

Six of the best

"The Ambient 5.1A set from Rhine-based audio specialist Heco is a home cinema solution which boasts a particularly living room-friendly design. The speaker set is appealing thanks to its compact dimensions, beautiful design and impressive surround sound. Whether the surround sound lives up to what's promised visually has been scrutinised by AV-Magazin.

The enjoyment of a sound that fills the room is a fascination from which it is hard to escape. A prerequisite for this, however, is a setup with at least six speakers. This is where five surround speakers provide the directional sound and a subwoofer caters for the dramatic bass reproduction. Heco's Ambient system is a promising home cinema solution that looks set to satisfy even the most stringent demands in terms of price/performance and design. The speaker set presented here is the first member of the Ambient series from Heco. As the name suggests, the focus of the chic speaker set is on design and living room integration. To ensure the sound quality does not fall by the wayside, Heco's engineers have incorporated tried and tested technology in the compact cabinets. The purpose of this is to enable the small cubes, despite their minimal space requirements, to generate a proper cinema experience within your own four walls. Read the following report to see how well the Pulheim-based company fared in this project.

Design and workmanship

The handy satellite speakers are manufactured from a black anodised aluminium profile, whose brushed surface looks extremely elegant. Anyone picking up the small speaker will be invariably surprised by its weight. Thanks to its solid construction and high quality material, a single satellite speaker weighs in at 1.3 kg.

The baffle and rear panel are made of plastic and, in contrast to the side surfaces, are provided with a high gloss finish. A glossy silver trim runs between the sturdy metal front grille and the housing sides to distinguish the front from the rear body. The subwoofer is also compelling with an excellent tactile quality and it is able to stand up to even the most critical inspection. All joins are extremely even, which alludes to very diligent workmanship. The bottom line is that Heco's Ambient set creates a positive first impression throughout.

Application

To facilitate integration in the living room the satellite speakers in the Ambient set can either be stood upright or mounted on the wall. The preassembled glass feet provide the speakers with a secure purchase on shelves and sideboards. Anyone wanting to set up the speakers freely in the room can resort to the optional "Ambient Stand 1" speaker stands. These feature a glass base and a square aluminium tube. If required, the speaker wire can be routed through the hollow stand. The stands are available in pairs at a cost of € 100.

Heco also provides four angled brackets for practical wall mounting. The sturdy metal connectors enable the speakers to be mounted quickly and easily at the desired position in the room.

Technology

A two-way system is responsible for audio signal conversion. This consists of a midrange driver which operates via a 75 mm paper cone. A dome tweeter is recessed into the baffle directly above. The dome-shaped fabric cone transmits frequencies above 3,600 Hz. Deeper sounds are catered for by the bass/mid-range cone.

Solid, high quality gold-plated screw terminals ensure optimum contact security. The terminals, which are protected against short circuit, are capable of accommodating cable shoes, banana plugs and bare speaker cable.

The centre speaker features the same chassis as the satellite speakers. Unlike the satellites, however, the centre speaker is equipped with two drivers, which ensure a higher level stability.

The lower bass range is catered for by an impressive subwoofer, which cuts a fine figure thanks to its black high-gloss wooden cabinet. A 20 cm woofer and a reflex tube are embedded on the underside of the sub, between the base plate and body. The unit, which is optimised by active electronics, generates its sound via a highly rigid and damped paper cone. This is driven by a 120 watt power amplifier. A level limiter protects the bass chassis from electromechanical damage in the event of an overload.

Sound

We start the listening test with the fantasy/adventure movie "Jurassic Park 2 - The Lost World" directed by Steven Spielberg. The original DTS soundtrack on the Blu-ray disc is resplendent with an excellent dynamic range and exquisite tonality.

Heco's Ambient set cuts a very good figure during the very first few minutes of the test. Film dialogue is reproduced by the centre speaker with good resolution and tonality, which effectively enhances speech intelligibility. Presentation within the impressive stereo sound stage is extremely good thanks to the uniform use of chassis for the satellite and centre speakers. The excellent locatability of various effects generates an exquisite impression of surround sound and thrusts the listener into the middle of the action.

A not insignificant contribution is also made by the bass reflex subwoofer. This complements the brilliant sound pattern with its striking bass reproduction superbly well and makes the spectacular film sequences in this dino-adventure appear even more realistic.

Clear text

The quality of Heco's Ambient 5.1A set can be seen and, above all, it can be heard. The speakers generate an excellent sound quality, which will transform any living room into a home cinema. The stylish satellite speakers sound brilliant and clear, while the subwoofer is powerful and voluminous. Heco's speakers thereby promise high quality film and TV enjoyment for many years to come."