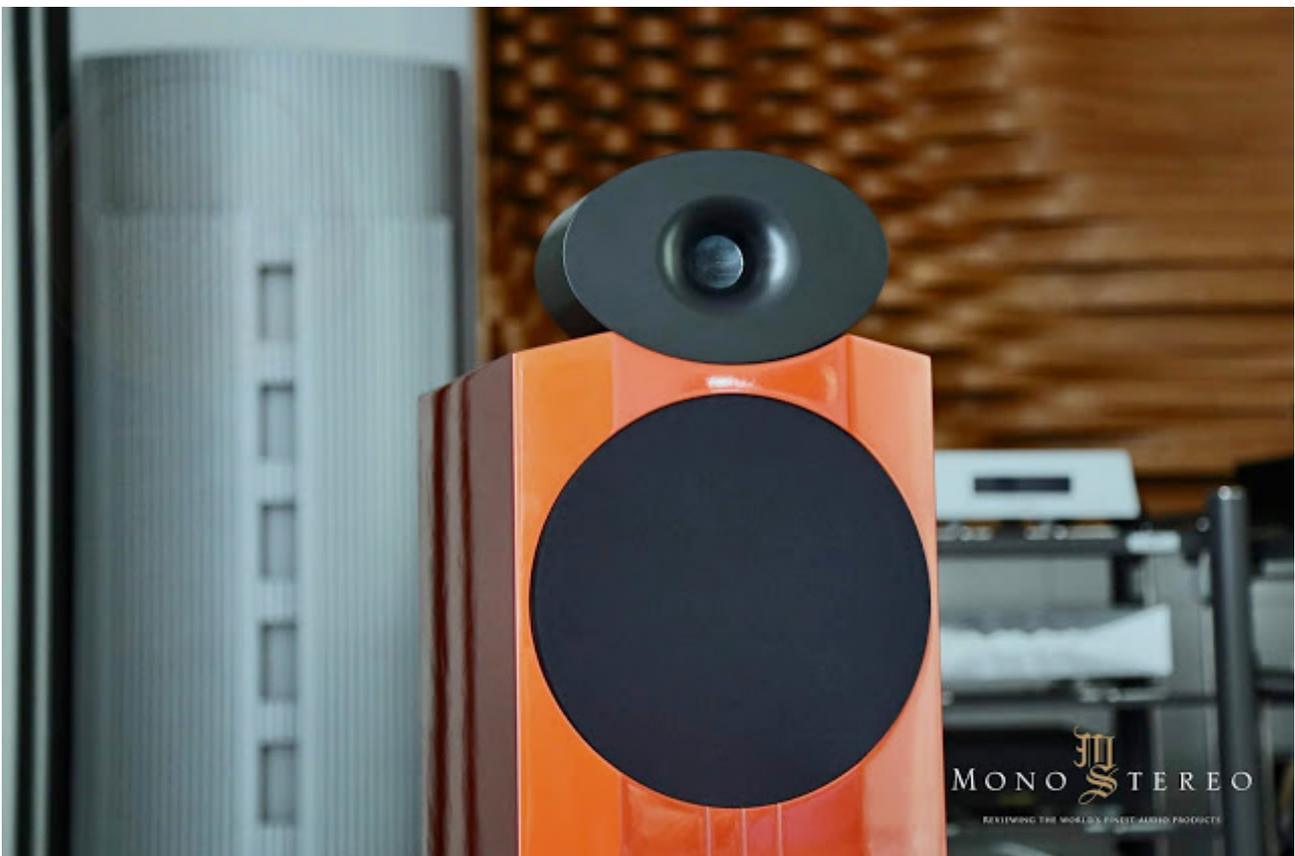
The unsurpassed sonic delivery is the result of painstaking tuning, proprietary drivers and clever design. The floor facing vented excursion supplies a highly energetic, focused and clear bass foundation.



Another nice and highly useful feature is the selectable tweeter gain (1,5dB) as well as the tweeter's placement adjustment. The top plate of N° THREE enclosure lets you simply slide the tweeter forward and backward. This affects the time domain so that the broadband driver and tweeter can be time aligned if needed.

All in all, I'm was very inspired by the Robert Rothleitner creations. This well-tuned, highly refined transducers are highly efficient and easily driven. I've found a great match with my Class A Lamm and Grandnote reference monoblocks. Both M1.2 Reference and Demone locked and loaded instantly with the N° THREE. My listening note particular highlighted the synergy with a full Granditone setup with Magri's flagship electronics. (Demone and Genesi).

Addressing both audiophile and music lovers' demands it's an arduous task, yet ICHOS Schallwandler N° THREE balanced nature and right technical applications allow such double-decker fulfillment.



Sport cars aficionados and connoisseurs are very evocative about their entitlement to enjoy the speed of all the driving paraphernalia. Our beloved high-end apparatus shouldn't be any further from entertainment and these Austrian Lamborghini orange speakers were designed from the very beginning to deliver a heftier portion of gratification.

*Matej Isak*

# PRICE

- 9.900 EUR for the black and white mat colour finish
- + 900 EUR for additional high gloss lacquer finish (as the orange review sample)

# TECHNICAL DATA

- 25 cm woofer-midrange speaker, glass-fiber membranes, treated with particular varnish
- Tweeter in dipole version, aluminium monobloc case.
- Dimension: 1.130 x 283 x 362 (h,w,d) mm
- Efficiency factor: 94 dB/1W/1m on 8 Ohm
- Frequency response: 35 Hz->20 Hz
- Listening-distance: from 2m appr.
- Weight : 32 kg appr./piece and according execution

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