DANISH SILVER VOICES



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It is rare for us to hear a loudspeaker that gets in the way of the music so little and delivers such richly rewarding musical experiences.

Words: Håvard Holmedal

It should come as no surprise that Børresen makes good loudspeakers, but it is still just as impressive how far the company has come in the relatively short time since its beginnings in 2017, when Michael Børresen and Lars Kristensen launched Børresen Acoustics. A host of new models and ranges have appeared in the nine years since then, but perhaps the most impressive achievement is how far they have progressed technologically, particularly in driver technology.

We have had the pleasure of visiting the factory outside Aalborg a couple of times, and it has to be said that the combination of generously piled Danish open sandwiches, Danish lager and the sound of a variety of Børresen loudspeakers is hard to beat and easy to remember. Yet it is their experimentation and relentless pursuit of further improvements in sound quality and technology that impress us most. They are not messing around, either. Every single driver, every variation in the construction of diaphragms, magnets, crossovers and cabinets, is there to be seen inside the factory. Nor does the place seem particularly secretive. Everyone who drops by gets the same "grand tour" as we do, and much of what they are working on also comes up when journalists meet at trade shows and product demonstrations. Often as the source of some fairly heated discussions.

Intriguing technology

At the asking price, you might expect the technology to be visible from the outside. But although the cabinet itself is impressively beautiful, it is inside that you find Børresen's technology. You could write an entire book about it, but we will try to keep things brief.

The cabinet is not as large as you might think, and I would certainly call it living-room-friendly. It measures just 120 cm tall and only 28 cm wide. That means it does not occupy much visual space when you are sitting in your favourite chair, although its depth will probably make itself felt in most living rooms. The speakers are 51 cm deep and need a little space behind them to get the balance from bass to treble properly in place, and to bring the proportions and holographic imaging of the soundstage up to the standard you are paying for.

Børresen insists that small drivers can play both loud and deep, and proves it once again. Each speaker contains three identical 5-inch drivers that give it a rather impressive bass response. The speakers have a specified frequency range of





30 Hz to 50 kHz, and not once during the review period did we manage to find music on which we missed any bass. On the contrary, they play very deep and powerfully, far beyond what you would expect from the size of the drivers.

The bass and midrange drivers are the IronFree5 Titanium SSE type. For those in the know, the driver's name may be self-explanatory, but just to be safe, here is a brief rundown. One of the distinctive features of the drivers in this design is their iron-free motor system. Instead of a more traditional motor, they use an iron-free magnet system with neodymium magnets. The traditional copper rings in the motor system have also been replaced with silver ones. The drivers already have very low inductance, but the SSE system reduces it substantially further. It is no surprise that Børresen is pursuing the lowest possible inductance. This runs through all the company's designs and could arguably even be called one of Børresen's design principles. The aim is to lower inductance and thereby minimise the magnet system's influence on the electrical behaviour of the voice coil as it moves in the magnetic gap.

The IronFree5 Titanium SSE drivers have several other special features. The baskets that support the magnet system are made of titanium. Their geometry has been optimised to increase strength, but titanium is also used to increase rigidity and internal damping. In addition, they can be shaped so that their geometry interferes as little as possible with the movement of air behind the diaphragm. The diaphragm itself is a sandwich of two layers of carbon fibre, one on either side of an aramid diaphragm with a honeycomb core. The three materials complement one another in terms of stiffness, low weight and the inherent damping of resonances. The tweeter is an RP94 Ribbon Planar Tweeter. We have probably mentioned it many times before, but here they combine a powerful motor system with a diaphragm weighing just 0.6 grams. Together with this model's series crossover, the drivers deliver a sensitivity of 86 dB and a nominal impedance of 6 ohms. The speakers are therefore not particularly efficient, but neither are they particularly difficult to drive.

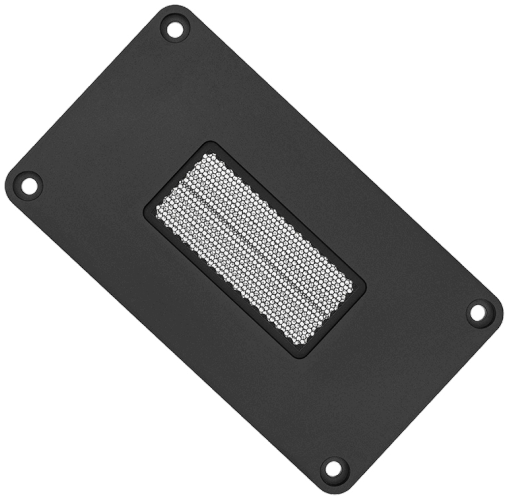
The speakers can be bi-amped, allowing you to use one amplifier for the bass section and another for the midrange and treble.

