

**Dynaudio Special Forty | Stereo speakers | £2500**

# “Three words: subtle, confident, muscular”

**FOR** Bold, dynamic sound; excellent build and finish

**AGAINST** Easy to underestimate | ★★★★★

**We have a confession.** Our first impression of Dynaudio's 40th anniversary speaker is more one of mild disappointment than anything else. It's not that there is a lot wrong with the Special Fortys, just that they seem a little too familiar.

Dynaudio has made any number of two-way standmounters of this size with drive units that look pretty much identical to the ones used here. Put aside the gorgeous finishes - the options are Birch in either grey or red gloss - and there seems little to differentiate the Fortys from any number of products the company has made in the past. And pretty much all of them were way cheaper than these speakers.

Things start to look brighter once we delve into the details. These speakers are indeed designed as something of a homage to the company's past, but they're not meant to be museum pieces. That drive-unit array may look straight out of the £600 Emit 20 (or even the Contour 1.1 from more than a decade ago), but it's actually based on the drivers used in the company's high-end Confidence C1 model that retails for 10 times as much.

## All change

Dynaudio didn't just plonk the units from the C1 into the Fortys. The drivers have been fettled extensively, and the engineers worked on improving the airflow and damping behind the 28mm tweeter dome. The idea is to reduce backpressure as the

diaphragm moves, which increases detail and lowers distortion. The motor system has also been tweaked.

That 17cm mid/bass driver still uses the company's traditional MSP (Magnesium Silicate Polymer) cone - it's a one piece cone that uses the large dome in the middle to aid rigidity - but much else has changed, from the suspension, to the voice-coil former, to the magnet system. Dynaudio says this is the best 17cm mid/bass unit it makes, which is quite some claim considering it has far pricier two-way models on its books that use similar drivers.

**“There's a natural fluidity to the Special Fortys' dynamics. We admire their ability to tie a multitude of strands together in a convincing, musical way”**

These drive units are mated by a relatively simple first-order crossover that is designed to minimise phase and impedance issues. Each drive unit can cover quite a wide range - the tweeter can delve to 1kHz while the mid/bass is comfortable up to 4kHz - but the crossover point is fairly conventional at 2kHz.

Our Special Forty review samples weren't new, so it didn't take long for them to come on song. Positioning is simple; we end up with them placed on solid stands, a metre or so from the rear wall with just a hint of angle towards the listening position.

These Fortys don't provide a particularly difficult electrical load - nominal impedance is a claimed 6ohms - so most price-compatible amplifiers will be happy driving them. We use both our reference Gamut D3i/D200i pre/power and a Roksan Blak amplifier for this test without issue.

How do the Fortys sound? We keep coming back to three words in our notes: confident, muscular and subtle. We start with Holst's *Mars* and the Special Fortys respond with glee. They sound far bigger and more authoritative than a speaker that stands 36cm high has any right to.




Part of this is down to a powerful, well-extended bass that balances weight and agility superbly. The rest is down to a combination of composure and dynamic reach that allows these boxes to cope with the demanding crescendos of this piece.

The orchestra is organised with precision and stability. There's a good sense of depth, which extends the presentation well beyond the confines of our listening room. We like the tonality too. There are more neutral alternatives - ATC's mighty SCM19s come to mind - but the Special Fortys are even, cohesive and nicely balanced.

The lovely gloss Birch finish lends these speakers a luxury feel



## KEY FEATURES

-  Single wire
-  Two-way
-  17cm mid/bass

They're also magnificently detailed, digging out the low-level acoustic clues that define the recording venue with ease. This resolution is apparent whatever genre of music we play. We love the way these speakers reveal the texture and attitude in Jill Scott's voice on *Gettin' In The Way*.

## Stand out in a crowd

There's a natural fluidity to the speakers' midrange dynamics and we admire their ability to tie a multitude of instrumental strands together in a convincing and musical way. They're surefooted when it comes to timing and rhythms, rendering the changing momentum of the piece well.

Playing Bruce Springsteen's *Radio Nowhere* shows the Fortys can cope with dense production while delivering a sound with drive and plenty of energy. While these speakers are great at revealing low-level information, they're just as happy to rock along and entertain.

A large rear-firing port means you'll have to leave a bit of space behind the Special Fortys



The Special Fortys are easy speakers to underestimate. They're not an overtly cutting-edge design that uses the latest in high-tech materials, nor are they styled to stand out in a crowd. But once we start listening, none of that matters - we're far too busy having fun.

## SYSTEM BUILDER

**Total build £11,300**



### STREAMER

**Naim ND5 ★★★★★ £2250**

This insightful and captivating streamer is one of the best we've tested



### AMPLIFIER

**Roksan Blak ★★★★★ £2800**

A fully featured all-rounder that works superbly with a wide range of systems



### TURNTABLE

**VPI Prime ★★★★★ £3750**

One of the most likable record players we've heard in recent years

## WHAT HI-FI? says

**Rating ★★★★★**

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

COMPATIBILITY ★★★★★

**VERDICT** The Special Fortys are superb standmounters. Paired with suitably talented electronics, they will shine