

Hello

I thought this the appropriate place to chime in with my experience with HHR Exotic Speakers and Dale Harder. While I do not yet have the TLS-1, what I do own is the TLS-1 Walsh driver sitting atop the original Ohm Acoustics cabinet... heavily modified by Dale. I recently purchased these on Audiogon. They were sold to me because the person selling lost his listening room. I have been listening for a couple of months now and I feel I can shed some light on these speakers and my experiences with them.

First about Dale Harder... I have spoken to Dale at least 4 times regarding the speakers. Remember he did not sell me these, so he has no real financial interest in these speakers. He is only supporting me and the speakers after they had been sold to me. He has been very generous with his time and knowledge. He has helped me with set up and answering any questions I have had. He is clearly very an expert when it comes to the Walsh style driver. He is now manufacturing a vastly improved driver and cabinet. I personally feel this is a labor of love on his part and he is doing what he feels he needs to do in order to perpetuate the nearly lost technology found in the Walsh driver.

About the speakers... Please remember mine are not the complete HHR TLS-1. While the TLS-1 driver was built by Dale in its entirety, mine still have the 30 - 40 year old original Ohm Acoustics cabinet ...3/4" plywood. While Dale has made substantial improvements to the "box"; extra bracing; resonance control; adding a plinth to the bottom, and even though they were very nicely refinished, it is still the old box and constitutes what I consider one of the weakest links in these speakers. Considering the new complete TLS-1 comes with a non-resonant 2" thick constrained layered cabinet I am sure Mr. Harder agrees with this statement.

So on to how they sound; Yeah, what does a crossover less, coherent Walsh Transmission line speaker sound like? In a word – Musical.

In more than a few words:

1. These speakers produce what I consider to be the most believable soundstage of any speaker I have ever heard. It is three dimensional, accurate (not to be confused with the pin-point imaging which I consider inaccurate) and full. The listening room boundaries disappear with the performance in a way that can only be described as life like.
2. Vocals sound WONDERFUL. You can "see" the performer in your mind. They sound very real. Male voice is chesty and breath-full with no boom. Think Leonard Cohen and smile. Female voice is glorious and never etched except when the recording is hard or strident. Think Allison Krauss and sigh. On the topic of recordings, I would have to mention that these speakers are extremely revealing and not at all forgiving of poor recordings. If you want your speakers to make everything sound good, then these are not for you. If you long for accuracy, you will be justly rewarded when the recording is "you are there". On the downside, you will know when the sound engineer did a poor or mediocre job.
3. Bass is outstanding except for some resonances that I attribute to the old cabinets. These old cabinets do resonate, but even so the overall bass performance is excellent. In conversations with Dale I have concluded that when he actually builds the cabinets from scratch this goes

away for even more clarity. Even with the old cabinets, I am often surprised by the bass depth and clarity. It is actually the accuracy and tunefulness of the bass that makes the old cabinet resonances somewhat audible. These speakers with their low bass can easily excite spurious resonances from the room, floor, windows etc. so be prepared to treat your room. Vinyl hobbyists will need to be careful of subsonic sound.

4. Amplifiers with power are mandatory. I am currently using a Spectron Musician II with great success. I am thinking a minimum of 200wpc is needed to properly control these drivers.
5. Overdriving the TLS-1 drivers. On Dale's site he clearly states the consequences of overdriving these speakers. You should never exceed the maximum excursion of the driver. If you overdrive them, you will destroy them... end of story. These are not head banger speakers nor are they made for Home Theater. They are made to reproduce music. They will play to 95db peaks all day long. I have found about 5% of the time wanting a bit more headroom than that. That is it. This is really my only negative with these speakers and I have decided that I can live with that in exchange for what they truly deliver. Music to my ears.

In summing up, a bit about me. I have been an "audiophile" since I was a teen and I am 60 now. I heard the original Ohm Fs when I was in my early 20s and I loved them and had wanted to hear how they stood the test of time for many years now. Even then I remember they were power hogs and at the time there was nothing much around that could properly drive them. I have had many high-end speakers since then and when these came on Audiogon I took the plunge.

I have not been disappointed. I am confident that these speakers can hold their own with any speakers now produced regardless of the cost. Let me state for the record that I have no affiliation with Dale Harder or HHR Exotic speakers other than being an owner of the speakers I have just written about. For me my biggest dilemma is I am thinking of selling these so I can purchase the HHR Exotic TLS-2. If anyone out there is as intrigued as I was about Walsh style driver technology, drop me a line perhaps we can help each other.

Celebrat

Fred Manheck