

DAVIS ACOUSTICS COURBET N°4

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Small cabin, great delivery!

It may not be widely known in our country, but it is a loudspeaker and speaker manufacturer that has been producing products on French soil since 1986. We talk about Davis Acoustics, which we know through a seemingly "simple" model, the Courbet n°4.



Davis Acoustics is the brainchild of designer Michel Visan, when the company he worked for, Siare Acoustique, was acquired by the Harman Group. He had previously worked with Audax. Initially based in a suburb of Paris, he set up a loudspeaker manufacturing plant in Troyes (1998). From the outset, it worked with a few well-known manufacturers (including car audio) around the world, supplying custom units. Visan is the man who brought innovative materials to the audio industry, such as Kevlar (1986) and the TiCoNAL magnet (1988), while offering speakers in kit form. The first loudspeaker model launched by Davis Acoustics, the DK200 floorstander (1993), was designed by him and was a commercial success at the time. In 2002, Davis Acoustics earned a place among high-end manufacturers with the César three-way floorstander. Visan passed away in 2012, but he had managed to instill his business and design genius in his wife Brigitte Visan and son Olivier, who has since taken the company's fortunes into his own hands.

The Courbet n°4

Davis Acoustics currently has ten series of loudspeakers produced in France, with its loudspeakers and tweeters always available from third-party manufacturers, and still has kits available for assembly. The Courbet range includes five models, with n°4 being the smallest floorstander, winner of the, in the signatory's opinion, prestigious "Diapason D'Or" award. The n°3 is a twin base while n°5, 7 and 8 are three-way.

The models in the range are characterised by the sloping design of the cab, while the floor models make use of a screw base on which the four pins are mounted. The position in which the base is screwed creates the characteristic visual gap between the cab and the floor. Although only 2 cm, this gap contributes to the visual relief of the structure.

The n°4 is a compact speaker and its modern design makes it attractive, with a high Conjugate Index. The listening room hosted the version with the grey finish. Comments like "well, how beautiful that is, where did you get it" and "finally, the coffins are out of the living room" were typical phrases of visitors and guests during the almost five weeks that Exclusive Audio provided us with the speaker.

The n°4 is a two-way implementation, with a 13 cm diameter loudspeaker handling low and mid frequencies, with the crossover point with the tweeter reaching 4kHz. Its Kevlar cone features an elongated coil and half-roll suspension to maintain smooth energy distribution and linear movement in high volume and simultaneous low frequency operation. To ensure smooth reproduction of the latter and reduce distortion, Davis places an inert-core cover in the center of the loudspeaker, which cools the motor more effectively, always according to the manufacturer. The company announces a bottom end at 51Hz, with the low-end boosted by the low-end reflection design, the venting hole of which is 7.5cm in diameter. The high range is taken care of by a soft dome driver, 28mm in diameter. The same high driver is used by the French designer in his more expensive implementations, such as the Nikita 3.0 base. The distance between the tweeter and the center of the woofer is 12.5 cm, while the latter's distance from the base is 64 cm.

When it comes to crossover, this is implemented with the components being connected to each other "in the air", without the use of a circuit board. Good quality materials are used for the price category, and the use of a thin pure copper cable, coated with PTFE Teflon, in the path from the cross-over to the tweeter is typical. The electronic circuitry is powered by

a pair of gold-plated metal plugs mounted on a metal plate.

The cabinet and base are made of MDF and are noted for their quality finish, which is available in three versions, satin grey, satin white and ebony lacquer. The black screen occupies the entire front of Courbet n°4, supported on it using magnets. The package includes a case containing the screws for adjusting the base, an allen key, four metal pins and an equal number of mats.

Hearings

The assembly of the bases is very easy and if the distance from the walls is kept at - at least - 30 cm, the optimal position in the room will be quickly found. Courbet n°4 replaced the Audio Spectrum Hermes TLS. After the first reconnaissance listening sessions, it was considered imperative to use granite stands, both for reasons of speaker elevation (7 cm, valuable in terms of listening position) and to achieve the maximum possible separation from the ceramic tiled floor.

The distance between them was set at 2.20m., with a slight inward draw and the listening position 30cm closer to the speakers. It is evident that the volume difference in relation to the system speakers also brought about a convergence of the units, while maintaining adequate distances (80-100) cm from the walls. With the manufacturer stating a sensitivity of 90dB and an average recommended power of 90W, it becomes obvious that we have the option to fearlessly use low and medium power amplification stages, with semiconductor or tubes in the output stage. Depending, of course, on our space, since the dimensions of the French speakers are such that they allow listening even in relatively small spaces. For the test, we used the Cairn Aria low-weight integrated, the Denon PMA-1560 "beast", but above all the home-made pre-finish kit I've been using for the last few months.

Speaker cable, in all three cases, the professional Canare 4S8.

