

Wilson Audio • Sasha W/P Series 2 Loudspeakers

"A speaker that once reveled in dismantling recordings and the music they contained now reconstructs them"

by [Roy Gregory](#) | June 3, 2016

Wilson Audio's WATT/Puppy loudspeaker, in all its iterations, is not just the most successful high-end loudspeaker but the most successful high-end audio product, ever. It might not have been the first high-end loudspeaker, but it was arguably the first loudspeaker that came to be synonymous with high-end audio as we now know it. It was both widely represented -- with distinctly WATT/Puppy-esque images appearing in books and instruction manuals for every conceivable kind of product -- and widely imitated, and it's not hard to understand why. Back in the early 1980s, no one was going to get rich selling Wilson WAMM systems, but, although the WATT -- the name is an acronym for Wilson Audio Tiny Tot -- with the subsequent addition of the Puppy subwoofer started out as a location-monitoring solution for Dave Wilson's record label, it soon became apparent that the combination offered the perfect, albeit unintended, opportunity to monetize the knowledge base, brand value, and experience invested in the flagship speaker. As such, it set the path for an entire speaker industry to follow.



Price: \$30,900/pair.
Warranty: Five years parts and labor.

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Look at the WATT/Puppy ingredients in detail and it's not hard to understand why the speaker was so successful. Essentially based on a simple two-way loudspeaker done properly, it introduced the wider audio world to the concepts of manufacturable, non-wood cabinet materials, time-aligned baffles and modified or specified drivers. Whether it was the first speaker to employ these approaches isn't the point; it was one of the first to use them *all* (and make a virtue of the fact), and thanks to its high price it quickly became the most visible. Adding bass drivers built in to an entirely separate enclosure is another step that (with the benefit of 20-20 hindsight) makes perfect sense -- even if in this instance it was more a case of necessity. Driving them from the same amplifier as the main speakers makes even more sense. The mold was established and it has yet to be broken.

Of course, the original WATT/Puppy was far from perfect. It represented a brutally difficult load combined with distinctly brutalist styling. It was also, true to its location-monitoring roots, brutally revealing of system setup and source material. Now in its tenth iteration, the WATT/Puppy has been a story of steady evolution and gradual domestication, each version (for the most part) prettier and easier to drive than the previous. Some of the increments might have been small, but the vector has been a constant, and the closer you get to a perfectly balanced design, the greater the impact of apparently tiny differences becomes. On paper and in physical terms, the step from Sasha W/P to Sasha W/P 2 might seem small. In musical terms it is arguably the most significant evolution to date. But before we go there, let's just consider why the WATT/Puppy is so successful, was so widely imitated and -- most interesting of all -- why it isn't now.

The WATT's truncated-pyramid enclosure was rigid and non-resonant with non-parallel internal surfaces and a sloping, narrowing baffle -- all features that have subsequently become pretty much *de rigeur* for serious loudspeakers. The execution may have evolved or been incorporated into much larger designs, but the thinking and concerns that drove the original are very much intact. The use of resin-based and other non-organic cabinet materials also became virtually synonymous with high-end loudspeaker design -- a trend that also continues to this day, although the thinking behind cabinet design and materials has also evolved. Tellingly, adding the Puppy produced a genuinely compact speaker system with enough bandwidth to at least hint at full-range performance -- or at least as full-range as most of us have ever experienced at home.

Perhaps the most significant impact the WATT/Puppy had on public perception was its price. More than any other product, this was the one that established modern notions of high-end pricing and performance. Here was a speaker that was just about small enough that most of us might accommodate it, and just about cheap enough that even if we couldn't afford it, it was at least within the realms of realistic aspiration.

Interestingly, one aspect of the WATT/Puppy recipe that didn't stick was the use of a large-diameter 7" bass-mid driver. Increasingly, high-quality compact loudspeakers used ever-smaller drivers to cover the lower registers, first in the 5" range and then even down to 4". Thankfully, that's a trend that has reversed in recent years, and once again we are seeing high-performance two-way designs sporting larger drivers, another indication of just how right the original WATT/Puppy recipe really was.

