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Simaudio MOON Voice 22 Loudspeakers Review



Canadian audio electronics specialist Simaudio has ventured into new territory with the new £2,650 MOON Voice 22, the company's first foray into the loudspeaker market unveiled at this year's Munich High End show. This new shelf or stand mount speaker – measuring 200x350x290mm [WxHxD] – is designed to mate perfectly with the popular MOON ACE all-in-one music player while offering the company's audio know-how to those who fancy hooking up the Voice 22 to their existing equipment.

Although this review is primarily focused on this new loudspeaker, my review pair was auditioned extensively with the MOON ACE system as well as my usual kit. This is because the Voice 22 and ACE are offered by the UK distributor as a £5,699 package, giving a saving of £450 on the combined price of both products.

Simaudio tells us that the Voice 22 was conceived following the repeated question of what loudspeakers work best with MOON electronics, specifically the ACE, and to take the guesswork out of deciding which type of speaker to choose. After all, ACE stands for 'A Complete Experience', so with the Voice 22, you now have precisely that, apparently!



The one-brand-fits-all approach should appeal not only to those desiring high-quality music reproduction without all the faff of mix 'n' match but also to those with audiophile tendencies who appreciate that often overlooked aspect of system building – synergy. Renaissance Audio's John Carroll explained to me that the speaker. "has been tuned to take full advantage of the expressive midband of the MOON ACE system. This, and 6 ohm loading, which allows the ACE to deliver fifty percent more power and operate as a truly efficient system, allows the music to flow with an even greater sense of ease."



UP CLOSE

At a glance, the Voice 22 could be viewed as a traditional two-way, rear-ported speaker in a four-square box. However, that description doesn't really do it justice, as it comes with its own unique Hover Base, which enables the unit to 'float' – so it's effectively decoupled and acoustically isolated from any furniture onto which it might be placed. It sports a rubber underside to prevent scratching your precious sideboard or bookshelf but is detachable so the speakers can be placed upon dedicated stands. Simaudio also offers the bespoke Stand 22 (£495) to keep things firmly in the family.

While the floating base is designed for use in conjunction with furniture without causing damage, the speaker cabinet itself has no furniture-style aspirations, as there are no real-wood veneer options. Instead, you have a choice of either black or white high-gloss lacquer finishes which look lovely – just so long as no one leaves grubby fingerprints all over them!

Inside the cabinet, a patent-pending technology dubbed CGD (Curved Groove Damping) is used. This is designed to control panel resonance via polymer-filled grooves cut into the inner surfaces of the enclosure. At the rear of the cabinet is a bass reflex port that comes with a foam dampener to reduce output, which you'll need if using the speakers near a rear wall. Finally, a single set of sturdy speaker binding posts allows easy connection to the ACE or any other amplifier.



The driver complement consists of a 155mm woofer, assembled with a cast aluminium basket and mineral-filled polypropylene membrane, closely partnered with a tweeter constructed from a 29mm dome textile membrane with a large surround and incorporating what the manufacturer calls a

saturation-controlled motor system. This has a damped, non-reflective chamber to tame the rear output of the unit. The tweeter dome sits within its own waveguide, designed to allow wide dispersion and superior time alignment; it also allows for the lowish crossover point of 1.5kHz, we're told. Frequency response (+/- 3dB) is quoted as 55Hz to 24kHz, while the manufacturer claims the available frequency range (+/- 6dB) is 45Hz to 30kHz.

As the MOON ACE was launched way back in the before times – 2016 to be exact – a full review of its features isn't forthcoming here; however, if you are considering the complete ACE/Voice 22 package, I can tell you it's a wonderful all-in-one streamer and amplifier. It features a decent moving magnet phono stage for vinyl enthusiasts and a front-panel quarter-inch jack socket for headphone users.



The system is simple to set up and use and integrates with Simaudio's MiND app for streaming. I particularly like the OLED-type screen display, which is extremely clear yet can be dimmed or switched off completely. Rated at 50 watts per channel, the amplifier is no powerhouse, but as the Voice 22 has

been designed for perfect compatibility, this isn't an issue. For the purposes of this review, my pair of speakers sat on heavy Target stands with Hover Bases removed, positioned in free space. As per the manufacturer's suggestion, the supplied magnetic grilles were left off for serious listening.



