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Fyne Audio F704 Floorstanding Loudspeakers Review



Fyne Audio is a relative newcomer to loudspeaker manufacturing, yet one that comes with a pedigree of over two hundred years of collective experience in the hi-fi industry. Created by a group of former Tannoy employees, this company has the advantage of not being a part of a large corporation. And as Technical Director Dr Paul Mills says, “with the freedom to do what we wish, and develop new technologies and ideas which would not previously been possible...”

Since 2017, this has led to Fyne Audio releasing a procession of new speaker designs, from the flagship F1 series to retro tinted Fyne Vintage series and the F700 series reviewed here. Coming in with a pricetag of \$18,995 USD and measuring 1,339mm tall, 540mm wide and 561mm deep, to many people, this F704 will be an 'end-game speaker'. Being a long-time fan of large, full-range dynamic speakers, I was particularly excited to get a pair into my system to see what the Fyne Audio team has achieved.

UP CLOSE

The F series ranges from the compact F700 bookshelf model to this big, top-of-the-line F704 floorstander. Built entirely in the UK, the design distils Fyne Audio's latest technologies and expertise into a large box with similarities to classic Tannoy designs – its concentric drivers and overall cabinet shape remain. Leveraging the technologies implemented in the F1 Series, and promoted as a two-and-a-half way design with a downwards firing port, a twin cavity loading system is used. This is aimed at reducing internal standing waves and cone excursion around the tuning frequency for increased power handling.



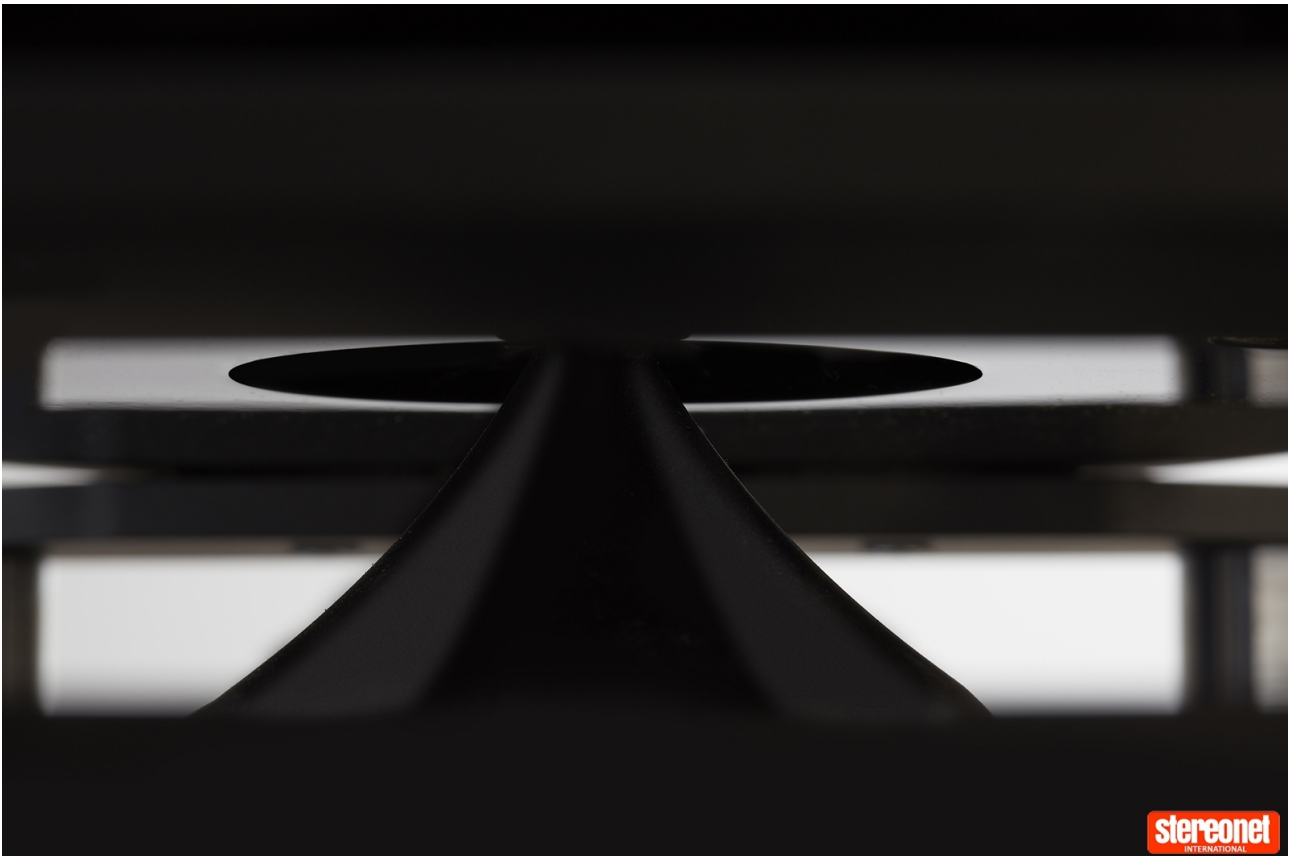
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Arriving on a well-packaged pallet, the F704 quickly alerts the owner to the imposing size and engineering prowess encompassed within. Unboxing a pair of speakers as large as these requires two pairs of hands to lift them up and off their base using a wonderful two-strap mechanism that I've not seen before. I wish more speaker manufacturers would take such a comprehensive approach to transit and unboxing.



