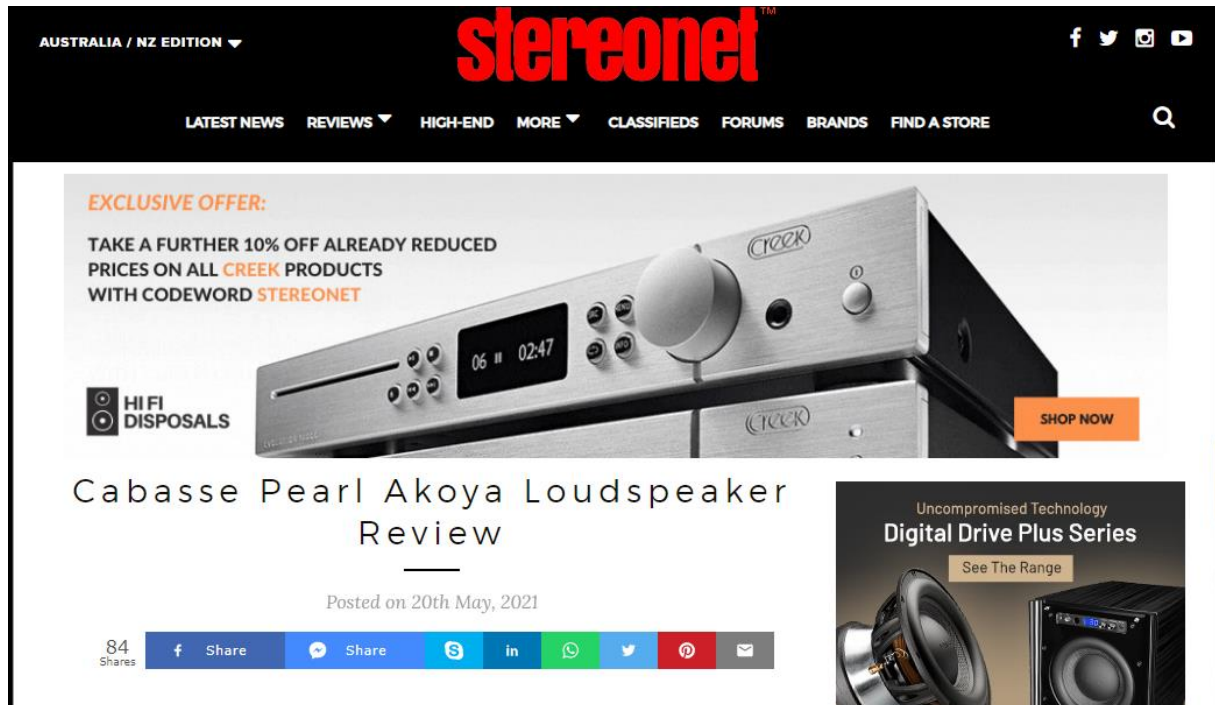


<https://www.stereo.net.au/reviews/cabasse-pearl-akoya-loudspeaker-review>



The image shows the top section of the Stereonet Australia website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the 'stereonet' logo in red, social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, and a dropdown menu for 'AUSTRALIA / NZ EDITION'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: 'LATEST NEWS', 'REVIEWS', 'HIGH-END', 'MORE', 'CLASSIFIEDS', 'FORUMS', 'BRANDS', and 'FIND A STORE'. The main content area features a large image of a silver CREEK digital clock/tuner. To the left of the image, text reads: 'EXCLUSIVE OFFER: TAKE A FURTHER 10% OFF ALREADY REDUCED PRICES ON ALL CREEK PRODUCTS WITH CODEWORD STERONEONET'. Below this is a 'HI FI DISPOSALS' logo. To the right of the image is a 'SHOP NOW' button. Below the image, the article title 'Cabasse Pearl Akoya Loudspeaker Review' is displayed, followed by the date 'Posted on 20th May, 2021'. At the bottom left of the article preview, it says '84 Shares' and provides social sharing links for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and others. To the right of the main article preview is a smaller featured image for 'Digital Drive Plus Series' speakers with the text 'Uncompromised Technology' and 'See The Range'.



Jay Garrett is roundly impressed by this special spherical speaker...

