

Audio Physic: Classic 3 REVIEW „Hörerlebnis 2018“

Enjoyment in refined style

by Marco Kolks

Novelties from Brilon: the Classic 3 loudspeaker system

For those who are forced to operate loudspeakers on a bookshelf, there is good news: Audio Physic has designed a compact top-class loudspeaker, the Classic 3. And for those who are looking out for a small two-way speaker, that can be placed on a support freestanding in the room in order to best enjoy the sonic benefits of such a compact design, this also is good news. On their homepage the manufacturer from Brilon, which is located in the forested German Sauerland region, comes up with the slogan: "Sometimes less can indeed be more - if done right!" That sounds self-confident and who knows the head of development Manfred Diestertich, very well is aware of his talent.

The Classic 3 with its weight of just under seven kilograms, is 350 mm tall, 170 mm wide and 285 mm deep. The baffle is extremely narrow, whereas the enclosure is somewhat deeper. Slim front panels are an ideal way to avoid the reflection of the sound radiated by the drivers. Due to its proportions, the design shows an elegant restraint and therefore consequently pleasing looks in all available finishes. For testing purposes, Hörerlebnis was provided by Audio Physic with a version in black ash.

The front panel is equipped with a tweeter and a mid-woofer. Both drivers embellish also its larger sister model, the floorstanding Classic 5. However, unlike many competitors, Audio Physic does not simply buy its drivers off the shelf, but has them custom-built at specialist manufacturer Wavector to their own specifications and exclusively to the brand. The tweeter excels a silk dome with a slight horn-shaped face plate with precisely calculated directivity. This implies a more direct, focused and accurate performance, which very much accommodates for my own sonic preferences. The mid-woofer features a cone made from woven glass fibre and a phase plug to reduce possible interferences. The cone is torsionally extremely stiff, yet still very light. As a result, it is capable to cope with even the fastest impulses, a basic requirement for an accurate sonic imaging. In its inside, there is no circuit board used for the crossover, which instead has the high-quality components freely wired. The tweeter reaches down to 2,5 kHz, passing then over the frequency band to the mid-woofer, both separated by a filter of third order. The rearside is completed by a bass reflex port and an embedded single-wire connector terminal. By conviction, the manufacturer from Brilon renounces the use of bi-wiring terminals in all their models.

Worth mentioning is the very solid and clean workmanship. The Classic 3 really shows up as a lovingly crafted speaker. A sonically useful addition are the proprietary Vibration Control Feet to decouple the speaker from the ground, either if it is intended to be positioned on a bookshelf or on a sideboard. Lucky are those, whose ambience allows for operating the Classic 3 on a supporting stand freely in the room. A recommendable solution for this kind of application are Audio Physic's own Sherpa V speaker stands. Bottom and top plates are made of tempered safety glass, connected by an oval supporting strut in lacquered aluminum. Buying speaker stands and speakers all from one manufacturer offers also another advantage: You get the correct listening height right from the beginning.

Listening experience

I opt for a placement of the Classic 3 freely in the room. The available stereo base can be set between 2 m and 2.50 m. It may also prove advantageous to angle-in the speaker towards the listening position. As with almost all speakers having only one driver transmitting nearly the full range of lower to higher mids, which, of course, is the case with all two-way speakers, a clearer focus can usually be obtained. The distance to the back wall is approximately 50 cm, the distance to the side walls about 70 cm. It surely can be said that the main intention throughout the development has certainly been to create a transducer for all the non-standard and sometimes very different conditions in the homes of the customers.

Furthermore it should be able to cover a wide range of music genres. These certainly are demands people imply on any speaker, but when it comes to achieve the best set-up in domestic ambiances one surprisingly has to often face severe problems. However, the Classic 3 can cope with any room, except, of course, with those rooms that range in the category "large". By design, it is a two-way speaker with small outer dimensions, nothing more, nothing less.

After one month, the Classic 3 shows off for the first time, but then after two, listening to music really becomes enjoyment. But already during the burn-in phase there is lots of fun you can have with this speaker. If, of course, the rest of the system proves to be a good match. The Classic 3 is very sensitive to small changes in the audio chain. The easiest way to detect any inconsistencies is by using the Vibration Control Feet under the stands. And if there appear to be discrepancies in the cabling, the Classic 3 will take prompt action to call your attention. In sum, this speaker impresses with a very good spatial depth (Volker Engelberth, *Prismatic Colors*, Unit Records). Virtually, the imaginary space behind the speakers starts to open up. Volker Engelberth's piano outlines its edges, makes them tangible, and stands immovably at a defined distance. "*Prismatic Colors*" teaches the colourful facets in jazz. And the album really is full of colour. The players act in a colourful mixture of finely chiselled solos and complex teamwork, harmonious, functional and extremely creative. Not only can the Classic 3 floodlight the rearward space, but also illuminate the other axes. This makes the quintet sound highly three-dimensional. "*Orange*" even takes it a nimble step further. The image is dominated by the full-bodied bass solo at the beginning, and underlined with careful key sounds it slides over into a section of eruptive horns, before a sunset atmosphere sets in. The interplay of gentle sequences and intense outbreaks works perfectly, while avoiding any overexcitement. On the contrary, favoured by its small dimensions, this speaker manages to detach acoustic events from the enclosure and to position them freely in the room. Analogous to this, there is the almost ten-minute track "*Red Orange*", in which Engelberth's lively play is preceded by melancholically evolving horns before the pace increases, while Arne Huber underlays strong accents on the bass and Silvio Morger caresses his drums in his usual filigree and elegant way, rather than beating them. Then, literally, the piano takes a good step forward and converts the red-orange almost into a pastel colour, before the horns respond and the piece ends in rich tonality. The Classic 3 is music that lives and breathes, and where individuality and common spirit go hand in hand in a reciprocal and versatile way.

