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Above Wharfedale Elysian 2 and Elysian 4 loudspeakers in piano lacquered walnut and black

Elysian speakers turn home into sonic heaven

The culmination of a special three-year R&D project, Wharfedale's new flagship speakers are the ultimate expression of pure musical enjoyment embedded at the heart of this famous British brand

Cambridgeshire, England – In Greek mythology, the Elysian Fields are a heavenly place where the heroic and the virtuous are rewarded in the afterlife. Elysian, as an adjective, means blissful – a fitting name for Wharfedale's new flagship loudspeakers, conceived to deliver blissful sonic reward to music lovers seeking heavenly respite from the rigours of daily life.

Two Elysian loudspeakers have been created; a large standmount model called Elysian 2 (£4,500 per pair) and a floorstanding speaker named Elysian 4 (£6,500 per pair). Both speakers were developed concurrently with the EVO4 Series, which launched towards the end of 2019 and sits immediately below Elysian in Wharfedale's new hierarchy.

Elysian and EVO4 share many design elements, having benefitted from the same R&D process as part of a unified project. The core speakers in both ranges are three-way designs, sporting an unusual and sophisticated driver array including an Air Motion Transformer (AMT) high-frequency unit. But with

Elysian, each component part is engineered to the very highest standard. The drivers, the crossover, the cabinet – every aspect has been developed in harmony and without cost constraint to push the project to its performance limit. Many of these elements were trickled down, remodelled and engineered in more affordable form to create the EVO4 Series, enabling the speakers in this range to deliver astounding value for money.

With the EVO4 Series already winning major awards, now is the time for Wharfedale to unleash Elysian.



Elysian AMT treble unit

In the 1940s, Wharfedale's founder, Gilbert Briggs, developed the first two-way speaker for domestic use, radical for its separate treble and bass drivers combined via a crossover. Early treble units, such as Brigg's famous Super 3, resembled small cones as the necessity for reproducing high frequencies demanded the use of low-mass diaphragms. It was subsequently realised that the dome in the centre of the cone was doing most of the work and this gave rise to the now ubiquitous dome tweeter.

Dome treble units have dominated the hi-fi scene for decades, but they are not necessarily the ideal way of reproducing the exact harmonics of the musical waveform. In order to reduce moving mass, the dome has to be small and use ultra-thin materials, both of which counteract its efficiency and accuracy.

The AMT is a radically different way of moving air, using a large, pleated, lightweight diaphragm driven across its surface by rows of strategically placed metallic strips immersed in a strong magnetic field. The pleats in the diaphragm contract and expand under the influence of the musical drive, squeezing the air between them to form the desired waveform.

Not only is this an efficient way of moving air, it is also highly accurate as the diaphragm is under close control of the motor system at all times. The result is a wide bandwidth transducer that achieves extremely low distortion and wonderful musical detail, with scintillating speed and dynamic ability.

The development of this AMT unit was a key part of the Elysian/EVO4 project. The Elysian AMT is larger and of higher specification than the one used in the EVO4 Series, featuring an ultra-lightweight diaphragm material called PET and an acoustically damped rear chamber, delivering even more spellbindingly clear and sweetly extended high frequencies.

Elysian midrange driver

In the spirit of Gilbert Briggs, who was well known for experimenting with new driver materials, Wharfedale investigated a range of options to match the sensitivity and accuracy of the AMT treble unit.

The company settled on a proprietary woven glass fibre matrix, formed into a 150mm cone. This provides a superb combination of low mass and high strength, with the addition of a high-plasticity coating to control its acoustic behaviour. With such a low-mass cone, only a low-damping, foamed, rubber-like material would match for the surround – again, coated for durability.

A central phase plug is specially shaped to linearise the output across a wide bandwidth, even off-axis, enhancing a natural response to the music that can be heard anywhere the listener wishes to sit.

This midrange driver enables the Elysian speakers to deliver voices and instruments with astonishing realism. Vocalists seem to be present in the room with the listener – simply close your eyes and listen to the palpable presence of singers in the acoustic space.



Left The Elysian speakers' AMT treble unit (far left) and midrange driver deliver exceptional speed, clarity and bandwidth

Elysian bass driver

The midrange unit is matched with a glass fibre matrix cone for the bass unit, in this case terminated with a highly flexible rubber surround and driven by a specially developed low-distortion motor system.

In order to plumb the depths of the lowest frequencies in recorded music, the 220mm bass units – one in the Elysian 2, two in the Elysian 4 – are capable of reaching down below 28Hz in-room, revealing the full body and impact of percussion, stringed and wind instruments.

The bass units are loaded by an advanced version of Wharfedale's signature slot-loaded port. Christened SLPP (Slot-Loaded Profiled Port), it ensures that the rear output of the bass units is not wasted. Instead, the lowest frequency energy is vented to a slot at the base of the speaker, specially profiled to equalise the high internal pressure to the low pressure in the room.

