

Simaudio MOON Voice 22

Canadian brand long-known for its high-end digital and analogue separates has now added a compact standmount to its range. So a full system is no longer a 'Blue Moon'...
 Review: **Mark Craven Lab: Paul Miller**

Back in 2016, Simaudio added the MOON ACE to its range of pre, power and integrated amplifiers. A slimline machine with analogue, digital and network connectivity (the latter including Roon Ready status and streaming service support through its proprietary MiND module), the ACE clearly warranted 'just-add-speakers' status. The only problem? Simaudio didn't have any...

Rather than hand sales away to other companies, Simaudio was motivated to venture into the world of loudspeaker design and manufacture. The result is the MOON Voice 22. Priced at £2650 and available in either high gloss black or white finishes, it's intended to be a partner for the MOON ACE – although, naturally, the manufacturer says it will play just fine with other amps too [see PM's boxout, p69].

FLOAT ON

With a full 'MOON ACE system' now a reality, UK distributor Renaissance Audio is promoting the package at a price of £5700 for speakers and amp, a saving of £450. The Voice 22's compact 35x20x29cm measurements (hwd) also make them easy to find room for and ensure a 'size-match' with the ACE amplification.

The purpose-built £495 Stand 22s give the speakers a lift, but the Voice 22 also boasts something called a 'Hover Base' – a detachable rubberised (Poron) layer underneath the cabinet that supports the box when placed in a bookshelf or cabinet. It gives the vague impression that the speakers are 'floating', provides a degree of isolation and prevents furniture surfaces from being scratched. You'll need to lever off the Hover Base insets before you mount the Voice 22s on stands but beware – they are very firmly attached!

As our pictures illustrate, the Voice 22 is a two-way design, partnering a 29mm soft dome tweeter with 155mm mineral-loaded polypropylene bass/mid. The former benefits from a 'saturation-controlled' motor system, with rear output managed by a damped, non-reflective chamber, and the dome, with large surround, is then

positioned within a custom waveguide for both time-alignment and dispersion control. It's this waveguide that Simaudio says allows the Voice 22's crossover – a second-order (12dB/octave) network on a two-layer PCB – to be set at a relatively low 1.5kHz [see PM's Lab Report, p71].

The bass reflex cabinet outputs via a circular rear-facing port, which can be resistively-loaded with supplied foam dampeners if the speaker cannot be accommodated in its optimal position.

Simaudio recommends the Voice 22s are angled in toward the listener with clearance from walls 'to at least twice the dimensions of the cabinet' – which I suppose is a roundabout way of saying 60cm from the rear boundary.

While the Voice 22's styling is either dully unadventurous or wonderfully understated depending on your fashion sense, there's apparently quite a lot going on inside regards resonance control.

The manufacturer states the 'mechanical characteristics of the enclosure are carefully engineered to be free of vibrations' by virtue of its bracing and novel CGD (Curved Groove Damping) technology.

RIGHT: A 29mm soft dome tweeter, with waveguide, is paired with a 155mm mineral-loaded polypropylene bass/mid driver. Proprietary CGD (Curved Groove Damping) aims to control cabinet modes while the 'hover base' can be removed for stand mounting

The latter involves sculpted grooves that are cut into the inner walls of the MDF enclosure, snaking their way across these internal surfaces in semi-random fashion and filled with a damping polymer.

SNAP JUDGMENT

It's only once the fine detail of Simaudio's engineering is appreciated that the price of its debutante loudspeaker starts to make a lot of sense. The square-edged



LEFT: Available in white and gloss black finishes, MOON's Voice 22 also has an optional, partnering loudspeaker stand at £495 a set

cabinet is not only solid-feeling and weighty (its 11kg being considerably heavier than some loudspeakers that are considerably larger), but the speaker binding posts to the rear are robust, while the full-size magnetic grilles snap satisfyingly into place.

FINE FOCUS

With this loudspeaker debut, Simaudio has delivered a standmount model with considerable flair, most notably when it comes to bass, but also delicate treble details, which it presents in a subtle-but-always-there fashion. And while it has weight, it doesn't throw its weight around – there's mostly a neutral and balanced feel to the sound. This perhaps means some might find it a little unexciting, but also means you get an untempered view of the music at hand.

