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»A Striking Character«:

**Mulidine Allegretto V4**

Over the years, I've become increasingly convinced that a good loudspeaker will have character. I'm not talking about strange quirks – on the contrary, the perfect loudspeaker would have no sonic properties of its own. The perfect speaker, however, will never exist, and so we have to live with the many flaws of real-world, electro-dynamic transducers. And, after all, isn't it the way someone deals with their weaknesses that defines their personality? You will find many loudspeakers that show certain qualities, usually too much bass in combination with high volume levels. There are also plenty of all-rounders with no distinctive qualities whatsoever, or, to be precise, only marketable ones. In any case, if a friend with a modest hi-fi budget were to ask me for a speaker recommendation, none of those would fit the bill.

But what kind of speaker would? If my friend listened mostly to classical music, I might suggest a pair of Harbeths or Spondors, maybe Dalis or a Dynaudios. If we're talking jazz and searching for »that swing«, I might be looking at other makes, because not every speaker with an even tonal balance will excel in micro-dynamics; jazz heads and similarly inclined listeners might even go so far as to brand them »stiff in the hips«. They may be exaggerating, but I know what they mean: some speakers are simply faster than others. Unfortunately, the fastest speakers tend to exhibit high levels of colouration. In the best of all possible worlds, as Leibniz described the one we live in, there will simply never be a speaker capable of making everyone happy.

Also, most people want floor-standing speakers – not too large, of course, but nice and slim. I don't want to pontificate about the benefits of placing speakers on stands or the advantages of wide baffles, so let's just take the size requirements as a given. That won't make our search any easier, especially if the object of our desire has to look stylish as well.

Review: Mulidine Allegretto V4 loudspeakers

An affordable speaker of pedigree and class:

Mulidine's Allegretto V4 may look innocent,  
but its looks are deceiving.

Naturally, the speakers have to be musical communicators, too, equally good at playing rock, pop, jazz and classical. Easier said than done. A certain degree of sound quality is a must; if a soprano voice makes you want to turn the volume down, any attempts to immerse yourself in the world of opera or Bach's cantatas are bound to fail. It's fair to say that good loudspeakers are like a ticket that will grant you access to the world of recorded music.

In the age of globalization, the shopping districts of large cities are becoming increasingly indistinguishable from one another, but hi-fi products, and speakers in particular, still seem to retain national traits. Many brands from neighbouring countries are more or less unknown over here (and vice versa). Marc Fontaine's Mulidine brand is a perfect example, but Willi Bauer from Munich has set out to change that by bringing one of Mulidine's successful models to our attention: the Allegretto V4, a floor-standing speaker that, at 2,400 euros, won't break the bank.

The driver configuration is conventional in some ways, less so in others. The Seas tweeter with its wide surround, as used in many recent Spondor designs, is a known quantity. The only thing remarkable about it is the foam padding (reminiscent of older BBC loudspeakers) that Marc Fontaine applies in order to minimize diffraction effects. Due to the foam padding, most people will use the Mulidine Allegretto V4 with cloth grilles in place. The crossover frequency, set at 3,700 Hertz, might also have been chosen by a British designer.

In high-end circles, one rarely encounters drivers by the Italian manufacturer Ciare. This mid/bass unit has a diameter of 16.5 cm, a paper cone and a strong motor with a 100-mm magnet. Mulidine modifies the dust cap.

What makes the Allegretto V4 an unusual design is how it deals with the lower registers. Instead of using a regular bass reflex port, Marc Fontaine has opted for a double-quarter-wave acoustic line. Behind the bass driver sits a perforated gypsum board

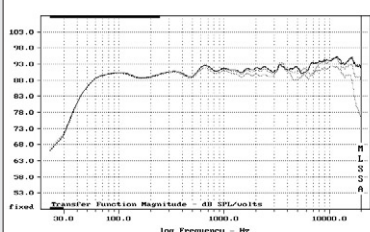
# A Striking Character



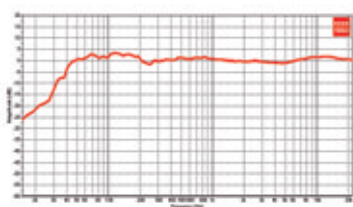
## Lab Report

Measured at one metre distance, the frequency response rises slowly from the midrange up and exhibits a minor resonance at around 650 Hz that fades away quickly. Measured in-room, there is still a slight treble boost on axis. We would, therefore, recommend not toeing the Allegrettos in; at anything less than 30 degrees off axis, the treble response is fine. The Allegretto is a 4-ohm speaker with a minimum impedance of 3.3 ohms at 213 Hz.

