

OUTSTANDING

With the Special Forty, built to mark its 40th anniversary, Dynaudio wants to create a benchmark in the compact speaker segment, one of its traditional areas of strength. STEREO explains why the little one is both very Dynaudio and also something very special.



It's no coincidence that Dynaudio is celebrating its 40th birthday with a compact loudspeaker, as in so doing its designers are remaining true to their tradition and thus to themselves – and truth is important to the Danes, as they've made a point of stating in past marketing material. The tradition? Well, for its 25th anniversary the company launched the Special 25, a design so successful that a special edition of it was unveiled in 2010.

But there's more to it than that: Dynaudio may make first-class speakers of practically every size and price range come, but it has a special strength in the compact speaker segment – not by coincidence, but due to decades of commitment in this area. From the legendary Contour 1.3 to the brilliant Crafft or Confidence 3, which was blessed with tremendous potential but can be expanded almost at will, it has produced a whole range of models with high sound and corresponding cult potential. In fact it seems that every time Dynaudio wants to show what it can do, it builds a new compact speaker, and in so doing further challenge the supposed limitations of the genre.

„Special“ drivers

And nowhere is that more true than in the Special Forty, even if at first glance everything seems familiar: even without a badge, anyone halfway acquainted with Dynaudio will recognize what brand they in front of them. The „typical“ proportions are one clue, but the in-house drivers guarantee recognition.

The bass driver, with its polymer cone and large voice-coil dustcap, which has been in use since time immemorial, is just as stylish as the tweeter dome in the large-surface mounting plate, finished in a matt gloss coating. Yet while these drivers are “very Dynaudio”, much work has been undertaken to optimize them for this Special speaker – and that has made them very Special drive-units indeed.

For example, the company's top 17cm woofer, the 17W75 MSP, which is also used in the €6,000 Confidence C1, has here been treated not only to even stronger neodymium magnets, for increased control over the voice coil, but also to extremely resilient „Nomex“ fibers from Dupont woven into a coarse-meshed centering spider. The open mesh makes this very air-permeable, minimizing

Dynaudio prefers single-wiring, and the Special Forty is no exception. Note also the large reflex opening for the woofer. ▶

back-pressure behind the cone that can limit dynamics. This version of the woofer, designated Special Forty, is exclusive to the speaker of the same name.

This is also the case with the Esotar Forty tweeter, which as the name suggests is a development of the company's famous Esotar2. However, for use in the anniversary speaker, it also received the more powerful „neodymium engine“ and an



◀ In addition to its large voice coil, the 17cm woofer has a coarse-meshed – and therefore breathable – centering spider.



optimized sound conduction for the rear-radiated signal components, along with measures to equalize the pressure in front of and behind the 28mm soft dome. That done, by the way is coated with a material the company calls DSR – it stands for “Dynaudio Secret Recipe”!

All these measures come together to ensure that this tweeter can reproduce frequencies all the way down to down to 900Hz, while the woofer goes all the way up to 4kHz. The drivers are separated at around 2000 Hertz with a phase-stable

filter of the first order, which corresponds to a smooth edge steepness of six decibels per octave: the 3kHz overlap, plus the fact the two drivers are designed with similar characteristics in phase response, tonality, sound dispersion and on- and off-axis performance, enables the use of a very simple crossover system.

Due to the use of a large bass reflex port on the back of the cabinets, which come finished in Finnish red or grey birch veneer, the Special Forty is not for use on shelving or a sideboard. Instead it thrives when set up with some breathing space, for example on the new Stand 20 (see box). For our listening sessions, audiophile league integrated amplifiers were used in particular, but one should not reach too deep: as with all Dynaudios, the Special Forty grows especially with as the amplification improves, as well as offering pleasure seemingly beyond its compact dimensions.

In fact the speaker first picked up plaudits in a workshop during the „West German HiFi Days“, when compared to an old pair of structurally very similar

TEST-COMPONENTS

TURNTABLE: Perpetuum Ebner PE800
CD PLAYERS: Rega Apollo CDP
MULTIPLAYER: T+A MP 1000 E
INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS: Exposure 3010S2, Rega Brio Amp, Symphonic Line RG14 Edition
LOUDSPEAKERS: B&W 705S2, Dynaudio Contour 20
CABLE: HMS Concertato, In-Acoustic LS1602, Silent Wire LS16

SUPPORTING THE SPECIAL FORTY: THE NEW STAND 20

The Special Forty can be used on any high-quality stands, but Dynaudio's new Stand 20 seems to be made for it. Available in white, silver or black and costing just under €530 a pair, the 61cm-tall design comes in three parts even inexperienced users can put together in no time at all. The carrier tube is screwed onto the solid base plate, and then the top plate attached – done! Rubber pads support the speaker, while spikes (below right) ensure a firm footing. It is important to tighten the spikes with the locking nuts once everything is leveled up, so that nothing wobbles.