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My review pair came finished in a piano gloss walnut, and proved superlative in their fit and finish. This is fine, handcrafted work, delivering an immediately arresting and magisterial appearance. Though available from dealers in luxury high gloss piano lacquer applied to black, white or walnut veneers, custom finishes can be ordered from the factory to meet personal décor demands. With a high-density birch ply construction, the drive unit is coupled to the internally braced panel through damping material to absorb energy. The F704 weighs in at circa 70kg, and one never gets the feeling that any corners have been cut in its build or finish.



This speaker offers something different to the fray, in terms of transducers. It sports a two-driver configuration encompassing a 300mm IsoFlare point source driver and a 300mm bass driver with a multi-fibre cone. In discussion with Dr Paul Mills, it was suggested that these drivers were selected to, “give a sense of scale and power which is uncommon with the majority of modern loudspeakers.”

In the IsoFlare driver, the bass/midrange driver shares a common centre with the high-frequency unit. This approach is aimed at providing superior stereo imaging, even off-axis, as energy is radiated with the same intensity in all directions following the flare of the driver cone, allowing the sound produced to appear as if emanating from a single point in space.

This 'point source' driver is supported at the low end by the additional 12" bass driver, which rolls off at 200Hz. The IsoFlare driver operates at full bandwidth and possesses a considerable radiating area at bass frequencies. Unique to Fyne is the BassTrax Tractrix Diffuser System, with a downwards firing port that's said to convert wave port energy to a spherical 360-degree wavefront. Apparently, this integrates energy uniformly into the room.

The speaker footing platform is machined from aluminium and provides exceptional stability. Heavy-duty spikes are provided to allow for levelling and to reduce unwanted vibration, and aluminium cups are provided to protect wooden floors.

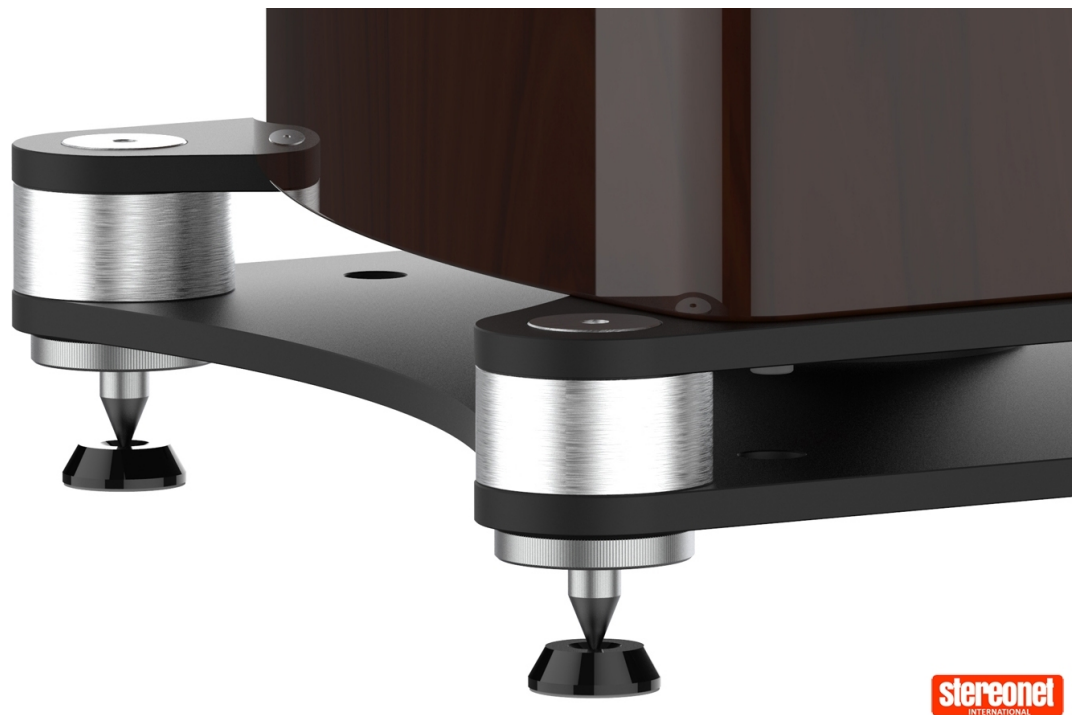
With a claimed nominal 8 ohm loading (minimum 4 ohms at 87Hz) and 96dB sensitivity, low power tube amplifiers are highly suitable candidates for the F704. However, Fyne Audio says that powerful transistor amps give a more impressive dynamic performance. With a 300W amplifier (the maximum recommended), the speaker will provide a peak output of 123dB at 1 metre. In-room frequency response is put at 24Hz to 26kHz (± 6 dB), which is impressive by most people's standards.



