CANTON CHRONO 70 LOUDSPEAKER

It's Chrono Time

By Michael Trei

CANTON MAY be a speaker brand that's relatively unknown in North America—no doubt due to the company's products not being available in these parts for the past decade—but the German outfit has been around for almost 50 years. Headquartered about 25 miles north of Frankfurt, Canton is one of Germany's largest loud-speaker manufacturers, offering a truly breathtaking spread of models across several product ranges.

If you wanted to pluck a repre-sentative speaker out from the middle of Canton's lineup, you'd most likely select the Chrono 70. The whole Chrono series resides somewhere in the middle of the company's range, occupying a comfortable sweet spot between affordability and performance. One key advantage to this positioning is that the Chrono series leverages trickle-down technology from Canton's more expensive lines—the Vento series' Wave Surround rubber woofer suspension, for example, which permits greater driver excursion with less distortion.

The 70 is the smallest of three floorstanding towers within the Chrono series, with a couple of bookshelf models coming in just below it to complete the lineup. There's also a Chrono center channel, subwoofer, on-wall, and an Atmos elevation model in case your plans include a full surround rig. But for this review we focused just on the Chrono 70, used alone as a stereo pair.

Many companies selling affordable speakers moved their production lines to Asia long ago, but Canton has resisted this

temptation. Instead, it has chosen to consolidate operations within the EU, with flagship models manufactured in Germany and lower-cost lines like the Chrono produced across the border in the Czech Republic. This strategy allows Canton to hold costs down while keeping everything reason-ably close to home.

We Americans tend to appreciate the warmth of a real wood veneer finish, but it seems European design these days is all about purity and austerity. With that in mind, it's not surprising that the Chrono 70 is only available in black or white. Its front baffle has a high gloss painted finish, while the cabinet's sides, top, and back are covered with a matching textured vinyl wrap. Magnetically attached black fabric grilles can be used to cover up the drivers, although I found the Chrono 70 to be quite attractive with its drivers left naked. The tweeter has a mesh protective cover, which will prevent curious children with prodding fingers from poking it.

On the back of the Chrono 70's cabinet is a fairly large bass port with two pairs of gold-plated speaker cable binding posts below it. A pair of jumper straps connect the top binding posts to the lower ones for a normal single-wire connection, while removing them allows for bi-wiring or bi-amping. A pedestal at the speaker's base extends its foot-print a couple of inches out in each direction for added stability, while a set of not especially sharp spikes can be attached for installation on carpeting, with a rubber foot option for hard floors.

Canton's literature describes the

Chrono 70 as a three-way speaker, but after seeing that it uses what appears to be two identical-looking low-frequency drivers in addition to the tweeter, I was a bit unsure about that description. It became clear after running tests that this could be more accurately described as a 2½-way speaker, with both six-inch aluminum woofers covering the full bass range, but only the upper one also handling midrange frequencies. (The Chrono 70's bottom woofer starts to roll off at around 300Hz, while the upper crosses over to the tweeter at around 3KHz.) A 2½-way speaker can offer real advantages over a more traditional three-way; specifically, it has greater bass output capability than a single-woofer design can muster, while still maintaining the smooth dispersion and coherency of a separate midrange driver.

Canton's specs state that the Chrono 70's bass extends all the way down to 25Hz, which is probably only a bit of a stretch. With a nominal impedance of four ohms, and a sensitivity in the mid 80s, I found that the Chrono 70 presented a reasonably straight-forward load to most amplifiers. For much of my listening I used a 150 watt-per-channel Denon AVR-X8500 receiver, which was able to drive the Chrono 70s to frat-party levels with ease.

SETUP

Canton's manual recommends that the speaker's back be positioned between 12 and 20 inches away from the front wall to give the rear-firing port plenty of breathing room. Initial listening proved this

to be sage advice, as the Chrono 70 can crank out prodigious bass. I ended up with the pair closer to the 20-inch maximum distance, with the added space needed to minimize boundary reinforcement and bring bass levels into proper balance. Overall, the Chrono 70's sound erred slightly warmer than neutral at first, but I was able restore high frequency extension and openness by angling the speakers in slightly toward the listening position.

PERFORMANCE

Streaming some of my favorite demo tracks from Qobuz and Tidal, I first decided to explore the Chrono 70's ability to dig deep into the bass, something amply demonstrated by the title song from Shelby Lynne's *Just a Little Lovin'* album. Right from the start, the weight behind drummer Curt Bisquera's kick drum and the deep growl of Kevin Axt's bass belied the Chrono 70's relatively modest driver complement. Better

still, this was far from the type of tuneless mid-bass thump that smaller speakers sometimes pass off to provide a simulacrum of deeper bass; with the Chrono 70, it was tuneful and agile, sounding at times like a carefully dialed-in subwoofer.

To get a handle on the Chrono 70's dynamic capabilities, I next played the opening of the Rachmaninoff *Symphonic Dances* from the Reference Recordings release with Eiji Oue and the Minnesota Orchestra. Following the first few delicate bars with violins and winds, this quickly builds to a big crescendo, with basses digging in hard and loud tympani rolls before moving on to an even bigger and louder crescendo. Even with peak volume levels of well over 100dB at my seat, the Cantons were able to shrug off this ultra-demanding music with ease and showed no signs of impending distress.

Moving on to something a bit more subtle, I played the opening of the Philip Glass score for the movie *Mishima*. This starts with a variety of bells and other percussion instruments before low strings and tympani enter to underpin the delicate high frequency sounds. I was able to really fine-tune the speaker toe-in using this track, maximizing tonal clarity and fine detail from the percussion while ensuring that the sound-stage remained spacious and had plenty of depth. Delicate tinkly percussion is a tough test for any speaker, but the Chrono 70's aluminum-manganese tweeter pulled it off beautifully.

For something a bit more raucous, I played "Tied Up" by Yello, a track that guarantees to get a party going. Again, I was truly impressed by the Chrono 70's ability to crank out sound effortlessly

and cleanly. Certain horn-loaded speakers might offer a smidgen more of a jump factor by way of comparison, but these Canton's have a much more neutral balance than most horns in the same price range.

CONCLUSION

The Canton Chrono 70 doesn't look like anything particularly special on paper, but once I hooked it up for a listen, it was immediately clear that this speaker manages to punch way above its weight class. Better yet, it can be easily expanded with Chrono center, surrounds, sub, and Atmos speakers for a complete home theater setup. The Chrono 70 offers transparent sound, plays hard, and, at $1,995/pair, delivers excellent value.

Specs 6 in aluminum cone woofer (2), 1 in aluminum-manganese dome tweeter; 7.5 x 37.4 x 11 in (WxHxD); 38 lb

The Verdict

Canton's Chrono 70 tower speaker delivers powerful sound with ease and represents a great value at its $2K price.