



The breezy Dutch

Few dare putting their faith in dipoles. It is thus all the more astonishing that two Dutchmen have founded a business based on this design. With matching electronics to boot. A truly major first.

By: Andreas Günther

It warms your heart. In more ways than one. Firstly, Daudio's developers give us a clear view of the heart of their whole design. Secondly, both testers and equipment aficionados are always fascinated by rare constructions with a touch of the extraordinary. Plus, in this case, extraordinary daring. Because the target group for a loudspeaker of this kind is small. The famous connoisseurs. Which in turn is a pity, as these loudspeakers conquered our listening room in just a couple of beats – a really major achievement. And at a comparatively fair price.

But first things first! Hans Beckeringh and Jeroen Dezaire live in Holland. In autumn 2012, they formed their own company and barely six months later presented their first dipole loudspeaker to the world. The name 'Daudio' was obvious: there had to be a 'D' for dipole at the start.

It sounds like a mix of hobby and start-up, but what they actually produced is a highly professional product – with a design concept that goes way beyond the two speakers. For within the whole package the two company bosses have also designed two perfectly matching power amps and an upstream digital converter / pre-amp. It is only when it comes to the source that customers can and should choose for themselves from the diverse offerings of the free market. But once more we're going too fast. First things first again, starting with real eye-catcher: hovering on the end of four cables in the centre of the >

construction is an Airmotion transformer based on a Oskar Heil design, bought in from Mundorf – the two lower cables simultaneously taking the signals to the converter.

It looks irritating, fascinating and avant-garde – but is above all in the developers' minds the ideal form of decoupling and playing freedom when using a dipole.

Don't be fooled by the camera angle: the ,W1' is just one metre high. But a full 35 kilograms in weight.

The mid-range driver lies above it, an 18-centimetre chassis from the C-Quenze range of Danish manufacturers Audio-Technology, who among others also supply to Sonus Faber.

Oscillating in the bass range are two 25-centimetre membranes from Seas – these are open as well, on the opposite side in the bottom part of the housing. Or to use an image: the

developers talk of the ,W-frame' – like a W lying on its side, the aluminium membranes fuel their bass waves. That is designed to trigger vibrations, but needs a clever filter concept and above all energy. An exalted assignment, therefore, for the power amps.

Anyone now wanting to connect the latter with jacks and cable lugs, will not achieve their goal. Daudio links up the



power right at the bottom on the back via a Neutrik Speakon socket. An option that is fairly unusual for high-end fans, but that is popular in the professional world and fits in with Daudio's concept of how the speakers should be used – no screws and thus no risk of a sudden loss of contact; instead a secure 'click'. Another argument supporting its use: the Neutrik connection carries four signal paths – in keeping with how the power amps have been conceived: Daudio separates here one amp purely to feed the bass chassis and another amp for high and mid-range frequencies.

Naturally, Daudio also offers the option of replacing the Speakon socket with a traditional terminal. Or a very different arrangement, openly addressed by Daudio: the Dutch firm's mono block takes on the job of providing bass-range power only up to 150 hertz. Via an XLR output a fine valve amp for mid-range and high frequencies could then be inserted and direct its signals to two conventional loudspeaker terminals. Or in hard facts: the bass range gets served via an active crossover, while everything above it gives itself over to the internal passive crossover. Anyone looking more closely at the Daudio power amp in this regard, will discover that on the back there is also a small, rotary knob for setting the perfect bespoke bass level.

Everything up until now had an incredibly coherent feel. They had clearly put a lot of thought into it – and found the right suppliers on the world market, predominantly in their own country. Hans Beckeringh and Jeroen Dezaire have got a very good network of contacts in the Dutch high-end scene. Presiding under the hood of the power amps, for instance, is a digital amplifier from Hypex, confi-

A set of compatriots: Daudio buys in the basis for converter/pre-amp and mono blocks from befriended Dutch high-end manufacturers – refined for dipoles' requirements. In terms of source, users are given a free choice and could, if they wished, also insert a valve power amp.



