



Date de publication : 23/03/2022

Lien : [The Cabasse Pearl: a Bastareaud of a loudspeaker](#) | [Darko.Audio](#)

The Cabasse Pearl: a Bastareaud of a loudspeaker



by **Phil Wright** March 23, 2022, 14:45

The Cabasse Pearl is an active speaker from France with amplifiers and streaming smarts built-in, no other boxes required. Tout-on-aucun – all-in-none. Yours for £2,690 / US\$3,499 / €2,990 per speaker. Run one in mono or two as a stereo pair. Or go multiroom with others in the Pearl collection. In all cases, Cabasse's StreamCONTROL app directs proceedings.

You can position two Pearls on a sturdy shelf. Wall brackets get them up out of the way. Or mount them on Cabasse's custom stands (£649/pair). If the latter: unless the thought of an 18kg boulder toppling from height onto your foot appeals, get a friend to help set them up. I didn't and I almost regretted it.

Once the Pearl is screwed to the stand it's all very solid. And the stands are beautifully finished – satin white for me, black also available. Cable management sees the

power and network cables going down separate legs, maintaining visual (and electrical?) integrity. Overall they're expensive, but I've seen worse quality stands for the price.

The Pearl itself is a 32cm diameter globe. In black, it has a Star Wars menace to it (IT-O interrogation droid anyone?) In white, the look is more forgiving but still very 'out there'; these are speakers that will divide opinion on looks. The photos capture the vibe better than words.

Functionality and pricing put the Pearl alongside Devialet's Phantom, Linn's The Three and their ilk. Audiophile aspirations married to distinctive style (I've yet to hear them properly). You can judge the Pearl's looks for yourself, but how do they stack up sonically? And is the user experience up to snuff, something that can undermine otherwise good devices? Let's see.

The Internals

The Pearl is a three-way tri-coaxial speaker, the tweeter sitting coaxially within the 13cm midrange driver. The 25cm woofer is on the same axis but fires rearward. Three Class D amplifiers provide power, the midrange and tweeter each getting 300 Watts, the woofer 1000 Watts. That's some oomph.

Bandwidth is quoted as 14Hz – 27kHz, the lower figure being at -6dB 'in-room'. Even with 1000wpc on tap, that looked optimistic although a 14Hz test tone did get the bass cone flapping wildly. To be fair a 20Hz tone produced discernible bass, which I wasn't expecting.

Connectivity

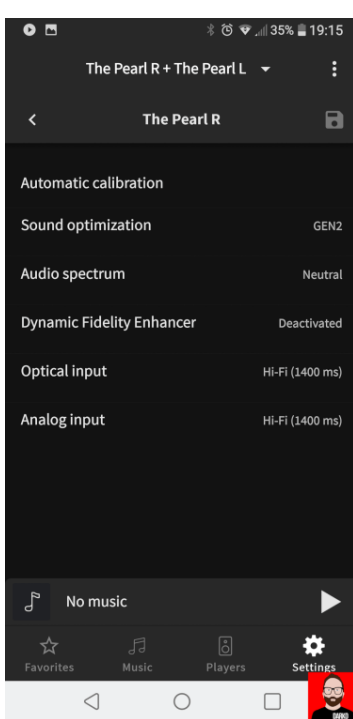
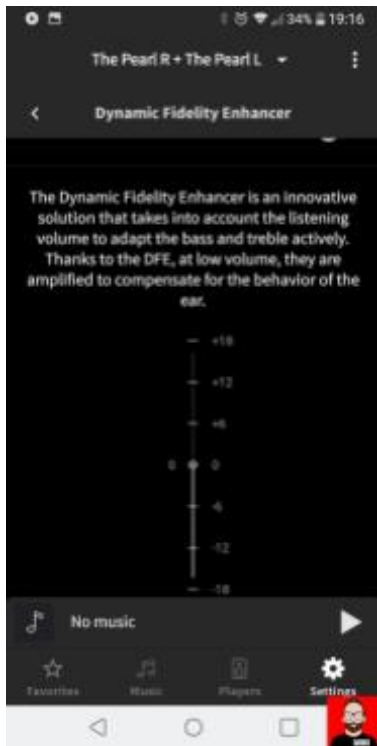
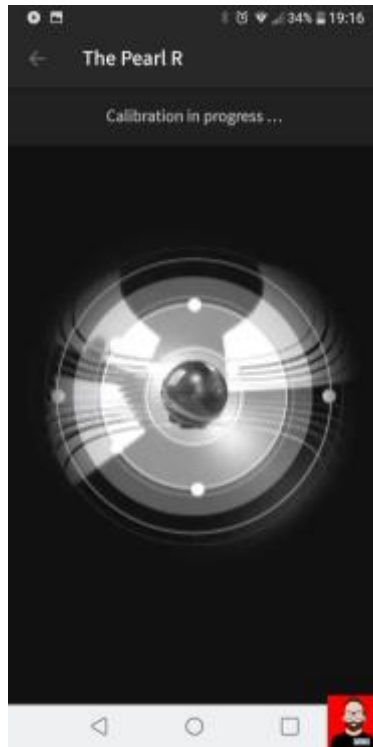
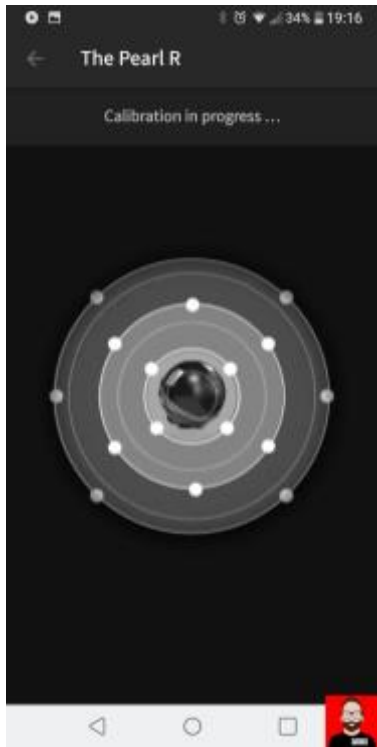
Inputs sit at the base of the Pearl's rear and include TOSLINK, USB-A and RCA analogue (the latter converted to digital for DSP purposes). USB is for drives, not computers. Completing the lineup are RJ45 network and IEC power sockets, a button for network pairing, two status LEDs and a tiny power switch. Bluetooth 4.2 is available as is Wi-Fi, the latter working well for me (I do have good Wi-Fi). As usual wired networking is recommended for network stability – just string an Ethernet cable to each Pearl.

