

From the German audiophile magazine  
HiFi Lautsprecher  
Test-Jahrbuch 2013

[translated from the original German language by Louis Motek]

## **Oh So Grand**

As the old saying goes: height doesn't necessarily depict greatness, and the reverse applies just as well: even with a modest physique, one can achieve greatness -- as is done here.

Kawero is a portmanteau made up of the three names Kaiser, Weber and Rottenwoehrer. These three men, each blessed with their own special talents, decided a few years ago to make public their purely personal loudspeaker project. Such is the truncated version of the story behind the name.

The loudspeakers with the "Kawero" logo are manufactured in a facility called Kaiser Möbelwerkstätten GmbH close to Passau. This company is no less than one of the most advanced woodworking companies in the entire country of Germany, something I could convince myself of during my visit there. Among the projects implemented there are enormous trade show stands for the German automobile industry, complete hotel lobbies and similar complex custom projects. In addition, the company has a well-known acoustics branch which engages in room acoustics of all color and shape. Kaiser is capable of trimming the acoustics of most any venue to the exact direction the customer desires.

Rainer Weber's day job position is revealed by his intriguing business card: "Director Advanced System Engineering Noise, Vibration and Harshness" and this for a major automobile supplier. Acoustics is his life, and this plays a major role in the development of this loudspeaker. Presently, the top-of-the-line model in the series is the "Classic" including an external crossover, and this is the very model we're dealing with here. The speaker pair is priced from 78,400 Euros -- not exactly a steal, but in the meantime, we are thoroughly convinced that it is impossible to achieve this less expensively.

The "Classic" is a three-way loudspeaker. The midrange driver -- a specially customized version from Audiotechnology Denmark -- is found in the usual position on the front of the quite asymmetrical body, which is somewhat reminiscent of the shape of a pyramid. This driver is housed in its own hermetically closed chamber which is enclosed with a passive membrane on the rear side. On top of the body one will find one of the most extreme tweeters presently available: a true ribbon, hand fashioned by the Serbian manufacturer RAAL. But this version is not readily available -- in fact you won't find this one in the catalogue at all. It might be the only ribbon in existence with a sandwich membrane; the vibrating foil is composed of two layers of aluminum sandwiching an enclosed film of oil. The driver transformer is made with a silver-gold-palladium alloy wire, which is not available in the RAAL catalogue. The tweeter can be adjusted axially and in position to fit the particularities of the venue and setup. At the back of the speaker one finds, beneath the passive membrane for the mids, the bass driver. This 10-inch driver is

also made by Audiotechnology. The very low tones are supported by a bass reflex port at the bottom, which, together with the floor, serves for proper foundation.

All of that resides in a housing which, given its build and material quality, boasts something rather unique: it is made of 30 millimeter thick Panzerholz, which, together with a total of 5 other layers may just be the ultimate housing material. Panzerholz is about as heavy as aluminum, but boasts much more advanced acoustical damping properties; it is extremely hard (bulletproof) and is practically impossible to machine using standard methods. Kaiser Möbelwerkstätten has transformed it here with a wonderfully beautiful Ziricote veneer and a perfect finish with genuine italian piano lacquer. Even when these speakers aren't actively engaged in music playback -- their appearance alone is an impressive example for the ultimate in the art of handcrafting.

Based on footprint, practically equal in size is the unbelievable external crossover of this speaker. If you're intimidated by this external "weaponry," for 30,000 Euros less, a version is available with integrated, internal crossover. Although not quite as insanely equipped as the external version, the manufacturer claims to have now achieved the same if not better results despite the somewhat leaner parts solution, which is why the version with external crossover will soon no longer be made available. The crossover boasts the finest passive components available that (ample) money and knowledge can buy. Almost all of these are made by the danish specialist Duelund. Silver? A whole lot. Oil and paper? But of course. Alone for the price for the cables connecting crossover to speaker, you could get yourself a pretty decent pair of loudspeakers.

Is it the enclosure build? I suspect it at least. In any case, Ilena Florentina Tautus's "Ausgeliefert" from the phantasmagorically beautiful Meyer-Records-Sampler "Vol. 3" stands palpably, solidly, and very precisely delineated in the room. At first, the bass seemed somewhat on the conservative end, but that impression quickly proved deceiving: the Kawero does not sound thin, it simply avoids any form of thickening coloration in the bass region. I am reminded of a similarly precise (and also not lifeless) bass from only one other enclosure material, and that is slate. Here we have a similar perfection: remarkably clean, comfortably decent, with a complete pallet of timbre -- which for the bass region is no small achievement. It sounds remarkably clear, direct and differentiated; I have never before heard anything like it from a bass reflex system design.

The next feature of the Classic is obviously the opposite end of the spectrum: the RAAL ribbon is considered without a shadow of a doubt one of the best tweeters on the market, and this is proved here impressively. Even with not exactly 'audiophile' grade recordings, this driver shines forth with its exceptionally silky, detailed, completely unobtrusive sound character. Of course, the Smashing Pumpkins should as a rule probably not be the source material of choice for such a revealing loudspeaker -- big mistake. Ah, but what the Kawero extracts from Billy Corgan band's present album "Oceania", I hadn't thought was even possible: real dynamics, details, passion, pure "current" -- this loudspeaker can really rock. The Kawero fills our relatively large listening space effortlessly with pure energy, and in this context, I'm quite happy with the power reserves offered by our Lindemann amp.

Let's switch gears and turn to Till Brönner's new untitled album. This is really exactly how it should be: very beautifully detailed leading edges of the german gifted trumpeter's notes, great separation between bass and percussion, every instrument with its own individual signature tonal color, without a trace of any sameness or blurring. This I find

very unique among ribbons: the tweeter in this case does not separate itself from the soundstage, and the midrange is not lost in a failed attempt to catch up to the speed of the ribbon. It's very well integrated. I call that carefully matched. This record emphasizes the variability that this speaker is capable of with regards to sound-staging: Brönnner's new album sounds much more compact and intimate than for example the Smashing-Pumpkins recording, and expresses a very clear depth depiction. Even if the comparison of such extremes in practice might not mean all that much, it does show, however, the cross-genre capabilities of this loudspeaker.

The more challenging the recording, the more the Kawero is in its element. One such recording is Nina Simone's "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair." This almost-mono rendition from the year 1970 becomes, through the portal of the Kawero, a demonstration of absolute musical devotion. Even though the speaker, even without trying, clearly displays all sorts of technical recording faults, even if every not quite precise piano hammer-fall is illuminated embarrassingly under the spotlight, the result is a perfect demonstration of musical integrity since you feel the performance stems from deep emotion. And that is exactly the most distinctive mark of this loudspeaker which makes it like no other: it sounds completely untechnical and hones our senses to perceive the essential -- I cannot think of a better compliment.

Holger Barske

Bottom Line:

It doesn't always have to be as big as a telephone booth; Kaiser demonstrates impressively, that a loudspeaker of even moderate dimensions can belong to the very top echelon. Here, really no detail was left to chance -- additional optimizing is hardly imaginable.