



# Avalon Eidolon Diamond

*When it comes to diamond tweeters transforming high-end loudspeakers, Avalon got there first*

PRICE: £33,000 per pair CONTACT: Audiofreaks, 15 Link Way, Ham, Richmond, Surrey TW10 7QT ☎ 020 8948 4153 www.audiofreaks.co.uk

**T**he combination of elegant styling, fine finish, good materials science and – probably most useful of all – a good set of ears in owner/chief designer Neil Patel have all combined to make Avalon Acoustics one of the most significant names in the high-end pantheon of recent years.

Right now, there is a lot of noise being made about diamond tweeters, largely because of the new high-end range by B&W. Because B&W is huge and home-grown, it would be easy to forget that it's not the first brand to develop a high-end speaker with this type of tweeter. Avalon Acoustics took the already popular and successful Eidolon floorstanding loudspeaker and added a diamond tweeter, developed by Accuton. This dramatically raised the price of the Eidolon to £33,000, but it's a necessary increase that also takes in the attendant improvements that need to be made to the crossover, the drivers and the cabinet itself to deal with so demanding a tweeter. These differences are not immediately noticeable on view – even comparing the two side by side will not show the differences – but they are there and unfortunately it means the standard Eidolon cannot be upgraded to Diamond status.

The backswept, three-way, reflex-ported Avalon Eidolon cabinet is a tall, elegant and rather uncompromising design; not in the brutal charm of Wilson Audio, but much more of a physical statement of intent than a normal rectangular box. It stands almost 110cm tall and 425cm deep and each speaker weighs in at a healthy 68kg; you'll also need plenty of space both to the sides and behind the speaker. Then you'll need a good distance between you and the time-aligned front baffle. In short, unless you have a room at least 5x8m, the Eidolon or Eidolon Diamond are just not for you. Bass delivery down to 24Hz, with high frequencies up to 100kHz (+/- 1.5dB, in anechoic conditions) also suggests the speaker needs plenty of room to breathe.

This exceptional frequency response comes from three drive units: the bass is covered by a 280mm Nomex-Kevlar composite driver (making the bass both fire-proof and bullet-proof – useful if you enjoy playing music in a war zone), midrange is covered by a 90mm inverted ceramic dome and treble is handled by the diamond tweeter, a 20mm inverted dome design. At the bottom of the speaker is the large downward-firing port and terminals, so no ugly back panel.

The diamond tweeter concept is extremely useful for audio. Being exceptionally hard

and rigid, it makes metal dome tweeters seem soggy and soft, but also means the diaphragm itself is exceptionally light and therefore exceptionally fast, too. It also has considerably better thermal properties than metal or fabric domes, which means it can handle higher power levels than conventional tweeter designs. The sonic effect of all this is the tweeter retains its sonic properties through a greater range of higher frequencies and volume levels, and those properties are closer to the notional ideal tweeter than any conventional dome design.

For all its high-tech approach to transducer making, the speaker doesn't present too demanding a load. It has a claimed sensitivity of a moderate 87dB and nominal impedance of four ohms, although this can drop to 3.6 ohms at a minimum. Avalon recommends amplifiers between 50 watts and 500 watts per channel. In short, the load the Eidolon Diamond presents is no more demanding than its peers and should suit high-end amps, save for single-ended triode designs.

## SOUND QUALITY

When you deal with the really top end of loudspeaker designs, descriptions are more observations instead of criticisms. And as such, there are no criticisms to be made of the Eidolon Diamond, just observations.

The intrinsic sound of the Avalon is one of ultimate insight into the music with a sense of flow both to the music and the

Fortunately, it can also work its magic on every other instrument or combination of instruments. It presents a very distinctly detailed presentation, with one of the most refined and precise soundstages you will hear from any speaker, regardless of price.

Part of that acclimatisation process means you need to get used to the level of dynamic resolution on offer. You learn how to listen all over again, just like you learned how to listen to classical music or understand jazz. You become gradually more aware of the dynamic shading on offer and how much more informative that is compared to other speakers. The Eidolon Diamond gets into the inner detail and inner dynamics of the performance, and once you begin to understand this, it's hard to go back to normal speaker sounds.

Other speakers seem perhaps less filled with micro-dynamic insights. You get the whole sound of the orchestra, and the tiny changes in level from instrument to instrument – while other speakers concentrate on the bigger picture first, the Eidolon Diamond tracks the little changes. Yet it doesn't make the common error of only looking at the little picture, it also takes in the dynamic scale of the performance as a whole.

One of the most common remarks about the Eidolon Diamond presentation is how sounds rise out of a noiseless blackness, and this is a comment with a lot going for it. Sounds really do appear out of nothingness

**“Sounds really do appear out of nothingness and form in front of the listener.”**

performance that is never less than absolutely compelling. It's a seductive sound: big but not lush, precise yet not overtly analytical.

It's not one of those immediate sounds, it's a slow burner. Part of this is acclimatisation, as you get used to a less coloured sound than you were hitherto used to.

This is unquestionably one of the most coherent and articulate speakers on the market. Female voices have a breathy, natural quality entirely free from the spit and spitch that can sometimes undermine an otherwise first-rate performance. Perhaps this is why the female voice is always one of the most important indicators of hi-fi performance. And it's an indicator of the quality of the Eidolon Diamond – female voices sound more natural and real through this speaker than any other.

and form in front of the listener within a deep, wonderfully wide and high soundstage. It's an uncanny presentation, as if every other speaker has a higher noise floor.

The Eidolon Diamond speaker is one of the most beautiful sounding speakers money can buy, yet its beauty doesn't come from trying to make the sounds deliberately beautiful. Instead, the Eidolon Diamond makes the sound just that bit more understandable and musically communicative. There are more direct, more immediate sounding speakers available, and there are more obviously romantic ones too, but none that provide so much insight and musical entertainment. This is a real grower, and one that will stay in your system for many, many years. **HFC**

*Alan Sircom*