

Equipment Report

Fyne Audio F704SP Loudspeaker

The Big Brother Steps Up

Dick Olsher

So you know, I was in a rather celebratory mood when the Fyne Audio F704SP loudspeaker landed on my doorstep. Having lived quite happily with its smaller brother, the F703SP, for some months now, I was enthusiastic about the prospects of auditioning what is essentially a 12-inch-woofered version of the same design. Although not quite in King Kong territory, it is intimidating enough, especially in piano-gloss black finish to command instant respect. Its high-density birch-ply enclosure features extensive internal bracing and accounts for much of its total weight. In fact, it weighs almost as much as I do. Fortunately, a crew of three was on hand to unpack and move the speakers downstairs to my main listening room.

While on the surface the upgrade from 10- to 12-inch woofers may seem to be minor, its effect is significant and impacts the overall design. The larger woofer offers increased efficiency but also mandates a larger cabinet volume to deliver its full bass response potential. Starting with the F500 series up to the flagship F1, floorstanding models use a twin-cavity bass-reflex loading system. Dual chambers are tuned to expand the bass-reflex frequency range and reduce cone excursion. One chamber is typically tuned to give acoustic loading in the midbass, while the second is tuned about one octave lower to achieve a desired low-frequency cutoff. The chambers are connected via an internal port while the lower chamber is coupled to the floor via a Tractrix-shaped diffuser referred to as a BassTrax™.

The Tractrix horn profile was developed by Paul Voight in the 1920s, but its application here as a port diffuser appears to be innovative. One benefit is the reduction of port noise due to air turbulence, sometimes referred to as “chuffing.” Its major benefit is the conversion of the vent’s plane-wave energy to an expanding spherical 360-degree wavefront, making for smoother room integration. The diffuser is mounted on a substantial aluminum base, which forms part of the BassTrax porting system. The base is threaded to accept cone feet that are conveniently adjustable from the top. The proof was in the listening. Fyne Audio’s dual-chamber alignment performed extremely well in my listening room, delivering low-distortion and well-defined deep bass response useful to about 30Hz. The in-room response above 200Hz was also fairly smooth.

Designer Dr. Paul Mills’ vision was to elevate the performance of the F704 standard production to that of special production status by adding the refinement of the elite F1 series.



At the heart of the design is the formidable 12-inch point-source concentric driver energized by a massive neodymium magnet system and combining within it a bass/midrange cone driver with a 3-inch titanium-dome com-

pression driver. Titanium is a top diaphragm choice nowadays due to its light weight and stiffness. The tweeter is connected to a waveguide of much smaller throat diameter, which gives rise to the compression effect. It oper-



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Specs & Pricing

Type: 2.5-way, downward-firing port, with BassTrax™ Tractrix diffuser, twin-cavity loading

Sensitivity: 96dB (2.83V/1m)

Nominal impedance: 8 ohms

Frequency response: (–6dB typical in room): 22Hz–26kHz

Drivers (Neodymium magnet system): HF: 75mm titanium-dome compression tweeter; 11.8" (300mm) Iso-Flare point-source concentric driver; 11.8" (300mm) multi-fiber bass/midrange cone, FyneFlute™ surround

Crossover frequencies: 250Hz, 850Hz

Crossover type: Bi-wired, second-order low pass, first-order high pass

Dimensions: 22.8" x 53.3" x 22.4"

Weight: 157.6 lbs.

Price: \$25,999

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Associated Equipment

Phono front end: Kuzma Reference turntable w/ 313 VTA tonearm and Clearaudio da Vinci V2 mc phono cartridge; Revox B795 turntable w/ Audio Technica 440MLa mm cartridge

Phonostage: PrimaLuna EVO 100 V2, Tritschler Precision Engineering Model 2200

Line preamplifier: Audio Research LS25 MkII, Pass Labs XP-12, Classé DR-6L, Klyne Audio Arts 6LE-4.3, Tektron Heritage custom 6SN7

Digital front end: Denafris Terminator, Gustard A26, Geshelli Labs J3 Pro DACs

Digital source: Qobuz streaming via Audirvana Studio software

Power amplifiers: PrimaLuna EVO 400 monoblocks, Audio Research VS115, Threshold 400A, First Watt F8

Cables: Kimber Select KS1016 & KCAG interconnects; 8N OFC speaker cable

Accessories: Sound Application CF-X & TT-7 power line conditioners, Ideon Audio 3R Renaissance mk2 Black Star USB regenerator/reclocker

ates down to a frequency of about 850Hz and delivers superlative transient speed and dynamics. A second 12-inch woofer operates below 250Hz to extend the low-frequency response. Both woofers feature a computer-designed fluted surround, which minimizes reflected energy and yields better transient control relative to a conventional roll surround. However, because of its stiffness it requires an extended break-in period of at least 200 hours for optimal performance. Details matter. The crossover network has also been redesigned and upgraded with premium Clarity-Cap capacitors, Vishay resistors, and cryogenic treatment. The crossover is bi-wired to high-quality gold-plated WBT Nextgen 0703 binding posts.