Cryogenic treatment

With the Silver Supreme Edition (SSE), and indeed with the somewhat less expensive T3 Cryo model as well, Børresen goes a step further than most: we are talking about cryogenic treatment. We appreciate that some people will certainly be sceptical and that its effects are open to debate — a discussion Michael Børresen is more than happy to have. The company states that copper and silver rings, internal wiring, driver baskets, crossover inductors and parts of the tweeter assembly all receive their own cryogenic treatment. To qualify as cryogenic treatment, everything must be cooled to at least –150 degrees Celsius before undergoing controlled warming. The manufacturer describes this as a process intended to change the materials' crystal structure, reduce internal stresses and improve electrical conductivity.

Positioning

The speakers are heavy, but easier to handle than their weight had led us to expect. At least once they were more or less in position in the living room and, with a little help, had been freed from their shipping crates. Whatever a manufacturer may say about positioning its speakers, we strongly encourage you to experiment a little



yourself. That is why almost every speaker we review ends up toed in towards the listening position, usually pointing fairly directly at the listener. The toe-in angle varies somewhat with the distance between the sofa and the speakers, but that is the approach we are taking again this time.

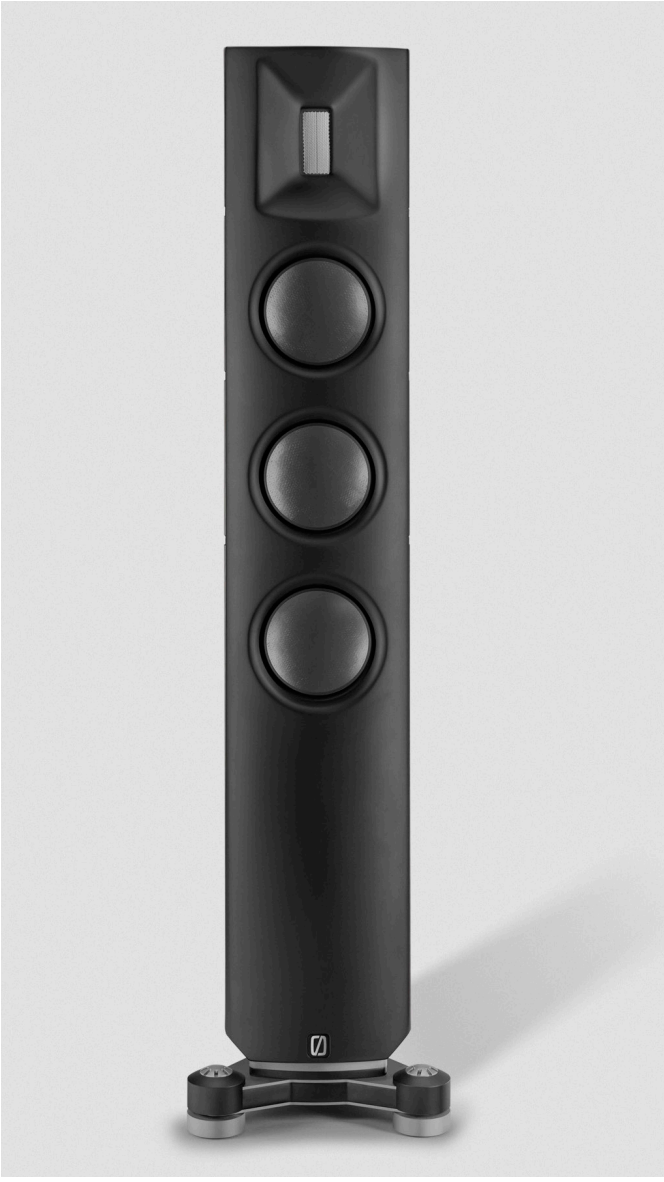
The distance from the wall is more a matter of individual preference. They also work well relatively close to the wall, although you will probably notice a little extra bass. Still, we are mildly surprised by how flexible they are when it comes to positioning.

Placing speakers relatively close to the wall will usually sacrifice some soundstage depth and some of the impressive high-end holographic imaging that you are paying a great deal for in a design like this. Yet the T3 SSE still paints a remarkably precise and spacious soundstage, with beautiful focus on voices and instruments — even when there are plenty of them.

A sound that makes your eyes widen and fill with tears

There is no reason to review speakers solely on the basis of price. But to truly recalibrate our sense of what is possible, and to do so at home, it was difficult to say no when Audio Group Denmark contacted us and offered to let us review the speakers, and even deliver them to our front door. All that was missing was for them to carry them inside and connect them as well.

