

DLS R55

THE OUTSIDER

Swedish DLS has for many years been synonymous with 'good sound' to in-car hi-fi enthusiasts. Not the type of enthusiast with four 15-inchers and thousands of watts in the boot, but for those of us who appreciate true sound reproduction. After having dominated the top places in most tests and competitions, DLS is now focussing on the in-home market. Our expectations were therefore high when we connected up the newly launched R55 in our test room...

The DLS R55 is a two-way speaker with a 1" tweeter and two 5½" woofers. This is one of the test's most expensive speakers. It does however give a higher impression of quality than we are used to seeing in this price range. The cabinet finish is real veneer, and the box is very solid and well damped. On the back is a bass reflex port and terminals which allow bi-wiring. The speakers are developed and produced in Sweden. DLS produces the elements themselves, which have been developed based on their in-car hi-fi experience.

Reaching for the stars

Diana Krall was the first disc which we tried on the R55. After just a few seconds of Diana Krall, we on the test panel began nodding in agreement to each other. Sounds surprisingly good? The R55 brings forth an abundance of details in the sound picture. Diana Krall came alive right between the speakers, and the reproduction of her special voice had amazing clarity and dynamics. The fine grain treble means that the R55 is very pleasant to listen to, even at high volumes. The mid-range is exceptionally open and clean - fully comparable with much more expensive speakers, and significantly better than the other speakers in the test. This is undoubtedly due to a very solid cabinet and not least the high quality of the speaker elements. The R55 is also well suited to classical music.

Tight bass

We were very excited when we came to testing the DLS bass range. The speaker gave such good results with Diana Krall and Verdi. Could we possibly dare to expect a similar result in the bass range too? DLS has obviously prioritised detailed and tight reproduction above rock rhythm and fun. Or...?

Our prejudices were quickly blown away when we put on Jill Scott's 'bass test' album. The R55 goes surprisingly deep! The bass is quick and precise, and you can turn the volume up very high before the bass elements lose control. However, it quickly became obvious that the R55 demands more of the amplifier than the other test participants. DLS has used well damped speaker elements with stiff mountings to achieve high sound quality. This gives a tighter and more predictable reproduction, but means also that the speakers are more difficult for the amplifier to drive. The R55 performed better after we increased the size of the amplifier we were using.

Klipsch RF25: Multi-talented

Klipsch has again provided a very exciting speaker in this price range. The RF25 is a good speaker for those who want a good all rounder but still want the option to play really loud. The RF25 distinguishes itself with a committed and direct, but at the same time pleasant style which is perfect for most people, and is suitable for all types of music. Klipsch of course supplies mid, sub and rear speakers in the same series for those who want to build a multi-channel system, which would have to be one of the toughest systems in the neighborhood!

PSB Image T65: THE TOUGH ALTERNATIVE

The PSB T65 is a very successful speaker design. It plays all music with great confidence and commitment. Its speciality is modern pop music where the hard hitting bass really shines through. This is not the most 'correct' hi-fi speaker we have heard, but we really had a lot of fun with it! If you like to play loud, and like thinner types of music and you also want a capable front speaker for your home cinema, then the PSB T65 is a good choice

Quad 221: Capable

This speaker does a good job with all music. However, the magic is somehow missing. Where the Klipsch RF-25 gives a fat and soft reproduction, this speaker is tight, but a little flat and grey. The treble is not in the same class as the Dali and DLS. This speaker sounds more shut in. The bass is also a little moist and viscous.

The holography, the ability to position instruments precisely in a three-dimensional sound picture, is not optimal. The sound picture does not break through the speakers' physical size or positioning, and therefore is a little compact and one dimensional. The plus points are that the speaker is an undemanding for each amplifier, and it does not make many obvious errors.

DLS R55 Best sound Hi-fi comet

DLS has, with the R55, achieved the test's most 'hi-fi correct' sound. This is a very well made speaker with a well defined treble, an open and fresh mid-range and a tight and dynamic bass reproduction. The R55 does however place greater demands on the amplifier than the other speakers tested here. The best speakers do usually demand the best possible electronics. While the other speakers in the test worked well with a 50 watt amplifier, the R55 needs at least twice this output to perform at its best. You should take this into consideration when buying, as the price for a complete system will be higher than for the other speakers. But with sufficient power, and a good sound source, the DLS R55 will give a sound quality we are not used to hearing in the under 10,000 NOK price range!

KEF Q4 Small and good

The Kef Q5 performed very satisfactorily in a test we carried out a couple of years ago. We actually thought the smaller speaker, the Q4, was the better of the two! It has less cabinet resonance and therefore sounds more neutral, particularly in the bass range. It is also quicker and more distinct. Compared with the other speakers in test, it is a little greyer and flatter in the treble range, but this does integrate perfectly with the mid-range. The stereo perspective is surprisingly good. The different elements in music are differentiated better than for example the PSB and Klipsch. This is an excellent all-rounder which cannot quite match Dali and DLS in a number of areas, but will suit many sitting rooms better.

Dali Suite 2.8 Best all rounder A lot for the money

A ghost-like transparent and dispersed sound picture combined with good punch makes these speakers an excellent all-rounder. Only one speaker in the test scored almost as high a score as an all round speaker, and that is the DLS R55. However it costs 2000 NOK more and demands a more expensive amplifier than the Dali speakers to work properly. A complete system with DLS speakers will therefore be noticeably more expensive. Dali therefore gives more for the money. The Dali is much more reasonable particularly for home cinema where at least five speakers are needed. They also do not require a too expensive multi-channel receiver. These speakers give a lot for the money irrespective of music style and film genre.