Tomasz Karasiński

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Audio Physic Cardeas 30 LJE

I guess that each of us likes making oneself a gift. Some people do it at the first opportunity, others wait for specific achievement - a promotion at work, running a marathon, passing an exam or losing weight. A new watch, family trip or just a day for small pleasures may be the prize. But can you imagine what gift would you make if your very successful company celebrated its 30th anniversary? For sure, it would be something special. Such an extraordinary occasion has been celebrated recently by Audio Physic. Did the crew open a bottle of good champagne or at least go for a beer and a schnitzel at the local tavern? I guess so, but first of all, they have done one more gift for both themselves and the loyal fans of the brand - a limited edition of their best speakers.

Cardeas 30 Limited Jubilee Edition is a supercharged version of the standard Cardeas Plus model, although the word 'standard' is a little out of place here. Currently, they are the largest speakers produced by the German company at the price exceeding twenty-five thousand euros. We had the opportunity to deal with the improved version. Moreover, the pair delivered to our editorial office had a serial number described as '01 of 30'. Yes, the company produced only 30 sets for the whole world, but we got the very first pair. As I am one of Audio Physic's fans, hearing about the arrival of these loudspeakers to our listening room made me feel like Frank Underwood reading a newspaper in Freddy's BBQ Joint and murmuring under his breath - '...like Christmas in July.'

The uniqueness of this model results not only from a number of produced pieces. It also has no connection with the price. Well, yes - these speakers are not cheap, but you can easily find many much more expensive speakers on the market. The point is that this is probably the best speaker created by the Audio Physic so far and you can guess that it will retain this title for a long time. At least for the next 5 or 10 years, I guess. They are more expensive than the standard version, but let's be honest - if you can afford to spend €25,000 on speakers, you can handle an even bigger price in return for an exceptional veneer, better sound due to the number of modifications made by the designers, and just the pleasure of having one of the 30 pairs of the best Audio Physics in the world. I decided to seize the opportunity before all sets will go to the American TV stars, Arab sheiks, and German bankers.

This review is also unique for another reason. From the beginning, I was calm about the future of the speakers delivered to us, so I don't feel that anyone's decision depends on me and my review. The special, jubilee versions of high-end products find their owners very quickly, and if they really are as good as manufacturers say, their value increases even after the production is ended. Just look at the Sennheiser Orpheus headphones, whose buyers certainly didn't regret their decision after many years. Due to the huge customers' demand, manufacturers sometimes organize a short "reprint", but in the case of Audio Physic I wouldn't count on that for a minute - the designers limited themselves by engraving the serial number in the form of 'X of 30' on each speaker. It is hard to imagine that this number increased to 50 or 60. As if they want to say that these are their very best speakers for the 30 most loyal fans of the brand, and that's it.

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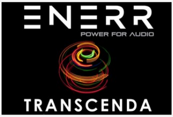

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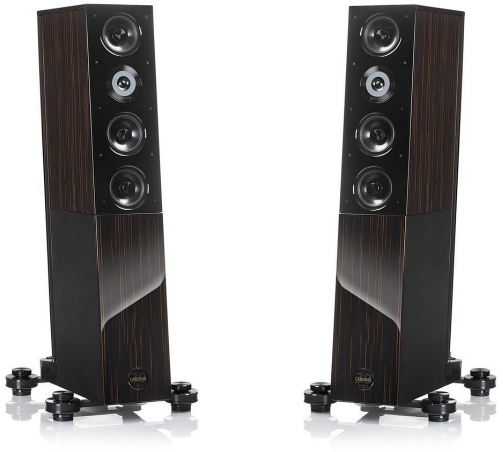

There is no denying that Cardeas 30 LJE is a sizeable instrument. From the start you have no doubt they're costly.

Design and functionality

Flagship speakers of the companies like Audio Physic are usually quite scary - in terms of transport, setting the system's configuration and all the things that normally are very easy to do with your eyes closed. Normally when we expect the speakers to come for a review, we arrive at our listening room and wait for the courier to carry the boxes inside. But extremely high end speakers usually mean trouble. This can be confirmed by those who have seen the process of transporting such sets to exhibitions or from a warehouse to the store. The situation usually requires a few strong guys with trolleys, platforms on wheels, belts, rails and all kinds of similar stuff. We expected the same with flagship Audio Physics, but - to our surprise - it wasn't so complicated. Yes, the boxes are big and heavy, but fit in the typical door. You may laugh, but the buyers of Cardeas 30 LJE will certainly appreciate this attribute. Have you ever heard stories about people who bought new speakers and had to hire the team that smashed the front door and wall because the gap was too small? I did, so I imagine what real audiophile sacrifice is. Nothing like that will happen here. The door will remain in place, the floor will not be adorned with ruts from the trolley run by a vendor who drives the boxes with speakers, and wife will not move out because of the boxes blocking access to the bathroom.

