



Canton

CD 300 Home Theater Speaker System

Normally, speakers don't jazz me out of the box — I gotta hear them first. But Canton's CD 300 speaker system, which combines technology from the company's high-end Karat series with the sleek design of its smaller CD 100 model, primed the adrenaline pump even before I connected the speakers to my receiver. Just lifting the slender, shiny enclosures from the cartons gave me a sensory thrill. The unusually smooth, flawless, brushed-aluminum finish pleased both my fingers and eyes, and the heft made it clear that these weren't just thin-skinned hollow cylinders.

The system borrows its name from the CD 300 front towers, which at almost 4

feet tall are twice as long as the three CD 360 F speakers used for the center and surround channels. The CD 360 Fs can be oriented either vertically or horizontally and, if wall-mounted, can even be used for all three front positions with a flat-panel TV. Deep-bass duties were covered by Canton's top-of-the-line ASD 250 SC subwoofer.

SETUP While there is no absolute correlation between attention to detail and superior sonics, these German-made speakers spoke volumes about the care taken in their manufacture. The front towers arrive wrapped in fabric, which comes in handy to remove the inevitable smudges and fingerprints. The mating between each tower and its base — a large, heavy disc — is elegantly simple and secure, requiring only three screws. Once

assembled, the base and speaker appear to be a single unit and will stand securely on any surface. The base has grooves for routing speaker wire, and all the speakers have gold-plated screw-clamp terminals.

Each CD 360 F speaker comes with wall-mounting hardware that fits integral brackets on its back panel, but for this review I placed the surrounds on a shelf above and slightly to the rear of the listening position. The center speaker rested horizontally on a stand immediately below the screen of my 42-inch Toshiba rear-projection TV, and the towers were initially placed about 8 inches to the left and right of the screen.

Canton calls the driver layout in both the towers and center/surrounds a "two-and-a-half-way" system. Each cabinet contains four 4-inch aluminum-cone drivers and an aluminum-manganese dome tweeter. The tweeter's dome and voice coil are manufactured as a single unit rather than being glued together, which is said to make the moving mass stiffer, lighter, and better at dissipating heat. Two of the cones reproduce only bass, while the other two share midrange and bass duties. Canton claims this array provides output equivalent to an 8-inch driver in a much narrower cabinet. The main difference between the CD 300 towers and the CD 360 F center/surrounds besides length (the drivers are identical) is that the towers are ported while the others are sealed.

The downward-firing subwoofer offers both line- and speaker-level inputs as well as a two-position phase switch and crossover-frequency and level controls. I used the line-level subwoofer output from my Denon receiver, bypassing the sub's crossover.

MOVIE PERFORMANCE I journeyed back to the Middle Ages to test the 21st-century Canton system with a recent DVD of *The Name of the Rose*, the movie based on Umberto Eco's novel of medieval skulldug-



PLUS

Gorgeous styling and build quality.
Plays at very high volumes.
Authoritative sound with ample bass.

MINUS

Lacks some high-end openness.
Requires precise placement
for best imaging.
Pricey.

gery and philosophical ruminations. Director Jean-Jacques Annaud matches the dim, deliberately shadowy images with a growling soundtrack — which was remixed for Dolby Digital 5.1 — featuring a musical score that rises and falls in deep, primal, low-frequency waves.

The Canton system faithfully reproduced the sounds of heavy cartwheels rolling, large chains coiling and uncoiling, beefy men ponderously walking, and huge wooden doors closing with a thud. Bass-heavy sounds came across firmly, from the thunderous opening of the monastery gates to the climactic roaring inferno as the library burned. The hammering of the blacksmith in the courtyard and the rattling-clanking of the condemned prisoners' chains as they stumbled toward the stakes sounded grimly realistic.

Indeed, the CD 300 system, which can play at very high volumes, handled the

soundtrack with as much authority as Sean Connery's William of Baskerville character displays in solving the mystery. Reverberation and echoes accompanied much of the dialogue, yet the speakers clearly conveyed every word, including the barely comprehensible mix of languages used by the crazed monk Salvatore. Most impressive were the scenes where the monks assembled to sing Gregorian chants. The fullness and depth turned my home theater into a cathedral.

I went from the sublime to the ridiculous with a blast from the folk-music sendup *A Mighty Wind*. The Canton system lacked the treble sparkle I often notice with this kind of material. The banjo sounded clean and present, but not briskly crisp. In my 15 x 24-foot room, the upper bass was also mildly pronounced, but not enough to detract from my enjoyment.

While the Canton system reproduced all the ambience recorded on the soundtracks, in my room I heard the sound as coming from individual speakers rather than a wide, seamless sound field. Moving the front L/R speakers a bit further apart and angling them slightly toward the listening position helped spread the sound.

