



**L'AUDIO
EXPERIENCE**

The ASKJA Origin system or the fulfilment of a dream

As you can probably imagine, it would be a mistake to approach the ASJKA sound system in the same way as any ordinary system.

The cost itself is enough to make you giddy, with the basic price at 440,000 euros before tax. The weight is quite impressive too, reaching a metric ton – and 1,200 kilos if you add the flight cases.

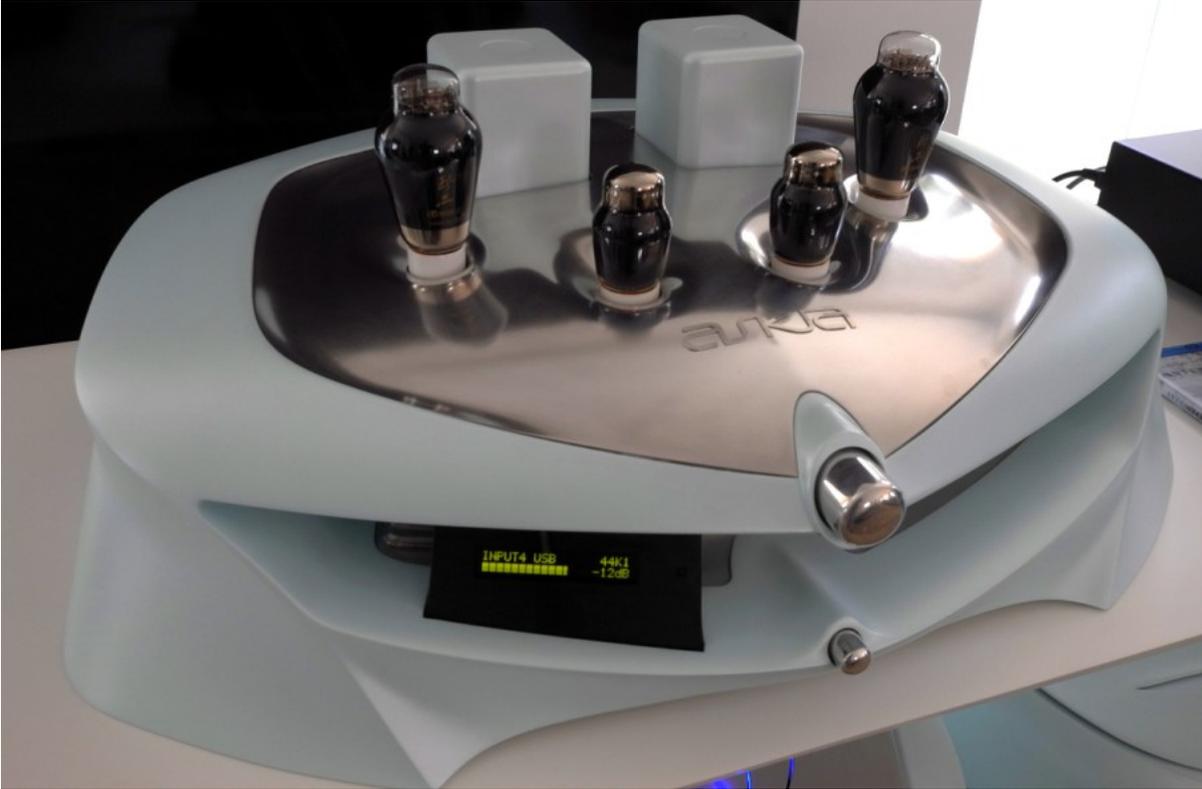
It's already not easy to remain objective when faced with the idea of almost half a million euros (including tax), but the most important thing is to avoid trying to convince yourself that the result must inevitably be something exceptional.

Further to an invitation from Mr. Didier Kwak, I travelled to Nice on Wednesday, 20th June 2018 to get acquainted with ASKJA (pronounced "askia") Origin.



On entering the listening room, I discovered a luxurious setting with comfortable amenities conducive to spending many a long hour in its company, including a Pioneer Kuro plasma TV to provide a suitable visual accompaniment.

The system comprised 7 units – 1 DAC amplifier, 1 power supply, 2 crossovers and 2 speakers, as well as a special unit made of Corian weighing 246 kilos (and, what's more, hollow).





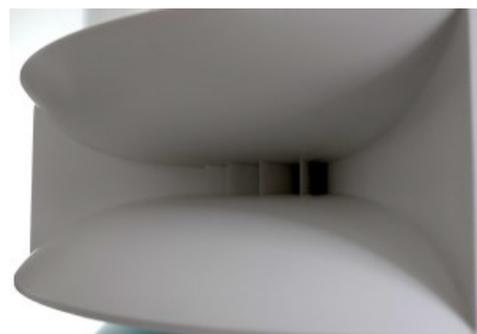
The beauty of the forms was matched only by the design, which was modern and extremely sober, suitable for any style of interior.

The work carried out to create the system was fundamental to explaining Didier's approach.

He informed me that Origin's design was the result of an in-depth scientific study on psychoacoustics and the latter's influence on our perceptive system, which in turn unveils our emotions.

