

Orpheus

Aurora 3 Generation 3 Loudspeakers

For quite some time now the 'Aurora 3' in its various incarnations has been a best-seller for Orpheus, most recently in a special high-performance 'Signature' version from Brad Serhan, generally regarded as one of Australia's best loudspeaker designers. He has now changed the cabinet's physical shape, upgrading it by removing the rear panel and curving both side walls.

Equipment

Orpheus took this radical step because cabinets with curved sides are far more rigid than its earlier flat-sided cabinets. The increased rigidity enables the bass drivers to work even better in the cabinet, but more importantly it means there is far less cabinet coloration—not least because there's one less panel to resonate!

The bass/midrange drivers are made for Orpheus by Danish company ScanSpeak. The driver chassis are moulded from ABS plastic, which can't rust, and the roll surrounds are made from durable rubber which, unlike the far less durable foam that is often — and most inappropriately — used as a surround suspension material, will not rot away in Australia's harsh climatic conditions. As for the cones themselves, they're made from Kevlar which, if it's tough enough to stop a bullet, must be about the most durable material from which you can build a speaker cone!

Silk domes have always been a favourite *chez* Orpheus and so, following established form, the new Aurora 3 Gen 3 sports a 25mm diameter silk-dome tweeter. The dome is powered by a very large conventional ferrite magnet assembly but, unlike many such tweeters, it has a large rear chamber that improves its performance at the bottom of its frequency range, near the crossover frequency.

Delivering powerful bass from such small cabinets as the Aurora 3 Gen 3, particularly using relatively small diameter drivers (153mm), requires some sophisticated design, and Serhan has employed all three of the weapons in the 'good designers' arsenal. The

most obvious is to use a bass reflex cabinet, so that the Aurora 3 Gen 3 uses not only the sound coming from the front of the cone, but also the sound from the back of the cone. The second is that the Aurora 3 Gen 3 has not just one but two internal spaces, each with a different volume and with its own port. This so-called 'differential bass loading' delivers even more bass — though it does make the inside of the cabinet more difficult to build.

The third weapon is that the Aurora uses a 2½-way crossover network, where bass frequencies are routed to both Kevlar drivers, and high frequencies to the tweeter, but midrange frequencies are routed only to the Kevlar driver that's highest on the front baffle.

If there's any downside to the new cabinet, it is that because the cabinet is now a little narrower for the same height, it's not quite as stable. Position it where it can't be knocked over and you'll be fine.

Performance

If we hadn't heard it with our own ears, we would not have believed that it was possible to make such significant improvements in sound quality simply by changing the shape of the cabinet, particularly when a speaker's design is as sophisticated, advanced... and evolved... as the Aurora 3. The bass is just as powerful and extended as it was previously, but it is now more controlled and seems somehow 'cleaner-sounding.' The improvement extends beyond just the bass, with the midrange performance exhibiting subtle but audible increases in the level of musical detailing and in the rendition of subtle tonal nuances and inflexions. And where the previous model had to be toed-in and aimed directly at the listening position, the new Aurora Gen 3s work best facing straight ahead, and there are significant improvements in stereo imaging. We found the Aurora 3s' newfound precision was more than amply demonstrated when we listened to James Morrison's latest album (with Deni Hines) *I Only Have Eyes for You*. Just listen to that trumpet sound!



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Conclusion

This new Generation 3 model isn't just an improvement on the standard Aurora 3, it's also an improvement on the original Signature version as well, which means that Orpheus has been able to make a quantum improvement in performance — and, need it be said, appearance — while at the same time pegging the price at the same point it's been for quite some time. In our books, that makes this generation the best-value Aurora 3s ever. **BB**

Orpheus Aurora 3 Generation 3 Loudspeakers	
Price:	\$2500
Warranty:	Five years
+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks • Sound
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stability
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