

Audio Physic Classic 8 brings the bass

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Audio Physic Classic 8 loudspeakers

With new UK distribution, via Cyrus Audio, the German loudspeaker brand Audio Physic is set for increased prominence on our high streets. What better time to try one of these highly thought of transducers which have a long and distinguished pedigree. Cyrus selected the 2½-way design that is the Classic 8. The Classic range is the most affordable produced by Audio Physic and the model 8 the second smallest floorstander in the range, it features woofer and midrange cones made of woven glass fibre along with a soft-dome tweeter of imitation silk. As we shall see, the two reflex ports work with the woofer to produce staggering amounts of low-frequency output.

The company behind the brand

Established now for almost 40 years, Audio Physic has created a host of award-winning loudspeakers thanks to the team at Brilon in central Germany. The development team is led by Manfred Diestertich ably assisted by colleagues including the renowned Joachim Gerhard who has been dubbed 'the magician'. Early designs included the Avanti and Virgo, the company's first floorstanding loudspeakers, and the Medea, launched in 1991 and creating quite a storm at the time, I recall. It was followed, in 1993, by the Cardeas which was heralded as reference. I recall fondly the old Virgo II which I class as one of my favourite speakers of all time; it really was outstanding.

Producing a new model at Audio Physic is a protracted affair. Each iteration undergoes hundreds of listening tests; each component is tested and continuously improved until the design team are totally happy with it, not only acoustically but aesthetically as well. This is not one of those market-driven companies that feel obliged to produce a revised model every couple of years for the sake of it.

The R&D team are pioneers in researching and applying new materials and structures in loudspeaker development, forever in search of an even more authentic sound. For example, Audio Physic were the first company to use ceramic foam and showed that glass fibre is not taboo. While many manufacturers now rely on dome tweeters, the R&D team in Brilon have been working on further developing its aluminium cone tweeters, in use now for 15 years. They've also employed newly-developed capacitors with copper foam, and found them most beneficial in the signal path of the crossover, while using open-pored copper foam damping in the midrange/tweeter cabinet on larger models.



The company are proud that every loudspeaker is still manufactured by hand in Sauerland, so they've become one of the last loudspeaker manufacturers in Germany. Many suppliers are from the surrounding area and they keep regionality and sustainability as part of their DNA.

Classic 8 makeup

Based on the smaller Classic 5 design but with additional woofer (with extra-strong motor) to provide bass-support duties, the model 8 is a 2½-way design aimed at rooms up to 20 sqm or more. Both the woofer and mid/bass cones are woven glass fibre, combining low weight with high internal damping. The fixed phase plug of the mid/bass unit reduces compression effects in the crucial midrange and plays an important part in cooling the substantial magnetic motor during operation.

Like the Classic 5, the 8 also has a silk-dome tweeter that resides in a small horn-shaped indentation to subtly adjust the sound radiation behaviour around the 3kHz crossover point between mid and high frequencies. This way, the stereo image remains wide, balanced and precise outside the so-called sweet spot.

The Classic 8's front/rear baffles are as narrow as the main drive units to minimise unwanted reflection and diffraction issues around the cones. Standing just 1m high this is a very compact floor-stander, looking modern and almost Nordic in the satin white finish supplied for review. The 16mm thick MDF cabinets, with internal bracing, are connected to their black plinths (supplied with floor spikes) via M8 spacers to create a vent for the downward-firing reflex port. There is a secondary, circular port on the rear of the baffle directly opposite the tweeter. That tweeter is housed in its horn-shaped faceplate to act as a sonic guide and avoid interference with the 170mm mid/bass unit directly below it. Sited directly below that is another 170mm driver, this one handling frequencies below 500Hz.

Classic 8 set-up

Connected initially to a Hegel H190 streaming amp and placed around a foot from the rear wall with spikes connected and a slight toe-in, I found the sound to be quite a shock. There was a predominance of bass in my room that threatened to swamp the midrange and treble. These



are clearly loudspeakers for those who enjoy pumping bass-lines and are almost the inverse of my usual BBC-style monitors with their early and rapid LF roll-off.

