



GOOD THINGS TAKE TIME

After more than 13 years, Dynaudio has renewed its „Contour“ series. Here STEREO exclusively tests the range-topping Contour 60.



In addition to the Contour 60 (M.), there is also the smaller floor-standing box 30, as well as the compact model 20 (from €4500/7000/pair), which came out in a stimulating „White Oak“ plus the centre speaker 25C for €3250.

While it will be immediately clear to connoisseurs that this substantial floorstanding speaker, at almost nearly 136cm tall, is really a Dynaudio, to others it may not be so obvious. You see, the reinvention of the Contour 60 – the top model in this renewed line-up – took an eternity, even by the standards of the hi-fi sector, in which comparatively long model cycles are far from unknown. Compared to their predecessors, boldly styled with a protruding steel plate and visuals that polarized at best, and at worst led to rejection, these new Contours were designed by the Danish specialist to play things „safe“: they have a dignified elegance, with no corners or edges for the viewer to „bump“ into.

Dignified Instead of Striking

Where metal grilles once stood out to striking effect, there's now a 14mm-thick aluminum profile housing the four drive units, and providing stable support for the speaker's three-way design. Where once there was a thick MDF plinth, Contour 60 now stands on graceful aluminum struts, cheekily peeping out from under the curved cabinet. The spikes are embedded into the feet and can be unscrewed with an Allen key: this is done once the 54kg speakers are perfectly placed – until that point, small rubber rings protect the floor from damage while the fine adjustments are made. Eight flat locking nuts are provided for the spikes once the speakers are perfectly level: using these gives the sound of the Contour audibly more contours.

The efforts of careful installation and wiring are apparent as the Contour 60 snaps into focus and starts to show its

class when we precisely align the position of both loudspeakers. The new model replaced the previous S5.4 model, which had served us as an invincible working tool since its own exclusive test, and which we „kept“ at the end of its long service period for a comparison with its successor (see box).

And with the Contour 60 finally in place, it doesn't take long



for us to start appreciating its attributes. The fabric dome tweeter is easily identified as an „Esotar2“, equipped with aerodynamic, milled-out neodymium magnets, stabilizing coating and an inner damping chamber, the work of the Skanderborg company's master driver-designers. According to the manufacturer, the latest Contour series uses no parts from the previous range, and even the midrange driver and woofers are all newly developed. Well, there was plenty of time, after all!

Exciting stories are going around – like how the technicians used software-based simulations based on the „finite element analysis“ to

◀ Dynaudio founder Wilfried Ehrenholz with some models from the long „Contour“ tradition

reinforce Dynaudio's classic MSP woofer cone from 0.5mm to one millimeter thick; how they finally folded the centre asymmetrically instead of uniformly; and how the rubber bead at the rim is no longer semi-circular, but elliptical – in order to suppress tumbling motions even more effectively and to keep the movement of the cone piston over a wide range of excursions. This is also the purpose of the light, but ultra-rigid, coil former in the speaker's "motor": it's made from titanium instead of Kapton, the results acquired „virtually“ acquired results having been verified in long listening sessions.

The broad gap between 220 Hz and 4.5 kHz is filled-in perfectly by the midrange driver. Unlike other 15cm drivers made by the Danes, which were designed to cover some of the bass in „XEO“ or „Excite“, this one has been “uncompromisingly tailored to its scope and practically wrapped around the “Esotar2”, according to product manager Roland



▲ Only the best ingredients are used for the Dynaudio's pride of tweeters: the famous Esotar2.

„CONTOUR“ REDEFINED IN COMPARISON

Everyone was curious about one thing: how would the new Contour 60 compare to its direct predecessor, the proven Contour S5.4 (r.)? The latter had recently cost €8400 and had been built unchanged until the end of production in 2014 – there was no „LE“ version like the smaller S3.4.

Compare old and new, and while it cannot be asserted that Contour 60, in comparison to S5.4, brings the sound „from the head to the feet“, it does show an evolutionary step, which is quite significant because of the length it took to arrive at the new stage.

Therefore, the Contour 60 sounds like a much more refined S5.4. In the bass range, the latter appears comparatively more comfortable, far



Hoffmann. For the first time, this driver uses a rigid fiberglass coil former to carry the light aluminum wire in its “motor”.

Unlike most cabinet builders, the Danes still design and produce their own boxes at the company's headquarters. Anyone who had feared that acquisition by new Chinese owner GoerTek would dilute



▲ The solid metal foot stabilizers have integrated stabilizing spikes.

Dynaudio's ambition and high standards will be reassured by the Contour 60, for as simple as this cabinet appears on the exterior, it has a whole lot going on inside!

Apparently there were heated discussions – even the cool Danes get heated sometimes! – on the best strategy for stiffening the cabinet: increased wall thickness or internal bracing. The compromise reached? Both: so the Contour 60 now uses a range of MDF thicknesses for the main “carcass” – 38mm for the rear wall, 26mm for the baffle and 16mm for the side panels –plus slotted internal panels to diffuse the sound, dampening „Basotect“ on all walls, special wadding in the entire volume plus an acoustic fleece in the midrange chamber to guarantee the ideal balance of sound absorption and resistance.



▲ The two rear reflex tubes can be closed in several stages by means of intermeshing foam stoppers, allowing the desired bass adjustment.

Striking High-end Flair

We particularly liked the WBT „Nextgen“ terminals used in the single-wire connection panel: anyone who ever experienced a direct comparison of how positively these opposing sockets affect the spatial representation, serenity and homogeneity will realize their inclusion is a few extra euros well spent. But before we get lost in the effect of these terminals, or the finesse of the impedance-linearized crossover networks they feed, equipped as they are with first-class Mundorf components, perhaps we should listen to a few bars.

