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Vivid Giya G4

by Jason Kennedy

The day after these little Giyas arrived designer Lawrence ‘Dic’ Dickie was off to Durban in South Africa to set up a test and measurement facility in Vivid’s new factory. But the company was not due to move to said factory until the day after he arrived and he had two weeks in which to create the perfect environment for R&D and make serious progress with a new model. And I thought my life was hectic!

The G4 was created in response to demand from Japanese audiophiles for a smaller Giya, but that was the story with both the G2 and G3, it seems that small(er) is indeed beautiful when it comes to curvy speakers. The G4 is not that much smaller than the G3; it is just 101cm in height, although you can buy a set of wild teak blocks from Vivid that bring the G4s’ height up by 100mm, which puts the tweeters at ear level, but means the speaker is no longer quite so diminutive.

Pictures do the Vivid some justice, but don’t express its scale well. The Giya G1 seems to have lodged into the audiophile psyche and people mistakenly think ‘smaller’ means ‘a little smaller’ because the shape of the G1, G2, G3, and now G4 are similar. In the flesh, however, the block-free G4 really is small; coming up to hip height or so on most people. This has a slight ‘Ames room’ because the G4 looks like it should be 2m tall and yet is half that height in reality.

Apparently the G3 is the most popular model in the Giya range, so maybe Vivid has gone small enough with the G4. But still the question of whether there will be a G5 had to be asked. Dic, “cannot think of any reason to go smaller” and has, “no intention of making a four-way G5”. However, a three-way “should not be ruled out” in future.

A more significant difference between the G3 and G4 is that the G4 has a slimmer baffle, a change that meant that the 125mm lower midrange driver used on the G3 could not be employed, so Dic designed a new driver for this application with a 100mm cone called the C100S. Like its predecessor, the C100S has an aluminium alloy cone with a computer FEA optimised profile that pushes the first break up mode up to a point where it’s safely out-of-band. As in the case of the bass drivers, the crossover slope ensures that this is well below audibility. The bass drivers on the G4 are the same size as those on the Vivid B1 Decade reviewed in issue 137, and they have the same cone, but that’s where the similarity ends. In the G4 there are two side-firing bass drivers placed back-to-back so that they oppose one another’s actions in the widest part of the cabinet; these are C125L drivers, where the suffix stands for long throw. The voice coils are copper rather than copper plated aluminium so that they are heavier and have greater heat dissipating capabilities, which means they can be driven harder and thus go louder for longer. The G4 may look like a ballerina, but just like such dancers it is actually as hard as nails, and plays nearly as loud as the nine inch variety.

The tweeter and upper midrange driver are Vivid’s unique catenary dome types with a more oval section than a regular hemispherical dome. All three of the front firing drivers have the tapered tube rear loading that Dickie developed for the B&W Nautilus. You can spot the tubes that cross the hole for tweeter and upper mid but the rear vent for the lower mid actually curves up into the ring shape that distinguishes the Giya design. These tubes absorb rearward output without reflection, leaving the driver free to respond to the signal. The domes also feature a carbon fibre reinforcement ring that pushes the first break-up frequency up by over fifty per cent according to Vivid. The cabinet itself is not only remarkably elegant and devoid of flat planes or corners so as to avoid refraction but is made of end grain balsa in a sandwich of glass reinforced composite skins, making it light yet exceptionally rigid and also allowing the distinctive form. That form is not merely aesthetic either, but is based on the need to provide the same tapered absorption to the bass system as the other drivers. What’s really clever about this design is that it combines this approach with ports that augment the low frequency output, which is not something that you see on the Nautilus, or anywhere else for that matter.

Essentially Vivid has its own take on almost every aspect of loudspeaker design and technology; this makes construction expensive but results in loudspeakers that consistently have lower perceived distortion than most of the competition. At £21,000, the smallest Giya is an expensive speaker yet it shares the incredible resolving powers and undiscernible distortion of its rangemates. The B1 Decade is extraordinarily good, but the G4 is more transparent still, so that every tweak you make to what goes before it is easy to hear and every nuance in the music played through them is clear as day. But finding a source

and amplification that is quiet, dynamic, resolute and well timed enough to be a suitable partner is tricky for the less well heeled reviewer. Fortunately I had a Bryston SST 4B3 power amplifier on hand to provide oodles of clean, dynamic, and transparent power. The G4 needs a bit of grip; its 86dB sensitivity is not a serious challenge but if you want controlled low end then a decent 100 Watter or more would be a good idea. But quality is as ever the key, if you don't intend on ragging it at every opportunity you could get away with less. Source wise I used the CAD CAT server and both a Primare DAC 30, plus the Rockna Wavedream DAC reviewed next month. Volume control and input selection was catered for as ever by the Townshend Allegri.

The G4 also has rather more prodigious bass capabilities than the B1, which was made abundantly clear with one of the finest renditions of Infected Mushrooms' 'Avratz' [*Converting Vegetarians*, Yo-Yo]. This electronic track usually impresses with the power and extension of the bass, but here it went beyond that and came out as musically engaging as well. It's easy to deliver loads of bass but considerably harder to do so in an articulate and clean fashion. Most speakers impress at first, but you quickly tire of the aural display because distortion levels, particularly in the bass, undermine the experience; that was not the case with the G4. Alongside this is an ability to totally defy the scale of the box and produce full-size imagery, so that room size is really the only limiting factor when it comes to perceived stage height, width, and depth. This is more subtle with voices and acoustic instruments, which are placed precisely in a remarkably solid, three dimensional acoustic that convinces you it's an accurate facsimile of the studio or hall where the recording was made. Mozart's Violin concerto in D major [DSD64, 2L] made a very good case for its format with scale that again extended to the room boundaries and delivered fabulous instrumental timbre. There really is no sense of the metallic with this speaker. The highs are nothing short of spectacularly ►

“It's easy to deliver loads of bass but particularly harder to do so in an articulate and clean fashion.”



