

IS THIS THE WORLD'S BEST CARTRIDGE?

hifi+



ISSN 1465-5950



REPRODUCING THE RECORDED ARTS
www.hifiplus.com

AUGUST 2018 • 162

TRIUMPHANT TRIANGLE! THE FRENCH HAVE ANOTHER WINNER



Kii THREE

VIVID KAYA 45

FALCON LS3/5A

MONITOR AUDIO STUDIO

SONUS FABER AMATI HOMAGE

NEW MOON! THE 600i V2
INTEGRATED AMP DOES IT ALL!



Triangle Esprit Australe EZ floorstanding loudspeaker

by Alan Sircom

I am going to try a spot of mass-hypnosis here. You are feeling calm and relaxed, relaxed and calm. You are feeling sleepier and sleepier. Now... I want you to forget the word 'price' for the next couple of thousand words (and you feel a burning need to give me all your money), and when you awake, you will feel refreshed and relaxed. 3,2,1... you're back in the room.

The Esprit Australe EZ is the top of the lower-middle of Triangle's product lines, with the Signature and Magellan models above it, and the Elara below. The Esprit range comprises three towers, two standmounts, a centre, and a rear channel wall-mount. Australe EZ is the new reference point of the range and, according to Triangle, "is the result of unprecedented technological innovations." Given Triangle's science-led standpoint, this is likely to be more than just hyperbole.

The core technologies in the Australe EZ are the Dynamic Pulse System (or DPS) and the Driver Vibration Absorption System (or DVAS). Dynamic Pulse System uses a second tweeter to the rear of the cabinet, which is designed to improve the polar response of the front tweeter, by helping to reduce its directivity. This is not quite the same as creating a dipole tweeter, or the equal front/rear radiation pattern of an electrostatic panel, because using a second driver dedicated for the task helps control any phase issues that may arise. This is not a new concept to Triangle, but to date the only loudspeakers that have used the DPS concept have been the top of the top Magellan series. All the other models in that or any of Triangle's other ranges have been more conventional in approach.

On the other hand, Driver Vibration Absorption Systems technology is a means whereby the loudspeaker drivers are decoupled from the loudspeaker by what Triangle refers to as 'reinforcements', pushed against the magnets of the drive units to limit and damp vibration. These 'reinforcements' need to be a little more 'Commandos Marine' and less 'raw recruit' because the new bass drivers introduced for the Australe EZ have an oversized engine, along with a wood-pulp/carbon-fibre composite diaphragm, and a very big magnet, designed to reach down to a healthy 29Hz. We aren't finished, though, as the Australe EZ uses the crossover design and even internal wiring of the Signature line. Even the plinth itself is new: a glass platform with a rubber absorbing plate. This both widens the base and lowers the centre of gravity (to pass European tilt test rules) and absorbs the dispersion of vibration from the cabinet into the floor.

Australe EZ is a three-way design, featuring a trio of those aforementioned 165mm bass drivers, another different design of 165mm for the midrange, and the aforementioned front and rear set of 25mm tweeters, both with a bullet phase plug and deep set enough to be a quasi-horn. The speaker crosses over at 300Hz (bass-midrange) and 3.9kHz (mid-tweeters), using a second-order network for the bass and a third-order crossover for the top end. The loudspeaker can be biwired or bi-amped if so desired.

Triangle has always made its loudspeakers relatively efficient and the Australe EZ is no different, with a 92.5dB sensitivity and a nominal impedance of eight ohms that drops to just 3.3 ohms at minimum. This means a loudspeaker that is easy to drive and is unlikely to trouble any amplifier it is likely to be partnered with. The tall tower is neatly finished in a choice of gloss white or black, and there are no veneers or RAL paint options.

Set-up is a breeze. You just need to place the loudspeakers at least 0.4m from the rear wall, at least 0.5m from the side walls, and at least 2m apart. You need to sit at least 2m from a centre of a line drawn from tweeter to tweeter. And if that sounds pragmatic, it is, and so is the Australe EZ. It is unfussed about positioning, placement, and partnering. Just make sure the loudspeaker is level and not wobbling, and experiment with toe-in (don't make it too acute though, as you don't want the rear tweeter to start interacting with the front). There is one limitation to this; try not to have a very reflective rear wall. This is a good idea in general, but when there's a rear tweeter involved, you want it to subtly reinforce the main sound, not provide too much of its own influence; a wall of glass is going to do just that, so aim for a more diffuse rear wall (you might want to put room treatment panels on the back wall behind the tweeters in extreme cases).

I actually preferred the Australe EZ wider and with no toe-in and sitting closer to the loudspeaker than usual. This is more of a near-field setting than most might choose, but it worked for the Australe EZ perfectly. This was just at the limits of the central image becoming distinct left and right channels. At that point, everything snapped into focus and clarity, the musical integrity of the sound went into hyperdrive, and the sound just seemed like there were real people projecting music into the room.

Amplifier and source choices are pretty much open to interpretation. I'd go with 'quality' rather than 'quantity', although if you can do both, the system will sound even better. Because of the hypnosis, I'm not talking specifics and price points, but when you are out of thrall, you'll probably work out that this deserves a 'commensurate' system. I found it worked perfectly with a spot of Class D overkill in the shape of an Aavik U-150 integrated amplifier fed by a Hegel Mohican CD player, and hooked together with either Ansuz, AudioQuest, or Nordost cable. In truth, I preferred the slightly earthier tones of the AudioQuest over those of Ansuz or Nordost in this context.