Mind you, not everything was right straight off the bat. I've already mentioned the aesthetics and the crippling load characteristics, but less obvious was the sheer build cost of the WATT/Puppy system. With such a runaway success, it was no surprise that imitations quickly emerged, some more flattering than others. Most of those systems have fallen by the wayside, a function of simple economic pressure: once you start building four boxes instead of two, start using non-rectangular shapes and something other than wood-based materials, you quickly discover that what you end up with is expensive to produce, heavy and hard to work with, and difficult and costly to pack and ship. Unless you are doing serious numbers or can command a premium price, then a more conventional single-box, three-way design is a lot more cost-effective. It's a truth so unavoidable that even Wilson Audio had to acknowledge it with the introduction of the Sophia.

But such is the regard in which Wilson speakers are held, the WATT/Puppy series in particular, that the Sasha Series 2 doesn't just continue to hold its position in the range, despite its high price and compact dimensions, it remains Wilson Audio's best-selling speaker. A big part of that continuing appeal lies in the speaker's continuing evolution, with dramatically more attractive aesthetics and color options than the basic Henry Ford original, more tractable load characteristics, evolving performance and bandwidth and, critically, an ever-more-sophisticated approach to setup and alignment, all combining to deliver more of the system's potential more of the time. Compared to the originals, the Sasha Series 2 is a little bigger, a lot better, easier to work with and easier to get working. At its \$30,900/pair price, I can't actually figure out whether it costs more in today's dollars than the originals (a set of WATT 3/Puppy 2s cost \$12,800 back in 1991), but what is indisputable is that it sits in a very different place in the market. Back in the 1980s, there were relatively few speakers that cost more than the WATT/Puppy combination; now they look positively modest, almost affordable compared to the more extreme offerings that have hit the market, a market in which six-figure price tags seem almost commonplace.

Look at the Sasha 2 in detail and you quickly realize that, while much stays the same (the broad, four-box concept and system topology), virtually every detail of the design has evolved. The original "Lego-speaker" WATT/Puppy had a Bauhaus modularity that offered the advantage of an almost prosaic clarity of purpose. It started life as a tool, it looked exactly like a tool, and you could tell just what it was for simply by looking at it. When the first Sasha appeared in 2009, it marked the end of the fiction that suggested that the WATT existed as a standalone speaker, the Puppy being an

option. In reality, *nobody* used the WATT on its own, and the acceptance of that fact allowed Wilson to treat the sub and satellite elements as a single system, easing physical integration, simplifying electrical integration and creating a musically and aesthetically more coherent result. It also signaled the adoption of a larger low-frequency volume, the Puppy gaining breadth and stature, the system gaining genuine low-frequency weight and authority, rather than just suggesting it as it had in earlier iterations.

In the meantime, development of the flagship Alexandria XLF produced two technological advances with profound implications for the rest of the range. New drivers, including a soft-dome tweeter to replace Wilson's longstanding, trademark inverted-titanium-dome unit, got most of the attention, but a new approach to cabinet analysis employing advanced laser vibrometry also promised significant potential improvements in the critical areas of cabinet coloration and stored energy. Alexia was the first speaker to benefit from the trickle-down influence of those changes, quickly followed by the Sasha 2.

The most obvious difference between the original Sasha and the Series 2 is the replacement of the flat, sloping baffle on the head unit with a pair of contoured sub-baffles that alter (close) the angle between the midrange and tweeter. This is not a simple stylistic change but rather fundamental to the performance of the speaker. It reflects the use of a Sasha-specific version of Wilson's Convergent Synergy soft-dome tweeter, the angled baffle necessary to better integrate its dispersion characteristics. At the same time, moving to a two-plane baffle has allowed Wilson to further optimize the mechanical characteristics of the midrange driver and tweeter. The flat baffle of the original Sasha used a new epoxy-based composite dubbed S material in place of the previous phenolic-based X material used throughout the rest of the cabinets. Offering a different resonant signature, S material offers superior midrange performance and clarity, at the cost of some high-frequency coloration. Sasha 2's move to a split baffle allowed the ideal material to be employed for both drivers, mounting the midrange driver on the mechanically optimized S-material plate while reverting to X material for the tweeter, thus providing each driver with the optimum physical interface with the cabinet as well as perfecting the geometrical relationship between them.

But arguably an even bigger change is a lot less visible. Although the Sasha 2 bass cabinets are outwardly identical to the originals and sport almost identical drivers, the structure is completely different, with totally different wall thicknesses and bracing. The bigger the panel, the more susceptible it is to resonance. These adjustments to material dimensions and bracing have significantly reduced the musical thumbprint and acoustic "chatter" generated by the woofer cabinet, resulting in not just cleaner, more natural bass but also improved clarity up into, as well as integration with, the midrange. Throw in a completely revised low-frequency crossover and it should come as no surprise that the bass performance of the Series 2 isn't just superior to that of the originals, it is also the foundation for a whole new musical voicing for the system as a whole.

