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EQUIPMENT REVIEW

Dynaudio Consequence Ultimate Edition

by Alan Sircom

Some high-end products change with the wind. Others adopt an ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ attitude to flagship models. Dynaudio very definitely takes the latter approach. The original Consequence loudspeaker showed what a drive unit company could do when it turns its hand to box building. It created such a stir, Dynaudio subsequently got into the speaker building game and did so extremely successfully. But the Consequence remained a fixed point, unchanging for a quarter of a century.

Eventually, the changes in materials science, drive unit technology, engineering and computer modelling meant a replacement, the Consequence Ultimate Edition, was called for, even though the original was still selling relatively well. This is no face-lift; it’s a root-and-branch change to almost every aspect of the original design, the result of more than two years of R&D. But it’s a tribute to the original Consequence to see just how close the old and new look. The distinctive ankle-level high frequency units, the series of fixed, yet separate boxes, that huge bass driver staring you in the face all look familiar. As does the Tardis-like cabinet: a very big, weighty squared off and physical presence that doesn’t look as big as it should. Although it stands in free-space, and takes up a lot of room (especially a lot of depth), it doesn’t ‘seem’ much larger than a pair of big PMCs and is certainly less of an imposing structure than many transatlantic flagship designs.

Nevertheless, staring at a whopping great 300mm driver where you expect to see a tweeter can be a little disconcerting. It’s probably little comfort that the cabinet hides a second upward-firing 300mm driver at the bottom side of that box to help make both sections act in a manner similar to – but not identical with – isobaric loading, known as the Compound Bass System. You’d expect deep bass from a big speaker, but 17Hz deep is an impressive off-shoot of this clever design

The reason for the ankle-grabbing high-frequency units is down to time alignment. Rather than go for the backswept look beloved by the likes of Avalon for example, Dynaudio wanted an upright squared off loudspeaker, but one that didn’t mean the sound from the bass units arrived slightly out of step with the mids and top. An inverted tweeter is not that uncommon – Mission uses the idea a lot in standmounters – but the Consequence takes this to new (Ultimate) levels.

There’s another, equally logical reason that many overlook – first reflections. Unless you rest this speaker on a

diffusion panel, a 300mm drive unit set low in the speaker is going to play havoc with the first reflection point off the floor almost right in front of the speaker. By placing it at about chest height, the floor and ceiling first reflections are further from the Consequence and can be managed slightly easier. The fact that it also makes sense from a position of building that Compound Bass System was probably a consideration, too.

A five-way design, from the bottom up, the Consequence sports supertweeter, tweeter, midrange dome, midwoofer cone and those 300mm woofers. These cross over at 15kHz, 2.7kHz, 1.4kHz and 800Hz respectively, which shows how much work the bass driver takes on. Naturally, given the fact that Dynaudio is also a drive unit manufacturer of some renown, these are custom made devices from the brand itself. No OEM drivers here. Dynaudio is not a fan of the metal dome tweeter or the paper cone bass driver, so it’s soft domes and MSP (magnesium silicate polymer) bass cones all round. As drive unit geeks are known to go misty-eyed at the mention of the Dynaudio Esotar2 tweeter (along with the ScanSpeak Revelator and the Morel Supremo), the company is very much on the right track. ▶

“Staring at a whopping great 300mm driver where you expect to see a tweeter can be a little disconcerting.”

▶ The first four drivers all sit on a separate baffle plate, but are separated into chambers to limit the interaction from unit to unit. Those chrome – or gold plated – surrounds are not just for show and act as optimal wave guides for each drive unit. The loudspeaker is put together like a giant wooden Lego set in your room, resting on four whopping great adjustable feet. With so much cabinet on offer, it's little wonder the crossover network is huge, featuring giant air-cored inductors that most speaker designs would simply not be able to accommodate. This is all wired together with the impedance-matched OCOS coaxial speaker cable as internal wiring – another popular choice with the Dynaudio people across the board.

Some big loudspeakers are surprisingly easy to drive and come with a benign impedance load. The Consequence Ultimate Edition isn't one of them. It's not an amp-crusher, but its low sensitivity (claimed to be 85dB, but I suspect one or two dB below that), and a four ohm nominal impedance means prime amplifier beef is the order of the day. We tried it with a Naim CD555 CD player into a NAC 552 preamp and a NAP 500 power amp,



and a Chord Electronics Red Reference CD player, CPA8000 preamp and SPM14000 mono power amps, both times fed entirely by top Chord Company Sarum cables. The Naim kit gave a gutsy performance, but was beginning to run out of steam next to the unstoppable force of more than a kilowatt of Chord. That this speaker was demanding enough to highlight the limits of the Naim shows just how much power is needed to give the Consequence what it wants. If this were a cheaper design, the review would end there, but when you get to discuss speakers at this level, the expectation is for no-compromise amplification. Still, if you are planning to use the Dynaudio flagship to show off how good your 5W SET amp sounds, something's gotta give.

This is the sort of speaker that doesn't shout about its virtues in a flashy, immediate manner. Perhaps this is part of the reason for the original Consequence's quarter-century lifespan. Instead, the Dynaudio plays the long game, slowly seducing you with a sound that has longevity. Even that subterranean bass is not ostentatious or impressive, just convincing in its power and precision.

