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Wilson Audio WATT/Puppy 50th Anniversary Edition: The Legend Returns



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REVIEW BY JOSÉ VICTOR HENRIQUES

The new WATT/Puppy encapsulates 50 years of history and evolution of an icon that defined an era—my era. It has been with me throughout my entire career as an audio critic.

As Manuel Freire once sang, 'There is no axe that can cut the root of thought', and Lavoisier famously remarked, 'In nature, nothing is created, nothing is changed, everything is transformed'. These two axiomatic truths also resonate with the rebirth of Wilson Audio's most iconic speaker.

Dave Wilson originally created the WATT in 1986, as a tool for sound engineers like him. By 1989, he had paired it with the Puppy bass module, transforming the two into a full-range system for commercial use.



The Wilsons, a happy family: Dave, Daryl and Sheryl. Daryl's public debut as Wilson Audio's team member at the presentation of WATT/Puppy System 7 (New York, 2002).

Over the years, the WATT/Puppy evolved through several iterations, culminating in System 8 and followed by the Sasha W/P. Interestingly, there was no System 4 due to tetraphobia—a fear of the number 4 in Chinese culture, where it sounds similar to the word for death in Mandarin, which is bad for business.

Few speakers have withstood the test of time as the WATT/Puppy has, evolving through incremental improvements in design (mainly internal volume), drivers, crossovers, and cabinet materials. However, Daryl Wilson thoughtfully transformed the 50th Anniversary edition while remaining true to the original, as if guided by nature itself, carrying on his father's legacy.

The WATT/Puppy has been my lifelong companion as an audio critic, and I'd like to share with you a few photos of key moments in our journey together, culminating in the



Dave Wilson shows the WATT/Puppy System 8 to the press (Vegas, 2007)

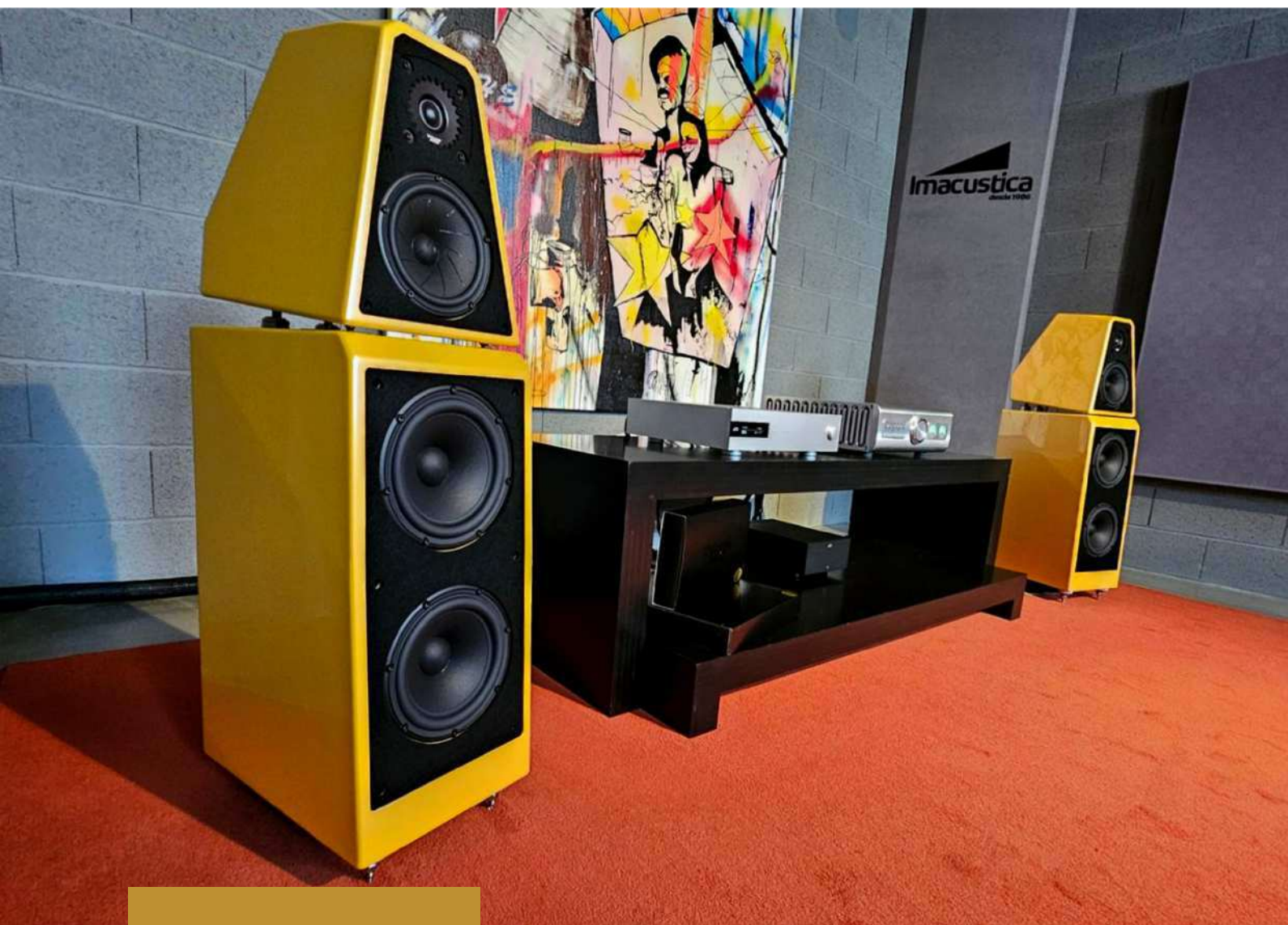
unveiling of this commemorative model at High-End 2024 in Munich.

