

aqua  
acoustic quality

introducing the Aqua LinQ  
the Italian streaming bridge

new

Aqua LinQ Network Interface'  
RRP: from £4,982.00

LinQ

Power

Display

M1 Room Ready  
PCM 24bit 384.0kHz

M1 M2 M3 M4 Func

network interface

aqua  
acoustic quality

Formula

power

mute

phase 180

44.1 • 88.2 • 176.4 • 352.8 •

48 • 96 • 192 • 384 •

I II III IV V VI

Optologic DAC

aqua  
acoustic quality

Aqua Formula xHD DAC  
RRP: £11,900.00

exclusively distributed in the UK by elite audio

contact us to find out more about our part exchange and interest free credit terms



Retailing the world's most sought  
after Hi-Fi components.



T: 01334 570 666

E: [INFO@ELITEAUDIOUK.COM](mailto:INFO@ELITEAUDIOUK.COM)

W: [WWW.ELITEAUDIOUK.COM](http://WWW.ELITEAUDIOUK.COM)

aqua  
acoustic quality

## LOUDSPEAKER

92dB sensitivity was optimistic. While I barely got the needles on the D'Agostino Momentum Stereo [HFN Jul '11] to flicker (and the sensitivity for the meters was set to 'high'), the Ktêmas love a lot of juice... and enjoy delivering realistic levels.

That's not to say that the Ktêmas cannot whisper, for they excel at low levels. They seemed to operate independently of pure SPLs, and the grilles – which Franco told me were inspired by violin strings – have absolutely no effect on the sound. If you

can hear the difference, I will give you a bottle of Barolo. But the need for loads of power in reserve was manifested in the way the lower registers behaved, especially regarding control and slam.

I found this amusing, because Franco designed his loudspeakers more for finesse than force. The percussion in the remastered *Abbey Road* [Apple 02577 92112; CD/Blu-ray box] made some visitors jump visibly in their seats, the weight and scale so rich and substantial it was hard to credit even two pairs of 230mm woofers. But it was the control and transient attack which proved even more dazzling than the extension or bass quantity. Ringo's break at the tail-end of 'Carry That Weight' had nearly the impact of that legendary release, *The Sheffield Drum Record*. Yes, it was that vivid, especially its stage width and cavernous front-to-back depth.

### LIFE CHANGING

When dealing with the Ktêma, though, one needs to keep in mind the *raison d'être*, which is the spatial element, in the same way that one considers a Lotus for handling or a Ferrari for speed. I put on Ray Anthony's admittedly schmaltzy *Dancing Over The Waves* [Capitol ZC-87], a 7½ips, ½-track tape from 1958 possessing the finest big band pedigree, firing up my treasured Denon DH-710F open-reel deck in order to savour it.

It proved room-filling in a way that I've only heard before from the likes of Apogee's Scintilla in 1ohm mode, via 200W Krell monoblocks, or Wilson XLFs in founder Dave's own listening room. Highs were crisp without being aggressive, airy and gossamer-like with no lack of precision or definition, and more-ish enough to inspire playing a half-dozen LPs into the wee hours. One can't avoid the term 'silky' because that's what you get: a glossy sheen that's so un-hi-fi-like, so organic you begin to understand what authenticity means by 2020 standards. ☺

**LEFT:** Side view of the concave, satin sycamore side cheeks with subtle venting for the midrange drivers. The two alloy woofers are 'compression loaded' against the convex rear panel [see p39] exhausting from the sides

### MASSIMILIANO FAVELLA

Massimiliano Favella, owner of Laboratorium, the manufacturer of Franco Serblin loudspeakers, Yter cables and Flexum acoustic panels, began his audio career in 1995 at Sonus faber. His last two years at the Italian speaker giant was spent working with Franco, his father-in-law, in the R&D department before leaving in 2001 and setting up Laboratorium a couple of years later.

'In 2010 Laboratorium produced Franco's final loudspeakers, the Ktêma and Accordo', recounts Massimiliano. 'The latter are permanently set up at Mozart's birth place in Salzburg, so visitors have the opportunity to listen to his masterpieces through the Accordo'.

Franco passed away in 2013 since which time Laboratorium has continued his legacy, finalising the Ligne project in 2016 and the Accordo Essence floorstander in 2018. 'Over the years we have maintained Franco's "Modus Operandi" in our R&D', says Massimiliano, 'using high quality electronic components and precious wood with harmonious shapes.'

'In order to maintain the highest quality standard, Laboratorium releases only a few loudspeakers – our production and QC is very time-consuming. Of course new projects will be announced in the future, in fact we are working on a new design at this moment, but it takes time to reach a good result. In truth it is not easy to carry on Franco's name, but I can affirm that the value we give to things is also the meaning we put into them, and reflects the profound esteem I always had of Franco.'