The ability in rendering voices and liberating dynamics further enrich the Classic 3's array of skills. Time and again I realize that singing really impresses me (James Taylor, *One Man Band*, Hearmusic). For almost forty years James Taylor has embodied the prototypical American singer/songwriter like no one else. On the album "*One Man Band*", which was recorded live at concerts in the Colonial Theatre in the Berkshires (in the western part of Massachusetts), James Taylor reviews his entire career and recites self-written songs like "*Something In The Way She Moves*", "*Never Die Young*", "*Country Road*", "*Carolina In My Mind*", "*Fire And Rain*" and "*Shower The People*", and, of course, "*You've Got A Friend*", written for him by Carole King. Anxiously I pounce on the CDs containing good voice recordings. Taylor sings, plays guitar in his inimitable way and tells very amusing stories about his songs, stories from the wild old days with the Beatles, with Joni Mitchell and Carole King. The performance of the Classic 3 is fluent as well as tangible, further enhanced by the beneficial dynamic capabilities of this speaker. Fine nuances reach the

listener's ears without the restraining and distorting effect of an intricate crossover. Although the efficiency is only 89 dB, this is sufficient to get along even with amplifiers of moderate power outputs.

Again and again the Classic 3 surprises with its attitude to not reduce the sonic image to peep-box dimensions (Paulo Morello, Sambop, in+out Records), such as listening from the outside through a remote window, being downright detached from the musical event as a listener. Once the Classic 3 has found its place in the room, these little black valuables from the Sauerland can't keep from convincing again, this time with Paulo Morello and his fellow musicians, who intuitively incorporate in their playing all those qualities that make jazz and Brazilian music distinctive and strong. The resilient lightness inherent in Brazilian music in no time conquers the heart of the listener. It mirrors the finesse, the intensity and the speed of jazz music. In addition, there is this naturally virtuoso, joyful fluent way of making music, which one only finds with those who are absolute experts on their instruments and in their favoured genres. For "Sambop" Paulo Morello has put together a band of selected musicians. Lula Galvão, the special guest from Brazil on acoustic guitar, is a true master of his craft. The Classic 3 transforms the player's rhythmic nuances and dynamic flow into a musical atmosphere. Where it most matters musically, these speakers perform distinctively balanced due to their highly coherent performance. And, they also are capable of conveying this unique style of Brazilian cosy and melancholic yearning, which after all only music is able to capture and express. However, what particularly attracts me is the Classic 3's way of letting the nylon strings and the semi-acoustic guitar sound in wonderful clear and accurate harmony.

Conclusion: If you can set up the Classic 3 free-standing in the room, then the optional stands and feet are a very good investment. In view of its pricing and due to the high-quality workmanship you will have to give this two-way speaker a listen. Period!

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Product:

Loudspeaker model: Classic 3

Price: 1,390 euros

Dimensions (HxWxD): 350 x 170 x 285 mm, Footprint (WxD): 170 x 285 mm

Weight: 7 kg,

Recommended amplifier power: 20-120 W

Impedance: 4 Ohm

Frequency range: 45 Hz - 30 kHz

Sensitivity: 89 dB

Manufacturer:

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Email: info@audiophysic.com, Internet: www.audiophysic.com

Distribution:

Find distributors on www.audiophysic.com

Listening equipment:

Turntable: Transrotor Fat Bob Reference;

Tonearms: SME V (inner cabling by Clearaudio), SME 2-12-inch, SME 2-9-inch;

Cartridges: Stein Music Aventurin 6, Transfiguration New Spirit, The Cartridge Man, Phonosophie Flair;

CD players: Phonosophie Impuls 2 and Power Control 3, Trigon Recall MK II; Cambridge 650 C by Klang

und Kunst

Preamplifier: Phonosophie Bi-Control 2 and Power Control 3;

Phono amplifier: Phonosophie und Power Control 2;

Power amplifier: Phonosophie Bi-Stage 4/4;

Integrated amplifiers: Symphonic Line RG 10 MK IV Reference; Cambridge 650 A by Klang und Kunst

Loudspeaker: Audio Physic Cardeas, Audio Physic Avanti, Duevel Jupiter, Ascendo C5 MK II;

Cables (interconnects/speaker/power); Interconnects: Phonosophie, Klang und Kunst NF 3 S12; TMR Ramses

Phono cables: HMS Grand Finale Jubilee, Sun-Wire (3 sets), Peter Feldmann Elektronik,

Speaker cables: Phonosophie, Phonosophie Bi-Amping adapter, Bastanis Epilog, Artkustik, Klang und Kunst LS3 S12,

Power cables: Klang und Kunst NK 3 S12, Phonosophie, Artkustik,

Power bars: Phonosophie, Klang und Kunst;

Power accessories: Power Animator and Optimizer by Artkustik, Phonosophie wall outlets AG, Phonosophie fuses and fuse holders;

Equipment supports and bases: Racks by Phonosophie, speaker stands by Metaldesign Liedtke, SSC bases and pucks, Klang und Kunst KB3-S10

Digital accessories: CD stone by Phonosophie;

Analogue accessories: Animator chips by Phonosophie, Blaue Lichtquelle (blue light source) by Phonosophie, Audio Animator and Cable Animators (MK II versions) by Artkustik,

Power fuses (in domestic fuse box) by Phonosophie;

Room acoustics tuning: Corner pyramids by Phonosophie,

Room Animator MK II by Artkustik, Harmonizer by Stein Music