This is a loudspeaker that would work best in a medium to large dedicated listening room. In my experience, a placement of at least five feet from the wall affords essential “breathing space” to achieve optimal soundstage depth. It is worthwhile experimenting in this regard, as the F704SP can generate an exceptional 3D soundstage with remarkable width and depth perspectives. The “IsoFlare” concentric driver offers a wide listening sweet spot due to its time-aligned design. But there is no overcoming the laws of physics—the tweeter starts beaming above 10kHz, so plan to experiment with toe-in angle to determine the ideal tonal balance in your room. In my setup, intersecting the tweeter axes at the listening seat worked best.

As you might expect, the F704SP’s sonic signature bore an unmistakable familial resemblance to its smaller

brother. There were, however, significant and immediately apparent sonic differences. Most obvious were the increased bass extension and enhanced lower midrange authority and control. That was obvious on one of my favorite albums, the Charlie Haden/Jim Hall collaboration recorded live in 1990 at the Montreal International Jazz Festival and released on the Impulse! label in 2014, after the passing of both artists. Heavy bass lines were resolved with full power and control; apparently, it takes 12-inch woofers to do this music justice. The adage that you can’t send a boy woofer to do a man’s job very much applied here. The midrange in general sounded cleaner with reduced distortion products. I was surprised at how much more refined the F704SP sounded relative to the F703SP. Just as impressive was the ease with which it navigated dynamic and complex orchestral passages. Tonally, the upper midrange was a tad more laid-back, though it’s possible to argue that the upper mids were now dialed in toward tonal neutrality.

Point-source designs typically generate a huge spatial impression, and the F704SP excelled in this regard, fleshing out an exceptionally wide and deep soundstage, essentially a curtain of sound with an assist from tube amplification, most of the time from the PrimaLuna EVO 400 monoblocks. The ability to peer into the inner recesses of the soundstage was another highlight. There was no veiling of image outlines or confusion about image location. These attributes contributed to excellent spatial resolution of massed voices.