**Frequency Response:** on axis, 15°/30°

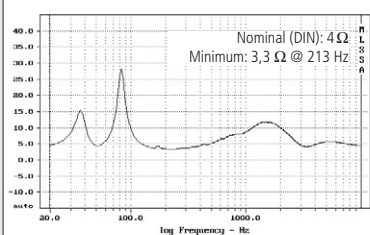


**In-room frequency response:** Mulidine

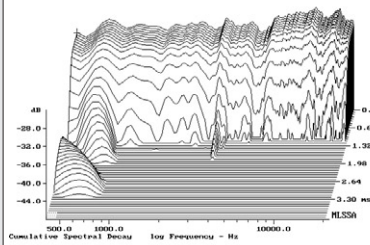


2,0 Meter, 1/1 octave

**Impedance:** Mulidine Allegretto V4



**Waterfall:** Mulidine Allegretto V4



ted the first pair we had here to visitors, all of whom were more than impressed. One of them spoke of »a lucky draw« and remarked: »With these speakers it's not about bass or treble, they just get on with the music.«

And, indeed, the Allegrettos really let you connect with the

music, thanks to their sense of ease. The nice thing is that this extends right down to the bass, which is somehow different to what one is used to and sounds less like sounds emanating from a wooden box. The effect is one of effortless music right from the start. But that is by no means all: for a speaker with a sensitivity of 91.5 dB (!), the tonal qualities are more than agreeable. The Allegretto V4s may

made by Mulidine. Marc Fontaine calls it a »mechanical-acoustical filter«, Willi Bauer uses the term »flow resistance«.

I have to admit that, at first, I was somewhat sceptical about this design, illustrated by the cross section on the right. However, I am sure that this method of bass loading makes up the largest part of the Allegretto's sonic signature, or »character«, if you will.

There's nothing really unusual about the Allegrettos' inner wiring, which uses regular copper strands. The cabinet spikes can be inverted to reveal ball heads that can be used with most wooden floors (an Allegretto weighs only 18 kg). Another thing worth mentioning is that Marc Fontaine is not a big fan of bi-wiring; therefore, only the lower two terminals are connected. However, any customer wishing to bi-wire the Allegrettos can have them modified.

As always, it's the performance that counts – and in that respect the Allegretto V4s excel. I demonstra-

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## Perfect Partners

The Mulidine Allegrettos work a treat with Naim electronics, as Willi Bauer confirms. We recommend partnering the speakers with a **Naim CD5 XS CD player** (2,498 euros) and a **Naim NAIT XS integrated**

**amp** (1,800 euros). Anyone looking for a lower-price solution should short-list the **Musical Fidelity M3i integrated** (1,150 euros), a great all-round amp. Its sound is open and lively and a good match for the Allegrettos' strengths. Paired with the **Musical Fidelity M3 CD player** (1,150 euros), both pictured on the left, it's a great budget solution. ■

not be the last word in that respect, but they let you enjoy Sammy Davis Jr. just as much as Lohengrin's Grail narrative. The speakers I listed as suitable for classical music at the beginning of this article may offer a bit more substance with vocals and strings (a paper cone will always be a paper cone) but their sensitivity rating will be much lower than that of the Allegrettos (the Spondor model reviewed on page 62 is almost 10 dB quieter). However, the manner in which the Allegrettos manage to combine a variety of sonic qualities is extraordinary. Their tonal balance is typical of French speakers: »light« and rising from mid-range up, which is something that should be taken into consideration when choosing electronics and cables. Partnered appropriately, the V4s will afford musical enjoyment across all types of genres.

## Conclusion

They obviously still exist: loudspeaker boffins who produce surprisingly good results by treading off the beaten engineering path. With the Allegretto V4, Marc Fontaine has developed a speaker that places low demands on amplifier power and plays music with verve and ease. Highly recommended!

Wilfried Kress ■

### Mulidine Allegretto V4

WxHxD	20 x 89 x 25 cm
Warranty	5 years
Price	2,400 euros
Distributor	Bauer Audio
	Pollinger Straße 4
	81377 München
Telephone	(0049) 89 - 7 19 39 80

