

# The Coincident Total Victory II Loudspeaker

by Roy Gregory

Back in Issue 40, JK reviewed the Super Eclipse III, a substantial floorstander from Canadian company Coincident Speaker Technology. Relatively conventional in appearance, one look at the spec sheet tells you that this is far from a run of the mill design; bandwidth extends down to a  $-3\text{dB}$  point at 28Hz, yet sensitivity is pegged at 92dB. Then there's the impedance rating of between 10 and 14 Ohms. Clearly, ease of drive is high on the agenda, but designer Israel Blume is not prepared to sacrifice scale or bass extension to get there. It's a combination of virtues that bought music to JK's ears, whose enthusiasm for their energy levels, bass extension and gripping musical presentation was clear to read. Here, he concluded, was a genuinely alternative approach to speaker design, one uniquely suited to lower-powered amplification, while even at the imported price of \$4750, material value for money was hard to fault. Take their enthusiastic musical delivery into account and the Coincidents represent something of a bargain.

Which rather begs the question, just how far can you push this particular envelope? The Super Eclipse uses five drivers, two of them sideways firing woofers, the other three in a D'Appolito arrangement on the front face of the narrow but deep cabinet. Separate internal compartments for mid and treble drivers as well as extensive bracing contribute to the 43.6kg mass of each speaker, while the absence of internal damping material helps maintain efficiency. Using first order crossover slopes also helps keep the drive characteristic even, making the

speaker an easy load. What happens if you take that basic recipe and simply double up on the list of ingredients?

The answer is Total Victory – or to be more precise, the Total Victory II, because that's pretty much exactly what Israel Blume has done to create his flagship model, conceptually if not materially. Bigger (let's make that MUCH bigger) and using nine instead of a paltry five drivers, the TVII is mightily impressive and mightily imposing, in just about every conceivable way. Each cabinet is around 30% larger in height and depth, as well as an inch wider. The front baffle carries the tweeter, two 75mm dome mid-range drivers and a pair of 165mm mid-bass drivers, while there are no fewer than four 200mm woofers housed on one side panel of each cabinet. That adds up to a lot of radiating area! It also adds up to a lot of componentry and seriously complicated woodwork – none of which comes cheap. The Total Victory II costs a substantial £9000, yet as we shall see, it's hard to criticize it on grounds of material value. Anyway you look at it this is an awful lot of speaker for the money.

The complex cabinet is CNC machined and laboriously spline jointed in Canada, all panels being veneered inside and out to aid rigidity and keep things true. Internally it consists of a separate sub-enclosure that loads the mid-bass drivers as well as isolating the other forward facing drivers from what amounts to a discrete sub-woofer containing the four bass units. However, not only is that mid-bass enclosure multiply and critically braced, but each bass driver has what amounts to its own separate enclosure, created by the horizontal and twin vertical braces, but cascaded to form a single acoustic

space loaded through a fist-

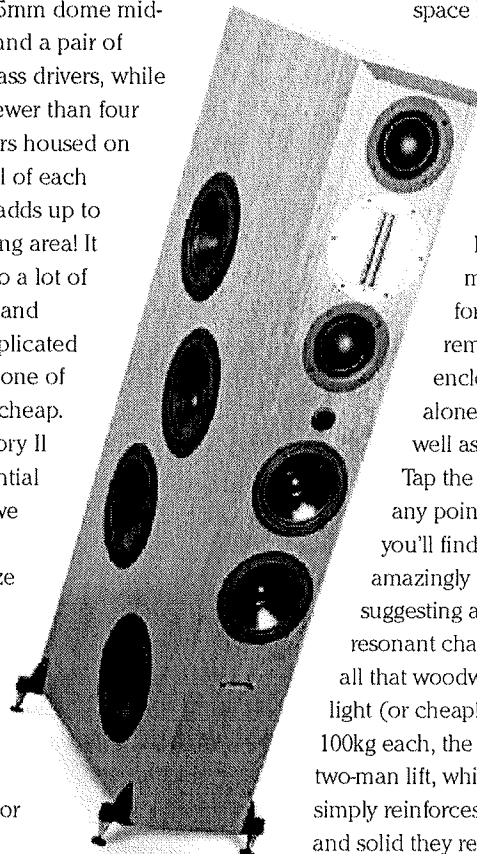
sized, rear facing port. The

end result is extremely rigid

(Coincident claim an astonishingly high 350Hz fundamental resonance for the cabinet –

remarkable in an MDF enclosure of any size, let alone one this large) as well as extremely heavy.

