

## Review of Dynaudio Contour S1.4 By Marco Lisi



Danish Dynamite is what they're sometimes called, those speakers from the Scandinavian manufacturer Dynaudio. Secretly, we Europeans can be quite proud of some very good products from our own continent. If you think of it, that list is getting longer by the day. And it's a list on which Dynaudio can not be left out. It's a Danish brand of speakers, that has earned its merits for many years, not in the least through its reputation in the pro-world and even car audio. Of course, we audiophiles are in the living room and not in the studio. But that's no problem!

Dynaudio has four ranges of speakers on offer to spoil your ears with. In rising order of performance (and price): Audience, Contour, Confidence and last but not least Evidence. Speaking for itself, doesn't it? Other items in the product range consist of subwoofers, inwall speakers and numerous accessories. Number 2 in the line listens to the name Contour. Let's dig deeper. The Contour offers a complete collection of speakers for everyone's stereo or surround needs. In a row: the S R (rear speaker), S CX (X-large center), S C (center), S 1.4 (bookshelf), S 3.4 (floorstander) and the S 5.4 (X-large floorstander). We randomly chose the S 1.4 bookshelf.

### Contour S 1.4

For a mere €2.590 you're the proud owner of a pair Dynaudio Contour S 1.4. On the Danish Dynamite's website you can read that the enclosure is finished by hand. Every element of the speaker adds to the esthetic and sound qualities. The slim enclosure stands for genuine craftsmanship, the cabinet is internally braced and dampened. It's no secret Dynaudio produces its own drive units. This specific speaker sports two drivers: an Esotek soft dome tweeter accounts for the high frequencies, while a 17cm MSP mid/bas takes care of the rest of the frequency band. And it's just that unique choice of units, combined with the implementation in a qualitative cabinet leads to extraordinary results in a long Dynaudio Bookshelf tradition.



To let this speaker perform at its best, the manufacturer advises to use the matching stand. Speaker and stand become one through a unique technique: put the speaker on the stand and mount the screws in the predrilled holes in the speaker. Smart! It seems everything is used to lift the performance as high as possible. Also take a look at the typical placement of the tweeter (at the lower end) and the mid/bass (on the top end). I myself will use my own Atacama Nexus 7 (70cm), so the tweeters always are on earheight. Though the tweeters weren't exactly at earheight, I found no disadvantage during my listening sessions. And concerning looks, you have the choice of four real wood veneers: walnut, birch, black ash and cherry. The pair on review was finished in Birch.

### **Very curious**

It has to be said: lately a lot of speaker brands have been tickling our ears (eg. Dali, B&W, Kartell, TacT Audio, Polk Audio,...). No matter how good your system is, in the end it remains the speaker who translates the music into emotion (not taking the room in consideration). So before we're going to listen, just a few words on my setup, minimalistic but up there with the best: from the source (Philips DV-963SA), the digital signal goes through a Kimber Select KS2020 (straight) to the power amp (TacT TDA-2200). The unique about this amp, is that it's also possible to use it as a digital integrated. It has a volume control onboard. As pure as a signal can get, I think. Only the best is good enough to hear these Danish sing! Personally I was very interested in the performance of these beauties, because they are in the price range I heard a lot

of speakers in (eg. B&W 805S, Dali Helicon 300,...). An extension of my listening experience is always nice! Are you just as curious???



### **Specifications**

- System: 2-way bass-reflex
- Sensitivity (2.3V / 1m): 85dB
- IEC long term power handling: 160Watt
- Nominal impedance: 4 Ohm
- Weight: 12,6 Kg
- Size (W X H X L in mm): 188 x 404 x 360
- Single wire WBT
- 1st order filtering
- bass reflex opening on the back



### **Sit down and listen**

For warm up, Mark Knopfler started playing. Aw! No sign of compassion here...  
DThe first impression of the Contour S 1.4 was one of grandeur: an impressive amount of bass energy, a nice central imaging of Mark's voice, with a lot of character, a flat soundstage, limited to the area in between the speakers. A good start! The Dynaudio's quickly showed this cd wasn't a very good recording. The whole was without sparkle and compact. A positive note on the guitar: snappy and crisp. Yep, first test passed cum laude!



Pat Metheney really opened up the stage! An overwhelming feeling off life-like sound came over me. Boy oh boy, did that percussion have rhythm, energy and power. A big, deep and spatial soundstage was served and i ate it with pleasure.

The same feeling stayed with some tracks from the soundtrack of 'The Mission'. The attack (impulse if you like) of the horns was good. The low came with a power that surpasses the content of a bookshelf enclosure. I could feel the energy vibrating through my seat.

Nils Lofgren was once again in my living room with his outstanding 'Keith don't go'. Nice! I've never heard such a presentation: while his voice and guitar might not be a 100% creamy, the plucking of the strings really had a bite! Very convincing, with again rhythm and coherence.



