

ELECTROCOMPANIET TANA SL-2, L2 AND SIRA L1 SUBWOOFER

Electrocompaniet's Tana SL-2 is the Norwegian brand's second-generation Tana all in one, streamer, amp and wireless speaker, from the EC Living wireless lifestyle audio series. Linette Smith explores its capabilities, along with its second speaker and sub, and is suitably impressed.



Linette Smith

It comes packed in a smart customer-friendly box and is stylish looking in an understated way with black fabric speaker grills and silver brushed aluminium detailing to the lower part, (the fabric and 'stripes' are user-replaceable). The Tana 2 updates the outgoing Tana 1 model with new software, a new cabinet, new functionality, and new packaging. It is a brand new product standing out from its predecessor with a re-designed stiffer aluminium chassis, with custom made passive grilles on the sides for maximum bass response. The in-house (as all Electrocompaniet's electronics are) designed amplifier is a 150W Class A/B amplifier and is built and designed on the same principle as the Classic Line amplifiers from Electrocompaniet. The 5" bass/mid-range speaker and 1" tweeter are designed by Electrocompaniet to match the amplifier.

It has new in-house developed software and accompanying app.

It is reassuringly heavy and seems much more substantial than many standalone wireless speakers. As well as being a system in its own right the Electrocompaniet Tana SL-2 has the option of a second speaker, to create a stereo pair, the Tana L2. Plus you can also go down the route of adding Electrocompaniet's wireless sub, the Sira L1. There are also stands available for the Tanas, though we didn't review these. The Sira L1 looks deceptively small but is actually very heavy, which I took as a good sign for a sub.

Electrocompaniet sent us all three to try so I used the Tana SL-2 on its own and then with the other two components.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION



TION

The Electrocompaniet Tana SL-2 is designed for use in a smaller room, maybe as a second system in a bedroom or kitchen, or you can set them up around the house as a multi-room system. Although compact I found the Tana, particularly in its two speaker stereo configuration, worked well even in the large, high ceilinged living/listening room that we have downstairs.

I must admit to being someone who never used to enjoy hearing the words 'wireless' and 'speaker' used in close proximity. The market is full of cheap, almost disposable, options, however, the Electrocompaniet offering is in the class of the likes of the iFi Aurora, Devialet Phantoms and Naim Musos, being a high-quality build with 'proper' HiFi credentials.

SET UP

Set up of the Tana SL-2 was really simple. Just a matter of plugging into the mains and then checking there was a light on the top panel, and then doing the rest through the app. Electro-

companiet recommends setting up with a wired connection but I set it up wirelessly via the Android app and my phone, this can also be done using an iOS Apple device. I had no issues doing it wirelessly at all.

Adding the second Tana speaker was also very, very simple using the app. I moved the pair of speakers onto an IKEA unit that partially separates our main listening room from our living room, setting them up with a bit over 70cm space between them.

The manual advises a corner set up if possible for the Sira L1 subwoofer, though I had it below the Tanas on a low unit, which seemed to suit it well enough.

GETTING CONNECTED

The app is very simple to use. If you like listening to the radio there is a massive choice of stations, organised by country, through the app. So whether BBC Radio 4 or some obscure foreign Jazz station is your preferred media you are bound to find something to entertain you.



The app makes controlling volume etc simple and it is easy to set up the system, check all the components are assigned into the correct positions, and control and balance bass etc.

You can also easily access music on your NAS drive and use Qobuz, Tidal, and Spotify.

There are soft-touch 'buttons' to adjust the volume and turn the units on and off, on top of the unit that light up when you sweep your hand above them, these also have the useful option of being able to disable them from the app, which avoids any accidental turning off of the system.

