

Roksan Darius S1

PAUL MESSENGER TRIES OUT A COSTLY BUT CLASSY AND ATTRACTIVELY STYLED STAND-MOUNT

It's very rare to encounter a loudspeaker that has actually received the attentions of an industrial designer, who has clearly done his damndest to make sure that this compact stand-mount at least looks like one of the most interesting around. It's also unquestionably one of the heaviest, and at £5,250/pair one of most costly of its type, so it clearly has to deliver the goods from a sound quality perspective too.

I should point out that this *S1* has very little in common with the original *Darius* – Roksan's first loudspeaker – that was first introduced back in the mid-1980s. That original *Darius* was a big four-square stand-mount with an extraordinary 'exoskeleton' frame/stand and a spring-decoupled tweeter. Indeed, I reckon the only thing the two models have in common is an essentially two-way configuration.

This *Darius S1* is certainly an inordinately pretty loudspeaker, thanks in part to several decorative elements that vary from the smart to the ridiculous. In no particular order, these include heavily radiused edges all round (all 12 of them!), high gloss black (or white) finish, a six-leg protector over the bass/mid unit, a little Roksan badge set into the top surface, and three scalloped sections forming large dimples down each side. The fact that the bass/mid driver frame matches the size of the tweeter's faceplate adds a pleasing symmetry to a speaker for which no grille provision is made.

The matching c60cm high stand is quite stylish too, and costs £750/pair if purchased at the same time as the speakers. A heavy steel tripod base couples to the floor through sharp pointed cones. (Regrettably perhaps, there seems to be no means of locking these cones at a specific height.) This supports a quite deep, high gloss finished, rectangular central pillar that is bolted to the loudspeaker and incorporates a cable-tidy. A tripod support will always maintain good floor contact.

A particularly interesting feature is that the stand incorporates a slight backward tilt, in order to provide a measure of compensation for the directivity characteristics of the ribbon type tweeter used here. The shape of a ribbon device is invariably taller than it is slim, and this will inevitably limit the vertical distribution of the highest frequencies. Aiming the speaker slightly over the heads of seated

listeners should help add some worthwhile extra room reflections from above to the listening zone.

This might simply be a compact stand-mount, but the complete three-box package (including one for its dedicated stands) was not dissimilar to a pair of floorstanders in terms of bulk and mass. In fact the speakers alone weighed around 14kg, while a hefty 23kg was registered when the stands were attached. I was very happy that I had an electric screwdriver to hand, to help with the rather lengthy procedure that assembling these stands involved, as the pair uses no fewer than 32 quite long bolts (as well as requiring the fitting of floor-cones).

One certain thing is that this speaker has a very tough, substantial and rigid enclosure, presumably made from braced MDF. Low frequencies are acoustically loaded by twin ports located on the rear panel, above two pairs of the most substantial multi-way terminals I've ever seen. Permitting bi-wiring or bi-amping, and supplied with rather mundane looking optional spade-terminated wire links, their chunky white plastic knurled nuts will allow appropriately terminated cables to be seriously tightened. The drivers consist of a 130mm bass/mid unit with a 100mm diameter metal alloy diaphragm, and a 52mm tall by 15mm wide metal ribbon tweeter (allegedly sourced from Aurum Cantus).

Measurements

In several respects the *Darius S1* resembles a rather larger loudspeaker. Helped by the twin ports that are tuned to 42Hz, the bass extension is quite generous, especially by stand-mount standards, giving decent in-room output down to 25Hz (assisted by some excess centred on 50Hz). Sensitivity is quoted at a respectable enough 89dB, which was more or less confirmed under our measurement regime, and is only mildly compromised by its impedance.

The latter dips to around 5ohms at 42Hz and 4ohms 125-200Hz, but stays comfortably above 6ohms at all frequencies above 500Hz. The crossover occurs at just above 2kHz electrically, and just below 2kHz acoustically, frequencies that are a little lower than average which should assist directivity. The bass/mid crossover arm looks like a straightforward filter, but that feeding the ribbon tweeter incorporates some additional frequency equalisation in the 1-2.5kHz zone.

