

## Holy Lucia!

*You don't know Saint Lucia? For your Enlightenment: Every year in Sweden, the Festival of Lights is celebrated in mid-December, during which the Saint is honored with a candle crown. According to legend, the Sicilian woman, who was persecuted as a Christian in the 2nd century, placed a wreath of lights on her head in order to find her way to her fellow believers in the darkness and to bring them food with both hands. The occupation with the brand-new QIn Prestige Three proves to be similarly enlightening and noble. Unfortunately, so far there is exactly one pair in on German grounds, but I predict that this will change very soon – and very lastingly.*

Hmmmmmm. Standing in front of me there are two very compact, distinctly designed loudspeakers in the classic two-way configuration for probably around 7,500 Euro: A 2.5 cm tweeter with a silk dome plays in the high frequency range, and an 18 cm cone for the low-midrange also appears to be rather standard. But as so often appearances are deceptive, because the effort the Swedes put into the Prestige Three is considerable. For a start, the bass/midrange drivers are not just any standard drivers, but Scan Speak models manufactured to QIn specifications with Kevlar diaphragms and a copper ring built into the magnet system, which are intended to move the drive exactly symmetrically and thus increase dynamics and minimize distortion. The 19 mm voice coil allows for quite violent excursion, which, in combination with the bass reflex system, results in a lower cut-off frequency of 28 Hz (-3 dB) for the woofer with considerable power handling. In the upper range, QIn also relies on a Scan Speak tweeter model and a proprietary magnet system consisting of six circularly arranged neodymium magnets with the beautiful name *AirCirc*, in which the air flow behind the tweeter is said to be as unrestricted as possible and which, in combination with a special chamber behind the tweeter, is intended to eliminate reflections and resonances.

The loudspeaker is tilted backwards for more accurate timing and stands on four solid stainless-steel cantilevers with cone spikes and thick spike discs made of POM. The edges of the upper section of the cabinet have been slightly beveled inwards, eliminating standing waves in the cabinet and, in conjunction with the satin finish around the tweeter, efficiently minimizing reflections from the cabinet. The entire enclosure of the Prestige Three is based on the proprietary Qboard® technology, which combines two layers of a high-density material with one layer of a viscoelastic material, resulting, according to the manufacturer, in an almost ideal combination of damping and stiffness at an acceptable weight. In fact, at 27 kilograms, the Prestige Three are quite a bit heavier than their graceful appearance would suggest.

So, the basis for good sound has been laid, now only the crossover needs to "play along". It has been equipped with non-inductive capacitors for the tweeter and oil-filled capacitors for the woofer as well as high-quality flat wire coils. Of course, all components are carefully measured and selected and matched in pairs. After assembly, the crossover components are glued or baked in order to exclude any resonances from the outset. All these components are internally connected by proprietary solid core copper wires wrapped around a polypropylene blind core. The music signal enters the loudspeakers via WBT Nextgen terminals made of copper and silver.

According to QIn, all this is intended to reduce resonance as much as possible, from the cable clamps to the crossover to the cabinet and the connection to the floor. According to Mats Anders, chief developer and owner of QIn, this is the only way to minimize interfering distortions, which in turn benefits the dynamics and the famous "black background". Okay, let's hear ...

### **Sound impressions: QIn Prestige Three**

That you can't expect a bass miracle from such a compact two-way loudspeaker is a set hi-fi wisdom. No, there's no twist à la "...the QLN show us where the heaviest hammer hangs, contrary to all expectations", because even in this case physics sets certain limits to wishful thinking. But beware: This limit is clearly higher with the QIn Prestige Three than their delicate physique would suggest. So in "Flygel og Synth" by Lynni Treekrem's "Haugtussa" the deep synth bass comes across with a perfectly balanced mixture of contour and pressure, and in the following "Det Syng" the drums have punch and precision, stand deep and free in the space behind Mrs. Treekrem's voice and in no way influence the mid- or high frequency range. The hammer I just mentioned arrives after all: One of the probably most worn out hifi test tracks ever is the title track of "Haugtussa" – and if a loudspeaker is able to give me a goose-skin shower from the neck to the little toes, that's a real miracle: Already with the first bass drum kick my mouth stands open, and the big drum towards the end of the piece, which might bring the premature exitus to many mini loudspeakers, has a measure of control, precision and presence, that I'm frankly a little baffled. Could that be real? The answer is clearly yes. Here, the bass of a full-grown floor-standing loudspeaker with at least the double bass equipment materializes in front of me. This is all the more astonishing, because there are no bass-bloating effects, and there is no drone of any kind.