Electrocompaniet uses wireless technology from Summit Systems, the makers of WiSA to transmit data between the wireless speakers. It is the only wireless technology created for the transmission of high quality sound in music systems and Home Theatres. It is used by many major manufacturers of wireless HiFi systems, like System Audio, B&O, Klipsch, Buchardt, Harman Kardon among others. WiSA transmits High Definition sound in a resolution of 24 bit /96 Khz. It works like this: From the

master Tana SL-2, a special 96kHz/24bit real-time link is used to transfer audio data to the other loudspeakers in a room (Tana L-2 and Sira L-1). This is done with a continuous data stream, as opposed to Wifi which is packet switched. It is specially designed so that the speakers are synchronized within one micro-second, which cannot be achieved with ordinary WiFi. Only the master communicates with the network and sources, and controls the timing with the other wireless units. This ensures a correct and wide stereo image, as intended during the music production.

I then switched to the iPad mini and Roon as this is the way we usually stream music around the house and on our various HiFi systems. The Tana 2 is Roon Ready which means it was just a simple matter of logging into Roon and it was there as an option to stream to. I really liked the fluidity of being able to pick up my phone or the Apple or Amazon tablet and control the Tana 2 from whichever is to hand, for example when I had set Roon playing from the tablet, I could then flick through tracks through the Electrocompaniet Play app on my phone.

REVIEW

Being Roon Ready is more or less essential for any streaming products as it is becoming the go-to choice for organising and selecting digital music. If a product doesn't have the Roon option it becomes very noticeable through its absence and to be honest, not being Roon Ready is becoming a bit of a factor in whether we would actually be able to live with a piece of HiFi or not.

SOUND QUALITY

Flicking through a few Radio stations with the Tana SL-2 in standalone set up I was immediately impressed with the sound quality. I had the unit on a normal piece of furniture. It doesn't really seem important where the speaker is as it does give a very omni-directional sound. For listening to radio the sound quality was great, I'd be perfectly happy using it as background music whilst getting on with other tasks. As a single unit it does have plenty of bass and doesn't distort at all when you turn it up loud.

With the pair of speakers, the sound was very good indeed. With them positioned as they were, on the unit, more or less in the middle of the listening space, their omni-directional quality was even more pronounced. It didn't matter where in the room I chose to sit, the sound quality and listening experience was very enjoyable.

Having lived with the Tana 2's for a while I found myself listening to radio, particularly BBC Radio 4 much more, and putting the Radio on rather than the TV. Documentaries and plays were particularly enjoyable with there being a very natural quality to the human voice.

I then added the Sira L1 subwoofer and switched to something that would test it out. With the two speakers plus the sub set up and using for music through Roon rather than radio, the Tana 2 HiFi credentials became very apparent.

The sound was very tight and controlled with no distortion at all, even when pushing them with high volume. My thoughts of these being 'good for background music' were banished. This system will obviously draw comparisons with Devialet's Phantom, which I have heard on

many occasions. Suffice to say you can push the Electrocompaniet to high volume without distortion, where I have heard the Phantom give in to farty and flappy bass. I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions there.

The little Sira L1 sub underpinned the bass with that nice, dry, fast sub-bass that I really enjoy from electronic music. The sign of a good sub-woofer is that you don't actually notice it until you turn it off, and this is exactly the case with the Tana 2 and Sira L1 set up. The Sira integrates perfectly, you can adjust the levels on the app to dial it in to your taste. Again, as I found with every aspect of these EC Living components this was all, very, very simple...and this is coming from someone who generally prefers to use a HiFi that I can operate with dials, buttons and a remote rather than an app on a phone.

Whilst the Tana 2s on their own are a very acceptable system, the Sira L1 just gives that extra bit of 'je ne sais quoi' and I think it is well worth adding to your Tana set up if you enjoy a full bass sound.

THE ROON RABBIT HOLE

Infected Mushroom are well known for their frenetic and bass-heavy tunes 'Becoming Insane' from Vicious Delicious gives the system a proper workout, in fact so drawn in am I, I work through several of the Mushroom's albums.

Roon takes over and I let it take me off down that famous Roon Rabbit Hole of discovery, one of the new tracks I find on the way is Modeselektor and Flohio 'Social Distancing'...which I thoroughly enjoy, finding myself happily listening to both tracks old and new with great pleasure.

