

AUDIO TEST

STEREO | STREAMING | HIGH END

LAUTSPRECHER

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AKTIVE HIFI-BOXEN UND STUDIO
MONITORE IM GROSSEN

TEST-PDF
PERLISTEN S5T

10 x
TESTS



Neuer Stern
am HiFi-Himmel
WELTPREMIERE!

Perlisten
S5T



ANLAGE DES MONATS

Denon CD-Player- und
Netzwerk-Vollverstärker-Kombi



LUXUS SOUNDBARS

B&W und Harman Kardon mit
High-End-Klang



Perlisten S5t

A New Era

World premiere! We are the first editors to test the brand new Perlisten S5t Special Edition floorstanding loudspeakers from the young audio brand from the USA. We are more than excited.

Thomas Kirsche, Benjamin Mächler

In 2016, the audio brand Perlisten saw the light of day in Verona. Of course, we Europeans immediately think of Italy, but that's far from it. There is also a Verona in the US state of Wisconsin and this is where we find the headquarters of Perlisten Audio. If you haven't heard of Perlisten yet, you don't have to be surprised. The American loudspeakers have only been available in Germany since this spring, because Audio Reference included the brand in its distribution portfolio in May 2022. By the way, Perlisten stands for "Perceptual Listening". That means something like „perceptive hearing“, i.e. hearing that is more than just consuming sound events. With its loudspeakers, Perlisten focuses on usage in home cinema environments. And they do this very successful, because the

Americans achieved the first THX Dominus certification worldwide in 2020 with their S series. And as of the date of publication of this AUDIO TEST issue, they are the only loudspeaker suppliers on the market who have this certification. As a reminder, THX Dominus has twice the power requirements of THX Ultra (note: the Perlisten loudspeaker models have this seal of approval also – of course). With this certification, home cinemas with a volume of up to 183 cubic meters and a viewing distance of around 6 meters from the screen can be covered with sound. Dominus thus closes the gap between normal home cinema and the professional cinema hall.

World premiere in AUDIO TEST
For our test, we received the latest example of the S series from



AUDIO TEST
6.2022
Reference Class
(97%)
Perlisten S5t
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AUDIO TEST
6.2022
High-End-Highlight of the month
Perlisten S5t
www.likehifi.de

Audio Reference, the S5t. We were quite astonished, because we had actually expected the Perlisten S4b bookshelf loudspeakers. We wanted to subject the compact speakers to an extensive test as part of our topic special on hi-fi and studio speakers. When the man-high palette stood in front of our listening room, we got stuck. Should the compact shelf loudspeakers Perlisten S4b be hidden in this huge packaging? Not at all! The Perlisten Audio S5t appeared in the „Special Edition“. So when we asked the German Perlisten distributor Audio Reference, they informed us that they were delivering a special gem to our publishing house in Leipzig and that we were the first hi-fi editors in the world to be allowed to test the Perlisten S5t. A world first and an exclusive test! Thanks Mansour Mamaghani and his team from Audio Reference in Hamburg. The S5t are a special edition because the demand for the S5m bookshelf speakers was so great that retailers and end users would have liked to have had the speaker's size and sound as a floorstanding speaker. This is how the Perlisten S5t (the "t" stands for "tower") floorstanding speaker was born, which Audio Reference is currently producing exclusively for the German, Austrian and Swiss markets.

Exciting optics

The performance of the Perlisten S5t is simply exciting - every tester in our publishing house and even uninvolved employees praise their optics. Noble, graceful and majestic, the S5t stands in our listening room after it has been set up. A loudspeaker that plays with its charms openly, even in idle mode. Our test model comes in the noble special edition finish Ebony High Gloss. This exquisite special version underlines the impressive premiere appearance of the Perlisten loudspeakers in the AUDIO TEST listening room. Of course, their appearance and the series designation clearly show the relationship to the Perlisten S5m. As just described, these monitor speakers, resting on a speaker



The dust protection membrane over the bass speakers looks simply brilliant and is the hallmark of the entire S series from Perlisten

stand, are the template for the S5t. The design of Perlisten has an enormously high recognition value. Let's take a look at the domes of the two 18 centimeter bass speakers. They adorn the typical checkerboard pattern that we find on all loudspeakers from Perlisten's S series. The light is refracted within the pattern in ever new ways, depending on the angle from which we look at it. That alone is simply an eye-catcher and unique. Between the two bass speakers we see the DPC Array. DPC stands for Directivity Pattern Control. It is a mid-high unit, in the middle of which we find a 28 millimeter beryllium dome for high-frequency reproduction. This arrangement is similar to the D'Appolito principle, but still very unique. Beryllium is used because, due to its excellent damping properties, it does not suffer from the typical harsh dissolution phenomena of other metals.

