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HIFI-STARS

Stand-alone loudspeaker Ascendo D7 Aktiv

## Beyond „normal zero“



About a year ago, the editorial team set out on the way to Frankish Ansbach to visit the loudspeaker manufacturer Ascendo. After a friendly welcome and a little refreshment, we were able to admire the new Dolby Atmos and Auro 3D Immersive Sound Referencekino. At first, we were able to marvel at a system spread out in all parts, which had just been made for a customer – which was already very interesting from a technical point of view. A full-fledged cinema system with a total of 32 (!) Loudspeaker systems one does not get to see just every day.

Some curious questions later went to the home cinema for demonstration purposes. The anticipation on our part was great and the expectation of course correspondingly high, as we took place on the leather couch. What then happened, however, exceeded all the conceptions of a „home cinema“ in the conventional sense. A colleague said quickly, as impressed as respectfully: „They have a gossip, they do not have much to do with normal home cinema and the well-known Dolby systems!“ This cinema is the absolute hammer – depending on the film

sequence, the acoustic range stretches from the sensitive whisper of a love scene to a regular physical attack on a war center. Madness, with how much pressure and level this system can offer without distorting even in the approach. And because of the digital technology used, all signals arrive at the listener almost simultaneously, otherwise the whole thing does not work – at least not really. At the latest, it is clear that the Ansbachers move with their loudspeaker systems beyond „normal zero“. Why am I telling this? Now, the digital technology used in the home cinema system is the basis for the activation of the existing passive loudspeakers of the manufacturer and is thus the logical further development of the classic two-channel systems from Ascendo.

Due to the digital processing of the input signal, the possibilities are almost unlimited. Even the separation of low-frequency and mid-high-frequency units, which is otherwise adopted by electronic components of an active switch, is carried out at the digital level. The As-

cendo D7 in question is basically an active loudspeaker, but the electronics and power amplifiers sit in an external housing from which normal loudspeaker cables lead to the loudspeakers – so two separate cables for bass and medium / high tone or a bi-wiring capable cable. Attentive readers will now have noticed that there should actually be three cables, because the D7 is indeed a 3-way loudspeaker. Strictly speaking, this is a system that is fully active in the bass and mid-range, with the transition between the midrange and the tweeter being realized at the center of the coaxial chassis with passive components. This does not matter, however, because any desired corrections in the high tone can nevertheless be made via the software of the digital electronics. Therefore no real criticism but only somewhat unusual in comparison with usual activists. The external electronics of the D7, on the other hand, are normally connected to the preamplifier via the balanced XLR inputs. For unbalanced RCA outputs on the amplifier (optional), use an optional adapter.



### request concert

The digital technology used at Ascendo opens up a wide range of settings and adjustments. This begins, for example, with the division of the audio signal for the bass and coaxial chassis by means of software on a digital level, which is usually taken over by a physically existing frequency sweep. Likewise, virtually any desired correction of the amplitude frequency response is possible. When Stefan Köpf delivered the loudspeakers with me, I use of course the opportunity and let the D7 adapt to my room. With a notebook, on which the corresponding software is located and an external interface together with measuring microphone, all parameters can be recorded and set. The data transfer is carried out by a network cable, which connects the notebook and the active electronics. A short measurement then shows that my listening room at about 50 Hz directly at the listening position is a bit premature. No problem, with a few mouse clicks, a narrow band filter is set up, which compensates for the acoustic problem of the listening room. Even for me – who feels more attracted to analogous technology – the possibilities and advantages of such systems are obvious. And I have to admit that this is really only possible on a digital level in this simplicity and effectiveness. After the correction it now sounds more structured and firmer in the bass, only the high note could be a bit louder. Click, click ... and Stefan Köpf has already put my wish into action. It is already somehow impressive how well the new D7 loudspeaker system can be adjusted and for how many room acoustic problems it provides a simple and fast solution. Nevertheless, the acoustic characteristics of a listening room remain crucial for the achievable quality of the music reproduc-

tion. The room should therefore at least provide with practical reverberation times, because even the best correction hits some physical limits. What is possible in combination with the D7 and a good listening room, you should have at least once experienced, in order to form a firm opinion in this regard.

