

SMALL STEPS - BIG STEPS

From the outside it appears classic, almost conservative, but technically it is absolutely up-to-date. DALI's Callisto system is more than just an active speaker.

Lots of people share the opinion that, if anything, there are rather too many loudspeakers than a lack of choice. Consequently, if you want to attract attention and stand out from the crowd, you have to come up with something special. The busy Danes from DALI have invested some thought into this in order to give the competition a bit of a headache.

Looking at the Callisto, which was presented at the Munich HighEnd this year, it is quite difficult to discover anything new, not to say revolutionary, about them. There are two rather conventional looking, slender columns in the room, which come in a not opulently crafted, somewhat bourgeois looking ash-black dress. The front panel is composed of five individual parts and also left us with a frown in view of the, for this price class, rather generous gaps between them. The first striking feature is the solo mounted ribbon super-tweeter, operating from 15kHz upwards, which works partly parallel to the dome tweeter – until now they were always mounted in combination. It is great that

the two 16.5cm midrange/bass drivers have inherited some genes from other DALI series – the special magnetic drive technology with SMC powder, for example, which is responsible for the very low distortion, as well as the special diaphragm material with its particularly unyielding, stiff surrounding.

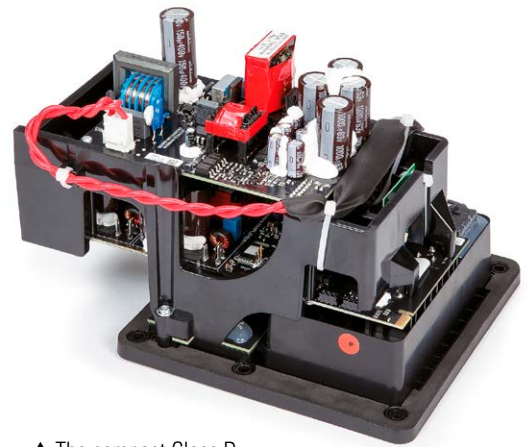
On the back, the connection for a mains cable attracts attention, which is complemented by an input for LF cables, but not for classic loudspeaker cables, from which we can deduce that we are dealing with an active specimen. This is also indicated by an LED chain on the front, which is, amongst other things, responsible for displaying the selected volume. Letting your finger slide along the upper front edge of the speaker is close to magic, as it leads to a change in volume. Gradually, the suspicion arises that perhaps it is not quite as conventional a speaker as first imagined... A glance on the inside deepens this impression as one searches in vain for a classic crossover. Instead, there is a Class D power amplifier whose feedback is digitally controlled and which has a power of 250 watts. These are distributed, as required, to the two channels for the mid/low-frequency and high-frequency ranges. The power supply is regulated several times and the volume is controlled immediately before the power amplifier in order to avoid resolution losses.

The “Sound Hub” called connection module has a much more modern look to it than the speakers and looking at it even

the most skeptical journalists have to admit that this is not “business as usual”. After all, the stylish device, weighing just below two kilograms, accommodates digital as well as analogue inputs and the ability to process data up to 24 bit/48 kHz wirelessly via Bluetooth on the input side and even up to 96 kHz on the output side via I2S connection. You will find an analogue pre-out as well as a subwoofer output. The equipment is completed by the optional BluOS streaming module, an Ethernet connection and W-Lan capability via dongle. Strictly speaking, it is a preamplifier of the latest design with converter and wireless functions, which is referred to as an “intelligent control center” in Danish modesty. If you like, you can connect a CD player or, with a phono module, a turntable and then have a highly comfortable entire system, which can later even be extended to an eight-channel home cinema combination if necessary – without having to lay miles and miles of cable. And if desired, one can use the supplied Bluetooth remote and control the system without being able to see the control unit, as it receives the commands even if it is hidden in a cabinet.

Operation is pure joy

However, all the technical background is quickly forgotten for a user of modern, contemporary technology, if the controls cause sorrow. In that regard the Danes have really done pioneering work and surpassed everything that has gotten into our hands so far. The system can be set up within just a few minutes even by people with little to no technical expertise. The reliability in the event of operating errors or power failures is simply outstanding – after a brief moment of searching, the hub and loudspeakers will have found each other again and play as if



▲ The compact Class D amplifier operates with two channels and provides the chassis with its power of around 250 watts as required.

nothing had happened. To illustrate; till now it was usually necessary in similar combinations to “pair” the system again with each other. That does not only take time, but also hasn’t ever worked as smoothly as here in the “Callisto” system.

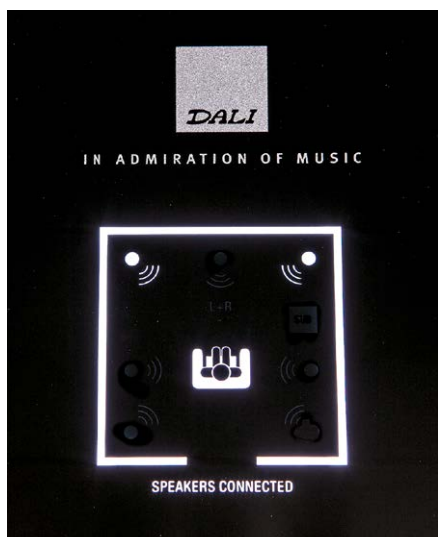
Only a few simple steps are required to initialize playback: supply the speakers and hub with power, press the “Link connect” button on the hub, then press “Link Connect” on one of the two speakers and wait for the acoustic signal indicating successful coupling. Press “Link Connect” again to clarify the left/right assignment; repeat with the second box; then press “Link Connect” one last time on the hub – done. This really is no witchcraft – and certainly a piece of cake for your trusted dealer. Equally simple is the installation of the streaming module: two screws have to be unscrewed, the cover removed and then the module inserted. This is only possible in one unmistakable way, has no play whatsoever and always works. Success is definitely guaranteed!



