

REVIEW



DALI EPICON 6

LOUDSPEAKERS

Reviewer Edgar Kramer

Danish Audiophile Loudspeaker Industries, commonly known just as DALI, is one of Europe's speaker-making powerhouses, playing on the same field as the likes of Bowers & Wilkins, Focal and KEF. And like those brands it has scored notable successes across wide ranges of pricing, both in territories close to home and here on the other side of the globe under its capable long-term distributor.

So while here we are reviewing speakers at the elevated heights of the company's abilities, this reviewer also fondly recalls the extraordinary value delivered by the all-in-one-for-\$3K STILE 5.1-channel package, which in my view shamed far more expensive competition at the time with its exceptional performance and superb finish. So DALI is a company that spans the classic range of speakers from high-value entry level right up to the high performance of the Epicon series reviewed here, DALI's flagship range.

The Epicon offering begins with the Epicon 2 standmount design, and is topped by the much-lauded Epicon 8 floorstanders. Here we enjoy the smaller floorstander of the range, the Epicon 6. This trio of models could form the basis of a home theatre set-up, so DALI also has the Vokal centre speaker for such configurations.

GOT WOOD

Like many large-scale manufacturers, DALI engineers and manufactures its midrange and woofer drivers at its headquarters, in this case in Denmark, since 2009. The latest-gen drivers feature DALI's own composite material formula

consisting of a brown-toned wood fibre coating over extremely light paper diaphragms. Each Epicon 6 features two of these stiff yet light cones, both 165mm drivers backed by cast aluminium basket structures and large low distortion (Linear Drive, in DALI-speak) magnet systems with high-flux SMC material (Soft Magnetic Compound). These high output, low/uneven resonance and fast-reacting transducers are in a 2.5-way bass-reflex configuration (tuned at 32.5Hz) providing the midrange and bass frequencies, each operating in its own individually tuned sub-enclosure. DALI provides an interesting white paper – downloadable in PDF form from the company's website – which goes into substantial detail on driver design and the engineering ideas behind the sophisticated magnet systems.

For a number of generations now, DALI has used a ribbon and cloth dome tweeter combo of its own design in its upper echelon models. The all-in-one 'Hybrid Tweeter' module features both drivers mounted on a solid aluminium plate, further reinforcing that section of the 33mm dual layer low resonance baffle. The module houses the high power high excursion 29mm dome tweeter and broad dispersion 10 x 55mm ribbon.

The crossover design is undisclosed, although DALI states the transition points are at 700Hz, 2.55kHz and 15kHz, that it contains high quality components and connects to the drivers via the company's own Cordial cable developed for the now-discontinued Megaline flagship.

DALI quotes the Epicon 6 as being 88dB efficient (2.3V/1m) and possessing a nominal impedance of 5-ohms. Frequency response spans 35Hz to 30kHz +/-3dB and DALI recommends using amplifiers capable of 50 to 300W.

▽ TWIN PORTS EXIT AT THE REAR FROM THE SEPARATE BASS REFLEX ENCLOSURES BEHIND THE TWO MID/BASS 165MM DRIVERS. HIGH QUALITY BINDING POSTS ALLOW BIWIRING OR BIAMPING.





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Finally, the cabinet design. Made up of multiple MDF layers (six glued layers) and supported via a 53mm MDF spine, the enclosure walls have been pressed under high temperature to obtain the subtle non-parallel curvature which aids in the deformation of internal standing waves, dissipates deleterious resonances and increases panel rigidity. Like the entire high-tolerance cabinet, all the drivers' allocated mounting points within the baffle have been precision CNC machined in-house.

The end result is a solid and beautifully rounded enclosure finished in our sample unit in an extremely high quality gloss piano-black lacquer, while also available are gloss white, gloss walnut and 'Ruby Macassar' finishes.

DALI even manufactures its own speaker binding posts. The posts provide for bi-wiring and are clearly of very good quality, grippy and also easy to hand-tighten. Solid steel gold-plated buss bars link the terminals. Good quality steel spikes are provided as are floor-protecting disc receptacles. The entire presentation of the Epicon 6 is schmick chic.

