



Fyne Audio F500SP Standmount Speaker Review



Fyne Audio F500SP Standmount Speaker Review

The Fyne Audio F500SP is a wonderful balance of talents that makes for a speaker with very few vices that is extremely easy to partner up and live with. It's a fine all rounder.

What Is the Fyne F500SP?

The Fyne Audio F500SP is a two way standmount speaker that represents an evolution of the existing F500 standmount speaker that remains in production and part of the wider Fyne Audio range. The SP has some design refinements that we'll cover in due course but a key difference, one significant enough to feature in the title, is that the F500SP is made in the UK (SP stands for 'Special Production'), making it the most affordable speaker Fyne Audio makes in this way. I'll save you the bother of hunting this information down on the Fyne Audio website and let you know that the basic F500 is priced from £700 and that the F500SP climbs to an exactingly specific £1,299.98 although once again I stress, the two models are not the same so it's not a straight like for like.

Now, before we objectively look at the F500SP, I'm going to forestall any questions as to whether the country of manufacture matters to me. This is prompted in part by there being some decidedly odd attitudes among some people towards labelling things as 'UK made' (as type this, Twitter has decided that today's point of random debate is the labelling of a chicken; so you'll forgive me a degree of caution addressing this). I do not feel that you should be judged because you have elected to buy something made in the Far East; indeed a number of products I've given excellent scores to this year could not have been made at the price they are sold at any other way.



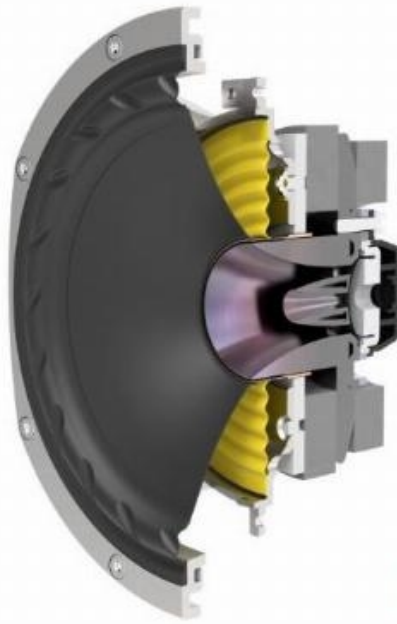
Simultaneously, since this is also being written at the same time as the COP26 summit, I feel there are both environmental and societal 'nudges' to buying a few things made more closely to where you live (and in this context, I would also describe the EU as also being geographically close). On a basic level it makes a degree of sense that reducing the costs of shipping product, while also paying people a reasonable wage that they'll hopefully spend within the same economy your yourself are also part of, would also feel uncontentious to me as well. With this laid out, and stated it is simply my position, not yours or that of AVForums, let's move onto discussing the actual speakers.

The Fyne is a clean and usefully timeless piece of design

In the relatively short time that they have been in existence, Fyne Audio has done a neat job of establishing a coherent design philosophy that helps you to look at something they make and go 'that's a Fyne.' This is centred around taking some ideas that key members of staff, who had previously been part of Tannoy (a company that doesn't so much have a design philosophy as it does an almost religious affection for certain acoustic principles) had, before proceeding to evolve them into something subtly but convincingly different again.

Key to what makes the F500SP tick is the driver array. This is a variation on the principles of the other UK production devices and differs from the one in the existing F500 by making use of two driver magnets rather than one. Then, in keeping with a few different speakers in the market, the Fyne combines two different drivers into a single array. The main unit is a 150mm mid bass driver that is made of a 'multi fibre' (unspecified type) and that features a very distinctive surround called FyneFlute that employs variable geometry to dissipate driver energy at the edge of the cone more effectively than a conventional surround.

At the centre of this driver is an aperture that houses one of the more distinctive tweeters available in a vaguely terrestrially priced speaker today. It is a 25mm compression type tweeter made of magnesium. What do we mean by 'compression type'? It means that the tweeter itself is buried in an aperture that the dome itself fills at one end. As this aperture widens, it allows energy to be more effectively



dissipated. The principle is widely used by JBL and (although they prefer Titanium) but both those companies build the tweeter into its own complete waveguide. Fyne sinks their tweeter into a relatively deep but narrow aperture but, by placing it inside the driver aperture, lets the midrange cone complete the mouth of the treble unit. At the same time the relationship between the two drivers benefits from them both being on axis with one another.

The quality of the veneering is absolutely superb

Where Fyne has altered this pattern is that this driver is ported via a downward firing, fixed boundary port that works against a metal base at the foot of the cabinet. This reduces the ability of the speaker to interact with the outside world. Some basic tests on the F500SP have confirmed that it is admirably unconcerned about how and where you place them. There is a cone shaped section on the inside of the plinth that serves to direct and shape the airflow rather than having the port simply hammer against the flat of the plinth.

The crossover of the F500SP also borrows components and thinking from the more ornate speakers (there's a logic to this beyond the pursuit of higher performance and points of differentiation as it also reduces the total number of parts required to build the complete set of speakers). This has a relatively low 1.7kHz crossover point that puts a fair amount of demand on the tweeter. Something it doesn't put a great deal of demand on is a partnering amp. The F500SP has a claimed sensitivity of 90dB/w and a baseline impedance of 8 ohms which makes it something that you could reasonably drive with ten watts if you wanted to. Fairly unusually, it also supports bi wiring and has its own earth terminal which is something you don't need right up to the moment where you absolutely do.

