

Fyne Audio F701

- Standmount speakers
- £4299
- ★★★★★

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★



"The Fyne Audio F701 are truly entertaining performers... they sound like they just want to have fun"

WHAT HI-FI?

SOUND



COMPATIBILITY



BUILD



FOR

- Strong dynamic performance
- Musical cohesion and precision
- Distinctive engineering

AGAINST

- Need careful partnering

VERDICT

If you value entertainment above outright refinement, there's little better than the F701 for the money

The F701s render a sound that is brimming with authority



It's hard to believe that Fyne Audio was founded as recently as 2017. Since then, the company has wasted no time in firmly establishing itself at budget and mid-priced levels with a series of excellent and often *What Hi-Fi?* Award-winning products.

It must worry the established competition to see this new brand stretch its reach to higher price levels. We have already reviewed the truly excellent F1-8 standmounters from Fyne's high-end F1 range, and here we have their more affordable siblings from the F700 series, one step down in price point.

There's a fair amount of shared DNA between the F701 and the pricier F1-8, the most obvious being the use of an Isoflare point-source driver array. This is one of Fyne Audio's core technologies and places the 25mm magnesium-dome compression tweeter right in the throat of the 20cm multi-fibre mid/bass driver. This kind of arrangement has a number of advantages over conventional configurations, from a more even dispersion characteristic 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. Doing things this way bodes well for focus and precision.

SUBTLE ENGINEERING TOUCHES

There are a lot of subtle engineering touches here. You'll notice that the mid/bass driver's surround has indents all the way around. This is done to control unwanted resonances in the cone, leading to clearer, less distorted results. A downward-facing reflex port tunes the mid/bass unit's low-frequency output, and it fires onto a metal diffuser that guides the sound waves through the gap between the cabinet base and solid metal plinth. This kind of arrangement is claimed to make the speakers less fussy about placement in the room - and in our experience it does just that.

The F701's crossover point is set at a fairly low 1.7kHz, and the bi-wire crossover network is of a relatively simple design; it's a first-order filter for the tweeter and second order for the mid/bass. Those crossover components are cryogenically treated to remove internal stresses which, it is claimed, leads to a better sound. This is hard to judge without being able to make direct comparisons, but it's clearly something that Fyne Audio feels is worthwhile.

Combine the drive units, cabinet and crossover network and you have speakers that are sensitive at a rated 91dB/W/m and a pretty conventional 8 ohm electrical load. We doubt any decent price-compatible amplifier would have trouble driving these Fynes to high levels in most rooms.

The cabinet is a braced, solid affair made with panels of pressed high-density birch ply. While the F701s lack the luxurious look and feel of the F1-8, they remain well made for the money. There are three finish options - white, black or walnut - all in lovely deep piano gloss.

If you want to hear these Fynes shine, you need a talented system. We use our reference set-up of the Naim ND555/555 PS DR streamer, Technics SL-1000R turntable and Burmester 088/911 Mk3 amp, but substitute in a Naim SuperNait 3 integrated to see how the Fynes cope with more modest electronics. The F701 perform well regardless of amplification.

These speakers aren't unduly fussy about positioning, provided you leave at least 50cm from the rear wall, keep them well away from side walls and take care in angling them towards the listening sweet spot. It pays to spend some time dialling in the toe-in angle to optimise the stereo imaging. In our set-up, the best position ends up with the speakers pointing so that they cross a little behind our heads when we are seated.

Any standmounter is highly dependent on the support it is placed on. Fyne Audio makes a stand called the FS8 that's suitable for all its premium standmounters. In our experience, it works well enough, though there's no shortage of quality competition at its considerable £999 price.

PASSION AND CLARITY

The Fyne Audio F701 are truly entertaining performers, if installed with care. They sound big, bold and enthusiastic in a way that eludes much of the high-end competition. Most rivals concentrate on refinement and detail resolution, whereas the Fynes sound like they just want to have fun.

Fed The White Stripes' *Seven Nation Army*, these speakers sound right at home as they pound out that distinctive plump bassline with verve and grip. There's an impressive degree of punch and power low down, but just as pleasingly, that is coupled to a strong sense of articulation. These standmounters are happy to play loud, delivering the music's wall of sound with confidence and composure. We like the way they capture Jack White's vocals, which come through with all the passion and clarity we would hope for at this level.

Rivals such as the highly polished Dynaudio Contour 20i deliver a more sophisticated sound and are sweeter through the higher frequencies. But, there's something about the snappy way these Fynes deliver rhythms and track dynamics swings that makes them hugely appealing.

We switch to Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and the F701 continue to impress. They're capable of huge scale, provided the rest of the system is up to scratch, and render a sound brimming with authority. They paint orchestral swings with muscle, refusing to sound strained even when pushed hard.

Tonally, they're a little uneven, but they still manage to render instruments with a convincing sense of body and texture. We like their ability to organise and track low-level instrumental strands in complex productions.

When positioned with care, the F701 produce a wide, sharply focused soundstage. In absolute terms, the depth of the soundstage isn't particularly impressive, but that's more an observation rather than something we're disappointed by.

We listen to a wide range of music, from Bruce Springsteen's *High Hopes* through to Miles Davis's *Kind Of Blue* and Bob Marley's *Catch A Fire*, and the F701 never let us down.

They may not be the most polished listen for this amount of money, but the Fyne Audio F701 are certainly among the most musically engaging choices we've heard. If you have this kind of money to spend on a pair of standmounters, make sure you hear this one before buying anything else.