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AUDIO REVIEWS

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AURUM CANTUS V8F

A SYNDICATED ARTICLE FROM GERMANY

This review first appeared in the August 2008 issue of fairaudio.de and can be read in its original German version [here](#). It is herewith translated and presented to an English-only audience through a mutual syndication arrangement with fairaudio.de. As is customary for our own reviews, the writer's signature at review's end has a link below it to his e-mail should you have questions or feedback you wish to send. All images contained in this review are the property of fairaudio.de or Aurum Cantus. - Ed.

Reviewer: Jörg Dames

Source: Audiomeca Obsession II, Fonel Simplicité

Amplification: *pre/power* - Bel Canto PRe3/M300, Funk LAP-2.V2, Myriad MXP2000/MXA2150 - *integrated* - Accuphase E212, Lua 4040C

Loudspeaker: Thiel CS 2.4, Volent Paragon, Elac FS 247, Quadral Rondo, Spondor S 3/5

Cables: *low-level* - Straight Wire Virtuoso; *high-level* - HMS Fortissimo, Reson LSC 350, Ortofon SPK 500

Review component retail: € 5.000/pr



"Retreat of the Chinese warrior." That's how the daily *Die Welt* paper put it in a recent economic editorial. That the warrior, during an earlier review, managed to only garner one out of five stars was certainly no happy prelude. Despite the Chinese maker's ambitions of conquering our domestic automobile market, the testers belabored all-around cheapness. And unless my road scans missed something, the Brilliance BS6 -- that's how the warrior on wheels was christened -- isn't exactly crowding our streets.

Be that as it may, the Chinese have come quite a way in matters hifi both in sales figures and cutting a good profile with Hifi mags and not the General German Automobile Club. Here and there one has said good-bye to el cheapo tactics, abolished copy 'n' paste R&D and transcended questionable material excesses. Which gets us to today's tester. Neither on price nor cosmetics does it cut any corners. Now add a properly established German importer and a solid reputation for proprietary, internally developed drive units (the international Aurum Cantus name, for legal reasons, had to be changed to AuCantus for Germany by the way).

A firmly developed manpower doesn't hurt either. According to the company which was founded in 1994, they currently employ six design engineers and a total of 108 workers who handle manufacture and export into 26 countries for a deep range of speaker models with a goodly number of reviews in English-speaking publications.

Externally ...

... the V8F flagship for the German market exudes a certain noblesse which suggests the kind of club frequented by cigar-puffing gents who discuss the latest business deals rather than my more modestly attired listening space. At least that's true for the loaner's Rosewood trim with gold spikes. But the V8F also proves its upscale ambitions in matters of fit 'n' finish. Be it gap tightness, lacquer quality, the curvaceous rear-slimming form factor, the details in edges and transitions, the bolted-down bass reflex port or the massive, easily accessed biwire terminals - it's all high class if you will. Put differently -- and I'm not saying this lightly -- this is a rather impressive affair.



Factoids

G1 ribbon tweeter

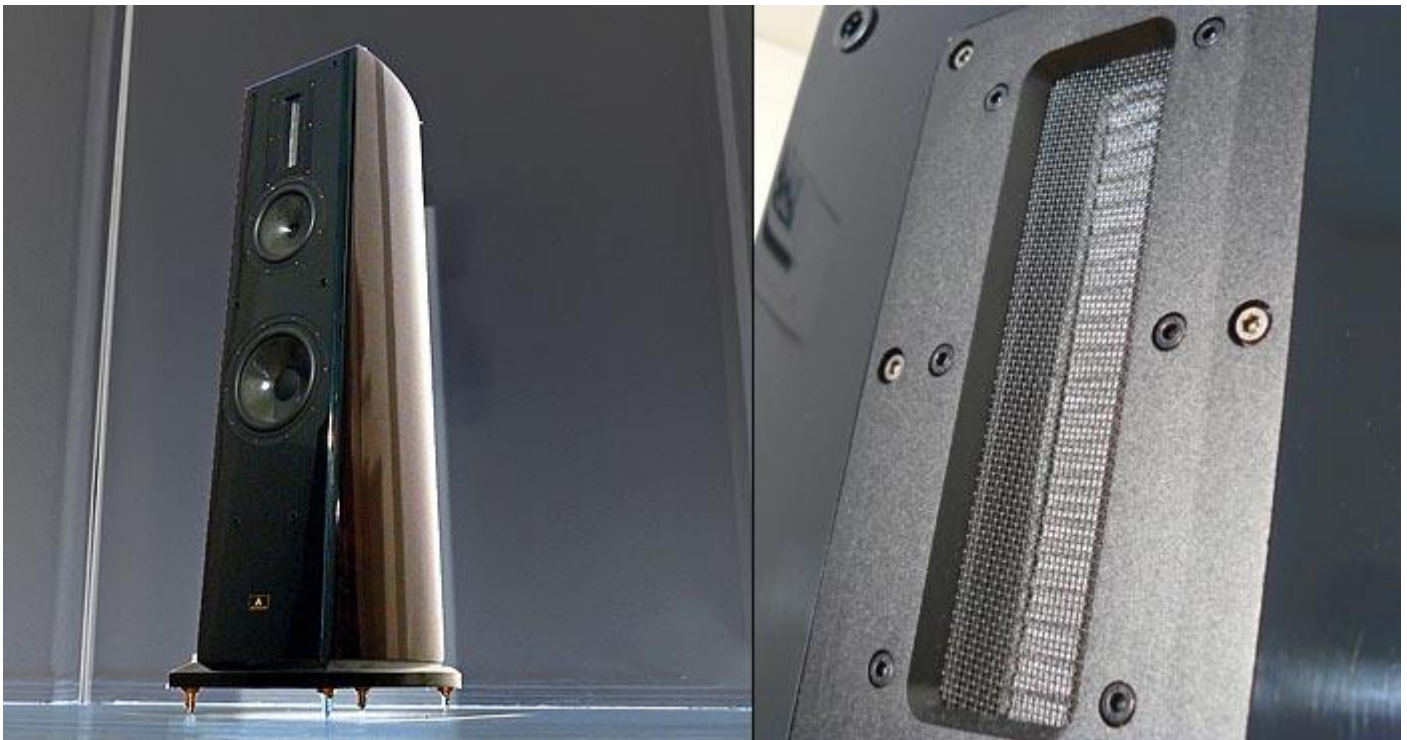
Conceptionally, the ribbon tweeter might be the first



