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Network **18**

Kamen Dobrev, Co-founder & Designer Everything But The Box



Imagine speaker designs right out of a sci-fi movie and very few would guess that we are talking about a speaker company based in Bulgaria. Not much is available about founder and designer, Kamen Dobrev, but take one look at some EBTB designs in the following pages and you will get a sense of the giant behind these brilliantly designed speakers. Read on...

Based in Bulgaria, the origins of Everything But The Box (EBTB) go back to the end of 1991, when Kamen Dobrev and Dobromir Dobrov founded a company, Shark Art that focussed on professional audio distribution and system integration. By 2003, Shark Art had taken the avatar of EBTB. As per the company website, the partners initially set up their company workshop in an office basement where they made their first attempts at manufacturing AV products. It was when they presented their

products at Frankfurt's Pro Light and Sound that they broke new ground in speaker design and could develop their distribution network. Eventually, they would go on to shift their factory five times in as many years. Today the EBTB factory is based in Varna. According to the company, it was when they worked with some famous studio monitor manufacturers that they realised the monitors were "full of compromises". Thus they decided to "try their own designs with a simple goal—"to follow the best shapes from acoustical point of view, to make them beautiful and with the best possible build quality."

During the early years, Shark Art was led by Kamen Dobrev who stated, "We did serious preparation including an in-depth study into acoustic theory and, as a first step, we bought a full LinearX system for projection and analysis and started the project." According to EBTB, during those times, it was not easy to make something different from the usual box. Thus they used a relatively simple, trapezoidal enclosure for the first prototypes.

When the prototypes produced good results, they decided to invest in some basic machinery, moulds and started building the first Terra prototypes. By the end of 2001, the Terra was ready for tests and several pairs were sent to some overseas partners. The results were positive and by 2002 the company was ready with their first loudspeakers. It was at this point that they established a new venture as a separate company—leading to the genesis of Everything But The Box as we now know it.



DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

For all their products, EBTB applies the thumb rule—form follows the function. Their loudspeaker designs are "not created because they will look beautiful, but because in this way they will sound as good as possible." According to the company, some of the parts are made on CNC machines while they still use very old technologies for others. All the finishing operations, including the painting and polishing, are executed by hand. They also make wide use of stainless steel, leather, brass, aluminium and onyx.

WHAT AV MAX SAYS

Terra II/Subterranean Model 2 Bookshelf Speakers & Sub (Reviewed July 2011)

The Terra II is structured uniquely where the front baffle is lobe-shaped from the rear. The lobe also caters to the mid-bass section of the speaker while it houses the mid-bass driver and a small extension in the bass reflex port. The front baffle is slightly inclined, which makes the speaker seem as if they are staring at you with eyes wide open. The subwoofer is a massive globe that is clad in a classy lacquer finish.

There are two options for the subwoofer with the Model 1 coming with a single 200W class D amplifier and Model 2 coming with two additional Class D amps with 180W power each. The Model 2 with the Terra II's globe is made of MDF and is approximately 0.39" thick and houses a massive 12" driver. The setup boasts of unique looks and innovative technical features.

Pluto F, Pluto & SubTerra HT Speaker Package (Reviewed February 2012)

The bookshelf speakers come in two pieces—the driver unit and a leather covered pad that's concaved to efficiently accommodate the spherical speakers. What's incredible about this design is that you can change the tilt angle of the speaker to a point where the tweeter and the mid-bass drivers are at the same height.

What takes the cake is that the SubTerra is shaped exactly like a globe on an aluminium

Trivia

- First international appearance was at the Frankfurt Pro Sound and Light in 2004.
- Awards: Audio Excellence Award for Terra II (2007 Japan), Best Product for Terra II (2010 Poland)

plate that prevents it from rolling around the floor. There are hints of silver aluminium lining the widest perimeter of the globe like it was Saturn's disc. The speakers have been designed to work as single pairs with one another or as a 5.1 speaker setup, in which case, their frequency response and power handling has been matched to each other or as a 5.1 speaker setup. As exquisite as these speakers look, you'll get a 5.1 soundstage that you'll be proud of and their key feature is their synergy with one another and they even look like they were a match made in heaven.

Venus F Floorstanders (Reviewed April 2012)

The speakers are simply extraordinary when it comes to



looks, design and form and resemble egg shells, which makes them stand out from the rest of the crowd. Venus F's powerful and full-bodied sound can be attributed to its drivers and its cabinet design. The 1" soft dome tweeter that handles all the crisp high frequencies up to 25kHz is backed by a 5" Kevlar driver. The mid-bass Kevlar driver handles audio content right down till 48Hz.

The Venus F doesn't have much in terms of specifications to boast of as the drivers and its capsule are housed on a long, slender neck. Also, there are not too many drivers here; just one for the mid-range and bass and the other for the high frequencies. This does not mean that the designers had not considered these issues. The solution is ingenious and a good example of efficient utilisation of a speaker's form factor. What happens with the Venus F is that the hollow space of the enclosure increases the internal volume of the entire speaker. This helps the speakers to deliver all the mighty and gut-wrenching, low-end energy without any hiccups. They dazzle you and if you go beyond their looks, their sonic footprint does the same thing.

Luna Bookshelf Speakers (Reviewed August 2012)

The swollen cavity that's been given to each of the two drivers makes the entire speaker look like a stocky robot. If you were to look at this pair from the side, you'll find that the mid/bass driver's cavity goes on to form the actual cabinet, which in itself is a round belly of metal. The black gloss pair we got looked fantastic sitting on the black iron stands of our studio.

Their sound is authoritative and controlled, when it comes to precision that is. If you're just talking about the frequency range, the lows could have gone a little deeper and the highs a little blunter. But their sheer aluminium weight can be heard in every note they vibrate out, which is a fantastic characteristic to possess. Here's to the speaker that's welcoming the age of artificial intelligence by standing at the forefront of futuristic speaker design.

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