This reduces the distortion that is typical of bass reflex systems and increases the port's efficiency. In addition, because the air is dispersed uniformly in the room, the speakers are less fussy about siting.

In combination, the bass units and SLPP bass reflex system provide the massive foundation upon which the rest of the musical performance sits, letting you feel as well as hear the full impact of thunderous low-frequency information. High overall system sensitivity allows any amplifier to reveal the full dynamic range of the music fed to it, without strain or limitation.



Left The Elysian speakers' SLPP bass reflex system vents at the base, working with the bass drivers to deliver exceptional low-frequency performance

Elysian crossover network

The drivers' output is combined via a sophisticated crossover network, fine-tuned over hundreds of hours of listening tests to ensure a seamless blend between the drive units.

Of particular note is the phase consistency across the driver output, permitting a wide range of seating positions and encouraging the power response to be highly linear throughout the listening room. Only the highest grade, acoustically transparent components are used throughout the crossover network, ensuring all the musical detail is heard with nothing held back.

Elysian cabinet

The Elysian speaker cabinets are designed to enhance the acoustic output of the drivers and provide a piece of furniture of which the owner can be justly proud. Handcrafted veneers are enhanced by true piano finish lacquers, hand-polished to six levels of depth to give a truly beautiful finish.

Beneath the veneer is a sandwich of woods of differing density, designed to reduce panel resonance to below audibility. Named PROS (Panel Resonance Optimisation System), this multi-layer construction also inhibits the leakage of unwanted sound energy from inside the cabinet, which would otherwise interfere with the forward output of the drive units.

Both Elysian models have a wide stature that complements the output of the drive units by helping them match to the acoustics of the room – an aspect of home audio reproduction that has been largely overlooked amid the modern trend to design slim, compact loudspeakers. One key aspect is the wide baffle, finished with radiused edges to smooth the flow of sonic energy around the cabinet.

Speaking about the development of Elysian, Wharfedale's Director of Acoustic Design, Peter Comeau, said: "Our aim for the Elysian/EVO4 project was to deliver a new flagship for Wharfedale (Elysian) whilst creating design elements that could be trickled down to a more affordable, mid-range series (EVO4).

While we are justly proud of the value for money offered by the EVO4 Series, the two Elysian models represent the pinnacle of our achievements – loudspeakers that deliver an exceptional high-end performance yet still cost much less than many of the models with which they compete.”

Comeau added, “The cabinet design, in combination with the drive units, allows the Elysian speakers to convey the full body of instruments like cello and bass guitar, without constraining the dynamics of the musical recital. Whether you’re listening to solo piano, a full orchestra, a jazz trio or a rock band, these speakers bring the thrill and excitement of the performance to your listening room.”

The Wharfedale Elysian 2 and Elysian 4 are available in the UK from this month. RRP’s are £4,500 per pair (£4,900 with matching stands) and £6,500 per pair respectively. Finish options are walnut, black or white, hand-finished in high-gloss piano lacquer.



SPECIFICATIONS	ELYSIAN 2	ELYSIAN 4
Configuration	3-way standmount	3-way floorstander
Enclosure type	Bass reflex (slot-loaded)	Bass reflex (slot-loaded)
High-frequency driver	27x90mm Air Motion Transformer	27x90mm Air Motion Transformer
Midrange Driver	150mm woven glass fibre matrix cone	150mm woven glass fibre matrix cone
Bass driver	220mm woven glass fibre matrix cone	220mm woven glass fibre matrix cone (x2)
Sensitivity (2.83v @ 1m)	89dB	92dB
Recommended amp power	25-250W	15-250W
Nominal impedance	8 Ohms compatible	8 Ohms compatible
Frequency response (+/-3dB)	35Hz-22kHz	30Hz-22kHz
Bass extension (-6dB)	28Hz	24Hz
Crossover frequency	360kHz; 2.9kHz	340kHz; 3.1kHz
Cabinet volume	17.5L; 43.6L	38L; 79.4L
Dimensions (HxWxD)	700x334x432mm (stand 428x402x435mm)	1188x402x432mm (inc. plinth)
Weight (each)	30.5kg	49.5kg



British loudspeakers have always enjoyed an excellent reputation around the world, and Wharfedale is perhaps the most famous brand of all. Stretching back to 1932, when Wharfedale's founder Gilbert Briggs built his first speaker in the cellar of his Yorkshire home, Wharfedale has been responsible for some of the most important loudspeakers ever produced, introducing many techniques and technologies that became commonplace such as the two-way loudspeaker (invented in 1945) and the use of ceramic magnets (pioneered in 1962). Now in its 87th year, Wharfedale continues its quest to deliver excellent sound quality and value-for-money with a wide range of class-leading speakers, both traditional and wireless, including the latest iteration of the famous Diamond line – the classic entry point to high-fidelity sound – and the next level up: the new EVO4 Series.

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