

Activated

The world of music streams – a great opportunity for active loudspeakers, where (nearly) wireless communication and network operation can use its strengths.

Tom Frantzen





The advantages of an active loudspeaker solution are manifold. The arrangement of the active or electronic crossover directly in front of the amplifiers as well as the adaptability and precise, individual tuning of amplifier and driver to each other, in addition to DSPs allowing corrections of frequency, timing and room acoustics, open up otherwise almost unthinkable possibilities for optimization. The quality of integrated amplifier electronics is also not necessarily worse than that of separate power amplifiers.

The only real counter-argument is the theoretically distortion-prone microphony of the electronics in the speaker cabinet. However, that can easily be countered by reducing vibrations, decoupling and separation. Especially in Germany, the active speaker has never been popular enough to become a bestseller. Some may attribute this to the preference of hi-fi fans to have „real“ amplifiers and power amplifiers. But with digital smart-homes, wireless connections and Streaming services for music, the active loudspeaker is celebrating a kind of renaissance, as it is excellently suited to deal with these new demands. For many it might be the key to this new world of music consumption.

In the latest generation, an array of connections, a remote control or app, Bluetooth and/or WiFi as well as, naturally, volume control are almost a matter of fact, so that the modern, „smart“ active speaker is far more than just a loudspeaker with integrated power amps. Instead it has itself become the system. However, unlike the rather small devices usually referred to as “smart speakers”, which are specially designed for multiroom or operation on the go, our test subjects are all very serious hi-fi candidates and even some proper high-end speakers meeting highest audiophile demands.

STEREO invited novelties from Canton, Phonar, Piega, Quadral and Triangle, from small to large and from 450 to 16,000 Euros, into our listening rooms. While the price tip goes clearly to the clever and extremely affordable concept of Triangle, the speakers from Phonar and Piega, and above all Canton, score with excellent sound and equipment, while the Quadral proves to be an uncompromising audiophile. ■