

HI-FI WORLD

JULY 2016

UK £4.30

www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

FREE READER CLASSIFIED ADS IN THIS ISSUE!



EXCLUSIVE!

BLUE AURA V40 BLACKLINE
valve amplifier with bluetooth



ORACLE PARIS MKV **EXCLUSIVE!**
turntable



DALI OPTICON 2
loudspeakers

ROHDE & SCHWARZ
MEASUREMENT



7 PAGES OF LETTERS - THE BEST WINS A PAIR OF QUAD S2 LOUDSPEAKERS! (UK ONLY)

COMPETITION

WIN A
QUAD PA-ONE
HEADPHONE
AMPLIFIER
WORTH £1200!
(UK ONLY)



EXCLUSIVE!

MARTIN LOGAN RENAISSANCE ESL 15A loudspeakers

- ICON AUDIO HP8 MKII HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER **EXCLUSIVE!**
- T+A PA 2000 R INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER **EXCLUSIVE!**
- VAN DEN HUL MC-ONE SPECIAL CARTRIDGE **EXCLUSIVE!**
- UNISON RESEARCH UNICO CD DUE PLAYER **EXCLUSIVE!**
- HIGH END MUNICH SHOW SPECIAL REPORT





Dali's new Opticon 2 standmount loudspeakers are rather special, says Jon Myles.

Stand and deliver

If you are looking to spend £650 on a pair of loudspeakers then there are no end of options available. You could plump for a set of floorstanders with multiple drive units and a hefty bass response if you have

the room to fit them in. Alternatively, you can spend the same sort of money on a smaller model which may not look quite as impressive but may be sonically better and rather more suited to your own listening environment.

Which is exactly where the likes of Dali's new Opticon 2 come in. In size they are a traditional small standmount measuring 351mm x 195mm x 297mm (H/W/D) with a single pair of 'speaker terminals at the back above which sits a small

reflex port. Nothing too unusual there in essence.

Pop off the grilles, though, and take a look at the drive units and things become more interesting. Both the mid/bass and tweeter are in-house designed. The former utilises a mix of paper and wood fibre that is said to ensure very low surface resonance while the latter is a large 28mm soft dome unit enclosed in a metallic housing.

It looks distinctive and rather different to the average standmount - a quality that is confirmed by a firm rap on the cabinets which are substantial and well-damped. Dali uses its own Danish-based cabinet manufacturer for these, so perhaps that's not too surprising. Our review sample came in a light walnut finish but black ash and white matt satin vinyl versions are also available.

SOUND QUALITY

The Opticon 2s need careful positioning and a bit of care to get them at their best. I initially tried them well away from a rear wall and toed-in. It didn't work all that well, having a slightly soft sound and lack of bass. However, experimentation showed just how potent they can be. They are balanced for small and medium-sized rooms and are best being placed around 35cm or 50cm from a rear wall for decent low-end response.

Then they become well balanced. Mainly because they combine a rich midrange with a nicely judged treble that is neither too sharp nor lacks anything in detail. The Opticon 2s also sound rather larger than their size would suggest - presenting a wide and expansive soundstage.

Paired with a Creek Evolution 100 A integrated amplifier via Tellurium Q Silver Diamond cables the classical/modern fusion of David Chesky's 'Area 31' had presence and drama. The timpani parts especially rolled into the room with exceptional force.

Switching to the low-end workout of James Blake's 'Limit To Your Love' the Dali's again showed they can handle the lower registers well. No, you don't get the absolute impact of the very bottom octaves that a big floorstander will give you but neither do the Dalis leave you feeling you are missing much. Instead they beguile with a nice, rich presentation.

Listening to Bruce Springsteen's 'Land Of Hope And Dreams' from

the 'Wrecking Ball' CD saw an excellent sense of timing, the leading edge of the guitar notes having fine tonal quality.

If there's a criticism to be made it's that when pushed really hard the Dalis can tend to become a little grating with that mid/bass unit struggling to handle big orchestral crescendoes. But that's only when you are playing them really loud in a big room.

Use them as they are intended in smaller spaces, however, and the sound is never less than refined and enjoyable.

The two drive units are well integrated and the tweeter is especially sophisticated bringing a nice air and presence to female vocals. Sinead O'Connor's voice on 'Mandinka' was dripping with emotion and hung high and wide of the edges of the loudspeakers. I've heard more expensive loudspeakers that fail to convey the drama of this track by stripping it of its power. The Opticon 2s, however, handled it with aplomb.

In the final analysis I could hanker for a little more low-end heft or the sharper treble of a ribbon tweeter perhaps - but that would be doing the Dali Opticon 2s a massive

disservice because for their size and price they do everything extremely well.

Pair them with a good amplifier and position them carefully and they will reward with a sumptuous sound that encourages long listening sessions.

CONCLUSION

If you are looking for a domestically-friendly standmount in the £650 bracket then the Dali Opticon 2s should be at the head of your list. They combine superb build quality with excellent bass and treble and a sure-footed sense of timing. There's absolutely nothing to dislike.



