



# BLUEKEY ACOUSTICS MODEL 1

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Francisco, CEO of Bluekey Acoustics, was a regular attendee of our Hearing Perception classes, even completing the full course before moving to Canada and building a solid career in the financial industry. But like every audiophile ‘bitten by the hobby’, he never stopped wanting to produce his own speakers. When he retired from the financial markets, he began this new journey first in Canada and, now that he has returned to Brazil for good, he decided to establish Bluekey here and export his new generation of speakers to Canada (which I hope will not be limited to the Model 1).

I had the chance to listen to one of the first prototypes of the Model 1, and was very surprised by its potential, technical focus and the attention to detail, such as a first-class finish. In this quick listen, he reminded me how much the Hearing Perception Courses helped him establish a ‘north star’ for his ideas, seeking to apply all the requirements of the course’s methodology in the development of the speakers. It is comforting to know that many of our readers believe in and use the methodology both in adjusting their systems and, in some cases, also in developing products.

From the prototype I heard, I pointed out what I thought could still be improved, but I reiterated that he would need to adjust without losing what he had achieved, since it was already performing at a high level! In addition to being very disciplined, he showed great determination in seeking what he believed was important for improving the final product. I only heard the finished product hours before the opening of our Hifi Show this year, and I liked what I heard, especially with it being in a room very different from our Reference Room.



But Francisco, despite the excellent response he had at the Show, was not convinced and made yet another change, choosing a neodymium tweeter in the final speakers sent for testing. I can assure you that his choice could not have been more assertive, and with audible results far superior to those I heard at the Show.

I nicknamed the Model 1 the ‘big book’, because its dimensions are truly significant. It is aesthetically reminiscent of the speakers from the 70s, which were placed in the corners of the room. But the comparison ends here, because the Model 1 has nothing like the vintage sound of the speakers from the 70s, in which the bass was lethargic, with low resolution and ultra-coloration.

The Bluekey Model 1 uses a powerful 15-inch woofer with a response starting at 35 Hz and responding up to 1.9 kHz, where a compression driver with a 1.7-inch diaphragm responds up to 21 kHz. The neodymium magnet tweeter is paired with a state-of-the-art horn that produces a flat response from the midrange to the highs. The Model 1 has two crossovers mounted on separate plates and fixed to opposite walls of the cabinet, with the goal of obtaining maximum separation between the signals. Both crossovers are hand-assembled and soldered point-to-point, and all components are outsourced in North America and Europe. Assembled with two front ports, the user can even place the speakers closer to the wall behind them. The cabinet is entirely made in Brazil with 18 mm MDF boards with 45-degree joints to provide maximum rigidity and total sealing. The front panel is 36 mm thick to support the weight of the drivers and fully control the vibrations of the cabinet. The standard finish of the Model 1 is Canadian walnut and clients can choose other finishes for an additional cost.



According to the manufacturer, these are the technical specifications:

Bass-Reflex model with two front ports, two-way speaker, 15-inch paper cone woofer with a 100 mm voice coil.

Compression driver with 1.7-inch (44 mm) diaphragm, with Ketone polymer and neodymium magnet, in a constant directivity horn with horizontal asymmetry. The manufacturer indicates amplifiers with a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 300 Watts RMS (although I have some observations to make later in my evaluations). The frequency response ranges from 40 Hz to 21 kHz (within +3 dB) and 35 Hz to 21 kHz (within +6 dB). Nominal impedance is 8 ohms (minimum 7 ohms at 140 Hz), 94 dB sensitivity (2.83 V@1m), crossover frequency: 1.9 kHz. Single gold-plated speaker terminal for banana plug and spade. Dimensions: 88 (H) (1.10m with stand and spike) x 50 (W) x 34 (D) in cm. Weight: 40 kg each without stand.

For the test, we used the following integrated amplifiers: Fezz Audio Titania (read test in issue 308), Soulnote A-3 (read test in issue December 2024), and Norma IPA-140 (read test issue 306). Audiopax Reference line preamp (read Test 1 in this issue), Nagra HD powers, Ferrum Audio Wandla DAC (read test in issue 309), and Nagra TUBE DAC. Streamer: Innuos ZENmini Mk3, and Nagra Streamer (read the review in the Best of the Year edition in January/February 2024).

