



I recently spent some time at the HiFi Lounge, being privileged to audition the new dCS Varese 5 box music system (European launch). In the adjoining listening room were the new Wilson Audio WATT Puppy 50th Anniversary edition (WATT Puppy 9), but time constraints and of course the dCS launch prevented a listen. However, I was fortunate to revisit HFL to have an exclusive audition, just before Christmas.



Wilson Audio are known to almost every audiophile as having an amazing and iconic presence. Ever since the introduction of the Watt, this specialist designer and manufacturer of high-end loudspeakers has been a cornerstone of the high-end audiophile fraternity.

The construction and attention to detail afforded to the speakers is second to none. I won't go into detail here as much of the philosophy behind the design and the many attributes associated with construction, specification and set up guide can be found on the Wilson Audio website [Wilson Audio - The WATT/Puppy](https://www.wilsonaudio.com/en-us/products/watt-puppy). Suffice to say the speakers are totally amazing in execution, flawless in finish and attention to the smallest of details.

Partnered on the day by the Musical Fidelity 800.2 integrated amplifier and a dCS Bartok streaming DAC (all connected via various Atlas cables), I was able to listen to the system streaming hi-res tracks via Tidal or Qobuz for a few hours.

HFL had set up the system so that a listener was about 2.5 metres centrally from the line between them. On the floor, sat the 800.2 on an isolation podium. The Bartok was located on a rack behind. The speakers had been run in for some time and had been afforded some toe in, with the WATT module tilted to realise the optimum set up for the room.

When reviewing equipment there are a number of tracks that I use. I spent a few minutes acclimatising myself to the Bartok operating platform on an Apple iPad and the 800.2 remote and set some realistic listening levels and began this review.

It was soon apparent that these speakers belied their substantial size and were able to completely “disappear” creating a huge wide and deep soundstage, slightly in front of the speakers.

For example, the live recording by Jessica Williams of “Heather” from the album *Live at Yoshi's Volume 1* (FLAC 16/44.1 Qobuz) is a tactile and emotional performance highlighting not only her supreme skill as a pianist, but also the subtlety and equally heartfelt performance of her accompanying double bass player and drummer. It was as though I was there in the audience, absorbing the music and the emotion on offer. The music became as one, yet the musicians were so easily followed individually if I chose.

Loreena McKennit’s “The Lady of Shallot” from the album *The Mask and The Mirror* (FLAC 24/96 Qobuz). I used the track to highlight the dynamic performance of the speakers. McKennit’s voice can be both soft and powerful. Her voice is double and multi tracked throughout this rendition of the famous poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson. I was able to delve deeply into the softness of each gentle verse and enjoy the most thrilling power of her voice in chorus, set before me with effortless control.

After McKennit, I thought perhaps some metal, this genre can be both exciting and peaceful and is best listened to at high volume levels. I chose Rammstein’s “Mein Hertz Brennt” from the album *Mutter* (FLAC-16/44.1 Qobuz) and felt the goosebumps forming, such was the sheer power of the performance being laid out before me. These speakers can kick some serious butt that is for sure, producing an atmospheric performance with ease never once sounding strained. Again, the transition from soft to loud was spectacular.

Next up was a reworking of “Mother Of Pearl” by Bryan Ferry from his recently re-released album *Mamouna* (FLAC- 4/44.1 Qobuz). Ferry drives the rhythm along in a way that was hard to resist. It was clear that the speakers can be called rhythm kings such was the mesmeric rhythm that kept my foot tapping throughout. He is also a master of multi tracking, his numerous “voices” laid out clearly before me, the mix easily discerned within the soundstage shared equally with the backing singers.

These following three tracks were also auditioned each one confirming the speaker’s attributes as described above:

- Into White by Cat Stevens from *Tea For The Tillerman* (FLAC 24/192 Qobuz)
- The Devils Infantry by Tom Morello from *The Catastrophists* EP (FLAC 16/44.1 Qobuz)
- Trenchtown Rock by Bob Marley and The Wailers from *Live at The Roxy* (FLAC 16/44.1 Qobuz)

The new WATT Puppy 50th Anniversary edition exceeded my expectations, which were high. The ability to move from soft to loud from delicacy to power was simply breathtaking. Music flowed effortlessly, the speakers creating space and excitement at all times.

This listening experience will remain with me. Once again, I thank Paul and Billy for the opportunity to listen “in camera” as it were, given free reign with my choice of music. I am indeed privileged to write this review. These speakers are very special and as Paul Clark aptly said Wilson Audio have nailed it with this edition.

Lawrie Newton

Auditioned December 11th, 2024

Review written December 24th, 2024

Some more photos taken on December 11th at HFL. The photos do not convey the elegance and finish in Crimson Satin.

