

HECO

Direkt

BEST BUY

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Despite its generous sensitivity and relatively east-to-drive load, the measurements are impressively evenhanded, showing clear evidence that it has been put together by engineers with serious expertise. Yet the speaker also sells for a relatively affordable £2,500/pair, so a Best Buy rating would seem to be highly appropriate.



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LOUDSPEAKER HAS EXCEPTIONAL
SENSITIVITY AND AN EVENHANDED
BALANCE!”***



HECO

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MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

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REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

Rega Apheta 2

Rega Aphelion

Heco Direkt

Leadingedge panels

Missing Link Passion Signature

Soundsmith Zephyr MIMC

Eclipse TD712zMK2

ATC SCM11

Audes Excellence 5 AMT

Allnic HPA5000

Benchmark DAC2 HGC

Astell&Kern AK500 NAS

Naim NAP300 DR

Studio Connections Platinum

Wychwood Audionics

MUSIC & MORE

Contents

- 4 STAN'S SAFARI No33**
Stan explores the backwater of component microphony, while packing everything up for a house move.
- 6 MONEY, MONEY, MONEY**
It's A Rich Man's World (Abba 1976). Julian Musgrave muses on inflation and value in High End Audio.
- 9 REGA APHETA 2 + APHELION**
Rega has upgraded its Apheta cartridge and added an upmarket Aphelion derivative. Paul Messenger reports.
- 10 MAN OF NOTE**
Chris Frankland talks to Audio Note UK boss Peter Qvortrup about his 35 years in hi-fi, and some exciting new developments
- 13 MISSING LINK PASSION SIGNATURE**
Kevin Fiske examines an interesting new interconnect
- 14 LEADINGEDGE PANELS**
Paul Messenger finds that Vertex AQ's 'Leadingedge' panels are a most effective form of room treatment
- 16 HECO DIREKT**
This daringly different loudspeaker has exceptional sensitivity and an evenhanded balance, as Paul Messenger discovers
- 18 PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS**
Keith Howard explores the ideal headphone frequency response, and envisages further developments
- 22 THE ROAD TO GREAT BASS**
Peter Truce explains why and how multiple subwoofers and heavyweight filtering are necessary to deliver seriously smooth bass in the listening room
- 25 SOUNDSMITH ZEPHYR MIMC**
Chris Bryant encounters an unusual high end cartridge
- 26 ECLIPSE TD712zMK2:**
Never mind balance or bandwidth, this 'dinosaur egg' speaker is all about timing – 'TD' in Eclipse-speak
- 28 NAIM'S DR TECHNOLOGY**
Does the Naim Statement research programme constitute a revolution in amplifier design and technology?
- 34 ATC SCM11**
Martin Colloms discovers a compact but powerful sealed-box, two-way, stand-mount loudspeaker
- 37 ALLNIC HPA5000**
Rafael Todes tries a transformerless valve headphone amplifier
- 38 BENCHMARK DAC2 HGC**
Chris Bryant tries a compact yet unusually versatile DAC/pre-amp/headphone amplifier
- 41 ASTELL&KERN AK500 NAS**
From a company known for hi-res pocket music players comes a high-end 'network audio system'. Andrew Everard investigates
- 44 BRISTOL 2016**
Jason Kennedy reports from the biggest British hi-fi show on the calendar
- 46 MUSICAL TIMING**
Martin Colloms and Stephen N. Harris pick favourite tracks for assessing musical rhythm and timing
- 49 BITS & PIECES**
Short reports on SC Platinum interconnects and Wychwood Audionics
- 50 HIFICRITIC AWARDS 2015**
Our retrospective Awards include Audio Excellence, Recommended and Best Buy components
- 52 HIFICRITIC INDEX TO VOL9 (2015)**
- 54 KRAUTROCK**
Mark Prendergast examines Germany's crucial contribution to the music of the 1970s
- 56 JAZZ PICKS**
Greg Drygala picks several recent jazz releases
- 58 CLASSICAL**
Colin Anderson picks a number of classical releases
- 60 SUBJ SOUNDS**
Paul Messenger encounters a gorgeous but flawed Estonian speaker



Eclipse TD712zMK2 - page 26



Heco Direkt - page 16



Heco Direkt

THIS DARINGLY DIFFERENT LOUDSPEAKER HAS EXCEPTIONAL SENSITIVITY AND AN EVENHANDED BALANCE, AS PAUL MESSENGER DISCOVERS

This loudspeaker looks and behaves quite unlike any current stereotype. Indeed, while searching for something broadly comparable I found myself going back to the Leak *Sandwich*. This was one of the key loudspeakers in the 1960s, but Martin Colloms recently reviewed an original sample in this journal (Vol8 No4). Although it does differ in a number of important respects, the *Direkt* is a bulky and unusually wide two-way with a large (280mm) main driver. There are similarities to the Audio Note models, though these have much smaller (200mm) bass/mid unit, and a 'Phase 3 Loft Style' *B15* prototype that Burmester showed at the Munich show in 2015 (which doesn't seem to have made it into the company's catalogue). I also understand that US brand De Vore's *Orangutan* has numerous similarities too; the 0/96 version certainly looks the business.

Although those comparisons are interesting enough, they're nowhere near as dramatic as the contrast between the *Direkt* and earlier Heco loudspeakers that came this reviewer's way. The brand actually first appeared way back in the late 1940s, which may go some way towards explaining the numerous subsequent changes, as the Heco models scrutinised in those earlier reviews seemed entirely conventional in layout, while the £2,500 *Direkt* is clearly anything but.

