



MIND YOUR BACK!

If you carry the DALI Opticon 8 home, a visit to the chiropractor may follow – this floorstanding design is substantially constructed, to say the least

We were amazed when the top model of the DALI Opticon series arrived for unpacking: the huge packaging wasn't just there to impress, but housed a full-grown, powerful floorstanding loudspeaker clearly developed without reference to any diet sheet. Although it stands less than 1.2m tall, it still weighs a full 35kg – handle with care!

Class by mass

So what makes it so heavy? Well, the very thick-walled cabinet – a full 25mm, with multiple braces on the inside – plays its part, a stable platform with as little resonance as possible being indispensable for a lifelike reproduction. There's a broad consensus on that among the scholars of loudspeaker construction, because a loudspeaker cabinet is not an instrument, is not supposed to vibrate. It should reproduce every instrument and every voice accurately, not add its own influence to them.

Another factor in that mass is the powerful magnets used in the drive units, this three-and-a-half-way speaker offering above-average quality to justify its price of €2600 a pair. The two

long-stroke 20cm bass drivers, each tune with its own reflex port to the rear, are also above average, with a clever cut-out at the rear of the front baffle ensuring the air flow behind the bass drivers circulates unhindered. The fact that DALI has consistently implemented its core technologies here is no surprise: for example SMC – a soft, magnetic granulate – ensures significantly less distortion than classic pole pieces made of iron, as it is electrically non-conductive, while the cone material, a mixture of paper and wood fibers, is derived from the more expensive Epicon models.

Great attention is also paid to the crossover, which according to DALI is optimally tuned for a harmonious and neutral sound. The 16.5cm midrange driver, which operates in a closed cabinet, is responsible for the extremely important frequency range of just under 400Hz to around 2.3kHz; from there upwards the hybrid tweeter module – comprising dome and ribbon – takes over, the ribbon only being used beyond 10,000 Hertz.

The aim of DALI is to ensure the finest resolution, wide horizontal radiation and high power-handling capacity. If that's true, there should be no lack of punch in the lower registers in the listening room, no lack of balanced-sounding midrange and no lack of dynamic abilities, resolution and attention to detail - and all this should still be offered if two or more people want to listen to the sounds of the music sitting next to each other on the sofa.

So where have any savings been made? The answer is quite simple, not exactly a

cause of any great hardship: the enclosure is wrapped in high-quality foil rather than being veneered or lacquered, with only the front baffle getting the black or white gloss finish, while the grilles attach with conventional plug fixings, rather than the neater magnetic technique. If that has you throwing up your hands in horror and dismissing the Opticon 8 from your wishlist, you're missing out – you should know how good these speakers sound...

Heavy, but not sedate

We started very urgently with „Magico“, a masterpiece by Garbarek, Gismonti and Haden, and a ruthless exposé of any failures in timing, but the DALI remained more than brave, simply strolling through the music – albeit with a touch less elegance and agility than mustered by its much more expensive big brother, the Epicon 6.

However, when it came to natural expression, the two were much closer: with ever more wonderful voice of Lyn Stanley, „Makin' Whoopee“ sounded exceptionally real – it was delivered with just the right amount of charm and warmth, without appearing sugary. Voice reproduction, whether male or female vocals or even a whole choir, is a major strength of this loudspeaker, while the airiness with which sound is represented is another revelation: this design may at first seem hefty and even a bit plain, but the lightfooted breeziness of its sound is an entirely different matter.

The Opticon gives away very little to a speaker which after all is three times the price, even when depicting a large soundstage or apparently „disappearing“ behind the performance. Where it didn't quite the level of the Epicon, despite careful alignment, was in the focus of the sound – i.e. precise imaging and accurate sizing of elements in a recording –, this probably first and foremost a result of the housing, which is not quite as massive as that of the pricier speaker. However, the Opticon 8 has no need to admit defeat when lined up against competitors ranging up to a good €3500. While it was noticeable during comparative listening, e.g. with ZZ Top's „La Grange“, that the bass is never thickened, and may almost be considered a little reserved, I can assure you that the fun of rock and pop music is not neglected.

Michael Lang



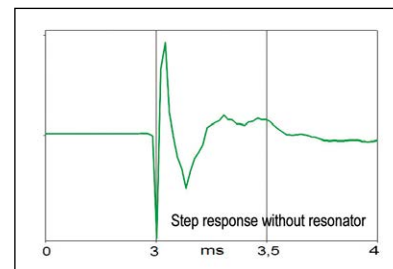
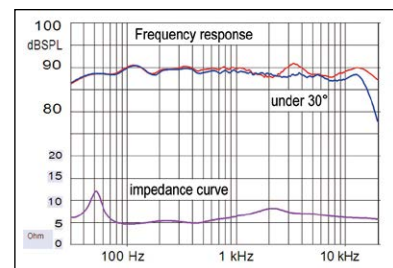
▲ Paper and wood fiber, SMC magnet technology and clever rear ventilation - the bass drivers of the Opticon 8

DALI OPTICON 8

around €2600
 (various finishes available)
 Dimensions: 24 x114 x45 cm (WxHxD)
 Warranty: 5 years
 Contact: DALI
 Phone: +45 9672/1155
 www.dali-speakers.com

This loudspeaker that convinces in all musically important criteria, with the only visible economies apparent in the enclosure only made on the housing, which has a foil wrap and a black or white front.

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



DC resistance	4 Ω
Minimum impedance	4.8 Ω at 100 Hz
Maximum impedance	12.5 Ω at 53 Hz
Sound pressure level (2.83 V/m)	88.7 dB SPL
Power for 94 dB SPL	5.6 W
Lower cut-off frequency (-3dB SPL)	33 Hz
Distortion factor at 63/3k/10k Hz	0.3/0.3/0.1 %

LABOR-KOMMENTAR: High efficiency, low distortion, smooth frequency response and an undemanding impedance curve, plus a very good step response - the DALI has become our laboratory manager's favorite..

FEATURES

Removable cover, outriggers and height-adjustable spikes, two reflective openings on the back, high-quality and stable bi-wiring terminal.

STEREO - TEST

SOUND QUALITY 77 %

PREIS/LEISTUNG



OUTSTANDING