The two TPCD domes, each 28 millimeters in size, are arranged above and below the beryllium dome and „hide“ behind the circular perforated grids. They are responsible for the center display. This unusual optic is called a waveguide lens. It orchestrates the array directivity and provides a coherent wavefront while optimizing early reflections and acoustic power. According to Perlisten, this should take voice reproduction to a whole new level. In our listening test we take a closer look at this claim. The letters TPCD stand for Thin Ply Carbon Diaphragm. This is a TexTreme carbon fiber that is 30% lighter than conventional carbon fibers of the same thickness. High strength is provided by a unique process that stacks multiple layers of this material. This creates a unique braid that disperses resolution modes without sharp response peaks while expanding bandwidth.



The center of the DPC array contains the tweeter with a beryllium dome. Above and below are the midrange drivers „hidden“ behind the grilles



There are two of these 180 millimeter woofers in the Perlisten S5t. Its membrane consists of a Thin Ply Carbon Diaphragm - a very light carbon fiber

Perlisten supplies three circular protective grilles for the speaker units. These hold magnetically, but must be placed correctly on the speaker screws. But even if one of these testers has a preference for loudspeakers behind protective grilles, one simply does not want to use them with the Perlisten

loudspeakers. The speakers simply look too good for that without a cover.

Haptics and workmanship

We need two people to set up the 112 centimeter high floorstanding speaker (including the base). After all, a base plate has to be

mounted and the feet screwed to it. Screwing and, above all, turning the speakers is much easier with two people, after all, the S5t floorstanding speakers weigh 43.2 kilograms. On the back we find the bi-wiring-capable connection terminal. The cable bridge is not pre-assembled, but is included in the box. Of course, we need these if we want to connect the loudspeakers to our amplifier in a “normal” way. The processing of the housing is at the highest possible high-end level. The entire speaker feels extremely valuable - there are simply no imperfections, edges or flaws here. This is loudspeaker construction in perfection. Admittedly, this is also what a customer can expect at a pair price of just under 15,000 euros. The front of the speakers is curved forward, which gives the S5t an extra swing. Yes, even if we are dealing with American loudspeakers here, they come across as completely „un-American“. Rather, we feel reminded of the noble loudspeaker concepts from Italy. It may be that this has something to do with the European origins of Perlisten founder Lars Johansen. The experienced HiFi salesman is Danish. Together with Daniel Roemer he founded Perlisten six years ago. Perhaps it is also due to Perlisten Audio’s headquarters in Verona, Wisconsin, USA, as mentioned at the beginning. By the way, Perlisten also researches, develops and manufactures here. The final production then takes place in a high-tech factory with its own production line in the Far East, which is why Perlisten can also pride itself on „in-house“ production.

Technical data

If you have read our previous text carefully, you already know that the Perlisten S5t are 3-way loudspeakers. They reproduce a frequency response at ±10 dB from 35 to 37,000 Hertz. Their acoustic suspension is between 36 and 33,000 Hertz. The connected amplifier should have an output of 100 to 300 watts (RMS). Their sensitivity is 89.5 dB/2.83 v/1.0 m and the impedance is 4 ohms

Photo credits: Auerbach Verlag, Perlisten



We find this grille in the bottom of the Perlisten, behind it is the bass reflex output – the S5t therefore work as a downfire

nominal. So much for the technical data. As is well known, they say hardly anything about the sound of a loudspeaker. So let's turn to the listening test.

Start on the Nile

Of course we don't start our test session with music, after all the Perlisten S5t are THX Dominus certified speakers. It has to be a film, because THX is a sound standard that is supposed to ensure that the audio experience in every cinema is the same as long as it complies with the THX certification. That's why we chose the latest Poirot film „Death on the Nile“ with Kenneth Branagh from 2022. Even though our audio test room is actually designed for hi-fi tests, the Perlisten S5t manage the room right from the start like a home cinema experience. This is absolutely phenomenal - it really

sounds like we're sitting in a real movie theater. The stereo image is so precise that a sound experience is created in front of us that extends far to the sides - more than half the room is actually acoustically perfectly filled. Let's go into the first scene of the film, which is in black and white and shows Poirot at the front in the First World War. Here are a few bare trees in the picture, creaking in the wind. This small, barely perceptible noise alone is fantastically three-dimensional – as written: a real cinema feeling arises. The subsequent dialogues, including the wind blowing in the background, are also acoustically tangible. The battle to conquer the bridge then brings the first perfectly sounding explosions into our test room. All noises and voices remain so perfectly clear, rich in detail and wonderfully locatable that we never lose our orientation purely acoustically. When Poirot then enters the restaurant in London and the band is rehearsing in the background, the Perlisten begin to work their magic again. In fact, it seems as if the speakers have secretly installed a pair of surround speakers in the room, adding even more sonority to the room. Of course this is not the case, the Perlisten S5t create this multi-channel perception all by themselves. The acoustic scenery gets really awesome when Salome Otterbourne starts to sing. If you don't think you can be there live in this club, we strongly advise you to visit an otologist.