Tap the cabinet at almost any point on its surface and you'll find the resultant sound amazingly consistent, again suggesting an incredibly even resonant character. Of course, all that woodwork doesn't come light (or cheap!) and at nearly 100kg each, the TVII is a definite two-man lift, while handling them simply reinforces just how dense and solid they really are. ▶

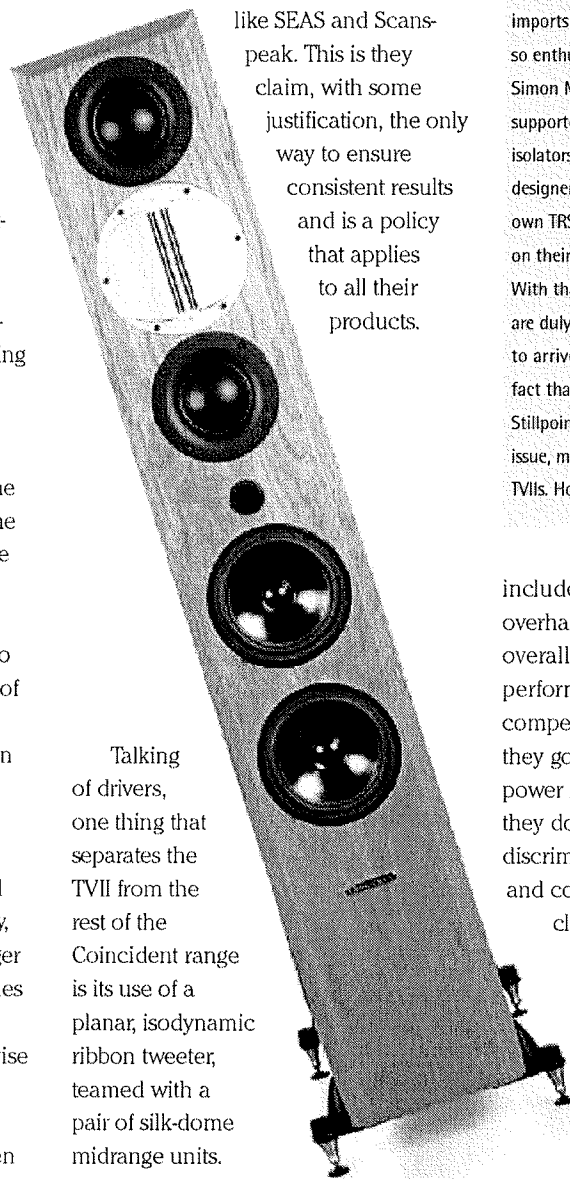


▶ But what is so fascinating about this speaker is the way it is both complex and simple at the same time. Massive, highly braced cabinets containing nine drivers are inherently complex, right? But at the same time the speaker as a whole is conceptually simple and displays some real elegance of design. With all those drivers, phase coherence and drive characteristics are going to be a serious concern. So, just as with the Super Eclipse III, Blume relies on first-order crossovers to minimize phase shift. But he actually goes further, taking advantage of the mid-bass sub-enclosure to use a small, forward facing port to roll the twin 165mm drivers off mechanically below 81Hz. That eliminates another inductor from the signal path and helps contribute to the basically flat, 8 Ohm impedance of the TVII, the only deviation being a gentle rise to 12 Ohms across the mid-band. Bass only goes down an extra 2Hz to -3dB at 26Hz, but efficiency rockets to 97dB, making this a speaker capable of delivering full-bandwidth sound from even flea-powered SETs – but more on that subject later.

The end result is tall, narrow, deep and very heavy, visually and physically slab-sided in a purposeful and not unattractive way. Fortunately, Coincident supply aluminium outrigger legs supported on profiled brass cones which offer some much needed stability to what could be an otherwise vulnerable structure, as well as the essential ability to get it absolutely vertical (an aesthetic imperative even if it wasn't a sonic one). Even the bits that look a bit tacky are anything but. The rather glitzy gold binding posts are actually solid copper items, machined locally specifically for Coincident. As the designer states, "Raw copper would sound even better – for about half an hour". There's nothing here that hasn't been considered, from the in-house, pure copper internal wiring to the careful profiling of the rear port.

Coincident make no bones about the fact that every element of the speaker is sourced and assembled in Canada, apart from the drivers, all of which represent the top-end offerings from reputable

European manufacturers like SEAS and Scanspeak. This is they claim, with some justification, the only way to ensure consistent results and is a policy that applies to all their products.