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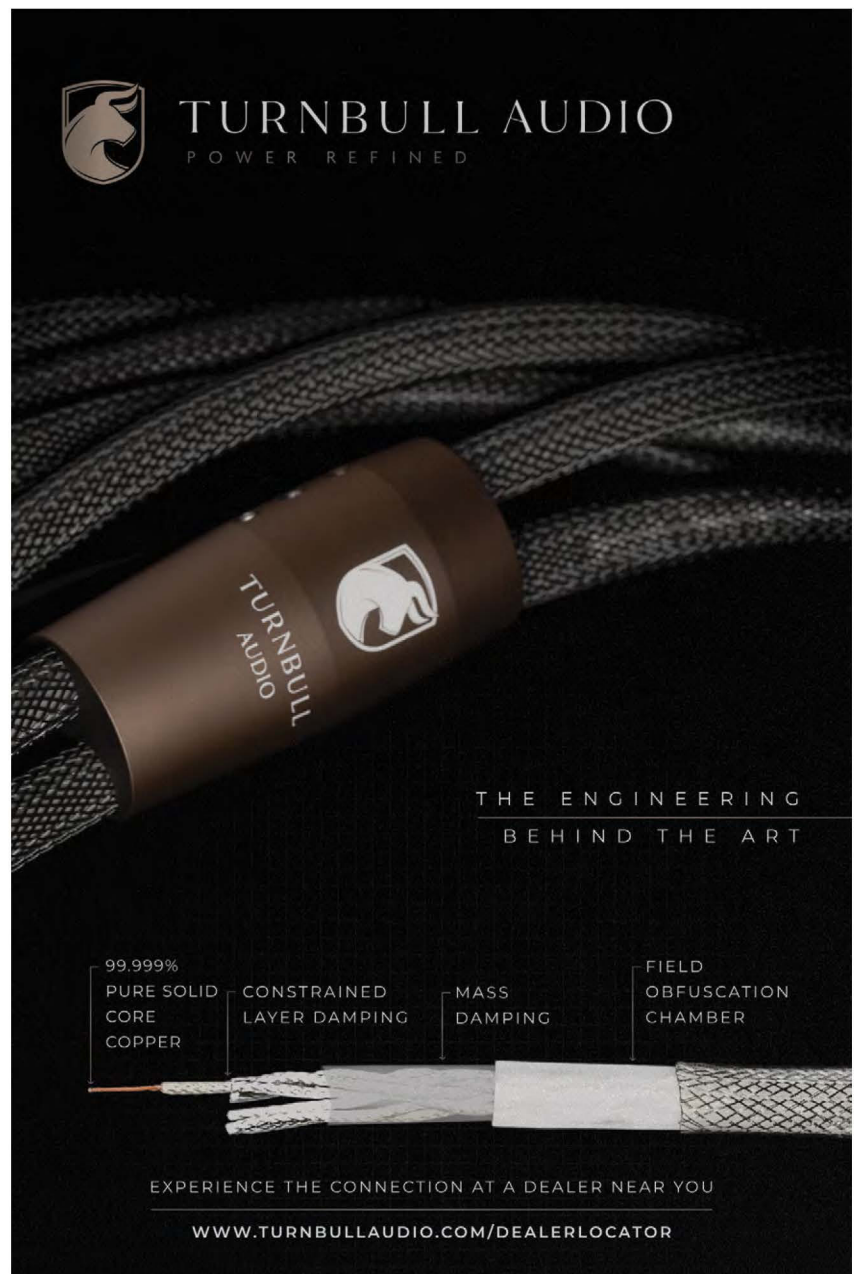
Sad but true, playback of some multitrack studio recordings appears to emanate from a flat plane stretching between the speakers. As a bonus, the F704SP managed to layer even depth-deficient recordings to an extent I had not previously experienced.

As with the F703SP, its big brother was also not fussy with both tube and solid-state amplification. I auditioned a couple of solid-state amps that represent disparate but sonically significant points along designer Nelson Pass' historical design timeline: the Threshold 400A and the First Watt F8. The 400A's bass impact and definition continued to impress after all these years, but overall I fell in love with the F8's textural purity. Yes, I know, it's only rated at 25 watts into an 8-ohm load, but the Fyne's 96dB sensitivity and quite benign impedance magnitude made for an enjoyable coupling. It was possible to flavor the sonic character of the F8 by choice of matching preamp. A tube-rectified 6SN7 line preamp such as my custom Tektron Heritage generated impressive 3D image outlines and rich tonal colors. On the other hand, the Classé DR-6L proved to be the right vehicle for *A Night in Tunisia* by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, an album released in May 1961 by Blue Note Records and recorded at the Van Gelder Studio. There are some amazing solos on this album, which were nicely accommodated by the F8 without diminishing the intensity of the recording.

If you're into low-level detail then this is the speaker for you. There's nothing wrong in lusting after all the recorded information on an album. I'm all for that as long as it's done naturally without hyping up the upper octaves or etching transients. Fyne's titanium compression tweeter was up to the task, being endowed with tremendous transient speed and control, two essential ingredients for superb resolution. This speaker was able to accurately resolve changes in front-end components. I was recently auditioning two DACs, the Gustard A26 and Geshelli Labs J3 Pro, both based around AKM's latest sigma-delta chipset. I was surprised to discover how much more detailed these DACs were relative to my long-time reference, the Denafrips Terminator R2R design. The differences as resolved by the Fyne F704SP were not subtle, as detail buried in a mix was allowed to float to the surface.

To discover that, relative to the F703SP, the F704SP is the better loudspeaker was about as surprising as finding Guinness on tap in an Irish pub. There are familial similarities in precise soundstaging, transient clarity, and microdynamic nuance via a shared titanium compression driver. Both loudspeakers advance the case for the supremacy of point-source concentric designs. However, the Fyne Audio

F704SP builds on the strengths of its smaller brother, delivering a more compelling command of the lower octaves and enhanced dynamic contrasts. It is capable of breathing life into a musical performance, of moving and inspiring us, and that is what it's all about. I love the sound of the F703SP, but I'm ecstatic about the F704SP. It is the finest point-source design I've auditioned to date. **LAB**



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