

Chario Academy Sovran Loudspeaker description

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by Anthony Kershaw

Chario was a company hitherto unknown to me. I happened upon their speakers during the 2012 Toronto Audio Show (TAVES). They looked amazing in beautifully finished wood and artisinal cabinetry and even under show conditions, sounded quite wonderful. A review pair was requested.

I've had the Chario Sovrans in my listening room for several months now and have grown to love their neutral and musical nature. This review pair had already been broken in — the quality and complexity of the proprietary drivers makes break-in for the new purchaser a necessity. Thankfully, that job fell to someone else. I could enjoy listening as soon as they were set up.

The Sovrans are a three-way, two-box design and are single wire — a jumper to connect the two modules is included (see photo below). The speakers are angled back 10 degrees off level — Chario designers want the tweeter firing at ear level when the listener is in a normal seating position. They also suggest a ten degree toe in — antithetical to audiophiles like me who prefer the drivers firing straight into the room to provide a wider soundstage. I tried them straight out, and Chario was right. The image firms up with the toe in. I complied.



Sovran rear panels with jumpers. Jumpers connect the top module with bass module. Sorbothane - type feet support two modules' physical connection. The speaker is similar in construction topology to two of my favourite speakers, Levy and Verity Audio.

Chario is an Italian company, some 38 years old. The Italians define themselves with refined, passionate living draped in style and superior design. They express this daily in their wine, food, fashion, cars, etc. But, my experiences with several Italian high end audio design pieces have been challenging at best. The kit looks great out of the box and, many times, sounds good, but as for longevity, ease of use, etc, well, that's up for grabs.

Things did not bode well as I perused the Chario paperwork and website. You will not find a more convoluted manual, at least in its English translation. Of course, their information and direction is sincere, but the execution was reminiscent of a

Lamborghini of the 80s. Who the hell needs to see out of the rear window, anyway? The research for these speakers seems to have been far and wide — like, Oxford University and Sorbonne wide. I was expecting a NASA blueprint on the final page. The music lover in you will not need the audiophile confusion — the merest glance or slightest touch of these gorgeous speakers will give you peace of mind as to the workmanship. If you're into Schroeder Frequency, Duplex Theory, Phase Curves, stereo kinetics, radiating doublets, coherence function, etc, then the Chario manual is for you! One thing is for certain, Chario has really done its science homework. No, 'bullshit baffles brains', here. The proof's in the exquisite sound.

Have you ever tried on a Zegna suit? Driven a Ferrari? Drank a 1989 Barolo? If you have and you remember the sensations, then you'll understand the feeling I had unpacking and setting up the Italianate Sovrans. Like the feel of Zegna Su Misura cloth or the exhilaration of brutal acceleration in a Ferrari Berlinetta, Chario has given the audiophile punter something to savour. On looks alone, there'll be no buyer's remorse with this speaker.

And, then you listen to them.

The sound of the Chario Sovran is difficult to describe. It does nothing. It does everything. It is a completely neutral speaker, and in the very best, purest form of that oft used audiophile word. Whatever I listened to, I was drawn into the music or the qualities of the recording. If you have good ancillaries (of course you have!), the Sovran's will be a speaker of choice for all your musical needs. As such, I threw everything at it.

With quality loudspeakers, I listen for specific things. Bouncing bows off strings with the concomitant, tactile sounds of resin and resonance, piano, french horn and classical soprano recordings (most pop singers sing through their nose with zero technique — classical sopranos use chest tones and diaphragm support that really challenge speakers). I also listen for long periods quietly. Do the speakers draw you into the music with a quiet, balanced sound? And, of course, macro dynamics, balance and bass.

An old CBC Records CD of music by Vancouver native Michael Conway Baker was used at length. First, it contains lots of accessible, tuneful 'modern' music. Baker's music is heartfelt and contains gorgeous melodies. Second, the recording contains a

flute concerto, piano concerto, a viola piece, orchestral tracks various and songs featuring the great Canadian songstress, Ann Mortifee (think a great folk singer with classically trained chops. No, not Judy Collins!).

The recording quality was benchmark in the mid 80s, but is a little flat when compared to today's very best digital. The orchestra is the recently disbanded CBC Vancouver Orchestra. Budget cuts! The CBC decided it was much better to produce dross like *Little Mosque on the Prairie* and very poor drama than support quality, live music and radio programs.

I used violist Steven Dann's wonderful performance of *Counterplay* to hear string tone quality — you know the sound, the tactile perfection that only the best vinyl can replicate! This CD gives it a go. And the Charios captured the subtlety of Dann's performance superbly. Once again, a very natural 'character' was in evidence — the speakers' ability to throw a wide and deep soundstage and image like a champ made listening a continuous pleasure. Additionally, the separation of the instruments, building on the target image was excellent.

The Sovrans handled all the tricky stuff I threw at it. Ann Mortifee's incredible dynamic (and bloody thrilling) range was a non starter. Easy peasy. Robert Silverman's piano was also handled without any problems. Testing the speakers was fun and instructive. In fact, Silverman was out to the house recently for lunch and a great bottle of Italian wine. After I played some of his CDs to him to demonstrate the superb timbral qualities the Sovrans, he intimated he had never heard his Beethoven set so accurately. High praise from a master musician. And audiophile.

At times, I worried a little about the bass, or perceived lack of it. My very well damped listening room can be problematic — not a suckout as such, but some speakers with higher Hz numbers can sound a little light. After one fitful early listening session, I decided to go to my old bass tester. No, not *American Beauty* (which did sound spectacular and clean on the Charios) — Esa Pekka Salonen's DGG *Rite of Spring*.

This recording helped indicate the bass on these speakers is equally as neutral as its midrange and treble. If bass is there, it's there. If not, don't listen for it. Boom! Or, I should say, dry as a bone, boom! The two tubas and bass drum in the *Rite's* First Part were spectacular and as low as they always are on great kit. There is no extraneous nonsense, bass humping, bass modules or other musical crutches

marketed as cool add ons to elevate the effect of the bass response. Bass purists like me will be happy. You want a heaving, fake orgasm of a chest thump, look elsewhere. You want bass that sounds balanced and real, Chario's your man.



Mario Marcello Murace and Carlo Gino Vicenzetto, the two musical Milanese behind Chario have given audiophiles and music lovers something quite unique, especially if viewed in Italian terms. Their speakers echo the workmanship of the other great Italian speaker manufacturer, Sonus Faber and the Sovrans have the technology to take you through the next twenty years in the most musical way. Very highly recommended.

[We are proud to award the Chario Academy Sovran Loudspeaker an Audiophilia Star Component Award. Congratulations! - Ed]

Specifications

Three-way, floorstanding loudspeaker.

Drive-units include 1.2" (32mm) Silversoft tweeter, 6.7" (170mm) aperiodically loaded Rohacell cone mid/woofer, two 8" (200mm) isobarically loaded woofers.

Frequency range: 35Hz–20kHz.

Nominal impedance: 4 ohms.

Sensitivity: 90dB/2.83V/m.

Dimensions: 47.6" (1220mm) H by 9.4" (240mm) W by 17.2" (440mm) D. Weight: 103.4 lbs (47kg).

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Preis €14.000,00 / Paar (Walnuss oder Kirschbaum)

Preis €15.500,00 / Paar (Wenge / Weiss) (Limited)