The axial driver array is a Fyne speciality

Another significant difference between the 'ordinary' F500 and the F500SP concerns the cabinet, both in how it is built and how it is finished. The SP is made from higher density fibreboard (again, as with the Kudos Cardea C10, there isn't an internationally recognised scale of board density as far as I know)



and this is damped with bonded acoustic fibre and polyether foam. The driver is attached to a horizontal bracing spar so it acts on the most rigid section of the cabinet. Compared to the supremely inert KEF LS50 Meta, the Fyne feels fractionally less dead but it still comes across as very solid indeed.

The cabinet is then given the option of a high gloss walnut veneer along with the gloss black and gloss white that are cost options on the basic F500. Interestingly, the last Fyne Audio speaker I tested was the odd but extremely charming F1-5 which, at £3,300 is considerably more than the F500SP. It may simply be a factor of the simpler cabinet shape and less fussy overall design but the 'cheaper' speaker honestly feels better finished than the more expensive one in this case. We can (and will) make a judgement on the sonic performance of the SP in due course but this is a design that looks and feels every penny of the asking price, regardless of the country of manufacture.

"At the centre of this driver is an aperture that houses one of the more distinctive tweeters available in a vaguely terrestrially priced speaker today"

How Was the F500SP Tested?

The Fyne Audio has done some running on the end of a Naim Supernait 3, Chord Electronics Qutest and iFi Zen Stream running as a Roon Endpoint and powered from an iFi Powerstation. It then moved over to the Cambridge Audio Edge A, Chord Electronics Hugo Mscaler and TT2 running from a SotM SMS 200 Neo running as a Roon Endpoint. Some additional testing took place with an LG 55B7 OLED TV and a Michell GyroDec, Vertere SG-PTA HB tonearm and Mystic cartridge via Cyrus Phono Signature phono stage. Material used has been FLAC, AIFF, DSD, Tidal, Qobuz, broadcast and on demand TV services as well as some vinyl.



Something that relates to the F500SP and Fyne as a whole is how quickly the company has moved from 'newcomer' to 'established' in the UK. Dealers I speak to simply state they are Fyne stockists; there's none of the partial self-justification that sometimes comes with describing a new arrival to the portfolio. Instead, Fyne is stocked because it offers a distinctive but capable range of products and the F500SP is a type standard of everything that the company gets right (and in fairness, a few things it's less assured about too).

The main one is a party piece that everything I've heard from the company with their coaxial driver arrangement can do. Put a little care and effort into positioning the SP and it does a fine disappearing trick. That's good but not truly remarkable; there's a fair few speaker brands who excel at this. What the Fyne does with uncanny skill is fill this vacated space with a depth and cohesion that is rather more singular.

The effect of attaching the F500SP to the Supernait 3 is to take the focus and drive that the Naim delivers with anything it's connected to and open it out into something compellingly three dimensional. It's as happy doing this with the vastness of the Hans Zimmer Dune score as it is the gorgeous intimacy of My Baby's Tribulations. If you appreciate this recreation of space, what the F500SP does is peerless; akin to the LS50 Meta but arguably even more accomplished. For stereo TV viewing, it is genuinely top drawer.

This is helped by an equally solid grasp of tonality. With the two very different driver materials at work in that single array, there's always the notional risk of there being a discernible handover between the two but that's really not the case here. Voices and instruments are consistently well handled and the F500SP does a fine job of balancing energy with refinement. It is going to be possible to provoke them



into sounding a little hard edged with some products but you'll have to work at it. Furthermore, while I'd hesitate to describe this as a monitor, it is perfectly capable of reflecting the differences in the electronics it has been connected to in the time it has been here.

The bass performance of the F500SP is also decent if not truly spectacular. Fyne quotes a low end roll off of 42Hz (no dB cut given) and it has bettered this in room. The bass the F500SP offers is articulate and keeps pace with the upper registers but some of the fine detail that I know to be present on tracks is harder to discern. This feeds into the Fyne not being the most ballistic speaker you can secure for £1,300. Even on the end of the purposeful Naim, it's a lively performer rather than an out and out 'b of the bang' one.

Crucially though, it's good enough. It's able to style out the electronic impact driver that is Carbon Based Lifeforms' Tensor and, when you stop that and put the glorious Neptune by The Olympians on, the Fyne delivers every attribute the brand does so well in a way that is genuinely excellent for a speaker at this price, again regardless of its origin. It's a sound that draws you in and reveals qualities you weren't initially aware of and I can see many people being won over completely by it. The forgiving nature of its sensitivity and impedance are notable too. There are amps that will realistically struggle with the LS50 Meta that the Fyne will pair with superbly.

Conclusion

It is with pleasure (and no small amount of relief) that the virtues of the F500SP allow me to judge it as a £1,300 speaker because it is extremely good judged as such and not as a complex, wood veneered metaphor for the debate over whether you should automatically support something made locally. As I said at the beginning, I think it matters and it's something that I try to consider in my own buying habits but I'm here to tell you about Hi-Fi, not provide pound shop political commentary.

The pleasant reality of the F500SP is that you don't need to be in any way invested in where it was made to be very taken with it. It's an easy to drive, simple to position device that's exceptionally well made and pretty good looking with it. It then delivers sonic imagery, tonal realism and refinement that keeps anything else I can recall testing at the price honest. This is perhaps the most complete speaker I have yet tested from Fyne Audio and it is something that comes Highly Recommended as a result.

Scores

