



Isobarbarism

My text for today is taken from the seventh issue of the seventh volume of *Hi-Fi Answers*, beginning at the seventy-fifth page. Ivor Tiefenbrun of Linn Products is discovered at the Festival du Son in Paris.

'I tell you a story that if I brought my mother and Brigitte Bardot into this room and I showed them both to ten famous audio critics, and I say "Tell me, what do you think!" They will say "First we have to take them home for three months to compare them both with our reference mother." And after three months they will tell me that they are both the same. They both have two arms, they both have two eyes and they both have two legs. But maybe my mother is the better because she's a little heavier. And I will, of course, agree. But this analogy sounds ridiculous. I assure you it's true. If you're going to choose a girl, you do it yourself and you do it very quickly. You know it right away. And it's the same with hi-fi and music.'

Now, Ivor Tiefenbrun's an entertaining speaker and the manufacturer of some interesting products, but his experience of women strikes me as somewhat superficial, and, after my recent experiences with his Isobarik loudspeakers, it wouldn't be unjust of me to say that they were overpriced rubbish.

I'm not going to say that, however, because it isn't true.

The main trouble with anything from Linn is that the reputation of the firm and the personality of its boss always ensures that it's very difficult to maintain any objectivity about the product. If you like the sound you hear, you're jumping on a bandwagon, and if you don't, you'll find that there are any number of people who will say you're knocking it just to be different. I find myself in the position of being very impressed by certain aspects of the performance, but seriously worried by others.



My experience in Isobariks has been limited to listening at friends' homes, for limited periods of time. This isn't very satisfactory in my opinion, although presumably Ivor Tiefenbrun would not agree.

Essentially, my impression is that their bass imaging is better than anything else I have heard, although I'm not sure about the extension. High frequencies are well defined, and the speaker's potential for creating a deep sound stage with total separation of instruments is truly exceptional.

On the other hand, it seems a bit dull in the midrange, tends to lack the ability to image centrally, and eleven hundred pounds seems a bit much... and... and... and...

Confusion is compounded by the fact that the world is full of people telling me that you have to live with them for some time to appreciate their virtues.

Or do they really mean that I have to come to terms with their shortcomings?

Who knows? I'm unlikely to get the

chance to get to know these speakers well, and such experience as I have simply leads to confusion – especially since my wife, who is more interested in music than in hi-fi, prefers Mordaunt-Shorts, which are much less ambitious designs.

I'm afraid that the way to review a piece of equipment is to take it home and listen to it for a very long time. It seems unlikely that PHF will ever publish a formal review of Linn Isobariks, since the only way for us to obtain a pair would be to buy them – and we can't afford it.

I agree that the comparison between Mrs Tiefenbrun and Brigitte Bardot is probably fairly easy to make – although I'd reserve my final judgement until I got to know both ladies. My argument, however, is that we are in fact comparing Brigitte Bardot with Raquel Welch, and that this is far more difficult. The Isobarik is clearly a magnificent achievement, but it will take time to find out exactly how magnificent.

CW