

Review Cabasse Pearl Keshi – delusions of grandeur?

by JAAP VEENSTRA

Pros

- Sounds big
- Fine tonal balance
- Looks good!

Cons

- Unhandy remote control
- No hdmi
- Fixed wiring satellites

Prijs: € 2500

Build quality	<input type="checkbox"/>
Usability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sound	<input type="checkbox"/>
Price	<input type="checkbox"/>



Intro

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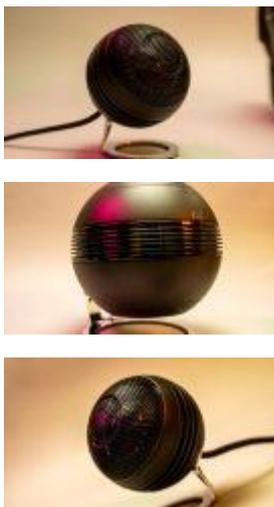
“What cool desktop speakers,” I hear as my visitor walks in. “Well... this isn’t really for the desk,” I report cautiously. “But it can be done, right?”, the editorial visitor asks. “Yes, anything goes...”, I say somewhat reservedly. Anyone who hears these Cabasse Pearl Keshi’s will understand that it can offer something more than some support for YouTube videos. Let’s clarify that.

[Cabasse](#) is a French brand. And the French often do things just a little differently. And a bit more stylish. Look at brands like Micromega, Focal, Devialet, Advance Paris... we can go on and on. And look at Concorde... or French car brands. How cool is the Citroen DS or something more modern: the Xantia with active suspension? Or a Renault 5 Turbo...? Yes: the French did know how to add a fun factor!



Cabasse is also different. In many ways even. Let's take a look at that!

Coaxial



What immediately stands out is that this Cabasse Pearl Keshi is compact. Very compact. The first impression is honestly that it can't be a decent performing system. After all, yeah, well... a brand with a "B" has promised us a lot a few decades ago.... and it did not deliver on anything. A lot of treble, no mid and then a lot of bass.... Often the result of too small satellites – well risky – and a subwoofer to compensate.

This is certainly not the case with the Cabasse. Partly due to incredibly strong drivers and a coaxial setup, the satellites can do much more than you might initially think. Not only does the subwoofer blend surprisingly well with the satellites – long live modern technology – the stereo image is also much larger than we expected. But more on this later.

The satellites, as mentioned, have a coaxial setup. That is to say that the tweeter is placed in the middle of the midrange. Surrounding the tweeter is the midrange unit. The unit sits in the remarkably heavy, round, metal enclosure. According to Cabasse, there is also a powerful magnet behind it that should keep the unit well under control.

The satellites have a fixed cable of three meters. We don't find that a convenient choice, because what if you want shorter or longer cables? Or the cables break? That's going to be a tricky story... I'm sure it can be repaired, but we're guessing you won't be doing that yourself. On the end are neat plugs that fit into the speaker outputs of the subwoofer.

A subwoofer with extras

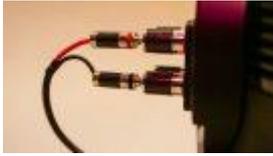
Speaking of the subwoofer, it's more like a central receiver, amplifier and subwoofer. Inside the sub are the crossovers (DSP) and amplifiers for the satellites and the sub itself. We're talking 300 watts per satellite and 450 watts for the subwoofer. Obviously class D, because there is not that much space and of course there must be some way of cooling it.

At the bottom of the subwoofer we see the inputs: ethernet, optical, micro-usb (unfortunately no normal usb input), wifi and bluetooth. Bluetooth is also used to connect to the remote control. This has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that bluetooth is energy efficient, so the battery can last a long time. The disadvantage is that after a while of no use, a connection must be set up again. And that takes a while. Cabasse needs to think about that; it doesn't work very well.

Fortunately, there is a good app. The only thing we really miss in this system is hdmi. We can imagine this system will be used near the tv. And then hdmi-arc (e-arc) is simply a must. We guess that Cabasse will miss some customers because of this. Perhaps there will be a version 1.1 of the Pearl Keshi with HDMI input? Now people will have to make do with an optical cable, which is possible... but is less modern, and often less convenient.

