

audition

equipment review

Legend Acoustics Kantu 4 Floorstanding Loudspeakers

Necessity as they say, is the mother of all invention. When the French driver manufacturer Audax announced it was stopping production of conventional drivers and instead concentrating on the car audio market exclusively, Australian speaker manufacturer Legend Acoustics and its director, Dr. Rod Crawford were faced with something of a conundrum. Just what drivers to use in Legend's famous range of Australian designed and built speakers?

Over the years, Legend had built its enviable reputation using the Aero-gel driver from Audax in its range. Fast, open and responsive; they produced a sound that had come to define just what Legend speakers were all about. And now just like that, they were gone. The only thing for it was a major redesign, which is just what Dr. Crawford embarked upon, producing the current 4 series of Legend speakers. So now for the first time, we have completely new woofers, tweeters and revised crossover networks. Radical stuff indeed for an established company with a much loved range of products. But just how has the sound of the speakers changed and is it for

the better? To answer these questions we have for review this month a pair of the range-topping Kantu 4s.

Outwardly at least, little appears to have changed with the Kantu. Unboxed and set up, they are two elegant towers, a little over a metre tall, affixed to sturdy plinths of MDF. On the top, side and rears, the speakers are swathed in gorgeous, real Jarrah veneer. The front panel and grill cloth is a contrasting black. There is a small port in the rear and below this, four of the largest, chunkiest binding posts you are ever likely to have seen. The cabinet is jewellery box tight. Rapping the front baffle with a knuckle is akin to knocking on a vault door. Although the whole cabinet is constructed of MDF, you'd swear there was tungsten alloy in there somewhere. It's not until you drop the unique, elasticised grill cloths however, that the main changes reveal themselves.

Now replacing the former Audax and Peerless drivers are two carbon fibre pulp woofers from Scan-Speak and a ceramic tweeter by Visaton. I spoke to Dr. Crawford and asked him about the changes. "I looked at a lot of different drivers and simply decided that the Scan-Speaks were the best for the money. They're lightening fast like the Aero-gel drivers but even more revealing. With the tweeter, I seriously

**Dr. Rod
Crawford's
latest Kantus
really do take
some beating**

By Michael O'Connor

considered. ribbons for a while but decided against it. They sounded good but I didn't feel they had a particularly accurate sound. It's my criticism of panel speakers generally. They sound lovely and warm but aren't really true. My Legend speakers are similar to the speakers I use to produce at Linn in so much as I always strive for linearity and accuracy. For some people they're going to be a little too analytical but I believe it's always best to strive for accuracy."

And what about that ceramic tweeter - why not just stick with the Peerless?

"The ring-radiator tweeter from Peerless was good, but I felt that I heard a little untidiness higher up the frequency hand. I prefer the Visaton unit. It's made of ceramic, which means that it's much stronger than fabric but better damped than metal. They're all good units and in each case I've selected what I think is the best available for the money, but don't forget Michael that it's not just the drivers. It's the overall design of the speaker. I mean anyone can buy some fantastically expensive drivers and screw them into a box and get a half decent sound out of it. The real skill is integrating it all with the crossover network and the cabinet to create a really great sounding speaker."

All three drivers are positioned in the top half of the speaker with the

tweeter placed in between the woofers and offset to the side. There is a left and a right speaker, with the offset tweeter positioned towards the outside. The woofers and tweeter are counter sunk into the baffle and appear locked in tight. The crossover network has been revised and now uses high quality Weema capacitors with the entire speaker cabled with solid core Cardis cable throughout. Legend claims that the aim of each change once again was to select the best sounding components available for the money.

Set-up was straight forward enough with no particular quirks I could discern. They're rear ported so get them off the wall at least a bit. Another point worth noting is that the speakers can be biwired and indeed this is how Legend recommends they be used. Large bars are included all the same however so you can use single shot wire if you wish.

The review sample already had a few hours of use, so they were run-in to a degree, but I played pink noise through them overnight all the same to ensure the drivers and crossovers were loosened up, ready to play. With their first use, the thing I noticed with the new Kantu 4 was that they still possess the familiar Legend sound. Open and detailed; the speakers do a better job of getting out of the way and revealing the music than most others. And of course the speed. You'd think that Legend had invented speed - then kept most of the world's supply for itself.

It's obvious why Legend speakers are a favourite of the home theatre set. It has transients that are blinding. Changes in music from high to low and fast to soft are rendered with breath taking efficiency.