DETAIL FREAK

Straight from the get-go, on the first and every subsequent track, the effect of the dual-tweeter module on the performance is clear. There's no passive listening here – the Epicon 6 is an overt and open speaker, a magnificent detail retriever and resolution acquirer which demands

◀ DALI'S RENOWNED RIBBON AND CLOTH DOME TWEETERS WORK IN TANDEM TO DELIVER THE EPICON 6'S HIGHS.

attention, and attention it gets! The tweeters float their fine nuances up in the extended areas of air and ambience where room/recording venue reverberation is rendered staggeringly realistically. This trait is also demonstrated in the speakers' power to separate instrumental lines. Within the context of our system and room the Epicon 6 was a scalpel at its sharpest in slicing through complex material with the cleanest of cuts. And that also translated to very fast transient attacks and a revelation in micro-detail. Seldom have I heard with such clarity the finest of minutiae from the subtlest of recordings and most delicate musicianship.


The ribbon and dome combo really showed its mettle with the gradations in technique on Peter McGrath's superb recording of Earl Wild's recital *Live at Carnegie Hall*. The finest shades and intonations of his instrument, the Hall's ambience, even the flu-ridden audience's incessant coughing (was there a flu epidemic at the time?) are all revealed with the utmost accuracy. If it's in the recording, you'll hear it – we thought many times during our listening that the Epicon 6 would make a great reviewing tool.

This same recording is invaluable for determining soundstage performance. The Epicon 6s can throw a large soundstage in terms of width, while the apparent depth is subjectively on par with many other designs, if not outstanding in this regard. The speaker tends to project its extremely well-placed images a tad forward of the speaker plane.

It can't have been easy to match these extraordinary high frequency drivers with mid and bass cones that can keep up with their performance, but that mandate has been met successfully in the Epicon 6 with the superbly adept Linear Drive Magnet System mid and bass partners. The cone drivers provide a matching transient performance in terms of the bass note leading edge. The upper- and mid-bass is tight, punchy, detailed and, even if not the deepest (the laws of physics apply) it is satisfying – especially in small to mid-sized rooms.

Play a track with well-recorded kick drum, such as the intro sequence in Jackson Browne's "Casino Nation" from his *Naked Ride Home* release, and you'll marvel at this small floorstander's potent thwack. On the same album, the very deep bass notes that highlight "Sergio Leone" are, not surprisingly, lower in level than from our larger floorstanders but they are, as per the signature, magnificently detailed. You could turn to the larger Epicon 8 model for deeper bass, of course, while the aim of the Epicon 6 is to provide smaller listening environments with bass performance of superb quality from the high 30s of cycles and up.

CONCLUSION

The number of companies with the expertise and resources to build both bespoke drivers and high quality cabinets can be counted on the fingers of two hands. Here, with the Epicon 6, DALI has achieved a remarkably detailed, transparent and dynamically lively speaker. It's beautifully styled and finished to suit many a décor while boasting superbly engineered drivers. And it's all built in its native Denmark. All those aspects combined make for an irresistible offering from a true speaker manufacturing giant. Epic. 



◁ THE REVIEWED EPICON 6 (LEFT) WITH THE LARGER EPICON 8 AND STANDMOUNT EPICON 2, PLUS THE VOKAL CENTRE-CHANNEL SPEAKER WHICH ENABLE HOME THEATRE EPICON SYSTEMS.



SPECIFICATIONS

DALI EPICON 6

FREQUENCY RANGE:

35-30,000Hz ±3dB

SENSITIVITY (2.83V/1M):

88.0dB

NOMINAL IMPEDANCE:

5 ohms

MAXIMUM SPL: 110dB

RECOMMENDED AMPLIFIER

POWER: 50–300 watts

CROSSOVER FREQUENCIES:

700/2550/15,000Hz

HYBRID TWEETER MODULE:

super high frequency driver:

10mm × 55mm ribbon

high frequency driver:

29mm soft textile dome

LOW FREQUENCY DRIVER:

2 × 165mm wood fibre cone

ENCLOSURE TYPE:

Bass Reflex

BASS REFLEX TUNING

FREQUENCY: 32.5Hz

RECOMMENDED DISTANCE

FROM WALL: > 25 cm

DIMENSIONS WITH

BASE (HXWXD):

1062 × 320 × 459mm

WEIGHT: 30.0kg

PRICE: \$15,995

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