CABASSE

PEARL AKOYA LOUDSPEAKER

AUD **\$3,299** RRP *each* (optional stand \$699 each)



Cabasse has always marched to the beat of its own drum, or should I say violin? Stringed instruments were the company's stock-in-trade when it was based in the Vosges Mountains region on the border of France and Germany, back in 1740. Fast-forward to 1950, and on the other side of France, **Georges Cabasse** founded the company we know today – which is based in Plouzané, on the north-western tip of Brittany.

Cabasse has become synonymous with eye-catching spherical loudspeakers, but it also manufactures more conventional-looking, rectangular designs such as the Bora bookshelf and Murano Alto floorstander, which still possess the brand's secret sauce. Having sampled the delights of the £197,000 [La Sphère](#) at its Harrods introduction, right down the brand's [Eole 4 5.1 system](#), it is evident that this manufacturer is intent on doing things its own way.



Although not as extreme as the La Sphère, the Pearl Akoya is no less striking in another sense. The smaller and less expensive sibling to the \$5,599 [Pearl](#) measures 220mm in diameter, with each sphere tipping the scales at 6kg. The speaker comes protected in a carrying case, making it easier to take one or two with you on holiday. However, don't be misled by its compact nature, as I was informed that the Akoya is capable of matching a live classical orchestra in volume, with 115dB at its disposal. This requires unique cabinets, and the spherical casement here is constructed from Bulk Molding Compound, a fibre composite and moulded resin – here finished with six layers of lacquer.

UP CLOSE

It sports a carbon fibre membrane driver, which Cabasse boasted was the most compact triaxial speaker in the world when launched in October 2019. This is bolstered by a rear-firing 170mm subwoofer with 20mm of linear excursion. The manufacturer claims a frequency response of 30Hz to 27kHz; assisting is Cabasse's patented automatic calibration system (CRCS), said to deliver optimal performance no matter where the speaker is located.



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As a standalone system in its own right, each speaker sports an S/PDIF optical and LAN socket along with a microUSB port and 3.5mm analogue input. Naturally, each speaker needs a power source, with the supplied cable able to be run up inside the optional stands – also provided for the review. Doing the same with the Ethernet cable gives the pair of speakers a clean, wireless aesthetic.



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The input panel also houses a source status LED, reset button and pairing button, which can be used to connect Bluetooth as well as Wi-Fi (WLAN) through your mobile device using the Cabasse StreamCONTROL app. The latter lets you group the speakers together as a stereo pair, selecting which is left or right, as well as adjusting the EQ should you so wish. I found

the automatic calibration using the speakers' onboard microphones impressive, especially using the new [GEN2 DSP sound profile](#). The app connects to your subscribed streaming services, so Qobuz, Tidal, Spotify, Deezer and Napster are all to hand with the Akoya happy to play MP3, AAC, WMA, AIFF, FLAC and ALAC, decoding digital signals up to 32-bit, 768kHz resolution. You can also grab music from your networked library too.



Rounding things off literally is the sleek circular remote control with a chromed outer ring performing duties as a rotary volume dial. On the face of the device are buttons to access a shortcut (the Cabasse logo), play/pause, previous/next, and source selection. Setting up the Pearl Akoya was straightforward enough, with most of my time taken to put the stands together and thread the cabling up their bow-legs.

THE LISTENING

The Cabasse proved remarkably musical, much more so in my opinion than its main rival, the curiously named Devialet Phantom Reactor 600. Granted, the Devialet is around \$1,300 cheaper, but I believe that the Pearl Akoya has a more refined sound, making the Reactor 600 seem a little two-dimensional in comparison.



Don't underestimate the potency of the Pearl Akoya because of its stature – even one by itself is enough to get your neighbour enquiring if you know what time it is. This fast became evident when testing a single speaker with **Erykah Badu's** *Rim Shot*. I openly admit that I selected this track just to hear what the Pearl Akoya's bass would sound like. However, it was Erykah's vocals, the keyboards and indeed the rim shots that underlined how there is more to this speaker than flare-flapping fun. Instead, the Cabasse produced a snappy yet open sound with a pleasantly bright and clean top end.