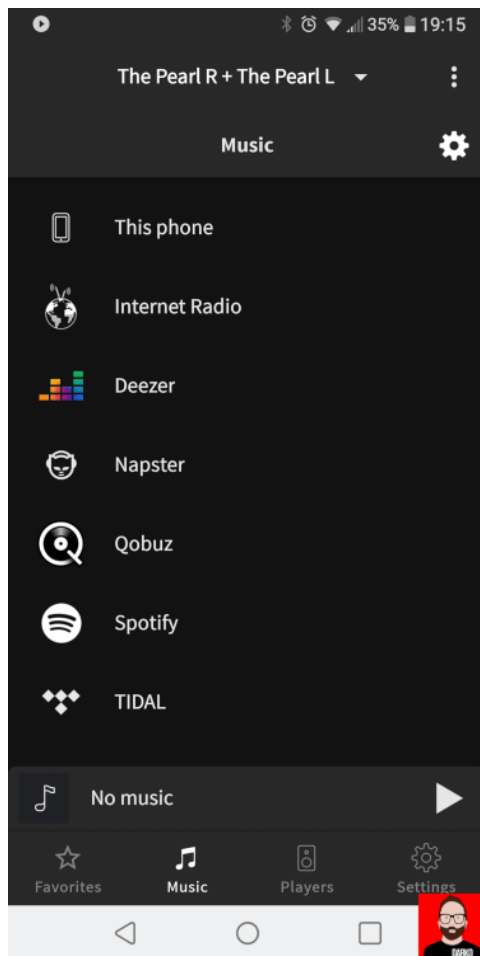
The Cabasse StreamCONTROL app

Available in both iOS and Android, StreamCONTROL provides Tidal, Qobuz, Deezer, Spotify Connect and Napster, plus Internet Radio. Tidal Connect is due shortly. Apple Airplay 2 was recently added. Music can be played from USB storage plugged into the Pearl.

Chromecast is absent, but Roon Tested is imminent according to Cabasse, noting that it's not there until it's there. When it lands, the Pearl will work with Roon but it won't have Roon Ready network streaming integration, which I'm told is not on this speaker's development roadmap.

The Pearl is UPNP / DLNA capable though, meaning apps like BubbleUPNP can be used to access music on your network. I tried this and it worked well apart from not being gapless (Tidal, Qobuz and Spotify Connect through StreamCONTROL all played gaplessly).





