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Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

Issue No. 505

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Classically trained

The latest speaker from Fyne Audio is an intriguing blend of old and new thinking.

Ed Selley takes a listen

Mining your past to produce new products that induce a spot of nostalgia for the 'good' old days (your mileage may vary to quite how good they were) is a big deal at the moment and, at first glance, the

Vintage Classic VIII looks like more of the same. Where things get a little complicated is that, on paper at least, Fyne doesn't have a heritage to mine. This speaker harks back to a time long before the company existed. As such, it looks to another part of Fyne's

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Fyne Audio Vintage Classic VIII

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
2-way floorstanding loudspeaker

WEIGHT
29.1kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
380 x 873 x 300mm

FEATURES
● 25mm magnesium dome compression tweeter
● 200mm multi-fibre mid/bass driver
● Claimed sensitivity: 91dB/2.83V/1m (8ohm)

DISTRIBUTOR
Fyne Audio

WEBSITE
fyneaudio.co.uk

ancestry, reflecting that many (but not all) of its key staff came from Tannoy.

This means the Vintage Classic VIII is built around a 200mm treated paper driver that mounts a 25mm magnesium tweeter with prominent waveguide around it in the centre. These crossover at 1.8kHz and the effect is entirely reminiscent of speakers from the Seventies. What is notable though is that the Vintage Classic VIII doesn't go for the 'pickled in aspic' approach to using the driver. Around the edge you'll find the visually fussy but effective 'Fyne Flute' surround that uses a variable geometry arrangement to avoid reflecting sound back into the driver.

The cabinet features a BassTrax ported at the base, which means that air exits after being smoothly channelled from a vertical to a horizontal axis. The result is that the air departing the cabinet has a

constant fixed boundary, which should make placement simpler. A band of material that the grilles are made of serves to conceal the porting instead of the louvres used on more contemporary Fyne designs.

The crossover for this driver is an intriguing blend of old and new thinking. It is specially designed for the task and combines 'old' practice; spacing the components out and placing them on a vibration damping panel, with up-to-date computer modelling. In another nod to the Seventies, a pair of adjustable controls for tone and presence are on the front. These are on continuously variable pots rather than jumpers and allow for a degree of fine tuning in-room. It then goes on to support bi-wiring (although Fyne supplies excellent cable jumpers for non-participants) which is a rather more contemporary fitment.

The Vintage Classic has more traditional features like the lossy coupling between the driver mount and the rest of the cabinet, but the fibreboard employed is much denser and stiffer than the materials of old and everything is held firm using software-calculated bracing. One other detail worthy of note is that, while I'd hesitate to call it 'cheap', the Fyne is a lot of speaker for something built in the UK for £4,500 and the level of finish is impressive.

Sound quality

Once you stop pontificating over what decade the Fyne belongs to and start listening to it, it does far more to convince you it's entirely of the moment. This is a sensitive speaker; the claimed 91dB/W figure actually feels a little pessimistic in use and this lends the Vintage Classic VIII an immediacy that is beneficial to pretty much anything you play on it. When you combine this with the expansive presentation afforded by the width of the front baffle, you have something that fills the listening space without ever overwhelming it.

This is beautifully demonstrated with *Everything I Saw* by The Weather Station. This is a small-scale and intimate recording and nothing that the Fyne seeks to do makes Tamara Lindemann sound bigger than she needs to. What happens instead is that the performance around her is filled out and made tangible. Going back to any narrow baffle speaker after some time with this one is a constricting experience. With something larger and more boisterous like the live version of *Radio-Activity* on Kraftwerk's *Minimum Maximum*,



Spendor's D7.2 (HFC 456) is one of the most capable speakers you can buy at this price. It exhibits less colouration and can generate deeper low-end than the Fyne. It's also easier to accommodate. The Vintage Classic VIII is easier to drive, produces a wider stereo image and offers greater adjustability. The Spendor was £4,500 for quite some time before recent increases took it to £5,650. At over £1,000 less, the Fyne, which can keep the Spendor honest in all aspects of performance, looks like very strong value indeed.

the perception of the sound is immersive. Like some smaller Fyne models I have tested in the past, so long as a modicum of care is taken in placing it, the Vintage Classic VIII does a fine job of disappearing into the soundstage.

Of course, some other aspects of modern Fyne speakers have also come along for the ride that are going to be a little more subjective. The tonal balance is refined, rich and satisfying, but there are other speakers available for this sort of

It has an immediacy that is beneficial to anything you choose to play on it

price that feel more accurate in their overall tonal presentation. This is not a monitor, but I'm not sure that Fyne set out to build such a thing and the Vintage Classic VIII generally sticks to the right side of believability. It's particularly adept at vocals and, unless severely provoked, it's never going to be hard or forward either and this is before any adjustment of the front controls occurs. When they are in play, all but the most aggressive of rooms and partnering equipment should be something you can tame.

By far the most unexpected aspect of the Vintage Classic VIII is how ballistic it can be. Perhaps unfairly, I had assumed looking at it that, when pushed with high-tempo material, it would sound a little wayward but that is far from the case. Instead, it tears its way through *My Own Soul's Warning* by The Killers in a way that is utterly joyous. Running on the end

of a Cambridge Audio Edge A – which has commendable current delivery – the Fyne is poised but tremendously entertaining. You can potentially argue that, for a speaker of these considerable dimensions and possessed of a 200mm mid/bass driver, the bass on offer isn't truly seismic. Fyne's quoted figure of 30Hz at -6dB is definitely the upper end of that roll-off, but the speed and sheer cohesion on offer more than offsets any disappointment.

Conclusion

This is not really the evocative revisit of past glories that you might expect from looking at it, but it's arguably rather the better for it. What the Vintage Classic VIII does brilliantly is take some of the qualities that speakers of this format have been demonstrating since they arrived in the Seventies and mixes them with rather more modern virtues to give you the best of both worlds. If you can accommodate it, the big Fyne is likely to be a delight that will work in a variety of different systems ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



BUILD QUALITY



EASE OF DRIVE



OVERALL



LIKE: Spacious, immediate and engaging sound; easy to drive; strong value

DISLIKE: Some slight colouration; size

WE SAY: A fascinating combination of old and new that delivers superb performance at a rather tempting price