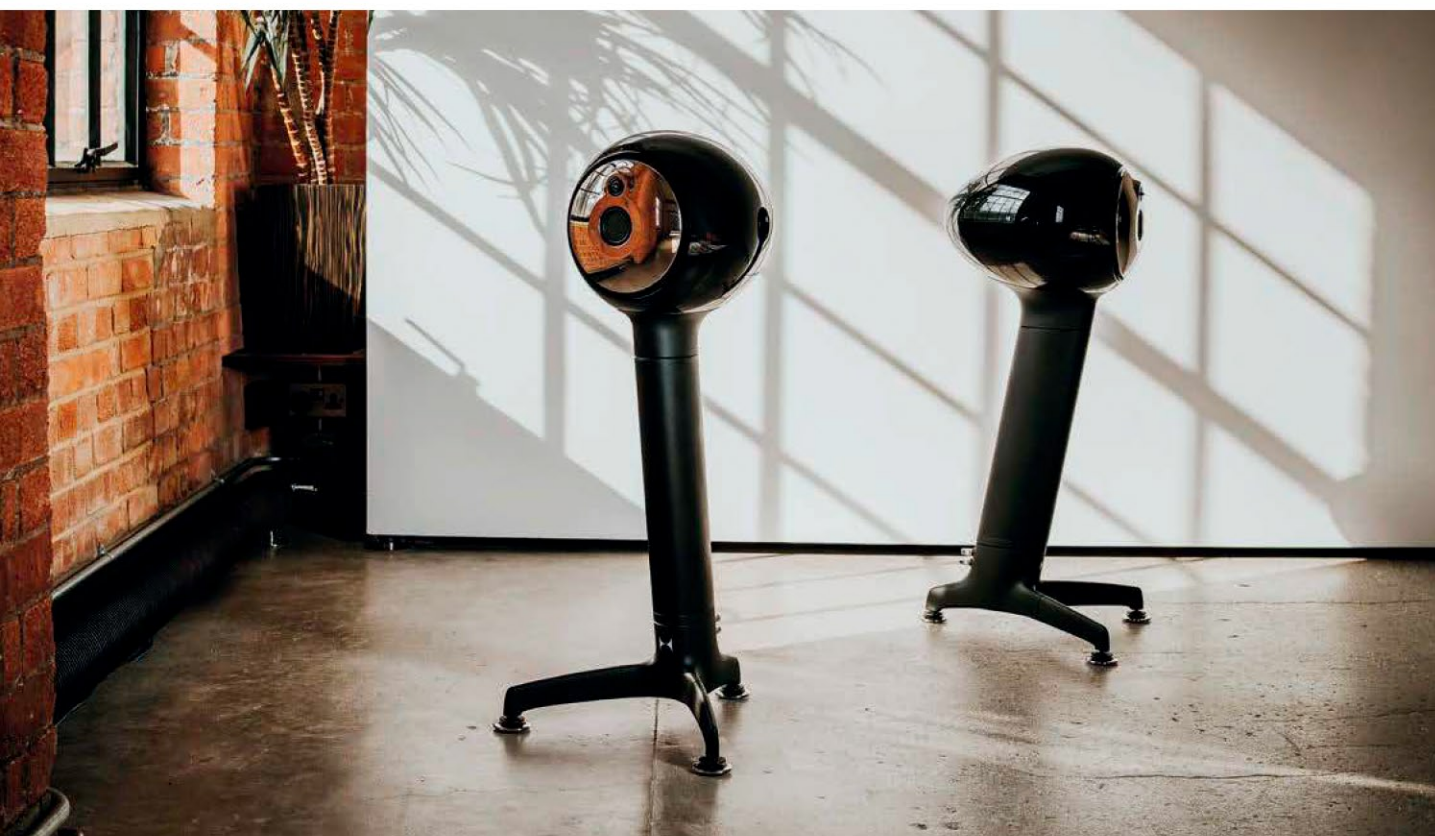




STAND-MOUNT LOUDSPEAKER OF THE YEAR

Node Audio Hylixa | Reviewed in Issue 171



“Our test pointed to a ‘remarkable sense of scale in an equally superior stereo imaging performance.’”

Some products defy easy categorisation; the Node Audio Hylixa is one such loudspeaker. It’s the floorstanding stand-mount! Although the ‘business end’ of the loudspeaker sits on a stand, this is actually an integral part of the loudspeaker design, with the crossover built into the base of the stand in a ‘locked and loaded’ magazine.

The product of some very clever industrial design and equally clever acoustical engineering, the top ‘pod’ section not only houses the drivers, but a unique radial radiating transmission line that could only be made by advanced sintered cabinets ‘grown’ in an industrial 3D printing system.

Our test pointed to a “remarkable sense of scale in an equally superior stereo imaging performance” as well as “an almost unbelievable ‘out of the box’ sound” and excellent off-axis performance too. This is a bespoke loudspeaker made in the heart of the Cambridgeshire tech corridor and can be supplied in a large range of high-grade finish options. However, the Hylixa is also a loudspeaker that is designed to be as equipment-friendly as it is good looking.