The crossover is designed as a fairly straightforward second-order topology, a fact that Fyne Audio says is made possible by the well behaved driver characteristics. In an unusual approach, the high-sensitivity HF compression unit is matched in level using a custom autotransformer to help prevent losses and improve performance.

Unlike most loudspeakers encountered today, an earthing point is fitted to each speaker. When quizzed on this inclusion, the company's technical representative stated that, "voice coils make a fairly efficient antenna in picking up RF energy, which with Wi-Fi and mobile phones is more of a problem than ever. This energy can get back into the amplifier's negative feedback loop, causing noise and distortion." When probed about speaker positioning and room correction, Dr Paul Mills stated: "With our point source technology and unique bass loading system allowing better than normal room integration, we do not feel the need for potentially degrading DSP correction."

To put this mighty loudspeaker through its paces, my review pair was harnessed to a Classe CA5300 power amplifier, with Classe CP800v2 preamplifier and an MSB Premier DAC. Qobuz over Roon provided high-resolution source material over a network renderer module.



THE LISTENING

The F704 provides an engaging and effortless listening experience. With a truly dynamic sound and liquid-like bass response, the result is a refined and disarming listen that is not compromised by any unwarranted harshness or fatigue. Voices, particularly female voices, come across in a polished yet unadorned manner, lending many an audiophile favourite a new lease on life. Creating a fantastic soundstage that is not only wide but seriously deep and with an ability to render complex passages of music with laser-like precision, it's easy to find much to like.

The BassTrax diffuser system, combined with the dual drivers, creates a comely bass sound that's fast, clear and fluid. Timeless from Goldie's album of the same name, exhibited a buoyant but room-filling sub-bass sound. With no subwoofers in my system, the ability for all listening positions to be suitably pressurised with no obvious bloat was a welcome find. Allowing Timeless to build and then break, gave me a great appreciation for the top to bottom integration of the drivers. It also floored me with the width of the soundstage, as percussion hits seemingly appeared several feet beyond the boundaries of the speakers.

Venetian Snares' Hajnal from Rossz Csillag Alatt Született is constructed from a collage of samples from Bartok, Stravinski, Mahler and Paganini. Here the strings and frantic pace of proceedings were given room to breathe - woodwind and piano were nicely laid out across the soundstage, and when a jazzy acoustic drum kit came in on the tail of the Stravinsky clarinet samples, I expected to see the drummer right in front of me. Detail was abundant, and the substantial depth of the soundstage let everything happen without the stereo image turning to mush.

Finely recorded guitars and vocals were a sweet spot for this speaker, and some old favourites got rinsed off to celebrate this fact. Queuing up I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight by Richard & Linda Thompson, The Calvary Cross transfixed me with a wonderful tremolo sound on the guitars. Palace Music's More Brother Rides from the Steve Albini produced Viva Last Blues left me spellbound. Albini's spare production and Will Oldham's plaintive vocal interspersed with guitar and slide guitar put me in

the room. There's no bigger ask than that when listening to recorded music at home. Lo-fi material like McLusky's Collagen Rock was revealed in all its ragged glory, but that's all part of the charm with music in this vein.



The expansive tonal palette of Black Midi's Still – from the recent Hellfire album – allowed the F704 to relentlessly tear down a manic soundscape. The speaker shifted fluently from a dense swarm of guitar-driven rock through to a pastoral landscape, all without breaking into a sweat. A similar experience was had using a personal favourite recording (with a huge dynamic range), the Breeders album, Pod. With a cover of The Beatles' Happiness Is A Warm Gun, the Fyne Audio deftly walked the line from the breathy vocals of Kim Deal to pummelling percussion, all at a moment's notice.

THE VERDICT

Large format loudspeakers may not be for everyone, but they bring many advantages to a listening room that smaller ones cannot hope to realise. The ability of the Fyne Audio F704 to deftly display large dynamic shifts and room-shaking bass, while still conjuring up a vast soundstage is quite the engineering achievement. The point source drivers dramatically reduce the complexity of positioning this speaker in a room, offering excellent



off-axis performance. The BassTrax diffuser system helps to smooth out the in-room response of low-frequency content, too.

If your preference is for complex, multi-layered music, then the Fyne Audio allows mastering engineer-level separation of content, making richly produced music a guilty pleasure. On the other end of the spectrum, sparse or vocal-laden music seems positively ethereal. Whether you are playing quiet or loud content, this speaker seemingly sits there grinning at you, content that it has loads more to offer!

There has clearly been a lot of love, sweat, and devotion put into this product. When compared to the JBL K2 S9900 I reviewed recently, the F704 is cut from a similar cloth – it is boldly dynamic, with well-defined bass and excellent off-axis performance. So if you're shopping for a pair of seriously large and capable floorstanding loudspeakers, this should be at the very top of your audition list.

