

### The Promise

**After almost forty tests in 100 editions, you might think you know a manufacturer inside and out. But Canton manages to knock our socks off once again with the Reference 1.**

The first award with the seal "Reference Class" was awarded to Canton in issue 08/2016 by us when the Reference 9K gave colleague Erik Scho a ride over "heaven on earth". The streamlined compact loudspeaker in elegant black Piano was not only convincing because of its high-class design, but above all because of its dynamic and outstanding depth for its compact format.

Only a few issues later, I was able to attest that Reference 3K was in the next "reference class." The almost tangible plasticity of this monolithic floorstanding loudspeaker remained untouched for a long time, especially in its price range. Overall, the price/performance ratio is the same Canton's loudspeakers always have. An attribute that can hardly be competed with.

All Canton devices we have tested so far cost just under 2,400 euros with an average test result of 90 percent. Truly phenomenal. Twenty-one test samples cracked the 90 percent mark, of which we have so far been able to certify seven devices as "reference class". Most recently, in issue 08/2023, it was the new Reference 7 floor-standing box. In addition to the excellent price, Editorial colleague Artur Evers was particularly impressed by the perfect tuning of the speaker and its almost three-dimensional sound. We have enjoyed listening thoroughly to all of Canton's collections over the past 13 years and 100 issues. Karat, Vento, Ergo, Reference and... We deliberately chose just one floorstanding loudspeaker for this second anniversary edition of AUDIO TEST with issue number 101.

### Canton Reference 1

At the reception of the Alte Handelsdruckerei in Leipzig, where our editorial team is located in the immediate vicinity of the Mitteldeutsche HiFi-Tage, a large pallet rolls onto the floor with the shipping agent's utmost concentration adorned with a sticker with a promising inscription. Total weight 175 kg. Wow Of course, the first question that always arises is how the hell you can create such monumental sounds.

Should the loudspeaker be lifted out of the box? A question that the manufacturer has thankfully already asked itself. The only real difficulty is lifting the boxes off the pallet one-by-one. Once this has been achieved, the two speakers separate. The lid of the box is easily removed and the packaging can be dismantled around the loudspeaker. Of course, it's not an activity that you should attempt without a helping pair of hands, but it can be accomplished by two people without sweat and tears.



What emerges is a loudspeaker with a completely ambivalent shape. On the one hand, its hulking, almost massive figure with the very present and powerful front chassis demonstrates great self-confidence. On the other hand, the seamless, curved casing made of multi-layer laminate is, in its simplicity, of a much more modest tone than many of its competitors. Silk matt white or black piano finish as in our case - both variants are of timeless elegance and make an unmistakable statement. Canton is first and foremost about the music and only secondarily about self-expression.



## Description

The five prominent drivers on the curved, milled from one piece, and proud 60-millimeter thick housing contribute to the appearance of the Canton Reference 1. These initially provide an obvious indication of how the speaker works as a 3-way system. Three drivers with diaphragms with a diameter of 219-millimeters are used in the low frequency range. These are contained in very smooth surrounds and newly designed bass guides, which means that the Reference 1 can play down to an incredible 18 Hertz. The depth is rounded off by the down-fire bass reflex, which also allows the speaker to be positioned freely. What is special here, however, is the asymmetrical shape of the reflex opening. Because while only a narrow gap allows for exit at the front, the channel enlarges towards the rear to increase performance and prevent the base from oversaturating.

At 170 Hertz, the mid-range driver with a diameter of 174 mm takes over the work. This is mounted on the upper end of the housing and is also made from Canton's revised material composition. We are certainly already familiar with ceramic and tungsten as the basic ingredients of this connection, but Canton has revised the exact composition again and colored it black. This is where the new name BCT [Black Ceramic Tungsten] comes from.

From 3,100 Hz up to the dizzying - and long inaudible - highs of 40 kHz, the tweeter located between the woofers and mid-range is used. This is made of aluminum ceramic oxide and promises a room-filling radiation pattern thanks to its accommodation in an expansive waveguide. As with low- and medium-tone drivers, polyoxymethylene [POM] is used here as a material characterized by its high internal damping.

All the drivers can be individually hidden behind circular, slightly curved textile panels. A great looking decision from the product design department. Instead of a fat sensor bar, the individual protective grills fit seamlessly into the chassis, where they are held magnetically.

The rear-mounted connection terminal of the Reference 1 is just as sophisticated and stylish. The gold-plated and also POM-coated connections make a high-quality impression and testify to Canton's high manufacturing standards. Of course, the sound transducer can also be used in bi-wiring or bi-amping mode. Canton also offers minimal fine-tuning of Reference 1 by the customer. Using a robust screw system, the levels of the tweeter and midrange can be emphasized or dampened a little.

In addition, the Reference 1 from Canton is quite efficient. Just under ten watts per kilogram - ie. up to 820 watts of music power - can be expected from this speaker. To do this, you first have to bring a lot of horsepower to the track.

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## Listening

So we'll have to get everything out of Audionet's stereo full-range WATT. For now, though, let's take it easy. We'll stream a recording of Schubert's Winterreise. We suspected it, but it still comes over us unexpectedly. Every single note begins to bubble out of the Reference 1 chassis in a holographic, almost tactile experience.

The delicate piano manifests itself clearly in outline at a distance of about two meters from our seating, ie. right in front of it is Fischer-Oieska and, that's right, right in front of it, depth soundstaging is in a class of its own. In addition, our listening room is transformed into a chamber music hall with a correspondingly subtle reverb detail. Incredibly similar in time, every detail, no matter how fine, of the complex overtone structures of the piano and voice comes into its own with such radiance that we really only know from live music.

We fast forward almost half a century and put "The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady" on the turntable. Here we also record the first bar of the title "Solo Dancer" on a good piece. Snare and hi-hat make the debut. Until, after four bars and a short double bass prelude, the brass section joins in and envelopes us in a feeling of well-being, almost like a prenatal comfort.

What a sound. Pure immersion. Melt into the sound, as if we were a leaf in the wind, we glide from event to event, becoming play ball of the waves. You can first translate it like this. The buttery, soft timbres caress us from all sides until we bounce around on the walking bass in the break of a rubber ball. The Soprano Sax – Solo cheekily tries to push us backwards. But the velvety bass catches us again and again. Especially when we set the mid-range level via the screw. If you lift something, you win transients of the bass in plasticity and the brass, so to speak, in air. What an almost extracorporeal [out of body] experience. What a trip.

We have now been able to fill half of the issue with the sound-spiritual journey that Canton's Reference 1 has sent us on. But that would not only be unfair to the other tests of this edition, but also to the performance of this loudspeaker itself because what Canton has achieved in this monumental loudspeaker cannot be put into words without learning to appreciate one's excellence.

From there it's best to see for yourself. Many of Canton's head developers Frank Gobl and Co. from Reference 1 were there again at the HIGH END in Munich. In any case, you will find a specialist dealer nearby who will definitely let you take a short detour into the spheres of this wonderful speaker and who will be happy to use the opportunity for yourself, of possibly more yourself with submission. Then see us on the other side.

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