Such a mannered presentation makes demands upon the listener, because you quickly discover the difference between true bass depth and the enhanced boosts, booms and blooms used to make people think they are getting deep bass from a smaller speaker design. Comparing dub with real-world sounds is a fascinating exercise through the Consequence Ultimates; for all its sound system energy, dub is centred round the 40-80Hz range, with not a great deal of bottom octave action taking place. Tympani and the bottom end of a piano keyboard goes deeper and it shows here. Paradoxically, the bass honesty of the Consequence Ultimate will make those wanting some bass grunt from their dub records feel almost disappointed. On the other hand,

the rooted, real world solidity the naturally extended bass brings will provide more than a little solace, especially for anyone with a penchant for acoustic instruments. The sense of performers in their own spaces makes for exciting listening.

The ability to reach below 20Hz – and it is a real sub-20Hz, no more than 3dB down at that 17Hz point – is an odd experience. It's not what you expect, not the roller coaster of subsonic trouser-flappery you might have been led to believe from the home theatre 'Explosions R Us' brigade. It's not like someone gut-punched you, it doesn't leave you doubled up or fighting to catch your breath. It's like a palpitation, a whole body palpitation. You just stop, and it feels like the air around you dropped by about 10°. For that brief moment, time stands still – and you are off again. Cinema soundsmiths used to know this and the really low frequencies with great care, as accent for the one or two really intense moments in a movie. Not any more. But fortunately, musicians still respect the subsonic and when bass hits this sort of depth, it's there for heart-stopping effect.

In audio terms, this kind of bass needs near-endless power on tap, but you are served up with the moments of sheer danger and thrill in music. So, when the music stops sounding like a badly de-tuned radio and ▶

► kicks in properly (and far later than most people expect) on ‘Bury Pts. 1+3’ from The Fall’s *Your Future Our Clutter* CD, the sound of the kick drum that suddenly appears after two minutes of not-quite-right grungy introduction shocks you. Not in a jump out of the seat shock, but in a creepy Mark E Smith unleashed upon you kind of manner.

I’ve concentrated on the bottom end because the sort of full-range the Consequence Ultimate Edition offers is not normally available this side of six-figure speakers these days. But it’s not just about bass. The whole package has an effortlessness that is hugely alluring. OK, so it’s an effortless that takes an awful lot of amplifier effort to deliver, but the result is a sonic confidence of the kind you normally get in studio environments.

“This is where the Consequence Ultimate Edition excels. The sense of scale is wholly dependent on the piece of music played.”

People who buy big speakers, often buy them for their sense of scale, where they should be looking at them for their scaling ability. This is where the Consequence excels. The sense of scale is wholly dependent on the piece of music played. This can sometimes be disconcerting – a close mic’d Leonard Cohen from the first *Rare on Air* album sounds like you are faced with an eight foot tall depressed head reading poetry at you – but is remarkably honest to the original source. Change that big-headed Laughing Len for the live recording *King Curtis at Fillmore West* album and you are faced with a thirty foot stage in front of you. Replace that with John Pickard’s *The Flight of Icarus* and real-sized percussionists beat merry real-sized hell out of real-sized tympani in front of a real-sized orchestra. The acid test for a big speaker is girl-with-guitar music; it can so easily scale up too large, but on the Consequence Ultimate Edition, the balance was just about perfect. Some of that must rest with the tweeter and supertweeter, which have to be producing perhaps the smoothest sounds from a loudspeaker. Not smooth in a ‘softened, blunted’ way, but smooth in an accurate, but ‘I can listen to this forever’ manner.

It’s impossible not to draw comparisons with the other loudspeaker Titan I tested this issue; the Magico Q5. However, they move in such different circles and do such different things, I suspect this might be the only time a comparison of this kind is drawn. The two go after different interpretations of honesty. The Magico Q5 has an uncanny ability to portray the passion of the musicians and the wonderment of music with an honesty and accuracy that is unparalleled. In contrast, the Dynaudio Consequence Ultimate Edition has that studio like honesty to the signal across the board that makes you think you are in the mastering suite. In brute force terms, the Consequence has the edge in terms of a wider frequency response (sort of; the Magico’s Q5 bat-eared 50kHz beats the Consequence’s dog-whistle 30kHz, but

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Five-way Vented Compound System speaker

Drive Units: 21mm soft-dome supertweeter, 28mm soft-dome tweeter, 52mm soft-dome midrange, 170mm MSP midwoofer, 300mm MSP woofer

Frequency Response: 17Hz – 30kHz

Crossover Frequencies:

800Hz/1.4kHz/2.7kHz/15kHz

Sensitivity (2.83 V/1 m): 85 dB

Impedance: 4 Ohms

IEC Long Term Power Handling: > 400 W

Dimensions (W x H x D): 43x133x63cm

Weight: 114kg per speaker

Finish options: Wengé/chrome or Rosewood/gold. Real wood veneers

Price: £45,000 per pair

Manufactured by

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where it matters at the heavy-lifting end, the otherwise-impressive 26Hz of the Q5 is no match for 17Hz of heart-stopper), but both speakers are much more than the sum of their specs. Both are beautifully engineered, well-thought out loudspeakers that have a great deal in common sonically, and my respect for both designs is deepened by the consistency of sound they deliver.

There’s something inherently right about Dynaudio’s approach here. The Consequence Ultimate Edition makes all the right ‘flagship’ noises; it’s big, powerful and possessed of the sort of bass and dynamics that few loudspeakers can deliver, yet couples that with the sort of classy refinement that Dynaudio’s more affordable models are praised for. In fact, the only odd thing about the Dynaudio Consequence Ultimate Edition is that it has so low a profile among high-end loudspeaker aficionados. That must change. +