The QIn Prestige Three are working their bass skills in a more honest way, and the deductive proof of this is how cleanly and transparently they reproduce the midrange and how little the rest of the sound is affected in terms of volume or size by the woofer's dynamic feats. Even the balance of impulse and body with drums and hard plucked bass strings remains intact at all times – I even think that in direct comparison to some similarly priced compact loudspeakers with horn (!) tweeters, a certain superiority in the holistic attack of impulses and fine dynamic nuances at the finest level can be perceived. The weightless dynamics of this loudspeaker are almost in direct contradiction to the earthy heaviness it can convey in the bass range.

With such a clear transient reproduction there is sometimes the danger that this quality is achieved with an overemphasis in the presence area, but at least with the perfectly produced "Haugtussa" album this does not seem to be true, because no matter at what volume: neither the voice of the singer nor the instruments have an annoying quality or cause my ears to "clip". Cross-check with dEUS' "In a Bar, under the Sea". This disc is full of bizarre creativity and is recorded for a rock album honestly dynamic and open, including the guitars which sometimes are quite dodgy. If a loudspeaker is doing too much of a good thing in the upper midrange, it becomes obvious with this recording. And the QIn Prestige Three pass this test with flying colors. Yes, the guitars sound extremely open, they don't lack any aggressive bite, but never reach an unpleasant or even annoying level. This indicates a balanced tonality and an enormously clean reproduction – and both can't be refuted with any piece of music that I throw at the QIn. And there were quite a few that I have listened to

without the slightest signs of fatigue: Nathalie Merchant's self-produced album "The House Carpenter's Daughter" and the self-titled solo debut of ex-talk-talk-singer Mark Hollis, as well as "Haugtussa" by Lynni Treakrem, are very critically recorded in the vocal range, they don't have a significant limiter in the vocal channel and can therefore lead to clipping of feeble-chested power amplifiers with careless use of the volume control. This means hard work for the drivers of a loudspeaker, because the human ear quickly penalizes errors such as compression or distortion in this frequency range with a red card. In all cases, even at high levels, the QIn Prestige Three passes the test with flying colors.

And more than that: It not only avoids sound discomfort, but also conjures up an emotionality in the reproduction that I often miss even with much more expensive loudspeakers. In my opinion, this is primarily due to the rapid, unrestricted dynamics, the fantastic resolution of detail and the open, holographic imaging. I'm not lying: When Lynni Treakrem's voice swells with great passion and energy, goose bumps are spontaneously accompanied by a tear of delight – this is madness! And in what kind of virtual stage the QIn Prestige Three gives this spectacle: Broad, really deep behind the loudspeakers and without even a hint of appearing as a sound source themselves. That the stage is not stretched too far into the room over the outer edges of the loudspeakers doesn't matter. I have seldom heard such a compact loudspeaker that plays as tonally, dynamically and emotionally complete as these impressive Swedish beauties.

### **Conclusion**

"Greatness always develops from small things"? What still seems somewhat semi-embarrassing with the infamous Saarland marketing slogan really makes sense with the QIn Prestige Three: More sound from a smaller cabinet is hardly possible. Absolutely worth the price.

### **QIn Prestige Three**

- Price:
- Distribution:
- Phone:
- Internet:
- Warranty:
- H x W x D: 900 x 210 x 420 mm, with feet 954 x 310 x 483 mm
- Weight: 27 kg
- Versions: Walnut Piano Lacquer, Walnut matt, white matt