The first time I encountered Heco was roughly 25 years ago, back in 1991. Much more recently, in 2008, the current importer Puresound made another attempt to establish the brand in the UK, again without much success, but the introduction of the *Direkt* could well change the situation in Heco's favour, for several reasons. One factor might well be that it looks so very different from the norm, but a more cogent reason is that it has an unusually high sensitivity, and is therefore particularly well suited to partner the relatively low power valve amplifiers that lie at the core of the Puresound range.

While the wide and shallow shape, and the single central rear leg are themselves unusual, the most dramatic feature is surely the use of two-way configuration with an 11 inch (280mm) bass/mid driver. Furthermore, it operates right up to a stated crossover frequency of 2.4kHz – not quite as high as the 3kHz norm, but a lot higher than usually encountered with a driver with a 200mm paper cone. Hopefully the cone will continue to behave well through and above the crossover zone, though one anticipates that a driver with such a large diameter will tend to focus the midband frequencies in a forward direction. The tweeter has a 28mm soft dome diaphragm that is somewhat recessed behind a shiny and stylish metal horn, which should extend its power range to a lower frequency than usual,

PAUL MESSENGER

HIFICRITIC
BEST BUY

and better match its directivity to the bass unit.

This large main driver is reflex-loaded by twin ports located in the base, and the well-braced enclosure is kept clear of the floor by a three-part tripod arrangement that lifts the front of the enclosure by rather more than the rear, tilting the low-set drivers upwards towards the listeners. The footprint is exceptionally large, with spikes attached to each of the three 'legs', though there's probably no way of applying a spring-decoupling technique. The whole speaker leans backwards by a few degrees, and since its top edge is just 1m off the deck, and the edges are curved or chamfered, it doesn't look nearly as bulky as the bald statistics might suggest. On our samples the enclosure came in an unusually subtle variation of two different matt black finishes, a wide central stripe flanked by two much thinner stripes, and then much wider side stripes in a contrasting black, all of which adds up to a rather attractive overall appearance. A white-and-silver version is also available.

Test Report

Measurements indicate an unusually high sensitivity, at around 95dB under our far-field regime. This is not really all that surprising in view of that large diameter main driver, but it's also barely compromised by the impedance here. While this might follow Europe's preference for a 4ohm loading, it does at least stay at or above 4ohms throughout, so at a nominal 6ohms it doesn't represent a particularly difficult load. And in view of the high sensitivity, it's no great surprise that the absolute bass extension rolls off below 30Hz, thanks in part at least to a port tuning frequency at around 40Hz. The port output is actually a bit strong, but a major plus and a real surprise was a beautifully balanced overall in-room averaged frequency response above 60Hz, which is also reasonably smooth too (± 4 dB 60Hz – 1.2kHz; ± 1.5 dB 1.2kHz – 20 kHz).

Sound Quality

Absolute bass weight might be mildly compromised here, but that seems a fair price to pay for such a generous sensitivity, which is probably a factor in conferring a good measure of dynamic grip and precision. That in turn makes voices in particular – and indeed the midband in general – unusually expressive and communicative, as well as impressively evenhanded.

I recently acquired a pair of monoblock valve power amplifiers based on vintage *PX4* triodes and operating in a single-ended configuration. These actually sound quite delicious, but as they have a total power output of roughly 3.5W, it's

quite obvious that they need to be used with high sensitivity speakers. I therefore connected them up to these Heco *Direkt* models, and got excellent results, with ample loudness available (for my tastes at least), along with the delightful sound of these valves. I subsequently also got fine results with an old EL84-based push-pull Leak *Stereo 20*, another amplifier with limited power output, so this is clearly a good choice for low power valve amplifiers – especially those of the single-ended variety.

That said, there's no denying its ability to handle serious solid state power. Strictly in the interests of reviewing, I pulled out Laurie Anderson's *Strange Angels* and gave it a good whacking with *Monkey's Paw*. The loudspeakers handled this without drama, simply getting louder until I at least had had enough and a greetings card fell off the storage radiator. Back at normal listening levels, I replaced the card and noted that the speakers now sounded as good as ever, even though I might have become a trifle traumatised.

There is some coloration here, but it doesn't seem particularly severe or intrusive. It's probably down to the broad unevenness – roughly ± 4 dB – seen throughout the broad midband. Output does seem a bit strong and prominent 750Hz – 1.1kHz, and rather lacking around 350Hz, which might help explain the characteristic sound quality of this speaker, though the fact that it works exceptionally well at very low volume levels remains a crucially important and relevant observation.

One might anticipate that the width could adversely affect the precision and focus of the stereo imaging, though this didn't seem to be the case. However, I'll be the first to admit that my personal appreciation of the finer elements of stereo imaging is not great, so I don't intend to be dogmatic on this.

Conclusions

Heco's *Direkt* looks a very impressive prospect, especially for those who favour low power valve amplifiers, and particularly for enthusiasts that choose the least powerful single-ended triode (SET) variety. It certainly looks unusual, but did not seem to be domestically unduly intrusive, despite a generous volume, partly because it leans backwards and sits quite near the ground. Despite its generous sensitivity and relatively east-to-drive load, the measurements are impressively evenhanded, showing clear evidence that it has been put together by engineers with serious expertise. Yet the speaker also sells for a relatively affordable £2,500/pair, so a Best Buy rating would seem to be highly appropriate.

Manufacturer's Specification

Type	2 =-way bass reflex
Drivers	280mm bass/mid 28mm dome tweeter
Power Handling (RMS/max)	200/320 watts
Impedance	4 – 8 ohms
Frequency Response	25Hz – 28kHz
Crossover Frequency	2,350 Hz
Recommended Amplifier	
Power	10 – 320W
Sensitivity	95dB (confirmed)
Cabinet surface finish	black or white/silver
Cabinet Dimensions (WxHxD)	440x900x200mm
Weight	25.8kg
Price (pair)	£2,500

