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MoFi Electronics SourcePoint 8 loudspeaker

Kalman Rubinson | Aug 17, 2023



When I got these new speakers for review, they were so new that, at the time I unpacked them, no official user manual was included or posted on the manufacturer's website, and the promised matching stands didn't exist. Yet, I have the abiding feeling that I am getting to the party long after it has started. The Mobile Fidelity SourcePoint 8 is the newer, smaller sibling of the SourcePoint 10 reviewed by John Atkinson in *Stereophile's* February 2023 issue, with a follow-up by Ken Micallef in June.

With so much ink already spilled, it seems wasteful of your time, the magazine's space, and my time and effort to rehash what has been ably covered and annotated by my colleagues, so I won't describe the history and qualifications of the speaker's deservedly well-known designer, Andrew Jones, or the principles of design and engineering applied to the SourcePoint 10 and SourcePoint 8 in common. What I will do is what high school English teachers so often request: Compare and contrast.

First, the obvious: The SourcePoint 8 was designed to be smaller, utilizing a smaller driver which, in turn, requires a smaller enclosure. It is smaller by 20% in every dimension, at 11.4" × 18" × 12.6" compared to the SourcePoint 10's 14.5" × 22.5" × 16". Consequently, it is much lighter, too, at 27.9lb vs 46.2lb.

However, creating it was not simply a matter of scaling down in a linear fashion, as Jones explained to me over Zoom.



With the SourcePoint 10, Jones chose a large-diaphragm woofer not only to extend LF performance but also to minimize cone displacement, which is especially important in a concentric design because the woofer cone serves as a (moving) waveguide: Displacement can intermodulate the tweeter's output. An 8" driver mounted with a standard surround with typical half-roll termination would have a much smaller active surface, requiring even greater displacement. So, Jones designed an 8" driver (as measured by the radius of its mounting holes) with a narrowed corrugated termination, which also serves as mounting support. The result is an 8" driver whose active area is almost as large as the SourcePoint 10's 10" driver and whose displacement will be similar, especially since its range does not extend as low: 47Hz vs 42Hz.

Fortuitously, the magnetic motor assembly required for this new driver could be (and is) the same as that in the SourcePoint 10; Jones was able incorporate that "Twin-Drive" assembly with its original 1.25" concentric HF driver into the new 8" driver with not much more than a new basket/frame. As a result of these similarities, one would expect the SourcePoint 8 to retain most of the SourcePoint 10's performance, except for two notes (F_1 , at 43.65Hz—the second-lowest note on an upright bass or bass guitar—and the $F^\#$ just above it) at the bottom of the larger speaker's range.

Arrival and setup

The SourcePoint 8s arrived finished in Satin Black Ash veneer in a single box, accompanied by a carton containing a pair of Solidsteel SS-6 stands, which were provided in place of the not-yet-ready dedicated stands. The single, 8" concentric driver is placed centrally on the front baffle, surrounded by facets that enhance dispersion by moderating the acoustical effect of the cabinet's rectangular edges. The only notable event in a basically trivial setup involved placement of the included grilles, which snapped magnetically into the slightly recessed front panel with the strength of a crocodile's bite. (Good thing I always start with speaker grilles on, until I have reason to think they affect the sound for the worse.) I connected my monoblock Benchmark AHB2 amplifiers to the SourcePoint 8's single pair of multiway binding posts with Benchmark/Canare cables.



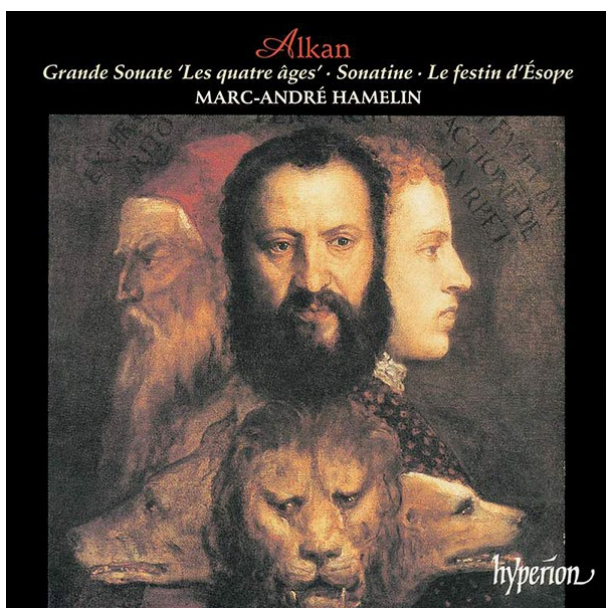
MoFi's documentation for the SourcePoint 8 and SourcePoint 10 omit any statement about whether the speakers should be oriented vertically or horizontally. All the illustrations show them vertical, and all the logos imply that as well. (The logos are all sideways when the speaker is oriented horizontally.) However, with a single, centrally located concentric driver, there is no obvious reason why they could not be oriented horizontally. (A single SourcePoint 8, mounted horizontally, should be appropriate for use as a center channel speaker.)

