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Press contact: Tim Bower

020 8654 8945

07854 966 071

tim@hashstar.co.uk

www.wharfedale.co.uk

+44 (0)1480 447700



Above Wharfedale Aston speakers in walnut wood veneer

Distinguished designer's new 'signature' speaker

Wharfedale's latest loudspeaker – the Aston – is a limited-edition, UK-made Peter Comeau 'signature' model, drawing on more than 40 years of award-winning acoustic design

Cambridgeshire, England – Wharfedale's rich history of loudspeaker innovation stretches back to 1932, when founder Gilbert Briggs launched his first commercial design. For the last 16 years, the company's acoustic design has been managed by Peter Comeau, one of Britain's best-known loudspeaker designers whose work since the late 1970s has won many awards for famous brands including Mission and QUAD, as well as Wharfedale.

Four years ago, Comeau began a new project for Wharfedale; a labour of love not to be rushed. The company's Heritage Series – famous models from Wharfedale's past rebirthed using the latest technologies and materials – had already proved a tremendous success, with modern iterations of the Linton and Denton amply illustrating the appeal of classically styled British loudspeaker design to legions of music lovers around the world.

Named 'Aston', this new project was set to run concurrently with the development of other new models. It would be a new addition to the Heritage Series, exemplifying classic British speaker design,

yet unlike other Heritage models it would not be a re-engineered Wharfedale classic but an all-new design with 'retro' appeal.

The Aston would be a Peter Comeau 'signature' speaker, drawing on his 40-plus years of acoustic design experience. It would be a standmount model, like many of Comeau's most lauded creations, delivering an absorbing, full-scale sound that belies the cabinet's compact dimensions. As well as being designed and engineered in the UK, it would be manufactured here too. And it would be limited edition, made not for the masses but for the passionate, knowledgeable few.

Comeau was able to take his time with the Aston, free from the commercial deadlines of core product lines. A prototype pair was shown at the High End audio show in Munich in the spring of 2022 but only now, almost three years later, are Comeau and Wharfedale ready to release Aston into the wild – in a strictly limited quantity of 500 pairs.

(A historical note: while the Aston is a new design, its name has appeared in Wharfedale's catalogue before. Launched in 1970, the previous Aston was designed to be wall-mounted; the new Aston shares its name, compact nature and two-way configuration, but the similarities end there.)



Left The mid/bass driver, complete with gold-coloured phase plug, and Dovedale-inspired treble unit were specially developed for the Aston

Two-way design, first-class performance

While several of Wharfedale's Heritage Series models are three-way designs – namely the Linton, Super Linton, Super Denton and Dovedale – the Aston is a classic two-way ported speaker. The treble and mid/bass drivers are both new units, designed specifically for the Aston and made in-house to ensure optimum performance and consistency from unit to unit.

The mid/bass driver features a rigid die-cast chassis and 15cm carbon fibre cone, tuned with the cabinet and twin rear-firing reflex ports to deliver cleanly extended bass to well below 50Hz in-room – impressive for a speaker of the Aston's compact size. A profiled, gold-coloured phase plug is positioned in the diaphragm's centre, contributing to the speaker's smooth, natural and expressive performance in the crucial mid and upper-mid frequency range.

The new treble unit inherits much of its design from the one used in the £5,000-per-pair Dovedale speaker, combining a ceramic magnet motor system with a 25mm fabric dome and a damped rear chamber to absorb the output from the back of the diaphragm. This reduces the resonant frequency of

the treble unit to well below the crossover region, allowing full treble detail and harmonics to be revealed without affecting the smoothness of the high-frequency performance.

A perfect blend

The electrical crossover between the drive units is of vital importance in a loudspeaker, as it not only divides the frequencies between bass/midrange and treble but also blends the outputs of the drivers into a seamless musical presentation. The Aston's crossover components, including air-core inductor coils and high-specification polypropylene capacitors, have been chosen for their revealing and transparent character, meshing the two drivers together seamlessly.

The crossover slopes and the shape of the Aston's power response have been refined by extensive listening tests with a wide variety of music to ensure the speaker is simply a conduit between the performers and the listener. As a result, this sophisticated standmount speaker reveals an engaging and transparent quality of reproduction suited to all styles of music.



Left Dressed from head to toe in satin-lacquered wood veneer, the Aston's 'made in the UK' status is confirmed by a badge around the back

Boxing clever

Measuring 34x20x25.5cm (HxWxD), the Aston could be described as a classically sized British 'bookshelf' speaker. The cabinet's construction uses a combination of woods to scatter panel resonances rather than having a single, audibly obvious resonant frequency. An inner layer of high-density particle board is bonded to an outer layer of MDF by an inter-layer of special glue with resonance-damping properties.

Specially chosen figured-grain, real-wood veneers are applied to all surfaces, hand-polished and lacquered to a satin finish. Every pair of Aston speakers is matched with extreme care, the standard of finish and attention to detail ensuring their furniture-quality status.

Critical analysis of the performance of each cabinet surface has resulted in the application of precisely shaped and positioned internal bracing, combined with specially sourced damping materials. This ensures that cabinet resonances are controlled to well below the level of the music signal, allowing the listener to hear through to the recording without colouration clouding their listening enjoyment.