StreamCONTROL itself is up there with the better control apps. No, it's not as good as Roon. Yes it is straightforward and easy to navigate. Pleasing to the eye as well, particularly in landscape mode on a tablet. A personal gripe is Tidal only listing favourite albums by name, I need date-added. Tidal Connect will solve that problem though.

As well as StreamCONTROL there's a stylish puck-type remote control. It looks great, volume being adjusted by rotating the outer ring. In use, it's laggy, apparently caused by its Bluetooth Low Energy connection entering standby to conserve power. I found myself using the app in preference to the supplied remote.

Finally, voice control should be mentioned – both Google and Alexa work with StreamCONTROL. Useful for casual listening, no more. You may feel differently.

Overall everything is nicely thought out and works well. The only quirks are the gentle clicks as the speakers come out of standby and sync. Likewise, when music stops – one speaker first, then the next. No big thing when you get used to it.

Setup, DSP, operation

The initial network setup is simple, after that it's automatic. Handily, the Pearls tell you (literally) when the connection is in progress and when it has been completed. DSP setup is more complex. Varying the parameters is easy, getting the right balance less so. Much like setting up a subwoofer.

First up is Auto Calibration, which isn't really optional if you want to get the best from your Pearls. Hitting 'Go' in the app initiates four tone-sweeps. The software then analyses the results and adjusts the frequency response accordingly. Around 30 seconds for each speaker, so easy to re-do it when experimenting with their position. Android users may get a message saying the process has failed – ignore it, it's a minor bug that Cabasse says should be fixed soon.

Audio Spectrum is a tonal balance setting akin to Quad's Tilt control of old (resurrected in its Artera range) that adjusts both ends of the frequency spectrum

simultaneously – bass up & treble down, or vice versa. StreamCONTROL offers five options with ‘Neutral Tone (HiFi Mode)’ the obvious choice. ‘High Tone’ was also useful, adding some sparkle whilst cutting bass. The other options dulled the sound too much.

Finally, there’s Dynamic Fidelity Enhancer (DFE), a loudness control that boosts bass and treble at low volumes. Its sophistication is in adjusting sound in real-time based on what’s happening in your room. You can also specify the threshold at which it kicks in. All very clever but I wanted less (not more) bass so I ran the Pearl without DFE.

Other settings include varying latency on individual inputs to aid AV integration, tweaking the gain on the analogue input and so on. An additional setting to account for the listening position relative to the back wall is also on the development roadmap. The Pearls are nothing if not flexible. Not at the expense of usability though, I rarely had need of the manual – a tick in Cabasse’s favour.

Listening

Mine focussed on three scenarios. First a single Pearl on a coffee table, 40 cm out from the wall. Then two Pearls in stereo on the same table, a metre apart. Then full-on audiophile mode: two Pearls on their stands, positioned to optimise sonics.

Tidal & Qobuz via StreamCONTROL provided the music. A Garrard 401 turntable also tested the analogue inputs (to clarify, the Pearls don't have a phono stage).

Solo Pearl

A single Pearl sounds big and dynamic, the bass digging way deeper than most lifestyle products. I review wireless speakers for another publication and in ten years nothing has asserted its presence quite like the Pearl. Beth Hart's fabulous new *Tribute to Led Zeppelin* just powered from the speaker for example.