Do pay heed to the manual, however, as the Voice 22's bass output benefits from sensible positioning. It never gets boisterous or overblown – this speaker is too polite to earn those sort of adjectives – but from my experience it becomes the dominant element of the performance if you've given the woofer too much of a boundary gain boost. With around 10cm clearance and the ports left open, the thudding rhythm section and phasey guitar riffs in Deep Purple's 'Perfect Strangers' from the 1984 album of the same name [Polydor 546 045-2] were impressively weighty, but it didn't take me long to realise Ian Gillan's vocals, and the outro keyboard solo, were facing an uphill struggle to cut through.

ACE IN THE HOLE

Simaudio's partnering ACE 'A Complete Experience' all-in-one music player is equipped with a very substantial power supply and robust Class AB amplifier that belies its modest 50W specification. I put the MOON ACE through its paces on the bench where it achieved a far higher 2x65W/8ohm and 2x100W/4ohm with 80W, 145W, 235W and 240W into 8, 4, 2 and 1ohm loads under dynamic conditions. That 15.5A current reserve endows the ACE with more than sufficient grunt to grapple with the Voice 22's low 4ohm nominal impedance and very low 1.6ohm EPDR (Equivalent Peak Dissipation Resistance) at bass frequencies. The response is flat and extended down to -0.5dB/1Hz and out to -0.15dB/20kHz and -1.5dB/100kHz, all from a moderate 0.07-0.10ohm output impedance (20Hz-20kHz) so the system response will not deviate markedly from that seen on p71. Finally, the ACE's +36.6dB gain and very wide 92.3dB A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW) round off an impressive package. PM



'It scared the hell out of me – as it should'

Restricting the ports with Simaudio's inserts yielded an improvement, but I still preferred the Voice 22s left unsealed, on stands and placed into the room. The soundstage is open and three-dimensional here, the Deep Purple track full of heft yet sharply focused. 'Hefty and focused' would also be a fine description of the speakers' handling of Lynyrd Skynyrd's 'Railroad Song' [Nuthin' Fancy; MCA Records 112 024-2], which rolled along with both a taut bottom end plus a distinctive clarity to drummer Artimus Pyle's 16th note hi-hat hits.

Staccato instrumentation, punchy rhythms, and low octave elements are all in the Voice 22's wheelhouse. Listening to them with the volume up, you get that happy confusion of an impactful sound emerging from deceptively small boxes. They ensured the finger-clicking funk of Michael Jackson's 'Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough' [Off The Wall, Epic; Tidal Master] was conveyed with the necessary sharp-edged, stop-start energy. Meanwhile, Quincy Jones' everything-but-the-kitchen-sink production (including, apparently, three different percussionists) found clear space between the speakers.

FUN-FILLED

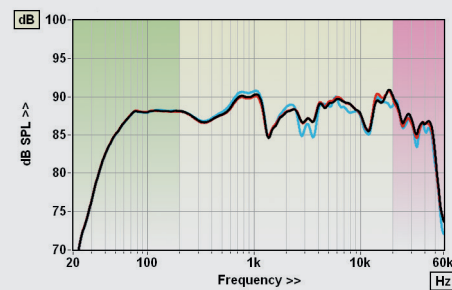
On this piece, much of Jackson's vocals – and occasional onomatopoeic outbursts – are sat back in the mix, yet other refrains are overlaid front and centre. These parts enjoyed due prominence, momentarily focusing attention away from the fun-filled backing track. Elsewhere, however, the Voice 22's well-constructed sound did lose its balance. Norah Jones' career-defining

LAB REPORT

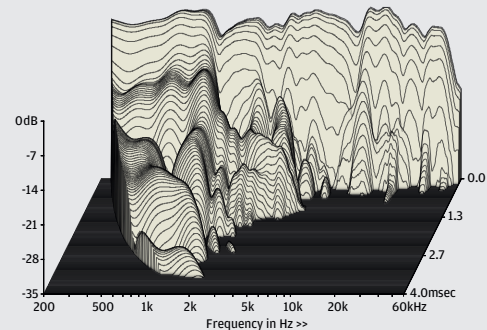
SIMAUDIO MOON VOICE 22

Measured on the tweeter axis, MOON's inaugural Voice 22 standmount offers a slightly bumpy forward response trend with a boosted lower midrange prior to a 5.5dB dip near the 1.5kHz crossover, possibly the result of a cone/surround misterrmination [see Graph 1 and resonance on Graph 2, below]. This also draws out the response error(s) to $\pm 3.1\text{dB}$ (200Hz-20kHz), although as this occurs in both samples, the pair matching remains a superbly tight 0.35dB from 200Hz-13kHz (or 0.9dB, 200Hz-20kHz). Furthermore, distortion is very low at $\sim 0.1\%$ through this midband region (re. 90dB SPL/1m). While the grille brings some 1.8dB of variation through the presence region [blue trace] the quality of the soft dome tweeter is realised in the HF response which extends out to $\sim 41\text{kHz}$ [-6dB re. 10kHz; pink shaded area, Graph 1]. As for its low-end reach, the 155mm woofer's 64Hz-1.01kHz (-6dB) bandpass is reinforced by the 24Hz-90Hz (-6dB) output of the rear-firing port to better Simaudio's 55Hz specification with a solid 47Hz extension (-6dB re. 200Hz).

