



LOUDSPEAKERS

STANDMOUNTING LOUDSPEAKERS

CHARIO CONSTELLATION II DELPHINUS



These Italian-designed and made loudspeakers offer stunning cabinetry, with unusual porting to support their bass, and award-winning performance at the price.

Some manufacturers are a little vague about the rooms in which they think their loudspeakers will perform at their best and the amplifier power most suited to their capabilities. Not Italian manufacturer Chario. For its Constellation II Delphinus model, it specifies:

"The size of the ideal listening environment should not be less than 9 square metres and not more than 20 square metres. A carpeted floor in front of the speakers is recommended. The minimum power amplification suggested to fully exploit the characteristics of the speaker is 30W per channel into 4 ohms."

It then goes on to suggest that you can use "amplifiers rated at up to 70W per channel into 4 ohms" but specifies this as 'average power' rather than 'rated'. That's pretty specific, except for one thing, which is that the measurement is in square metres, rather than cubic metres. We can only assume that all Italian homes have ceilings of exactly the same height, which is the only way a 'square metre' specification could ever be accurate.



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port is located underneath the cabinet. It’s 67mm in diameter, 92mm long and has neither a flared exit nor a flared entry. This ‘underside’ location of the port means that it is essential that either the rubber conical feet supplied with the Delphinus — or the threaded spiked feet that are also supplied — be fitted to ensure the bass reflex port can perform its designed task of reinforcing and extending the speaker’s bass response. Using the rubber feet delivers a 20mm ‘gap’ between the bottom of the speaker cabinet and the surface it’s sitting on. Using the feet also means that the top of the cabinet is 415mm above that surface — slightly more than identified by Chario’s specification. (Similarly, Chario’s specification for cabinet depth, of 330mm, does not take into account the grille or the rear terminals which, if factored into the measurement, increase the total cabinet depth to 345mm.)

The rear terminals are of a design we can’t recall seeing previously, but are gold-plated multi-way types that accept banana plugs, spades, ring connectors and bare wire. They’re on 35mm centres, so you can’t use standard dual-Pomona plugs. Only a single set is fitted, so bi-wiring and bi-amping are out.

The speaker grille is wonderfully open, as the black acoustically transparent cloth is stretched over a wooden frame that has only a very narrow periphery: there are no cross-struts. It’s secured to the grille via the post-and-socket technique, with the posts fixed to the grille frame.

The Chario Delphinus’ cabinet is particularly attractive and not completely unlike those made by Sonus faber... perhaps not so surprising since both are Italian companies. According to Migliorini, all the wood hails from Italy, the side panels are finished by hand, and there’s no machinery used in cabinet assembly: all the work is handcrafted. He says “even the painting of the cabinet’s central body is made by hand”, which references the fact that although the side panels are solid wood, the central top, rear, baffle and bottom panels are painted with a black paint that gives an almost ‘velveteen’ finish.

PERFORMANCE

Immediately obvious from the get-go in our listening sessions was that the Chario Constellation II Delphinus is very good at converting electrical power into acoustic watts. In other words, it’s a very efficient loudspeaker, so whereas we would usually doubt a ‘90dB SPL’ specification for a small bookshelf speaker, the Delphinus sounded every bit

CHARIO BACKGROUNDER

Chario was founded in Milan, Italy, in 1975 by Carlo (Charlie) Vicenzetto and Mario Murace, who combined parts of their first names (Cha from Charlie and ‘rio’ from Mario) to create the unusual company name. Although Vicenzetto retired a few years ago, Murace still works as one of the company’s audio engineers. Alessandro Migliorini, one of the company’s three new owners, says that as far as he knows, Chario is the only audio company in the world that has been operating for more than 40 years that has had the same audio engineer since the beginning. Chario is an entirely home-grown Italian manufacturer, though its manufacturing operations are fragmented right across that country, with the headquarters located in Vimercate, a city around 20km north-east of Milan, a small factory in another town close to Vimercate, and a larger factory where all the cabinetry is done that’s near Vicenza. All the drivers are made in a factory near Ancona, on Italy’s eastern coast.



of this rating. This is good news not only because high-efficiency speakers sound more ‘exciting’ than lower-efficiency ones, but also because this efficiency means you’ll get the highest performance possible from your amplifier, because more of its power will be going into generating sound in your room, and less on raising the temperature in the cabinet by heating up the drivers’ voice coils.

