

WHAT HI★FI?

ROUND-UP

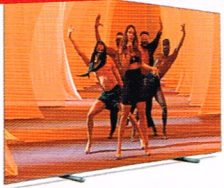
AMAZING AMPS!

Nine of the best stereo amplifiers you can buy for less than a grand

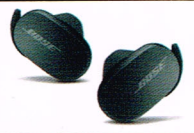
£250 TO £950



REVIEWED



Philips 65in OLED TV



Brilliant Bose earbuds



Fyne Audio's thrilling F1-8 speakers



ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEMS

Arcam, Linn, NAD and Naim do battle in a just-add-speakers sonic showdown



FUTURE
FEBRUARY 2021 PRINTED IN THE UK £5.20
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“They have the insight to let us home in on any instrumental strand, but prefer us to look at the bigger picture”

WHAT HI-FI?

SOUND



COMPATIBILITY



BUILD



FOR

- Dynamic and exciting listen
- Superb rhythm, drive and punch
- Works well across all volume levels
- Excellent build and finish

AGAINST

- Needs careful system matching

VERDICT

Fyne's F1-8 deliver a terrific combination of dynamic punch, rhythmic precision and insight. They're easily one of the class leaders

Read **Fyne Audio's** website and you'll come across terms such as IsoFlare, FyneFlute and BassTrax. It's easy to dismiss these things as marketing bluster, but take a look and you'll find real substance in the engineering.

Fyne Audio may be a young company, formed in 2017, but having established a strong foothold in the budget to mid-priced arenas, it's now taking aim at more premium sectors.

The F1-8s standmounters alongside the smaller F1-5s (£2999) are part of this process, and complement the established towers in the company's high-end F1 series. These products represent the very best the brand can do, and as such, pack in a full dose of its technologies.

The two-way F1-8s use a coaxial driver array that puts the 25mm magnesium-dome compression tweeter at the centre of the 20cm multi-fibre mid/bass driver. This dual-driver design is what the company calls IsoFlare. This kind of arrangement has all sorts of advantages over conventional configurations, from even dispersion to allowing a degree of time alignment between the two drivers so that the sound from both reaches the listener at exactly the same time. This bodes well for focus and precision.

Look carefully at the larger driver and you'll see that its rubber surround has notches all the way around it rather than being smooth. Called FyneFlute, the idea is to terminate unwanted mechanical energy in the cone more effectively, leading to cleaner, more detailed results.

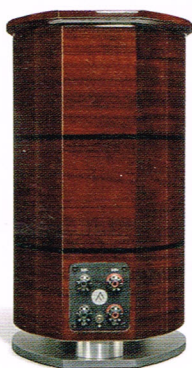
The two drivers are linked with a carefully calibrated crossover, cryogenically treated to remove internal stresses in the components, which leads to a better performance.

Sensitivity is relatively generous at 91dB/W/m and nominal impedance is claimed to be 8 ohms, so you should get decent volume with most price-compatible amps.

FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP

The curved speaker cabinet is lovely. It's built of a composite ply (made of various hardwoods) and covered in a beautiful walnut veneer with a burr walnut inlay on the front panel, which extends to the top panel. The whole lot is finished in a sumptuously deep high-gloss varnish. The cylindrical section around the driver array is covered in high-quality soft leather. Add it all together and you have a pair of speakers that look as luxurious and expensive as the price point demands. The distinctive appearance might not suit everyone but there's no denying the quality of build and attention to detail evident in these hand-finished cabinets.

You'll find an aluminium plinth at the base of the cabinet. This is home to the BassTrax cone diffuser. The idea is that the speaker's downward-facing port fires at this diffuser, spreading the sound out 360 degrees into the room. It's claimed to make the speakers less fussy about placement - and we don't have an issue with positioning in our test room.



The quality of sound from any standmounter is heavily reliant on its support. Fyne Audio is taking no chances here and offers a dedicated stand that, with a change of top plate, also works with the smaller F1-5s too. The FS8 Stands are pretty costly at £999 but match the speakers well, physically and visually. They're a good bet, but if that's your budget, there's plenty of choice, so it's worth experimenting.

The F1-8s may be just 47cm tall, but they still deliver a properly weighty and authoritative bass. In our room they prefer to be in free space with a slight angle towards the listening position to firm up the stereo image.

EXUBERANT AGILITY

We start with Neneh Cherry's *Broken Politics* and love the F1-8's exuberance. They have a direct and taut sound that grabs the listener's attention from the off. Basslines are surprisingly powerful, but remain agile and tuneful with it. These speakers have no difficulty showing differences in texture between differing low-frequency sounds, and can track multiple bass strands with ease.

Cherry's voice is well projected and clear. The F1-8s are excellent at communicating the emotion in her vocals and can convey subtle shifts in intensity and phrasing wonderfully. There's never any doubt as to the emotion she's trying to convey.

We're impressed with the cohesion of the presentation. Every sound has a place and contributes towards our musical enjoyment. These speakers are impressively rhythmic too and, given appropriate music, have a sense of drive that few rivals get close to. If you're looking for cold-blooded analysis tools, these aren't the ones. Simply put, the F1-8s promote entertainment above examination.

We switch to Dvořák's *New World Symphony* and the Fynes respond with impressive scale and the kind of wide-ranging dynamics that are rare for a product of this type. In part, it's the benefit of using a larger mid/bass driver than most of the competition. Their sound is suitably dramatic, yet has a lovely sense of control and composure.

They have the insight to let us home in on any particular instrumental strand, but would prefer us to look at the bigger picture and enjoy the majesty of this symphonic work.

By absolute standards, the highest frequencies aren't the purest sounding, but take a bit of care over system matching and there shouldn't be an issue. It's worth noting that rivals that better the Fynes in high-frequency refinement can't match the F1-8's infectious energy, so the preference comes down to taste and partnering electronics.

Shifts in musical momentum are rendered superbly, while dynamic swings are punched out with enthusiasm. These speakers sound truly commanding when volume levels rise, but remain an entertaining listen at lower levels too. This is something to note if you listen late at night and don't want to disturb neighbours or others in the house.

We're impressed with the F1-8's stereo imaging. They have a wonderfully focused sound and deliver a wide and nicely layered soundstage. The stability is pleasing and doesn't start to waver, even when the recording becomes demanding.

These standmounters are excellent speakers. They prove an immensely entertaining listen, provided the recording and system are good enough. There's no shortage of strong rivals but in our opinion the F1-8s have little to fear.

TEMPTATIONS

Fyne Audio F1-8

■ Standmount speakers

■ £5999

■ ★★★★★



Images: Fyne



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