So, although the switch in tweeter is by far the most visible change between the two Sasha models -- and actually drove a cascade of subsequent changes, through the need to integrate its different characteristics and the demands the improvements it offered placed on the rest of the system's performance -- actually the invisible changes to the bass cabinet and crossover are potentially more profound, simply because they impact not just more of the bandwidth, but the musically most important frequencies. There is a clarity of purpose and musical coherence, a combination of all those changes, that makes the Sasha 2 special -- and which really marks it apart from earlier WATT/Puppy iterations. With the instigation of the Series 2 upgrades, Wilson have changed the fundamental nature of the WATT/Puppy -- and in a very positive way. The original Sasha approached that tipping point; the Series 2 has taken one giant leap beyond it.

In terms of setup, the new Sashas feature the same easy-to-adjust spikes below the sub cabinets, but now, as well as a range of different spikes to alter the angle of the head section, there's also a sliding machined-aluminum "staircase" on the top of the bass cabinet that interfaces with a single rearward-facing spike and allows incredibly precise angular adjustment of the midrange/treble baffle to allow for different listening distances and seat heights. A particularly welcome note of continuity is that Wilson still provide all of the tools necessary to fit and tighten everything -- from the spikes to the speaker terminals, the latter positioned at the bottom rear of the bass cabinet with short flying leads and binding posts to connect with the head unit.

As to positioning itself, much has been written about Wilson Audio's systematic approach to speaker placement, an exercise I'm not intending to repeat here. As set up by John Giolas, the Sasha 2s adopted a wider-than-usual stance in my room -- two nodes in Wilson-speak, or 12" further out than most speakers. After considerable experimentation, I actually preferred the sound slightly closer together (one node, or 6" further out on each side), still wide but not quite as extreme, sacrificing some of the astonishing stage width for added presence and more coherent center fill.

The other change that was made involved [Stirling Trayle of Audio Systems Optimized](#), who tilted the bass units back slightly (from the vertical position in which they were initially set), adjusting the head units to compensate. This added life, texture, shape and impact to bass notes as well as improving integration and rhythmic integrity. More importantly, it also reflects the amount of time I had available to refine the setup and just how tunable the Sasha 2 system is -- and how much you can get out of it by adapting it precisely to the specific listening environment. As impressive as the Sasha 2s were after first installation, additional running in and bedding in, along with experience with different driving systems and cables, allowed improvements that might have been quantitatively subtle but were qualitatively significant. Really get the Sasha 2s dialed in and the results are musically spectacular, which brings me to that change in this speaker's nature.

The original WATT/Puppy's reputation for brutal, unadorned honesty was well deserved. Although essential to its intended role as a nearfield/location-monitoring solution, it was instrumental in establishing the warts-and-all school of high-end audio. More effort invested on setup yielded more detail, resolution and transparency -- and more apparent errors in any recording, whether emanating from the musicians or the engineers. That tendency might

have been tempered over the years and different iterations, but the WATT/Puppy was never a forgiving musical partner, its explicit presentation and voicing always presenting a challenge to the driving system and listener alike.

With the Sasha, that started to change, and with Series 2, a whole new presentation has emerged, like a butterfly from its developmental chrysalis. Many observers will point to the inclusion of the soft-dome tweeter and talk about how older WATT/Puppy models used to be bright and shouty, but I think that there's something far more fundamental afoot. The tendency of the older versions' tweeters to sound off was as much a function of setup and stress or issues within the driving system as it was a problem with the tweeter itself. The emphasis on transparency and definition simply exposed those issues to what was, all too often -- especially at shows and in dealer show rooms -- an unacceptable level. It's a self-fulfilling prophesy; go looking for edges and that's exactly what you'll find.

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The Sasha Series 2's cabinet, along with the improved performance and integration of the drivers, results in greater clarity, allowing you to hear much further into the recording. This means that you no longer have to go looking for leading edges at low frequencies and you now can balance the speaker for natural musical weight and coherence. The result is a warmer sound with greater body and presence, a shift in tonality that's easily noticed. What isn't so obvious is that by resting on the center rather than the leading edge of notes, the temporal coherence of the system is dramatically improved, resulting in a natural sense of rhythmic integrity, dynamic shading and intra-instrumental connection. Where the original WATT/Puppy systems used to excel in defining individual notes or phrases, at the expense of dismantling the whole, the Sasha 2 might not seem as obvious but actually tells you dramatically more about who is playing what and, most importantly of all, why they're playing it at all. This shift from the individual to the collective, to a more organic and holistic presentation, is at the root of what makes the Sasha 2 both so different from its predecessors and so musically satisfying to listen to in the long term.