THE LISTENING

The Voice 22 doesn't seek to impress with hyped treble and boom-boom bass, nor does it attempt to drag the listener onto the dance floor with an exaggerated boogie-factor. Unfortunately, those who like to be thrilled with sonic fireworks from the get-go might not have the patience to experience the more subtle, refined and understated nature of this speaker's presentational style. This is a pity, as the more time spent with the MOON system, the greater its many strengths appear.

No particular style is favoured over any other. The naturally balanced sound is equally at home with soft, delicate acoustic material as it is with hard-rocking amplified music and complex electronic pop; the Voice 22 is every bit the diplomat. The only way that this speaker seeks to bamboozle is in its scale, as it's a classic example of a smallish speaker with a bigger, more fulsome sound than you might envisage.

Bass output is on the generous side but not overblown and, in conjunction with the ACE, is comfortably controlled. Radiohead's Karma Police from OK Computer is incredibly bottom-heavy, often coming across as a turgid dirge on more wayward systems; however, the MOON combo kept those lower bass guitar notes in check while losing none of the impact and solidity of the kick drum. Paranoid Android from the same album made the most of the system's detail retrieval capabilities, showcasing the acoustic guitar and percussion at the start of the track without becoming overly explicit – as it frequently does through more brightly balanced speakers.



While the high-end is in no way subdued or muted, it's never glaringly obvious, vying for attention at the expense of the broader treble and midrange. By modern standards, it's ever so slightly soft sounding, which gets a thumbs-up from me as the clanking metallic sound of hard-domed tweeters can ruin the timbre of otherwise very capable loudspeakers. Speaking of which, the Voice 22's even-handedness allows for a thoroughly convincing portrayal of well-recorded acoustic instruments without the nasty grating edge that can – for example – make Yehudi Menuhin's violin sound like a screeching amateur is trying to play it.

One of my top test tracks for assessing a speaker's timbral accuracy is Nick Drake's *Pink Moon*, a stark acoustic guitar and voice piece with just a smattering of piano. While there's little in the way of low-end on the recording, the warmer tonal balance of the Voice 22 added a subtle thickening to the closely-mic'd vocal, making the performance all the more intimate for it.

Adding a rhythm section to proceedings and a play through saxophonist Wayne Shorter's fantastic 1966 Blue Note session, *Adam's Apple* was a joy. It sounded natural, well-balanced and free-flowing. The interplay between Shorter and pianist Herbie Hancock (along with bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Joe Chambers) was superbly portrayed. It had refined dynamic expression and an irresistible swing that was not the result of artifice from the speakers.

Of all the fine attributes of the Voice 22, the most impressive is its soundstaging, which is both wide and deep. Attention to detail when positioning the stereo pair is key here. But, when you get it right – toed-in with the tweeters at ear level – you're rewarded with a panoramic and cavernous image that's impossible to achieve through speakers with a more shut-in, two-dimensional soundscape.

This was evident spinning David Bowie's *Moonage Daydream*, which features some extreme seventies-tastic stereo panning, especially with the creation of a gigantic drum kit with each tom-tom assigned to its own stereo channel. Oftentimes, those ping-pong drum fills have my head turning like a centre-court spectator at Wimbledon, yet the generous sweet spot produced by the Voice 22 gave a more coherent picture without the dreaded hole in the middle.

Towards the end of my time with the MOON system, I felt compelled to try the speakers with my Naim NAIT XS3 integrated amplifier that usually powers my Rogers LS3/5a monitors. Space dictates that the speakers are situated relatively close to a rear wall, which is OK for the sealed-box LS3/5a but far from ideal for the ported Voice 22. The supplied foam bungs came into their own here. That said, after listening in free space, uncompromised by stifled bass output, it was clear that this isn't really the speaker's comfort zone. The reduction in bass had the effect of adding a mildly forward sound, which may also be exacerbated by the change in amplifier.

THE VERDICT

Simaudio's new MOON Voice 22 is a well-balanced loudspeaker with impeccable manners. It delivers a huge soundstage and scale that belies its relatively compact dimensions, telling it like it is without ramming it down your throat. There is much to be said for the synergy of the Voice 22/ACE combo – it offers easy, fluid music-making that is the preserve of well-matched, efficient audio systems.