

**£595 per pair** ☎ 01753 652669 # www.operaloudspeakers.com

## OPERA MEZZA

*This Italian mini boasts an attractive shape and luxurious finish*

**O**pera is a well-established Italian speaker brand, operating alongside Unison Research in the north east of the country, just outside Treviso. In true Italian tradition it makes speakers with particularly attractive cabinetwork.

This Mezza is the latest, smallest and least costly member of the Linea Classica range, which also happens to be the least expensive of Opera's three speaker ranges. In the Linea Classica hierarchy, it's a new 'entry-level' model that sits below the Prima and Seconda, both of which have recently been reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* (issues 279 and 297 respectively).

Like its range-mates it's an attractive little speaker, though the emphasis here is firmly on the word 'little'. It shares similar styling cues to the larger Linea Classica models, with an overall shape that tapers slightly from front to back, curved sides that are beautifully veneered with thick horizontal real wood strips, and thick top and base sections covered in leather. The enclosure is immensely stiff, thanks to its small size and thick panels, while the shape also helps to de-focus internal standing waves.

The SEAS-sourced main driver here has a 125mm frame and a small transparent polypropylene diaphragm just 90mm in diameter. This is reflex-loaded by a front port – though it's worth noting that the manufacturer recommends the speaker should be sited a minimum of 300mm from rear or side walls, which concurs with our own

findings (see Lab Report).

The tweeter, again from SEAS, has a 25mm silk fabric dome diaphragm, ferrofluid cooling, plus a back chamber to reduce pressure behind the dome. Signal is applied via a single pair of high-quality gold-plated multi-way terminals that feed a PCB crossover network operating around 2.8kHz, with 12dB/octave filtering on the bass driver, and an 18dB/octave filter feeding the tweeter.

### SOUND QUALITY

If achieving a flat and neutral frequency balance was the only factor in obtaining a top-quality sound, this little Mezza would undoubtedly be a winner. Although it doesn't pack a lot of bass power or drive, it does deliver weight and scale that's truly surprising considering its small size and free-space siting, and does so with an overall smoothness and evenness that many rivals might envy.

The standard of overall neutrality and smoothness is, if anything, more impressive still, with just enough restraint in the presence zone to avoid any unwanted aggressive tendencies. Perhaps the top end might be just a little too strong for some tastes and systems, especially as the bass end is just a little on the lean side overall, but it is at least clean and sweet, even if the sound as a whole lacks some air and transparency.

No doubt aided by the small, tough and irregular shaped enclosure, there's no obvious boxiness here and the stereo soundstage is well formed with no tendency to cluster around the boxes. That said, focus could be tighter, and some lack of overall coherence

seems to let the Mezza down, both in image sharpness and precision but more significantly, also in its dynamic expression.

That lack of dynamic excitement and brio is really the core of this speaker's limitations. Its delivery is all rather matter-of-fact; it lacks any real get-up-and-go, so the end result always seems a little detached, and this didn't make it easy for listeners to get involved in the music. **HFC**



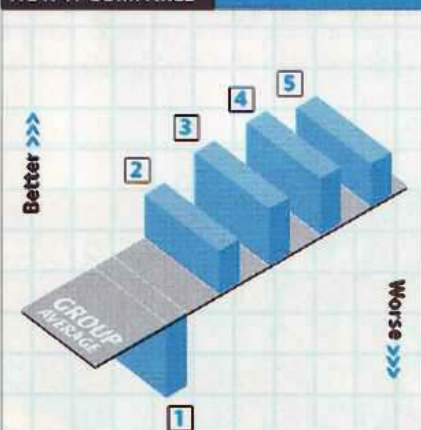
### LAB REPORT

A modest 86dB sensitivity is claimed for this little loudspeaker, an inconsequential 1dB stronger than the figure arrived at using our measurement technique.

While this figure is relatively low, it should be seen in the context of an easy amplifier load, which stays comfortably above seven ohms throughout, a bass alignment best suited to free-space siting, plus surprisingly good ultimate bass extension from such a small enclosure. The latter reaches below 30Hz under in-room conditions, thanks to a low port tuning frequency of 38Hz.

The in-room far-field response is beautifully flat and smooth, holding within remarkably tight  $\pm 2$ dB limits above 150Hz, with just a mild notch around 1.7kHz. That said, the top end is perhaps a shade too strong, as it really ought to be rolled off a little more under these measurement conditions.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1) Sensitivity >>> -40%
- 2) Bass extension >>> +20%
- 3) Ease of drive >>> +30%
- 4) Overall frequency balance >>> +30%
- 5) Response smoothness >>> +20%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	85dB	86dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/6.2 ohms	8/6 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	45Hz	40Hz

### VERDICT

**SOUND >>> 77%**



**PRACTICALITY >>> 80%**



**BUILD >>> 86%**



**VALUE >>> 77%**



Beautifully finished in wood and leather, the Mezza has superior neutrality and smoothness, and surprising bass weight, too. Dynamic expression is very limited though, and the overall sound lacks excitement.

**HI-FI CHOICE** **80%**  
OVERALL SCORE