I've been making considerable use of that word *integration* to describe the Sasha Series 2's advantages. It's one of those terms popular in the audio lexicon, much bandied about in reviews, to the extent that we've almost stopped thinking about its meaning, the extent of its implications and its impact on musical reproduction. Put on the spot, we'd probably come up with some formulaic explanation involving "seamless continuity between drivers" -- and that's obviously a part of what I'm referring to here. The assumptions start with the notion that that continuity occurs in the tonal realm; for me the term is far more complex, with the seamless junction between drivers depending on their dispersion characteristics, dynamic capabilities, their ability to project musical energy and the ability of the crossover network between them to preserve time and phase information. Once we factor in all of those aspects of system performance, we are left with a significantly more complex and fundamentally more important performance characteristic, one that lies at the very heart of any multiway loudspeaker's ability to arrange the musical information it receives into a convincing whole.

Wilson speakers have always done scale and imaging, performance attributes that along with dynamic response might be considered the brand's hallmarks. The Sasha 2 is no exception to that rule, although it could be argued that its overall spatial and temporal coherence raise performance in this regard to a new high, especially for the smaller speakers in the line. Listen to Wilson speakers at shows and the one thing you can pretty much guarantee is that they'll present a massive soundscape. What the latest Sashas do is make that more than audio cosmetics, turning it into something presentationally and musically not just meaningful but fundamental. Those who decry stereo imaging as superfluous, exaggerated, a distraction or the work of the devil, need to hear just how much musical sense it adds to performances replayed on the Sasha Series 2s. It's back to that *integration* word again, with the spatial location of instruments and voices playing directly into and illuminating the musical relationship between the players. This Sasha isn't the first speaker to do this, but the benefit is so obvious and so right that it needs to be heard by advocates and skeptics alike.

The extra weight and poise the Series 2 brings to the WATT/Puppy bottom end also banishes another perennial complaint. Earlier models in the series could sound rhythmically stilted and disjointed, a function of setup that leaned on the leading edge of bass notes in an effort to help the musical timing and introduced an awkward misstep between bass and midrange. With the redesigned bass cabinets allowing the bottom end to shift back to its proper place in space and time, the speaker's rhythmic performance suddenly locks in. The new sense of low-frequency articulation and agility also couples seamlessly to the midband output, with consistent time and energy across the transition, meaning that the ability to appreciate the placement and positioning of notes, the way in which musicians space and shape each note, is now one of the speaker's greatest strengths.

Below I'll be discussing just how brilliantly these speakers handle the subtlety and dynamic demands, the intimate interplay and complex musical conversation of the Beethoven Cello Sonatas, a performance that rests squarely on this ability to measure and place each note. It's a conclusion that you could derive from that example, but it is too important to leave to implication. It is important enough, both developmentally (in terms of the WATT/Puppy family) and musically, to be worth underlining as a key consideration. Essentially, it is this single quality more than any other that underpins the Series 2's newfound sense of poise and clarity of musical purpose.

To hear what I'm talking about, select any piece of complex, wide-bandwidth music that contains significant shifts in dynamic range, density and instrumental input. Berglund's recording of Sibelius's 2nd Symphony (Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, *Sibelius Complete Symphonies* [EMI SLS 5129]) is a perfect case in point, the composer building his evocative, sweeping climaxes in a characteristically piecemeal fashion, right across the orchestra, stacking contributions from one set of instruments immediately after another. This sequential rather than layered orchestration presents a significant challenge to both performers and systems. Any hesitation in the direction, the playing or the reproduction and the whole thing falls apart, which is what makes Berglund's control of tempo and precise dynamics so

musically compelling.