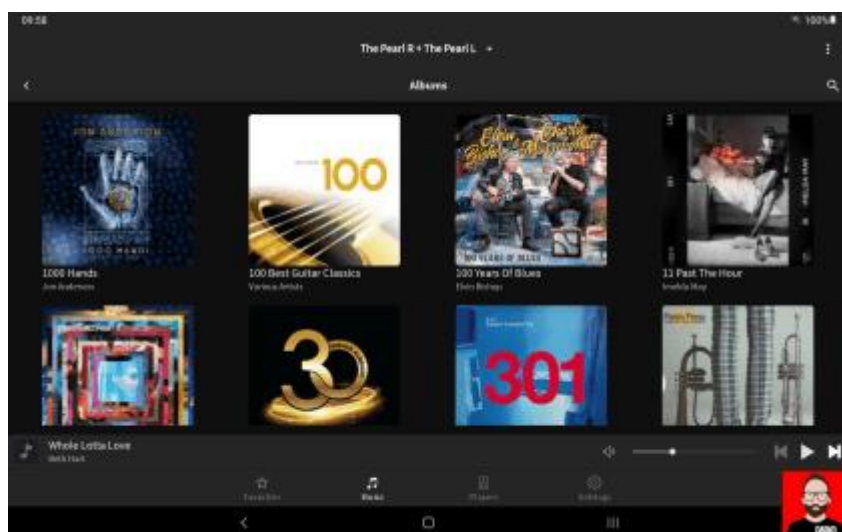
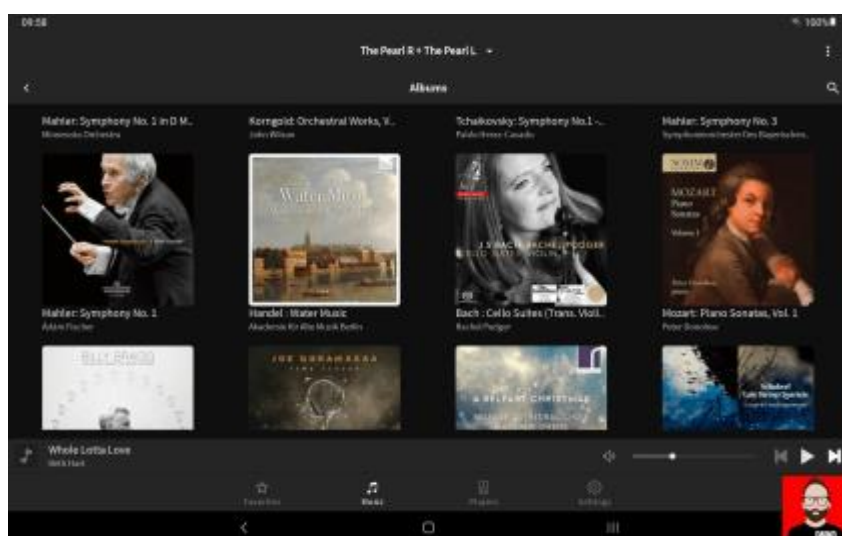
True, the sound is weighted below the waist. And whilst copious, the bass is a bit loose. But ploughing through track after track on the Pearl I'm increasingly sold on its abilities, progressively drawn into the broader sweep of the music, my audiophile sensibilities parked. Which surprises me. I like that sort of surprise.

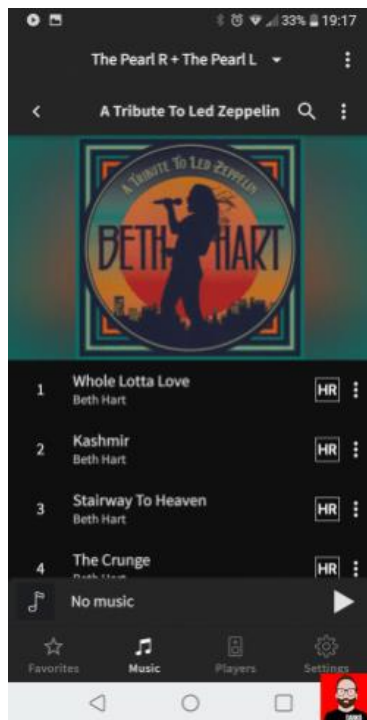
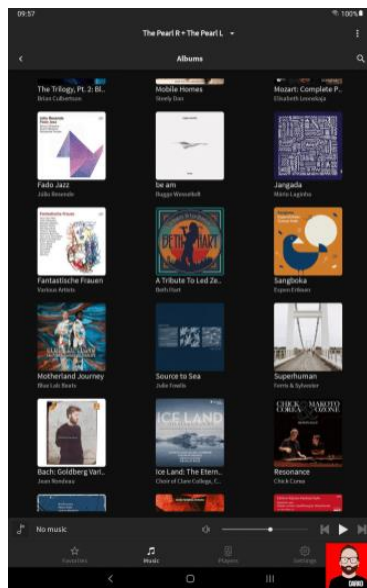
Tabletop stereo pair