There is no denying that Cardeas 30 LJE is a sizeable instrument. The speakers don't have two meters in height, but the dimensions leave no doubt that they are costly and probably their performance is great. They have a raw, Germanic charm. Angular and very masculine. Well, except for the rear wall which is completely rounded. The boxes, however, are inclined to the back, and because of that their base is heavily extended near the floor. Here we find terminals and plates with model name and serial number. Speakers terminals, as befits the Audio Physic, are single and very elegant, but - what is very interesting - they weren't put on the axis of symmetry of the speakers, but slightly to the right or left side, depending on the channel. This is a very practical idea. As a result, the speaker cables land on the floor and don't dangle limply behind the speakers. You can easily place them on special anti-vibration blocks or platforms. Also, if you hire five interior designers, hiding the cables in the floor will be a bit easier for them.

The only unusual element of the whole set-up procedure is mounting the feet, which isolate the speakers from the ground and prevent harmful vibrations. VCF V magnetic feet are very advanced. The manufacturer even describes them as sound optimizers claiming that they have a huge impact on the final performance. Fortunately, engineers predicted that moving the speakers weighing 74 kgs on such insulators can be confusing, so speakers come to us with a default 'temporary feet' - they are simply solid plastic balls mounted on metal threads. This way, it is much easier to move the speakers to the carpet. In the case of the hard floor we should put the felt pad under each ball, and then we can easily begin the search for the optimal position. And that's what we did - after moving the speakers with these temporary feet on, we found an ideal distance from the walls, tipped each speaker backward and forwards, screwing two VCF V feet at once and job done. Position retained, feet swapped - no stress for such big and massive loudspeakers.

What did I like the most in these speakers? I think that they are uncompromising and quite easy to control. They look very serious, as high-end speakers should, but they don't contain idiotic solutions that may be suited to the world of audiophile bondage, but cause problems in the real world. There is no driver in a marble sphere placed on springs, requiring leaving five meters of free space from the nearest wall, no grille with very complicated assembly requiring at least three other people to mount it, no cables installed by special silver pliers... If not for the above-average size and weight, Cardeas 30 LJE could be considered as a perfectly normal speaker, no more difficult to transport, install and configure than a typical floorstanding speaker such as, for example, the Classic 30. The flagship Audio Physic model, however, has something unusual. It's disgustingly luxurious. High-gloss black ebony veneer raises clear associations with the interiors of the most expensive limousines, like Rolls-Royce or Maybach. Absolutely fantastic in terms of both quality and way of serving the finished product to the customer.

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PS Audio Sprout

Four speakers on the front and side-firing woofers. That's probably more than enough.

Sound performance

If you like the sound of Audio Physic speakers, if you had the opportunity to listen to models such as Tempo, Scorpio, Virgo or Avanti, you will certainly notice that Cardeas 30 LJE has the same approach to music. This is the same, well-known and liked by most audiophiles philosophy of shaping the sound based on the dynamics, transparency and brilliant soundstage. But, as might be expected, flagship Audio Physics are definitely better than the above-mentioned models in many ways. I will not beat around the bush - Cardeas just rocks! Already after the first minute of listening, I was glad that we are not dealing with the design distinguishable from all the other models, but rather - developing their best features and grooming the details to the limit. If you have, let's say, Virgo 25 at home and from time to time you might be thinking 'they sound great, but if the bass was a little faster and deeper, if the midrange was clearer, if the sources were more defined' and so on, Cardeas 30 LJE are these speakers. Here practically everything is done perfectly. These sets implement company's concept of sound design without hesitation, and if such an approach suits us - and many factors indicate that generally audiophiles like such a performance - the listening experience will be unforgettable.

