

Audiovector SR 6 Avantgarde II

Mikkel Gige

The SR6 series from Audiovector has had a minor update. As a natural continuation of our previous reviews of models from the SR3 and SR1 series, we will now take a closer look at one of the larger models.

SR 6 was the first of Audiovector's S-series models and is thus the source of the technology found in the smaller SR 3-series and SR 1-series models. Like the other series, SR 6 has also gone through both the S and Si-incarnations. But SR 6 now has had what could best be described as a simple update.

The update is minor and consists of a lighter diaphragm in the AMT tweeter which makes it easier to control. At the same time, the upper bass has been improved. And that's about it, and therefore it is not a new model, but more a version II.

SR6's cabinet is radically different from that of the SR3-series, for here it is divided into two completely separate parts, with two separate bass ports on the front. The lower part houses an 8" bass driver, specially developed for this purpose. It is mounted at the bottom of the cabinet to create a better coupling to the room. This unit covers the deepest bass below 80 Hz, and is a built-in subwoofer which eases the job for the other drivers.

In the upper part of the cabinet, the units are the same as in SR 3 Avantgarde, but the function is different. For SR 6 is a "3½"-way speaker, with the upper bass and midrange drivers cut off at the bottom, where the big bass driver works alone. The upper midrange driver works primarily in the midrange, but has a soft sloping down towards the big bass driver's working area. Here the middle woofer driver supplements as a "filler" device, where it fills out the bass range between 80 and 300 Hz and it is thus "the ½" device in the 3½-way configuration. Again a very special way to construct a speaker, but this is not surprising, coming from the Klifoths. It is innovation at a whole new level!

Otherwise, the upper part of the SR 6 cabinet is very similar to that of the SR 3-series with acoustical subdivisions where the bass flow is controlled through four small openings attenuated by special foam plugs. And the tweeter sits in its own tubular casing that goes out through the back, where it is vented, just like the other models in the SR-series. But the midrange also has a kind of vent at the rear, where the rear radiation is controlled by a "valve" consisting of foam and holes in the profile on the back.

Another feature is the rigid chassis, both top and bottom, made of a matrix-like structure, with braces supporting each other, and small chambers that control the flow of sound inside the chassis. In the lower chamber, one of the braces is made with a circular opening for an additional active bass down here, in a so-called compound system. An interesting detail is that the SR 6's are 20% larger compared to SR 3-series but without dominating the room, although they are BIG! However, they include longer spikes, and therefore they are very easy to work with, even when in place where they have to play. Fit and finish of the cabinet and the devices are of the same high caliber as the smaller series.

Setup

I will describe the setup of the SR 6 Avantgarde speakers in detail as they demand some extra attention for optimal performance. This is definitely not a negative thing, but only goes to show that you have to take your time if you want the full benefit. If you do, you are fully rewarded. The support I received from Audiovector proves that they know their products very well!

The speakers were first placed using the factory-fitted plastic feet that also protect the threads for the spikes. These plastic feet make it easier to move the 40-kilo speakers to the basic position with respect to toe-in and the distance to the back wall. Once this was done, the spikes were mounted, which definitely is a necessity for the bass to couple 100% correctly to floor and room.

At the same time, the front spikes were used to angle the speakers slightly backwards, for the sake of the acoustic phase in front of the speaker, which particularly affects the sense of space and soundstage. SR 6 Avantgarde is a big speaker, and is built to operate in any size room, often with longer distance between the speakers and the listening position. -For reasons of limited space the sweet spot in my listening room is located at approximately 2 meters from the speakers.

The cables are attached to the midrange terminals and taken to the bass and treble using the supplied "bridges" that are made of the same material as the terminals. This has turned out to be the best solution with all the SR-series speakers we have tested. Audiovector SR speakers can be used for bi / tri-wiring / amping, but single-wiring has proven fully sufficient.

Listening impressions

The Audiovector SR 6 Avantgarde IIs are exceptional loudspeakers - formidably good. They possess a calmness and dynamic headroom that I have only experienced in very few - and often very expensive - other speakers. At this point I can already reveal that they are among the very best speakers I've had a visit from! A story that supports this: Already during the initial setup the SR 6 Avantgardes revealed that the azimuth of my Benz Ebony Pickup needed a light trimming. Normally I do not hear this directly, I use a gauge for adjustment! This goes to show how great these speakers are. Yes, one can almost say that channel balance is perfect!