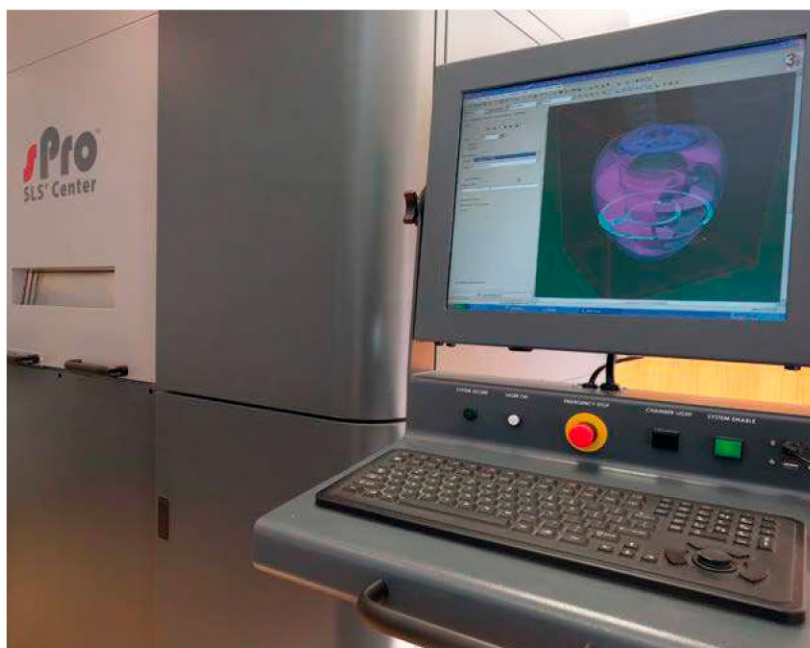
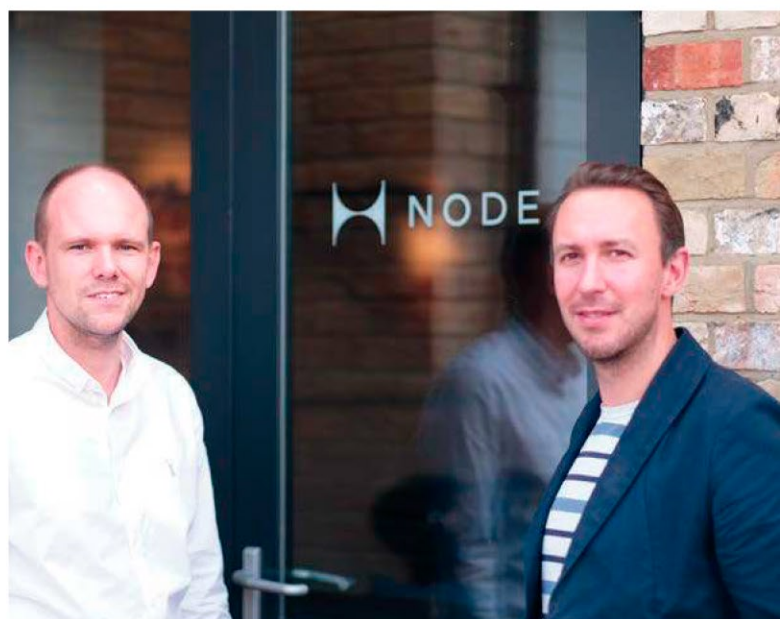
MEET YOUR MAKER

Node Audio

by Alan Sircom

Normally, our 'Meet Your Maker' features revolve around discussions with the manufacturer about the product line, the product development, and so on. This time, things are very different. From their studio in the heart of the Cambridgeshire tech corridor, industrial designers Ashley May and David Evans have created a loudspeaker that is legitimately like no other, both in terms of performance and the way it is designed and manufactured. It is a real 'clean sheet' design, looking at all the elements of loudspeaker design from first principles, and coming up with innovative new solutions to age-old problems.

The way they build the loudspeaker systems is so different, in fact, that we decided to follow the cabinet from beginning to end in a series of photographs, showing how this unique helical transmission line is manufactured, how it is assembled, how and where it is so very different from the rest of the pack, and how the end product is truly bespoke. +



The enclosure of the Node Audio Hylixa uses an industrial-grade Selective Laser Sintering (SLS) process. A three-dimensional model of the enclosure is uploaded to a computer that runs what's known as a 'slicer' program. This divides the three-dimensional file into two-dimensional layers, which are overlaid to build up the full enclosure. This takes hours!



