

# Wilson Audio Sophia 2

MARTIN COLLOMS ASSESSES WILSON'S MOST COST-EFFECTIVE AND UK-FRIENDLY FLOORSTANDER

MARTIN COLLOMS

Evolution is a good word to describe the decades of progress made by Wilson Audio's designer and founder Dave Wilson. While there have been small revolutions in the choice of drive units, enclosure materials and build, the continuity of model by model performance improvements over the years is down to progressive evolutionary development.

This requires both vision and ambition, where the concept of high performance is both well understood but also remains an aspirational goal that is tantalisingly out of reach. The more you learn, the closer you can get, but still more is always possible.

While the two-box *WATT/Puppy* formula, currently exemplified by the subtle and spacious sounding Series 8 (*CRITIC 3*), represents the best bang for the bulk, less expensive single box 'versions' of this relatively compact and costly floorstanding loudspeaker have long been available, and the present contender, the *Sophia 2* reviewed here, currently costs roughly half the price of the two-box equivalent.

In fact the first of these, the chunky looking Art Deco style *WITT*, actually supplanted the *WATT/Puppy 3.1* in my own system. Next came a *WITT 2*, and then in 2001 its sleek looking *Sophia* replacement arrived, significantly more expensive but built to a much higher standard in a more compact and home friendly package with more universal durability. (Tropical climates can play havoc with wood fibre based cabinets and lacquer finishes.)

I reviewed the original *Sophia* for *Hi-Fi News* in 2003. Now it's time for the £12,000/pair *Sophia 2*, which has already been in production for a year or so. There's no need to rush with Wilson designs. The speakers endure for many years, and the approach has less to do with flavour of the month and more to do with enduring values of build and performance.

*Sophia* might be fairly compact and easy on the eye, but at 73kg it's no lightweight, so unpacking and installation is a two man operation. The price includes custom installation in your home by a Wilson-trained operative and this should not be taken lightly: the speakers are generally so accurately pair matched that placement may be adjusted to centimeter precision, with audible gains in timbre, clarity and image focus. The operation can be worth up to 40 per cent – some say more – of the ultimate installed performance.

This is a classic three-way design, with a 250mm (10inch) reflex-loaded cone bass, a 170mm (7inch) cone midrange and a 25mm (1inch) inverted titanium dome tweeter. The bass driver has a rigid flared hardened

