

The Spark that lit the fire

With the new Spark, Audio Physic lights up its product range for “newcomers” to the world of high end with more sophistication and natural reproduction.

In English, “to spark” means *to emit sparks of fire* or *to glitter*. On its homepage, Audio Physic describes sparks as fiery particles dancing in the air which look just like what you might observe in open fire places conveying the emotional impact of warmth and also hot temper. We soon came to realise that it was far more than just that. This Spark truly breathes fire.

Exactly speaking, the loudspeaker which was provided to us for a review by the German manufacturer is the new Spark, a distinctively and visually redesigned successor to the original loudspeaker. Let us not forget that the original Spark already performed at the top of its class due to its natural pleasant sound reproduction, exceptional resolution and above all its amazing volume that you would have never expected coming from such a small cabinet. In fact, the pleasingly small dimensions of the floor standing loudspeaker deserve a special mention.

The original shape and size of the Spark has not been changed, however the cabinet sides of the **two-and-a-half way system** are now softly rounded, and the cabinet itself becomes slightly narrower towards the back. The new Spark has become an attractively streamlined and stylish visual stunner tuned for optimum reduction of standing waves inside the cabinet thanks to intelligent design and manufacture.

To reduce resonances as much as possible, the Spark is generously fitted with a system of bracings that make the cabinet more rigid and also help to reduce the transmission of vibrations.

What have also been changed are the stands of the second-smallest Audio Physic family member. The previous designs were mounted on bottom plates where spikes had to be threaded into the bottom whereas the new design comes with the same stands which the larger sister, the Tempo, is equipped with. Now, three metal bars are tightly screwed to the bottom of the

loudspeaker cabinet - one longer bar in the front and two smaller ones in the back. The smaller ones in the back are set in an angular position to accommodate the Spark's slightly angled cabinet.

In addition, the stands are capped with plastic caps to effectively hide the screw holes of the spikes. This is very hands-on in that the spikes can be adjusted from above with an Allen key, therefore it is not necessary to lift the whole cabinet. (See figure in the bottom right corner of page 22; However, it is not advisable to set the loudspeakers up without the spiky “couplers” as the stand of the Spark is simply not stable enough on its own. If you have a precious parquet floor, we suggest you directly couple your spikes with appropriate footers or plates.

With regard to their terminal design, Audio Physic remains true to its policy. All vintage Audio Physic products from the Spark to the top ranking Kronos are provided with a stable and high quality single wire terminal. The manufacturer affirms that this design is by all means a great deal better than wires and metal bridges. One cannot but agree.

When it came to sound reproduction, the small floorstander impressed us from the very beginning. The Spark not only creates a sound character that is truly audiophile, it also excels at clearly, accurately and naturally reproducing the smallest details with pinpoint resolution.

Rebecca Pidgeon's voice in “Primitive Man”, recorded on our STEREO-Review-CD 2, came through superbly and was rendered with richness; her voice was out front, all nuances vividly portrayed, and the recorded reverberation quite wonderfully reached into the depth of the room. What a performance!

At the same time we found that the deep and dynamic drumbeats that run throughout the song reveal the high-quality lower frequency reproduction the Audio Physic loudspeaker is capable of. The bass delivers clarity and punch down to the lowest octaves where it always stays in control. There were no so-called “low frequency effects” to be observed.

The Spark performed Frank Perkins complex “Fandango” with the same ease. The classical music arrangement combines an extremely high density with a wide spectrum of simultaneously active

frequencies which is quite capable of driving some audio components, including loudspeakers, to their limits. The Audio Physic speaker stays cool and reproduces the explosive piece of music with an amazing clarity and differentiated energy without diffusing the midrange frequencies.

Looking at the price - the Spark retails at 2,000 Euro - the Magnat five-star-awarded-speaker Quantum 905 immediately comes to mind. In a head-to-head comparison, the 905 achieved higher scores for delivering a deeper and "menacing" bass which is obviously due to its significantly larger volume. However when it comes to spatial imaging, the race actually ended in a tie since both speakers are capable of creating the same wide and well-defined soundstage matching sounds from in front and behind. The greatest difference could be observed between the frequencies: the Magnat rather stands for fundamental tones and emotions whereas the Spark combines lively swiftness with dynamic agility and impeccable precise timing culminating in a more objective sound quality where fine details are even better revealed within the music. The 905, on the other hand, provides a more emotionally powerful sound trying to carry the listener away. All things considered they are a living example of peaceful co-existence.

Audio Physic has succeeded in designing an excellent entry to the class of audiophile loudspeakers. The Spark achieves a neutral sound reproduction without being too analytical where any type of music is portrayed with a natural, detailed and uncoloured realism. The spark has lit – we are head over heels for the Spark.

by Carsten Barnbeck

AUDIO PHYSIC SPARK

Price per pair: approx. 2.000 Euro
 Dimensions: 15 x 98 x 22 cm (WxHxD)
 Guarantee: 10 years
 Distribution: Audio Physic, +49 (0)2961-96170
 Internet: www.audiophysic.de

The Audio Physic Spark is an agile floorstander which offers a high degree of audiophile sophistication, delivers an extremely lively performance and achieves a most natural sound reproduction at a reasonable price.

The Spark has a well-balanced and very linear frequency response which is held within 3 dB. The bass only starts to roll off at approx. 75 Hz from where the curve drops relatively steeply. Our off-axis measurements (see dashed line) clearly show that the tweeter has a wide dispersion. The curves are nearly identical. Therefore, the correct positioning of the Audio Physic loudspeaker is not at all critical. The impedance never drops below 4 ohms - as indicated by the manufacturer - and the step response demonstrates how extremely fast the slim floor-standing loudspeaker actually responds.

STEREO TEST

SOUND LEVEL:

65 %

PRICE-PERFORMANCE RATIO:



EXCELLENT