

Xavian Giulietta Loudspeakers
Elegance From The Czech Republic

August 2008



Daniel Barnum is the owner of Half Note Audio, the U.S. distributor for an array of fine European high-end audio components such as the legendary ASR Emitter II integrated amp, Rolf-Kelch turntables, Tidal Audio loudspeakers and electronics, and much more. Besides being European, the one other characteristic that the lines Half Note Audio distributes, is how very expensive they are. I use to accuse Daniel of being an audio elitist who didn't carry products unless you needed a second mortgage to afford them.

Then one day, he shocked me: "You know Dave, I carry an affordable speaker line."

What?! Stop the presses! Hell has frozen over! The Cubs have won the World Series! Could this be true? Did Daniel actually discover a European speaker builder whose designs measure up to his lofty standards and are affordable? The answers are yes and relatively speaking.

The Giulietta

Xavian features two lines of speakers, the "XN Series" and the "XC Series." Daniel brought by a pair of the company's floor-standing Giulietta loudspeakers which are part of the "XC Series." Right out of the box this is a pretty unassuming looking speaker measuring approximately 36" x 7" x 10" (HxWxD) and weighing about 46 lbs. But a closer inspection allowed me to appreciate the gorgeous cherry wood veneer and polished metal and leather accents.

The front of the cabinet features a 5.5" Scan-Speak Revelator mid-bass driver and a 1" Scan-Speak impregnated fabric soft dome tweeter. The cabinet is made of 22mm thick MDF and is a bass-reflex design with massive aluminum bass-reflex port. The frequency response is a modest 47Hz to 32kHz, crossed over at 2200Hz. The rear of the cabinet has the port with a cool, brown leather strap that the binding posts are mounted into. The strap is embossed with the name of the designer, Roberto Barletta, and a nice little piece of polished aluminum identifies this speaker as part of the Xavian's "XC Series."

The Giuliettas are mechanically decoupled from the floor by an elegantly shaped HPL board with internal aluminum layers. The decoupling spikes, which are adjustable from top, are screwed through this bottom board.

A Commitment to Quality

Xavian Electronics from the Czech Republic is a builder of beautifully handcrafted, thoughtfully executed, moderately priced and above all wonderfully musical loudspeakers. The attention to detail and quality of construction faithfully represent the finest European craftsmanship.



What makes the Xavian speaker line so unique is its extraordinary high level of construction. Recently, the high end speaker industry has been inundated with speakers that claim to be using some new and innovative designs, yet appear to use tried and true cabinet techniques. It is not extremely difficult to program a CNC router to machine cabinet parts then either stack those parts or assemble them with butt joints or the often used 'V' groove method or cutting 'V's in the flat panel then folding the wood at those grooves to create the rectangular box. The integrity of the building process is not in question as most methods are sound but unremarkable.

The Xavian speakers utilize a construction method that is rarely used but very impressive. The parts are hand cut then put through a machine called a "shaper." The shaper puts a profile on the edge of flat panels. It then puts a 45 degree angle and a tongue and groove profile on the edge of the pre-cut panels. The veneer is then matched and cut to each specific cabinet. Another unique method of construction that showcases Xavian Chief Designer Roberto Barletta's attention to detail is that they measure each driver faceplate, match a specific driver to a cabinet and then custom machine the

cabinet for the exact faceplate of the driver that will be used in that particular cabinet. With CNC machining there is minimal human intervention. The machine cannot take into account the varying tolerances of the driver faceplates. This explains the gap you see between the faceplate and the front baffle inset on many speakers.

Xavian also chose to use aluminum port tubes and top-of-the-line WBT platinum binding posts. Both are features that add to the buyer's confidence factor and attest to the manufacturer's commitment quality of fit and finish. All Xavian loudspeakers use first order crossover designs and are built with crossover components usually found in far more expensive designs.

Musicality



Daniel brought over the Giuliettas at the same time that he brought over the ASR Emitter II Exclusive (though the ASR only stayed for a very short time). I really only had a couple of nights to listen to what these rather small speakers would sound like on a world-class amp like the ASR. This was one of those listening experiences that answers the question: "When you put a big, powerful amp on a small speaker, how much sound can you squeeze out of it?" The answer? A whole lot.

I decided that I would start out with some lite fare not wanting to freak the Giuliettas out with anything hard core, and says light 'n easy like Nora Jones. So I played "Court and Spark" the opening track from Herbie Hancock's Grammy winning disc, *River: The Joni Letters* [Verve]. From the first note, it was apparent that coupled with high quality amplification, these speakers were capable of portraying music in a hauntingly realistic way. Jones' voice poured out of the Giuliettas and held a three-dimensional scale and weight that made the sound rich and palpable. Hancock's piano and the cymbals sat in a open, wide and deep stage. This was awesome stuff and sent me scrambling for more challenging recordings.

A more challenging recording was provided by Charles Dutoit and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra's *Respighi: Pines of Rome* [London]. Track four, "I Pini della Via Appia" The bass heavy first part of this track was admittedly a bit much for the Giulietta's 6" mid-bass driver. But it picked up some serious steam when the oboes and French horns came in. And as built up to its crescendo, it held its composure even at higher listening levels, only sounding a bit hard at the very end of its range. Bear in mind that my only other reference point at this time was the far bigger and more expensive Escalante Design Fremont.

Getting back to more realistic music and amplification for the Giuliettas, I replaced the ASR with the wonderful Audio Analogue Maestro Duecento integrated amp (review coming) and put on an old favorite track of mine, "Fast Changes" from *Seal's* self titled CD [Warner Bros]. The bongos played as this track begins comes to life right out of the Giuliettas and has the kind of pop and decay that small yet fast speaker design like this excel at. Add in Seal's smooth and textured voice and you're knee deep in musical bliss. I guess that's the best way to describe the Giulietta's sound, absolutely, positively, and splendidly musical.

Conclusion

I began this little discussion by mentioning that megabuck system distributor Daniel Barnum had shocked me by saying that he was carrying an affordable speaker line, but I still haven't mentioned what the cost of the Xavian Giuliettas is. Well, I haven't spoken much about the cost of these speakers because without actually, seeing, touching, and hearing them, telling you the price won't resonate and you may not think them to be affordable at all. So let me try this: they are beautifully finished and constructed of the finest materials. They use high quality drive units and components. Their sound is equal to systems I've heard costing nearly \$10,000 and their price was recently just raised to \$4,400/pair. I don't know about you, but to me, that sounds like a speaker that can stand up to the highest standards and is affordable. It also sounds like what we at Stereo Times call a "Most Wanted Component."



Dave Thomas



Technical Specifications:

Mid-bass frequency unit: 148 mm Scan-Speak Revelator, paper membrane, SD-1 "motor".
High frequency unit: 29 mm Scan-Speak impregnated fabric soft dome, low - distortion "motor" no ferrofluid.
System type: 2-ways damped bass-reflex, massive aluminium bass-reflex port.
Cabinet: 22 mm MDF handly crafted.
Frequency response: (-3 dB on reference axis): 47 - 32000 Hz
Connection: 1 pair of singly mounted WBT Platinum Signature binding posts.
Nominal impedance: 8 ohms
Crossover frequency: 2200 Hz
Sensitivity (2V / 1m): 85 dB

Recommended power amplification: 50 - 150 W
Dimensions (HxWxD): 912 x 180 x 250 mm
Net weight (1 unit): 21 kg

Price: \$4,400.00/pair

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