



Diapason Micra III Excel

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Launched at the last High End event to be staged in Munich, the 2019 show, the Micra III Excel is the latest addition to Italian specialist Diapason's Classic Series. At the Bavarian event it was somewhat overshadowed by other announcements from this manufacturer, but I knew it was a model worthy of further investigation. And, I wasn't disappointed when I put them in my system.

Diapason was founded in 1987 by Alessandro Schiavi, who previously had extensive experience in recording studios. His skill in capturing live music in three-dimensional space and its faithful reproduction, led to the development of the first Diapason, the Prelude.

Even today, when many famous brands have resorted to manufacturing in the Far East, each Diapason speaker is still hand assembled and wired by skilled craftsmen. The beautiful cabinetry is not only an integral part of the design, but a proud example of Italian furniture-making. The cabinets, constructed in solid-wood, are assembled for ultimate rigidity in order to be as free from resonance as possible. This is something I witnessed first-hand on my visit to the production line.

New mini

The shoebox dimensions of the Micra III Excel cabinet are achievable with the combination of a 110mm mid-bass unit and 26mm soft-dome tweeter in a rear-ported cabinet of solid Canaletto walnut. But the sound is much larger than the small boxes would suggest with a bass response which seems almost unbelievable from this size of speaker. Add to that the enormous sound-stage and studio-like quality, and there's little wonder that I had a very enjoyable two months living with these speakers.

The Micra III Excel's woofer uses Diapason's Direct Drive technology, developed in conjunction with the Norway's drive unit manufacturer SEAS, to Diapason's specifications. This permits a direct connection to the woofer without using a low-pass crossover, while the high-pass circuit is wired directly using Van den Hul CS oxygen-free copper cables.

A matching 1/M floor-stand is available (not supplied for the review); 75 cm tall, the thick, black painted metal structure boasts a central round shaft which can be filled with lead or other damping material, while there are four spikes under the base that lift the speaker system off the floor.

Sound quality

Thanks to the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, I spent a lot more time than usual at home in my listening room enjoying a wide variety of material. During the review of the new Diapa-

son's I received Hegel's latest unit, the H95 DAC, streamer and integrated amp. They appeared the perfect match and I didn't look back.

Sound quality

From the off, it was clear that here was a system capable of incredible three-dimensionality while possessing supreme levels of clarity and realism. With Faure's Requiem (Corydon Singers/Matthew Best on Hyperion), the composer's best-know work had me enraptured as a compelling atmosphere was brought to the listening room, complete with pure-toned soloists.



The sounds produced by these small speakers had a harmonic completeness which was very appealing and could be enjoyed for hours without listener fatigue. Too many modern loudspeakers aim for a 'wow' factor but are extremely tiring to listen to for prolonged periods. Not so here, thankfully, as I enjoyed album after album from my library.

The Micra III Excel is capable of creating dynamic and delightfully musical reproduction. The bass extension was so surprising given the size of the cabinet and a mid/bass driver with an 11cm cone to move the air. The low point quoted is 50Hz and I was pretty much achieving that in-room with track after track including Queen's Another One Bites the Dust and David Bowie's Golden Years. Here is a design with poise and finesse that's nevertheless capable of handling more raucous sounds as well in a convincing and involving way.

Another staggering feature was the soundstage. Again, here was a small speaker



capable of producing BIG sounds. More than once, while listening to TV and radio dramas, I heard things that made me leave my chair to investigate what turned out to be coming from the speakers in front of me while appearing to be from much further afield. Not only an immense width, but decent height and depth was created as well, generating a highly enjoyable listening experience: and that's all one can ask from a competently designed transducer.

Large-scale pieces produced a 'big' sound and I completely forgot that I was listening to a small box perched in front of me. Gigantic works were successfully reproduced as I was immersed in Beethoven's Ninth, his choral symphony (Furtwängler on EMI from 1951). So, yes, these are not full-range panels and there is some compression and a reduction in scale on what can be achieved by spending many-times as much on loudspeakers which are several-times larger. But the package here from Diapason does more than we expect for the size and price. It brings home, literally, the sublime performance by the Bayreuth Festival Chorus and Orchestra; it re-creates the force of this mighty work as tempi fluctuate to create a feeling of ecstasy. Bravo!

The experience of hearing those broadcast dramas made me remark on the speaker's ability to handle the human voice, that acid test which so many designs simply fail to master. Alessandro Schiavi has a musical upbringing and classical training, so he knows what acoustic



instruments should sound like in the flesh and can design a loudspeaker so that its reproduction is faithful. And so it is with the voice as the Micra III Excel passes the test with flying colours across a wide range of voices from Carleton Hobbs as Sherlock Holmes and Norman Shelley as the redoubtable Watson in the BBC Radio production, to Dame Judi Dench starring alongside Geoffrey Palmer in *As Time Goes By*.

With my neighbours out for the afternoon, it was time to wind-up the volume and prove that this is an easy-to-drive model which will, when required, play loudly and without resource to undue compression. At high SPLs, higher than I found comfortable, there was no hint of the balance becoming uneven. In the nearfield the sound was sublimely accurate and well-balanced; moving back from the speakers it becomes more involving, wider, deeper and more expansive: filling the room with sound.

Conclusion

Quality is this manufacturer's watchword and the Micra III Excel does not disappoint. Yet again Alessandro Schiavi has engineered an enjoyable masterpiece. I don't say that lightly. Yes, it comes at a price but then again most really good things in life do. But, as shoebox-sized transducers go, this one takes some beating; it boasts a sonic performance that other designs in the class will be envious of. Here is proof that, even if speaker selection has to be compromised by space it does not need to be compromised by quality.