

Subjective Sounds

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Originally planned to devote a full page to each of two speakers, largely because both are unusual and both of them are therefore interesting. But availability (or rather the lack thereof) is likely to be a problem for both.

The first (and simplest) one is apparently called an MBA *Marauder*, and had been sitting unexamined in its box in my hall for many months. MBA's home is quite close to mine, and its website is still active, but unfortunately the printed phone number is 'not recognised', and I don't have a mobile number to reach Darren Hollands. Furthermore, neither the MBA (nor the parental Sonic Concepts) site list a *Marauder*, nor anything similar, so I initially thought I'd be a bit stuck.

However, the reason for opening up the box and getting intrigued and enthusiastic about this speaker is simply that it has a single full range drive unit from Mark Audio. And that's the same Hong Kong-based operation which supplied the lovely *Sibelius* speaker that I got so enthusiastic about in the last issue.

Some extra detective work was necessary, and I first came across an Oak Audio brand and a guy called Stefan who runs a kit speaker operation called KJF Audio from a village called Bishops Itchington, somewhere off the M40. He gave me contact details for Darren, but the dreaded voice mail seems to be getting in the way of communication (as is all too common these days!). I'd have liked to chat about availability and current price, but simply couldn't get hold of him.

Detective work aside, the stand-mount *Marauder* is quite a chunky little affair. Although the front is quite narrow, the unit as a whole is rather deeper than one might expect, and the total weight (on some very suspect bathroom scales) is around 18lbs (c8kg). Finish was a very Pro-oriented textured black, and no grille provision was visible, though all the edges had been nicely radiused.

Although the load is bound to be easy for the driving amplifier, as there's no crossover involved, the front panel does incorporate a slot port. However, in-room far-field averaged traces do reveal the very audible weakness, as a distinct lack of bass output leaves the upper midband (say 600Hz-2.5kHz) looking very exposed. This was much less true with the *Sibelius*, where a quarter-wave floorstanding enclosure (and some proprietary drivers specified from Mark Audio) helped to fill in the upper and lower bass, at least down to 50Hz or thereabouts.

Mounting the *Marauder* close to a wall did help, as did over-angling it inward so that one avoided the direct on-axis sound. However, this was really only part of a solution to a distinct problem, tending to move the output downwards by reinforcing the bass at the expense of the lower midband.

I understand that the *Marauder* costs around (or a little below) £1,000/pair, so it's very tempting to regard it as a £5,000/pair *Sibelius* 'on the cheap'. That was certainly my main initial hope, but in fact this was a case of hopes being dashed. The *Marauder* does 'sort of' work, especially when positioned close to a wall and over-angled to avoid on-axis listening, but I also have to point out that it's really no substitute for the 'real thing',