Building a tower ahead of the dipoles: Daudio ideally likes to see its first product fired by its in-house electronics – a converter/pre-amp (top) sends a signal via RCA to two mono blocks. Via Neutrik Speakon socket it proceeds to the loudspeakers.

gured to 250 watts at 4 ohms.

The matching converter/pre-amp is based on an Octave DAC board with four NOS (NonOverSampling) DACs per channel from Metrum Acoustics, likewise a Dutch manufacturer, coupled to a volume regulator from TentLabs, again Dutch. An extraordinary concept, with six relays engaging in 64 stages ahead of twelve resistors.

Daudio also include a wonderfully simple, programmable remote control from One-ForAll. Given all the high-tech, the soft clicking of the relays seems wonderfully anachronistic. In addition, the listener can choose from four sources: two analogue RCA inputs, one optical input and a coax digital input. Two further RCAs lead to the mono blocks. As if it was a mere trifling matter, Daudio have, as a 'side-line', also developed their own cable range, naturally including the perfectly fitting Neutrik connections between power amps and speaker.

Forgotten anything? Yes: the converter/pre-amp has no USB input. That's no

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Daudio

Loudspeaker: W1

List price: €17,500 (pair)

Guarantee period: 5

Weight: 35 kg

Size (W x H x D):

30.6 x 100 x 30.6 cm

Surfaces: white or black, stainless steel – other colours on request

Daudio

asp/amp

List price: €3,150 (pair)

Guarantee period: 2

Size (W x H x D):

23.6 x 5 x 29 cm

Set price

Daudio W1 & ASP/AMP

including cables

€19,950

Daudio

dac

List price: €1,995

Guarantee period: 2

Size (W x H x D):

23.6 x 5 x 29 cm

Sales:

Daudio

Van Keppelmarke 73

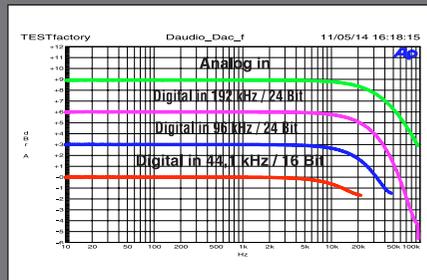
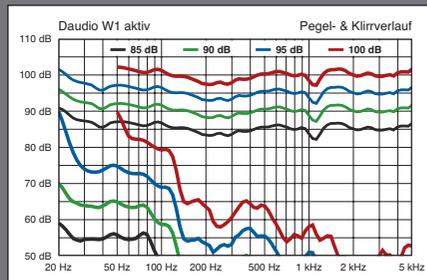
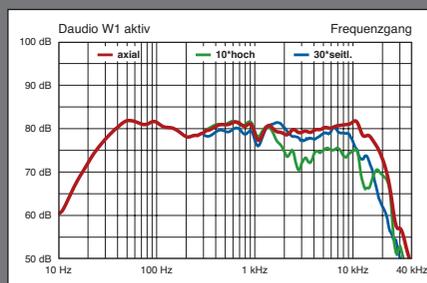
8016 GJ Zwolle

Website:

www.daudio.nl

The measurements

Hats off to Daudio, whose Speakers manage a beautifully linear frequency response, albeit with limited treble extension, rolling off at approx. 17kHz. Similarly, and not surprisingly, we find a similar behaviour with the switch mode power amplifiers. As we see in the distortion measurements (2), the complete combination is very clean in the midrange and almost distortion free in the treble. The increase of harmonics in the bass is to be expected because the creation of dipole characteristics at low frequencies means incredibly hard work for the drivers. That said, the limitations were very benign and remained inaudible over the whole course of the listening tests.



drawback. Especially as Metrum Acoustics already offer an optional USB module for their Octave Board and Daudio could follow suit here as well.

Enough of the technical aspects. We created space in our listening room, on which the dipole had the maximum output area. The structural form itself looks bigger in photographs. However, the loudspeaker, officially christened the 'W1', is no more than a metre high, though nevertheless 35 kilograms in weight. A dipole fundamentally requires somewhat more attention – the listening room should not sound too bright and the basic set-up should also be symmetric to the side walls and the listener's position. Playing with the angle is then key to the acoustic panorama. Our tip: do not place the speakers at too hard an angle to the listening position and keep them well away from the rear wall, as otherwise the bass frequencies take the upper hand. For anyone who absolutely has to place the speaker closer to the wall there is, as already mentioned, a control for fine adjustment of the bass level on the back of the power amps.

