



DLS CD ONE, AMP ONE, M66

Until now, the DLS name sounded familiar mainly to in-car hi-fi fans and yacht owners only, even though the Swedish manufacturer has been building its home hi-fi speaker product line since 2003. In 2008, DLS finally unveiled its first electronics, the CD One CD/SACD player and the Amplifier One integrated amplifier to complete the brand's home audio suite.

The company started in 1979, when three young Swedes, Dawid, Leif and Stefan (their initials make up the DLS name) set out to manufacture radio receivers without the use of crystals. This endeavour brought immediate success to them, as the Swedish police, fire brigades, ambulances, taxis and many others became devoted users of the devices. The receivers, manufactured until 1998 and sold over 100,000 units, established the company's business and reputation in the market. In 1985, when the popularity of in-car hi-fi exploded, DLS turned its attention to in-car speakers and amplifiers. They were determined to provide top quality alternatives to the offerings of the major Japanese market players.

In 2003, with Mats Andersen, the designer of QLN speakers on their side, they began manufacturing home-use speakers. Their product ranges included high-end floorstanding and monitor speakers, in-wall speakers, sub-woofers and Flatbox speakers, and provided a suitable solution for all kinds of audio applications. It wasn't until 2008, that a CD player and an integrated amplifier were added, so their fans could enjoy their DLS sound system in their homes, as well as their cars. The devices were designed with a black and near-white metal case in a clean-cut, cool Scandinavian style: DLS wanted a high-tech interior with a user-friendly exterior.

Looking at the very elegant devices with minimal controls, they clearly achieved their second goal. As to the first one, we will see shortly.

CD One

Matched to its partnering amplifier both in design and in size, the CD/SACD player is a formidably sized, tall structure with not too much weight – at least compared to other high-end products. The simple front panel contains only the basic controls; the middle area is dominated by the dark Plexiglas insert that also houses the indicators.



The mechanics are Philips, a large portion of the digital section is from Mediatek, and the signals are converted to analogue by a sophisticated Burr-Brown DSD1792 DAC, which handles not only the SACD (DSD) signals, but also the up sampling of the 88.2 kHz CD-DA bits. CD One is quite generous with its outputs: the analogue selection includes balanced XLR and two sets of RCA connectors, while the digital outputs include Toslink and coaxial versions. The R4U remote control supplied with the device is able to control the functions of both DLS electronics.



Amplifier One

The DLS specialists spent many hours of listening time to pick the parts for the 8 Ohm 2x100W amplifier. Its design contains relatively few stages, resulting in very low distortion even in the highest ranges, and a quick and stable sound. Thanks to the pre-amp stage being paired with a high-current terminal amplifier, the unit can deliver up to 180W power on a 4 Ohm load. Two large, infinitely turning knobs are located on the left and right side of the front panel, in perfect symmetry: one of them is a rotary encoder type, 85dB upper limit volume knob, the other is to select one of the five high-level inputs.

In addition to the balanced input connectors, there are four line RCA sockets, a tape output, a pre-out, and good quality screw-clamp banana sockets for the single speaker outputs.

M66

The pinnacle of the DLS speaker line, the M66 is a classic shape, elegant floor-standing box with high gloss rosewood or piano lacquer finish. Its speakers are made with an innovative and strong magnetic system, aluminium diaphragms, specially designed dust caps and low weight aluminium voice coils. The cabinet is heavy, stable and rigid, with double baffles: standing waves and other kinds of resonance have no chance against it.



The speakers are attached with heavy duty fasteners, and the thick grey front panel appears to be of a vibration damping composition. The tweeter of the 2.5-way speaker is a 28 mm soft dome, the woofer/midrange and woofer speakers are both 6.5" aluminium diaphragm speakers. The single cable connector is a gold-plated, screw-clamp type.

Sound quality

The "DLS band" strikes the chords in a pleasant and neutral style; the sound is very friendly, recalling the analogue versions of the recordings. The CD-type brightness is not characteristic to it: in spite of its energy, there seems to be a bit of polite moderation that gives some intimate feeling even to music with sparkle. The set has very strong bass, but not bone-crunching: firm, powerful and heavy drums as well as the opulent and accurately notable bass provide stable foundations. The clarinet sings in a loose style; the entire sound image reminds me of devices I heard long ago, made by another famous Scandinavian company, Copland, and that is not a bad comparison. I also like the vibraphone very much. The instrument sounds in a very nice, pleasant tone, with soft and fine strokes and long echoes, continuously reminding me of the LP version.

Verdi's Macbeth with its sudden and steep mood changes and full-blooded tutti passages followed by sweet lulling melodies presents an interesting task for the fundamentally tame-tempered DLS devices, who nonetheless, accept the gloves when challenged. They deliver the tutti's energy easily, but the colours are a bit pastel-like. For example, the metallic feel of the brasses is not complete, as the "edges" of the colours are smoothed somewhat. The string choir is beautiful and refined, almost creamy, and at the end, even the thrill is there, without the pretentious elements. In other words, a pleasant sound is created with a Scandinavian-type approach, and the analogue relation that is the dream of all digital devices is again unforgettable.

The heavy basses in Shirley Horn's recording don't prove to be especially challenging for the M66 speakers. They dutifully pump the energy and power, overdoing it only for two moments when some resonance enters the sound image. The instruments are nicely differentiated, the principle of "together but separately" prevails perfectly, and the reproduction of the details shows mastery as well. The voice of the singer stands out from the instruments, and due to the natural presentation, appears very realistic.

The presentation of the rambunctious clacking, rattles and drums that are characteristics of this recording lacks the feeling of the Latin temperament – this set clearly represents another school, and therefore conveys the theme with a different, but very enjoyable approach.

The strong and full bass makes Terje Rypdal's rock music enjoyable and effective. The hard-pounding drums get us wrapped up in the genre, in spite of the peculiar, pleasantly singing tone. It is great fun, when a highbrow device (set) with powerful sound plays pop-rock. It is like when poor Pavarotti sang pop songs long ago – you can sense it is not exactly his genre, but he enriches the music with new colours and feelings, giving it such an unworldly grace that turns it into a unique experience.

Recommendation

True to its origins, the DLS system continues the Scandinavian traditions both in its exterior appearance and in its sounding, having a natural, analogue-like, ageless sound that does not yield to any topical trends or fads. In its own elegant and neutral style, it presents both classical and rock music in a pleasurable high quality; its abundant power provides enough strength and a respectable bass so it would not be embarrassed by any musical material.

<p>DLS CD ONE</p> <p>Signal/Noise ratio: 112 dB</p> <p>Crosstalk: 110 dB</p> <p>Harmonic distortion: 0.005 %</p> <p>Dimensions: 432 x 432 x 128 mm</p> <p>Weight: 6.8 kg</p>
<p>Price: 599.990.00 Ft</p> <p>DLS AMPLIFIER ONE</p> <p>Power: 2 x 100 W / 8 Ohm</p> <p>Frequency range: 0 to 100 kHz / 1 dB</p> <p>Signal/Noise ratio: 106 dB</p> <p>Dimensions: 432 x 432 x 128 mm</p> <p>Weight: 16.8 kg</p>
<p>Price: 599.990.00 Ft</p> <p>DLS M66</p> <p>Recommended amplifier: 50 to 250 W</p> <p>Frequency range: 40 Hz to 30 kHz</p> <p>Sensitivity: 89 dB</p> <p>Dimensions: 200 x 360 x 1080 mm</p> <p>Weight: 28.4 kg</p>
<p>Price: 599.990.00 Ft / pair</p> <p>Distributor: Horn Distribution</p> <p>Tel.: +36-1-347-0020</p>