

PRECISION EAR CANDY

The Børresen C3 is a fairly large loudspeaker, and we must admit that our arms felt a little longer after lifting them in. Once in place in the living room, they are worth every single kilo and every single calorie we spent getting them there.

Text: [Håvard Holmedal](#)

In high-end audio, there are certain products that immediately appear to be more than just components in a system. They represent an entire way of thinking, a philosophy of how music should be reproduced, and not least a story about the people behind them. The Børresen C3 is precisely such a loudspeaker. It is not only the result of advanced engineering, exclusive materials and uncompromising construction; it is also a distillation of several decades of experience, experimentation and an uncompromising pursuit of musical realism. To understand why the Børresen C3 has gained such a special position in today's high-end market, one must also understand the story of Audio Group Denmark – the Danish hi-fi conglomerate that in just a few years has established itself as one of the most innovative players in the international audio world.

The story of Audio Group Denmark begins long before the company actually got its name. It starts in Denmark at the end of the 1980s, in an environment where enthusiasm for high-end sound grew in parallel with the Scandinavian design tradition. For several decades, Denmark has had a unique position in the development of loudspeakers and acoustic technology. From classic manufacturers such as Bang & Olufsen and Dynaudio to newer specialist brands, the country has developed a culture in which sound reproduction is not only about technical specifications, but about musicality, craftsmanship and aesthetics.

At the centre of this story we find two people: Lars Kristensen and Michael Børresen. Today, these two names are inextricably linked with Audio Group Denmark and the brands Ansuz, Aavik, Børresen and Axxess. But their collaboration began long before the companies existed. Lars Kristensen grew up in an environment where hi-fi was a natural part of everyday life. His father was among the first high-end dealers in Denmark,



and Lars gained early experience with both music and advanced audio equipment. He quickly developed a deep understanding of how different components affect the listening experience, and this understanding would later become decisive for the direction he took.

Michael Børresen entered the picture as a young engineering student with an almost obsessive interest in technology and music reproduction. He was not only concerned with how loudspeakers sounded; he wanted to understand why they sounded the way they did. Even early on, he showed a clear tendency to analyse existing solutions and try to improve them. This combination of technical curiosity and creative problem-solving later became the core of the entire development philosophy behind Audio Group Denmark.

The meeting between Kristensen and Børresen has almost acquired mythical status in the hi-fi community. They first met in a high-end shop in Aalborg, where Michael often spent time as a customer and enthusiast. Later, they met by chance again at a hot-dog stand, and the conversation quickly turned to sound, loudspeaker design and the possibilities that still remained unexplored within modern audio. What began as a chance discussion quickly developed into a collaboration that would leave a deep mark on the high-end industry.

Large or small bass drivers

For some, bass drivers can almost never be large enough, and that applies both to manufacturers and hi-fi customers. There is nothing that can replace a fifteen-incher, and perhaps there is not, either. Designer Michael Børresen, however, takes an entirely different route. The loudspeakers are instead built up with smaller, faster and more precise bass drivers, and if anyone thinks that makes them too lean, they should have been present during this test. The loudspeaker has a surprisingly solid bass foundation, and perhaps most importantly of all, the bass seems extremely clean and free from distortion, and in that way does not hide important information in the mid-bass and the lower part of the midrange. In my opinion, this contributes both to the transparent sound and to the excellent stereo perspective. Not to mention the fast, hard-hitting and rhythmically



precise bass range. Perhaps loudspeakers with large bass drivers are able to move more air and create an even more physical experience of the lower octaves, but I would gladly trade that for the precision and purity I experience here.

The integration between the bass and the mid-range is also worth mentioning. The sound is homogeneous, with completely invisible transitions between the individual drivers, but there is also a precision to the rhythm here. There is a perfect vertical timeline from top to bottom. Nothing lags, and nothing seems forced or forward. Just very impressive rhythm and drivers that are perfectly in time with one another.

Design and cabinet

With several small drivers it is possible to make the loudspeakers exceptionally slim, and we should perhaps also add that they are extremely attractive. The finish is impeccable, and it is easy to like the slightly rearward-leaning construction.