But all these are attributes that have been carried over from the earlier speakers and are what the company has built its name on. What was new for me and where the series 4's are a leap ahead over the models before it,



are just how breathtakingly revealing they now are. I'm reminded of something that Dr. Crawford's former boss at Linn, Ivor Tiefenbrun once said, which was that speakers can only ever, to a greater or lesser degree, detract from the signal source. Well, the Kantu 4 detracts from that source to a lesser degree than any other speaker I've used in my system.

Detail is revealed that you never guessed was there. On *Grace* by Jeff Buckley, individual instruments were separated out like never before. Buckley's voice soars above them all, hanging between the speakers like some ghostly apparition. It made all my previous listening to this album sound somehow compressed or confused by comparison. On great live recordings like *Hot August Night* by Neil Diamond, things like the applause and murmur of the crowd behind the music

Technotalk

Product Type:

Floorstanding loudspeakers

Driver Complement:

2.5-way, three driver system

2 x mid/bass, 1 x tweeter

Enclosure:

Bass reflex, rear ported

Power Handling:

50-500 watts RMS

Frequency Response:

35Hz-25kHz

Impedance:

4 ohms nominal

Sensitivity:

90dB

Cabinet Finish:

Jarrah or Black Burr Ash

Technotalk specifications and recommended retail prices are supplied by the manufacturer

Vital Statistics

Dimensions:

1050 x 200 x 300mm

Weight:

35kg each

Price:

\$4,990 (speakers)

Distributor:

Legend Acoustics

PO Box 3862

Weston Creek, ACT 2611

Telephone:

(02) 6288 7276

Facsimile:

(02) 6288 7202

Website:

www.legendspeakers.com.au

transported me back to that audience in 1972.

The Visaton tweeter is a winner. Smooth and grain free, it never became fatiguing to listen to. On *Suspended Night* by the Tomasz Stanko quartet, the trumpet lines were wonderfully liquid as they floated around and above the rest of the band. By way of comparison I pulled out my notes from my review of the Focal JMLab 907 Be which was the last pair of speakers I listened to whose upper range had me grasping for adjectives. Looking back at it now, I think the Kantu 4 can't be very far away from the performance of the JMLabs. True, they can't soar to 40Khz like their Beryllium competitors from France, but I doubt that's anything you'll miss. One area where the Legends do compete with the JMLabs however is with the integration of the drivers. Where as the latter had a tweeter that sounded more forward than the woofer, you'll be hard pressed to discern just where the Legend's woofers cut out and the tweeter takes over. It means that the speaker's performance is just that much more effortless and organic. The other obvious advantage the Legends have is the extra 20Hz of bass.

The Legend Acoustics Kantu 4s absolutely flattered my system. It was almost like I'd traded my CD player in for a \$20,000 replacement. All the classic hi-fi tricks of three dimensionality and sound staging were there to a greater degree than ever. But ultimately, what I liked about these speakers couldn't be broken down to some mathematical formulae. It was simply the way they excited me and made me want to play

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album after album. Even old favourites sounded as though I was approaching them for the first time. As I write this now, there are discarded CD cases all over the floor of my room. No doubt there is another long evening of listening ahead of me.

The Legend Acoustics Kantu is now better than ever. Just like the Ambience speakers our editor Nic Tatham reviewed in last month's edition of, I think they've got to be some kind of hi-fi bargain.

Comparable performance from imported speakers is going to cost you a great deal more than the \$4,990 asking price. But my advice to you is to not even think about money. At least to start out with. Just go out and listen to a pair of the new Legend Kantu 4 loudspeakers. If you love music and movies, you'll be so glad you did. **AVL**

Ancillary Equipment: Naim CD5 CD player, Naim Flatcap2 power supply, McIntosh MC50 monobloc amplifiers, Nordost Solar Wind DIN to RCA interconnect, Nordost Flatline Gold speaker cable, Atacama Statistage isolation platform

Opinion

The 'Opinion' expressed here is that of the reviewer, summarised in the form of a 5-star rating system, and should be considered as an integral part of the full contents of this Audition Equipment Review. As such, each category should be judged on its own merits and not necessarily used as a comparison with other equipment reviews in this, or other editions of Audio & Video Lifestyle magazine.

- ★ Shocker
- ★★ Average
- ★★★ Good
- ★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★★ Perfection

"The Legend Acoustics Kantu is now better than ever (and) I think they've got to be something of a bargain"

- Performance ★★★★★
- Build Quality ★★★★★
- Compatibility ★★★★★
- Value For Money ★★★★★