Jubilee Audio Physics have so many advantages that I don't know where to start. Surely incredible clarity, microdynamics and the way in which speakers extract the smallest details from the records determine how we perceive the sound. But first, the bass, because in this area Cardeas 30 LJE surprised me the most. Yes, I expected truly atomic and well-controlled lows, but they had the right to grumble in our small listening room. Many hi-end speakers would do so, but here - no problems at all. The bass went down probably to the bottom of hell, but it wasn't even a little bit subdued and didn't raise at the first chance. If you're wondering what the reviewers mean when they write about the perfect combination of depth and timing - I think there are few speakers in the world that depict this description better. At times impressions are even strange as if watching a tank that accelerates better than a new Ferrari, and then stops dead at the next traffic lights. Last speakers, which made such an impression on me in terms of the bass were the Equilibrium Ether Ceramiques, although the price difference here is huge, and before that... Audio Physic Avanti III. It was a really wonderful model. Hardcore, but sensational and outstanding in its aesthetics, as Cardeas 30 LJE is. Here everything is shifted to another level, but the overall experience remains similar. Of course, if you put them in a room with a nightmarish acoustics, the bass probably melt down, but in a well-damped room, the effect is thrilling.

But... Every lover of German brand knows that it is mainly about speed, clarity, and soundstage in its performance. Cardeas 30 LJE is no exception. Sometimes it happens that flagship model stands out with the aesthetics presented by all the other products of the brand, which is very interesting, but inevitably introduces some inconsistency. German company, however, is too wise to afford such a mistake, and at thirty years of existence the company is well aware by now that consistency in tuning the speakers is a very worthwhile thing in the long run. Therefore Cardeas 30 LJE have what you would expect hearing the slogan 'Flagship Audio Physics'. It's the character of the sound, which we know and love, but here it is brought to the form of art. In the performance of Cardeas 30 LJE, there is no space left for errors and misconceptions. Everything is legible, clear and served on a silver plate. Excuse me, but I will not dwell on the fact that the sound is detailed, fast and controlled. Or to put it another way - if you imagine it based on the price and position of this model in the company's catalogue, probably it will be even a little better during the listening session. I'm not afraid to write it because in this case there will be no embarrassing - this is a performance close to perfection in many aspects.

As for me, I could take Cardeas 30 LJE home any time, and I think I wouldn't think about changing the speakers for a very, very long time. Probably for life. Since these speakers spent some time in our listening room, I had the opportunity to listen to the opinion of many people participating in the listening sessions and heard two criticisms. The first concerned the treble - some listeners were missing aggressiveness and courageous finish on the edge of the bandwidth. This discussion continues since the company introduced speakers in the '25' version with its cone HHCT tweeter, whose performance was slightly milder than offered by previously used a dome. Personally, I like such a delicate smoothing of the top and I don't think we miss any details because of this. Some of our guests and friends drew attention to the fact that 'they would like something more there'. If you will have the same feelings, just get the speaker cables with a slightly braver character and that's enough. Cardas

Audio wires, used in our reference system probably only intensified this effect, but with, for instance, Nordosts or Audioquests, it could be otherwise. In my opinion, Audio Physic's tweeters are very good, and the confusion results only from the fact that paradoxically some listeners now miss previously used domes, which liked to 'trim' some things even too sharply. The second repeated comment regards... The soundstage. Well-placed Cardeas 30 LJE are very accurate - all the sayings about the apothecary precision and cutting the sound with a razor blade become very real. The problem is that not everyone likes the way of showing the music that reminds us of watching a very realistic picture with incredible resolution. Somewhat I understand it because I don't like all these 400 Hz TV's. Accuracy, tangibility, and three-dimensionality of these jubilee speakers can be understood in that way - a lot of people will admire them for that, but there will be also those who will say that this level of sound quality and surround realism is a little too much.

When we buy hardcore speakers, we have to be prepared for the hardcore experience. If you like the performance of Cardeas, but feel that it's a bit of an exaggeration, you can always choose Avantera, Virgo, Avanti or Codex. Contrary to appearances, there is more in the sound that links these speakers with the flagship model. This is the brand's performance in a perfect version, and from a practical point of view - a unique product, which probably will have no worthy successor for five or ten years time. For lovers of the German company, meeting them will be like a ticket to a concert of the favourite band in top form.

The cabinets are inclined to the back and supported by an extended base.