For a loudspeaker with two tweeters and three bass drivers, the Australe EZ really leads from the midrange. It's a midband-out loudspeaker, getting that all-important aspect of music correct first, and then letting the other parts do their stuff from there. That is not to down-play the bottom end or the treble extension but shows just how the design criteria of the Triangle sound is created. The mid and treble (but especially the mid) are fast, dynamic, open, precise, ▶





“Every piece of music has its own distinct ‘right’ level.”

octogenarian Cubans in the 1990s. In short, that mid-forward-and-first sound of the Australe EZ makes music fun again (which sounds like it should be written on a hat). It's just so damn enjoyable to listen to music played through the Australe EZ, you want to hear more of it, and that's always a sure sign of musical goodness.

As is the next big acid test. Each recording sounds different and has its own optimum level with the Australe EZ. This is how it should be; music recorded in one studio should not sound like music recorded in another, and yet too many systems blur those lines and make everything sound a bit 'samey'. There simply isn't the resolution to hear the difference from engineer to engineer, or from studio to studio... but there is here. Also, the difference between a few dB listening levels is not a big one in the case of most loudspeakers, but here every piece of music has its own distinct 'right' level. That is a sign of deep resolution.

The Australe EZ sings from the midband on out, and the bass and treble need to give that midband a good underpinning. And they do. OK, so they don't do 'big boy dynamics' in the way a much larger speaker will, but instead they deliver subtle woven texture to the bass (in particular) that makes the speaker so entertaining on most styles of music. The big hitters do better with heavy opera and large orchestral pieces – if you are expecting audiophile Mahler played at thunderstorm levels, you'll be mistaken, and likewise if your music is predominantly different versions of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, there are more satisfying loudspeakers available. But for the rest of us – including those who want a spot of Mahler, just not the full catastrophe all the time – will find the Australe EZ's bass beguiling. ▶

▶ clean, and entertaining. It's the kind of loudspeaker where you put on a piece of music – let's say 'Marietta' from *Buena Vista Social Club Presents: Ibrahim Ferrer* [World Circuit] – and it leads to another, and another, and another. Even with a CD front-end, this is more like a Tidal and Roon workout, with you just enjoying 'swimming' through your music collection. The overall presentation of that midrange is a little forward, but not troublingly so; music is an exciting projection further into the room, not a lap-dance.

What that midrange-primacy does with something like 'Marietta' is make you wish you spoke Spanish, makes you want to reach for a Cohiba Exquisitos (and I don't smoke anymore) and mix up a Cuba Libra with seven-year old Havana Club (and I don't drink anymore... than the average rugby club after a big win), then you want to reach for any of those other records made by

“It’s like sharing your music with someone infinitely passionate with all things musical. You two are on a musical journey of discovery, and it will be entertaining.”

- ▶ In fact, what the Australe EZ does so well is be magnanimous with music. It doesn’t tailor your tastes to suit its own performance parameters, largely because it’s so free of those performance parameters. Instead, it’s like sharing your music with someone infinitely passionate in all things musical. You two are on a musical journey of discovery, and it will be entertaining.

As to the back-firing tweeter, it works very well, but perhaps not in the way you might expect. It seems to expand the soundstage (which you would expect), but does it from the bass on up (which you wouldn’t). It makes the soundstage seem that bit fuller and richer, and more dimensional (of course) but it also makes the sound project into the room more... not in an aggressive way, but just as you want the Australe EZ to sound. It’s easy to check – put a piece of thick piece of card over the rear tweeter and hear the difference. It’s not subtle.

A modern loudspeaker needs to be good when the sound is good and when it is bad because a lot of modern recordings leave a lot to be desired. The Australe EZ does this exceptionally well, coping with the compression of modern music as well as it does with the open dynamics of really good recordings. It doesn’t make compressed recordings any easier on the ear; Metallica’s *Death Magnetic* [Vertigo] really hasn’t got any nicer over the intervening decade, and the Australe EZ doesn’t hide the pain, but it makes it slightly less aggressively thin, and well recorded music – such as Buddy Guy’s *Damn Right, I’ve Got The Blues* [Silvertone] – is performed with sparkle and energy, just like it did the first time I heard it 27 years ago.

The best part of the Triangle sound is its naturalness. This is forward, but not aggressively so. The next best part is the soundstage, which is precise and wide of the boxes. Then comes the detail, and that bouncy bass underpinning the liquid treble. After that comes the detail and dynamic range. In reverse order, there is only really the running out of steam when the music gets really dynamic and large scale, and that seems a function of...

It’s time to snap you out of the post-hypnotic suggestion. Price isn’t an issue here until it is, in a good way. These loudspeakers don’t sound like they are a pair of £3,299 loudspeakers; they sound like a pair of far more high-end designs, just with the constraint upon that full-scale, full-range dynamism. And for most people with music, rooms, and systems that are not entirely perfect, they would rather have something they can really love instead of something they have to endure until the next upgrade happens. The Triangle Australe EZ is that speaker that people can really love because it makes music sound great. There are many speakers at double the price that offer more (in terms of frequency extension) but at the same time less (in terms of sheer enjoyment). That’s the clincher, these are speakers that bring the fun back! +



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Three way ported loudspeaker

Drive Units: 2x tweeter, 1x 165mm midrange,

3x 165mm woofer

Sensitivity: 92.5dB/W/m

Bandwidth: 29Hz–22kHz±3dB

Power handling: 150W

Repetitive Peak Power handling: 300W

Nominal impedance: eight ohms

Minimum impedance: 3.3 ohms

Crossover Points: 310Hz, 3.9kHz

Dimensions (W×H×D): 20 × 113 × 37cm

Weight: 38.8kg

Available in: piano white, piano black

Price: £3,299 per pair

Manufactured by: Triangle

URL: www.triangle-fr.com

Tel: +33(0)3 23 75 38 20