With the new version of the Square Two, Wilson Benesch introduces a floorstanding speaker whose speciality is to interact with the rear to amplify and modulate the return of low frequencies.

Finding that users often position their speakers near to the rear wall, Wilson Benesch developed a principle of acoustic load using the wall to give the lower register a dimension impossible to find with conventional speakers of a comparable size. The Square Two is a two-way speaker destined for placement directly on the ground. It has two drivers and a passive radiator located toward the top of the rear of the cabinet. It is charged with the role of passive radiator, whilst the two ports at the bottom of the cabinet form a conventional bass-reflex system. The relative position of the ports is fixed, allowing Wilson Benesch to perfectly control their acoustic behaviour. We really value the opportunity to settle the bass level simply by adjusting the position of the speakers relative to the back wall. The passive radiator of the Square Two benefits from a stiff suspension which aids the quality of the sound reproduction. The consideration here though, is that you need to run the speakers in for a long time before you can appreciate the best of
the Square Two. The manufacturer recommends around 70-hours running time before you reach this phase. It would be a mistake to judge the qualities of the speaker and in particular its performance before the active and passive transducers have settled fully.

MANUFACTURING AND LISTENING
Construction: All products from Wilson Benesch benefit from a perfect finish, the Square Two is no exception to the rule. There are no less than nine species of wood available to build your finish in addition to the black and white lacquer. We especially appreciate the grill used to hide the drive units which constitutes two metal aluminium plates holding captive the acoustically transparent jersey. Contrary to most design employed in the industry, the minimalist grill minimises the sound diffraction associated with thick covers.

Components: The Square Two uses 17cm Tactic Drive Units manufactured by Wilson Benesch and a 25mm ultra-linear silk dome. Whilst the passive radiator is composed of isotactic polypropylene with a predetermined mass to tune its response. The second order passive filter (12dB per octave cutoff at 5kHz) utilises polypropylene capacitors of audiophile quality and air-cored inductors. The connections are mounted on an optimised circuit board to shorten the length and the internal wiring is made from teflon insulated, high purity silver plated copper. This is not simply a detail - the speaker terminates with two-pairs of gold plated inputs allowing biamplification.

Bass: It is clear, once the Square Two is well run in, the bass is one of its strengths. Not only is it easily adjustable by positioning the enclosure but moreover, the bass response continues to be perceptible even at very low volumes. When replayed at high volume levels the Square Two will supply serious levels of bass, that is very taught and “fast” - you can really appreciate these qualities in Rachmaninoff’s ‘Symphonic Dances’ interpreted by the Minnesota Orchestra led by Eiji Oue. Although the speakers have a small footprint, they deliver the energy of a full orchestra with poise.

Mid-Range: The timbre is very beautiful, the voices rich and carnal. On the CD, ‘Roadhouses & Automobiles’ by Chris Jones, the guitar is presented with all its inflections and its most subtle vibrations. ‘Hope’ by Hugh Masekela (CD), the strings are delivered with all their harmonic wealth, Hugh Masekela’s trumpet is omnipotent, but not aggressive, very balanced and credible. The presentation has a lot of weight, but it remains very natural. In a word the presentation is beautiful.

High Frequency: The soft dome tweeter delivers the high frequencies with good precision and without aggressiveness. The violins in ‘Fabio Blondi the Italian cantata and sonata’ by Vivaldi is reproduced without sibilance and sounds natural throughout. There is a perfect balance across the speakers highs, mids and bass without over emphasis on any element.
WILSON BENESCH SERIES II SQUARE TWO

Dynamics: The soundstage is incredibly natural and an absolutely stunning sense of scale. The specifications state the sensitivity as 87dB, but in fact they prove to be very easy to drive and the amplifier does not suffer. The dynamics are perfectly satisfactory and the soundstage does not fail in anyway to capture the character, we heard all the most subtle inflections and also the most aggressive surges in the presentation. The key changes in the Series II designs is probably responsible for these enviable results.

Attack: The biting acoustic guitars of Paco de Lucia, John McLaughlin and Al di Meola's famous guitar trio present for us the qualities of the transient response of Wilson Benesch products. The English gratify us with beautifully realistic guitars with varied tonalities, and the attack in the notes, like their decay is marked by truth.

Soundstage: The soundstage is secure, stable and each element is fully defined. Precision within each dimension of the staging is the rule across all frequencies. The piano is in space, equally on the right as it is the left. We have before us a beautiful 3D image, the sense of openness and naturalness dominates.

Transparency: The Wilson Benesch Square Two creates a direct relationship between music and the listener, the speaker does not “disagree” and in this sense they are perfectly transparent. The high crossover frequency from driver to tweeter contributes to this result. On “Una furtive lagryma” the voice of the singer Izzy is very pleasant and smooth, there is no unnatural emphasis on her performance, the more we listen the more we want to listen.

Quality / Price: The Square Two is a classic design and manufactured with class leading components, the design makes them unique in the current landscape of high-fidelity. Able to integrate with ease regardless of their size, they are very easy to drive. The icing on the cake is that they create a unique musical presentation for their size. In summary, this is a great speaker at a great price.

VERDICT
Perfectly manufactured, beautifully designed, integrating very high quality transducers, the Wilson Benesch Square Two speakers suit perfectly any home interior. They deliver a musical message with a surprisingly extended bass presentation and have the ability to be adapted to the tastes of the listener by simply altering their position relative to the rear wall. With the Square Series II and the Square Two, the English brand achieves the feat of producing a large sound from a small cabinet volume.

CONSTRUCTION 6/6
COMPONENTS 6/6
BASS 6/6
MID-RANGE 6/6
HIGH FREQ. 6/6
DYNAMICS 6/6
ATTACK 5/6
SOUNDSTAGE 5/6
TRANSPARENCY 6/6
QUALITY / PRICE 6/6

SYSTEM SETUP
Sources: ICOS Fado CD Player
Electronics: ICOS Eisberg Amplifier
Cables: Absolue Creations (M), HIFI Cables & Cie Super Maxitrans II (HP)