

# Review: ESTELON X Diamond



In the past 2 years I had an opportunity to audition both the Estelon's flagship Extreme model and their most affordable (still quite expensive) YB speakers. Both were remarkable. The Extremes defy any categorization and the YBs nailed me to the listening chair for hours. The X Diamond is the next speaker in line after the Extremes and – long story said short – in a proper set up it is by far the finest sounding loudspeaker I have reviewed to date.

## Function and form



EASE OF USE



SOUND



APPEARANCE

137cm tall cabinets of the X Diamond are die-cast from mixture of crushed marble granulate and acrylic resin. This gives them their beautiful (and acoustically effective) curves, nondescript rigidity and mass. Each speaker weighs 86kg and one can move the cabinets around on casters until they are not replaced by spikes. After that the only concern is whether the floor has enough load capacity. Estelon only uses carefully selected parts and drivers for the X Diamond – not only by parameters but by real bench tests before the speakers are assembled. They go even one step further - after the speakers are assembled, each pair is individually fine voiced with set of special signals. That is what I consider a presales service!

All the drivers in the X Diamond are sourced from German Accuton. The 1.2" diamond inverted-dome tweeter with neodymium magnet and aluminum voice coil should have the first break up mode at around 45kHz, so outside the audible range. The midrange and bass drivers are ceramic, the bass is supported by a reflex port. Single wiring terminals are close to floor to save you extra lengths of a speaker cable. Sensitivity is quite standard 88dB. Minimum impedance is 3.8 ohms at 70 Hz so the speakers will require a quite powerful 4-ohms rated amplifier. Estelon confirms that the X Diamond can perform well with low-power tubed amps too, but honestly speaking without having at least 2x200 watts of dynamic power the potential of the X Diamonds would remain unexploited.

I liked the colour selection – Estelon offers “liquid gloss” or “matte” finish for Black, White and Pure Aluminum options, and deep shades of Blue, Violet and Red that are both elegant and attractive.



Estelon declares the low frequency response to be starting at 22Hz. My estimate was a bit higher than this, with the Stereophile Test CD 3 the -3dB point in the room was around 28Hz. Not only did the bass exist at this point but it was superbly flat, uncolored and articulated. The best bass I have heard so far was from the Legacy Audio Aeris speakers, properly placed and fine tuned, but they have DSP-controlled active woofers. For passive design with bassreflex ports the X Diamonds' bass is unparalleled. With earth-deep sustained bass tones (Annuluk) it is easy to excite a network of bass modes in any room; it is miracle for me therefore how it comes that the X Diamonds' bass had so amazing definition and texture. Switching to a live double bass recording I was teleported into a jazz club by a push of button. The scale, weight, explosive bass transients – everything was dosed in right proportions and beautifully blended with the midrange to die for.



One of my favourite recordings of all time, Michael Ruff's Wishing Well (Sheffield Labs) is not only a sonic gem but it is also a fantastic piece of music. The X Diamonds made this recording an absolute endorphin-raiser. It was so unbelievably juicy, alive and tuneful, with the rhythmic phrasing of a Swiss watch; the tapson cymbals synchronized with the big drum kicks were just amazing as if the drummer was in the room with me. Fourty years old recordings came alive like they were recorded yesterday – the shimmer of air in Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet was so physical that I could smell the resin on

bows. When a triangle's time came it suddenly exploded in the room with such dynamics and sonic realism that time (and my heart) stopped for a moment.



No matter if I focused on tonal colours or correctness of timbres, I did not hear anything that would make me wiggle in my armchair with dissatisfaction. Yes, there was the tingling expectation that the ceramic and diamond drivers would have a kind of sonic signature, but my preconceptions let me down: wood, skins and voices were totally natural and organic with no colouration whatsoever. The super-rigid cabinets and careful voicing of the driver system resulted into rock solid and superbly clean presentation that was independent of volume setting. Georges Cziffra's piano, that was put on tape in 1975 (Carnival in Pest), was so palpable in the room that it initiated a conversation about the mark of the instrument and the ambience of the recording, rather than a discussion about whether or not it was correctly reproduced. There was no smear, ambiguity or false expansiveness – it was real to almost scary degree.

The pluck of guitar (Lincoln Mayorga) was presented with a fast and precise transient edge, the sound was blooming in the air with very tangible decay that made me look behind the speakers where it had gone. Not everything was always great – when I fed the X Diamonds with not so well recorded material (read: modern recordings with flat dynamics) the result was flat and uninviting. These speakers will be difficult to appreciate if your audio library is built around mostly poor contemporary mastering art as they only convey the truth.



The X Diamonds' cabinets are slightly concave so the listening axis is not far away from the speakers. I found 3-4 meters to be an optimum, however, it may be different for your room. Still, the Estelons will thank you for at least a 30m2 room to breathe. I usually spend quite substantial amount of time by listening to pink noise signals. They are very revealing about soundstaging precision, tonal colorations or balance. These signals were absolutely hilarious through the Estelon X Diamond; in its correlated mono version the signal was projected as a narrow slit between the speakers, in its uncorrelated stereo version it filled the room wall to wall, room removed. In either instance it was impossible to derive where the speakers - the sources of the sound - were in the room. The real music tracks only acknowledged that the X Diamond imaged superbly – the instruments and people were carved out in space with great precision, the music stopped to be an audio illusion, rather it became a real thing. The Estelon X Diamonds vs the YBs, in the very same room and with the very same equipment, one standing next to other: The differences between both the Estelons were expected to be marginal, but they were not. The YBs are great speakers, controlled, clean, authoritative and resolved. When I auditioned the YBs I doubted that such a performance could be bettered to a significant degree. But that happened to be the case: the X Diamonds were better in every aspect. The YBs were audibly more constrained, flatter and less airy (still much more dynamic, open and transparent than most competitors). The biggest improvement was in the ease and natural flow that the X Diamonds exhibited. These loudspeakers set a new benchmark for what I consider the highest fidelity.