

Like The Scent Of A Flower

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Stereolith Monitor 232

Some 20 years ago, Walter Schupbach produced the Stereolith, in the true sense of the term a nonconformist creation in the loudspeaker market. So far, Schupbach's Stereolith single-unit loudspeakers have projected broad-frequency-band signals to the right and the left. His new, daring approach (Monitor 232), goes as far as to emit the high-frequency band in a monophonic way. Schupbach's latest findings have encouraged him to realize this apparent madness. According to his on-going research, it is the 1 kHz frequency band that produces the natural, spatial projection of sound.



Mini-Box - Maxi Sound

The Stereolith Monitor 232 is - by all accounts - a minute loudspeaker. It is equipped with two 13-cm bass-mediums, one for the left and one for the right side, embedded in the same bass-reflex box, plus a 15-mm tweeter containing an acoustic lens. This latter provides the tweeter with the broad-band-signal capacity. The whole system is magnetically protected and can therefore be used as a home-cinema speaker next to the TV set without causing colour distortions. The box of the present, limited series, is made of MDF, the future production will be based on elegantly designed synthetic material.

One single cable connects the Stereolith to the amplifier. No need for this latter to be a powerhouse due to the speaker's excellent sensitivity of nearly 92 dB.

Good Positioning Required

The Stereolith Monitor 232 reproduces a fair quality sound wherever positioned in the room. To achieve its full potential, a little experimenting is required. Placed in a corner, our nonconformist will sound a bit hollow, with a squeezed sound image. A distance of 1.2 meters from the corner will reveal its best qualities. A similar or even better result is achieved by a position parallel to a wall, at an approx. distance of 30 cm, unobstructed on either side. Counter-productive is a hidden position, such as behind a piano. When used away from walls, freely somewhere in the room, the combination with a sub-woofer is recommended. Walls function as bass reflectors, re-enforcing the bass effect, a fact equally valid for the Stereolith Monitor 232 whose sound projection remains truly spatial but with a thinner bass in a free position.

Sweet Spot In Whole Room

The Stereolith's Monitor 232 sound image differs substantially from the traditional reproduction based on two distinct, separate speakers. The conventional method projects sound to the left and to the right, with a heavy directional focus. If you are the lucky listener to be seated at the so-called "sweet spot", the optimal place exactly between the two boxes, a broad sound panorama may develop for the concerned listener. For all the others, the sound image separates into two distinct, more or less incoherent sound portions. In extreme cases, exaggerated left/right sound effects may be the result, likened to the movements of a table-tennis ball, an effect only occasionally relieved by the ideal mixture of the recording and maybe by modern, high-end speaker systems.

Pure Spatial Sound

As the title suggests, the Stereolith's sound projection is comparable to a flower projecting its scent evenly into space. The sound body extends itself also laterally, hence the perfectly concert-like impression. The representation by the Stereolith of such instruments as the piano or the cembalo is totally fascinating. The spatial projection of sound absolutely equals reality. At times, with symphonic works, a bit of breadth seems to be missing, a problem certainly due to the recording technique. Recordings performed with only 2 microphones show surprisingly positive effects, as can be heard on the test recording "Impression" by the Swiss High End Society. In cases of badly done multi-microphone recordings, the Monitor 232's reaction is rather allergic. Counter-phase signals are readily cancelled by the Stereolith (as observed on the recording "Impression").

Moving around in the room, one has to acknowledge that the spatial impression is present practically everywhere. Thanks to its extremely large spatial sound zone, the Stereolith not only fully satisfies the requirements of the demanding music fan, but also the needs of background reproduction and not too wild parties.

As far as the sound quality is concerned, such a small and relatively light construction obviously looks inapt to raise any particular expectation. However, surprise, even disbelief is the reaction of the listener when the minute unit delivers its incredible sound volume. Critical testers have observed only marginal sound distortions, with a perfectly acceptable bass range. The bass range can be compared to a cello capable to produce low sounds though not quite as low as a bass. The ones wanting to hear and feel a bass require a sub-woofer. There are plenty of active sub-woofers on the market, while Stereolith offers two passive sub-woofers.

Conclusion

With the Stereolith Monitor 232, the Swiss inventor Walter Schupbach has created a nonconformist loudspeaker, i.e. a single, utterly compact box capable to produce a superb spatial sound evenly projected throughout the room.

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Characteristics	Components
Maximum loudness 200 W	2-way bass reflex box, Stereolith
Impedance: 2 x 8 Ohms	1 tweeter: dome polycarbonat
Sensitivity: 91.5 db/W/m	2 x 13cm bass-mediums, coated paper
Amplitude response: 60-22'000 Hz	Body: MDF
Dimensions : 20/27/27 cm	Colors: black/white/structured, special finishes