



Simply superlative

With technology drawn from its flagship Chronosonic XVX, the Sasha V is the stunning new launch from Wilson

Those of an historical bent will know that Wilson Audio's Sasha V isn't merely its fourth-generation Sasha. This two-box floorstander is a carefully developed, decades-long evolution of a brilliant initial concept.

Founder David A Wilson's design was not the first to place bass drivers in one enclosure with the tweeter and/or midrange in a module perched on top. But it has refined that layout, not least by ensuring that the tiltable top module can be positioned precisely for perfect time alignment. What started out as the Wilson Audio Tiny Tot (WATT) prototype of 1985, and which was swiftly joined at the decade's end by the much-needed Puppy bass driver enclosure, has matured into a £54,000-per-pair high-end speaker of manageable size and luxurious finish.

The Sasha V sits in between the Yvette and Alexia V in a seven-model range of floorstanders. It is situated three from the bottom, and is the least expensive Wilson speaker with an adjustable mid/treble section. By contrast, its smaller siblings – the SabrinaX and Yvette – are housed in single-piece enclosures.

Leaving the issue of new models replacing old, owners of the Sasha DAW who wish to upgrade should be aware that Wilson (like Transparent Audio, McIntosh and some others) has a 'buy-back' scheme to encourage trade-ins and so also offers certified, pre-owned products. Expect to see a few pairs of Sasha DAWs appearing on the market at tempting prices...

Wilson has never ignored the need for domestic harmony and the Sasha V is offered in three levels of paint finish: the standard range of four colours including the dark Galaxy Gray, the lighter GT Silver, a taupe-y hue called Quartz plus Carbon if basic black is preferred.

Depending on how house proud the customer is, Wilson then presents

what are effectively unlimited choices, from its own in-house, automobile-standard paint department. For a 5 percent premium, 12 additional 'Upgrade' colours are available including the vivid Fly Yellow, Classic Orange and Pur Sang Rouge. Ten colours form the Premium Pearl range for 10 percent extra cost – the Blue Orchid Pearl is gorgeous – and custom colours can be negotiated, including the bespoke 'True Gold', seen here, which uses real gold flakes.

Wilson Audio has grown this aesthetic flexibility since the first WATT prototype appeared in base paint and then with wooden side panels. The look has been refined over the decades, accompanied by a litany of confusing names because the Puppy had to catch up with the WATT. The pair was finally grouped as an entity to form the 'WATT Puppy System 5' so we might well regard 2023's Sasha V as – drum roll – the WATT Puppy System 12.

In reality, the 'WATT Puppy' naming ended with System 8, when the next incarnation, Sasha W/P (W/P standing

DETAILS
PRODUCT Wilson Audio Sasha V
ORIGIN USA
TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker
WEIGHT 111kg
DIMENSIONS (WxHxD) 368 x 1,145 x 608mm
FEATURES • 25mm doped silk fabric tweeter • 178mm paper pulp composite midband driver • 2x 203mm paper pulp bass drivers • Quoted sensitivity: 88dB/1W/1m (4ohm)
DISTRIBUTOR Absolute Sounds Ltd.
WEBSITE wilsonaudio.com absolutesounds.com

for, you guessed it, 'WATT Puppy'), replaced it. The Sasha W/P was followed by the Sasha Series 2, then the Sasha DAW. This made them respectively Systems 9, 10 and 11 in the old naming system. In each case, the name changes signified important model refinements, whether of the drive units, enclosure materials, hardware, crossover modifications or other improvements, all of which apply to the move from DAW to V.

Additional knowledge gained in the development of the Chronosonic XVX, Alexx V and Alexia V has been used to refine the performance of the Sasha, which has been of the highest calibre for a small monitor astride a bass driver module since 1985.

Also key to the Wilson way is the development of custom materials. It employs a mix in its cabinet construction, with X-Material and V-Material used as they best suit the enclosure. Both are resin-based composites with density, stiffness and self-damping properties adjusted for application. The company explains: "X-Material is a denser, harder and more monotonic material, which is ideal for structural stability, for woofer and tweeter coupling and internal bracing. Alternatively, V-Material offers better internal damping and was formulated to be nested into X-Material."

This is critical when dealing with speakers of two or more modules. V-Material was first employed in the

Few, if any, other speakers have ever impressed as much as this creation

Chronosonic XVX's gantry. That speaker, too, was the first beneficiary of Wilson Audio's purchase of RelCap although it's the Sasha V that debuts the newly developed copper version of the AudioCapX-WA capacitor in the tweeter crossover.

From the Alexx V, the Sasha V gained the Convergent Synergy Carbon (CSC) tweeter as well as the stainless-steel-and-V-Material 'Acoustic Diode' spike system, which provides superior anchoring of the speaker. The latter can be purchased by owners of non-Wilson Audio loudspeakers, with adapters for this purpose.

