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# HIFI-STARs

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HIFI-STARs



„2017“ version of the Ascendo D9-C loudspeaker

## Acting consequently

It's been a mere three years since this speaker hit the market – and now it's been revisited, this leading to a big upgrade. The result? All of a sudden a well-known speaker transforms into an even more musical unit. The „2017“ version has benefitted that much you may call it another league it plays in. So what happened? The exterior remained almost untouched. But stop, the expert eye recognizes a new tweeter at the backside of the housing. That's all as for changes to be detected by external inspection. During the Ascendo Live 15's stay at my home for testing purpose my very own D9 was being refurbished in Ansbach, transformed into the „2017“ version and finally re-delivered right now. Maybe we could call this action kind of „pimp my box“...

### Ten HiFi-STARS later

It's been exactly four years ago – or ten issues – since I wrote about the Ascendo D9 for the first time. Since then it has been serving as my „workhorse speaker“. To my ears this is one of the few passive speakers rightfully described as sounding really neutral. For some listeners this might be a transducer that is too much „in your face“, too honest, as it shows all strengths, but also mercilessly exhibits all weaknesses of your favorite recordings. As this is exactly what I crave for – the ultimate truth in sound. I want to hear the quality of the LP or CD I'm listening to with every detail shown. The D9 makes music feel so realistic like it is not coming from a recording. I then chose the D9 to be kept for its sonics, but also because of its room-friendly appearance (112 cm in height, 24 cm in width and 45 cm in depth). So it is no „monster speaker“ that could be scaring the lady of the house. In addition to that it is quite uncritical to place. Due to the front-sided vent of the bass-reflex enclosure the speaker can be positioned quite close to the wall. The Ascendo D9 can either be placed parallel (straight), facing the listener (my preferred position) or it may as well be angled toward the listening position so it either points straight to the listener's ears. The piano-lacquer surface



is available in white or black, making the speakers even less noticeable in normal living rooms. If you prefer other colors talk to the manufacturer...

The driver assembly with the well-known coax chassis and the two 18 cm (diameter) NRSC bass chassis made from carbon fiber working inside the cabinet remained untouched. Really new are the two ferrofluid-free 27mm Magnesium tweeter chassis made by Seas that are operable using the TOS technology. My constant operating condition for the D9-C is the „4-way-mode“, meaning all of the chassis are activated. In some cases this mode will sound too bright, so the second tweeter can be taken



out of the signal path with the rear toggle switch. This ensures that even in modern and rather sparsely-furnished living rooms you still have every frequency reproduced adequately as the three-way circuit is still in full operation. Great idea!

### Important Tool

The importance of the baseplate or pedestal of any loudspeaker cannot be overstated as this is the part of your speaker getting direct contact with your ground floor. To put it in a nutshell: Almost none of our floors are capable to take care of modern, powerful HiFi speaker

and their demands. It doesn't matter what kind of transducer we are talking about, be it a bookshelf sized monitor or a real „monster“. Each and every loudspeaker I have heard has benefitted from an optimized coupling/decoupling towards the floor. Mostly floating floor is used with various coverings such as tile, oak parquet floors, carpet or various conifers. But who knows which insulating material is located under the respective flooring? Due to the non-vibration free flooring speakers can induce resonances via impact sound - this may convert an old buildings floor into another (secondary) sound source. The tonal result is characterized best by a lack of transparency and resolution leading to an undifferentiated, dull sound. The bigger/heavier the speaker, the more it affects its surroundings. The Ascendo D9-C brings 50 kg (per piece) to the scale. So it seems very reasonable to add an upgrade in the form of the C-decoupling. The pricing for this asset must be called a fair one (1.300 € per pair). And, another plus: At the same time the physical stability of the speakers is being increased.

So as far as the two types of speakers being part of the coax series are concerned (the smaller D7 and its bigger sister D9) Ascendo put a lot of effort into creating a design made of combined plastic dampers, massive steel feet and other synthetics to solve this problem. And it works fine in decoupling the speakers from the ground. The components used have different excitation frequencies and the transmission of impact sound is therefore effectively eliminated. If you would open up the Ascendo C-decoupling you would find a combination of two-layer steel feet optimized for attenuating, each teamed up with three high effective stainless steel/ceramic decoupling units. The reasons for why this concept is working are multiple. But mainly it is how these parts interact with each other. The double-layer, solid steel base fractionizes the impact sound transmission wide-bandedly, the stored energy still left is transferred into the attenuation-optimized steel base by the stainless steel/ceramic decouples. No „Voodoo“ but a product developed in-house based on physical findings by Dipl.-Phys. Jürgen Scheuring, co-founder and member of the management board of the Ascendo GmbH. To sum it up: You end up with an even more open and at the same time more detailed sound than without the C-decoupling. You will spot the difference right away as the much cleaner sound hits you with the first note reproduced. Nothing has to „settle in“ and the acoustic capabilities of the Ascendo D9 version „2017“ make this a mandatory buy. Otherwise you simply waste a lot of sound potential.



## Internal Improvements

„Once you start to optimize to the innards of a speaker, this shows up to be a blessing and a curse at the same time. Because everytime you better one component this leads to the next part to be optimized“ Stefan Koepf, also the managing Director of Ascendo GmbH, told me. The crossover has been completely renewed and is now free wired. Capacitors of very high quality (high-current versions) are responsible for an improved current flow. Which led to a new internal wiring, originated by the Franconian manufacturer „High-End-Masterclass“, to reduce the reverse modulation. Everything is cleaned, measured, and meticulously assembled and, before any loudspeaker leaves the facility, checked in-depth in the manufacturer’s laboratory. These efforts will be heard immediately right after switching on the amplifier, but give it about 50 hours of burn-in with music and you will hear the full effect. Resolution and transparency in sound are so intensely striking then – not to mention the speed... Listening to Charly Antolini’s album „Knock Out“ (direct cut, released in 1979) is a great example here. The D9-C shows an almost brutal directness – unbelievable! I just experienced 110 dB of truly measured sound pressure level in my room... „This is freaking great!“ I noticed. A passive speaker capable of delivering the full frequency range so seamlessly and with ease is hard to find. And what about music at low levels? Therefore I asked the Yuri Honing Quartet with „Desire“ to be my guest (via CD, that is). The resilient movements



of the snare, the tenor saxophone shining all over the room and the gorgeous, delicate taps on the piano keys plus that softly plucked double bass make up for a great musical experience. Overall, the D9-C creates the sound of a dream so beautiful you could die for it!

## To the point

The Ascendo D9-C as of 2017 does not have much in common with the prototype I originally knew. The sound of it has developed so much that after this update you have a different, way better speaker playing. Which leads to the conclusion that the price of accommodation is one that within no time pays acoustic dividends. To put it straight: There are much more expensive, passive competitors that can’t do what the D9-C can do now. From super-speed to relaxed chill out - everything is possible, no (musical) stone left unturned. Unadulterated music – what else is there to be wished for?

## Information

Passive Three- or  
Four-Way loudspeaker Ascendo D9-C  
Price: 11.200 €  
Price of the Update from D9 to D9 „2017“:  
2.300,- €  
Price for C-Decoupling: 1.300,- €  
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