Of course, all that gets undone if the speaker system (as is so often the case) introduces discontinuities of its own. The Sasha Series 2 preserves not just the majestic sense of scale and flow so crucial to this music, the carefully poised rests that Berglund gets just right, it maintains a rock-solid soundstage in which instrumental level and location are both clearly defined. There are no awkward shifts or fractures in the dynamic shading or sense of instrumental presence. Instead the acoustic space and the orchestra within it are a single, continuous, organic whole. The pattern of the energy generated by the players and reflected by the hall is natural both in its consistency and the sense of almost physical presence. It exists beyond, between and apart from the speakers generating it, with a confidence and unfettered dynamic range (doubtless helped by the VTL S-400 Series II amplifier doing the driving) that allows you to first ignore and then forget the mechanics of reproduction, the speakers (or more specifically, their flaws) never intruding to shatter the illusion created by the system or the performance captured by the recording. The tension in the measured pace is palpable, the contrast between the tingling delicacy of the quiet passages and the sheer power of the towering, purposeful crescendos is exhilarating.

Where so many speakers reduce classical recordings to an intellectual exercise, these Sashas deliver not just the unadulterated facts and structure of the music, but the energy and immediacy of the live event. With Berglund directing proceedings, it's a visceral demonstration of what correct temporal, dynamic and spatial integration can achieve, especially in a full-range speaker system driven by a truly capable amplifier.

Much of the musical and emotional power in the Sibelius comes from the midbass and lower midrange, with the heavy lifting being done by the cellos and the lower register of the violas. It's also exactly the range where the cabinet and crossover changes have transformed the Sasha 2's performance. With that in mind, let's look a little closer, at a pair of new recordings that each step down in scale, leaving the cello progressively more exposed.

First up is Steven Isserlis playing the Elgar and Walton concertos (Paavo Järvi with the Philharmonia [Hyperion CDA68077]), wonderful performances, with a carefully reflective, inward-looking Elgar that finally stands alongside the Du Pré, as well as a pair of beautiful "fillers" in the shape of Gustav Holst's "Invocation" and daughter Imogen's "The fall of the leaf." But it's the stark beauty of the Walton that is really special. In the album notes, Isserlis describes the tension between heroism and tragedy at the heart of the score, qualities that are perfectly captured in his performance. His fluidity and agility are stretched close to breaking point by the challenges of the solo part, the muscular effort and energy necessary, vividly apparent in the playing.

The Wilsons capture not just the pace and attack in the bowing, but also the control and precision, the sheer intensity of the effort. That's due in no small part to the ability of the speakers to project the cello as a single, coherent musical whole, right through its range. The angular demands of Walton's lines and phrasing will ruthlessly expose not tonal aberrations but differences in the scale, physical presence and the consistency with which the instrument projects energy. The Sasha Series 2 presents a solid, consistent and incredibly convincing instrument, neither spot-lit nor over-voiced, but naturally set in the overall acoustic. The sudden orchestral interjections, bright, dramatic and even more angular have an explosive power and presence, when required, further heightening the contrast between the solo part and the orchestra. Of course, a lot of this is down to the recording, but the speakers have to preserve and project it, maintaining natural perspectives and dynamic scaling, something which the Wilsons achieve with an almost insouciant ease.

There's more than one kind of compression, and as impressive as the Sasha Series 2's dynamics undoubtedly are, it's the holistic nature of their performance that allows the listener to appreciate the full (and considerable) evocative range in these recordings. It's the combination of their temporal accuracy and articulation along with their precise dynamic shadings and textural and harmonic consistency that allow you to hear the human agency in Isserlis's playing, the emotional drivers in the score. It's that and the ability of the speakers to preserve the relationship between the solo instrument and the orchestra, with its sudden shifts in scale and dynamic density, that make this recording so affecting -- and the system so capable.

To zero in further on the instrument and the playing, listen to "The fall of the leaf" with its five-part sonata form. For anybody questioning the value of imaging and dimensionality, the convincing scale of the instrument, the sense of the player and the playing working the whole length of the strings, the difference in texture and attack between the pizzicato and the bowed notes all add to the presence and beauty of the performance of this perfectly English vignette. Once again, the intent and energy in the playing, the contrast between the quick flurries of skittered notes and the longer, more measured passages become a natural extension of the instrument itself, allowing you to completely forget the system and lose yourself in the music.

As impressive as the Isserlis disc is, French pianist François-Frédéric Guy's previously mentioned recording of Beethoven's complete works for cello and piano with cellist Xavier Phillips [Evidence EVCD 015] raises the bar another notch. These are beautifully gauged performances matched by a recording with a sense of presence, immediacy and natural perspective. Instrumental balance is spot on and the physical location and scale of the instruments are perfectly balanced. The Wilsons render them as an almost ghostly presence, capturing not just the contrasting nature of the instruments themselves, but the almost telepathic relationship between the performers.