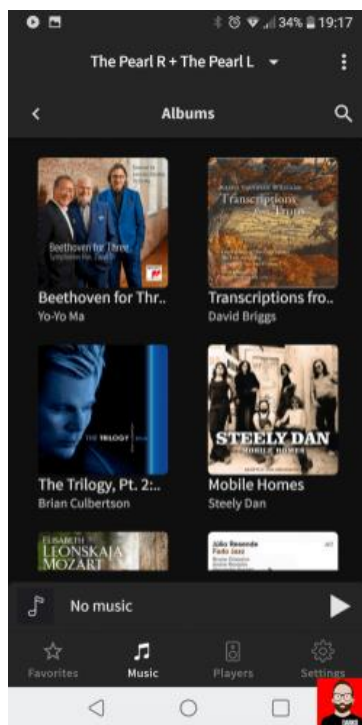
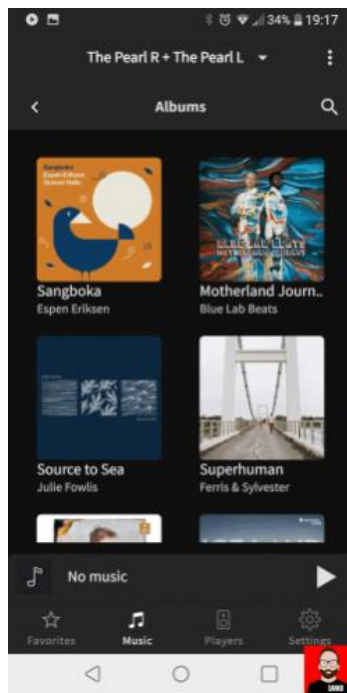
In goes a second Pearl and after a brief pause for Auto Calibration we're up and running. Immediately the bass makes itself known again, giving a rich tonality that's slightly over-cooked. I switch to classical guitar (Manuel Barrueco, *The Köln Concert*) to assess the sound of music without low bass. Only to find the sound still isn't quite right. A basic spectrum analyser shows two distinct spikes at 97Hz and 127Hz, which tally with specific notes on the guitar. Clearly, it's not low bass that's the issue. Cue much fiddling with the DSP settings and insertion of Isoacoustics Aperta stands. Which all helps, even if the

Pearl / Aperta combination looks less than chic. I never quite vanquish the resonances though. Maybe my room – or the supporting table – is the problem.

Elsewhere, the Pearl's top end isn't overly extended. Not a bad thing per se. The lovely AudioQuest NightHawk Carbon headphones I use are similarly voiced. It just gives a slightly darker tonal quality. Lightness and air are not words you'd use here. Plenty of detail comes through though. And the Pearl's soundstage is gratifyingly large, the sense of acoustic space palpable. Dynamics are also strong.







Stereo pair, on stands

Time for the Pearls to give their best: bolted to their stands and away from the rear wall. I start 60cm out – where most speakers sound best – and the Pearls up their game significantly. The bass is much tighter, nearly ideal now. Only a slightly rough treble when playing loud undermines things (“Enter Sandman” is even harsher than normal).

I move the Pearls further out – 100cm out – and angle them to cross over just in front of the listening position. Bingo. Bass is really tight and extended, with considerable weight. The top end is also slightly sweeter.

I now appreciate the huge soundstage the Pearls present, surely their strongest calling card. Dynamics are also forceful, and there's considerable drive. Think big, bold speakers; this isn't a sound for grandma. Non-audiophiles will be hugely impressed.

Durufle's *Mass for Choir and Organ* on Signum Classics showcases a cavernous acoustic together with real heft from the organ. Positively majestic. "Drop Drop Slow Tears" from Voces8 – beautiful acapella singing – again shows the Pearl's soundstage prowess. A direct rather than refined treble is also apparent – an observation, not a criticism.

Gerald Albright's "Sooki Sooki" slams out of the speakers, bringing to mind the Line Magnetic 845i amplifier whose dynamics I revelled in. Pat Metheny's solo guitar on "Alfie" (*What's It All About Then*) is vibrant. I normally overdose on the intricacy of the detail it presents. On "Talk To Your Daughter" from Hans Theessink and Terry Evans it's the rhythmic drive that comes across most, not their telepathic interplay.

Do you get the picture? The Pearls are direct rather than refined, their sound propulsive and vigorous, with *substantial* bass for their size. They're not neutral, they can be irrepressible. They're also FUN.

Conclusions

The Pearls are distinctive speakers whose looks prompt debate. But you've probably already decided on that and you're still reading, so it's not a showstopper. Visually they suit larger rooms, in my space the look dominated. That they worked for me sonically is probably down to my room's high ceilings. Cabasse recommends rooms of 35m² or more.

We could argue for days whether or not the Pearls are audiophile speakers – and what's in a label – but they are good. They don't major on refinement, air or delicacy. Theirs is an energetic sound that grabs your attention and encourages you to play track after track.

I'm reminded of French rugby player Mathieu Bastareaud. Nuance doesn't really factor into his style of play. Why sidestep other players when you have 120kg of weight behind you? Just go directly from A to B, running through people as needed; and for fun. Big and bold. I sense he'd have an affinity with the Pearls.

Overall, the Cabasse Pearl combines form and function – considerable lifestyle credentials married to very creditable sound. They aren't for everyone but that's part of their appeal. Give them a spin if you want something different.

Further information: [Cabasse](#)