

Equipment Report



Audiovector R 10 Arreté Loudspeaker

Danish Delight

Alan Sircom

The new Audiovector R 10 Arreté floorstanding loudspeaker succeeds the company's flagship, the R 11 Arreté. This model is nearly the same height but is slightly broader and deeper, costing about 85% of the price of its predecessor. From its factory on the outskirts of Copenhagen, Denmark, the company is one of the few loudspeaker brands that range from distinctly affordable bookshelf models to high-end statement tower designs.

The brand uniquely offers upgrades to owners of its R 1 stand-mount, R 6 floorstander, and R C center channel speaker as they progress from the Signature to the Avantgarde and then to the Arreté model. This does not apply to the R 8 and the newer R 10 floorstanding designs, which feature only Arreté-level components. Each improvement enhances clarity, detail, and listener engagement while maintaining Audiovector's signature tone. This consistency remains as you transition from the QR 1 SE bookshelf to the R 11 Arreté. With each step up, you receive "more" and "better"; such reliability is refreshing and rare.

There's a timeless quality to the R 10 Arreté design. Followers of the brand will notice a strong family resemblance to the rest of the R-Series. This is a positive aspect; companies often become "grandiose" when creating a flagship, overlooking the visual styling cues that people appreciate about the brand. As a result, there are no outriggers, top pods, oversized side cheeks, bulbous bass sections, or other visual missteps. It's a classic slim floorstander, simply taller and deeper in the brand's tradition. While the finishes are richer than those of the rest of the line, Audiovector pays close attention to detail even on the company's nursery slopes.

That family resemblance extends to the voicing of the R 10 Arreté. There is a completely understandable temptation to "read the market": creating a high-end design that either imitates the voicing of market leaders or consciously aims to fill the gaps in the market. Both approaches define the product's perfor-

mance by the sonic signature of other brands and rarely succeed more than once. They neither effectively clone the sound of the leaders nor carve out their own niche in the process. By sticking resolutely to its (visual and sonic) principles, Audiovector plants its voice firmly in the high-end audio stream. Instead of designing something cynical to cater to high-end trends, the brand enhances the high-end with its own sonic and visual signatures.

Staying with the visual, the distinctly "Scandiwegian" lines of the R 10 Arreté provide it with a timeless appeal. It is undoubtedly an Audiovector, featuring its tall, narrow-baffled, boat-backed cabinet, fanned base section, and selection of finishes. While "African Mahogany Crotch" may sound like something requiring six months of antibacterial ointment to treat, it refers to the part of the tree where the branches meet the trunk, resulting in a swirling pattern favored by high-end furniture makers.

From an audio perspective, a "tall and narrow" design can create bass issues. The cabinet lacks sufficient width to support bass drivers that deliver a full-range frequency response. Alternatives exist: Audiovector incorporates an isobaric chamber in many of its smaller R-Series floorstanders, while other companies feature side-firing bass units. However, in the R 10 Arreté, Audiovector showcases a "Line Array Bass System" with eight five-inch drivers offering almost half an inch of linear excursion. Together, these create a surface area comparable to a 15" woofer, producing an in-room bass response down to

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Specs & Pricing

Type: Rear-ported floorstanding loudspeaker

Drivers: 1.5" AMT N 51 (extreme tweeter), 1.5" AMT N 51 (tweeter), 6.5" AFC carbon sandwich cone (midrange), 6.5" AFC carbon sandwich cones (lower midrange), 8x 5" long-throw rear-mounted bass drivers

Crossover frequencies: 180Hz, 450Hz, 3kHz, 20kHz

Frequency response: 27Hz–53kHz ±2dB

Distortion: 0.15% at 90dB SPL

Sensitivity: 90.5dB/W

Impedance: 8 ohms

Dimensions: 14.3" x 63" x 24.6"