Analog Setup: Origin Live Sovereign Mk4 turntable, Enterprise Mk3 tonearm, Soulnote E-2 phono preamp. Speaker cables: Virtual Reality Braided, and Dynamique Audio model Apex.

Francisco was kind enough to send us the speakers broken in, which allowed us to do a brief audition together, and helped calm him down since he was anxious to see how the finished product would sound in our Reference Room. The speakers were connected to the Soulnote A-3 integrated, with the Nagra streamer connected to the TUBE DAC. He left feeling calm and happy with what he heard, and certain that he had done an excellent job!

It is a beautiful speaker, dear reader, and it needs to be paired with a high-quality system, if the buyer wants to extract its full potential. Before giving my review, I will make two comments that I believe are important. Forget 10 watt powers, to properly drive these drivers with competence and refinement you will need much more than 10 watts! For a standard room over 16m (the minimum that this speaker requires), I would say that at least 50 watts into 8 ohms will be necessary. So that the speaker has room in the macro-dynamic passages and the tonal balance is not harmed when listening in the middle of the night in low volumes. You know what I'm saying?

They play divinely in pianissimo, with a correct tonal balance, and you will hear the bass present, a mid-range and treble with excellent intelligibility, but they need watts in reserve to achieve this beautiful experience.

Here the best results were with the Norma integrated, with its 140 watts into 8 ohms, and the Nagras with its 250 watts into 8 ohms. This way, my friend, I managed to extract the best of the best in both the macro and micro dynamics! Its bass is very interesting, because it has definition, body, weight, energy, air displacement and most importantly: speed. If you like bass that hits your chest, or runs across the floor until you feel the air displacement in the back of your chair, you've come to the right place! But, as I said, it has nothing to do with the 'cabinets' that were placed in the corners of living rooms in the 70s, where the bass drum would hit, you'd go to the bathroom, come back and it would still be playing, lol. Here the



bass has authority and control. If you understand that current hi-end speakers provide this level of 'fidelity', great!

I was surprised at how Francisco managed to adjust this woofer to respond up to 1.9 kHz with this level of intelligibility and balance, without coloring the high frequencies or losing speed. Quite an achievement, since I usually hear this level of 'fit' in the passage to the tweeter, at 1.9 kHz, in 8-inch woofers and not 15-inch ones.

And here comes the best surprise, the horn does not sound like the overwhelming majority of horns, which are nasal. Voices and wind instruments (woodwinds) sound very natural and their timbres are absolutely preserved. You don't notice the transition from one driver to the other, because it is done very correctly (another great merit of the designer). The midrange sounds extremely intelligible and has excellent tonal balance. There is no fatigue, even at correct recording volumes and for long periods of time. And the highs also don't sound like most horns, with excessive brightness or harshness. I heard critical examples, such as: piccolo in the last octave, pipe organ, solo pianos, muted trumpet, soprano sax, and countless ride cymbals. And I didn't hear anything overdone or annoying in the high frequencies. So you might think the following: perhaps the designer made a sharp cut in the high frequencies to provide this listening comfort. And my answer: if he had chosen this option, his speakers would not have such a smooth decay, which allows us to hear the ambience of any recording in detail. Another characteristic when the designer makes this choice to attenuate the brightness in the high frequencies is the darkening of the last octave of all these instruments mentioned. This also does not occur in the Model 1. I think the merit of this correction lies in the choices made in the components of the high pass crossover, cables, and of course, the horn itself with neodymium magnet tweeter. These specific changes made in the final speakers I heard are what made this final leap, I have no doubt about it!

The soundstage will be a critical point in the positioning of these speakers. So, my friend, keep in mind that due to their size they will need air space in between them and the walls. Because it was a two-day struggle to reach the ideal fine-tuning point between focus, cut and depth. You won't have 100% of these three requirements if your room doesn't have ventilation for the speakers. So my tips are: at least 1m from the wall to the back of the



speakers, a minimum of 2.80m between them, and at least 60cm from the side walls. Here, to extract the full juice, they were 1.80m from the wall to the back and 1m from the side walls, facing the ideal listening point, and 4 meters from tweeter to tweeter. Then I got a perfect soundstage! They don't like accentuated toe-in, so do this angle to the ideal point slowly. Use voices for this adjustment. When the voice is perfectly focused in the center between the speakers, sounding behind them (always), then you have found the correct toe-in angle. Then listen to recordings that have depth to see what you can extract, without losing the focus you have already achieved. Is it hard work? A lot, but the result is very gratifying!

