

Dynaudio Contour Legacy floorstanding loudspeaker

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Nostalgia is a powerful drug, and it has been fuelling a significant part of the audio industry of late. Across a range of different product categories and at various price points, companies have mined their past to create products that remind us of a time when things were at least differently awful. I've enjoyed many of these products, but their emotional pull on me has been limited somewhat by many of them harking back to a point before I was born. Even the Neat Petite Classic, which I adore, harks back to the point when Fisher-Price made my audio system. However, the Dynaudio Contour Legacy hits a little differently.

Designed to mimic the Contour 1.8 loudspeaker from the 1990s, the Dynaudio Contour Legacy takes me back to a point where my interest in hi-fi was coming together. I remember the original Contour 1.8 achieving the unusual feat of being highly regarded across almost every publication I could get my hands on. It carved out an enviable reputation for delivering massive bang for your buck. Dynaudio has decided to tap into this reputation for its Heritage program, and the Contour Legacy is the result.

Ancestral resemblances

It's hard to overstate the latent nostalgia it unlocks simply sitting in my listening room. The Contour Legacy resembles its ancestor, but Dynaudio didn't dust off an old production line. Instead, Dynaudio developed a new speaker that happens to look like an older one and it is a different size to any 'in period' Contour model. However, the lengths that Dynaudio has gone to here are impressive. The tweeter, for example, looks exactly like the classic T330 unit used at the time, with its distinctive nine-bolt fixing in three groups of three.

It isn't a T330 tweeter, of course. The Contour Legacy uses a 28mm Esostar tweeter complete with Hexis technology that prevents unwanted information from coming back through the dome. It's absolutely of the moment, but thanks to some careful aesthetic tweaks, you'd never know. Dynaudio's mid-bass drivers have been more stylistically consistent over the years. You will only notice that the Legacy uses two 180mm units taken from the Evidence range if you know what you're looking for.



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» Stealthily spanning the decades is a theme for the speaker as a whole. The Contour Legacy is still a 2.5-way design that connects via a single set of speaker terminals. However, the crossover is completely revised and features niceties such as Dueland capacitors in the signal path. At the base of each cabinet is a metal plate, but it's now roughly the thickness of a section of an armoured belt and lends each speaker an all-up mass that will surprise most people who judge them on their sensible dimensions. While the veneer of the original Contours was always a touch on the prosaic side, the Legacy is different. It uses a sustainable American walnut that is genuinely lovely to behold in the same gently understated manner as the Contour Legacy exudes in general.

If you know...

This 'if you know' quality to the Dynaudio has really appealed to me in the time they've been here. Taken at face value, it's a well-proportioned (I have stated before that Dynaudio has a grasp of proportion that results in uncommonly elegant speakers), attractive and

fundamentally 'grown up' piece of hardware. If you're more invested in this pastime, you'll see a loving homage to a highly regarded classic done in such a way as to ensure that every single part of it is as good as it can be. You don't have to notice the tweeter surround or that it uses a badge with a period-correct logo. You don't have to know anything about the older Contour 1.8 to know this is a unique loudspeaker. Still, if you do, it rewards you in various ways.

In one key area, the Contour Legacy is a modern Dynaudio. While the ongoing use of aluminium for voice coils means there will always be more efficient rivals, it would be a stretch to call the result hard to drive. It's also more forgiving regarding placement than the Evoke 30 I tested recently. I wound up with them around 2.5 metres apart, with a gentle toe in and around half a metre out from the wall to let the two rear ports breathe as they should.

The result was a performance that did what I would expect a Dynaudio to do but with twists that took a little untangling. First up, the Contour Legacy has sensational bass extension. The deep drum that underpins the





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» opening 'Angel Dance' on Robert Plant's *Band of Gold* [Universal] is a positively seismic event felt both in the chest and through the sofa. The delivery is practically effortless; the port is utterly inaudible, and the control and definition give you the sense that you are barely pushing the Dynaudio. And that's true even at the point where people unencumbered by neighbours and the rudiments of mechanical sympathy would be winding it down a notch.

Tangibly real

This bass is wedded to a gloriously and tangibly lifelike midrange without tipping over into any perceived emphasis to any one point on the frequency response. Listening to Stanley Jordan's unique take on Eleanor Rigby' on his *Magic Touch* album [Blue Note], the Contour Legacy make complete sense of the 'one man, one guitar, two discernible melodies' that defines Jordan's technique. Having replayed so clearly does nothing to take away the astonishing experience of it. As the frequencies increase, the Dynaudio remains almost impossible to provoke. Wilful mis-partnering would result in a performance where that refinement slipped, but you'd have to work on it.

The Contour Legacy deviates from up-to-the-minute Dynaudio designs because there is fractionally more perception of the cabinet being part of the performance. There's nothing so overt as 'coloration' from the Contour Legacy but less sense of the 'shaping' that creates soundstages you can all but wander around in. The effect is joyous when confronted with the focused rage of *Superabundance* by the Young Knives [Transgressive]. The Contour leans into the congested, jangling mess that is 'Terra Firma' and delivers it with all of the fury baked into the recording intact. Is this more authentically 'hi-fi' than the modern speakers? Possibly not. Is it an absolute riot to listen to? You bet.

It's this absolute joy that the Contour Legacy has delivered so consistently that it marks them as something extraordinary. I've sat here on a few evenings, looking at a loudspeaker that takes me back to a very satisfying time of my life and delivering a fundamentally modern performance but tinged with just enough of something different to be quite exceptionally captivating. At one point, I moved to vinyl and while listening to a '97 first pressing of Massive Attack's *Mezzanine* [Virgin] (something I regrettably failed to pick up when new and sourced more recently), the sense of time travel was pretty much complete. 'Dissolved Girl' rumbles into life with Sarah

Jane Hawley's delicate vocals perfectly presented over the top of it. The nexus of 'my adolescence but high end' was complete, and my life was much better because of it.

Limited catch

Of course, there's a catch- there generally always is. Products from the Dynaudio Heritage line are always limited editions, but making just 1,000 pairs of the Contour Legacy feels especially restrictive. Of that 1,000, only 52 will go to the UK, and you will need both speed and a touch of good fortune to secure a pair. I understand the desire to create something that is both a talking point and not a distraction from modern Dynaudios. However, double that number would have still passed through very rapidly indeed.

The Dynaudio Contour Legacy is something a bit special. It's a modern retelling of a profoundly influential speaker, made as well as the company can make it. However, the result is still greater than that of prodigious engineering. It delivers a performance absolutely of the moment with just enough knowing winks to the past to make the experience an unforgettable one. In a busy field of nostalgia products, this has to rank as one of the most considered and capable I've had the privilege to listen to. +

Technical specifications

Type: Two-and-a-half way, rear reflex-ported floorstanding loudspeaker

Drive units: 28mm Esotar 3 tweeter, 2x 180mm MSP mid-woofers

Frequency Response: 42Hz-29kHz (±3dB)

Sensitivity: 90dB (2.83V/1m)

Impedance: 4Ω

Crossover Frequencies: (400)/3400Hz

Crossover topology: 1st/2nd Order

IEC Power Handling: 200W

Finish: American Walnut

Dimensions (WxHxD): 20.8x35.2x99.5cm (incl. feet/grille)

Weight: 32.5kg per loudspeaker

Price: £10,200, \$14,000, €12,000 per pair

Manufacturer Dynaudio A/S

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