Weight: 199 lbs. each

Price: \$165,000 per pair

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Associated Equipment

Source component: Naim Audio ND555 with 555PS

Preamplifier: Gryphon Commander

Power amplifier: Gryphon Apex Stereo

Power conditioner: AudioQuest Niagara 7000 (source and preamplifier only)

Equipment support: Bassocontinuo Aeon X

Cables: Audiovector Freedom Grounding, Audiovector Zero Compression Arreté

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27Hz, with a midrange component that extends up to 2kHz. The bass array is positioned at the rear of the cabinet to prevent the R 10 Arreté from reaching nearly 10 feet in height. This Line Array Bass System configuration is also present in the R 8 Arreté, but in that loudspeaker, it functions more as a “rear-firing midrange.”

The Arreté-level components include the company’s unique version of an Air Motion Transformer tweeter, featuring its distinctive rear-radiation control. However, in this instance, it features two of these low-distortion tweeter units; the first covers a range from 3kHz to 53kHz, while the second provides additional ultra-high frequency reinforcement from 20kHz to 53kHz. Audiovector refrains from labeling this a “supertweeter” (preferring instead “Extreme Tweeter,” which sounds like a reality TV show about loudspeaker building) because it considers such devices external components to a loudspeaker. Nonetheless, it smooths out an already refined upper mid and treble...like a supertweeter. Audiovector calls their integrated dual-tweeter system “Dual AMT Hyper Tweeter.”

Beneath the two tweeters are twin 165mm AFC carbon-sandwich lower midrange drivers and a dedicated midrange. AFC

stands for the new “Accelerated Force Concept,” specifically developed for the R 10 Arreté. This innovative drive unit enhances the diaphragm’s initial movement and features a new concertina suspension made from natural neoprene rubber, titanium voice coils with carbon fiber, and natural resin-sandwich midrange cones alongside

distortion-controlled pole pieces. These new AFC designs will likely trickle down to subsequent generations of the R-Series.

This driver layout aligns well with the broader context of Audiovector’s characteristic sonic signature, which has remained unchanged from 1979 to now. But what defines that sonic signature? Several



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years ago, the company's founder, Ole Klifoth, described his motivation: "I wanted to recreate the kind of sound I experienced in Tivoli's Concert Hall, 13th row, middle, from where I could take in both the overview and the details. Or in Jazzhus Montmartre, sitting about 3–4 metres (10'–13') from the musicians. I loved the atmosphere of the jazz club. I found out that I could not find a speaker that could reproduce all of this. That is when I decided—because I was young and adventurous and did not know if it was impossible—that it should be my project."

This music-centric perspective remains true today, and the design team—including Ole and several new members who learned the craft under his guidance—continues to bring that realism into the home. The R 10 Arreté is the best example of that music-oriented development thus far. However, the company employs the same physics models and measurement techniques used throughout the audio industry. Audiovector also follows the maxim "if it measures well and sounds bad, it's bad" when designing new products. Loudspeakers must perform well both on the bench and in the home.

This art-meet-science approach, combined with timeless design, does not require reinventing the wheel every few years. As a result, many of the new flagship's more innovative features merge established technologies. For instance, the teardrop-shaped cabinet is standard across the entire R-Series. This shape is more than merely decorative, as it reduces the need for excessive damping material. However, in the R 10 Arreté, this cabinet is made from vacuum-formed high-density hardwood fiberboard with extensive internal bracing. Additionally, 6061-grade aluminum baffles minimize vibrations, enhancing an already acoustically inert structure.

Naturally, a loudspeaker at this level will utilize the best possible components throughout, best illustrated through the medium of crossover networks. Nothing in that circuit is left to chance. It employs precision film resistors instead of wire-wound, optimized copper coils in a dynamic feed-forward layout, doubly cryogenic polypropylene dielectric, tin-flashed copper-foil capacitors, and Audiovector X Duelund bypass capacitors. The R 10 Arreté is also the first outing for the second generation of the company's Freedom Grounding system. This system wicks unwanted currents away from the driver chassis, performs well in many settings and has been enhanced. It's more than worth experimenting with.