As we kind of suspected from the compliance of the bass driver (it’s quite ‘springy’) bass lines also had quite a spring to their step — there’s nothing stodgy about the bass delivery of these speakers: It’s bright, bouncy, beautifully paced, with a depth to it that in a dealer’s showroom might have you looking around for a hidden subwoofer. This was particularly evident listening to the organ and double-bass on *Heavenly Voices*, from ‘Lightness of Dark’ (Fiona Joy Hawkins and Rebecca Daniel), but the lower octaves of Hawkins’ piano are also accurately realised. A track like this would be nothing without ‘heavenly voices’, and these (supplied by the aforementioned) also perfectly revealed the purity and accuracy of the Delphinus’ midrange sound. The speed of the cone, and the match it has with the tweeter, were illustrated by the immediacy and dynamism of the piano sound on the track that follows (*Ghosts Insanity Angels*), although we have to

constantly remind ourselves that it was composed by Hawkins, and not Michael Nyman.

This speed and dynamism are complemented by the superb warmth of the midrange sound, no better exemplified than if you audition Katie Melua’s oddly named (*Belfast Penguins and Cats*). You can also use this track to admire the sweet, pellucid high-frequency delivery of the Delphinus’ tweeter. Make sure you listen off-axis too, because its dispersion is particularly good, no doubt partially due to that horn. Well-recorded acoustic guitar is also a joy to hear when listening to these Charios. Melua’s is as good as any to try this out, though you should choose tracks that she herself has produced. If you don’t have her playlist handy, any well-recorded acoustic guitar will suffice to prove the point.

CONCLUSION

It’s always nice to be able to recommend speakers that have won awards, and in this case, we can report that the Chario Constellation II Delphinus is the current holder of the Sound+Image 2020 award for ‘Loudspeaker of the Year \$1000–5000’. And seeing that you’re going to get quite a lot of change from \$5000, that makes them something of a ‘Best Buy’ as well! ■

Currently, there are four models in Chario’s ‘Constellation II’ range, all of which use the same 38mm tweeter as the Delphinus. The others are the Constellation Lynx, a two-way bookshelf with a 130mm bass/mid driver, the floor-standing three-way Cygnus, which has a 130mm bass driver and 130mm midrange driver, and the floor-standing three-way Pegasus, which has a 160mm bass driver and a 160mm midrange driver.

As you’ve no doubt already noted, Delphinus, Lynx, Cygnus and Pegasus are all constellations of stars. The Delphinus constellation (its name means ‘dolphin’ in Latin), represents the dolphin sent by the sea god Poseidon to find Amphitrite, the Nereid he wanted to marry, and the constellation was first catalogued by the Greek astronomer Ptolemy in the 2nd century. It’s interesting that Chario named only one of its other models in the Constellation II series after one of the other neighbouring constellations, those being Aquarius, Aquila, Equuleus, Pegasus, Sagitta, and Vulpecula... Cygnus and Lynx are light years away. (The original Constellation line, which ceased production in 2016, featured an extra model, the Ursa Major.)

EQUIPMENT

The chassis of the Delphinus’ bass/midrange driver chassis is 202mm at its widest part, but the moving diameter is 160mm and the most important dimension — the Thiele/Small diameter — is 146mm, which gives an effective cone area (Sd) of 168m². The cone is made from a paper compound, while the cone suspension, which has a normal ‘traditional’ roll surround, is made from a rubber compound. The central dustcap is dished, rather than domed, which gives a much cleaner look. The driver chassis is recessed into the front baffle to assist with dispersion.

The Delphinus’ tweeter has a 38mm coated fabric dome that’s driven at its periphery by a voice coil driven by a standard ferrite magnet. The large (130mm diameter) tweeter faceplate doubles as a horn, which improves the efficiency of the tweeter while at the same time also improving dispersion. Like the bass/midrange driver, the tweeter faceplate is secured to the baffle by star-headed wood screws, rather than by bolt/nut fixings, and is also recessed into it.

Rather unusually for a standmount/bookshelf bass reflex design, the Chario Delphinus’ bass reflex

Chario Constellation II Delphinus standmounting loudspeakers

- Very efficient
- Superb midrange
- Fit’n’finish
- Choice of finishes
- No bi-wiring

Price: \$2599 per pair (RRP)
Configuration: 2-way, bass reflex
Tweeter: 38mm
Bass/mid: 160mm
Sensitivity: 90dB SPL (1 m/2.83V)
LF cut-Off: 55Hz (–3dB)
Crossover frequency: 1.5kHz
Impedance: 4 ohm (min 5.8Ω)
Phase angle: ±36°
Cabinet finish: Walnut
Dimensions (HWD): 410 × 230 × 330mm
Weight: 12kg

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