I placed the SourcePoint 8s—vertically—on the SS stands and, after some experimentation, situated them about 8' apart and about 11' from my listening spot. In that position, each was about 3' from the respective sidewalls and about 4.5' from the wall behind them. I found

that the clearest and most stable center imaging was achieved with the SourcePoint 8s toed in about halfway between straight ahead and directly aimed at the listening position. This placement resulted in a wider sweet spot than I'm used to. The soundstage just snapped into place (just like the grilles!) when I was seated anywhere on the sofa; it quickly lost focus when I started to stand up. Seated ear heights vary, so you should be prepared make adjustments in speaker height or tilt to fully appreciate what the SourcePoint 8s can do.

Sitting and listening

Back in the Stone Age, when I was using osmium-tipped "needles" to play 78rpm records at home, I was shocked to hear what came out of the Zenith High Fidelity record player newly purchased by the parents of a school friend. Listening to a Mantovani LP, I visualized the sound of violins as a gentle waterfall flowing out of the wooden box, never hitting the ground. That childhood image sprung from my memory when I played Marc-André Hamelin's recording of Alkan's *Grande Sonate 'Les Quatre Âges'* (Hyperion CDA66794, played from file) with the SourcePoint 8s. From these relatively plain and chunky boxes, Hamelin released a torrent of notes as he soared through the opening movement, "20 Ans. Très Vite," expressing the joy and optimism of youth. So many notes (but not *too* many) flew by, each clearly defined, many with a pearly ping.



Spurred by that experience, I listened to *Gypsy Baroque* (Il Suonar Parlante Orchestra, Vittorio Ghielmi, Alpha Classics ALPHA 392, CD from file), a delightful collection of gypsy and gypsy-influenced music by Telemann, Tartini, Benda, Vivaldi, and Mozart scored for and played by folk and classical instruments of the time. The MoFi SourcePoint 8s portrayed all those bowed, plucked, struck, and strummed sounds with such character and transparency that I was able to visualize each in its place on the soundstage. The ensemble was positioned between the speakers, extending backward from the loudspeaker plane.

I am particularly fascinated by the last track on this album, "Mozart the Gypsy & Mozart Sîrba (After Mozart's Violin Concerto in A Major K219)," a riotous riff on the last movement of that concerto. Hear the detail in the crunchy bass lines that pace the theme and its *ritornellos*.

I heard no brightness from the SourcePoint 8s. I also did not hear any hint of "audiophile air" producing a simulated, false sense of spaciousness. What I *did* hear was a relatively forward and engaging presentation coupled with sharp detail. Familiar voices and tracks were presented honestly and clearly without enhancement or highlighting. Listening to solo voices—"Go Your Way" from Alison Krauss's *Raise the Roof* (Rounder Records 1166101371, 16/44.1, download); "Dat Dere" from Ricky Lee Jones's *Pop Pop* (Geffen Records, GEFD-24426, CD rip); "Too Proud" from *Give It Up to Love* by Mighty Sam McClain (AudioQuest Music, AQ-CD1015, CD rip)—I felt that each singer was fully present in my room. The same was true for "Stimela (The Coal Train)," from Hugh Masekela's *Hope* (Analogue Productions APJ 82020, SACD rip); Masekela's voice and trumpet were incredibly intimate and focused—an intense experience, although the famously lively ambience did not spread beyond the speakers.



