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AUDIO
FILE

Two-way floorstanding loudspeaker with side-firing bass unit
 Made by: Boenicke Audio, Switzerland
 Supplied by: Elite Audio (Distribution) Ltd, London
 Telephone: 0203 397 1119
 Web: www.boenicke-audio.ch; www.eliteaudiouk.com
 Price: £5526

hi-fi news
EDITOR'S
CHOICE

Boenicke W8

At the 2016 Hi-Fi Show *Live*, one small loudspeaker caused quite a sensation. It was the diminutive Boenicke W8, priced £5526. This is a fascinating design from Sven Boenicke, who has pursued a minimal-crossover approach. He also has very definite ideas about materials and their resonances. Solid wood cabinets have been used, seeking to make an enclosure as *non*-resonant as possible, with each half made from lengths of timber that are glued together.

The side-mounted bass unit is a nominally 6.5in paper-cone unit by TangBand of Japan, run with no low-pass filter. The cabinet loading is said to be tuned to 28Hz, with a slot-shaped rear port or vent. Then comes the front-mounted, 4in paper-coned bass/midrange unit, also from TangBand, but customised

'Here was power and authority, vocals urgent, the sax soaring freely'

by Boenicke with an apple wood phase plug at the front and a maple-wood cone piece mounted on the back of the magnet.

This drive unit is run with no high-pass filter, and it covers frequencies up to about 2kHz. Above it, a Fountek 3in metal-coned wideband driver takes over, fed via a simple first-order high-pass filter.

A mysterious device unique to Boenicke and used in all his W series models is the 'electromagnetic parallel resonator' – a piece of a specially-chosen metal which needs to be of exactly the right length. Adjustments are done by listening, and trimming minutely with abrasive until a satisfactory tone is produced when the metal is struck. The resonators are attached at one end to the positive terminal of the wideband driver, the other end remaining free, like an antenna.

Completing the W8's driver lineup is a rear-mounted tweeter,

a silk dome type by Monacor, which operates above 6.5kHz. Each drive unit has its own partitioned enclosure, while internal wiring is executed in orientation-optimised, silk-wrapped stranded Litz cable.

The optional Swing Base (£900 extra) suspends the rear of the speaker on wires, free to swing with the front supported by a ceramic ball sitting between two metal cups.

A GIANT KILLER

This small speaker was indeed a giant-killer. It could produce a big and convincing soundstage with good depth – it really did give the lie to its small size.

With 'Money' from Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon* [EMI] there was power and authority, the vocals urgent, the sax and guitar solos soaring freely. Almost surprisingly, the W8s could excel with large-scale classical music too, where they could conjure up a vast stereo stage with enticing depth as well as breadth.

Liadov's *Baba Yaga* with the Minnesota Orchestra/Eiji Oue [Reference Recordings] was truly dramatic, the tremendous atmosphere generated not only by the rolling, rumbling timpani but also by the clean and open quality of the whole.

Initially with Ashleigh Smith's *Sunkissed* [Concord] and 'Best Friends', we felt the heavy bass guitar line that Nigel Rivers plays had plenty of volume but lacked some definition. Adding the Swing Bases, the sound was really transformed. Suddenly the drum kit was in three dimensions and the stereo picture bigger and more open. If the speaker already offered a pleasant sense of freedom, this was now enormously enhanced.

VERDICT

These unusual speakers extract a more than quart-sized sound from a pint-sized enclosure. They'll thrive in small or large rooms alike, and produce great sound over a wide listening area. ☺

RIGHT: The Boenicke W8 features a cabinet machined from a series of wood blocks with 6.5in side-firing woofer, 4in paper bass/mid cone and 3in 'wideband' driver. The cabinet front rests on a ceramic roller bearing



HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	88.0dB/83.9dB/82.2dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	3.6ohm @ 5kHz 12.3ohm @ 1.5kHz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	–40° @ 2.9kHz 31° @ 610Hz
Pair matching/Resp. Error (200Hz–20kHz)	±4.7dB/±13.3dB/±14.3dB
LF/HF extension (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	80Hz / >40kHz/>40kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	3.1% / – / 1.3%
Dimensions (HWD)	776x114x260mm