

CANTON'S K QUESTION

The „Reference 9.2“ was a superb and affordable compact speaker in the top class. The 9K is supposed to be even better.

The smallest model in the current Reference K portfolio presented at last year's High-End, though 40cm tall, is still a compact speaker, designed to be positioned at ear height on stands. Compared with the previous Reference 9.2, the volume has been "opened up" a bit more, in order to deliver bass reproduction that doesn't lag behind that of small to medium floorstanding speakers.

The 25 mm dome tweeter, with its ceramic/aluminum-oxide diaphragm, is derived from the "9.2", but has been further developed with the waveguide

◀ The matching LS 850.2 stands came to us already filled with sand. Canton's curvaceous, gloss-lacquered enclosures are definitely not cheap to produce.

already known from the "Jubilee", to enhance its dispersion characteristics. Also for the K series all the larger drivers benefit from the improved speed, robustness, and lack of coloration delivered by the company's "ceramic-tungsten" membranes and "Wave" surround.

In the novel cone design, up to 20% of the aluminum is transformed into a ceramic material, into which tungsten particles are introduced to give optimum rigidity-to-weight and improved self-damping properties. Meanwhile the "Wave" surround allows maximum excursion while maintaining a piston-like action.

The extreme stiffness of the 180 mm driver used in the 9K is supposed to come extremely close to the ideal of warp resistant, piston-like movement even at abnormal volumes. The natural resonances of all drivers thus lie clearly outside of the transmission spectrum, the tweeter's grid and special acoustic lens ensuring that the resonance peak above the audible range is damped. The shiny, twelve-coat piano finish of the strikingly heavy bass reflex housing is available in gloss white, black, and cherry, with the grilles attached to the baffle magnetically.

All grown up

Like all K-models, the new 9-series has grown up tremendously in terms of effective internal volume, and this is reflected in lab measurements which attest to this still-compact speaker's lower cutoff frequency of 31Hz – usually the domain of large floorstanding models. Except for the very lowest registers of a church organ, this compact flagship from Weilrod now covers the entire instrumental spectrum – exactly what development chef Frank Göbl strove for in his aspiration to deliver spectacular, vivacious and "complete" speakers, stable even at high levels.



Even though its predecessor was a fantastic speaker, which could already replace a small floorstanding design, the 9 K goes a step further thanks to its “larger chest” and the new driver. That’s not just by luck – there’s no such thing as coincidence at Canton. Doesn’t happen. Instead, the engineers spend many hours with simulation software, measurements, and material research, and in addition to resonance spectra, omni-directional diagrams, and laser interferometry, we have been shown extremely precise illustrations of the pressure distribution in the speaker housing based on which the material thickness and struts in the cabinets are designed.

In fact, only the mounting of the drivers is subject to countless man-hours and sound tests in Weirido, helped by the fact that Canton doesn’t use standard drive-units but develops its own, its best designs then successively trickled down to other models over time, similar to the way the car industry operates when it comes to core technologies.

The corresponding LS 850.2 speaker stand, to which the 9 K can be firmly bolted, has also been designed to accommodate the clearly larger housing.

Breath-taking pressure

Pressing “play” almost feels like unleashing the Kraken, an effect made doubly dramatic by preconceptions that a speaker

so compact shouldn’t be able to project as much physical presence as. The fierce, attacking, driving bass in the title piece of Chuck Mangione’s “Children Of Sanchez” will leave you sitting on your chair with your mouth open – after all, small monitors can usually only deliver rather tired and irritating sounds from this piece, whereas here you’ll be blinking at the sheer physical impact. But the Canton can do a lot more.

More sensitive, less visceral, music shows that these speakers are also unusually refined, the midrange presented with phenomenal clarity to give Eva Cassidy’s “Somewhere Over The Rainbow” full expression even a trace of harshness. The Cantons create an open, spacious, and accurately layered soundstage, placing the musicians of German folk band “Cara” almost visibly in front of the listener.

Let’s cut to the chase: the 9 K can basically do it all. Audiophile sophistication? Check! What some of my colleagues (disdainfully?) term “fun speakers”? Check, and all in one – for me that’s the way it should be, as I really wouldn’t want to have to change speakers or even the entire system for every CD or record.

Considering what it offers, the Reference 9 K is almost too cheap, and even if you’re considering compact floorstanding speakers up to the 5000 Euro class, you should definitely take a look at (and a listen to) these speakers at about half that price – they even look great, albeit in an understated sort of way.

Maybe she’s the one: invest in proper electronics, e.g. a musical Symphonic line power amp, which will inspire it, drive it to top-performance, and make it “sing”. My hat is both raised, and blown off!

Tom Frantzen



▲ High-quality components are used throughout the Reference K series crossovers.

Canton’s own bass and mid/bass drivers use an aluminum-tungsten-ceramic membrane in a long-throw design with extremely powerful “motors”. ▶



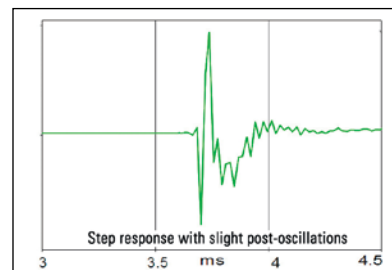
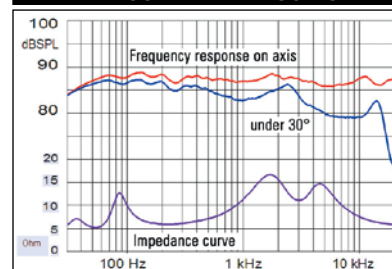
CANTON REFERENCE 9K



Pair starting at € 2,600
(stand LS-850.2, € 500)
Dimensions: 25 x 40 x 38 cm (WxHxD)
Warranty: 5 years
Contact: Canton, Phone: +49 6083/2870
www.canton.de/en

Unbelievably dynamic and powerful compact speaker with refined musicality plus the assertiveness of a floorstanding speaker. Highly recommended at the price!

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



Nominal impedance	4 Ω
Minimal impedance	5 Ω at 53 Hertz
Maximum impedance	17 Ω at 1800 Hertz
Nominal sound pressure (2.83 V/1m)	86 dB SPL
Power for 94 dB (1m)	13 W
Lower cutoff frequency (-3 dB)	31 Hertz
Distortion at 63 / 3k / 10k Hz	0.3 0.1 0.1 %

LAB COMMENTS

On axis, the Cantons displayed a balanced, almost linear amplitude frequency response and ranged down to 30 Hertz! Below 30° it decreases significantly. It should therefore be turned towards the listener. The efficiency is good at 86 dB, as is the step response with slight post-oscillations.

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY	95%
PRICE/PERFORMANCE	
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	
OUTSTANDING	