The Chemical Brothers 'Don't Hold Back' from the brilliant Push The Button album sounds as energetic as it does on our second system. The stabbing string sound gives the track the edgy sound it demands and once again the bass and sub-bass is perfectly integrated. Particularly enjoying the Chems I switch to their 2015 album Born In The Echoes and their smash hit (and much used in TV adverts) 'Go'. This Electrocompaniet system really is a joy to use and



listen to, it's very much a 'chuck on what you fancy and enjoy' system.

Of course, this wouldn't be a proper HiFi Pig review without one of our favourite tests in the form of some Daft Punk. 'Giorgio By Moroder' from RAM is followed by the ultimate test of 'Contact'. This is where things can go wrong for a system that is 'not all that'. On this system there was the definition that one would expect from a well-put-together HiFi system and no muddling or jumble in the wall of musical noise that this track slams into you with.

I am aware that I've been drawn into listening to electronica, the system suits it so well, so as a transition to other genres I put on the new Reprise album from Moby, which we have been enjoying recently, the orchestral reworkings of his classic tunes on Deutsche Gramophon. The blend of electronic and orchestra is well suited to the system yet again, with 'Go' and 'Porcelain' being beautifully balanced, expansive, and enjoyable. Tops and mids have a wonderful and airy clarity with an emotional connection that I would not have expected from this kind of system, and of course, there is that wonderfully

integrated bass running underneath it all.

Switching to another genre I select Nirvana's classic, Nevermind. "Smells Like Teen Spirit" has exactly the raw edge that I am looking for, with Cobain's broken vocal cutting through the instruments.

Miles Davis's Kind Of Blue shows the system's jazz credentials, again engaging and toe-tapping, you really can just go anywhere in the Rooniverse and enjoy what you find...the system is definitely an all-rounder genre-wise.

CONCLUSION

Yes, this is quite a lot of money for a wireless system, however, I think it is well worth it. Rather than just being a 'second system', the Electrocompaniet Tana 2 and Sira L1 combination sounds like a 'proper' system. It is room-filling, defined, and detailed with oodles of wonderfully controlled bass. Electrocompaniet have got into the realms of 'get rid of all your boxes and cables' territory here, I was very, very impressed. Whilst discussing it, Stuart and I agreed that you could put a 'dummy' big system

REVIEW



in a room and hide this behind a screen and no one would suspect that it wasn't the big system playing.

It is safe to say that the Electrocompaniet Tana SL-2, L-2 and Sira L1 system has changed my perception of wireless systems. This isn't a compromise, it's a totally enjoyable and versatile streaming system and I have no hesitation putting it forward for our highest award.

AT A GLANCE

Build Quality:

Understated looking, built like a tank, don't drop the sub on your foot

Sound Quality:

Exceptional, this is 'proper' HiFi sound in a wireless package

Value For Money:

You are looking at over £4000 for the full complement of two speakers and sub, but when you listen to the sound you get and how much that would cost you in separates and cables and then add in the sheer convenience and ease of use that £4k starts to look like exceptional value for money

We Loved:

The easy-to-use app, fluidity of control, build quality, sound quality, Room Readiness and the tight controlled bas...did we mention the bass?!

We Didn't Love So Much:

I honestly can't think of anything that I don't like about this system.

Price: Electrocompaniet Tana SL-2 £1439, Tana L-2 £1199, Sira L-1 £1599, Tana stands £200 pair in the UK.

The RRP's in Europe are: Tana SL-2: 1699 €, Tana L-2 1499 € Sira L-1 1999 €.

Elevator Pitch Review: A wireless streaming system for people that don't like wireless streaming systems, easy to set up and use, incredibly well made and sounds like 'proper' HiFi. Take my money.

Over to Stu...

I was asked to review the system by way of seeing if it got the seal of approval for the Editor's Choice Award. Read on for my take on this system.

I was in the upstairs review room all day yesterday listening to loudspeakers that are in for review whilst Linette had spent the day listening to the speakers and sub you are reading about here. We'd had them on in the background for a while for radio and Linette had listened to them by way of the usual review process, but

I'd not taken much notice – we've had a pair of the first model of these for ages and used them sparingly for listening to Radio 4. Yesterday was really the first time I'd taken any real notice of them for anything other than background noise. My comment on entering the downstairs room was along the lines of "My word, Linette, these sound really rather splendid!" Except perhaps with more expletives and with a much thicker Yorkshire accent than that conveys.

