SV-Audio Gro floorstanding loudspeaker

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Storgaard & Vestskov ApS, known by their more pronounceable SV-Audio brand, is a newcomer to the audio scene, established in 2023, but the Danish company's three- model line-up of loudspeakers already looks very promising. That probably reflects the more than 25-year history of the engineering company behind the name. You can learn a bit more about what makes the company tick, and what their design philosophy is, in the accompanying Tech Talk, but for now, this review is going to focus on the middle model of their range, the small-to-medium-sized, two-way floorstander, the Gro.

Having said that, before it does, I need to refer you to their first model, the £14,000 Frida, a two-way stand-mounter. This essentially sets the tone for everything that follows, from the driver choices to the distinctive machined aluminium front baffle and the SV-Audio house sound that developed from that design. The tweeter used is a 38mm ring radiator from SB Acoustics, and the bass/mid units are 127mm Kevlar cone drivers from SEAS. These are not inexpensive units and were carefully selected for their integration. The crossover contains top-quality components, again chosen for their sound. Pair that with manufacturing in Denmark, not China, and it's clear that SV-Audio is not targeting the budget market.

All Gro(wn)up

The £20,000 Gro is the second model to be introduced. Still a two-way design, it is based on the Frida and features a second, identical bass/mid driver mounted in a separate machined baffle on the sloping front panel of the loudspeaker. The tapered cabinet and sloping top plate help reduce the perception of size, although the review pair came in a striking metallic blue that itself draws considerable attention. Co-founder Kim Storgaard is an expert in high-quality paintwork, and like the other co-founder, Casper Vestskov Poulsen, is a big fan of hot rods. Therefore, it's almost inevitable that, although this blue is a standard option, SV-Audio also offers bespoke finishes in any automotive paint colour. The rear panel houses a pair of high-quality WBT binding posts and three ports arranged in a vertical array, somewhat reminiscent of a stack of car exhaust pipes. SV-Audio is discreet about the port technology employed, but I can't help wondering whether this arrangement, while clearly functional, might also be a nod to their shared enthusiasm for customised cars.

The cabinet rests on a pair of alloy bars bolted to its base, effectively creating four outriggers threaded M6 to accommodate spikes or other foot designs. This provides a stable stance for what is otherwise a quite narrow cabinet. The Gro is equipped with Soundcare SuperSpike feet from SEAS, the Norwegian manufacturer of their bass/midrange drivers. These are essentially traditional spikes featuring a captive floor-protector disc in a pod. They offer a secure stance and are easy to level, while the felt pads on the base make small adjustments on my wooden floor straightforward. However, sonically, they do not benefit the Gro, and it wasn't until I experimented and replaced them with some aftermarket isolating cones from my own collection that the Gro began to perform well in my room. To clarify, the SuperSpikes are probably preferable to the spikes usually supplied with floorstanders at this price point, but I recommend that buyers explore alternative aftermarket supports if they want to optimise these very promising loudspeakers.

Machined alloy faceplate

The most distinctive feature, aside from paint finishes, of the SV-Audio range is the machined alloy faceplate on the front baffle. This has been developed through extensive listening and measuring to address issues of diffraction and reflection from the front baffle. On the Frida stand-mount, it is a single-piece design that carries both the tweeter and bass/midrange units. The Gro replicates this but adds an additional section directly below, housing the second bass/midrange driver. This gives the Gro a somewhat modular appearance, a design theme that is also reflected in the range-topping, three-way Fenja.

When the speakers are positioned correctly, with the patterned side facing outwards, the geometry helps manage reflections around the drivers and contributes to a cleaner and more focused presentation. »

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» The orientation is defined from the listening position. Left and Right are clearly marked on the loudspeakers and should be relative to the listening position*.

