GamuT RS3

It’s the baby in the restructured company’s new flagship range, with optional stand – how does it sound?

Review: John Bamford  Lab: Keith Howard

The start of 2014 marked the beginning of a new era for Denmark’s GamuT audio. For the last few years the firm has been a wholly owned subsidiary of Kvist Industries, a global supplier of wooden components for high quality furniture, but following a management buyout at the end of last year it is now an independent company.

Says GamuT: ‘Kvist Industries is still the biggest single stockholder. But now also the employees as well as a group of investors own their part of GamuT A/S.’

Since the company’s restructuring its first product introduction is a new flagship range of loudspeakers, the ‘RS’ (Revised Superior) series. Nothing that GamuT designs and manufacturers falls into the budget-priced sector: its electronics and loudspeakers are all decidedly ‘high-end’ both in performance and when it comes to price.

Last year we tested the £8500 M5 floorstander [HFN Apr ‘13] from its middle-range M’inenT series. Meanwhile the company’s Superior models – the ‘El Superiores’ first introduced in 2007 – are cost-no-object designs which GamuT’s engineering team has now further refined with improved enclosures and revised internal networks. The RS3 is the baby in the series. Priced at £11,823 it’s a compact two-way bass reflex ‘bookshelf’ speaker. Moving up the range are the RS5 and RS7 floorstanders at £23,100 and £29,050 respectively. The series is topped off by the £74,000 RS9 flagship standing nearly 1.7m tall and weighing 185kg.

RESONANCE CONTROLS

As in the M’inenT M5, which Adam Smith auditioned last year, the RS3 employs Scan-Speak Revelator drive units which GamuT tweaks in-house. The bass/midrange driver is a 7in unit with a compliant rubber surround and paper cone, featuring radial ‘slices’ filled with damping glue. This is claimed to reduce the diaphragm’s breakup modes in the critical midband region and reduce distortion.

It hands over at 2.15kHz to the Revelator tweeter, a 1.5in double ring radiator design rather than a true dome, to which GamuT adds its own stainless steel waveguide, shaped to aid dispersion and clamp the centre of the dome. This aims to reduce cancellation effects and smooth the overall output, as well as extending bandwidth to something approaching 60kHz.

GamuT describes its crossover as a Non Resonant Linked Impulse network, designed to align the drivers in the time domain and optimise their resonant behaviour – and that of the circuit itself.

The RS3 captured the sax’s honk and echo-laden guitar with perfect attack'

Air pressure within the enclosure is controlled and guided by a fan-shaped reinforcement structure running the full height of the cabinet, which aims to time align the coupling to the port opening. The port which vents at the rear is made of 5mm-thick aluminium.

Below the port are two sets of seriously chunky input terminals for bi-wiring/amplifying: a proprietary design featuring a pressure insert for clamping bare wire – GamuT’s preferred termination for minimizing contact resistance. Naturally the terminals are compatible with spade connectors and 4mm banana plugs as well.

**RIGHT:** Scan-Speak Revelator drivers are modified and treated by GamuT in-house. The 7in ‘sliced cone’ bass/mid unit crosses over at 2.15kHz to a double ring radiator tweeter with stainless steel waveguide
Resonance control is clearly a major factor in every aspect of the speaker’s design. GamuT has its own range of precision-made cables called WormHoles which are pretty serious: a 3m pair of WormHoles Signature speaker cables cost £3536 (add £605 per stereo metre). It comprises individually insulated conductors surrounded by a woven insulation, all inside a second cover containing copper threads within it. The company says its design helps optimise impulse behaviour and effectively terminates unwanted stored energy. It’s this cable that’s used for internal wiring throughout both its M’innenT and Revised Superior ranges.

GamuT’s 660mm-tall column stand adds substantially to the price of owning the RS3 – at £3536 it costs as much as many a good speaker – but you wouldn’t want to be without it. Again, it’s made of multilayered birch plywood with a lamination of form-pressed wood to complement the RS3 perfectly, with a recess at the rear of the pillar in which to channel cables. Short aluminium outriggers extend from each corner of the base to increase stability, through which inverted cone spikes are threaded, adjustable from above with an Allen key.

The quality of the metalwork is exquisite, right down to the little ‘coasters’ for siting the stands on hard floors. They feature rubber o-rings inserted into a groove on the underside to damp resonance and prevent scuffing.

BEYOND BOUNDARIES
Site a pair of RS3s in free space and they can throw up a sound image extending way beyond the confines of their cabinets. My room is approximately 16x25ft yet the RS3 ‘drove’ it surprisingly satisfactorily, serving up a subjectively powerful and deep bass which belied its compact dimensions. There’s a hint of boxiness, a tubby upper-bass bloom that I couldn’t quite dial out; nevertheless the RS3 is an easy-going speaker to listen to for hours on end. High frequencies appear exceptionally relaxed and extended, combining vivid crispness with an unforced naturalness that’s open and airy.