A project born of noble heritage

The 50th Anniversary edition stays true to the angular two-box design of its predecessors. The WATT, a mid/high-frequency monitor, rests atop the Puppy bass module, with its modular design intended to isolate high frequencies from bass vibrations—a groundbreaking concept at the time. The 2024 edition pays homage to this

legacy with modern technological refinements and a touch of modernity.

Wilson has used its exclusive materials: X-material for the enclosures; S-material for the WATT baffle; and V-material on the Puppy top for better vibration isolation. These composite materials are designed to create an acoustically inert structure, minimising the resonances of the enclosure and allowing the loudspeakers to work at their peak. The built-in bubble level, adjustable spike and slanted baffle ensure precise time alignment between the WATT and Puppy modules, a testament to Wilson Audio's quest for sonic precision.



The 50th anniversary WATT/Puppy boasts Wilson's most advanced loudspeaker technology inherited from the Sasha V

High-tech loudspeakers

The 50th anniversary WATT/Puppy also boasts Wilson's most advanced loudspeaker technology inherited from the Sasha V. The WATT features a 1-inch Convergent Synergy Carbon tweeter and a 7-inch AlNiCo QuadraMag midrange speaker, designed to offer clarity and detail in their working frequencies. The Puppy module, responsible for low-frequency performance, includes two 8-inch speakers with treated cellulose pulp cones, delivering firm, articulate bass that integrates perfectly with the upper registers.

The crossover uses AudioCapX-WA capacitors, exclusive to Wilson Audio, for better low-level resolution. The resulting sound is incredibly transparent, revealing even the subtlest details of a recording.

Sasha V in a WATT/Puppy body

The new speaker is thus a Sasha V in the body of a WATT/Puppy, as it uses exactly the same drivers. The difference is in size, weight, and price. And, of course, the bass extension. If you have a large room and a deep wallet, go for the Sasha V. If you have a medium-sized room and want to save around 12,000 euros, the new WATT/Puppy will do the trick.

I first listened to it at Imacustica's Auditorium 2, which is 30 m². It was paired with a dCS Bartók as the source and a Dan D'Agostino Progression integrated for amplification. When I left, I said to myself, I hadn't heard such a clean, transparent, balanced sound in these premises in a long time, even though the 'burn-in' process had only started 24 hours ago.



Despite the gorgeous custom Saffron Pearl colour, the speakers had an extraordinary ability to vanish from the room, leaving me alone with the music.