From TV series to film

We don't just stick with cinema films, we look across the board at what's currently on offer from TV and streaming providers. This is where the sound stage of the Perlisten S5t comes into its own with the precise positioning of all sound sources. It is remarkable how well intelligible the voices always remain, even though we only hear the stereo

mix of the sound. In most cases, the voice reproduction is less successful, because the other noises quickly overshadow the speech. Not so with the Perlisten speakers!

Classical, pop etc.

So that we can examine the purely musical qualities of the Perlisten



The processing of the Perlisten S5t is perfect and their design is a feast for the eyes



The crossover of the Perlisten S5t can be seen in the picture. The connoisseur immediately grasps their elegant, tidy design

S5t under the “ear magnifying glass”, let’s first look for a bit of the classical performance, as if we were sitting in this concert hall as listeners. Even with Stravinsky, which we always like to use for testing, the atmosphere of the concert hall comes into play immediately. Precise, emotional and musical – simply phenomenal. It really blows our socks off when we allude to Martin Kohlstedt and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Choir via Tidal. The excellent recording of the title „TARLEH“ puts us in the best place in the Gewandhaus Leipzig thanks to the Perlisten S5t floorstanding loudspeakers. Clear, finely resolved and yet stable and powerful, the speakers know how to convince in this test session. The goosebumps on our arms confirm our assumption that we are dealing with very special loudspeakers. We keep it a bit more modern musically and switch to Jamie XX and his electro anthem „Loud Places“, which is vocally refined by his The XX bandmate Romy. The Perlisten loudspeakers not only show themselves as fine spirits, but can also shine as party beasts. Yes, they even want to be fed with bass-heavy sounds. So it literally pushes us into the sweet spot on our couch in the listening room. Timing, definition and precision of the loudspeakers are second to none. We stick to the club atmo-

sphere, but switch from the techno to the jazz club.

At the end of our listening session it should be the great Lady Blackbird with her 2021 album “Black Acid Soul”. We start our favorite track „Fix It“ and are blown away. We have rarely been able to enjoy this reinterpretation of the jazz classic „Peace Piece“ by Bill Evans so clearly musically, presently and yet emotionally. It’s amazing how

SUMMARY

Even experienced testers are seldom served such an acoustic feast for the ears as the Perlisten S5t offer. Anyone who thinks the THX Dominus certification is just a marketing gimmick is wrong. The S5t manage to conjure up real cinema sound in every room via a simple stereo setup. When playing music, they perform just as confidently and yet emotionally. „Perfectly done Perlisten!“ we exclaim from the editorial team and don’t want to give up the speakers anytime soon. Definitely one of the best we’ve had in the listening room in recent years.

FEATURES

- THX Dominus certified
- Bi-amping/wiring capable
- DPC array

Advantages	+ Perfect cinema sound and brilliant music playback + Most detailed, flawless locatable spatiality + Super balanced, bass-strong sound
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Disadvantages – none

these speakers handle any type of audio information. No matter whether in home cinema or hi-fi use, you will hardly find a better all-rounder at the moment. Certainly at just under 15,000 euros a pair, we are not dealing with a bargain here, but the HIGH END 2022 has shown that there are no upper limits. The Perlisten Audio S5t really don’t have to hide from the high-end speaker bolides shown there above the 50,000 euro mark - quite the opposite! This new loudspeaker brand is really stirring up the market! ■

FEATURES

General	
Device class	Floorstanding speaker
Price band	Upper range
Manufacturer	Perlisten Audio
Model	S5t
Price (EIA)	14 800 Euro (pair)
Dimensions (H/W/D)	24 × 112 × 40 cm
Weight	43,2 kg
Information	www.audio-reference.de

Technische Daten (lt. Hersteller)	
Method of operating	passive
Construction type	3 way bass reflex
Frequency response	24 Hz – 32 kHz
Power	100–300 W
Room recommendation	16–40 m ²
Individual sound adjustment	–
Input	Screw terminal

BEWERTUNG

Bass reproduction	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>	20/20
Middle reproduction	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>	20/20
Treble reproduction	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>	20/20
Spaciousness	<div style="width: 80%;"></div>	10/10
Reproduction quality	<div style="width: 70%;"></div>	70/70
Equipment/workmanship	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	10/10
User-friendliness	<div style="width: 80%;"></div>	8/10
Appreciation/Depreciation		none
Interim result		88 von 90 points
Price-performance	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>	very good 9/10
Result	<div style="width: 97%;"></div>	Reference Class 97 %

Photo credits: Auerbach Verlag, Perlisten