There’s nothing hectoring or aggressive in the RS3’s musical presentation. In fact some listeners might consider it rather laid-back in personality. Images appear created across and behind, rather than forward of, the loudspeakers’ plane, which helps create an appealingly deep soundstage. The RS3 is also a fine communicator of rhythm and pitch, allowing effortless observation of dense musical adventures such as Aufgang’s ‘Channel 7’ and ‘Channel 8’ from the French experimental band’s eponymously titled album of 2009 [Infiné If1006].

DETAIL LOUD AND CLEAR
Separating clearly the percussive elements of piano and myriad electronic keyboards in these grand operatic-sounding pieces, in which classical themes blend with prog-rock and drum ‘n’ bass style rhythmic complexity, the GamuT appeared unfuddled by the density and allowed details such as the sound of the compositions’ bells and percussion to ring out loud and clear.

By the time I’d allowed the Aufgang album to play on to the baroque-feeling ‘Barock’ I became particularly appreciative of the speaker’s HF civility, the jangling piano lines of composer Francesco Tristano which underpin the music were clearly delineated throughout the piece.

Aufgang’s recording isn’t hi-fi show demonstration quality in the manner of, say, Wesseltoft & Schwartz’s Duo, however the RS3’s innate clarity through the frequency range revealed the natural timbre of the piano most vividly. The speaker proved so wonderfully...
low frequencies, the speaker kept the music’s bass lines firmly in check. Not that the album is particularly demanding, it turned out. But it will sound like a relentless cacophony on less-than-civilised-sounding playback systems, so it’s challenging in that respect. The RS3 told it like it was, punching out staccato rhythms and capturing the sax’s honk and echo-laden guitar with perfect attack.

ARTICULATE GRIP
It sounded sublime when reproducing the velvety vocal cords of baritone Gregory Porter whose ‘No Love Dying’ from Liquid Spirit [Blue Note 0602537410538] was delivered with commendable articulation. The RS3 held everything in place, only that slight honk in the upper bass belying its diminutive stature. The rumbustious title track was taken in its stride, however, the compact GamuT remaining composed as the parping contributions of the accompanying brass and reed ensemble augmented the track’s dynamic hand claps and percussive honky-tonk piano.

Hear the RS3 playing tonally rich cords of baritone Boz Scaggs’ Dig [Virgin 10645 2 1] or James Taylor’s ‘Line ‘Em Up’ from Hourglass [SACD issue, Columbia CS 67912] and you might just be seduced by the RS3’s conspicuous wow factor. 😊

GamuT’s ‘El Superiores’ are undeniably expensive, even this smallest standmount in the RS model range costs as much as many manufacturers’ statuesque floorstanders. However it’s beautifully built and sounds extremely refined, its gentle sound balance and innate musicality encouraging prolonged listening. The RS3 is a tremendous compact monitor for a small room if the price isn’t a barrier.

Sound Quality: 75%

LAB REPORT
GAMUT RS3
GamuT claims 87.5dB sensitivity for the RS3 which is close to what we obtained by simply averaging our FFT response data (87.2dB) but exceeds our pink noise figure of 85.9dB, which suggests that 86dB is actually a more representative figure. The upside of this modest sensitivity is that the RS3 presents a relatively benign load to its amplifier. The 5ohm nominal impedance chimes well with our minimum measured modulus of 3.9ohm (GamuT claims 4.0ohm), and impedance phase angles are sufficiently well controlled that the EPOR (equivalent peak dissipation resistance, which takes into account the effect of both modulus and phase) dips to a low of 1.9ohm at 102Hz – higher than typical of modern floorstanding competitors.

Measured at tweeter height, the 1m forward response [Graph 1, below] has quite a marked suckout between 2kHz and 3kHz and a gently rising trend thereafter, as a result of which the response errors are a little on the high side at ±4.6dB and ±4.3dB respectively for the pair, 200Hz-20kHz, although listening a little off-axis will tame the treble. Over the same frequency range the pair matching error was also mildly disappointing at ±1.6dB but the largest errors occur in the octave above 10kHz, below which the figure is a more typical ±0.8dB. In another payback for the modest sensitivity, its 49Hz bass extension (–6dB re. 200Hz) is a good result but the diffraction-corrected near-field measurement shows a peak of about 3dB at 90Hz and there is a severe resonance within the port output at around 700Hz. By contrast the cumulative spectral decay waterfall [Graph 2, below] evinces fast initial energy decay and well controlled treble resonances. KH

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