A rare listening experience

When I sat down to listen to the WATT/Puppy, I realised I was in for a treat. Despite the gorgeous custom Saffron Pearl colour (you can have them in any colour you want, for a fee), the speakers had an extraordinary ability to vanish from the room, leaving me alone with the music. The soundstage was immersive, with precise imaging: the instruments and voices were placed precisely where they should be.

What impressed me the most was the speaker's dynamic range. It effortlessly handled everything, from the subtlest vibration of piano strings to a full orchestra's harmonic thunder.

The bass response was particularly outstanding. While WATT/Puppy has always been known for its tight,

controlled bass, the 2024 model goes one step further, or, shall I say, lower. The dual 8-inch woofers deliver deep, agile bass with a sense of impact that never overshadows the rest of the frequency spectrum. Whether you are listening to classical music, jazz or rock, the WATT/Puppy always delivers a balanced and cohesive performance.

The Damnation of Faust

Ricardo Franassovici once told me that he played Madonna's 'Like a Virgin', not to listen to it, but to 'burn-in' speakers all night. At Imacustica, when I entered the room, Berlioz's 'The Damnation of Faust' was playing. 'It played all night', Manuel Dias, Imacustica's CEO, told me.



Digital source: dCS Bartok



The built-in bubble level, adjustable spike and slanted baffle ensure precise time alignment.

I vividly recall a memorable audition of 'Faust' we did together in 2005 at an audiophile's home in Águeda, which I wrote about in an article entitled 'Paradise Exists,' published in DNA. The audition featured Wilson Audio Alexandria speakers. Here is an excerpt in English:

'The brass ensemble cut with powerful claws through the thick web of symphonic sound woven by the terrifying timpani, the demonic voices, the shimmering woodwinds and the raging strings.'

Even though the speakers were now the smaller Wilson Audio WATT/Puppy model, not the huge Alexandria, I still think that most home audio loudspeaker systems would have to make a deal with the devil

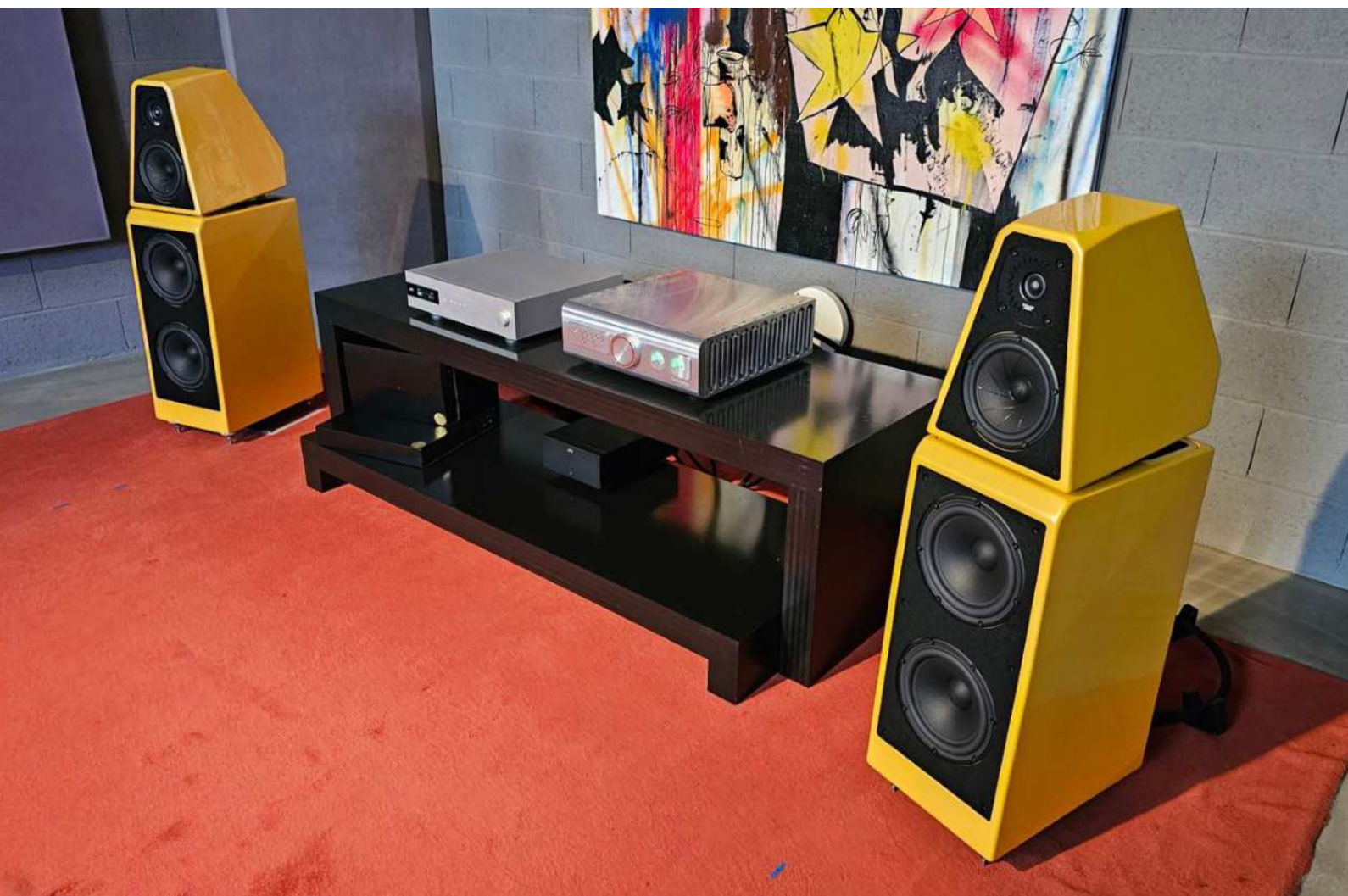
to match the WATT/Puppy musical impact, attack, transparency, and expansive soundstage of this performance without making significant compromises.

