

AUDIO ROUND-UP

Every issue, our audio expert *Michael Brook* takes a look at the best new audio and video equipment to help you get the most out of recorded classical music

BBC MUSIC CHOICE



ACCURACY ASSURED:
the Dali Zensor 3s pick out every musical detail

BUDGET HI-FI SPEAKERS

Dali Zensor 3 £300

I recently spent some time with Dali's Kubik wireless speakers (see April issue) and was impressed by how effortlessly Dali had switched its focus from being a die-hard hi-fi aficionado to forward-thinking, wire-free, do-it-all musical brilliance. So it was with some surprise that the next Dali product to make its way through the door was a return to classic Dali form in the shape of the Zensor 3 bookshelf speaker.

Compact, but as well-made and expertly crafted as you'd expect from the Danish company, the Zensor 3s use Dali's trademark loudspeaker design – a soft dome tweeter and 7-inch wood fibre cone – to deliver hard-hitting yet refined sound. This never spills into brashness but picks out every detail with pinpoint accuracy, never missing a beat, never struggling to make sense of even the most fraught arrangements.

The Zensor 3s deliver hard-hitting yet refined sound

Naturally at this price point you're not going to get groundbreaking good looks, but the Zensor 3s are handsome enough, available in black ash, walnut and white finishes, all of which look the part.

There's a single set of 'binding posts' at the rear of the units, which means that bi-wiring the Zensor 3 speakers (a process where the high and low

frequency signals are separated and wired into the speakers separately) isn't possible.

But that's one of the Zensor 3s' few limitations. No, they don't sound like a £1,000 set of speakers, but then they are a third of that cost. Where they do score highly, however, is by creating a compelling, convincing soundstage from more or less any source you care to connect them to. And for £300, you can't say fairer than that.

www.dali-uk.co.uk
★★★★★



CONVERTED:
the USB DAC 128 is top of its class

VALUE DIGITAL-TO-ANALOGUE CONVERTER

Henry Audio USB DAC 128 £100

The thinking behind the Henry Audio USB DAC 128 (above) was clearly that it should be a digital-to-analogue converter (DAC) that shouldn't cost the earth and should deliver results. And it scores highly on both counts. A good DAC transforms sound from digital files, creating the tonal warmth of analogue music, and the USB DAC 128 easily achieves this. The difference between the Henry Audio and other DACs at this price point is immense – even spending twice as much more is no guarantee of a superior performance. Put simply, if you're in the market for a DAC, I would advise you to place the DAC 128 at the top of your must-hear list.

www.henryaudio.co.uk ★★★★★

CUTTING-EDGE AMPLIFIER

Nakamichi Dragon Processor and power amplifier £900



Nakamichi hasn't been a name you associate with audio in the UK since the early 2000s, but last month I reviewed its Dragon Lily portable speaker and was very impressed. And I

now have the Nakamichi Dragon processor and power amp. A surround-sound amp first and foremost, but one that's at home with two-channel stereo, the Dragon system needs a solid speaker set-up to allow it to really sing. If you have a decent surround-sound system then you will get achingly well-defined sound from the Nakamichi Dragon, dripping with detail. Nakamichi was once a giant of the audio-visual scene and, it seems, that heritage lives on in the Dragon amp. This is no budget set-up but it will give systems twice as expensive a run for their money.

www.nakamichi.co.uk ★★★★★