

Fyne Audio F701SP

stand-mount loudspeaker

Steve Dickinson

The Fyne Audio range of loudspeakers can be bewildering; sometimes, they're keen to ensure every available market niche is covered and preferably overlapped. While this means that for the most part, regardless of what your needs, there will be a Fyne Audio loudspeaker to meet them, this does risk creating something akin to menu paralysis ("Do I want this one, or should I stretch the budget to that one, and if so, what about that other one...?") and confusion ("So, remind me, what's this one called...?"). It

sometimes helps to think of them as a *Friends* episode: 'The one that looks like a 1960s studio monitor' or 'The one that looks like a New York fire hydrant'. Or is that just me?

The F700 range is 'The ones with the cool, boat-backed cabinets', ranging from the 5" F700 bookshelf to the 12" F704 floorstander. And now there are SP (Special Production) variants of the F701 (8" stand-mount), F702 (8" floorstander) and F703 (10" floorstander), the F701SP, F702SP and F703SP, respectively. The SP suffix means that they use the F700 series cabinets married up to the same driver and crossover tech as the top-end F1 series ('The ones that look like a New York fire hydrant'), which is to say, their highest-spec drivers and (in-house cryogenically treated) crossovers employing high-grade components such as ClarityCap capacitors and Neotech PC-OCC wiring.

Until now, the F1 series had a significant performance advantage over the F700 series, but the F1 series' looks are somewhat polarising. Not everybody appreciates the form-follows-function approach of the F1-8 (and its bigger siblings), and I suspect the SP series might find favour with some of those folk. It certainly should. The F701SP is a stand-mount/bookshelf design with Fyne's top-end 8" point source driver - realistically, though, you're not going to get the best from a pair of £6,500 loudspeakers on a bookshelf, so let's go with 'stand-mount.'

Style with function

The elegantly curved and skilfully crafted cabinet appears modern and will attract those who prefer a contemporary style. However, like all Fyne products, this piece is not just about aesthetics; the cabinet's curves disrupt internal standing waves, and its extensively braced design utilises high-density birch plywood for enhanced sonic neutrality. The F701SP features an IsoFlare design, which includes a 200mm mixed-fibre mid/bass cone and a 25mm magnesium dome compression tweeter co-located in Fyne's classic point source configuration, ensuring that the acoustic centres of both drivers align for optimal time and phase coherence with an isotropic radiation pattern. An internal waveguide for the tweeter provides a flat frequency response and minimises internal reflections.





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» The main driver uses Fyne's fluted roll surround, which reduces reflections from the edge of the driver cone, where it fixes to the structure. It's a very classy unit and easily justifies using the high-class crossover componentry it receives here. The crossover supports bi-wiring, and Fyne supplies nicely made links for single-wired use, with no horrid bits of bent brass on the terminals; it also benefits from their in-house deep cryogenic treatment, which carefully controls the cooling and warming cycle to better suit the needs of the components, not a generic cryo cycle. That's one benefit of making these loudspeakers locally in Fyne's new Glasgow factory.

Layin' down some Trax

F701SP's bottom plate features Fyne's 'BassTrax' tractrix diffuser, which deflects the cabinet's downward-firing reflex port output into a spherical, 360-degree wavefront. This port design minimises any 'noises off' from the port and helps the bass output drive the room with fewer constraints as to placement. It's not a small cabinet; the port aperture and diffuser add a little height and weigh in at a reasonably chunky 14kg, but the neatness of the design means it's relatively unobtrusive and looks smaller than it is.

Aesthetically, I've always liked the F700 series' boat-backed style, and it's clean, modern, and unfussy. The F701SP comes in standard gloss walnut, black and white piano finishes. However, there's also a matt natural walnut option, and all finishes cost the same. The curved, sloping top panel also helps reduce the impression of size, though it does make it more difficult to confirm the levelling of the speaker. Fyne offers matching speaker stands, which provide mass-loading options.

The level of performance available from the F701SPs does mean that it rewards the time and care taken with ancillaries, setup and placement. Such attention delivers a level of focus, precision and control, which is by no means a given at this price. Once correctly set up, there's a directness to the F701SP's delivery, which some may initially find disconcerting, but I'd say this is one of the speaker's great strengths – it does an outstanding job of simply getting out of the way of the music.