MUSIC PERFORMANCE For pure audio, I returned to the *Name of the Rose* era with Philip Pickett conducting the New London Consort in the original *Carmina Burana*, not Carl Orff's modern setting. The Canton system brought me back to many an en-

fast facts

	CD 300 (left/right front)	CD 360 F (center/surround)	ASD 250 SC (subwoofer)
TWEETER	1-inch dome	1-inch dome	—
MIDRANGE	two 4-inch cones	two 4-inch cones	—
WOOFER	two 4-inch cones	two 4-inch cones	10-inch cone
ENCLOSURE	ported	sealed	ported
POWER	—	—	80 watts
INPUTS, OUTPUTS, AND CONTROLS	gold-plated screw-clamp terminals	gold-plated screw-clamp terminals	line- and speaker-level inputs; phase switch; crossover and level knobs
DIMENSIONS (WxHxD) AND WEIGHT	4¾ x 47¼ x 6¾ inches, 27½ pounds	23⅝ x 4¾ x 4 inches, 17¾ pounds	11⅝ x 17⅞ x 18½ inches, 37½ pounds
FINISH	brushed aluminum	brushed aluminum	silver vinyl, beech veneer with silver lacquer top, or cherry veneer with graphite top
PRICE Total: \$5,049	\$2,000 a pair	\$800 each	\$649

MANUFACTURER Canton, cantonusa.com, 612-706-9250



The Canton speakers handled the soundtrack of *The Name of the Rose* with the same authority Sean Connery's William of Baskerville character displays in solving the mystery.

joyable Sunday listening to medieval music at the Cloisters museum in New York City. This stereo recording filled the apse of my listening room.

For multichannel music I spun the Super Audio CD of James Taylor's *Hourglass*. This mellow recording, with Taylor's mellifluous voice and Yo-Yo Ma's even sweet-

er cello, poured smoothly from the Cantons. I could sense the tension on the drumheads as they reported from the speakers with notable tightness. Frank Filipetti's six-channel mix — with Taylor's voice in the center, the main instruments in the left and right front channels, some harmonies and percussion in the surrounds, and deep bass in the subwoofer — was well served by this system. What I missed most was an overall feeling of airiness and openness.

BOTTOM LINE While I have minor quibbles about tonal balances and airiness, overall

these speakers beg you to bring it on. They can transport you smoothly from 13th-century instruments to 21st-century pop while doing justice to both — and provide the visceral effects of whatever movie you choose. If you like your sound larger than life, this Canton system aims to please. And it looks stunning. **SW**

in the lab

Sensitivity (SPL at 1 meter with 2.8 volts of pink-noise input)

front left/right.....	89 dB
center/surround.....	89 dB

Impedance (minimum/nominal)

front left/right.....	3.6/6 ohms
center/surround.....	4.7/6 ohms

Bass limits (lowest frequency and maximum SPL with limit of 10% distortion at 2 meters in a large room)

front left/right.....	40 Hz at 88 dB
center/surround.....	80 Hz at 85 dB SPL
subwoofer.....	32 Hz at 90 dB SPL

100 dB average SPL from 32 to 62 Hz
110.6 dB maximum SPL at 62 Hz
bandwidth uniformity 90%

All of the curves in the frequency-response graph are weighted to reflect how sound arrives at a listener's ears with normal speaker placement. The CD 300 tower exhibited a relatively mild floor bounce, with some midband roughness and tightly controlled horizontal directivity. The tweeter resonance near 20 kHz is also evident in the response of the CD 360 F, which shows a mild elevation centered at 2.5 kHz and significant roughness at higher frequencies. Placed horizontally for the center-channel measurements, the CD 360 F exhibited significant lobing beginning at 15° off-axis that became much worse as the microphone moved farther off. Our averaging techniques tend to downplay such lobing in the horizontal plane. Placed vertically for the surround measurements, the CD 360 F had well-controlled directivity, rolling off only the extreme high frequencies at wider angles.

The ASD 250 SC subwoofer's bass limits were measured with it set to maximum bandwidth and placed in the optimal corner of a 7,500-cubic-foot room. In a smaller room users

can expect 2 to 3 Hz deeper extension and up to 3 dB higher sound-pressure level (SPL). There was usable output up to 165 Hz within -6 dB. This sub had impressive output at 62 Hz, but its output SPL fell 15 dB per octave below that. At the 12:00 position on the crossover dial, the turnover frequency measured 85 Hz, and at the lower end, marked 80 Hz, it measured 70 Hz.

— Tom Nousaine