Anyway, Linette was coming towards the end of the review and asked if I'd take a serious listen to them by way of seeing if I thought they should get an Editor's Choice award. The protocol is that nothing gets this award without having my input – it takes longer and is a pain in the fundament but it's just how we do things here.

I'm not going to comment on the set up procedure as that's not my job here and will already have been covered. I'm also not going to go into massive detail about the product as I'm assuming that Linette will have covered all that, though as I write this I haven't seen her copy so as not to influence my thoughts.

Aesthetically the two speakers and their sub look pretty cool and unobtrusive. They were set up for me on an IKEA unit and with the sub between them. Perhaps the sub should have been in a corner but the truth of the matter is that with this kind of product the user is likely to be more interested in just getting them set up where they are convenient and look good rather than getting into the minutiae of getting them on stands and exactly measuring where they are placed in the room – they are a lifestyle product first and foremost, that is undoubtable!

They run Roon which is a must for me. I use it constantly other than when listening to vinyl. Set up is apparently a doddle and the app looks and works well, though my main interface was an iPad running Roon.

Saying these sound good for a lifestyle pair of speakers is doing them an injustice I feel. The simple fact of the matter is that they sound good...period! I'm going to talk about these as a system including the sub as that is how they were sent. I would say that the sub is essen-

tial as when you turn it off the speakers are a bit light for my taste and so factor this in when buying or thinking of buying. Talking about the sub – it's tiny and could be hidden away should you not want it on display, but it looks pretty cool anyway. The sub integrates very well and it's one of those "you don't know what you got 'til it's gone" kind of things. It adds great weight to everything but doesn't get in the way or honk away at you. A well-thought-out system!

Having the satellites set up where Linette has them isn't going to present the most ideal of soundstages but even so it's not bad at all. I position myself in the middle of them and they do image very well. They aren't on a par with the Raidhos we have in with regards this and they're not as open and spatial as the Audiovector R3 Areté but they throw a good stage plonked where they are and I imagine on a pair of dedicated stands and properly positioned they'd be even better – but they aren't that kind of product and so I'm not going to fanny about doing that!

I've listened to a good few speakers of this type, most notable the Devialet Phantoms which I always find just a bit too much for my taste in the bass – look, I like bass but it needs to be properly done and not OTT! This speaker system seems to have a good deal more subtlety in its presentation, but then crank them up (Daft Punk's Contact is on) and they really do fill the room – great for when you have a few friends round for a party (remember that?) or when you just want to blast the tunes out and blow away the cobwebs. I could see us dragging these onto the window sill, flinging the windows wide, and using them to add music for when we are in the garden.

But they aren't all about the bass and no treble (to paraphrase Meghan Trainor). These do pretty much all I threw at them very nicely. They have detail and refinement to satisfy all but the most dedicated of audiophile – and all that in a package that is pretty much self-contained and good-looking.

Listening to Fun Loving Criminals at volume is a very good experience and on a par with a good quality full-on system costing this kind of money, only in a package that is more home-friendly.



There is plenty of detail there and there is subtlety and nuance to the delivery. As good as the mid-priced system costing around three grand a box? Nope! But that's not a fair comparison. The depth and subtlety of this system is evident on Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* where the tape hiss is clear to hear and so is the rasp of the horns. Subtle changes in the piano chords on *So What* are easy to hear and there is a real dynamism to the presentation with the bass underpinning the whole sound. Face the speakers and sit in the middle and there is a good soundstage with the players set out before you.

In summary, this is a very good system for those that want to have a great sounding musical experience without the hassle of lots of boxes lying around. Get Qobuz and a Roon subscription and you are away. It does a lot of what a full-on system can achieve in a compact and good-looking three boxes. In comparison to the original Tana, they are more resolving and better sounding. That said it is the originals we

have, but having now experienced the latest iteration with their sub I will be considering purchasing the sub to add to ours. I can't help but give my sign-off on the Editors Choice award.

This is a very accomplished solution.

Stuart Smith