Advanced DSPs





In order to achieve the soundstage that this Pearl Keshi is capable of, there's a bit of a stretch to be made in terms of DSP technology. In fact, everything is already in pretty good shape if you just connect and turn things on. However, if you want to get everything out of the Cabasse Pearl Keshi, you can also measure the mini Cabasse in the room to get rid of some pesky room modes. And you can – if you do not want to measure – also indicate how the Keshi is placed: from the wall, against the wall, all the way in the corner.

You can also choose a profile under “Audio Adjustment” and then audio spectrum. (Some things are still a bit fuzzy in terms of translation). These changes are definitely audible and wise to go through when you are setting up the Keshi and getting it ready for use. It doesn't just dot the “i”; it's the difference between sounding just fine and sounding really good.



Then when everything is set up right... what does it sound like? Well... big! Much bigger than you think. This is – as I said – no simple desktop-system. Yes, it can be used like that, but then with 2500 euros you really have a very, very luxurious system for the computer ... No: this is more for the living room, well used office where you spend a lot of time, or perhaps for the TV where you now for once really good sound because you also want to watch decent movies.

This is simply much better than a soundbar that always sounds like.... a soundbar. Well, what can we say: we are not fans. With a few exceptions. But then again: they also cost serious money.



Grand and airy

If we have to come up with a few words that capture the character of this set: big and airy. How big you want to play is partly controlled by the angle of the bulbs. This is because you can rotate them to set the stereo image. Handy if you want to hang the spheres on the wall (that is also possible). But also if you have them on a lower piece of furniture. Then turn them so they are a little higher. We do not have to explain that this makes a lot of difference in the experience ...? Think of it as turning in your speakers. That is also necessary for an optimal experience.

We lived with the Cabasse Pearl Keshi for a few weeks in our workspace. There the 2.1 system played quite a few hours of music. And what is striking is that the Keshi is not prominent unless you want it to be. It can play just fine in the background and fill space pleasantly with music (our workspace is about 20m²). But if you want to have a party, there is no doubt that this system can really deliver. After all, there is 1000 watts of power at your disposal! It will deliver... believe us.

What is also striking is that the Keshi absolutely does not sound thin at lower volumes. This is undoubtedly due to the DSP that adjusts the balance. It will look at the volume and adjust the sound balance accordingly. A kind of automatic Loudness. And that's good, because our ears are less sensitive to low at lower volumes ...

Target

If we live with the product like this and start thinking about who this is for, we estimate that this is not for the purist hi-fi enthusiast. It's a "designer" 2.1 system. That's swearing in church for the purist. But your author does think they are making an error in judgment. This is better than you think. Is it ultra-hifi? No... ..of course not. But it is better than you think. It is more detailed, more complete and more coherent than you will estimate. And, above all, it plays more pleasantly than many a "designer system.

Cabasse has proven that they understand DSP and can make beautiful-looking systems that also sound good. It will appeal to many younger couples because of its design and connectivity. Couples who want something beautiful in the living room, study and near the TV. However, an HDMI input will be handy. And that is unfortunately missing. We really hope that Cabasse will include that in an update.

Conclusion

At first glance, the Cabasse Pearl Keshi looks like a designer system. And in a way it is. But Cabasse has also made sure that it sounds good. Much better than many a conventional fan would think. The Keshi plays big, airy and remarkably coherent. Even at low volume. And that makes it a pleasant life partner.

We do see some areas for improvement. The wiring is attached to the satellites, which we understand in a way. But what if you want shorter or longer cables? Or the wire breaks? Also, we really miss hdmi on this system. We estimate that many people use this set with their TV. It's ideal... Compact, but big sound. In short: the ideal replacement for those soundbars... And the remote control is not handy because it often has to be re-paired, which takes time. Bit irritating after a while.

Fortunately, we have a great app that didn't let us down during the review period!

The App and Conclusion

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We want to briefly show some of the app. We've taken screenshots of all the main pages and the set-up. That way you have an idea. By the way, the Cabasse Pearl Keshi is already going through the certification for ROON. We already saw the Keshi in the software. However, not yet fully certified...

The Cabasse Pearl Keshi App The app works stable and fast. Here and there we still see some fuzzy translations. Streaming is by default via UPnP, which works fine if you have your music properly tagged and you have a good server. Tidal, Qobuz, Napster, Deezer and Spotify are also found. In short: plenty of sources to

play with. Should you want more: Bubble UPnP can stream from services to a UPnP source.

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