The SourcePoint 8 demonstrated remarkable bass for a small box with a bass driver of modest size. They did not reproduce much output below 50Hz, but above that frequency they proved capable of

tight, powerful bass. I subjected them at high levels to my stress-test track: "Jazz Variants," from the O-Zone Percussion Group's *La Bamba* (Klavier KD 77017, CD rip). The result was thrilling in its dynamic range; the powerful bass pounded the room and my chest. The SourcePoint 8s (on their own, I emphasize—no subwoofers and no DSP) were satisfying because they did not break up or bottom out, unless I exceeded neighborly decorum. It would be a lie to say that they were the equal of what I experience from the far larger KEF Blades (which were lurking in the background) or with the assistance of a subwoofer or three. The results of releasing the energy in that additional octave of bass were undeniably awesome.



The SourcePoint 8s provided convincing bass; let's see what they can do with complex music covering a wide dynamic and frequency range. Spurred by Stephen Francis Vasta's comments on the CD release of Mahler's Symphony No.2 ("Resurrection") with the Czech Philharmonic conducted by Semyon Bychkov, I downloaded a 24/96 PCM version from the Pentatone website. Immediately, with the opening's deep chugging of lower strings, it was apparent that the SourcePoint 8s can reproduce a convincing sense of symphonic weight and space. Indeed, the first movement (first published independently as "Totenfeier," a symphonic poem for large orchestra) evolves, expands, and, through

multiple *tutti* (with bass drum), eventually concludes with a note of fatalistic dejection. The SourcePoint 8s presented all this movement's churning and heaving, as well as its intervals of sweetness and hope, clearly and powerfully in an acoustic space that permitted the orchestra to breathe. The sonic highlights were the entry of Christine Kulman's creamy alto voice in "Urlicht"; the explosive opening and recurring outbursts in "Im Tempo des Scherzos. Wild herausfahrend," and the inexorable momentum of the conclusion, starting with "Aufersteh'n, ja aufersteh'n wirst du" with large chorus, off-stage instruments, and a massive coda that includes all that plus an organ. This symphony never fails to be thrilling and cathartic live. To be similarly affected by this music presented through a modest-sized pair of standmounts was quite remarkable.

Off-topic

Several people, including Andrew Jones, have mused on the possibility of using the SourcePoint 8 or its bigger brother as the center channel in a multichannel system. Before I boxed them up to send to JA1 for measurements, I gave that a brief try. The plan was to compare three configurations: my two KEF Blade 2 Metas in stereo, the KEFs in multichannel (with phantom center, footote 1) using the Revel Performa3 F206s for surrounds, and the KEFs and the Revels with a SourcePoint 8 as a discrete center channel (footnote 2) in a full 5.0 multi-channel arrangement.

With Marianne Beate Kielland singing Finzi's "Come Away, Death" (2L 2L-064-SACD), I switched between stereo and multi-channel (with a phantom center) by selecting the respective DSD files on my server. Predictably, multichannel resulted in a wider, more immersive acoustic and a very subtle improvement in the perceived solidity of the piano, but it seemed to have no effect on Kielland's lovely voice. Switching between a phantom center and discrete center with one SourcePoint 8 required selecting between two virtual zones in JRiver. This time, the most notable difference was in



the definition of Kielland's voice, which was now a step farther forward, still slightly to the left of the piano and marginally fuller—more human if that's possible.

As a center channel, I don't think that the SourcePoint 8 did anything other than what any well-balanced speaker would do, and I cannot say with certainty that it was worse (or better) than, say, a third KEF Blade Meta or a different KEF. What I can say is that five SourcePoint 8s would likely make for a dandy, compact multichannel system.

Some comparisons

As I was completing this review, I received the July *Stereophile*, which includes my review of the

B&W 705 S3 with its picture on the cover. I decided to compare and contrast the two experiences.

The MoFi and B&W speakers are similar in size and application, but they sound quite different from each other. The B&Ws were more open and threw a wider, taller soundstage and managed, occasionally, to disappear outright. The concomitant was an elevated treble, to which one can adapt but which may still prove fatiguing, especially with bright, aggressive recordings.

Tonally, the SourcePoint 8s were more self-effacing. They did almost everything right, without attracting attention to themselves. (Spatially though, the script was flipped: The SourcePoint 8s disappeared less readily than the B&Ws did.) The MoFi speakers proved capable of revealing even fine differences among sources, yet I never tired of listening to them.

When I set up the Revel Performa3 F206s to compare them with the SourcePoint 8s side by side, the differences were elusive. Voices via the Revels were a bit more reticent and farther back than they were through the SourcePoint 8s, although the soundstage was similarly detailed. The Revels had more extended low bass, but with most source material, the SourcePoint 8s seemed fuller. I find myself listening to the Revels at somewhat higher levels than I do the SourcePoint 8s. Perhaps this is why.