With music that offers such range and contrast from just two instruments, there really is nowhere for the players to hide. The challenge for any system is in trying to capture the nuance, the perfect weight and timing of notes and phrases that animate the musical conversation. The Sasha 2s leave you in no doubt as to not just the music's shape and structure but the connected brilliance in the performance. Just play Sonata No.3 in A major for an object lesson in expressive vivacity and the sheer intimacy that can be captured by a recording -- and revealed by your speakers, if they're up to the job.

This is a complex exchange, a conversation full of subtlety and musical shadings. Where earlier WATT/Puppy systems would have dismantled the performance, giving you perfectly etched and defined words, words and more words -- but not a single sentence -- the Sasha Series 2 gives chapter and verse. Where older WATT/Puppy versions concentrated on the surface, the notes themselves, the Sasha Series 2 takes you right to the core of this musical relationship, adding layers of musical detail, texture and contrast, not just the notes but the relationship between them that binds them into a single breathing, intelligible whole. As this speaker reveals that sense of inner musical coherence and integrity in the playing, it's reflecting those qualities in the speaker itself.

Ultimately, the acid test for any loudspeaker has to be that most familiar of instruments, the human voice -- especially a voice you know. For me, the various recordings of Eleanor McEvoy fill that bill, not just because of the times I've heard her perform, but for all the time I've spent in her company. Hers is a distinctive voice in terms of timbre, accent and expressive character. It's utterly unmistakable -- and equally unmistakable when a system fails to capture its particular quality. The exposed vocals of *Early Hours* [Mosco Vinyl MOSV101] leave no room for error, yet from the opening notes of "You'll Hear Better Songs Than This" that voice is not just real, but in the room. That reflects in part the remarkable immediacy and natural intimacy and tonality of the DS Audio DS-W1 cartridge (mounted in the AMG Giro/9W2), but then the superb phrasing and sheer presence of the Acoustical Systems Archon (mounted in the Kuzma Stabi M/4Point 14) is just as beguiling. The Sasha Series 2 isn't just true to the voice, in stark contrast to earlier WATT/Puppy iterations, it has that happy knack of not only being transparent to, but also making the most of, the system and source feeding it.

As impressive as this is with familiar recordings, it takes on a whole new importance with recent acquisitions. Birdy's brilliant second album, *Fire Within* [14th Floor/Atlantic 825646420315], has a lyrical maturity and complexity that belie her tender years. Once again, the Sasha 2s perfectly capture the fragile delicacy of her voice, but what they also do is sort through the tight arrangements and melodic hooks, keeping that voice front and separate and center -- cool, clear and above all articulate. A lot of modern pop music is, shall we say, pretty vacuous; this isn't, and the Sasha 2s let you know that with an honesty and directness that serve the music perfectly.

If this is beginning to sound like the Sasha Series 2 is the perfect speaker, then let's be clear about this -- it's not. But given its DNA, you shouldn't be surprised that it ticks a lot of boxes. This Sasha 2 may not demand power like WATT/Puppy of old, but that doesn't mean it doesn't like it. I got to use the speakers with a wide variety of amplification, solid-state and tube, but there was no escaping the fact that hooking up the [VTL S-400 II](#) lifted the speakers' performance significantly. The sheer quality of the S-400 II shouldn't be underestimated, but nor should its power output. I certainly wouldn't expect to get the best out of these speakers without offering them plenty to chew on, and in the perennial arms race between quality and quantity, I'd consider putting the latter first. A brief outing with Arcam's A49 integrated amp went a long way to underlining that point -- as did an even briefer flirtation with the Jadis JA-30s.

Given current audio fashion, there are high-profile speakers that offer more detail, top-end extension and transparency than the Sasha 2. Of course, listening biases are an ever-present consideration and there are those who will find Wilson's soft-dome tweeter and "low-tech" driver materials quaintly old school and short of the resolution they require. To this I would caution that Wilson Audio, and in particular the Sasha 2, can justifiably claim to have "been there and done that." Increasingly -- and as should be clear from the discussion above -- I am coming to believe that it's not *how much* detail a speaker produces that matters, but what it does with it. You may or may not agree, but understand that the Sasha Series 2 is a prime example of this phenomenon.