“Presence is the operative word here, and virtually everything played sounded like it was in the room.”

- ▶ real and extended, which makes reproducing instruments like violin an unusually pleasant experience. I tried 2L's DSD128 version of this piece as well, and discovered greater depth of image, increased realism, and presence.

Presence is the operative word here, and virtually everything played sounded like it was in the room. By eliminating edges from the cabinet Vivid has built a speaker that recreates the original acoustic with negligible trace of its own existence. There is literally no sense of a traditional, resonant box-type enclosure in play. The absence of vibrating wooden panels makes that relatively easy and this factor combined with the G4's extension at both ends creates a sound that blends the best of dynamic and panel speaker qualities.

I dropped some vinyl onto the Rega RP8 to see whether the benefits of analogue would be apparent or whether the unerring transparency would highlight the limitations of the format. What I got was a frank reflection of the quality of recording and software, and one favourite album that I have clearly played to death sounded more that way than usual, though a far newer and better recorded one completely blew me away. This was Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons' by Interpreti Veneziani [Chasing The Dragon], a direct-to-disc recording that usually sounds good but became a living, breathing experience with this Giya. I've rarely heard tone or presence like it, and never realised just how much texture and variety there is in the lower notes. These are early and thus more earthy sounding instruments but the G4 doesn't let this get in the way of musical communication; the piece has spirit and vitality aplenty.

The same could be said of Binker and Moses playing sax and drums on the *Dem Ones* album [Gearbox]. This recent cut delivers real dynamics from the drums, so much so that you can't help but utter 'wow' when the sticks hit the skin. The speed of the snare, clank of the cowbell, and warm sax notes on 'Man Like GP' are all in the room, in the here and now. As someone in Aswad once said, "you know what live and direct mean? It mean live ▶

▶ and direct”; that’s what a great recording sounds like on this speaker. It has an immediacy that is rare, formed from the combination of well-controlled drive units with a cabinet that has little ability to store energy, meaning that when notes stop the sound from the speaker stops. This is extremely hard to do with wood because wood naturally resonates at audio frequencies and it is very difficult to stop it adding a tiny bit of sound to that produced by the driver. This has a smearing effect on the signal and masks detail, the louder and busier the music the more extreme the effect – hence the simple, easy tunes used in many demonstrations.

Going back to the digital source was not so difficult, it’s hard to get the transparency but that is offset by a flat response and with a piece like Dave Holland and Pepe Habichuela’s ‘Subi La Cuesta (Tangos)’ [*Hands*, Universal] makes it pretty painless with this speaker. This track is a room filler of extraordinary, er, vividness in the G4’s hands, with the musicians placed in front of the speakers in totally realistic scale.

At this point I tried an alternative power amplifier in the shape of Naim’s NAP 300 DR. At 90 Watts its output is not particularly prodigious but it more than makes up for this with a musical fluency that is totally engaging. The aforementioned Infected Mushroom track wasn’t as tight but it was considerably more banging, giving the sensation of being ‘off your face on Es and Whizz’ without the chemical stimulants or need to visit a rave (should such things still exist!). The slightly more sophisticated ‘Sharangati’ from Bugge Wesseltoft’s *OK World!* [Jazzland] is likewise highly involving, the tempo of the tabla and percussion precisely defined in a musically coherent fashion that is irresistible. The sound is not perhaps as precise or transparent to detail as it is with more powerful amps, but it’s ultimately more enjoyable. Separation of instruments and voices remains superb; even on deliberately vague recordings like Radiohead’s *A Moon Shaped Pool* [XL], it’s easy to hear the layering of different elements within the soundstage. And even easier to get caught up in the songs, too.

By bringing new thinking to everything from the shape of the drive units, the magnet systems, ventilation, cabinet shape, and material, Vivid has carved out an enviable niche in the high end. The quality of build, finish, and ultimately sound puts them in the same league as the very best brands in the business. Although not in the bargain basement, I highly suspect that if this was a Magico, a Wilson, or a Focal it would be considerably more expensive. It is very rare to hear a loudspeaker that’s as revealing as the G4; the bigger Giya models add greater dynamics and replay levels to the mix, but this diminutive entrant delivers an awful lot of what makes the series so special. If you are looking for the very best but have limited space to enjoy it in then this curvy beauty should be very high on your must hear bucket list. +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type: 4-way, five-driver, floorstanding speaker with reflex loaded enclosure

Driver complement: One 26mm alloy catenary dome with isolating compliant mount tweeter; one 50mm alloy catenary dome with isolating compliant mount midrange; one 100mm alloy cone unit with short-coil long-gap motor design lower midrange, two 125mm alloy cone with short-coil long-gap motor bass drivers in reaction cancelling compliant mount.

Crossover frequencies: 250Hz, 1kHz, 4kHz

Frequency response: 39Hz – 33kHz (+/- 2 dB)

Impedance: 6 Ohms

Sensitivity: 86dB/W/m

Dimensions (HxWxD):

1011mm x 300mm x 460mm

Weight: 32kg/each

Finishes: Piano, Pearl, Sahara, Arctic silver, Oyster, Borollo.

Price: £21,000/pair (optional wild teak plinth - £1,000)

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