▲ The volume is indicated by LEDs on the loudspeaker.



▲ The control unit is equipped with digital and analogue inputs and outputs, the optional Streaming module is Roon-ready.



▲ Select left or right speaker, connect, repeat on the other side – all done!

for the first time MQA

The generous amount of formats that the BlueOS module can handle underlines the quality standards. For the first time, the much discussed MQA files are processed in such a system, which we explicitly appreciate at this point, as well as the fact that the device is prepared for Roon, the database system for streaming services, and several streaming services themselves. It almost goes without saying that it is compatible with smartphones of any provenance and even with Kindle. As if that wasn't enough, the system can also be used via home automation or home control applications such as Crestron. The smart system automatically detects which source is running – so you'll hear music at an instant. And that's exactly what we



▲ The volume can be adjusted by moving your finger – very smart!

did then, alternating between streaming services Qobuz and Tidal, as well as the youngest competitor on the market, Highresaudio. With us, also the CD still has its place and was, of course, not neglected. The digital Callisto system, which will be built entirely in Denmark in the future and whose integrated DSP chip replaces the conventional crossover, played with a striking lightness after a fitting break-in time. This is even reliably possible using wireless connection due to the quick transmission at 5.8 GHz.

In the listening room, the innovative Dane then showed itself as one would expect from a high-quality loudspeaker: a very airy sound that extends beyond the basic width of the only slightly angled loudspeakers, a bass that played cleanly and unobtrusively, and a variety of timbres that did justice to the peculiarities of voices and instruments. Not showing even a trace of discolorations, the slim columns were very neutral, but not uninvolved in the played music. How high-quality and high-resolution the Callisto and its sound hub really played, became evident by the fact that differences in the sound character between different very high-quality CD players could easily be heard. Similarly, when we heard the Accoustic Arts Player2 first in native CD mode and then in upsampling mode, the latter option seemed to be more detailed, but for Clark Terry's trumpet, for example, it added a touch of artificiality to the sound. In rock music, the result was in favor of upsampling, but in vocals and acoustic instruments you should take some time to choose your personal favorite.

The DALI, on the other hand, cut a very good figure with any kind of music, let the tones of its transients swing in and out, and provided joy in the music – even without cables. Where it reached its, absolutely forgivable, limits was at the point of precision: in Clark Terry's "Superblues", it reproduced the piano a little to the left of the base width and showed the trumpet clearly outlined to the right, but the positions of the drums and double bass where slightly blurred.

Finally, we heard Allan Taylor's Stockfisch-recording "Let The Music Play" and we were astonished at how clearly the DALI could show fine and even finest volume differences – the Stockfisch CD is produced with about three dB higher

level compared to the Clark Terry CD released by Chesky. So it seems to work after all: DALI combines maximum comfort and top sound in just one device!

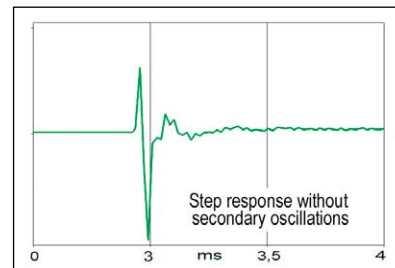
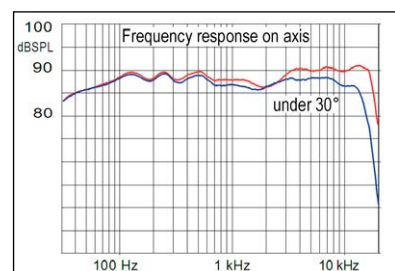
Michael Lang

DALI CALLISTO 6 C

for 4750 €
 (price incl. controller and BlueOS module)
 Dimensions: 20 x103 x33 cm (WxHxD)
 Warranty: 2 years
 Contact: DALI
 Phone: +45 9672 1155
 www.dali-speakers.com

A step into the future of listening – wireless, digital, reliable and with maximum comfort, combined with very good sound. Not a cheap, but a groundbreaking music system.

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



Lower cut-off frequency (-3dB SPL)	49 Hz
Distortion factor at 63/3k/10k Hz	0.3/0.1/0.1 %
Power consumption. Stby/idle (at)	<2 W/14 W

LAB COMMENTS

Balanced frequency response, very low distortions and practical connection values. The control unit is also perfectly fine.

FEATURES

Wireless, active loudspeaker system with control unit and optional streamer; digital and analogue inputs, Bluetooth remote control, extremely easy operation.

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY	80%
PRICE/PERFORMANCE	
★★★★★	
OUTSTANDING	