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A final consideration concerns the bottom end, which goes deep enough and with sufficient weight and authority to satisfy, if not deep enough to truly convince, at least on large-scale orchestral works. That (I'm sure that Wilson would argue) is where the Alexia and Alexx come in -- at a price. What the Sasha Series 2 delivers is a beautiful balance between bandwidth and size, drive requirements and domestic impact. What is less obvious is that it also offers a stepping stone to bigger and better things, not just because Wilson speakers retain a remarkable secondhand or trade-in value, but because, just as the original WATT could be augmented with the Puppy, so the Sasha 2 can gain a WATCH Dog (or two). As anybody who was fortunate enough to hear this set up in the VTL room at the 2015 Rocky Mountain Audio Fest can attest, driven by a pair of VTL S-400 IIs, the results were spectacular -- so spectacular that I'm heading there next, with a full Wilson/VTL system review.

Given the WATT/Puppy's ever-present torch-bearer status within audio history and the audio community, it's perhaps surprising that while the Sasha Series 2 is far from the first WATT/Puppy I've worked or played with, it is the first I've ever reviewed. That is, in no small part, down to the fact that it's the first model I've ever actually *wanted* to review. As its virtues have evolved and its center of musical gravity has shifted, so the WATT/Puppy's musical appeal has moved closer to my tastes, making this Sasha 2 not just the first WATT/Puppy I've reviewed but the first I really do want to live with. A speaker that once reveled in dismantling recordings and the music they contained now reconstructs them, as complete, distinct and musically satisfying entities within your listening room. The Sasha Series 2 may well be the first WATT/Puppy you don't listen to -- or at least you don't notice.

There was a time when owning WATTs and Puppies seemed almost like a high-end rite of passage, a necessary way-point on the path to bigger and better things. Well, not anymore. The Sasha 2 is all grown up. No longer the angular, edgy girl you dated in college, now she's all ready to meet the parents. Polished, elegant and sophisticated, Wilson's WATT/Puppy has blossomed into a keeper. ☺

Analog: VPI Classic 4 with SDS and VPI JMW 12.7 and Tri-Planar Mk VII tonearms; Kuzma Stabi M turntable with 4Point 14 tonearm; AMG Giro with AMG 9W2 tonearm; Acoustical Systems Archon, Allnic Puritas and Puritas Mono, Clearaudio Goldfinger Statement, Fuuga, Kuzma CAR-50, Lyra Etna, Dorian, and Dorian Mono cartridges; DS Audio DS-W1 cartridge with matching equalizer; Stillpoints Ultra LP Isolator record weight; Connoisseur 4.2 PLE and Tom Evans Audio Designs Master Groove phono stages.

Digital: Audio Research Reference CD9 CD player, Wadia S7i and 861 GNSC CD players, CEC TL-3N CD transport, Neodio Origine CD player, Naim UnitiServe music server.

Preamps: Audio Research Reference 5 SE and Reference 10, Connoisseur 4.2 LE, Tom Evans Audio Designs The Vibe, VTL TL7.5 Series III Reference.

Power amps: Berning Quadrature Z monoblocks, Audio Research Reference 150 SE and VTL S-400 Series II Reference stereo amplifiers.

Speakers: Coincident Pure Reference Extreme, Vienna Acoustics Liszt, Ubiq Audio Model One and Focal Sopra No.2.

Cables: Complete looms of Nordost Odin or Valhalla 2, Crystal Cable Dreamline Plus or Fono Acustica Virtuoso from AC socket to speaker terminals. Power distribution was via Quantum QB8s or Crystal Cable Power Strip Diamonds, with a mix of Quantum Qx2 and Qx4 power purifiers and Qv2 AC harmonizers.

Supports: Harmonic Resolution Systems RXR, Hutter Racktime or Quadraspire SVT Bamboo racks. These are used with Nordost SortKone or HRS Nimbus equipment couplers and damping plates throughout. Cables are elevated on HECC Panda Feet.

Acoustic treatment: As well as the broadband absorption placed behind the listening seat, I employ a combination of RPG Skyline and LeadingEdge D Panel and Flat Panel microperforated acoustic devices.

Accessories: Essential accessories include the SmarTractor protractor, a USB microscope and Aesthetix cartridge demagnetizer, a precision spirit level and laser, a really long tape measure and plenty of masking tape. I also make extensive use of the Furutech anti-static and demagnetizing devices and the VPI Typhoon record-cleaning machine. The Dr. Feikert PlatterSpeed app has to be the best ever case of digital aiding analog.