Build quality and technical parameters

Audio Physic Cardeas 30 LJE is the flagship model of the German company. Low frequencies are reproduced by 10-inch woofers mounted on the bottom of the side walls and working in a push-push configuration. At the front there are two 15-cm HHCM speakers for the upper bass and lower midrange, again the same or very similar driver for the midrange and a 39-mm HHCT III tweeter which is the latest variant of the company's cone tweeter. All transducers are manufactured according to Audio Physic's specifications by Wavecor. The manufacturer does not specify, however, how the crossover frequencies have been set. In the description I could only find a clue that the crossover frequency between the low-midrange speakers and the midrange is about 500 Hz. The HHCM speakers use a solution called Active Cone Damping - in a nutshell, it's about damping a metal diaphragm resonances by using a special ring made from a blend of rubber and silicone. The flagship Audio Physic speakers also use Vibration Control Terminasl (VCT +) and VCF V magnetic feet.

All elements of Cardeas 30 LJE have one thing in common- damping. Manfred Diestertich is a total freak when it comes to fighting unwanted vibrations. He spent a lot of time trying to combat this phenomenon, which can be seen not only in his speakers, but also SSC anti-vibration accessories for which he's responsible. This is a man who listens to music files, but not because it's so convenient. Manfred believes that all CD players produce too many harmful vibrations when working, so he built a ripping machine based on his damping feet and a vibration platform of its own design, as well as heavily modified transport. It looks a bit like a hi-end turntable because the disc is completely exposed during operation. Manfred said, however, that the less vibrating mass there is during playback, the better. The same philosophy can be seen in Cardeas 30 LJE, which I had the opportunity to see up close because shortly after our listening session I have been invited to a dealer's meeting where these speakers have been presented in a special cross-section version, opened on one side for demonstration purposes.

I have to admit that something like this is very rare. The Cardeas 30 LJE is not only about the quality of the materials used, although it is very high, but the overall vision of fighting resonances. Typically, manufacturers use MDF for the construction of their cabinets, sometimes heavily cutting into them and combining rigid crates, but here we are dealing with something far more advanced - a housing made virtually entirely of elements with damping properties. All partitions are made of porous plates nicked from the inside, and appropriate damping elements can be found at the rear in the curved walls of the main chamber. You will not find a typical woolly stuff here. Actually, the only soft filling is sealed in a small bag. The key elements are the ceramic foam damping plates which look like a sort of a brick with the structure of a hive. The material is very light and rigid at the same time, and Manfred Diestertich maintains that this is one of the best solutions when it comes to mastering the vibrations inside the cabinet. Interestingly enough, all the elements of the crossover have been divided into several PCBs placed on many damping platforms so they are less exposed to the vibrations from the speakers. Each of these platforms consists of separate boards and various rubber or foam pads. The whole thing looks really amazing as you can see on the photos in the gallery below.

HHCM bass-midrange drivers are made to Audio Physic's specification by Wavecor.

Some of the damping materials used in the Cardeas 30 LJE.

System configuration

T+A PA 3000 HV, T+A MP 3000 HV, T+A E-Serie Music Player Balanced, T+A E-Serie Power Plant Balanced, Cardas Clear Reflection, Enerr One 4S PB, Enerr Transcenda, Solid Tech Radius Duo 3.

VCF V magnetic feet are very advanced but quite necessary if you want to get the full experience.

Verdict

There's always a problem with reviewing special jubilee and limited products - only a few people will have the opportunity to experience their advantages firsthand. The reviewer gets such a device for a few weeks, and then it is transported directly to the customer's home, probably one who placed a deposit right after reading the news about the new limited model coming. Only 30 people in the world will be able to confront my impressions, and perhaps their families, friends and the lucky ones who listened to Cardeas 30 LJE during one of the exhibitions or private shows. The flagship Audio Physic speakers are close to perfection for me. After some time I even managed to convince myself that they are not as big and as heavy as one might think. Even the price doesn't discourage me because I listened to a lot more expensive speakers that can't hold a candle to the Cardeas 30 LJE. The only thing I could personally assess is the difference between the described model and 'standard' Cardeas Plus. But it seems that people who can afford such equipment won't have such dilemmas, because there's only one flagship model and this is it.

StereoLife

Such spectacular speakers call for unusual measures when taking pictures.

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Technical data

Speakers type: Floorstanding, 3,5-way
Sensitivity: 89 dB
Impedance: 4 Ω
Frequency response: 25 Hz - 40 kHz
Recommended amplifier power: 40-350 W

Dimensions (H/W/D): 119/30,5/59,5 cm
Weight: 74 kg (one piece)
Price: $45,000/pair
Manufacturer: Audio Physic

Sound performance

Editor's rating

8.8
Overall

10	8	9	10	7
Sound	Functionality	Design	Quality	Price

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