

# Linn Kaber LS500



the stunning performance turned in by the slightly smaller and much less expensive *Keilidh* in the last project (issue 114), a reappraisal was clearly overdue.

My main criticism of the original *Kaber* lay in its rather exposed and unforgiving treble, but the original tweeter has been recently replaced by Linn's Tonagen-built 14mm ceramic dome, which has already shown great potential in both the *Keilidh* and the much larger *Keltik* (*The Collection* 92). The *Kaber* now also comes fitted with the same moulded ceramic plinth that proved such an effective option with the *Keilidh*, in place of the earlier reversible metal frame affair.

The rest remains as before: a slim, elegant, compact and very substantially built and braced floorstander that with hindsight was one of the trendsetters of this increasingly popular breed. Two similar and small 90mm plastic cone main drivers sit above and below the tweeter on a narrow baffle, the upper one handling bass and midrange duties, the lower one simply reinforcing the lowest octaves. A cocktail of wadding and Ku-Stone blocks damp the enclosures.

Three sets of rear terminals address each driver individually, facilitating bi-/tri-wiring/-amping, all the way up to full active drive. So a pair of *Kabers* could very easily remain at the end of a hi-fi system that goes on getting better through a whole succession of amplification upgrades. Apart from the charcoal grey baffle and plinth, and optional stockingmask grille, all is rather nicely finished in real wood veneer.

However, the saga referred to at the beginning did prove disappointing, and exasperatingly ironic from a company that prides itself on manufacturing quality. Through some ghastly oversight, one of the bass/mid drivers was wired out of phase. The listening panel spotted it in seconds, the presentation was aborted and the errant pair replaced, amidst much embarrassment.

## Sound quality

Despite being booted off the stage first time around, the *Kaber* replacements came back with a vengeance on the last day, generating uncharacteristically genuine enthusiasm among a sometimes cynical panel. One member was quite shocked to discover later that he had described a Linn design as: "No problems; an excellent speaker."

The upshot is that the *Kaber*'s original virtues of fine, if dry, bass control, extended bandwidth and superb dynamic range now come with added sweetness at the brightly balanced top end. There may not be the relaxed sonic delicacy of, say, the transmission lines in this report, but the *Kaber* has a remarkability ability to convey coherent musical information, especially in the way secondary backing instruments continue to sound clear and consistent no matter what the lead may be doing.

## Conclusion



Much improved by the recent revisions, the Linn *Kaber* is more capable, if less kuddly than the *Keilidh*, with a clinical presentation that emphasises its startling dynamic range and encourages multi-amp drive. Assuming the first sample was an isolated rogue, a much more positive Recommendation than that awarded to the original model is clearly deserved.


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## Verdict

-  Superb dynamic range and bass control, very informative.
-  Dry balance can be unforgiving, some shut in boxiness.

 **£1,198.00** RRP

ometimes a review threatens to turn into a saga. The £1,198 Linn *Kaber*, originally reviewed and Recommended three years ago (issue 114), has recently significantly changed. Given

## TEST REPORT

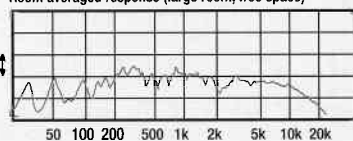
The measurements are very similar to those for the original *Kaber*, although the treble is now clearly both better integrated and less exposed than before. Bass extension is exceptionally good, though as usual the trade-off is seen in below average sensitivity and an amplifier load which demands plenty of current at low frequencies. The *Kaber*'s two bass drivers each have sealed box enclosures of slightly different volumes, so that the two fundamental resonances don't coincide and reinforce each other. The consequence of this technique is seen in the all but disappearance of the low frequency resonance peak from the impedance trace.

Close-to-wall siting gives the best averaged in-room balance, at the expense of some slight over-enthusiasm in the midbass. The mid and treble looks very well judged and smoother than before, but there's still a fair amount of midband unevenness, and a downturn of some 5dB from the upper midband into the crossover dip, followed by a 2dB recovery over the main treble itself.

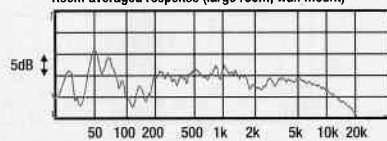
## TEST RESULTS

Size (hwxwd)	93x19x28cm (exc. plinth)
Weight	24kg (inc plinth)
Recommended amplifier power	20-150W
Recommended placement	quite close to wall
In room averaged response limits	
50Hz-10kHz	±5dB
Large room/space LF rolloff (-6dB ref midband)	28Hz
Large room/wall LF rolloff (-6dB ref midband)	25Hz
Large room output at 20H (ref midband)	-9dB
Estimated midrange sensitivity (ref 2.83V, 1m)	84dB
Impedance characteristic (ease of drive)	current hungry
Typical price per pair (inc VAT)	£1,198

Room averaged response (large room, free space)



Room averaged response (large room, wall mount)



Modulus of impedance