Several adjustments were made but no noticeable difference was evident. I then had the idea to dust off my Trigon monoblocks; German electronics to power a German loudspeaker. Immediately there was a change and the mid and treble became more in balance with the bass such that we had an integrated sound. Further investigation revealed that the Classic 8s have a nominal impedance of just four Ohms, and likely much lower across some parts of the spectrum. The Hegel amp is not known for tolerating low impedance loads and the Trigons were clearly happier in this respect.

Then, right on cue, an Atoll SDA300 Signature streaming amp arrived for review. Connecting this to the Classic 8s provided a much more acceptable partnership such that I felt the review panel could assemble, although it still took me several days to become accustomed to the tonal balance. The listening panel decided to move the loudspeakers further into the room as they, too, felt that the bass was slightly overdone in my relatively small and solidly built room. We discovered that a position some two-feet from the rear wall was much more appropriate, which is not so surprising with that rear port.

Sound quality

The new set-up showed the Classic 8 capable of producing a tight, precise and full-bodied bass. Indeed, there is an immense sense of control and tightness across the frequency range such that even the largest of crescendos remained dynamic and forceful with a warm, musical coherence. This was evident on the mighty forces of Mahler's *Second* (CBSO/Rattle) where an acknowledged inflected interpretation of the work was reproduced with immense realism and forceful gravitas. The whole was enjoyed by the panel which rated the performance highly and noted that there was strength and detail to the sound which allowed engagement with the music, even from the first few notes. I thought the sound lacked the ultimate sparkle that I am used to but the dynamics were certainly impressive and from such a compact cabinet. The treble was detailed and without any unwanted colorations to mar the sound. The ability to play both softly as well as to cope with the immense forces of this work was notable and we all agreed that articulation was superb, helped by the bass which was delivered with unbelievable amount of power, even at modest listening levels. I had a feeling my neighbours would agree since I was conscious of not only my internal organs but also the floor vibrating.

By contrast Vivaldi's *Gloria* (King's Cambridge/Cleobury) was a delight and, after the panel left, I played it again such was the level of clarity and listener involvement from this piece which lacks the thunderous bass of the Mahler. The refreshing lightness of texture was brought home so vividly, the soloists so clear and uncoloured, the pensive cello causing me to tingle with excitement. The level of midrange and treble detail conveyed is just incredible and not expected from a speaker of this size and price.

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The panel felt it fitting to play something German and non-classical, so from 1986 Falco's Rock Me Amadeus (American Edit) was chosen. The only German language record ever to top the UK charts (well, probably Austrian as that's where the performer is from) it was an ideal selection since it contains so much detail. The Classic 8s took it all in their stride, re-creating the singer right there, in front of us, in flesh and blood as it were. The realism was uncanny, the reproduction precise as every guttural noise, every syllable came across loud and clear. I was starting to understand why the panel enjoyed these loudspeakers so much. The bass, which at



first I found rather over-powering, has so much power; it is fast and in fact neutral. Imaging is also pinpoint across an immense soundstage which draws the listener in. The midrange is also refreshingly clean and uncoloured, while the treble from that soft dome is sweet and never shrill or unpleasant.

The ability to engage the listener was reinforced with a track I've been using a lot lately, George Ezra's Shotgun. Through the Classic 8s we heard a huge degree of detail, our feet were soon tapping to the catchy, almost addictive tune and showing that Audio Physic believe that timing is important in a loudspeaker if you want the tune to whip along at pace as intended. I noted the natural midrange while others mentioned the tight, deep beats.

Conclusion

It took me a while to appreciate these loudspeakers, to understand them and to find a compatible amplifier; they are such a far cry from my usual broadcast monitors. Those who find BBC designs 'dull, lifeless and boring' need to try the Audio Physic Classic 8s. They will blow your socks off. They look modern; they sound modern.

The build-quality is excellent and these loudspeakers offer great value-for-money. It's great that they now have proper UK distribution since Audio Physic is clearly a brand that deserves much greater recognition for its products. Despite their compact dimensions, the Classic 8s revel in space and are clearly capable of filling a large room with thunderous bass. A hearty recommendation for their spacious soundstage, sonorous bass, sweet treble and uncoloured midband.



The ear is all about great music and great sound. It is written by hard bitten audio enthusiasts who strive to find the most engaging, entertaining and great value components and music of the highest calibre. This really is what living is all about.