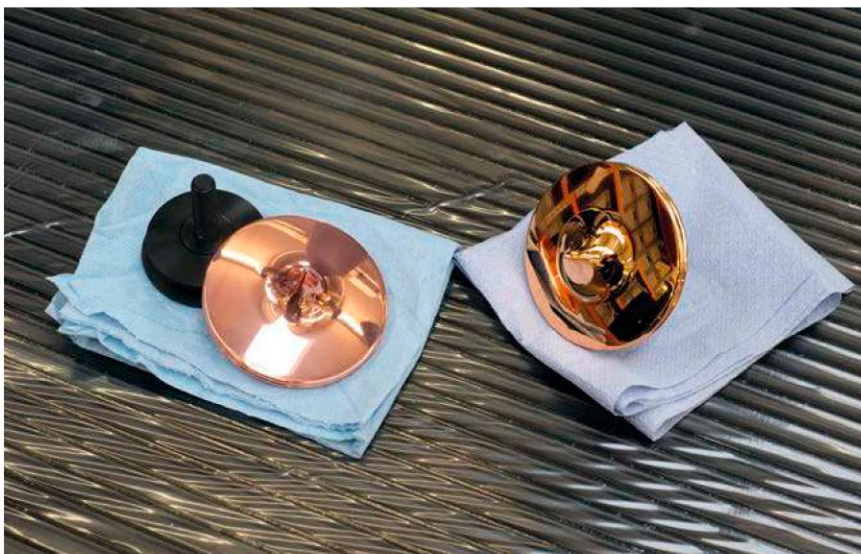
This is the reason why the Hylixa has to be 3D printed. This bowl-shaped disc is a cross-section of the elaborate helical transmission line design; a shape that cannot be created by any other means. ▶

“The whole crossover network is built into a magazine that slots into the loudspeaker stand itself.”



These are the component SLS-made parts needed to create the helical transmission line, the front baffle and its rear vent that feeds into the transmission line itself.

This is the point where other loudspeaker makers get a bit jealous. The whole crossover network is built into a magazine that slots into the loudspeaker stand itself. It has been carefully created to act as housing for the high-grade components in that crossover, in the form of a 3D puzzle, albeit one that uses high-grade cables, instead of etched tracks on a 2D circuit board.

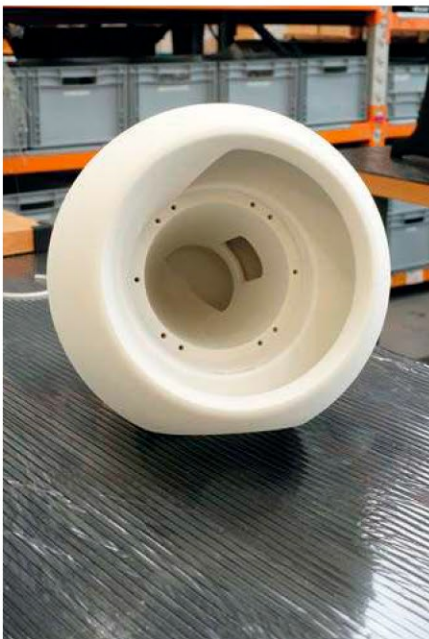


An example of just how seriously Node Audio takes its bespoke nature. The feet can be made in any colour you so choose, and a popular choice in some countries is gold. Other buyers might eschew gold for rose gold. That's not a problem for Node Audio! Unobtainium might take a little longer to source, however.



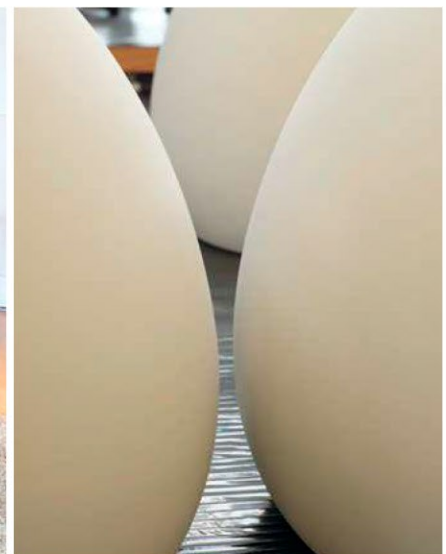
Alongside the 'lock and load' part of the crossover magazine, the stand itself is an integral part of the design, and the modular construction is designed for incredible rigidity.

“The transmission line circles around the rear of the drive units. It’s a neat way to eliminate standing waves and to keep the line manageable.”



Viewed from the front, it’s easy to see how the transmission line circles around the rear of the drive units. It’s both a neat way to eliminate standing waves and to keep the line manageable.

Assembly is fairly straightforward, thanks to mounting the drivers on the baffle pod before insertion into the main enclosure housing. Actually fitting the components into the crossover cartridge is more time consuming and fiddly, and although the layout means almost anyone could build it, only trained specialists can build it well. Everything here is built by hand, naturally.



In a section of the company’s design studio (in a separate building to the manufacturing plant), a range of Hylixa loudspeakers are on display. There are an almost infinite combination of finishes, but these models have proved popular choices. The model playing was made especially for Bentley (in British Racing Green, no less) to celebrate 100 years of the car marque.

Technically speaking, you should be able to see the difference in finish between a raw and primed Hylixa enclosure, but it was more noticeable by touch... which wakes the aliens!