I recently discovered an album that has haunted me for weeks: Sara Bareilles' 'Brave Enough: Live at the Variety Playhouse.' In this recording, she sings solo and accompanies herself on a Yamaha digital piano.

Her renditions of Otis Redding's 'Sitting At The Dock of The Bay' and Elton John's 'Goodbye, Yellow Brick Road' make you feel like you're seated in the intimate setting of the Variety Playhouse. This feeling of 'being there,' which I often experience when I use headphones, is something that many speakers can't quite replicate.



Amplification by Dan D'Agostino Progression Integrated



Most home audio loudspeaker systems would have to make a deal with the devil to match the WATT/Puppy musical impact, attack, transparency, and expansive soundstage.

One of my favourite performances of Haydn's Violin Concerto No. 1 in C major, Allegro Moderato, is by Isabelle Faust. Listening to it again in Lisbon with the WATT/Puppy, as I did with the Alexx and the Sasha V, I vividly experienced the acoustic surroundings of the Schloss Elmau Concert Hall in Bavaria with its wooden-beamed ceiling.

Isabelle Faust is standing slightly to the left of the centre in front of the Munich Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Christoph Poppen. Despite the small size of the concert hall, the sound of the instruments, especially Isabelle Faust's Stradivari (1704) 'Sleeping Beauty', is beautifully clear and airy.

If I remember correctly, the transparency of the WATT/Puppy is even more captivating than that of the Sasha V. The Sasha V costs 12,000 euros more, and, of course, it has more scale, body and bass extension.

After two hours of surfing through Tidal and Qobuz archives, I ended up with Keb Mo and added a little Haydn to cool down. You can experience it 'live' at Imacustica-Lisbon. Don't miss it! There's nothing like the real thing.



Myself, Dave and Peter with the WATT/Puppy System 8 (left) and the Sasha W/P (Munich, 2009)

Final thoughts

At €49,900 per pair, this speaker is undeniably a luxury item, costing as much as a car. Still, for those who seek the pinnacle of audio, the 50th Anniversary WATT/Puppy delivers an unparalleled experience in its category. Dave Wilson's vision has come full circle, and the result is nothing short of extraordinary.