Talking of drivers, one thing that separates the TVII from the rest of the Coincident range is its use of a planar, isodynamic ribbon tweeter, teamed with a pair of silk-dome midrange units. This extends upper frequency response to 35kHz, but mixing these differing technologies along with the high driver count might lead you to expect a lack of overall coherence from the speaker. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth; turn the lights out and these speakers really live up to their name, top to bottom coherence and integration being one of their real strengths. Others

#### More to come?

used the Total Victories on their standard feet and with my normal Nordost Valhalla cable loom, with the impressive results I've described in this review.

But Coincident distributor Musicology also imports the Symposium support products reviewed so enthusiastically back in Issue 41. Headman Simon Mantele was keen for me to try the TVIIs supported on a combination of Rollerblock S2+ isolators and Symposium Svelte platforms, while designer Israel Blume suggests that Coincident's own TRS Extreme speaker cables, as used internally on their products, are also a must hear option. With that in mind the necessary wiring lengths are duly being dispatched, although they failed to arrive in time for copy date. That and the fact that I want to examine the Symposium and Stillpoints supports under speakers as a separate issue, means that there's more to come on the TVIIs. How much more only time will tell...

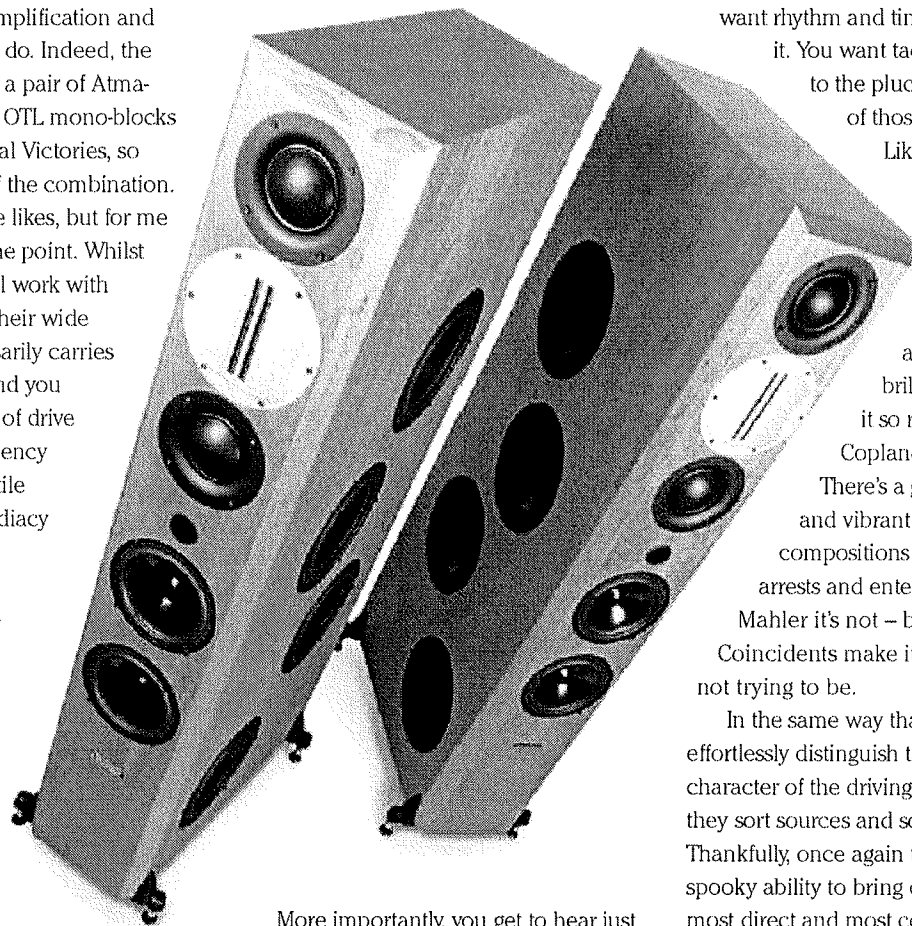
include a fat-free balance, devoid of overhang or stored energy, tremendous overall neutrality and a dynamic performance that puts most of the competition in the shade. It's not just that they go loud (and with 300 Watts of power handling you'd better believe that they do) but that their grasp of dynamic discrimination and shading is so precise and communicative. Micro-dynamic clarity at one end of the spectrum and macro dynamic jump at the other are the two most obvious things separating the live event from the recorded. That's why horn speakers can sound so "real" despite their massive failings when it comes to colouration and bandwidth. These Coincidents create a new class of performance, one they share with the Eben X-series speakers, which manages to combine much of the tactile immediacy of a horn with realistic bandwidth and natural tonal colours; the Ebens trade neutrality for impact, the Coincidents tread a more balanced overall path. Where the Scandinavian speaker, rather like the horns it ▶

► emulates, tends to be a love it or hate it proposition, the Canadian alternative gets precious close to being all things to all men.