I was reminded of the studies carried out by Christian Catauro on his Helixir Audio HRDDAC converter.

To create the elements, Didier Kwak was inspired by fluid mechanics and aerodynamics. As a result, the entire realisation was based on wave flow performance and the fight against vibration interference of any kind, so as to reproduce nothing but an authentic sound.



The speaker crossovers were moved to the outside, again in order to eliminate any interference that could have a harmful effect on the sound.



Each component of this prestigious system was designed without making any compromise. It was made manually and required at least 3 months to reach this simply sumptuous result.



After a good three-quarters of an hour of discussion, backed up with numerous explanations (I will go into more detail about the research that went into the elaboration of the ASKJA Origin in a future article), I made myself comfortable on the sofa and prepared to start listening.

Didier drew my attention to the fact that there was absolutely no background hissing coming from the speakers. Although a little embarrassed, but nevertheless anxious to check that his affirmation was correct, I pressed my ear to the speaker horn. To be sure, in the absence of modulation, there was no hissing whatsoever. No crackling, no static. Total silence.

From the very first notes of music, I could feel something happening. I was fascinated by the sound reproduction – surprised and a little disconcerted. What was certain was that it did not leave me indifferent.

The music here was full of lyricism and subtlety. Its romantic overtones made me feel that its creator was passionate about music.

Indeed, he was the editor of the TV program, "Les Enfants du Rock" ("The Children of Rock") in the 1980s and it was primarily because he was disappointed in the existing equipment that Didier set about creating a system that would represent a kind of ideal sound.

And what I heard was Music, all music and nothing but music.

Whatever the recording, the dynamics were, so to speak, boundless. The instruments, musicians and singers all came across in acoustics that were almost palpable and in dimensions that were close to reality.

I asked to listen to a few difficult passages in order to "trick" the system. No way! The system pulled it off admirably and without the slightest difficulty.

For some pieces of music which generally induce a certain lassitude, ASKJA managed to present them in a smoother, more serene and relaxed manner. Even if the piece of music was harsh, it succeeded in making it non-aggressive.

"Tutu" by Miles Davis was an excellent example of how the system was able to reproduce the tone of the muted trumpet with all its brilliance but without its stridency.

No tension and no exaggerated transparency either.

The reproduction was precise and yet airy. It was so fine-grained that you could almost hear the sound of the sheets of music being turned over and the musicians' breathing...

The whole system reproduced the sound with exactitude, with no flourishes or highlighting, in a similar way to the SENNHEISER EH-1 headphones (the ultimate reference for headphones), only with the addition of physical sensations.

Although I could no doubt analyse what impressed and affected me most, I don't think that would help you to assess the potential of ASKJA Origin, for the simple reason that sensitivity varies from person to person and we all have a different relationship with music.

The temptation that was the most difficult to resist was trying to find standards of comparison – generally with one's own system – and thereby running the risk of finding a reference which was false.

At the end of the session, I was unable to assert that Mr. Didier Kwak's system was the most emotional that I had ever had the opportunity to listen to, but I was nevertheless convinced that it belonged to the small group of systems that was the most faithful to the source, with the ability to give weight (increased presence), fluidity, rhythm and a clearly perceptible distinction between the quality of the recordings.

I found myself listening to the acoustics of the place where the recording had been made, with constantly renewed perspectives.

I was transported on a maiden voyage which took me right back to the origins of music. In that respect, it could serve as a monitoring tool for recording studios.

Even if the room could have benefited from some acoustic treatment to get rid of certain echoes which could be heard in some of the passages, the reproduction was "clean" enough to not bother me.

There's one thing I'm sure of and that is that ASKJA Origin was designed to deliver its message as faithfully as possible.

Listening to CD quality files was already extremely convincing, so it goes without saying that in high resolution they would take on their full dimension and the message would come across loud and clear.

With a TOTALDAC converter, 300B lamps and TAD speakers, one could expect an excellent sound, but that was without taking into account the extreme rigour of its development which enabled Didier Kwak to succeed in obtaining this neutrality, without false heat or artificial colouring.

The fact is that the speaker cables were supplied by Atohm and chosen for their balance quality, although their cost was ridiculously low when you consider the price of the whole system.



Conclusions

Didier Kwak followed his dream through to its fulfilment by giving himself the means to develop the complete ASKJA Origin system, **a diehard system that is capable of transporting you into another dimension and whose completeness represents a certain form of sound perfection.**

ASKJA's slogan, "Bridging exquisite sound and art" – the obvious link between captivating sound and art at its highest level.

It should be ranked among the most exceptional and prestigious systems ever created. A pity that it is only accessible to a wealthy clientele.



My thanks to Didier for having made me welcome and allowing me to make the most of his extraordinary system for a few hours.

Price/quality ratio: unclassifiable

Manufacturer's site: <http://www.askja-audio.com/FR>. Well documented and very clear, with information about the philosophy behind the brand and the product's make-up.

N.B. A less ambitious system with the same developments as the Origin is in preparation. The cost is estimated at around 280,000 euros before tax.

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Original article:

<http://www.audioexperience.fr/le-systeme-askja-origin-ou-laccomplissement-dun-reve/>