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Fyne Audio

F501E



The 'E' could stand for economy, but it could easily be for excellent value for money too

And now here we have Fyne Audio's take on a coaxial driver arrangement, that the company calls Isoflare - here trickled down to the company's F500E entry-level range for the first time in the F501E.

This trademark Isoflare driver array involves the tweeter sitting in the throat of the mid/bass unit. The advantage of this type of arrangement is that it disperses sound more consistently. In this case, a 25mm titanium compression dome tweeter is partnered with a 15cm multi-fibre mid/bass unit with the crossover point set at a relatively low 1.7kHz.

The mid/bass driver's rubber surround exhibits the same fluting as seen on the company's more upmarket products; this shape is claimed to terminate the cone more effectively, reducing distortion and improving clarity.

Even spread of bass

Fyne's F501E is a 2½-way design where the lower 15cm multi-fibre driver, a dedicated bass unit that rolls in below 250Hz, is tuned by a downward firing port arrangement called Basstrax. Here, the port fires onto an upward-facing cone that disperses the sound evenly through 360 degrees. Look just above the plinth and you will see the bass vents on all sides of the cabinet. That even spread of bass is claimed to make the speakers less fussy about room placement, and that proves to be the case. Even so, our samples still sound best around 70cm out from the rear wall and well away from the sides in our 3 x 7 x 5m (hwd) test room.

General build quality is as solid and neat as expected at this level. However, these speakers are available only in a black ash vinyl wrap. The lower production cost of only

Black ash vinyl wrap is the only finish available for the F501E



having a single finish is a part of the reason Fyne can achieve such an aggressive price for the F501E. The finish itself is decent, but to our eyes looks a little drab next to classier price rivals such as the Q Acoustics 5040/5050 duo.

Hugely capable

Speakers at this level have a difficult balancing act to perform. They should be unfussy enough to sound decent with modestly priced systems but still have enough sonic stretch to show improvements when the partnering electronics are upgraded. The Fynes' sensitivity is rated at 90dB/W/m and their nominal impedance is claimed to be an entirely conventional 8 ohms. We try a range of amplifiers from Arcam's A5 (50 watts per channel) and Naim Nait XS3 (70 watts per channel) to PMC's Cor (95 watts per channel) without issue. For performance benchmarking, we have the Award-winning Q Acoustics 5050 towers on hand, alongside KEF's similarly priced LS50 Meta standmounters, and for a broader context, PMC's more expensive Prodigy 5.

It doesn't take long to realise that the F501E are hugely capable. They do the basics well by offering good insight and delivering decently balanced tonality. Our experience of Fyne's more affordable models, capable as they have been, is that they haven't always had the most refined treble. But, we're pleased to note that the F501E does a pleasing job in this respect. It avoids edge and undue

harshness at higher frequencies, even when provoked by less than perfect recordings. This is a huge plus for those who choose their music on merit rather than recording quality.

That doesn't give the user a free pass on using capable partnering equipment, though. While these towers don't necessarily force a spotlight on any sonic flaws upstream, like any capable speaker they will only shine when fed a good-quality signal.

Strong dynamics

Given such a signal, their dynamics are strong and delivered with natural fluidity. As we listen to Hans Zimmer's *Interstellar* OST it is hard not to be impressed by the clarity on offer and the Fynes' ability to organise the mass of instrumentation on *Cornfield Chase*. These floorstanders stay composed when the production becomes dense and deliver the music's growing intensity, as it reaches its climax, with conviction.

One of the advantages of a coaxial configuration such as the Isoflare array is that it disperses sound more consistently as we move off-axis. This trait pays dividends in the F501E's focused and layered stereo imaging and the way its soundstage remains stable even when we move away from the (relatively wide) sweet spot. In comparison, the more conventional Q Acoustics 5050 become a little more uneven when we do so.

We like the Fyne's sense of scale and are impressed with the low-end authority and punch they generate on demand. Bass is taut, tuneful and articulate by class standards. We push the volume levels northward to see how the F501E cope - they tick that box confidently

"The F501E's soundstage remains stable even when we move away from the (relatively wide) sweet spot"



WHAT HI-FI?

★★★★★

at anything that passes for normal listening levels.

These towers are a fun listen too - as a trip down memory lane with *The Low End Theory* from A Tribe Called Quest proves. The F501E are fluid and expressive performers. They track rhythms with determination while communicating changes in musical momentum in a natural and convincing manner. Having the acoustic centres of the tweeter and mid/bass aligned helps with integration; the result is a crisp and forthright performance with vocals that captures nuances and subtle shifts in intensity superbly. The rival Q Acoustics 5050 sound a touch disinterested and mechanical in contrast.

Talented all-rounders

Through the test process, we cover large swathes of our music collection from Dvořák's *New World Symphony* and John Coltrane's legendary *Giant Steps* set to *Hit Me Hard And Soft* by Billie Eilish, and the Fynes never miss a beat. They have the sophistication and muscularity to convey the majesty of a full-blown orchestra yet can still convey the intimacy of Eilish's *Wildflower* superbly.

If you can put up with the less than inspiring finish to their cabinets then there is very little to dislike here. The F501E is a talented all-rounder that has a range of sonic abilities that are hard to better at this price. Partner these floorstanders with a bit of care, and we think you'll be as impressed with them as we are.

Fyne's take on a coaxial driver arrangement is called Isoflare

WHAT HI-FI?

RATING ★★★★★

SOUND



BUILD



COMPATIBILITY



FOR

- Expressive and entertaining presentation
- Taut, tuneful bass
- Even dispersion characteristics

AGAINST

- Available in a black ash finish only

VERDICT

Terrific performers for the money and good enough to upset the established class leaders