

# Living Voice Avatar OBX-RW3

## A gift from the gods, revised

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by Scot Hull

It was entirely unclear how much better the Avatar OBX-RW loudspeakers could be. When speakers are as good as this, "improvements" do not come easily, or without peril. And no, I don't say any of this lightly -- I have not only long been a fan of the [Living Voice](#) brand, I've been an *enormous* fan of this particular speaker for almost an entire decade.

Dialing the way-back machine to the beginning doesn't really get me that far in absolute terms, but in terms of Part-Time Audiophile, 8 years gets me close to the very beginning. And that [very-first Capital Audiofest](#), my very first audio show, back in 2010 was where I fell in love with the Avatar line. At that time, I lamented a rather extensive purchase I'd made, noting how "if I'd heard this before ... I'd have gotten it". And after some plotting and much scheming, I finally did.

It really is a shame that the Living Voice "affordable line" isn't more well-known, Their entire lineup is filled with easy-to-drive and easy-to-listen to loudspeakers that beg to be used. I've called the midrange "wet", as in, "crawl into your lap and slobber on your neck", and I'll stick by that rather ... sticky ... image -- because the experience I get from listening to them (driven well) is entirely visceral. The treble is extended and not etched or "hot", but has all the air I've ever wanted. If I was nitpicking, the world-class sound comes up against real-world physics in the bass extension, and while they do produce down below a very healthy 40Hz, they will not win any of Stereophile's full-range speaker awards. But these are the trade-offs. What customers get is a legendary-class with a mid-range that is perhaps the best that I've heard out of a dynamic speaker, all in a package that is relatively traditional room friendly size and shape. If those customers also want "flat-to-20Hz", then this is not the speaker for them.

The new OBX-RW3 doesn't change the physics, but it does change just about everything else. The drive units are now custom. The cabinets are entirely new. As are the crossovers. In fact, the only thing that *is* the same is the price -- depending on options, prices start at \$4100 and wander all the way up to just shy of \$12k. My Santos Rosewood pair of outboard crossover "references" are \$11,500/pair. Ebony or a Burr Oak finishes will set you back a bit more.

The sound of the new OBX-RW3 is very similar to the OBX-RW, which is a great thing -- as I mentioned, I love that old pair of speakers. Loved them enough to [give them an award](#) and use them as my reference pair for the last handful of years. But where the new ones gain on the old

ones is in detail and refinement -- quite simply, the new design is more mature sounding. Fuller. Deeper. Richer. Same extension. Same in-your-lap immersiveness. But more of-a-piece, if you will. More expressive. Almost as if they're more sensitive.

Harkening back to [my original impression of the last version](#), I am once again struck by how freakishly, unexpectedly, absolutely wonderful-sounding these speakers are. It's disconcerting. Disarming. Just looking at them, the speakers give no otherworldly justification for why they sound so damn good. Human voices are sublime. Jazz can seat me in a smoky bar, with a whiskey, a cigar, a partner of ill repute and a plan for mayhem. And yes, for the record, I listen to classical and classic rock. And yes, still all that and a bag of chips with these speakers. And did I mention that they are (still) absolutely stunning in the near- to mid-field? Remember that "in-your-lap" comment? Yeah. No, really, I dare you. Add your favorite 300b tube amp ([I may have made a suggestion](#) or two there) and that's it. You. Are. Done.

Not to be redundant, but if I'd had these available to me 10 years ago, I would never have had to write about that search for better sound. Funny how things turn out. But what I can say is, I am sure glad to own a pair of these new OBX-RW3 speakers. I love them. My one recommendation? Don't skimp on the finish. It really "makes" the look work, and the Rosewood Santos is a truly lux skin.

Chances are, I will never be able to afford a Vox Palladian, much less, the Vox Olympian, the two Living Voice ultra-fi loudspeaker systems that look as amazing as they sound, And, for the record, I am dismayed by that admission. But while the Avatars are certainly not the same, or even close to, those lofty divinities resting on high, these knights of the Avatar line nevertheless bring me an extraordinary level of lotus-flower bliss as I wrestle with my merely mortal budgets and my hopeful aspirations.

Quoting the local distributor: "With overall sensitivity of 93dB/W, a uniform average 6 Ohm load and bandwidth below 40Hz they might not be breaking any laws of physics but they are seriously bending them. Owners of 10W+ tube amps please form an orderly queue ...."

The new OBX-RW3 retain their pride of place in my personal pantheon of audio glory, and like the sneakiest of tricksters, continue to slay even the most ardent of contenders. I have no doubt that these Avatars have been sent by audio gods, and their message is rhythm, tone and timbre everlasting.

Let the people rejoice.