Performance

And it's that articulation which I believe is one of the key strengths of the Gro. It has the ability to present lots of detail and micro-expressions, but in a way that connects the different parts into a meaningful whole – reducing the listener's effort to understand the proceedings. It's also agile: transients and sudden dynamic shifts are clean, swift, and very precisely timed. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic/Vasily Petrenko Rachmaninov Symphonic Dances [AVIE] sounded, once the feet had been sorted, more dance-like, with a clear sense of movement and flow; the strings in the opening were more textured, more 'present' even when playing quietly beneath the brass.

The bass itself isn't excessively heavy – the 27Hz lower frequency limit is cited at -6dB; the more familiar -3dB point, confirmed at 36Hz, remains impressively low, though not quite so subterranean. In that regard, the numbers can be considered closer to a top-quality stand-mount, and that's quite how it feels. SV-Audio's founders are very clear that one of their main aims is to foster an emotional connection with the music for the listener, and they argue that dynamics play a crucial role in this. Therefore, it is better to have a more dynamic, responsive loudspeaker with less low bass than to burden the loudspeaker with deep bass that struggles to keep up. This agility in the bass pays off in 'The Swirl' from the Tord Gustavsen quartet Restored Returned [ECM], where acoustic bass notes are often two notes played quickly one after the other, giving this brooding piece the push it needs to maintain its momentum, with a hint of syncopation adding a touch of funk on top. Some loudspeakers blend both notes together, losing this effect.

The Gro sometimes walks a fine line between detailed and analytical: 'La Fiesta' from The New Crystal Silence [Concord] captures every nuance of Gary Burton's vibraphone and Chick Corea's piano, with remarkable levels of articulation very much in the forefront. However, what emerges from this is a genuine sense of dialogue between the musicians, a level of communication that less articulate loudspeakers often gloss over; and when the orchestra intervenes, everything is well balanced, ensuring the musical intent isn't lost in the exuberance. Frozen in time, Avner Dorman's percussion concerto performed by Christopher Sietzen and the Romanian National Symphony [Sony Classical] is highly dynamic yet tuneful. The string tone adds tension and drama, while the percussion remains vivid, tight, fast, and controlled. It's a piece that can easily spiral into an exhausting racket, but The Gro's almost forensic level of insight keeps the energy and drama alive right to the very end.

SV-Audio's goal is to deliver emotional impact, particularly through the energy and dynamics in music. Classical and jazz are obvious potential beneficiaries of this approach, and the Gro is notably successful in that regard. I've reviewed quite a few loudspeakers in the same price range as the Gro, and they are all different. It's very clear that whichever you choose will reflect your own personal priorities and tastes, and the Gro is good enough and credible enough to stand among them. It offers its own perspective; it's not a 'me, too' product, and SV-Audio would have failed if they had merely copied something already available – they built the company to deliver something that wasn't already on the market. If you also find yourself wanting something the usual brands don't offer, then it's worth seeking out the Gro; it might be exactly what you're looking for. +

**I initially placed the loudspeakers 'room left/right' instead of 'listener left/right'. SV-Audio tells me it will amend the manuals so other owners won't make my rookie error – that said, it was a useful exercise in learning what effect the handedness had on performance.*

Technical specifications

Type: Two way, bass-reflex ported, passive floorstanding loudspeaker,

Driver complement: 1 x 38mm SB Acoustics ring radiator tweeter; 2 x 127mm SEAS Kevlar reinforced polypropylene mid/woofers

Crossover frequencies: 2750 Hz

Frequency response: 27 Hz – 38 kHz (-6dB)

Impedance: 4Ω, nominal

Sensitivity: 90 dB

Power handling: 25-250 W (recommended)

Finishes: standard satin cabinets in black, white, light grey, aluminium baffle in black, bronze or anthracite grey to tone with cabinet. High gloss finishes in black, white, grey, or blue metallic. Bespoke finishes and faceplate combinations to special order.

Dimensions (HxWxD): 105 x 21 x 33 cm

Weight: 22Kg

Price: £20,000 / €22.995,000 (standard satin finishes);
£22,000 / €25,000 (standard high gloss auto finishes)
Bespoke finishes priced on application

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