Conclusions

To say that I am pleased with the Mobile Fidelity SourcePoint 8 speakers is an understatement. But before I sum up, let me get the few caveats out of the way. First, these speakers do not delve into deep bass, though except on a few specific tracks (including those with prominent low-Fs and F#s on piano or bass) and in direct comparison to much larger speakers, you're unlikely to notice that anything is missing. Second, although I have enjoyed larger loudspeakers at higher levels than the SourcePoint 8s are capable of, this would not be a practical constraint for most serious listeners. Third, the SourcePoint 8s should be evaluated at ear level. Truly, these are less caveats than application notes.

Making no accommodation for their small size, the SourcePoint 8s are balanced, wide-range speakers, enjoyable at all practical volume levels. They generate a fairly wide and deep soundstage that is notably transparent and detailed. They are engaging and nonfatiguing, and they encourage long, enjoyable listening sessions.

The SourcePoint 8s demonstrate how satisfying a small, relatively affordable loudspeaker can be.

Footnote 1: I did this because, at this time, I do not (yet) have my third matching KEF for center channel. To redistribute the center channel info to the L/R KEFs, I used JRiver's undefined JRSS algorithm "Move Center to Front L/R" or my own implementation where the center content is sent to each of the front speakers with a -3dB attenuation.

Footnote 2: I tried the SourcePoint 8 as center in both vertical and horizontal orientations, but they were indistinguishable.

Sidebar 1: Specifications

Description: Two-way standmount loudspeaker. Drive units: 1.25" wide-roll soft-dome tweeter concentrically mounted in an 8" paper-cone mid/bass driver in dual-vented enclosure. Crossover frequency: 1.6kHz. Frequency range: 47Hz–30kHz. Nominal impedance: 8 ohms (6.4 ohms minimum). Sensitivity: 87dB (2.83V/1m). Recommended amplifier power: 30–150W.

Dimensions: 18" (456mm) H \times 11.4" (290mm) W \times 12.6" (320mm) D without grille. With grille, 13.2" (335mm) D. Weight: 27.9lb (12.7kg).

Finishes: Satin Walnut, Satin Black Ash (real wood veneers), painted Satin White.

Serial numbers of units reviewed: B730003 (both speakers). "Designed and engineered in USA and manufactured in China."

Price: \$2999/pair with stands, \$2750/pair without. Approximate number of North American dealers: 75. Warranty: 5 years (parts and labor).

Manufacturer: MoFi Electronics, 1811 W Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago, IL 60660. Web: mofielectronics.com.

Sidebar 2: Associated Equipment

Digital sources: Oppo Digital UDP-103 universal disc player; Custom Intel/Win11 music server running JRiver Media Center v31 and Roon; exaSound s88 Mark II, and Okto DAC8 Pro D/A processors; QNAP TVS-873 network-attached storage device.

Preamplifiers: Coleman Audio 7.1SW for balanced source switching.

Power amplifiers: Benchmark AHB2, NAD C 298.

Loudspeakers: KEF Blade 2 Meta, Revel Performa3 F206; Bowers & Wilkins 705 S3; SVS SB-3000 subwoofer.

Cables: Analog interconnects: Benchmark Studio&Stage XLR–XLR, Kubala-Sosna Anticipation (RCA), Cardas Cross (subwoofers). Speaker: Benchmark Studio&Stage, Blue Jeans Canare 4S11. Digital: AudioQuest Coffee (USB).

Accessories: Furman Elite 15 DM i, Brick-Wall BrickWall 8RAUD, and CyberPower 850PFCLCD UPS power conditioners; Teddy Pardo 12V power supply (for exaSound s88); HDPLEX 300W Linear Power Supply and AC filter (for server).

Listening room: 24' L \times 14' W \times 8' H with 2 MSR Acoustics Dimension4 SpringTraps in the front corners. Sidewalls lateral to L/R speakers have 2" thick, 2' wide, floor-to-ceiling OC 705 panels. Front wall has large windows partly covered by fabric drapes and 4" thick 2' \times 4' OC 705 panels. Rear of room opens into 10' \times 7' foyer and a 12' \times 8' dining area.—**Kalman Rubinson**