ingredient to catch the eye (ribbons have the diaphragm double as quasi voice coils). For its 15cm long aluminum strip, AuCantus promises all the customary advantages we've heard before: low distortion, high resolution, superior speed and impulse response. Suggesting a particular affinity or even obsession, this Chinese speaker house works with *fifteen* different ribbon drivers in its portfolio. The version employed by the V8F goes by G1, runs an 8-ohm impedance, weighs in at 3.8kg, is claimed to make 40kHz and, says AuCantus, benefits from artisanal fabrication by hand.

Midrange

Below 2.100Hz, a 16.5cm driver with the catchy name AC165AVM/50SC takes over. It sports a low-mass, flat-wound voice coil, ferrite magnet and carbon fiber diaphragm for high output and minimal distortion. The third drive unit is the AC200AVM/75C2C woofer. Its makeup is similar to the midrange but is 20cm in diameter and active below 150Hz, thus kicking in "rather late".



With its non-critical 6.4-ohm minimum, the AuCantus V8F hovers squarely in the permissible window for true 8-ohm boxes. The 88dB/1W/1m sensitivity sets no records but should pose few challenges to averagely endowed amplifiers. My only issues arose during the customary A/B exchanges – 110cm tall and 53kg worth in mass demanded a certain elbow grease when moving about.

Listening ...

To reveal my heart: I've never fully fallen for any ribbon-tweeter'd speaker yet. Too often such designs, even if noticeable only occasionally and slightly, give away the tweeter as though it were not fully meshing with the other drivers. That's regardless of what the test bench freaks may proclaim. Particularly in this regard, the AuCantus V8F pricked up my ears. Rather than highlighting the treble with vitality, glow, resolution or some other aspect, this one seemed expertly voiced, integrated and properly fleshy from the get. I can even image how true diehard ribbon fanatics might wish for more energy and articulation in the upper end.

Moi? I like it as is. Quite well in fact. To avoid misapprehensions, AuCantus' V8F in typical ribbon fashion is fully convincing in matters of resolution. There simply is no seam against the midrange nor does anything drift into being overly analytical. The V8F thus pulls a very neat trick. Its sense of detail doesn't stem from vivisectionist presentations displayed in bits and pieces on the silver platter but from textures (sonic finger prints) whereby instruments and voices are rendered very finely. My Thiel CS 2.4s recreate cymbals and hi-hats more acute but also more compacted - less layered. The AuCantus meanwhile nails the subtleties of such sounds in such a realistic manner as I've rarely heard it before. Truly powerful stuff.

This quality of the V8F is ably aided and abetted by a midrange which conveys very realistic auras so that aspect isn't peculiar to the treble. This I noticed fully only one evening while hunkering down with my girlfriend in the listening room sipping a glass of red wine. Mostly for background fill, I cued up Ola Gieilos' album *Stone Rose*, rather non-spectacular but very emotional piano fare accompanied by violin or cello, a hot tip. Though I wasn't fixated on listening at all, the music absorbed me more and more. The piano's colors were rendered so embodied that our listening space was soon filled by bar atmosphere. Yes, 'live' piano music and red wine do go together fabulously (and not necessarily just in this sequence).

Though it should be apparent from what's been said already, another key virtue of this speaker is vocal intelligibility. Be it male voices accompanied by violin on Sol Invictus' *Trees in Winter*, or Dolores Marguerite C.'s vocal stylings on *Praxis* (by In the Nursery) surrounded by synths, they always sounded smooth and full. Even often critical sibilants never ran afoul of artifice or hissiness.



