

Looking for the inside track? Commentary, analysis and personal points of view from *Hi-Fi News*' key columnists on the crucial audio and video topics of the day...

Opinion



Ken Kessler

Senior Contributing Editor

Ken Kessler writes exclusively for *Hi-Fi News*. He loves Italian hi-fi, hates cables and is known for his strong views on virtually everything...

Bargain? It's a euro star

Founded in 2004 and based in Belforte del Chienti in Italy, AStri names its speakers after stars. When it comes to the T1 Celaeno two-way, never was a moniker so apt, says **Ken Kessler**

Bargain' isn't a word you'd associate with items priced in euros, given the pound sterling's recent plummet against said currency. But let's announce the dream number before you read any further. Italian brand AStri's T1 Celaeno loudspeaker sells for €690. Per pair. No kidding: this sexy speaker with its stocking-type grille and angular enclosure and, yes, terrific sound, costs roughly £550 depending on where our currency goes between the time this column was written and you reading it.

AStri, though little known to us, already produces a comprehensive line of speakers, electronics, stands and cables. Dottore Alberto Sabbatini gives his products stellar monikers: the T1 Celaeno completes the Taurus model range, Celaeno being one of the Pleiades star cluster in the Taurus constellation. Alberto points out that, as a star, it signifies 'warm colour, and the name also reflects the speaker's acoustic performance.'

ITALIAN JOB

Although the smallest AStri product has a price that screams 'offshore', it is made entirely in Italy and is a kissing cousin to the dearer Taurus speakers. Its mid/bass driver is a 5¼in custom-made unit with a polypropylene cone, rubber surround, a 25mm copper voice coil on an Epotex former, with an 86mm ferrite magnet and a second magnet for shielding. Above it,

crossing over at 1.5kHz, is a 1in custom-made ultra-light cloth dome tweeter, with a 25mm copper voice coil on an aluminium former, and 72mm ferrite magnet, also doubled up for shielding.

Both are housed in a reflex enclosure that tapers toward the back, an 'isosceles trapezium' with the drivers on the front panel and the tweeter mounted off-axis relative to the woofer, to minimise lateral reflections. It's made from sections of 18mm and 30mm MDF where needed, and stands 7cm taller than a 30cm LS3/5a, with a nearly identical footprint. It's damped on every wall with a long

'Although the AStri has a price that screams 'offshore', it is made in Italy'

fibre absorbent sheet, the material being fireproof, immune to rotting over the years and it's non-toxic, too.

All crossover components are audiophile-grade, including premium copper-wired inductors, polyester capacitors, and 10W wire resistors with 100W peak power, while internal wiring is 14 AWG twisted paired cable. All that the rear shows are a pair of decent, gold-plated, multi-way binding posts, but under the slip-over sleeve is a rear-firing tube.

Regarded by AStri as an easy load, the T1 does like power. The minimum



ABOVE: The T1 Celaeno from AStri – see www.astriaudio.com for contact details

impedance is 80ohm at 250Hz, but sensitivity is only 87dB. Suffice it to say, the Trilogy amps were more than happy with the T1, as was the Quad II-eighty.

SWEET AND RICH

What you don't expect is this speaker's room-filling capability. It sounds positively huge, abetted by convincing three-dimensionality. Tonally, the sound is sweet and rich, with no evident nasties. It's fast and detailed. It looks and sounds like something selling for £1000. My advice? If you're on a driving holiday to Italy, bring back a pair. Or you could hold your breath waiting for some UK distributor to pick up the line. ☺