A smart, vintage-style grille attaches magnetically to the Aston's recessed baffle and incorporates internal shaping to smooth the power output of the drivers and avoid reflections from the edges of the

cabinet. For this reason, the Aston is designed to be listened to with the grilles on – this is not always the case with modern speakers but is in keeping with the Aston’s ‘heritage’ design style.

Stand and deliver

Wharfedale has designed a pair of floor stands to match the Aston, with an open frame made from British steel and furniture-grade glass inserts at the top and bottom. All but one of the uprights are filled with damping material – the other allows for cable management – with a choice of discreet black or large stainless-steel spikes for the base. The stand ensures each speaker is positioned at the correct height, as well as reducing bass/floor interactions and providing stable and torsionally rigid support. The package is completed by a set of stainless-steel spike seats and a pair of handling gloves.



Left Conveniently compact, classically styled and handsomely finished, the Aston fills a room with sound without taking over the space

Made in the UK

Like many British audio brands, manufacturing of Wharfedale speakers moved to East Asia towards the end of the 20th Century – essential to maintain retail prices at the level the market demanded – while design functions such as R&D and industrial design remained in the UK.

In 2022, Wharfedale’s parent company IAG unveiled a new ‘Made in the UK’ initiative to enable the manufacturing of specific ‘prestige’ products to be brought back to Britain. Wharfedale’s HQ in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, has been expanded to incorporate key manufacturing, assembly and finishing processes for select models in addition to the world-class R&D function already located there. A 9,000ft² production facility has been added to the existing building, including a new anechoic chamber, making a total of 25,000ft² of office, lab and manufacturing space.

The Aston joins the Dovedale, Wharfedale’s largest Heritage model, in being made in this Huntingdon facility, alongside specially selected speakers from Wharfedale’s sister-brands Mission and Castle – a true celebration of British loudspeaker design and manufacturing.

Peter’s signature dish

Speaking about the development of his ‘signature’ Aston speaker, Peter Comeau – Wharfedale’s Director of Acoustic Design – said:

“When I designed my first commercial pair of hi-fi speakers in the late 1970s, my goal was to make a compact speaker that delivered a wide bandwidth sound – something I felt didn’t satisfactorily exist at the time. In the decades since, I’ve designed speakers of various types and sizes to suit the needs of different customers but, whilst fashions change, small speakers delivering a big performance have remained a cornerstone of every range.

“So, when I was offered the opportunity to create a ‘signature’ speaker for Wharfedale’s Heritage Series it was an easy choice to return to this theme, which has been constant in my career since the start.

“By harnessing the latest developments in cabinet, driver and crossover design from key Heritage Series models, then adapting and enhancing them to suit a two-way speaker with a specifically sized compact cabinet, I’ve created a ‘signature’ speaker that entirely fulfills the brief I set myself for my first commercial design all those decades ago: a compact speaker with a wide-bandwidth sound.

“When you hear the Aston, I hope you’ll wonder how we achieved such a full-scale sound from speakers of such diminutive size – natural, even, detailed and engaging across the full frequency spectrum. The answer is simple: acoustic engineering of the highest order.”

Designed, engineered and made in Britain, the conveniently compact and classically styled Wharfedale Aston is available from late February in a choice of walnut, mahogany and black oak wood veneers. The Aston’s RRP is £1,999 per pair with the matching stand, or £1,699 without. The stand is also available separately at £499 per pair. Production of the Aston is limited to 500 pairs.

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 10:00 (GMT) ON FRIDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2025.



SPECIFICATIONS	WHARFEDALE ASTON
Speaker type	Two-way standmount
Enclosure type	Bass reflex (2x rear ports)
Treble driver	25mm fabric dome
Mid/bass driver	150mm carbon fibre cone
Sensitivity (2.83V @ 1m)	86dB
Nominal impedance	4Ω (minimum 3.9Ω)
Recommended amp power	25-100W
Frequency response (+/-3dB)	55Hz-20kHz
Bass extension (-6dB)	44Hz
Speaker dimensions (HxWxD)	340x200x255mm
Stand dimensions (HxWxD)	560x265x255mm



British loudspeakers have always enjoyed an excellent reputation around the world, and Wharfedale is perhaps the most famous brand of all. Stretching back to 1932, when Wharfedale's founder Gilbert Briggs built his first speaker in the cellar of his Yorkshire home, Wharfedale has been responsible for some of the most important loudspeakers ever produced, introducing many techniques and technologies that became commonplace such as the two-way loudspeaker (invented in 1945) and the use of ceramic magnets (pioneered in 1962). Now in its 94th year, Wharfedale continues its quest to deliver excellent sound quality and value-for-money with a wide range of class-leading speakers, from the latest iteration of the famous Diamond line – the quintessential entry point to high-fidelity sound – to the upmarket EVO4, Aura and Elysian ranges, and the reborn classics of the Heritage Series.

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For more information, please contact Tim Bown
T: 020 8654 8945 M: 07854 966071 E: tim@hashstar.co.uk
