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In his column that starts on the next page, Stan Curtis begins by discussing the crucial importance of bass extension in defining the whole business of high fidelity. He goes on to describe his own experiments, mainly with very large horn and panel constructions, and I must admit I had a very good – albeit rather too brief – time with the enormous Tannoy *Kingdom Royals* not long ago, which turned out to have a beautifully even bass delivery, albeit from a large port-loaded drive unit. But maybe I should be adding a codicil of a more practical nature.

For example, I've rather enjoyed using the tiny little cast-iron JERN speakers, alongside active REL *T/5i* subwoofers, as a refreshingly compact alternative to the much larger floorstanders that normally occupy my room. The sat/sub combo might not have delivered superior performance, but it didn't fall far short, and the end result was definitely a lot more lounge-friendly. Indeed, the JERN inventor recently showed me a circular 'on wall' prototype, again made from cast iron and only 2-3in deep, that I'm looking forward to trying as an even more discreet and lounge-friendly package....

My more recent experiences with the single-driver Pearl Acoustics *Sibelius* speaker (see *Subjective Sounds*) do rather make me question whether deep bass (which of course they don't have) is actually necessary. But going back to a system with plenty of extension does deliver something that is normally considered 'hi-fi', whether justified or not.

The very fact that I've spent two full months enjoying a pair of *Sibelius*' must say something about the inherent direct-coupled appeal of the single-driver approach, despite its restricted bandwidth. There's certainly a bit of extra magic with such an approach, especially in the midband, but reverting to the full range B&W *800D3*s made me realise that this is really a 'six of one' situation. Indeed, I'd go so far as to describe the *Sibelius* speaker as equally valid in its own way, even though it obviously takes a very different – and in some ways a more mature – approach to high fidelity.

The single-driver performance is certainly rather different from the far more widespread 'speakers with bass' approach. After the last couple of months experience I've come to the conclusion that it's not only entirely valid, but actually a superior approach, inasmuch as one is unlikely to choose this particular route until multi-way loudspeakers have been tried.

However, the bottom line for those seeking serious bass extension has been a multi-way approach, either with a large passive speaker (such as the B&W *800D3* or Tannoy *Kingdom Royal*), or by using a part-active speaker system, such as the JERN + REL subwoofer (or two).

Alternatively I've recently been experimenting with some Hart Audio speakers which have built-in bass amplification and lots of little LF speakers firing out of the back. This arrangement seems to work quite well, delivering deep bass from a relatively compact Tannoy DC-based stand-mount. Indeed, the only obvious drawback is the need to add mains power!

Paul Messenger
Editor