True, the AuCantus V8F is no forward operator. This includes the bass which, considering the size of the enclosure, is otherwise deeply enough extended. Overall, the V8F convinces more with cultivated and elegant finesse, not happy-go-lucky impact and dynamics. Once you enter more energetic fare (though 'energetic' barely hints at the violent sonic experiments which New York formation Services has bestowed on my ultimate sound check *Your Desire is My Business*), certain listeners might fancy an altogether grippier approach.

Nailing dirty e-guitars or abruptly appearing and disappearing sequencer beats to the cross with due grittiness isn't the core virtue of these speakers. They'll further benefit from more fulsome -- and particularly in the bass -- more voluptuous amplifiers. Hence I favored my Accuphase E-212 which isn't famous for pressurized antics but certainly for bass fullness over the wirier while also more resolved and neutral Myryad MXA-2150 power amplifier.

Even in matters of soundstaging, the AuCantus is more integrated than, say, extrovert. Admittedly a bench mark in this regard, my Thiel CS 2.4 downloads the electronically dominated sounds of David Gilmour Girls' *Vultures* into the room with greater image localization, greater attack and plasticity. The V8F meanwhile focuses more on coherence and a certain limpidness.

This unperturbed, relaxed character of the V8F is further underlined by its very clean playing. Our Chinese friends here back up their low-distortion claim fully. You'd do well concentrating on just how clear and free of nervousness the AuCantus V8F goes about its business.



Conclusion

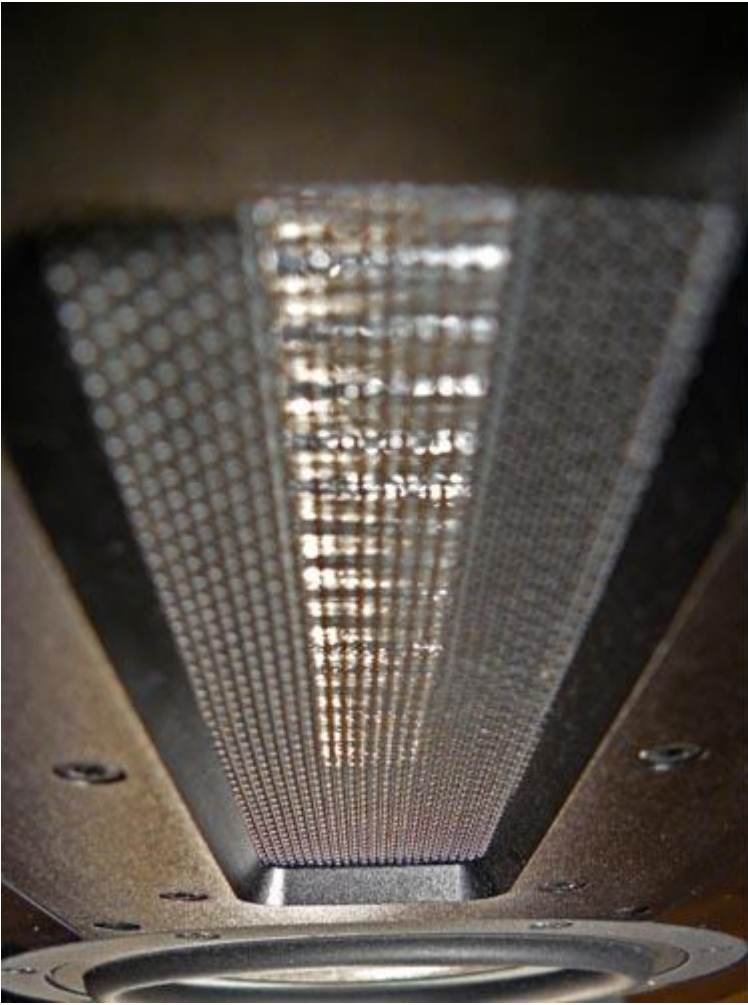
No, the AuCantus V8F is no heavy rocker, no massive turn-you-oner on the dance floor of floorstanding speakers. Rather than going after top figures in dynamics and displacement, this immaculately finished piece of furniture celebrates finesse, long-term listening pleasure and an exceptionally organic approach. In these latter aspects, this Chinese entry of the 5.000 euro class most surely sets real standards. Optimal partners would be transistors over tubes – and with optimally endowed foundation power and an energetic character. A listener distance of at least 3 meters and a room size of at least 25qm are also called for.

The AuCantus V8F are characterized by:

- An overall very cultivated, non-aggressive, non-fatiguing presentation.
- A very clean, intelligible sonic image with very high resolution, i.e. an ability to magnify instrumental and vocal textures in all their natural complexity.
- A flawless fit 'n' finish.
- A laid-back, relaxed perspective with not ultimately separated but very cogent soundstaging.

Facts:

- Model: AuCantus V8F
- Design: Bass reflex 3-way floorstander with ribbon tweeter
- Finish options: Maple, Cherry, Rosewood
- Sensitivity: 88dB /2.83V /1m
- Nominal impedance: 8 Ohm
- Weight and dimensions: 53kg/ea., 1100mm x 352mm x 462mm (H x W x D)
- Other: Biwire terminals
- [Website](#)



Jörg Dames
redaktion @ fairaudio.de