The cabinet is very narrow at the front, and it also tapers nicely towards the rear, so that it seems as if the loudspeaker withdraws from the eye, and you absolutely do not get the feeling that they are especially large. But in order to obtain enough internal volume, the narrow construction does take up space towards the rear. Even when positioned quite close to the rear wall, there is no getting away from the fact that they end up standing with the front some way out on the floor.

The Børresen C3 is also not as heavy as it looks, even though it weighs in at 65 kilos, and in this case arrives in transport crates that roughly double the weight per package. That makes them quite a handful to deal with. Hopefully, customers will be so pleased that they remain in the living room for a number of years, and then this job will of course be done relatively rarely.

The loudspeakers stand on solid feet, but a set of Anzus Darkz was also included. The initial listening was admittedly carried out without these, but when they were placed under the loudspeaker, the sound became even quieter and more precise while standing on the parquet floor in the living room.

The cabinet is a resonance-controlled construction with extensive use of composite materials, high-tech carbon-fibre reinforcement and a great



deal of internal bracing. The midrange chambers are semi-open to reduce compression and standing waves.

The set-up was also fairly simple where we tested it. It was positioned entirely without toe-in, and then it was just a matter of experimenting a little with the distance from the wall before the soundstage, holography and tonal balance fell into place.

The technology

The Børresen C3 is, for those not familiar with this loudspeaker manufacturer, the top model in the C series, and represents a construction in which several technologies from the brand's even more costly and advanced models have been carried over into a more accessible price class – even though many will probably feel that the C3 is also a relatively expensive model.

The loudspeaker is a large floorstanding 3-way construction with two dedicated bass drivers, two bass/midrange drivers and Børresen's own RP94 ribbon tweeter. The aim is extreme transient response, low distortion and maximum phase coherence.

Børresen highlights the two DCC5 Neo drivers in the midrange as perhaps the most decisive factors for the sound quality. These drivers use an advanced magnet motor system with neodymium magnets and dual copper rings on the pole pieces to reduce inductance and electromagnetic resonances. The result is intended to be a more linear magnetic field and lower compression at high sound pressure levels. The diaphragm is built as a sandwich construction with an aramid honeycomb core and layers of carbon fibre.

The treble range is handled by Børresen's RP94 Ribbon Planar Tweeter, a closed ribbon tweeter with a moving mass of an impressively low 0.01 grams and a specified sensitivity of 94 dB. The tweeter operates from around 2.5 kHz up to 50 kHz. The low mass provides extreme acceleration capability and very fast transient response, while cryogenic treatment is intended to reduce resistance and inductance even further.

The C3 uses a serial crossover rather than a traditional parallel filter. Børresen claims that this solution provides better phase integration

between the drivers because the same current flows through the entire chain of components in the filter.

The frequency response is specified down to 25 Hz, and we can confirm that the bass is deep, while also being brilliantly clean, unusually fast and extremely light-footed.

How does it sound?

When we walk around shows, demos and presentations, we hear quite a lot of loudspeakers, and there is little doubt that many of the loudspeakers are very good. They are sensibly designed, and years of experience lie behind the sound we hear. Even so, there is some distance between loudspeakers that can truly convey musicality, and that play in a way that makes us stay seated and want more.

High-end is often analytical, super-precise and highly focused on detail, but the systems we hear do not always manage to bring out the very core of the music. In other words, that which connects the artist to the listener, and which conveys the whole rather than individual components, creating a complete musical experience that has everything, but which at the same time is not intrusive and fatiguing to the ear.



With the Børresen C3, I think you get a great deal of everything, but after listening for a couple of days, it is the focus on the musical that characterises the experience. In addition to the loudspeaker's impressively good holographic abilities. I have previously said that as long as a loudspeaker has excellent holography, there are many other flaws I am willing to forgive, but this loudspeaker scores highly on all parameters without becoming over-explicit or insistent.

The dynamics are excellent all the way from bottom to top, and it really hits hard when the music and the recording demand it. This happens entirely without any form of dynamic compression or any other audible influence on the sound. The soundstage is just as clean, focused and detailed, and compared with many other loudspeakers we have had in for testing, seems strangely quiet. Even though what is presented musically is absolutely not.