And then there's the bass. It is simply among the weightiest I have experienced in this category! It goes as deep as a submarine, and this became evident already during setup. It has weight and solidity to a degree that I have never experienced before, without being spongy or soft, for it was at least as good as what I've experienced with Dynaudio's Confidence C2 II. When the SR 6's were put on spikes, the sound tightened and all aspects of the sound fell in place. Both detail, nuance and precision were tightened. Before they were put on spikes, the bass was emphasized too much, but once on spikes the bass was well balanced. And thus Dynaudio Confidence C2 II was beaten as bass-master, for SR 6 Avantgarde II can be quite the same, but with even more weight and accurate reproduction of the lowest frequencies.

The midrange is even better than what I have experienced with the smaller SR models. And here we were already close to Dynaudio Confidence C2 II level. But qua the more weighty bass, especially male voices also attain more weight, increasing the naturalness of the music even more. On the whole, the feel of presence is exceptionally good, and you can almost see the faces of the performers. I simply cannot put a finger on anything in the reproduction of the midrange of SR 6 Avantgarde!

This is mainly due to the new tweeter with the lighter diaphragm. And here I am on my bended knees out of respect for the new tweeter; it is at least as good as the amazing tweeter of Dynaudio Confidence C2 II! And that means that the treble has lots of air – to a degree that really is rare. Treble and midrange represent a gentleness and fluidity, which really enhances the enjoyment of the music. And this is quite different than previously heard from SR 3-series models and the SR 1 Avantgarde. Not that they did not do it well, but this is just a completely different world.

It also means that the SR 6 Avantgardes are easier to match with the electronics, simply because they are better and more "compatible". And it's the same with music on your turntable or CD player for SR 6 Avantgarde forgives the bad recordings, while in no way holding back on presenting the technical aspects perfectly.

Compared to SR 3 Avantgarde Arreté that can be likened to a Formula 1 racer, the SR 6 Avantgarde is more coherent and complete, and can both run fast and accurately, but has also the power and headroom to never lose track or frown at the source signal. It can best be described as a complete Gran Touring sports car which can also run the long distance with lots of comfort. Or to put it another way ... it is the best of SR 3 Arreté and Xavian XN360 combined, plus a little more, all at once!

And we have not yet mentioned the technical aspects of the sound from SR 6 Avantgarde. When the acoustic stage in front of the speakers should be checked, I usually play two pop songs with Sugar Babes and Kylie Minogue. On one track, bells pan from left to right and back again. Only two other speakers have previously been able to do this to perfection, but SR 6 Avantgarde II can also! The second track features some blip sounds that move up and down the speakers. Hitherto I have only heard electrostatic speakers cope with this, but here the SR 6 Avantgarde also comes incredibly close to the target. So close that it would take a direct comparison to determine which is better.

When the SR 6'es were angled backwards all this fell into place, and the height of the soundstage increased further. After this fine-tuning they delivered a sound that in no way is overshadowed by Dynaudio Confidence C2 II. The locations of the performers are very precise, and the reverb of The Magic Flute is fantastic with a great echo from the theater space. Generally, the soundstage is a little closer, and the depth may therefore be less. However, that is not the case - we are just closer to the stage.

Especially Q-sound from Roger Waters' Amused to Death benefited from the fact that the acoustic stage fell into place and was absolutely perfect. I could simply hear the details more clearly than ever before, and the instruments were reproduced even more sharply and accurately. On one track you hear a sleigh pulled by horses, which glides through the soundstage. Here it started just to the left of the speaker as normal, but almost 50 meters behind at the same time, and continued further out to the right of the other speaker than normal. The phase is exceptionally well controlled!

Add to this an exceptional dynamism which both pulls the little details and nuances, but also kicks violently when the music demands it. And although SR 6 Avantgarde has a higher sensitivity than most speakers, they love power in large quantities and respond promptly with a kick when you open the throttle on the power amplifier.

Summary

I must admit that I was a bit skeptical when I got SR 6 Avantgarde II to test. But also a little curious because it is the source of the technique used in SR 3 and SR 1. But they also cost well over EUR 14000 - and for that kind of money they need to be nearly perfect... And not only was my skepticism proven wrong ... I was also blown backwards as they were trimmed more and more in place.

I can reveal that they are better than both SR 3 Arreté and Xavian XN360. These have until now ranked second of the best speakers that have played in the listening room, only surpassed by Dynaudio Confidence C2 II which has remained number one. But that is over now. The Dynaudios must now share first place with Audiovector SR 6 Avantgarde II! For I cannot say that one is better than the other. They both have things that they do differently than the other, without either one of them claiming the victory.

Only one thing speaks against the wider dissemination of these amazing Audiovector speakers - their price! But regardless of that, they only leave the listening room to return at a later date as new reference! And therefore they also get the label "Editors Choice" - for Audiovector SR6 Avantgarde II is on a shared first place, one of the best set of speakers that have been visiting my listening room

This review is translated from the Danish website hifi4all.dk, with permission from the author and publisher, Mikkel Gige.
