

MORE THAN A RADIO



With its impeccable workmanship, numerous sources and an astonishingly large, detached sound, Roberts' new S 300 blurs the boundaries between table radio and hi-fi system.

Usually we have a hard time with all-in-one all-rounders which fall into the classic category of „kitchen radios“. No one is saying there weren't any interesting devices in this segment, but they cannot be equated with traditional hi-fi systems. Even an inexpensive rack with separate speakers has a better spatial depiction. Attentive readers will have already suspected that the introducing term „usually“ rolls out the red carpet for a deviation from this rule.

In fact, calling Roberts' massive S 300 a table radio is quite problematic. With a weight of just under ten kilograms and the dimensions of two stacked 43-centimeter components, it is definitely too large. When designing their new

one-piece system, the British were apparently inspired by role models such as Naim's Mu-So. Similar to the flat console (around 1150 Euro), the S 300 is flawlessly crafted. The base and lid of the case consist of two plastic plates, which were so effectively trimmed for an aluminum look that we were convinced it was metal until we had opened the device. Meanwhile, the front, sides and back are covered by a circumferential grille, blocking the view on the eight chassis.

ALMOST OMNIDIRECTIONAL

They seem to be the actual heroes of the system, as their arrangement provides an astonishingly spherical and plastic sound impression. In fact, during the test, both

in the small listening room (about 24 square meters) and in the office, we always had the impression that there were more speakers hidden somewhere in the room. This is essentially due to the two passive bass radiators on the sides, more accurately the two large flat ribbons that replace the bass reflex port, but also increase the spatial sound impression. The actual woofers are located at the back of the cabinet. This detail is of substantial importance, because, like a large loudspeaker, the S 300 needs an adequate distance to the wall. All other frequencies are handled by midrange and tweeter drivers at the front of the cabinet.

The sound can be tuned in various ways. First of all, there are the usual EQ presets, five in number, which speak for themselves with names such as Music, Soundtrack and Concert. However, we liked the freely programmable three-band EQ better, which allows not only bass and treble but also the adjustment of the mid-range. Since the single-block system per

se already plays extremely powerfully, we preferably messed around with the „subwoofer“ buttons on the solid remote control. They influence the level of the two rear woofers by +/- six decibels: two dB down - and the system sounded incredibly harmoniously. Correctly tuned, the S 300 actually plays surprisingly linear and unobtrusively. Voices such as Carolin No's velvety vocals in „Still Waters Run Deep“ are projected tangibly into the listening room, miraculously filling the entire space. Of course, one should not expect such a compact „all-in-one“ device to produce a very sharp image. The sound-picture has instead always something spherical.

SOURCE RICHNESS

In terms of playback, too, the Roberts system has a lot to offer. The core is made of various receivers: DAB and DAB+ are on board, VHF as well as an extensive web radio, sorted by country and with slots for favorites - a matter of honor, as, after all, the British have grown up with radio. To enjoy Internet radio, the system must first be connected to the home network. This can be done via LAN as well as WLAN. Thanks to WPS support, it took us less

than a minute to set up the connection. Once connected to the network, the S 300 can also access UPnP servers and plays all supported sound formats up to 24/48.

All of this is controlled either via the excellent remote control or the „Undok“ app. It can also be used to integrate the system into multi-room setups with the other Roberts network products. Last but not least, all functions can also be accessed and controlled via the device itself. Thanks to a total of twelve buttons and a data wheel on the top, as well as a color display, this works quite smoothly.

In addition to the UPnP network, a CD player and two slots for USB drives and SD cards further enrich the wealth of sources. The latter two are limited to the sound formats MP3 and WMA, but compensate for this with an interesting gimmick: If a stick is inserted in the back of the device, you can record from radio and CD in the compact MP3 format, simply by clicking on the record button. Finally, Bluetooth, an analogue input (mini jack) as well as various analogue and digital outputs are also available and complete the table system to a successful all-in-one package.

Carsten Barnbeck

KEYWORD

Wi-Fi Protected Setup: The connection between router and network devices is established at the push of a button without the need to enter a password.



ROBERTS S 300

around 900 €
Warranty: 2 Years
Dimensions: 42 x 19 x 42 cm (WxHxD)
Tel.: +44 3330 142505
www.robertsradio.com

Verdict: Mighty table radio with powerful, but amazingly linear tone. Many sources and an interesting USB recording option.

EQUIPMENT

Features: All-in-one system with DAB+ and FM receiver, multi-room capable UPnP network player, Spotify Connect, CD player, Bluetooth (with NFC pairing), recording of all sources directly to USB stick, alarm function, clock, equalizer with bass, treble and midrange control, bass driver („subwoofer“) adjustable separately from EQ

Connections: Analog line-in (mini jack), analog (mini jack) and digital (optical)

Line-out, headphone jack (mini jack), USB port for Data sticks and hard drives, SD card slot, LAN/WLAN, BT antenna

Sound formats: FLAC, AAC, Apple Lossless, WAV, MP 3 and WMA (all up to 24/48 or 320 kilobits), from USB or SD media only MP 3 and WMA

Accessories: remote control, free remote app (Android/iOS), manual, three antennas

STEREO - TEST

SOUND QUALITY	58%
PRICE/PERFORMANCE	
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	
EXCELLENT	

◀ The rear panel reveals the connection field with separate antennas for radio, Wi-Fi and BT. The two invisible subwoofers, which are installed above the connectors, can be controlled separately from the overall level and independently from the equalizer presets via the remote control.