It is important to give the Dynaudio sufficient playing time before serious listening is attempted: only then do the



◀ In terms of sound, the WBT Nextgen sockets in the connection panel can hardly be praised sufficiently.

„contours“ of its already excellent drivers really flow into one another more conclusively. The Contour 60 is still a real Dynaudio – linear, acoustically transparent and authentic – yet despite its size and the two woofers, ported by rear-venting reflex tubes, this is not a loudspeaker to push the listener into the chair.

Instead, the complete effect is to provide more purity and agility in the lower frequencies, allowing the plump electric bass in Jennifer Warnes’ „Rock You Gently“ all its substance without excessive fattening: it drives the track rather than slowing it. Details like voices fading away in the background, as well as the many short flares of intricacies in the brilliant pop production, are presented by Dynaudio on a silver tray; it’s rare to have the impression of being able to hear everything, yet delivered so effortlessly.

Contour 60 gives a prime example of its art with the so-often heard „Saturday Night“ by the Red Norvo Quintet. They are “immortalized” in the STEREO sound test CDVI, as well at 45rpm on

the new „Best of“ LP, a fantastic live recording, crystal-clear, as three-dimensional as it is solid – the effects is almost like small explosions „bursting“ around the vibraphone strokes of the bandleader. You can even imagine hearing new details in the well-known piece - partly due to the constant background audience, partly from the band itself. Even I had never noticed the soft „pling“ in the right channel at 2:47.

And that was not the only time that I was astonished: voices appear with typical timbre, the Contour 60 refusing any inclination to whitewashing and delivering a sonorous chest tone, if this is available. Although the midrange driver and tweeter operate above the ear height of a seated listener, the height and size images are absolutely realistic, and the soundstage shows first-class organization, with that real ‘point at the performer’ effect.

Yes, this driver arrangement is a break from the previous Contour series, but it’s also opening a new chapter in the Contour history, which started 30 years ago. With their models – some unforgettable like the Kompaktbox 1.3, which led a whole generation of sophisticated hi-fi – Dynaudio has always demonstrated what can be achieved at just about affordable prices, and this is still the case with the Contour 60: it’s an excellent, powerful all-rounder with a striking high-end flair.

Dynaudio recently created a furor with the futuristic active and wireless solutions of the „Focus XD“ or „Xeo“ series, so it’s a good thing that this manufacturer also sets a standard in classical loudspeaker design that will last for many years. That it took some time in this case - well? Good things just need their time.

Matthias Böde

TEST-COMPONENTS

RECORD PLAYER: Transrotor Max nero

PHONO Amp: Brinkmann Edison

CD PLAYER/STREAMER:

T + A MP3000HV

PRE- AND POWER AMPLIFIERS:

Accoustic Arts Tube Preamp II-MK2, AmpII-MK3

FULL AMPLIFIER: Accuphase E-370, Symphonic Line RG9 MkIV Ref.

LOUDSPEAKERS: B & W 802 D3, DALI Epicon 6, Dynaudio C. S5.4

LS CABLE: HMS Gran Finale, In-Akustik LS1603



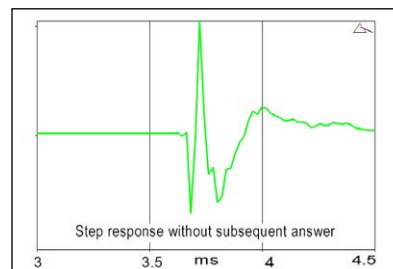
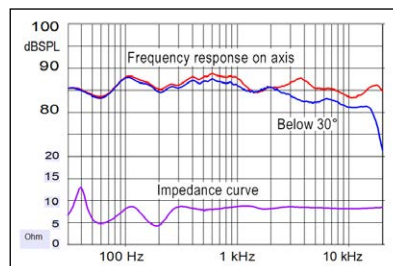
◀ The twin 18cm bass drivers used in the Contour 60 are of a brand-new design.

DYNAUDIO CONTOUR 60

Pair from € 9000 (six finishes, with lacquer available at a € 900 surcharge)
 Dimensions: 29.5x135.5x46 cm (WxHxD)
 Warranty: 8 years (on registration)
 Contact: Dynaudio Germany
 Tel: +49 4108 41800
 www.dynaudio.com

No other Contour model so amply demonstrates the Dynaudio maxim that „Danes don’t lie“: the new 60 shows a high level of know-how blended with brand-new developments to create a superlative loudspeaker for purists.

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



Nominal impedance	4 W
Minimum impedance	4.5 W at 190 Hz
Maximum impedance	13 W at 40 Hz
Sound pressure level (2.83 V/1 m)	89 dB SPL
Power for 94dB (1m)	7 W
Lower limit frequency (-3 dB)	30 Hz
Distortion factor at 63/3k/10kHz	0.3 0.1 0.1%

LABORATORY COMMENT

There is a slightly wavy, but linear axis frequency response (red) with an amplitude moving around the +/- two-decibel mark. Below an angle of 30 degrees, the tones above two kilohertz are increasingly declining, which is why the Contour 60 should be angled to the listening position. It has a pleasingly high efficiency, as well as a smooth, uncritical impedance response, without any significant breaks or peaks. Any amplifier can do that. Other strengths are the low lower limit frequency as well as an impeccable step response.

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY **92%**

PRICE/PERFORMANCE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
EXCELLENT