This loudspeaker needs adequate power for optimal performance, which isn't an issue at this level, just an observation. Although the Audiovector R 10 Arreté has a sensitivity rating and impedance that suggest it's not meant to be an amp crusher, it truly shines with a power amplifier offering substantial current. The brand has historically collaborated with Naim Audio, and amplifiers that can deliver strong peak current outputs bring these loudspeakers to life. It doesn't matter if the amplifier is solid-state or "hollow state" as long as it can provide a few good amps when needed—fellow Danish brand Gryphon literally and figuratively speaks the same language. While the Gryphon Apex stereo power amplifier used in this test might look oversized for these sleek tower loudspeakers, it is more than a match in sonic and performance terms.



However, matching the loudspeaker to suitable amplifiers is straightforward, thanks to a three-position setting located at the rear of the R 10 Arreté. Instead of simply boosting or cutting the treble or bass, this switch adjusts the Audiovector to accommodate the damping factor of various amplifiers. Position one is designated for medium damping (which suits most solid-state amp designs), position two is for low-damping tube amplifiers, and position three is intended for high-power solid-state amps with a corresponding high damping factor. A similar system was seen in the recent Trapeze Reimagined from the brand. This switch also permits a degree of experimentation and subtle tone shaping, as you can slightly soften or harden the bass by intentionally selecting the incorrect setting (nothing

will go "pop" as a result).

There are likely two types of prospective R 10 Arreté owners: long-time Audiovector enthusiasts seeking the brand's best and those looking for a high-end system combining elegance and exceptional sound quality. Both groups are exceptionally well catered to. The R 10 Arreté consistently outperforms other Audiovector models. Its extended, unforced treble, open midrange, tuneful bass, and excellent driver integration—a hallmark of every model from the QR 1 SE onwards—are all present in the R 10 Arreté. In other words, if you own an Audiovector R8 Arreté or the older R11 Arreté, you may not need a demonstration; the R 10 Arreté retains the core characteristics of either speaker and enhances every aspect of their performance. I'd still ar-

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gue an audition is vital, but if you like your existing loudspeaker and want “more” and “better,” the R 10 Arreté ticks all the boxes.

Meanwhile, those entering the high-end audio scene for the first time will encounter a loudspeaker that delivers room-filling sound without overwhelming the space. Inevitably, these prospective buyers will choose loud, bass-heavy tracks during a demonstration (it’s a psychology thing... almost all of us do this), which will likely seal the deal. These tall, slim, elegant loudspeakers pack a real punch. It doesn’t matter whether your “loud and bass-heavy” track features an orchestra performing Strauss’ *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (although probably not the Portsmouth Sinfonia’s version), Basie’s rhythm section, John Bonham ‘giving it some beans,’ or Infected Mushroom’s powerful trance-metal synth-beat. The effect remains the same.

For me, it’s ‘End of the Road’ from Infected Mushroom’s *Legend of the Black Schwarma* [HOM-Mega/Perfecto]. I’m familiar with this track; the electronic bass drumbeats are always both deep and rapid. Yet, they combine a punchy attack with remarkable depth, setting them apart from others. It’s not merely about speed and fury; the intensity of those nearly square-wave bass beats send chills down your spine. Paired with those glass-shattering breaks, the music becomes exhilarating and lively... just as it should be.

Move away from the crowd-pleasers, and you will encounter an exceptional loudspeaker, very much aligned with the Audiovector tradition. That AMT tweeter array, for instance, provides the R 10 Arreté with an effortless and fluid upper midrange and treble that makes most dome tweeters sound somewhat unbalanced; some soft dome tweeters seem to be relaxed almost to the point of lethargy by comparison. Many of the “materials science” tweeters (which feature vapor-deposited unobtainium oxide on a dome crafted from pure nonsense) perform little better, with the worst attempting their best “nails on a chalkboard” impression. The AMT balances the extremes, delivering a treble that is as unforced as it is extended into the most sensitive ear regions. This results in an expansive soundstage, with midrange and high-frequency performance so unperturbed that you could play Lou Reed’s *Metal Machine Music* and Yoko Ono albums without the need for rehab afterwards. Almost.