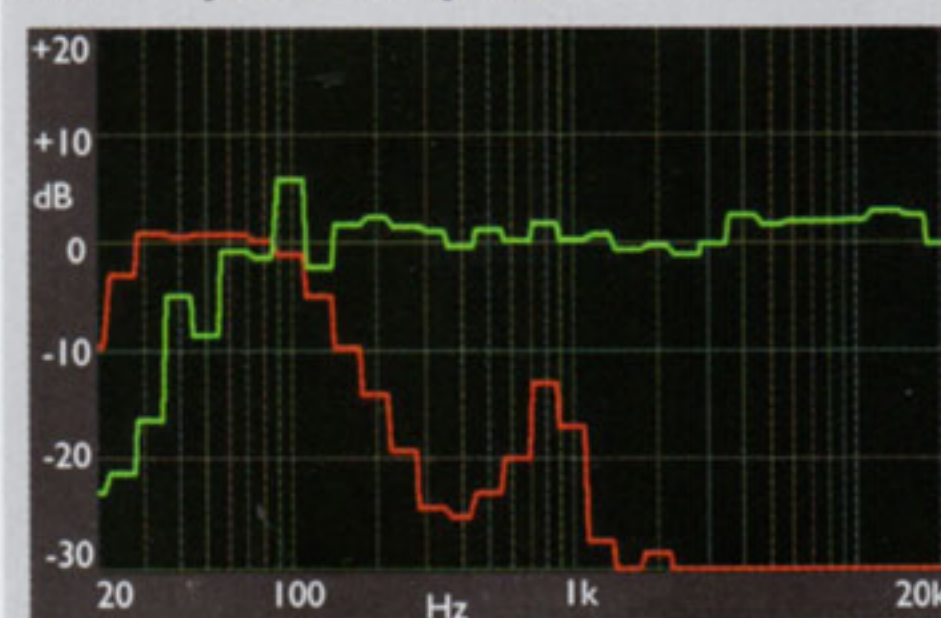
The rear panel features a large reflex port to extend bass response plus a single pair of loudspeaker binding posts.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

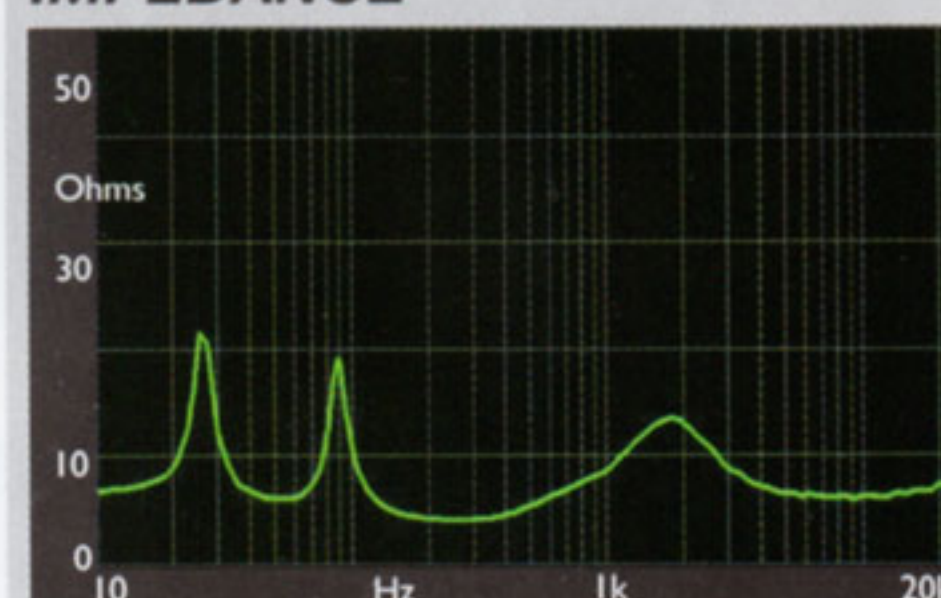
Frequency response of the Opticon 2 measured flat across the audio band, our third-octave, pink noise analysis shows. There is a slight plateau lift in treble level from the tweeter, just enough to ensure that treble is obvious, but the speaker is not bright. Moving off-axis lowered this just enough to give a flat tonal balance. With no crossover suckout and no treble

FREQUENCY RESPONSE

Green - driver output
Red - port output



IMPEDANCE



peak, the Opticon 2 will sound detailed, but not sharp in its treble.

The bass midrange unit runs smoothly down to 80Hz before rolling away, being contoured for near wall placement. The port has very broad output, showing that it offers effective damping.

Port output extends down to 30Hz and the port is quite large so, being +4dB up in SPL at 80Hz, it outputs a fair amount of acoustic power. As a result the Opticon 2 should have well controlled bass of good quality and level, with some subsonic content.

Sensitivity was high at 88dB from one nominal Watt (2.8V) of input. Impedance measured exactly 6 Ohm using pink noise test signal to represent music. The impedance curve is reasonably smooth and non-reactive, so the Opticon 2 is an easy enough load, needing around 60 Watts or so to go very loud.

The Opticon 2 measured well in all areas. It will have low coloration, firm bass of good quality, an even tonal balance characterised by slight brightness on-axis, but perfect tonal balance off-axis. **NK**

DALI OPTICON 2
£649



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VALUE - keenly priced

VERDICT

A well-engineered standmount loudspeaker that punches well above its weight in terms of sound quality. Highly recommended.

FOR

- big sound
- great looking
- excellent treble

AGAINST

- nothing at the price

Dali
+44 (0) 845 6443537
www.dali-speakers.com