Initially, it was not difficult to see that Courbet n°4 created a stage presence of much greater dimensions than expected. In the Tiger Lilies three-piece formation, on the album Circus Songs (Misery Guts Music), it was very interesting to see the development of the instruments that suddenly took on adequate dimensions without loss of focus, with their height rising visibly higher than the speakers. While individual elements of the mix, such as reverb, clearly defined the reverberation times, an element that was to play its own role. In contrast, then, the small Courbet developed the dimensions of London's Kingsway Hall in its recording of W.A.'s Requiem. Mozart by the Philharmonia Orchestra and Philharmonia Chorus, conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini (Warner Music vinyl, on a 1978 recording) with the orchestra and chorus taking their places with no room for misinterpretation or overlapping due to any inability of a 5-inch loudspeaker to cope with such a demanding recording. As a



class of size, it goes without saying that the Courbet n°4 could not recreate a large stage the way a speaker of four times the volume, with two eight-inch woofers like the Mercury TLS does. But what it does do is maintain proportions and bring them to such measures that they fill average home listening rooms, with dimensions that in most cases are not far from being described as "realistic".

On the other hand, the 51Hz low-end announced by the company is a real number. A limit critical for the correct description of the musical content, especially for the low-end instruments that define the rhythmic bases. Indeed, the promise is kept and the low-end receives the corresponding range, with a fast/short rate of development and decay. It seems (and sounds) that the bass reflex assists in the area around 80Hz, so songs with strong bass will not lose their independence, they will develop with a lot of energy and nerve, a feature useful in metal, rock, industrial coke music, but without vibrating the ... apartment building. The designer has diligently added rapid cut-off below 50Hz, gaining signal clarity and speaker response speed. This is aided by the cabinet, which despite weighing just 12kg, gives the impression of remaining unconcerned with coloration.

If, however, the dimensions and low end of the Courbet n°4s define their size class, it is the rendering of timbres and the level of detail highlighting that define their sonic character. They are not among the speakers that will showcase their analytical abilities. On the contrary, they will bring the timbre to the fore. The small timbral aspects that give the physical instruments a sense of proportion. The microdynamic variations whose presence enhances the perception of the interpretation. It particularly promotes human voices. He effortlessly rendered both the silky sensitivity of Madeline Peyroux on Bare Bones (Rounder Records) and the harshness of Sakis Tolis on the epic Triarchy of the Lost Lovers (Century Media). The midrange and mid-high performance are perhaps the strongest point of the performance of the speakers under review. But this is not only achieved thanks to the aforementioned. For, over the days it became apparent that the n°4's would draw out a considerable amount of information. And it is this element that makes them "play at a level above their price category", as the journalistic cliché defines it.

The alternation of the reinforcing grades was indicative. Of how a record, for example, like McCoy Tyner's Fly With the Wind (vinyl, Millestone Records) was transformed in terms of the plasticity of instrumental descriptions and the presence of individual parameters. One way of describing the piano, another the presence of Billy Cobham's snare cokes, with the pre-final set creating the most intense three-dimensionality, while Denon's excess of power promoted the emergence of the fronts. The choice to reach the midrange down to 4kHz proved strategic. From there on, the tweeter contributes to the atmospheric nature of the result. It limits the brightness of the top-end, i.e. above 8kHz, but contributes to the presence of micro-details and relaxing long listening sessions.

The Davis Acoustics loudspeakers we review are genuine children of the French School. As members of that special family of High Fidelity, they promote the lyricism of musical works and dramatic tension. They have this ability to take us by the hand and transport us into the narrative world of musical work. They possess the ability to handle signals of high detailed texture without a trace of character monitor highlighting. They move easily from "dark" to "light", and from pianissimo to forte, following the mood of the composition. They breathe in the pauses and weave the dense arrangements. Even in a room relatively large for their dimensions, as my personal space is, they reached up to 90-92dB without disturbance. They won't refuse to coexist with even 100-

watt amps, if at the same time they don't raise demands for high levels.

Courbet n°4 are therefore a proposal with special characteristics, both in terms of construction and sound. They are a model of good design and show the value of using units, cabs and cross-overs manufactured in the same factory, which we assume also influences the final price of the product. They are, without a doubt, a tempting proposition that will provide solutions even if your space can afford larger, three-way speakers, or if your budget can afford more expensive proposals. Chances are, you've previously heard of or bought a speaker with Davis Acoustics units. It's a good opportunity to try a speaker of theirs as well.



INFO **Exclusive Audio**
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OVERVIEW



Description: Floor speakers
Floor standing floorstander: 2/2
Charging: bass reflex
Speakers: tweeter 28mm dome, woofer 5in Kevlar
Recommended Power:
up to 90 watts (130 watts max)
Rated impedance: 4-8 ohms
Sensitivity: 90dB
Frequency Response: 51-25k Hz (-3dB)
Cross frequency: 4kHz
Dimensions: 160x825/998 (with base and pins)
x220 mm (WxHxD)
Weight: 12 kg/piece
Price: €2.490