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Subject: Golden Ear award for Børresen 05 Loudspeaker
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\$120,000

This svelte, handsome, seven-driver, five-foot-tall, two-and-a-halfway floorstander from justly celebrated Danish loudspeaker designer Michael Børresen sounds, surprisingly, very little like the dark, powerful, immensely detailed Raidho speakers that made Børresen's reputation. Though it uses the same cone/ribbon driver complements as his Raidhos did (in the O5's case, two cone mid/woofs, three cone woofers, and a single ribbon tweeter in a quasi-D'Appolito array) and those drivers are housed in a similar, grilleless, narrow-front/tapered-back, multi-vented enclosure, the characteristic "bottom up" tonal palette of Børresen's Raidhos has dramatically changed. Indeed, minus a slight persistent bit of excess midbass energy around 70-90Hz, the O5 comes as close to dead-center neutral in timbral balance as any cones-in-a-box loudspeaker I've reviewed. And thanks to the engineering of its svelte cabinet, it disappears as a sound source as completely as any cone speaker I've heard. A couple of things haven't changed in Børresen's new flagships. First, resolution is still astonishing - at least as high as, if not higher than, that of the standard-setting Raidhos - without (as was also the case with his Raidhos) any hint of the analytical. And dynamics remain edgelessly explosive, top to bottom. When you combine the O5's newfound neutrality with its extraordinary reproduction of fine detail and unfettered energy, you get a speaker capable of forehead-slapping realism on just about every kind of music, at just about every frequency and dynamic level. (Forthcoming)

THE ABSOLUTE SOUND'S 2020 GOLDEN EAR AWARDS

The Absolute Sounds Golden Ear Awards is the annual feature in which our staff and freelance writers choose those components that stand out from the competition. Some of these components are Longstanding references that have withstood the test of time. Others are newfound favorites destined to become classics. In either case, the products selected for a Golden Ear Award are special, indeed. Unlike our Editors' Choice Awards (a compendium of every product we recommend, chosen by consensus of the senior editorial staff), Golden Ear Awards allow each writer to express his or her individual views on which components are truly great-and why. The diversity of products selected here reflects not just the industry at Large, but also each writer's quest for the absolute sound. -Robert Harley