



Pole position

David Vivian has to move a few things around to accommodate this giant standmount, but it's well worth the effort



A 25mm magnesium dome compression tweeter sits in the throat of a 200mm multi-fibre mid/bass driver. This arrangement forms the coaxial Isoflare unit. The driver's moving parts are built around a rigid cast aluminium chassis, which is good for damping out unwanted vibration and resonance, while the vented rear chamber in the centrally mounted tweeter's Neodymium magnet is said to place low-frequency resonance well below the crossover region. Addressing potential distortion higher up the frequency range is the tweeter's rigid magnesium dome, which is claimed to push the initial break-up mode well beyond audibility.

As well as looking neat, some advantages include much more precise time alignment between the drivers and more even dispersion, widening the listening sweet spot without squandering stereo focus and precision. Energy is radiated 'isotropically' with constant directivity, consistent with the flared surface of the main driver's multi-fibre cone. The targeted ideal outcome is that sound is produced as if emanating from a single point in space. As with the Fyne FS02SP floorstander (HFC 472), the main

It conjures scale and dynamic freedom that'd be remarkable from a floorstander

driver's distinctively contoured Pyrene rubber surround aims to nullify unwanted mechanical energy in the cone, leading to a more cleanly detailed delivery.

The F1-8's curved cabinet is an exceptional thing. Made from a composite of hardwoods and dressed in a classy walnut veneer with a burr walnut inlay running from front to rear, a deep and incredibly smooth high-gloss varnish seals the deal. The fillet of soft leather garlanding the driver is an extra feel-good touch. At the base, the substantial machined aluminium sandwich plinth houses Fyne's Bass-Trax system, which

panel is called the Presence Control and let's you adjust output in the 2.5k Hz – 5kHz 'presence' region – useful for tailoring the frequency response to your room. For my listening room the '0' flat setting produces best results. Fyne's all-metal £1,000 FS8 stand doesn't just look the part, it bolts the speaker to its top plate, making a seriously stable – and aesthetically hamonised – structure.

Sound quality

When it comes to speakers, I suppose the holy grail is to have your cake and eat it. There are two possibilities. One is a large, broad bandwidth floorstander with the agility, focus and coherence of a trawly built, monitor-class standmount. Not an easy thing. The other is a meticulously tuned standmount with the scale, authority, dynamic reach and a strong hint of the former's bass extension. No easier. But the F1-8 gets as close to pulling it off as any standmount I've heard. Sensitivity of 91dB and a nominal 80hm impedance suggest an easy drive, but the F1-8 naturally cries out for a quality system. Assembling the best supporting cast at my disposal, digital feeds are handled by Chord Electronics' Hugo TT2 DAC (HFC 468) while amplification duties are shared between Hegel's Class A/B H120 (HFC 460) and Primare's Class D D25 Pista (HFC 461) integrated



It's probably fair to say that, apart from the malleable £3,000 F1-5, there's nothing quite like the F1-8. However, worthy contenders that could grace your shelves include KEF's £5,000 Reference 1/HFC 414), Audiovector's £4,800 RI Arreté and the £6,000 Wilson Genesis Precision Pt.0. All aesthetic performance with huge musical insight, but only the KEF gets close to matching the Fyne's floorstander-like largesse and dynamic freedom.

Bi-wiring and a terminal to ground the driver chassis feature around the back

The filler of soft leather garlanding the driver is an extra feel-good touch

live performances, *Pley*, the grand piano simply sounds real with thrilling attack, harmonic colour and texture and lower octave power – a quite stunning achievement for a standmount, even one as round as the F1-8. It doesn't end there. Fire up the LSO playing *Mahler 5*, and the hundreds of climaxes never sound constrained, but are delivered with a compelling sense of might and impetus. The speaker's outstanding low-frequency drops play a part here. The bass is deep and weighty with a sumptuous quality missing from most standmount rivals. Yet it's also remarkably spry and supple, incapable of dragging a beat anywhere it's in the high treble, which isn't quite as silky and airy as the best circa-£6k standmounts (those equipped with a ribbon tweeter). That said, the upper octaves are transparent enough to give instruments a convincing leading-edge incisiveness and realistic timbral sheen.



amps. Nor high-end enough to require oxygen, but a great fit as it transpires. What's clear from the start, music has that 'natural fibre' that breathes quality – nothing seems contrived or dialled-up to impress. The speaker conjures scale and dynamic freedom that would be remarkable in a strapping tower, but also incorporates an ability to unearth detail right down to the noise floor and project solid, full-blooded images into the room with almost tangible dimensionality and exciting precision. Oh Chik Corea's compilation of jazz/classical

I'm reminded of those set-flim DVD extras that show how the CGI special effects are created from initial wire renderings that establish the structure and action to the final layers that complete the colour palette, surface textures, lighting and shadows. Listening to the F1-8 after smaller standmounts – however sonically gifted – is like going from a prior rendering to that final, as seen on the big screen, result. Result indeed.

Conclusion

So there it is, size really does matter – the more so, it seems, if you're a standmount. Space saving isn't an option in this case. Matched to its all-but-essential dedicated stand, the F1-8 has a footprint and height every bit the equal of a large floorstander, and you'd better love the look because it isn't going to melt into the background. But if you hanker after the best of both worlds – one design that successfully merges the specific strengths of top-drawer standmounts and floorstanders – then you really should try to hear Fyne's flagship standmount. It isn't perfect, but it is dynamic, dextrous and deeply satisfying with all types of music.

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT Like Superb attempt sound quality, solid build for money and value. **PLUS:** Size and appearance might be a problem for some. **MINUS:** If your dream floorstander is a change your mind.



on might well wonder why the F1-8 speaker exists. There is, after all, the £3,000 F1-5 which represents such a natural sweet spot for Fyne's best-gains standmount, it would be easy to accuse the technically identical but considerably larger and bulkier F1-8 of gratuitous overkill.

Of course, Fyne Audio had already revealed the technical content of its top drawer with its F1-10 and F1-12 floorstanding flagships, the latter costing a properly grown-up £28,000. The good news is that the F1 message is the same across the range. For Fyne the line incorporates the best versions of its patented tech, including Isoflare point source drivers, twin cavity reflex loading and Bass-Trax Traxxix profile LP diffuser system, heavyweight machined aluminium plinth and an extensively braced, high-density pressed birch plywood cabinet.

presence – perhaps the better to admire the fabulous standard of build and the only finish on offer, a gorgeous mélange of walnut, burr walnut and leather. The visible and tactile luxury stands comparison with high-end trials costing multiples of its £6,000 price tag.

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DETAILS
PRODUCT Fyne Audio F1-8
ORIGIN Scotland
TYPE 2-way standmount loudspeaker
WEIGHT 15.2kg (34lb)
DIMENSIONS (WxHxD) 280 x 470 x 441mm
FEATURES
 • 25mm magnesium dome tweeter
 • 200mm multi-fibre mid/bassdriver
 • Quoted sensitivity: 91dB/W/m (90hm)
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