As I mentioned earlier, one look at the TVII's paper spec will have single-ended amplifier fans rubbing their hands in glee. But actually, the ease of drive makes the Coincidents far more universal than that. Israel Blume feels that his speakers should allow users a free choice of amplification and that they certainly do. Indeed, the importer supplied a pair of Atma-Sphere M-60 Mk II OTL mono-blocks along with the Total Victories, so enamored is he of the combination. I can hear what he likes, but for me it slightly misses the point. Whilst these speakers will work with almost anything, their wide bandwidth necessarily carries its own burden, and you will hear any lack of drive or control at frequency extremes. The tactile quality and immediacy that the TVIIs communicate so readily, their wide-open and unconstricted character means that they reflect the strengths and limitations of partnering electronics with the kind of clarity I associate with a spot-lit mirror. It's not a musically destructive or analytical tendency, it's just that differences between components (and thus their essential nature) are so apparent as to be obvious. The excellent Tom Evans Vibe complements the speed and agility, transparency and resolution of the speakers superbly. But putting the Lyra Connoisseur 4-2L SE back into the system emphasized the yawning chasm of quality that exists between these two components. You'd hear it in just about

any system – just not this clearly or this quickly. The good news is that the TVIIs seem to have an innate ability to get hold of the good parts in a signal, which means that good products sound great and better ones are better still.

Which means you get to hear exactly what it is you like about your amplifiers (and whether or not you were deluding yourself when you bought them!).



More importantly, you get to hear just how hard an amp is working – and conversely, whether or not it's operating within its comfort zone. Yes, you can get awesome levels from as little as 20 Watts (or less) but it's when you hear the consummate ease and confident headroom that comes from a quick, agile and organized 100 watts that you really begin to understand what makes these speakers special. The “small amp with headroom” sound of the RADIA proved a near perfect match, and despite forays with other partners,

none ever matched the easy grace and dynamic precision of the Hovland.

Play that Neil Young masterpiece ‘Safeway Cart’ (*Sleeps With Angels*, Reprise 9 45749-1) and there's a hypnotic insistence to the sure-footed and perfectly pitched and spaced bass line. The surprising subtlety of the drum patterns holds your attention, the guitar has a hesitant poise, a relaxed mastery that accents the vocals perfectly. You

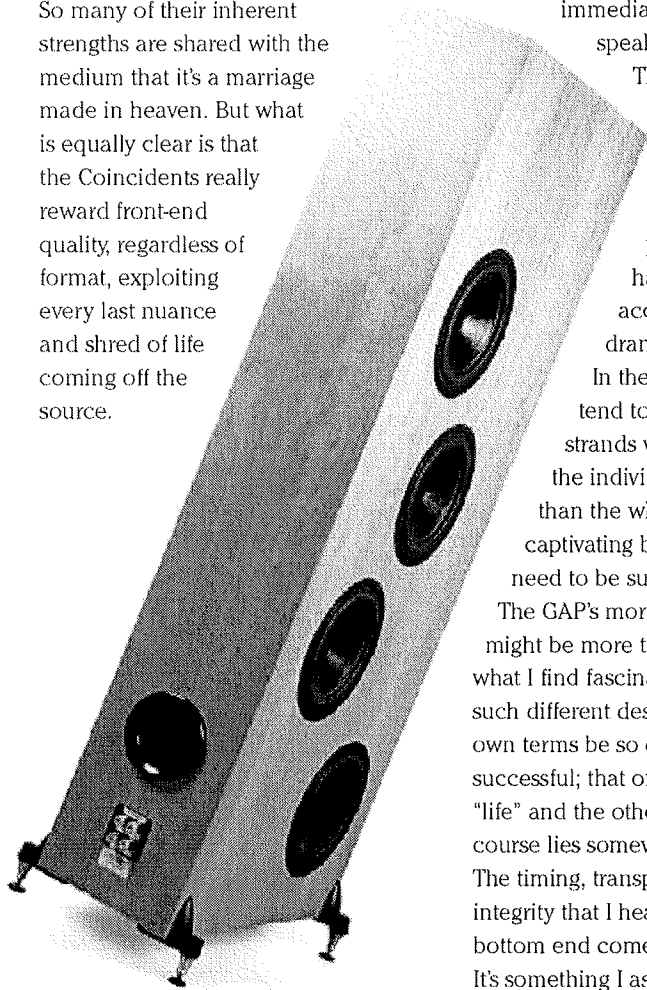
want rhythm and timing – you've got it. You want tactile, just listen to the pluck and release of those bass strings.

