

The Grande Utopia Beryllium was developed with only one goal: To be the best speaker in the universe.

Mission Accomplished?

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By Knut Isberner

Damn, how I love heavyweight high-end! . . . At the moment, I'm really spoilt – with great products from Accuphase and Wilson Audio. And not to forget:

The Grande Utopia Beryllium from Focal.JMLab with a back-breaking 210 kg (462 lbs) weight – a real rock in the realm of super speakers.

“No other speaker however, has filled me with so much enthusiasm as the Grande Utopia Beryllium.”

I already had the pleasure of listening to a prototype of this giant at press launch in France – an unforgettable experience that stayed in my memory . . . (Was this the peak in dynamic loudspeaker design?) . . . One thing was certain: the Grande played in such a monumental way (I had an optimum listening position in the listening room) as I've never experienced before. There were two phone booth sized speakers in the room, but the music didn't seem to have anything to do with them.

It is with these monoliths that Jacques Mahul wants to redefine the pinnacle of loudspeaker building.

To do so, the clever Frenchman did not only trust his own skills. Mahul gathered a trio of his best engineers

to be responsible for the Grande Utopia Beryllium. Teamwork definitely makes sense, since it is not easy to beat the few serious contenders in the king-class of speakers. And what was the result, with four clever heads working together without any financial restrictions? A loudspeaker the size of a telephone booth. That doesn't surprise me – on the contrary. If you want a speaker without any compromises, you need size. And any compromises were out of the question.

Let me explain the rules of a Utopia: no matter how many drive units are responsible for sound transmission – each has its own enclosure. The distribution of sounds throughout the frequency range is handled by a crossover that would bring tears of happiness to any High-End's eyes: the finest parts that are available in the world.

Changes compared to the older Grande Utopia: 24 kg (53 lbs) heavier . . . completely new drivers – the Beryllium moniker indicates a substantial change: the membrane of the tweeter is made of pure Beryllium and the magnet is samarium cobalt with a neodymium ring (Focal's Focus Ring™).



There's also news in the midrange. Both 17 cm drivers with their patented cone W™ membrane were given an unusual multi-magnet engine. Not a single magnet, but six small, ring-shaped systems . . . called Power Flower™. They also use a similar system for the bass units . . .



Enough of the technical features and construction details...

First, I listened to Tanita Tikaram. Wow, I've never experienced her voice in a more emotional, fascinating way . . . acoustical details stood three-dimensional in the room . . . Has any loudspeaker ever resolved the bass in such an exacting manner? It was like huge waves going through my room, not arbitrarily but in a clear calculated manner. The

Grande Utopia Beryllium managed to create an unbelievably emotional tension in me.

Have I noticed any faults? I'm always criticizing something! Nothing. Niente.

Whatever I listened to, I couldn't find a single fault.

How would the Grande Utopia Beryllium compare to the tried and tested (reliable) Dynaudio Evidence Master? No other speaker to date has been able to defy the Evidence – until today. The Grande Utopia Beryllium didn't color the sound, but mastered the full spectrum better than any other system I know. This is huge, considering that especially big boxes have difficulty being neutral.

The way the Grande Utopia Beryllium represented the acoustic room/space was amazing . . . It showed the smallest acoustical details while always conveying the feeling of being completely effortless. And here the Focal surpassed the Dynaudio: it differentiated depth better and gave the music more three-dimensional vividness . . . And the Grande Utopia Beryllium never lost control – it always remained stable . . . a dream come true. The big Focal doesn't make mistakes, it reminded me of a granite rock and yet it seemed so soft

and light like a feather . . . I have never experienced the representation of melody and rhythm in such an emotional and realistic way. The big Focal is a worthy successor of the evidence master.

Conclusions

In the case of the Grande Utopia Beryllium, the size is only a means to an acoustical end. In the twenty years of my hi-fi life, I have listened to and tested many speakers in the "ultra expensive" category. No other speaker however, has filled me with so much enthusiasm as the Grande Utopia Beryllium. It outshines all of the world-class speakers. Perfect music pleasure is not a utopian dream anymore. To me, the biggest Focal is simply the best speaker in the world – and it is the new reference in our AUDIO auditorium.

Sound Evaluation	
Neutrality:	100
Precision:	110
Airiness:	105
Vividness:	105
Bass Foundation:	100
Overall:	104
Audiogramm	
Sound:	Outstanding
Build Quality:	Outstanding
Reference Class:	5 Stars