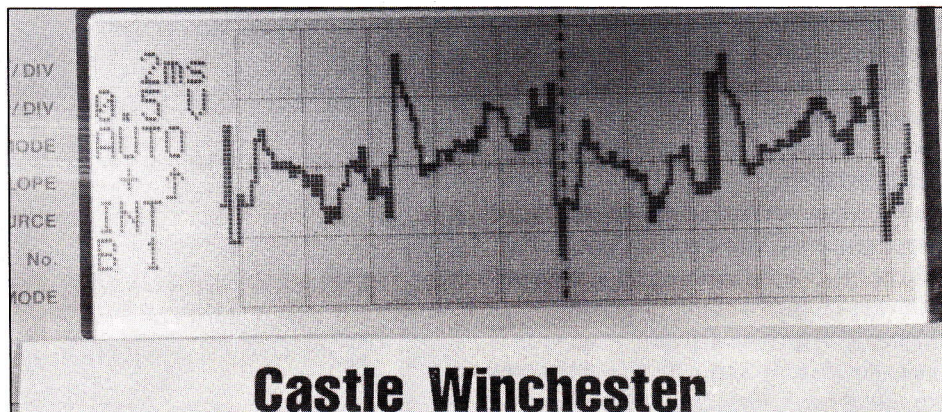


TEST BENCH

frequency response test, however, and by and large we were rewarded. Bass response is very good: flat down to 60 Hz, very reasonable to 40 Hz, and clearly audible down to 16 Hz. Such performances are rare in our highly damped room. At full level (100 dBa at one metre), the sine waves didn't look quite right, indicating that — as we had thought — there are limits to the Winchester's bass headroom. On the other hand, at no frequency did it look *really* bad, and at no frequency (we tried 'em all) did anything vibrate. Going up the band, there is a major dip at 125 Hz, and a slight elevation of the midrange between 1.5 and 8 kHz. Response is very good out to beyond 16 kHz, which is outstanding.

Can the speaker be improved? Probably. We wish *Castle* would take their cue from what the French do, and bevel the vertical edges of the front panel. This would prevent diffraction from the sharp edge, and therefore improve



stereo imaging. It would also make the cabinet look a little less large and forbidding.

For many years, *Castle* was making good speakers that no one listened to, because there was no "flagship" speaker to draw attention to the name. Now there is. The Winchester has what it takes to become a "classic" speaker. If the original *Wharfedale* company had survived, it would be building such a speaker today.

At least we would like to think that it would be.

Model: *Castle Winchester*

Price: \$3660

Warranty: 5 years, transferable

Dimensions: 112 x 47 x 24 cm

Most liked: Perfect balance, warm, life-like sound, fine finish

Least liked: Shape awkward for some decors

CROSSTALK

Now and then companies do this — take a mighty leap forward into the forefront of audio. And this is a *big* leap. Not that other *Castles* were not good — they were, and they are. But this is another kind of audio product. In a strange way, it doesn't even seem like a British speaker, and I don't mean that as any sort of putdown. This is the sort of speaker that could have been produced by the established and recognized loudspeaker companies: *Vandersteen*, *Thiel* or *Snell*. It could even be a baby *Duntech*.

There are plenty of speakers I admire, but that I couldn't live with, because I know I would be missing something I don't want to miss. But I *could* live with the *Winchesters*. This is truly a speaker that does everything well. Best of all, this is a speaker you don't really listen to. Rather, it forces you to listen to your records, and you can really *hear* them. Products like this make me glad I'm an audiophile.

—Gerard Rejskind

The *Winchester* is simply a superb speaker. It is accurate and precise, yet warm and musical. It is richly detailed, tight, focused, and *smoooooth!* I think it would make a nice addition to our listening room. I think it would make a nice addition to my own system. I think I need another raise.

—Khurram Syed

The *Castle Winchesters* are the finest speakers I have ever tested. They are musical and rich, warm and detailed, broad and deep. The *Winchesters* enrobe you with regal, glorious music, envelopping the room and carrying you away. This is passionate music, music that makes you forget everything. This is heaven.

And, yet, even these words do not do them justice. Words *cannot* do them justice, for they succeed in the wordless realm.

After the *Winchesters*, other speakers pale in comparison. They seem wrong — not necessarily because they are plagued with

problems, but just because you become aware of how much they leave out. In this sense, the *Winchesters* had the same effect upon me as the *Spectral* CD player. Each has changed the way I view the reproduction of recorded music. After hearing the *Spectral* play CD's, there was no going back. I have a feeling that after having heard the *Castle Winchesters*, there is no going back, either.

—Henry See

Love at first sight! In three years, I have never heard anything so exceptional. The *Castle Winchester* has it all: elegance of hue, regal bearing, richness of sound, heady depth, penetrating warmth, superb image... Such balance! It take one's breath away.

P.S. It was Friday at 6 pm, and we were all still there. We were unanimous in wanting our own pair of these speakers. Yet we hadn't been unanimous when we had selected our reference speakers.

—Odette L. Roy