What it takes to make a system with dynamic drivers vanish is an absence of resonance, correct time alignment and the usual requirements of low distortion or coloration, wide frequency response and superb dispersion. ▶



IN SIGHT



BOXING CLEVER

Time was that all loudspeaker cabinets were simple wooden boxes, glued together from particle board, MDF or birchply. Now, with our improved understanding of how internal standing waves and panel resonances colour the sound, cabinets are no longer engineered simply to contain the volume of air within and support the drivers without. Cabinet shape, bracing, damping and materials all have a crucial bearing on the final sound, from ply to metal to composites and the mineral-loaded polymer substrates used by Wilson Audio. The fact that many of these new materials are also better suited to accepting automotive paint finishes and layers

of lacquer is just another tick in the 'benefits box'.

Wilson's earliest speakers were fashioned from wood but it has subsequently implemented various grades of an epoxy resin, loaded with crushed granite, carbon and pulp. These are the S, M, X and V-Materials featured in the last four generations of Wilson speakers.

The ability to 'tune' the density, rigidity and hardness of this composite, by varying the mix ratios, results in sheets that are best suited for large bass cabinets, smaller mid/treble enclosures and other roles, for example in the V-material inset into the top of the woofer enclosure to better support the mid/treble mounting hardware.

Wilson Audio – like Allison, Bose for the 901, Quad's ESLs and others as obsessive about precise positioning – has championed time alignment for as long as the brand has existed.

Sound quality

And the Sasha V is utterly majestic. Lou Rawls' *At Last* is not an album chosen for matters of scale or soundstage recreation, as it's mainly recorded with small ensembles, but the inherent illustriousness of both Rawls' and Dianne Reeves' vocals are amplified and showcased brilliantly.

The Sasha V seems to redefine what a system can do for the recreation of space. Spatial presentation is a separate matter from, say, bass extension or vocal authenticity, but it

is a sonic artefact which cannot exist without accurate reproduction: transparency, clarity, detail, neutrality, tonal balance and other elements all play their part. Because the Wilson seems to evaporate, leaving only the sound and no clues as to their points of origin, it is a case of the (musical) truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth with Rawls' title track.

But what of muddier, more cluttered CDs, such as the tribute to Buffalo Springfield, *Five Way Street*? The fact that 21 different artists in the same number of different studios assembled this album suggests inconsistency. But what proves useful is the clutter: the waves of guitars, the ferocity of the vocals, the undeniable passion in the performances.



HOW IT COMPARES

If you cannot quite stretch to the superlative Sasha V then there are several key flagship floorstanders you should get to hear. KEF's £30k Blade One Meta gets closer than almost any loudspeaker to the ideal of a full-range 'point source' while PS Audio's similarly priced aspen FR30 (HFC 490) offers an exquisite blend of planar-magnetic mid and treble with alloy-coned dynamic bass drivers and ABRs. The Signature version of B&W's 801 D4, at £45k, takes the brand's iconic range-topper to new levels of hi-res musical performance. Also turning up the heat on the Sasha V is PMC's 'tower of power' fact fenestria at £64k and Magico's exquisite S5 MKII three-way floorstander at £61k. All these brands have their own design philosophy and, to an extent, 'house sound' but, arguably, for all their individual strengths, none quite wrap you in living, breathing music with the magic and majesty of the Sasha V.

Given that the Sasha V is a creator of a massive, open, unobstructed playground for the music, this disc can challenge its retrieval of detail, and its ability to 'de-clutter' the layers of sound. All it takes is Byrds Of A Feather's reimagining of *Bluebird*, with the requisite guitar smorgasbord, to appreciate that the Sasha V can untangle those layers, so even in the stringed onslaught a keen ear can tell the makes of the guitars. It's an exemplary case of juggling tonal accuracy, detail and attack.

What of the hunger for fast transients and bass slam? The dearth of any distortion and coloration as often brought on by too-high a volume simply doesn't happen with this fantastic loudspeaker. If anything, it proves rather naughty, encouraging indecent playback levels that will most likely cause complaints from the neighbours in most circumstances. The stomping on The Dave Clark Five's *Bits And Pieces* and *Glad All Over* can be felt even through a ground floor of utter solidity. But that's just decibels. What proves so memorable is the amount of detail being uncovered in these 60-year-old, mono recordings which are so familiar that to have them recreated as if one were actually in the studio as they were being laid down by the band is both a thrilling and truly humbling experience.

Conclusion

The word "majestic" has already cropped up in this review, but in all honesty, we could easily and justifiably heap superlative upon superlative into the text when it comes to the Sasha V.

In our experience few, if any, other loudspeakers have ever impressed to match this wonderful Wilson creation. But don't just take our word for it, come along to the UK Hi-Fi Show *Live* at the end of September and experience the magic for yourself ●

Hi-FiChoice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★

EASE OF DRIVE

★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★

LIKE: Everything bar the high price

DISLIKE: Absolutely nothing

WE SAY: Simply awesome. Time to start saving those pennies

★★★★★

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