

STEREO SPEAKER
OPERA
MEZZA



£ 600

FOR

Looks (well, everything's relative); fine build; engaging, absorbing sound

AGAINST

Not as luxuriously specified as other Operas – but then, not as pricey

VERDICT

Endlessly enjoyable, and affordable, too, these are easily the best-value speakers Opera has ever made

A fine Mezza we're getting into

THERE'S GOOD NEWS for the Opera Mezza, the new entry-level design from the Italian masters of indulgently built loudspeakers: though they seem to be wearing a leatherette toupée, the Mezzas are much more stylish than their immediate price-rivals.

And the good news keeps on coming. The Operas don't take an age to run in from their as-new state, and they're relaxed about their room position (though, like

“When you play music (any music, any genre), the Mezzas really sing”

any good standmounters, they do their best work when positioned on some worthwhile stands). Do that, and when you play music – any music, any genre – they sing.

Take Herbie Hancock's *Rockit*: it tests timing, drive and attack, low and high-frequency discipline – and that's just for starters. The Operas handle it all beautifully, offering real verve and enthusiasm to the electro-stutter. Tight,

punchy bass performance, with a smooth integration between lower and upper frequencies, combine to put the polish on an already scintillating reading of Hancock's funky classic.

Tugging the heart strings

Switch to Mark Hollis's quieter, more reflective eponymous album, and the Mezzas cope dextrously, delivering tremendous emotion, a huge dynamic range, a wide-open soundstage and close attention to detail. They're very precise, but this never translates to being uptight or fussy. Hollis is not the owner of the world's richest voice – and the Operas don't flatter him. However, these speakers manage to reveal the thinness of his tone without overly spotlighting it as a deficiency. The Mezzas' great quality is that while they're transparent, they always value emotion before analysis.

You get pride of ownership, too: the cabinets come in a choice of three real-wood veneers, or gloss black, and the baffle, top panel and rear plate are trimmed in something that looks like real leather from a distance.

We'd thought speakers at this price were either handsome or effective, not both. Then the Mezzas appeared – now we can't wait to get them into a *Group Test*.



Vinyl wig, Sir? The Operas look and sound superb regardless

ALSO CONSIDER



DALI IKON 2



£550

April 2006
Tremendous scale and insight from the finest horse-faced speaker in the business

AVI NEUTRON



£550

July 2005
Lots of substance from such a small enclosure, with speed and detail to burn, too