Directness

Take 'Giants Causeway' from the Chaos Orchestra album *Island Mentality* [Chaos Collective], for example. There's an immediacy and vitality here, a raw energy reminiscent of a live event: ebullient, free and unconstrained, raucous in the best sense. It's an album of talented musicians having a great time, and the F701SP serves as our party invitation. 'Landing Ground', the title track from Laura Jurd's previous album [Chaos Collective], is tight, fast and tuneful; the choppy strings, piano and bass are immaculately timed and placed, allowing for a greater appreciation of the fluidity of Jurd's phrasing on the trumpet.

The whole is like a beautifully seasoned dish, with nothing out of place, all designed to work together; speakers who deliver in a clumsy manner or demonstrate uneven timing make it significantly harder to appreciate the music and the musicianship involved here. This is why the F701SP's directness is such a strength.

Lest you suspect this is merely code for 'brash', I have heard the Paul Tortelier/Jean Hubeau recording of the Fauré *Élégie* [Erato] sound glassy and hard on some systems; however, through the F701SPs, Tortelier's cello



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» is richly woody and sonorous, beautifully contrasted against a crisp, clean piano tone. The playing is at times emphatic, bold and assertive, while at other times lyrical, featuring liquid phrasing and subtlety that only two musicians who understand each other could achieve without it sounding overwrought. An album of emotive music devoid of histrionics and any hint of brashness would disrupt the spell. Similarly, the 'Benedictus' from Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* [Virgin Records] transitions from heartbreakingly sentimental to a sudden, full-throated celebration. On a less nuanced system, this can feel like a disconnect and a bit gauche. Here, it makes more sense, reflecting the mixed feelings at war's end through the juxtaposition of joy and loss.

Joanna MacGregor's performance of 'Libertango' on *Live in Buenos Aires* [Sound Circus] was supposed to be accompanied by the Britten Sinfonia, with whom she was touring. However, they could not perform that piece with her that night. Instead, she played it solo, with an almost defiant energy that renders the orchestra's role nearly redundant and fully deserves the tumultuous applause she receives. It's a *tour de force* that many stand-mount loudspeakers struggle to portray convincingly because it requires scale, weight, dynamic energy, control and agility. That's a big ask for any loudspeaker; stand-mounts can offer agility and focus, but not always back it up with scale and energy. Thus, the fact that the Fyne Audio F701SP handled it quickly emphasises what a particularly communicative loudspeaker it is.

Fine line

There is a fine line between exciting and overblown, and the Fyne Audio F701SP navigates it exceptionally well. These are not simply party tricks; the driver and cabinet possess enough scale and reach to deliver outstanding performance in any standard-sized room, whether on a large scale or with more intimate music. They also exhibit the sophistication and agility to tackle complex or demanding

material. The F701SP features excellent timing, precision in the leading edges of notes, a rich tonality and a natural sense of air and space. Its dynamic range breathes freely, lacking any prominent reserve or constraint, establishing it as a versatile speaker of considerable talent. If, like me, you occasionally experience menu paralysis, the Fyne Audio F701SP may be the only loudspeaker you require. +

Technical specifications

Type: Two-way bookshelf/stand-mount loudspeaker, reflex ported, downwards-firing port with Tractrix diffuser.

Driver complement: 1 x 200mm IsoFlare point source driver, multi-fibre bass/midrange cone, FyneFlute™ surround with 25mm magnesium dome compression tweeter, ferrite magnet system

Crossover frequency: 1.8kHz

Crossover type: Bi-wired passive low loss, 2nd order low pass, 1st order high pass. Deep Cryogenic Treatment

Power handling: continuous 90W RMS, peak 360W (recommended amplifier power output: 30-180W RMS)

Frequency response: (-6dB in-room, typical) 35Hz-34kHz

Impedance: Nominal 8Ω

Sensitivity: 90dB @ 2.83V / 1 metre

Dimensions (HxWxD): cabinet: 465 x 278 x 393mm

Weight: 14.0Kg each

Finishes: Piano Gloss Walnut; Piano Gloss Black; Piano Gloss White; Satin Natural Walnut

Price: £6,500, \$9,000, €7,700 per pair

FS6 611mm stand: £600, \$849, €698

FS8 644mm mass-loaded stand inc cable management and 2-layer base plate: £1,099, \$1,599, €1,299

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