For easy filling of Stand 20 with quartz sand, for example, narrow-cut plastic bags are included, which ensure that nothing trickles out afterwards. Filling the stands enhances their stability and, thanks to effective resonance

damping, improves the sound, making them an even more reliable support for the compact speakers.



Contour 1.3SE speakers, Dynaudio's compact hit from 1998. The Special Forty sounded more complex, detailed and harmonious, and detached the performance better from the cabinets. That's the sound of progress!

The ability of this compact speaker to offer more bass than expected was something we explored extensively: when placed correctly, the Special Forty has a profound – but, thanks to its small volume, ultra-fast, sinewy and controlled – low-frequency range, which is more captivating in temperament than overwhelming in its fullness.

Vivid, and in 3D

The Special Forty could just be the definitive „compact speaker“, so exemplary is the unity of the sound, with the parts of

the image fitting together like pieces of a puzzle. At the risk of resorting to HiFi cliché, it's like looking through a wide-open window into the recording studio or a live location, so vividly and three-dimensionally does this new model outline the body of the sound.

A particular strength is the midrange reproduction, which is central to the natural character, whether with the sonorous timbre of Paul O'Brian in „Silvia's River“ or the bell-like organ of Rebecca Pidgeon in „Kalerka“. The Dynaudio is fleet-footed and delivers an emphatic spread of sound, as well as mustering infectious liveliness and flirty fine dynamics with, for example, Oio's dazzling guitar strings on „Iduzka“.

The Special Forty even challenges Dynaudio's Contour 20 (around €4500/pr, test in STEREO 9/17), and while the pricier speaker appeared more mature and significant, it couldn't quite offer the tingling and rousing wit of the new arrival. The Special Forty is new milestone in Dynaudio's remarkable compact loudspeaker history, so I have to convey congratulations on the anniversary – and for this design!

Matthias Boede



◀ When the magnet is removed, the optimized air-pressure handling behind the tweeter dome tweeter can be seen.

DYNAUDIO SPECIAL FORTY



€3000

(high-gloss birch veneers in red or grey)

Dimensions: 20 x36 x31 cm (WxHxD)

Warranty: 2 years (8 years on registr.)

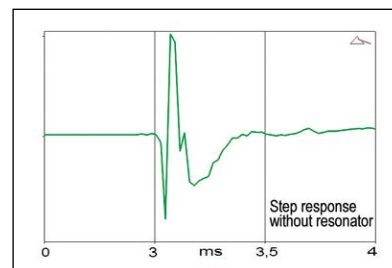
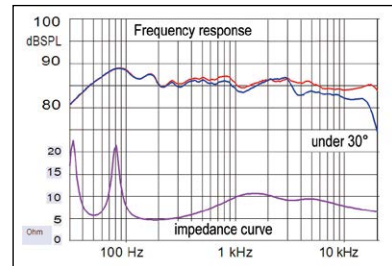
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The Special Forty consistently follows Dynaudio's tradition of exquisite compact speakers, for which only the best is good enough. This applies above all to the ultra-refined drivers, which provide top sound in perfect harmony..

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



DC resistance	4 Ohm
Minimum impedance	4.5 Ohm at 180 Hz
Maximum impedance	22.5 Ohm at 33 Hz
Sound pressure level	(2.83 V/m) 85.7 dB SPL
Power for 94 dB SPL	14 W
Lower cut-off frequency (-3dB SPL)	44 Hz
Distortion factor at 63/3k/10k Hz	0.3/0.1/0.1 %

LABORATORY COMMENT: A very linear frequency response, especially on the axis, with a subtle hump around 80Hz, underlines Dynaudio's knowhow in precision and tuning. Off-axis response drops only slightly, but nevertheless the Special Forty should be angled towards the listening position. Overall good-natured impedance response, barely below the 50hm mark; first-class step response.

STEREO - TEST

SOUND QUALITY 96%

PREIS/LEISTUNG



ECZELLENT