As with all Audiovectors, this design consciously avoids being a starkly neutral loudspeaker. A slight warmth in the lower midrange benefits the sound, adding body to both musicians and voices, which makes them more exciting and alluring. Most importantly, this warmth never detracts from the music and does not imply the cabinet is participating in the performance. It reflects that “benchmarked against real music” characteristic once again. A notable example is “Sunson” by Nils Frahm [*All Melody*, Erased Tapes], which adroitly blends found instruments and electronics with genuine weight and macrodynamics in the individual sounds. This presentation is unlike what you typically hear. There’s enhanced precision in the bass and upper midrange due to this characteristic, not hindered by it.

On the other hand, throw it a tempest—make that a “7-empst” by Tool [*Fear Inoculum*, Volcano]—and it’s all good. The drums take on a menacing tone, the guitars play with intensity and graunch, and the slightly scooped vocals come through clear-

ly. It’s like a highly detailed musical threat assessment—in a good way. After almost 16 minutes of this track, you need a breather and a place to hide.

One of the issues I have with the best in audio is that it sometimes stumbles over lesser quality in music. This might be self-sealing (goes the argument) because no one spends hundreds of thousands on loudspeakers just to play rap through them. However, that doesn’t sit well with me, so imagine how delighted I was to hear just how good the Audiovector R 10 Arreté sounded with Young MC’s “Know How” [*Stone Cold Rhyming*, Rhino]. This 1989 old-school rap (revived through its use in the movie *Baby Driver*) features some of the most articulate, fast-paced lyrics out there and highlights the loudspeaker’s intelligibility in its most crucial range. It excels in that regard but doesn’t allow the scratching and the now-primitive sampling to detract from the performance.

Other tracks showcase just how impressive this loudspeaker is. “Go” by Public Service Broadcasting [*The Race for Space*, Test Card Records] combines atmospheric synths, live-sounding drums and band, along with samples from NASA’s Houston base from 1969 in breathtaking fashion. We all know what happened and still wait in trepidation for “Houston. Tranquillity Base. The Eagle Has Landed.” It’s captivating, and—for most men of a certain age, who have trouble expressing any feelings apart from “itchy”—emotionally moving.

Then there are the loudspeakers adroit rhythmic

qualities that are best expressed through King Curtis and his band performing “Memphis Soul Stew” [*Live At Fillmore West*, ATCO]. You are captivated by the rhythm section featuring Jerry Jemmott on bass, Bernard Purdie on drums, and the late Cornell Dupree on guitar, which evokes the sound of a train; it’s an undeniable rhythmic masterclass, and in this instance, it’s impossible to resist tapping a foot along with the music. This knack for timing has long been a hallmark of Audiovector, and the R 10 Arreté does nothing to upset the rhythmic applectart.

My listening notes on this loudspeaker were extremely scattered, resembling Olivia Colman’s award acceptance speeches more than actual notes, in fact. (“Lady Blackbird...Oooh!” “Webster Lewis...waaaagh!”) This boils down to a loudspeaker that is as flexible and enjoyable as Audiovector can produce, and that’s saying something. Sure, those who prefer their treble “zingy,” their midrange “forward,” and their bass “majestic” will not appreciate the Audiovector R 10 Arreté. However, if you view those terms as euphemisms for zingy, pushy, and sluggish, then welcome aboard!

Even from a Danish company known for its excellence, the R 10 Arreté stands out! It combines a distinctly Danish aesthetic with a loudspeaker that makes all the right noises. While it can be challenging for brands offering such a vast range of loudspeakers to satisfy high-end enthusiasts, if any loudspeaker can establish itself in the high-end market based on sonic excellence, it’s the Audiovector R 10 Arreté. **tas**