Fully open-minded? In the listening room we always regard a newcomer with respect and also some reserve. After all, legends of the loudspeaker genre have already stood in the same place. But that was all by the by, as the first beats flooded out of the Daudio system into the listening room. And I use that verb quite deliberately, for there was nothing lumpy about this loudspeaker, no coarse dynamics. Instead it presented music in its most beautiful flow. This was a true great playing here. That was clear to the listening team within minutes.

The closeness among the membranes was what astounded us most: four thoroughly different chassis, idiosyncratically fitted and configured – appeared here with the harmonious mapping performance of a full-range speaker. Once again one of our current favourite CDs in the player: 'La Valse' in the recording by Tacet. The start is – actually not there. Ravel penned here not so much music as noise. A rumbling and pulsating – and yet from the very start, the Daudio captured the size of the room in which the

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Hans Beckeringh and Jeroen Dezaire, Daudio founders

„We sought the optimum housing, the best converters and best electronics – in order to bring the three chassis into one collective, harmonious acoustic field.“

recording was made, the reflections of the bass tones and the web of energy between the orchestral groups.

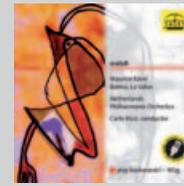
Some of us had never heard better. Not even in many a concert hall. Approaching the grand finale some loudspeakers become narrow, the high dynamics seem compressed. Not so on the Daudio: vehemence and relaxed breeziness, as if it were child’s play. We were astonished. Especially by a new company being able

to deliver such a perfect premiere – apparently with no trial runs, no huge effort and no failures.

Somewhere, though, there has to be snag, a limitation, a restriction. We looked long and hard and found one – albeit a matter of taste. What tends to be a soft, light character will not thrill fans of rough, dynamic, intimidating music.

Which is good. The Daudio system preferred to use its energy for a very special closeness. As so often, we tested it via the very difficult sound of a concert grand: there you not only have little felt hammers rushing down onto strings, you’ve also got a mighty steel body oscillating inside wooden housing with three legs connecting it to the parquet floor on the podium of a concert hall. We can count the high-end combinations that can map this really comprehensively on the fingers of one or perhaps two hands. As we do so, we also count the aggregate amount of money represented by the individual components. In this context the Daudio system is as remarkably affordable as it is remarkably good.

Idiosyncratic and strong in sound: right down at the bottom the signal gets supplied via a Neutrik socket, the bass drivers oscillate against each other in a ‚W‘ array, the mid-range driver sits on top and an Airmotion transformer is tautly suspended on four cables in the middle.



Test-CD

Maurice Ravel
Carlo Rizzi
Tacet

This is music you can direct with a delicate hand or big cudgel. Carlo Rizzi uses both – with pinpoint precision and pleasure. Perfectly lit up by the Tacet sound engineers. Also on LP, SACD and Blu-ray.



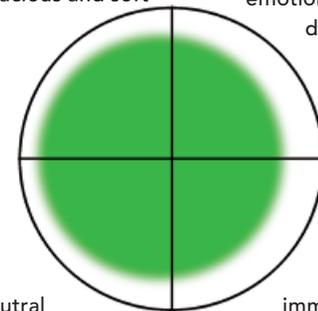
The author

Andreas
Günther

The extraordinary loudspeakers – generate in the writer both joy and respect. They show courage to swim against the mainstream. In addition, the writer is a fan of the Airmotion principle, for him a dream converter pro resolution and truly chilled out music-making.

AUDIophile character

effortless spacious and soft gripping emotional and dynamic



AUDIophile potential



Recommendation

Dipoles are no divas. But they call for a delicate touch when setting them up. The room should be very symmetric, acoustically not too bright and with a good gap to the rear wall.