The textures are impeccable! Both in terms of presenting the color palettes of the instruments, and the quality and technique of the musicians and the recording engineer. You will be surprised at the level of information that the Model 1 can reveal hidden in the recordings. The transients are from state-of-the-art speakers, precise in time, tempo and rhythm! You will be thrilled to hear a Dire Straits, for example, and feel the rhythmic pulse penetrating your skin, nerves and bones. The dynamics, as I have already said, will depend on whether or not the amplifier has the stamina and headroom to deliver it. If it does, the Model 1 will easily respond to its demands. And its micro-dynamics are excellent, thanks to its level of transparency and background silence.

If you want to know the size of a bass drum, listen to the Model 1. Of an acoustic bass, the same! As our dear collaborator, Christian Pruks says: "There's nothing like a good, well-designed 15-inch woofer!" In fact, the Model 1 has a lot to teach to many slim tower speakers with two or three 6-inch woofers about what a well-recorded bass guitar can sound like.

It was a pleasure to hear all the examples used for this review, just to appreciate the quality of the reproduction of these instruments! The natural quality of the sound, here again will depend more on the recording quality than on the speaker itself. But if the recording is up to this requirement, yes, you will have the musical event materialized before your eyes!

## CONCLUSION

It is so gratifying, in the same issue, to be able to share our review of two national products that are so expressive and significant that they raise the bar of hi-end products produced in the country.

As I wrote in the editorial of this issue, I have no doubt that we are experiencing the 'pinnacle' of hi-end products Made in Brazil!

And may many more come in the next Hifi Show, so we will be able to share with you these discoveries that are so important for our market.

The Model 1 from Bluekey Acoustics is an admirable speaker, and it can perfectly meet the needs of both the beginner audiophile and the most experienced, who wants a speaker that has quality, refinement and sophistication for a definitive system.

I hope that everyone who reads this review visits the Bluekey space in the next Hifi Show and discovers how charming and surprising this speaker is!

## **POSITIVE POINTS**

A speaker with an excellent cost/performance ratio.

## **NEGATIVE POINTS**

Due to its size and refinement, it requires extra care to extract all of its enormous potential.

### PONTOS POSITIVOS

Uma caixa com uma relação custo/performance excelente.

### PONTOS NEGATIVOS

Pelo seu tamanho e refinamento, precisa de redobrados cuidados para se extrair todo seu enorme potencial.

ESPECIFICAÇÕES	Tipo	Caixa 2 Vias Bass-Reflex com dois pórnicos frontais
	Woofers	Cone de papelão de 15 polegadas com bobina de 100mm
	Tweeter	Driver de compressão com diafragma de 1.7 polegadas (44 mm), com polímero de Ketone e bobina de neodímio, em uma corneta de diretividade constante com assimetria horizontal
	Amplificação sugerida	De 10W a um máximo de 300 Watts RMS
	Resposta de frequência	• 40 Hz a 21 kHz (em +3 dB) • 35 Hz a 21 kHz (em +6 dB)
	Impedância nominal	8 ohms (mínimo de 7 ohms a 140 Hz)
	Sensibilidade	94 dB (2.83V@1m)
	Frequência de crossover	1.9 kHz
	Terminais de caixa	Um par banhado a ouro - para plugues banana e spade
	Dimensões (L x A x P)	50 x 88 x 34 cm (1.10m de altura com pedestal e spike)
Peso	40 Kg cada (sem pedestal)	

### CAIXAS ACÚSTICAS BLUEKEY ACOUSTICS MODEL 1

Equilíbrio Tonal	12,0
Soundstage	11,0
Textura	12,0
Transientes	12,0
Dinâmica	12,0
Corpo Harmônico	12,0
Organicidade	12,0
Musicalidade	12,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>95,0</b>



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