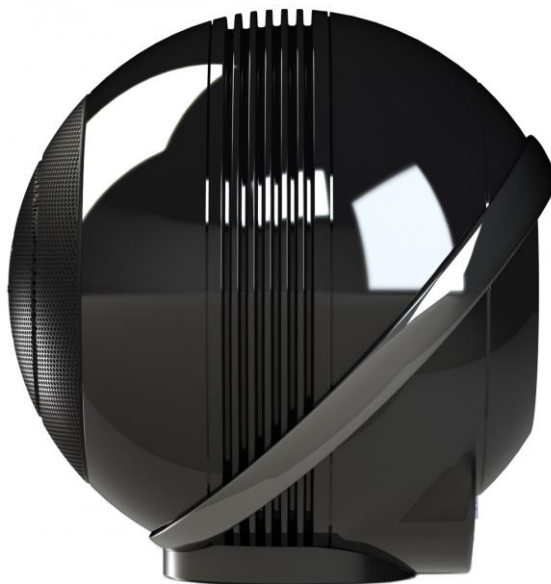
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As a stereo pair, the Pearl Akoya opens up even more, and thanks to its curved baffle, the staging is wide with a generous sweet spot. It was certainly more spacious than I'd expect from a similarly sized square box, active or not. Acoustic guitar was rendered realistically as the opening bars of *I Kicked A Boy* by **The Sundays** skipped across my listening room. As the typically jangly indie electric guitar joined **Harriet Wheeler's** lyrical storytelling, the music hung dreamily in the air with the sparse drumming picked out masterfully by the Akoya's bass driver. Although it added a bit more meat on the bone as it were, it managed not to over-egg the pudding – if you excuse metaphor stew.



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Select a track such as *Reverence* by **Faithless**, and you can sense that the Akoya wants to start the weekend a few days early. Bass was punchy and had stacks of presence, much more than [Piega's Premium Wireless 301](#) was able to muster, but the rest of the frequency range was given almost equal attention. This meant that the likes of **Tori Amos's** *Crucify* retained its spaced-out instrumentation. At the same time, the guitar and piano held on to their acoustic ambience without the metronomic percussive boom overpowering the piece – something that can happen with overly bass-happy drivers.



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While the pull to load up my listening queue with **Leftfield**, **Prodigy**, and **Chemical Brothers** was almost too much to bear, hearing **Yo-Yo Ma**'s rendition of *Bach's Cello Suite No. 3 in C Major, Bourree I and II* through the pretty French globes let me know I had made the right decision. This solo piece requires just as much attention paid to the spaces between the notes as the notes themselves, and the Akoya respected this. Were the low frequencies poking their heads above the parapet again? Well, yes, they were, unless Mr Ma was using a booster pedal for his C string. Nevertheless, I was enchanted.



I was also surprised at just how well the Pearl Akoya worked as a soundbar and sub-replacement. If you want a pair to work in concert in this situation, you will need an optical switch or splitter. Also, remember to select the TV mode as this drops the latency. With the Akoya plugged in, movies sounded massive, and action flicks made the most of the explosive dynamics. However, horrors and thrillers that enjoy soundtracks with that ominous low rumble were equally as fun. That said, the Pearl Akoya isn't just about the low end, as dialogue remained clear even in hectic scenes and lighter incidental music was presented articulately.



Is this spherically shaped speaker the last word in natural and realistic presentation? Not really, and I dare say there is quite a choice out there for passive speakers that could do a closer job for the price. But that's not what this speaker is about. In fact, my partner surprised me by saying, "These are exactly what I need. I can just turn them on and play music, and they sound fab". I cannot argue with that at all.

THE VERDICT



Whether sitting on stands as a pair or placed directly on surfaces in separate rooms, the Cabasse Pearl Akoya is as enchanting to listen to as it is to admire aesthetically. This compact active loudspeaker delivers impressive musicality, as well as letting you turn everything up to eleven when you want to party. There were occasions where I suddenly acted my age and thought the bass needed reigning in a little, but others will think it perfectly balanced. In truth, it depends on your tastes, your room and where you place each speaker.

One thing's for sure – I have yet to hear a more enjoyable standalone active loudspeaker, and that includes the 'other' French brand. Bring two of these little spheres together, and you not only have twice the fun but – as they share the load – the sound improves. Clarity, precision and imaging all get better, to the point where this speaker becomes practically irresistible – especially for those who simply want to play music, rather than having to get a full separates system set-up to play something. So whether you're considering speakers for a multiroom system, a stereo pair, or even just a single do-everything streaming object d'art, you really should check out the Cabasse Pearl Akoya first.