

Rise up!

OePhi's original entry-level standmount may have been usurped by the newer Lounge 2, but **David Vivian** reckons it's still a class act



DETAILS
PRODUCT
 OePhi Ascendence 2
ORIGIN
 Denmark
TYPE
 2-way standmount loudspeaker
WEIGHT
 7.5kg
DIMENSIONS
 (WxHxD)
 185 x 350 x 300mm
FEATURES
 • Aluminium SEAS-based dome tweeter with titanium voice coil former
 • 165mm SEAS mid/bass driver
 • Quoted sensitivity: 88.5dB/1W/m (8ohm)
DISTRIBUTOR
 Airt Audio
WEBSITE
 oePhi.com
 airtaudio.com

In May 2025, at Munich's High-End Show, OePhi head honcho Joakim Juhl deliberately upset his own neatly arranged appercart. Up until then, his four-tier speaker hierarchy was structured thus: Ascendence, Transcendence, Immanence and Reference. But, at Munich, the meticulously constructed and balanced tower of talent suffered an intriguing seismic wobble with the launch of a new entry-level statement manifested as the over-achieving Lounge 2 standmount and Lounge 2.5 floorstander – lowering the price of entry to OePhi's uncompromising world of low-distortion, large-bandwidth, unhindered dynamics and perfect phase-transition where “timing is everything”.

Great news for value hounds. As I discovered when I reviewed the precocious newcomer, the Lounge 2 (HFC 537) is an absolute peach of a standmount, inevitably stealing the ‘most affordable’ crown from the £4,000 Ascendence 2 while simultaneously kicking it into a sort of perceptual limbo, a £1,300 stretch over its own price yet probably not landing as a realistic alternative to

It establishes a new performance/value sweet spot for OePhi's standmounts

the £1,500 pricier and rather fabulous Transcendence 2 (HFC 514).

Ascendence was OePhi's original heavy lifter, responsible for introducing the OePhi method to the largest audience. No room for complacency, lots of scope for a spot of judicious over engineering to create the right impression. And, in material terms, it turns out there really isn't that much difference between the Asc 2 and Tr 2. “The Asc 2 is essentially the Tr 2 without the Purifi mid/bass driver,” Joakim Juhl explains. “Instead, we use a custom SEAS 165mm mid/bass driver that we developed together with SEAS. While not as technically perfected as the Purifi driver, it gets us very close while adding a slight ‘human touch’.

It has almost the same resolution, but leans on the less analytical side of things. The much lower moving mass of the SEAS mid/bass driver also makes it easier to get moving – it doesn't require as tough an iron grip from the amp to get bouncing.”

Lifted intact from the Tr 2, however,

is the SEAS-sourced but OePhi-tweaked metal dome tweeter. “Our experience is that even the most advanced drivers often still have room for improvement,” says Joakim. “For dome tweeters, we find that they tend to suffer from dynamic compression, which again causes harmonic and time domain distortions. What we effectively achieve is to take an already state-of-the-art tweeter and significantly lower second order distortion, while also reducing power compression so that when the music calls for fast transients, the tweeter can follow the waveform much more accurately.”

Just as importantly, the Tr 2's sophisticated crossover tech gets an outing in the Ascendence 2 as well. Joakim: “We have fine-tuned not only the resulting slopes, but also the parasitic effects so that the drivers will perform in the purest and most unhindered way that still corrects their output to give linear frequency response and perfect phase coherence.”

Common to all OePhi standmounts is the low positioning of the drivers on the front baffle. It looks a little strange, but is done to benefit diffraction, while the deep cabinet's relatively lightweight but nicely executed build works against the slow absorption and release of energy that occurs with bulkier designs.

Sound quality

Assuming my memory isn't horribly off, I'd say the Asc 2 is quite a bit closer to Transcendence than Lounge. Extraordinary as the Lounge 2 is for a sub-£3k standmount, the Asc 2 gives every impression of sounding a little juicier with more tonal colour and texture, greater dynamic reach and a weightier bass. Harder to be sure about without direct comparison, but I wouldn't be surprised if the Asc 2 has marginally tighter image focus, slightly cleaner separation and a soundstage with a little more space and ‘air’. Metric upticks rather than a musicality reset, sure, but arguably it establishes a new performance/value sweet spot for OePhi's standmounts and, for me, possibly a new £4k standmount benchmark, period.

One way to find out. Current title holder, and has been for some time, is Russell K's Red 50SE (HFC 527). It is quite simply a terrific compact, two-way, rear-ported standmount with essentially the same sonic goals as the OePhi.

For speed, there's nothing in it. Were they part of *The Fast and The Furious* franchise, they'd be 10-second quarter-mile contenders for sure. But it's the Ascendence 2 that has the



If you're happy to push the budget slightly there are some interesting options available. Audio Physic's Spark 6 and Fyne Audio's F1-8 (HFC 496 and 473 respectively) also plough their own paths technically and stylistically, and their ability to blend standmount and floorstander strengths are rare assets. Other contenders that might grace your shortlist include KEF's Reference 1, Audiovector's R1 Arreté (HFC 414 and 520) and the Wilson Benesch Precision P1.0. All three are terrific with huge musical insight.



larger engine, manifested here as a significantly deeper cabinet (300mm against 200mm), slightly more weight (7.5kg vs 6.5kg) and a considerably larger mid/bass driver (165mm vs 128mm). There's no blurring or smearing of transients: brilliant timing and rhythmic surety are the natural corollary. In these respects, the speakers are inseparable. Both deliver exceptional clarity, separation and intelligibility, too. Every element is given its own space and acoustic ‘air’. And although each speaker is highly detailed, coherence and flow aren't disrupted by the undoubted powers of analysis being applied.

That said, the OePhi is the fleshier, more dynamic and ‘exciting’-sounding speaker with more saturated tonal colours, deeper bass, high frequencies less obviously rolled-off and a stunningly low noise floor that allows notes and ambient reverberation to decay into inky blackness. Scale and depth that swamps the actual positioning of the speakers also sees me blinking in disbelief and yet, within that expansive soundstage, imaging is rock solid and in proportion. It brings out the best in Joe Sample's jazz-funk piano stylings, on his 1979 album *Carmel* on CD, which have a beautifully contained acoustic presence. A Qobuz stream of Al Jarreau's well-recorded 1984 live album *Tenderness* has a ‘being there’ ambience and energy that nails that nth degree of believability.

Conclusion

In the end, it boils down to matters of presentation and preference. Like the Red 50 SE, the Ascendence 2 has deep core coherence and dazzling musical chops. But whereas the Russell K sounds marginally more lean, lithe and athletic (if a little dry), the OePhi delivers more colour, scale and authority – as befits its physical advantages and a component-led voicing that allows the more expensive Transcendence 2, with its Purifi main driver, to exercise more emphatic resolution and analysis. In the OePhi lineup, however, it should not be sidelined for the outrageous value offered by the Lounge 2 or the greater technical ability of the Transcendence 2. In many ways, it combines the best features of both. A £4k superstar without question ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
 ★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY
 ★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY
 ★★★★★
FEATURES
 ★★★★★

LIKE: Another sonic superstar from OePhi; build and finish
DISLIKE: The cheaper Lounge 2 is snapping away at its heels
WE SAY: A strong contender for the best £4k standmount money can buy

OVERALL