Even with the volume turned right down, the sound is neither thin nor anaemic, as it can sometimes be with speakers designed to thrive at relatively high volume. Here, by contrast, it is full-bodied and lovely, with a beautifully tight bass foundation. Precision is exceptionally high, and the sense of silence is striking across all the music we work our way through. As it turns out, you need a fairly powerful amplifier for this to work equally well at every volume level, but that is hardly a surprise in this price bracket. Surely very few people would buy a cheap amplifier and believe they could extract everything these speakers are capable of. The speakers are extraordinarily transparent — so much so that it is almost difficult to convey in words and sentences. Language somehow falls short when we try to explain what this is, how it feels and what a profoundly emotional experience it is to have these speakers in front of us. So here we are, listening to music one late-summer morning. Two grown men listening



with tears in their eyes and goosebumps reaching all the way down to their backsides. Tori Amos and "Over the Rainbow" are so quiet, so understated, and so full of breath, air and substance that we remain seated at opposite ends of the sofa, avoiding each other's gaze. We are both quite certain that the fragile dam holding back our tears would then burst completely. The audience in the hall clearly hears the same thing, because when Amos takes over, you could hear the proverbial pin drop — and the same is true in the living room. It is simply as quiet as a mouse. We sit glued to the sofa, afraid that a creak or rustle might ruin this deeply hypnotic musical experience.

Anette Askvik and her still-wonderful track "Liberty" become an exercise in comparing formats. We play the same track via streaming, CD and vinyl. These are identical tracks, yet our emotional connection with the music keeps growing as we move towards vinyl. The vinyl version of "Liberty" has a tonal character and scale that bring another moment of pure hi-fi joy. Yes, this costs a fair bit, but there is nothing else on the planet that can do precisely this to me. A fine car is a good thing, and perhaps some fine watches too, but this is sound at a level that simply does something to you. Your breathing slows, your pulse drops, and you sink helplessly into the sofa. Completely unable to resist, and completely unable to move until the sound has died away altogether. And you can do this every week and every day, all year round — even 24/7, if you have the emotional reserves for it.

Trying to describe what is happening is an interesting challenge, but it is as though the music we are listening to moves more slowly, giving more space to the tonal character of the instruments and, not least, the room's distinctive reverberation, revealing its size and even what its walls are made of. We also find ourselves spending a long time listening to music we normally hear only occasionally. The reason becomes clear as we work our way through some classical tracks. The strings sound phenomenally beautiful, and there seem to be an unusually large number of them. When both the horns and the organ enter in Saint-Saëns's Organ Symphony, things really take off. It is simply fantastic, and you keep trying to make sure your body does not unexpectedly leap to its feet and start waving its arms in an uninhibited attempt to assist the conductor.

We usually look to the source when something is not working, but to a greater extent than we may have realised, the limiting factor is the loudspeaker. And that is a matter of quality, rather than size. We must also mention how completely unaltered the music seems on its journey from the studio and out through these relatively small drivers, and how pure and uncoloured it remains, from the deepest bass all the way to the highest treble. Right in front of us, then, we have the benchmark for how the music should sound.

The sound is not what you would usually expect from high-end speakers. Speakers in this price bracket, and often some way below it too, can be supremely precise yet lean and rather unforgiving of the source. A slightly bright or lean source, and the balance tips over immediately. Here the sound is full-bodied, relaxed and supremely precise, with deep, lovely bass, and flows so effortlessly from the midrange upwards that you struggle to accept that it is coming from those slim cabinets, even as you sit staring straight at them.







WE LIKE:

- Impressive precision and level of detail
- No listening fatigue
- Musical and inviting sound
- Beautiful design and finish
- Deep and powerful bass

WE DO NOT LIKE:

- Should qualify for a VAT exemption

STEREO+ SAYS: These speakers are not within everyone's budget, but goodness, what a sound!

KARAKTERER

Ease of use/flexibility 8

Build quality/design 10

10

9,4

Conclusion

The Børresen T3 SSE are not the least expensive speakers on the market, but then you would hardly buy a pair unless your finances were in excellent shape. Still, remember that we regularly see footballers carrying little bags with seven-figure price tags. We simply have to accept that this is a market for a select few, and that factors other than common sense and frugality come into play.

That said, these are still speakers that music lovers — those who enjoy jazz, all kinds of acoustic music and, not least, classical music — should definitely audition at some point. Of course, they also work superbly with electronic music, but with acoustic instruments they set a standard of musical experience that feels mildly shocking. They extract so much music from the source that we were left sitting open-mouthed, also marvelling at how honest and convincing they sound.

Stereo+

★★★★★

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Børresen T3 SSE

Børresen T3 SSE	
PRICE:	NOK 1 099 000.-
IMPORTER NORWAY:	Mala Analogsenter
LINK:	www.malaaudio.no