The super-lightweight ribbon tweeter from Børresen is, as already mentioned, beautifully integrated with the midrange, while also being capable of convincing even the most hard-nosed fans of dome tweeters. I perceive the treble here as quite relaxed, beautifully detailed and with a perceived resolution that is simply excellent. It is also among the airiest I have listened to in a long time.

We connect up the large P30a and H30a pre/power set from Hegel, and according to the critics of both Børresen and Hegel, this ought to become both a little lean and slightly bright, but we cannot get this set-up to sound that way, however hard we try. The experience goes rather in the opposite direction. This is easy on the ear without losing its grip on detail and information, and relaxing without lacking rhythm or the necessary dynamic abilities.

The music

It begins rather quietly with All About You by Sophie Zelmani. It is not the most difficult thing in the world to get to sound good, but this is nevertheless a little extraordinary. The voice is clear, open, airy and warm, and not least very present in the room because of the beautiful focus and the loudspeaker's ability to isolate each individual instrument and voice and create space and room around them. The soundstage is large and impressive, and the bass is beautifully controlled.

Till Tomorrow by Yello and Till Brönner is music in an entirely different landscape, but with Till Brönner's beautiful and airy tone as its analogue alibi. Here the loudspeakers get to show off their solid foundation, while the deep and quite large bass is not even close to affecting or clouding what is happening further up the frequency range. The midrange and treble remain open and transparent, and the whole thing is held strictly in place by a set of very precise loudspeaker drivers.

Hans Theessink's voice is deep on Slow Train, but is held strictly in place in the soundstage. Despite a large and powerful soundstage, the voice is just the right size and, not least, brilliantly focused – and it is placed exactly where it should be. Not too far forward, but not too far back either.

I also play Requim: V. Hymnum canentes martyrum with Nidarosdomens Jentekor and Trygve Seim. Here I get everything I could ever ask for.



A beautiful and warm saxophone, a huge space and lovely, open acoustics with reverberation in the cathedral's solid outer walls. Nidaros Cathedral is large, but easily fits into the loudspeakers' generous and very proportional soundstage.

I thought I had already heard fantastic versions of the track Forvandling with Paal Flaata and Solfrid Molland, but here previous experiences had to give way to make room for a kind of new reference for how this track should be played. The voices are beautiful, with plenty of texture, and the amount of information is almost overwhelming, and with that comes today's strongest and most extensive attack of goosebumps.

Infected Mushroom and their Deeply Disturbed, which is really a rather silly track, had the honour of ending one of the listening sessions we did, and that is really just as well. We definitely needed a break. Before we could turn down the volume and have a coffee, we were given a highly vivid, dynamic and fantastically precise version of this track, and again – those who think these loudspeakers sound a little lean in the bass should definitely listen to them again, and perhaps in more controlled acoustic surroundings. They really push, and the loudspeaker does not seem to care noticeably whether what is on the record is both loud and dynamic. The experience comes to you without audible dynamic compression, and with the loudspeaker's tonal character fully intact.

Conclusion

The loudspeaker is heavy, substantial, beautifully designed, and it plays in a musical and inviting way, while lacking nothing in terms of information, precision or dynamics compared with other important competitors.

It is large, but nevertheless disappears completely in the soundstage, creating holography that is rarely this good, and that applies even if the price becomes even steeper than with the Børresen C3. This is quite simply a wonderful experience!

PROS:

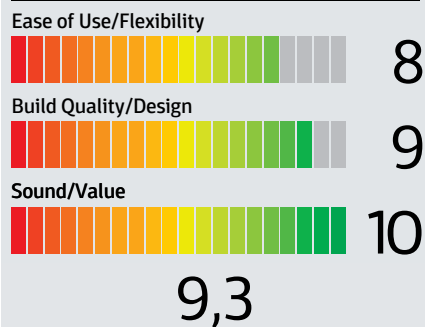
- Large yet elegant design
- Impressive holographic imaging
- Outstanding listening comfort
- Deep and weighty bass
- Exceptional rhythmic precision

CONS:

- Requires generous room space
- Benefits from a powerful amplifier

STEREO+ VERDICT: The Børresen C3 is an enormously impressive loudspeaker.

SCORE



Borresen C3

PRICE:	NOK 419,000
IMPORTER:	Mala Audio AS
LINK:	www.malaudio.no