



The special one

The smallest of Fyne's 'Special Production' series is a compact standmount that **Ed Selley** feels more than lives up to the tag

In a commendably short space of time, Fyne Audio has gone from plucky newcomer to an established contender in the speaker sector. More recently, it has focussed on increasing the number of its models built in the UK. These units – denoted by their 'SP' Special Production badging – are not simply repatriated versions of existing models. This means that the F500SP is a relative of the standard F500 (HFC 457), but is not the same speaker made in a different place. The characteristics are the same, though. The F500SP is a two-way standmount that uses Fyne's preferred driver configuration. This

is a coaxially mounted tweeter placed in the throat of a mid/bass driver. The tweeter is a 25mm magnesium compression type. It operates best inside a flare, so is placed inside a metal aperture which then uses the curve of the midrange driver to complete the flare. The midrange unit is a 150mm 'multi-fibre' cone that features the distinctive FyneFlute surround, which employs variable geometry to dissipate driver energy at the edge of the cone more effectively than a conventional design does. This is augmented by a downward-firing port arrangement. Fyne has kept this reasonably flexible and user friendly

DETAILS
PRODUCT
Fyne Audio F500SP
ORIGIN
UK
TYPE
2-way standmount loudspeaker
WEIGHT
8.1kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD):
200 x 323 x 320mm
FEATURES
 • 25mm magnesium compression tweeter
 • 150mm multi-fibre mid/bass driver
 • Quoted sensitivity: 90dB/1W/1m (8ohm)
DISTRIBUTOR
Fyne Audio
WEBSITE
fyneaudio.com

by designing the F500SP with an integral plinth that features a cone-shaped section to better manage the airflow from the port. The result is that the cabinet always has the relevant boundary for the port regardless of where you place it. Where the SP version differs significantly from the standard F500 is the crossover. This makes use of both components and design thinking from the other special production speakers for significantly higher performance. It features a terminal panel that has the opportunity to bi-wire and is also equipped with a dedicated ground post, which is very unusual indeed. The cabinet containing the drivers and crossover is also different to the non-Special Production version. The sections of MDF used are higher density and then damped by a combination of bonded acoustic fibre and polyether foam. There are more inert cabinets available for similar money to the Fyne, but this is still a rather substantial-feeling speaker. Something else that has changed is that the slats present on the standard

F500 version have been dispensed with on the SP update. This is the major visual difference between the two F500s, but a host of detail changes mean that the more expensive SP goes a long way to visually justifying the price premium. Three finishes are available; a gloss white and black (which doesn't command a price premium here as it does on the 'normal' F500) and a high-gloss walnut veneer that the review sample is supplied in. Some of the details are slightly fussy – performance enhancing or not, I don't really like the FyneFlute – but the overall impression is a generally positive one. You can legitimately argue that this isn't the most contemporary option going, but it gels very effectively with the looks.

Sound quality

Fyne claims a basic impedance of 8ohm and overall sensitivity of 90dB/W and, while that feels a tiny bit optimistic, nothing during testing suggests this is a difficult speaker to drive. The quoted low-end frequency response of 42Hz (albeit with no roll-off figure given) also augers well for a reasonably room-filling performance. In fact, it isn't the bass response that grabs your attention straight away. The coaxial driver arrangement is one that rarely struggles to create a convincing stereo image, but the F500SP really is exceptional in this regard. So long as a modicum of care is taken with the initial positioning, this is a speaker that vanishes from the soundstage it creates. But that's only half the story. Where it really is a class apart is the three-dimensionality of this soundstage. The perception of depth in stereo is largely illusory, but it certainly feels convincing here.

This means the glorious *Talking Timbuktu* by Ali Farke Toure and Ry Cooder has a, 'there in the room' feel that even some more expensive rivals struggle to get anywhere near. This is backed by an extremely accurate and consistent tonality. The Fyne has no trouble clearly showing up the differences between the various stringed instruments used across the album and Toure's unique vocal style is believably recreated. The bass extension on offer isn't seismic, but what the F500SP lacks in overall impact it recovers in a qualitative sense. That port and plinth arrangement genuinely seem unconcerned by the placement of the speaker in room and the integration between bass and midrange is consistently excellent. The Fyne



The F500SP is £500 more expensive than the talented Sonus faber Lumina II (HFC 478) and, once the higher quality all-wood finish of the Fyne is priced in over the simpler Lumina which only uses wood on the front, the performance of the two designs is interesting. The Lumina has no real answer to the stereo image and depth the Fyne produces; few at the price do. By the same token, the Lumina II has an agility and rhythmic engagement that the Fyne struggles to match; it's simply more fun more of the time. Both speakers share a port arrangement that makes them easy to place. In the end, it comes down to whether you prefer three-dimensionality over thrills.



delivers commendable detail retrieval across the frequency response and this extends to definition and control of the lower registers that greatly aids their perceived realism. The caveat to this is that the F500SP is happier with the sort of time signatures at work here than with more high-tempo content. Listening to the gloriously energetic *The Sound Of Violence* by Cassius, the Fyne is never actively slow or dull but this is not a speaker that delivers the sort of urgency that some rivals can. The upside to this is that less frenetic

In part, this is because the F500SP is extremely forgiving. It is genuinely tricky to provoke into sounding bright or forward in any way, even with less than stellar masterings and recordings. It can go impressively loud too, without any perceivable strain and even when its performance envelope is exceeded, it concedes gracefully. While I feel the sensitivity measurement might be a little overstated, there is little arguing that this is a genuinely easy speaker to drive. None of the amplifiers it is connected to during testing have to work particularly hard to hit room-filling levels, making this a fine choice for anyone short of headroom.

As long as care is taken with its setup, the F500SP vanishes from the soundstage

music never feels forced or relentless and the ability of the standmount to latch onto a time signature is consistently good throughout. Some of this can be partially ameliorated by sensible electronics choices. Even with the wholly propulsive Naim Supernait 3 (HFC 456) being used, the Fyne is never truly ballistic, but the time it is on test coincides with both the NAD C 700 and Roksan Attezza streaming amplifier being here and the performance with the NAD is definitely a little more energetic than it is with the extremely refined Roksan where the overall balance comes down a little too far in favour of refinement and smoothness to be truly engaging. The C 700 by contrast is still admirably refined, but there is enough energy in the upper registers to be that little bit more compelling. In all cases, though, the peerless creation of a stereo image never falters.

Conclusion

More than simple sensitivity, though, it's the all-round capability of the F500SP that consistently impresses. So long as a modicum of care is taken with partnering equipment, this is a speaker that avoids any tendency towards shock and awe to deliver an exceptionally spacious and refined performance that combines with the excellent build and design to make it a very capable option •

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★
EASE OF DRIVE ★★★★★
OVERALL ★★★★★

LIKE: Superb imaging and depth; tonally excellent; attractive; well made
DISLIKE: It's not the most ballistic speaker
WE SAY: An accomplished all-rounder likely to work brilliantly in a wide selection of systems