Eine kleine Nachtmusic by Mozart was presented with a natural flow. You could clearly hear that the recording was made with ancient instruments. In those days, strings of intestines were used for violins. This was clearly audible. The speakers brought the atmosphere of the 'The English Concert' Full of atmosphere, enthusiasm and with a wide and deep stage.

Hélène Grimaud is no stranger to me. This is (in a very short period) the second cd I bought from her (advised by editor in chief Jacques Thys). Not only is she a beautiful appearance, but she can play the piano like no other. And her eyes shine like the eyes of a wolf... The word goes, that she has a couple running around at home. Her pianoplay sounded rhythmic, coherent and with powerful harmonics. Yet I missed some edging (rolling of the notes, ultimate finesse). This is not an immediate complaint about the speaker, after all my setup didn't use room correction. And a very light smearing of the midrange is more than enough...AN piano remains one of the hardest instruments to reproduce correctly.

I didn't miss any power and impact with the Contour S 1.4. It's actually quite impressive how such a small speaker can develop such a force and energy. Even with his low sensitivity of 85db, he knows where it's at! Carmina Burana is known by a very big orchestration (lots of bass, eg big drum, gong), a grand choir and energizing compositions. No problem for this kiddo: during the dynamic peaks, the highs became quite spicy. The grandeur of this composition were presented without any effort, or so it seemed.



And we end in beauty with the Weihnachts-Oratorium by Bach. Old choral music (small ensemble). Just splendid! A must have for everyone who loves classical music. I listened with great pleasure to the 'Jauchzet, frohlocket'. The choir sounded nicely balanced from the back of the stage. You could easily place the kettledrums on the left side, and you could hear the wind instruments leading the way in an alternating manner. Put short, it sounded as transparent as it should sound. Even the last ambush was passed with brio.

### Conclusion

The term Danish dynamite is rightly chosen! vivid, energetic, live-sounding and direct are the most typical features. The Contours give a big and deep soundstage, full of detail and attack. The bass is powerful, full and imposing. The mids have a lot of presence and are nice and open. On the high end, the esotec tweeter gives an spicy and even high, that never sounds soft or laid back. On the contrary, usually it has a lot of bite!





In general, the color of the speakers is what I would describe as 'live-like-sound'. A lot of punch, ^power and a grand soundstage. A real commercial hit if you ask me! Taste differs and everyone is striving for his own sound. Great, isn't it? The Contour let's you miss a bit in edging and ultimate refinement, but makes up for that in coherence and convincing power. If I would buy a pair? Why not? Dynaudio's reputation is a good one, that's for sure. This was for me a very pleasant acquaintance. I can only hope there comes a following: Maybe an Evidence or Confidence series speaker??

### Softwarelist

1. Mark Knopfler - Golden heart - CD - Vertigo - 514 732-2 (pop)
2. The Pat Metheney group - Imaginary day - CD - Warner Brothers Records - 9362-46791-2 (percussion jazz)
3. Ennio Morricone - The Mission - SACD - Virgin - 7246 8 11267 2 1 (filmmusic)
4. Nils Lofgren - Acoustic Live - CD - Demon Records - FIENDCD 934 (pop)
5. Mozart - Night Music (The English Concert o.l.v. Andrew Manze) - SACD - Harmonia Mundi - HMU 807280 (classical)
6. Chopin / Rachmaninov - Piano Sonata's no.2 (Hélène Grimaud, piano) - CD - Deutsche Grammophon - 00289 477 5325 (classical)
7. Carl Orff - Carmina Burana (Koor en orkest der Deutschen Oper Berlin, knapenkoor Berlin, sopraan Christiane Oelze, tenor David Kuebler,



- baritone Simon Keenlyside o.l.v. Christian Thieleman) - CD - Deutsche Grammophon - 00289 453 5872 (classical)
8. Bach - Weihnachts-Oratorium (Rias kamerkoor, Academie voor oude muziek Berlijn, sopraan Dorothea Röschmann, alt Andreas Scholl, tenor Werner Güra, bas Klaus Häger o.l.v. René Jacobs) - 2 CD's - Harmonia Mundi - HMX 2901630.31 (classical)

## **Reviewsetup**

Dynaudio Contour S 1.4  
Philips DV-963 SA (van Medevoort + LC Audio modification)  
TacT TDA-2200 digital amp

Kimber Select KS2020 digital coax (Philips DV-963SA -> TacT TDA-2200)  
Kimber Select KS3033 LS-cable  
Ikea rack

Vibrapod Isolators & Cones (under Philips DV-963SA)  
DIY absorber between kitchen and living room  
Carpet 3m60 X 2m40 between speakers and couch

## **Useful links**

[http://www.dynaudio.de/eng/systems/lines/contour/contour\\_s\\_1\\_4.php](http://www.dynaudio.de/eng/systems/lines/contour/contour_s_1_4.php)  
[www.dynaudio.com](http://www.dynaudio.com)  
[www.iht.be](http://www.iht.be)