### General technique

Already during the installation, it becomes clear with which caliber of loudspeakers one has to deal with here. The 38 kg D7 from the cartons to pellet, requires a lot of muscle power. For that, one can then also look over 232 x 1065 x 415 mm (wxhxd) large, really first-class processed sound transducers – real men's hifi. The housings spray from the first moment on a price class appropriate value and the lacquer with its low luster is wonderful succeeded – really great. Rounded edges, combined with the slightly rearward sloped front, ensure an elegant appearance of the extremely stable housing. In sum, the loudspeakers look very beautiful despite their size. The solid screwdrivers provide a perfect level, which considerably increases the stability due to their light delivery. With their help, it is easy to set the loudspeakers absolutely free of wobbles. In principle, this is a 3-way system in which the two 18 cm bass drivers operate invisibly inside the semi symmetric bandpass principle. From the outside you can only see the large tube, through which the chassis contact the outside world. Above it is a coaxial chassis of the company Seas, which carries a fabric tweeter with neodymium drive in the center. The special XP material ensures inter alia a particularly „good-nature“ acoustic behavior at the upper end of the transmission range and helps to avoid unwanted partial vibrations.





On the rear of the D7 you can find a further tweeter, which can be activated by means of a toggle switch, which makes the loudspeaker in the high frequency range a dipole. The differences between the two operating modes lie mainly in the emission characteristics and the intensity of the indirect sound field (half-sphere or dipole). The chassis is powered by high-quality and powerful Class-D power amplifiers per channel, each with a 2 x 500 watt sine power. This corresponds to a total output of 1000 watts RMS per side ... This should ensure a dynamic reproduction even in larger rooms. Ascendo provides a frequency range of 31 Hz to 32,000 Hz at -3 dB and points to absolute timing of the loudspeaker system – thanks to modern technology and the coaxial system.

### Powerful and clean

The first impression immediately reminds me of very good studios, but the D7 immediately makes more fun, especially with corresponding live recordings. Again on the subject of space and bass reproduction: After the speakers have been measured, the bass is as if nailed in the room. It has real depth and comes very powerful therefore, with a lot of meat, but not exaggerated and bold. After some plays, it is clear that the loudspeakers in the points dynamics, level and draft fear nothing. I now put material into the CD player, which in terms of „timely“ is very demanding. So mainly music with high percussion, as on the album „Voodoo-Swing“ by Peter

Schneider (Secret tip!), on which the first six songs were recorded live. If the timing of the sound transducers is correct, this album rips right with you – in the case of the D7, if desired, this can even be easily adjusted to original volume. Then a change to „more serious“ music, I play Keith Jarrett's „Kölnkonzert“ and feel immediately at the place of the happening. The hall is palpable and the ending of the sounds of the concert grand piano is wonderfully clear and almost endlessly audible. Yes, quite clearly, the coaxial system plays the advantages of a point sound source here fully. I can confirm the timeliness, the Ascendo of the D7, absolutely under the cleanest offer the Ascendo has detailed accuracy on the highest level. In conjunction with the really very good dynamics of the D7 instruments such as saxophone, trumpet or clarinet are presented in their natural tone absolutely convincing. The imaging accuracy also benefits from the coaxial system and results in a space-saving accuracy in the reproduction, as is known from good headphones. Most passive multipath systems can not keep up. Generally the playback of the Ascendo speakers is rather dry and fairly direct, with very good dynamics and high precision. There will, therefore, be listeners who are a little frightened by that kind of play, or at least feel somewhat overwhelmed at first. The D7 has just real monitor qualities and – according to its characteristics – a headphone is quite close. Just in case that all this is too much of the good or simply too direct, the rear tweeter can be activated by a switch. Then the sound expands

appreciably in the depths and loses something of its immediacy, without however spatially inaccurate. It is rather a „loosening“ and yes ... deeper breath of the sound. As always with our hobby it remains however ultimately tastefulness and so everyone can listen according to his Gusto. I prefer under my conditions usually the variant without additional high toner however not always. Luckily, you do not have to set the point on the D7 – you can simply switch.

### To the point

The activation of the Ascendo D7 brings a lot of flexibility and makes an already very good loudspeaker an extremely adaptable active system. This makes it possible to compensate for many problems with the listening room and to realize individual wishes of the listener. The system shows impressively what a modern loudspeaker like the Ascendo D7 is capable of. Combined with the excellent overall quality and a guarantee period of ten years, you get a very variable concept that is worth every penny!

### Information

Speakers Ascendo D7 Active  
 Pair price: 12.800 Euro  
 (including electronics, without cable)  
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