All this adds up to a 90.2dB/2.83V/1m sensitivity, boosted by the lift in response at 1kHz, and a lower but more representative 88.4dB from 500Hz-8kHz. This is achieved with a tougher load than many contemporary standmounts, dipping to 3.5ohm/185Hz following large swings in impedance phase, all at low bass frequencies, of $-57^\circ/88\text{Hz}/10.7\text{ohm}$ and $+54^\circ/21\text{Hz}/10.6\text{ohm}$. Aside from a gentle 'bump' at 1-2kHz the impedance is sub-8ohm from 100Hz-13kHz, the nominal a low 4ohm and the EPDR a punishing 1.6ohm/117Hz, so the Voice 22 is best partnered with fairly beefy amps [see boxout, p69]. PM



ABOVE: Response inc. nearfield summed driver/port [green], freefield corrected to 1m at 2.83V [yellow], ultrasonic [pink]. Left, black; right, red; w. grille, blue



ABOVE: Treble and cabinet modes are well suppressed but a resonance at its $\sim 1.5\text{kHz}$ crossover is indicated

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83V - 1kHz/Mean/IEC)	90.2dB / 88.4dB / 86.0dB
Impedance modulus: minimum & maximum (20Hz-20kHz)	3.5ohm @ 185Hz 28ohm @ 76Hz
Impedance phase: minimum & maximum (20Hz-20kHz)	-57° @ 88Hz $+54^\circ$ @ 21Hz
Pair matching/Resp. error (200Hz-20kHz)	0.9dB/ $\pm 3.1\text{dB}/\pm 3.0\text{dB}$
LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	47Hz / 41.1kHz/40.5kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.55% / 0.09% / 0.7%
Dimensions (HWD) / Weight (each)	350x200x290mm / 11kg



LEFT: MOON's 2nd-order crossover is not split so the Voice 22 is fitted with a single set of 4mm terminals. The rear-facing port is mounted into the same solid rear plate

of sensitivity and nominal impedance and although PM's lab report [opposite] reveals it's a tougher drive than expected, neither did it strain my amplification, letting me sample Jerry Goldsmith's delightfully spooky title theme for *The Omen* [...*Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*; 44.1kHz/16-bit download] in full flight.

Played by the National Philharmonic Orchestra, this piece presents low piano and brass, ominous timpani, quivering strings and male and female plainsong. Surprising here was the sheer depth of the

soundstage the Voice 22 cabinets created, unearthing a cavernous recording space. Yet also enjoyable was the scale of the performance, which sent violins soaring. And, above all, the Voice 22s captured the mood of the piece. I don't speak Latin, so have no idea what Goldsmith's massed choir is chanting, but it scared the hell out of me - as it should. ☺

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

The unflashy appearance of Simaudio's first loudspeaker carries over into its sound - this isn't a model that seeks to grab attention via a warm voicing or attacking treble. On the menu instead is refined musicality, the Voice 22 offering clarity and control all the way down to a low-end that's surprisingly potent for a modestly-sized cabinet. Now, how about a floorstander to go with the MOON 888 monoblock?

Sound Quality: 85%



ballad 'Come Away With Me' [Parlophone; 192kHz/24-bit] should be all about her close-mic'd, soft and silky vocal, but here it felt almost too much the star of the show.

GOOD OMEN

All things considered, however, it's this speaker's controlled and revealing nature that comes to the fore. There's no sign of a nasty edge to treble nor an obviously smoothed high-frequency response, and the two cabinets mesh well to create a soundstage with a precise central image. The sound is insightful and detailed, and this applies to the speaker's low-end performance too.

This was shown to fine effect by the supple acoustic bass of Red Hot Chili Peppers' 'Road Trippin', from their 1999 album *Californication* [Warner Bros. Records 9362-49530-5] and the solidity of the kick drums throughout the group's recent *Unlimited Love* set [Warner Bros. Records; Tidal Master].

A glance at the Voice 22's headline specification suggests a welcoming loudspeaker in terms