



INDUSTRY FEATURES

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Munich High End 2012

Göbel of Germany caught our attention not only by their strategically placed advert but also shop-like window dressing. In the ad the term bending wave in combination with a photo of a flat panel atop what seemed dynamic drivers was one personal lure. The second was how the ad depicted what seemed like a room divider behind a static display of the loudspeakers – as though there was something else going on in the other part of the room. And there was. But first some background. A few years ago we met Shelly Katz, then owner of Podium Sound. He had developed a loudspeaker based on the bending-wave principle. We reviewed that [here](#). Interesting was how it married bending-wave panel transducers with conventional dynamic loudspeakers, a combination Shelly dubbed Layered Sound. Sadly this concept did not mature due to, if we understood correctly, an issue between Shelly and his patent attorney*. However this same Layered Sound concept was our second trigger to enter the Göbel room.



Behind their divider hid a clean well-lit listening area that felt comfortable from the start. The German company's largest and latest speaker model teamed up with a PS Audio Power Plant, Perfect Wave Transport and matching Perfect Wave DAC. Amplification was via Audio Flight's Strumento No.4 power amp. In the Göbel Epoque Reference we recognized some familiar ideas from our earlier Layered Sound encounters. The foundation here is the patented Göbel bending-wave driver in its latest iteration. Where the first implementation was basically a balsa wood panel excited by two asymmetrically placed motors, the current version sports an elaborate sandwich of wood and carbon fiber. Due to its construction with exciters at the back, the frequency response isn't equal front and back. The panel is not omni-directional for its full 150 – 29.500Hz bandwidth. The back is limited to 150Hz – 4kHz, still within the majority range of instrumental fundamentals. In total the 201cm tall 190 kilo Reference houses no less than 12 x 18cm cones but only 4 of them are active. The other 8 are passive. In the photos you can only see the fronts so imagine the backs as duplicates.

The static display in the room showed the smaller Epoque Fine equipped with only 6 drivers plus the Göbel signature flat panel. Listening to the huge loudspeakers we had to make the same mental adjustment as we had whilst coming to terms with the Podium Sound bending-wave speaker. This type of sound is more diffuse than from a purely dynamic driver. This quality enhances the spatial cues and renders most recordings more natural. Göbel is decidedly a brand that needs more exposure. They also make smaller models outside their Epoque series. In Munich their room was inviting and with the subtleness of white acoustic treatments all around blending fully into the walls, the signature black accents felt very pampering. Personal attention was professional and friendly. This room was a real pleasure to visit and enjoy.

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