Likewise, the beautiful Chandos recording of Yoshimatsu's *Symphony No 4* is revealed in all the chromatic brilliance that makes it so reminiscent of Copland and Gershwin.

There's a glorious sweep and vibrant energy to the compositions that constantly arrests and entertains the listener. Mahler it's not – but then the Coincidents make it clear that it's not trying to be.

In the same way that the TVIIs effortlessly distinguish the nature and character of the driving electronics, so they sort sources and source material. Thankfully, once again they display that spooky ability to bring out the best, the most direct and most communicative elements in a recording and the equipment playing it, but the differences between ordinary recordings and the really great ones are all the more obvious, while they not surprisingly stand as a telling testament to the enduring superiority of good vinyl over digital replay. The sheer presence and shape these speakers bring to the sound of a good record player is both engaging and impressive, thriving on the surface textures and harmonic complexities revealed by the

▶ medium. Comparisons of record and CD are damning indeed. It's not that the CD is unlistenable – it's just that the record sounds so much more there. Just listen to a few bars of the 'Play For today' (The Cure, *Seventeen Seconds*) to appreciate the bustling energy and vibrant presence these speakers bring forth from vinyl. So many of their inherent strengths are shared with the medium that it's a marriage made in heaven. But what is equally clear is that the Coincidents really reward front-end quality, regardless of format, exploiting every last nuance and shred of life coming off the source.



As much as I thrilled to the sound of my records, they never stopped me listening to CD – and you know what, on its own terms, that sounded pretty darn good too.

The essential neutrality and seamless integration of the Total Victories, combined with their lack of additive energy or smearing makes them disarmingly honest. Despite the apparent similarity in their bottom end extensions this speaker's bass is

a world away from the sumptuous foundation that underpins the Gershman GAP. This is all about deft precision, speed and lightness of touch. It means that the soundstage hangs upon the instrumental or vocal images as opposed to enclosing them in a single, coherent acoustic space, but it's a presentation that suits the immediacy that represents the speakers' greatest strength.

They give you "reach out and touch" transparency, yet do so without any of the forward placement, glare or hardness that so often accompanies such a dramatic performance.

In the same way they tend to focus on the strands within the music, the individual elements rather than the whole. It's undeniably captivating but it's still a slant you need to be sure you appreciate.

The GAP's more holistic perspective might be more to your taste, but what I find fascinating is that two such different designs can, on their own terms be so equally, startlingly successful; that one should represent "life" and the other "live". Truth of course lies somewhere in between... The timing, transparency and pitch integrity that I hear from the TVII's bottom end comes as no surprise. It's something I associate with the extended and beautifully unforced top-end of the speaker. But it leaves the audio excessive in me wondering just what a really good sub-woofer would bring to the party?

For the Total Victory IIs it's all about energy, and the ability to accurately map and track the varying levels within the band, within the gamut of a single instrument or voice. That's what gives them that harmonic and micro-dynamic accuracy. Like all good high-efficiency speakers

musical texture is an area in which the Coincidents excel. What sets them apart is that they do it across a wider bandwidth, more consistently and with less compromise than the competition. This degree of tonal accuracy and breadth of tonal palette is unusual; to find it in a speaker of this sensitivity is rare indeed (unique in my experience). The range of emotional expression that results, the ability to swing from delicacy to full dramatic power is almost equally as rare – and to be treasured. To find it in a speaker that's as honest to the partnering equipment as it is to the music makes the Total Victory II a towering achievement in more than just the visual sense. ▶+

#### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type:	4-way, port loaded loudspeaker
Driver Complement:	1x isodynamic planar ribbon tweeter 2x 75mm fabric dome midrange 2x 165mm paper cone mid-bass 4x 200mm paper cone bass
Bandwidth:	26Hz – 40kHz ±3dB
Efficiency:	97dB
Impedance:	8 Ohms minimum
Dimensions:	9 x 54 x 22" inc feet
Weight:	96Kg ea.
Finish:	Cherry or black veneer
Price:	£10400

#### UK Distributor:

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#### Manufacturer:

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