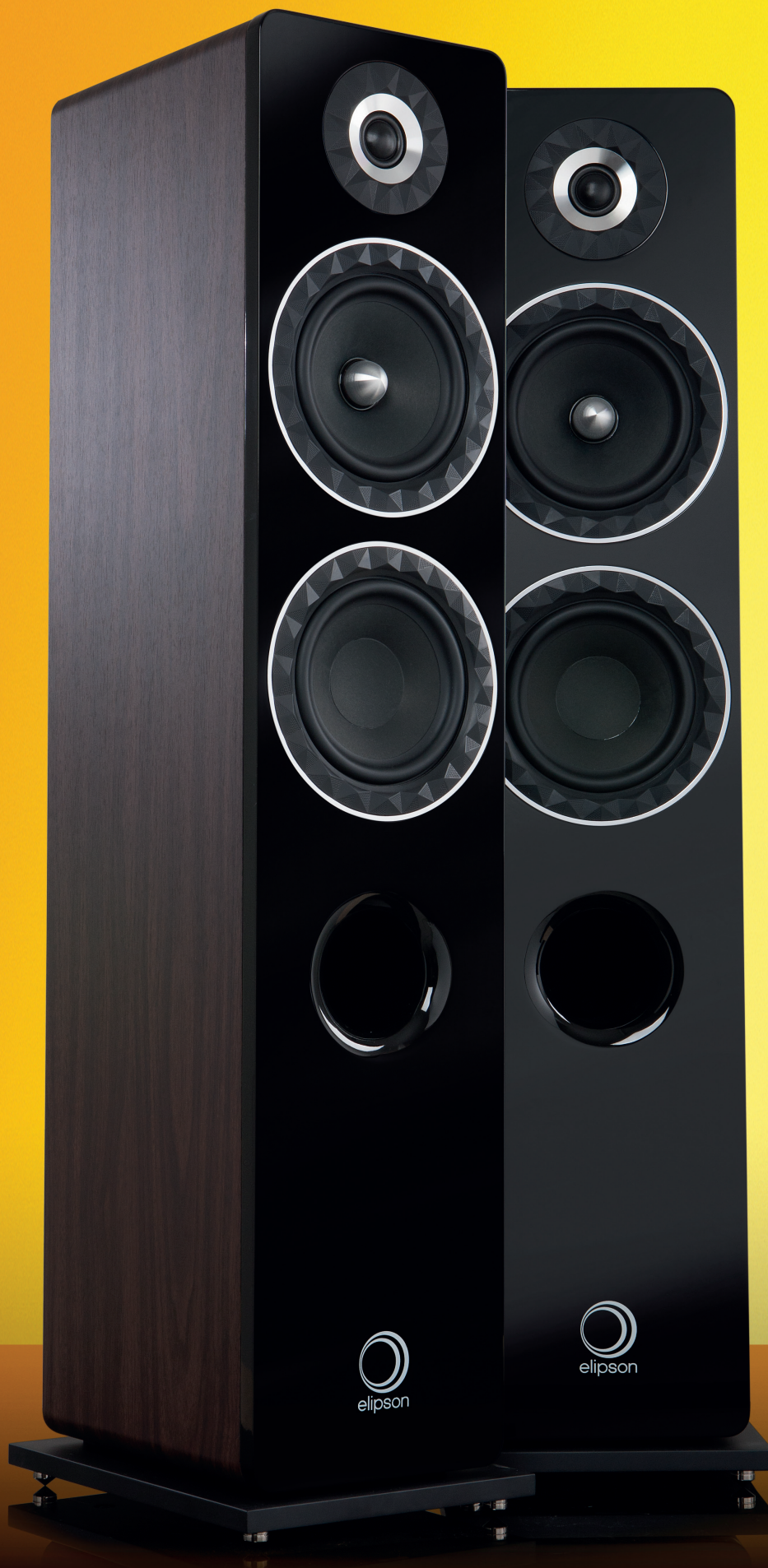


REVIEWS **ELIPSON**  
PRESTIGE FACET 14F £899



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# Lust for life

Known for its lifestyle designs, **David Price** is enchanted by the iconic French brand's more conventional entry-level floorstander

**O**ur story starts with Joseph Léon, a man decorated for bravery for his work in the French Resistance during World War II. Later, as managing director of Multimoteur, he began manufacturing loudspeakers called *Conques* (French for shells, due to their elliptical shape), and then changed the name to Elipson ('ellipse' and 'son', the latter being the French word for sound). The brand became quite iconic during the fifties and sixties, and Léon was awarded the National Order of Merit for his research and creations in 1962. The brand was reborn in 2008, when Philippe Carré and Eric James recreated it, with the accent on design and interior décor. The spherical

## Kate Bush's vocals sound smooth, even and intimate – and project very well

Planet is the company's iconic design, but it also makes more conventional and affordable box speakers such as the Prestige range you see here.

While the Prestige Facet 14F speaker looks pretty standard, some original thinking has been done to get the best out of the standard 'moving-coil drivers in a box' orientation. It's the company's entry-level floorstanding loudspeaker, quite large considering the price at 238 x 1,026 x 351mm (WxHxD) and at 20.5kg, heavy too. It's a two-and-a-half way design, with a 25mm soft dome tweeter, 165mm mid/bass driver and a similarly sized woofer. The latter sports a bullet-shaped phase plug to limit vibrations and thus reduce distortion, says the manufacturer. Elipson has fitted specially sculpted, multifaceted silicon surround rings around each drive unit; claimed to reduce the audibility of the front baffle and to improve sound dispersion.

Head of design, Philippe Penna, says that the aim was to use efficient drive units; as well as taking less amplifier

power, this means a faster and more responsive sound. "That is why they're equipped with powerful magnets with high drive unit motor strength for low distortion. We could have gone for even higher sensitivity, but we wanted to offer low bass extension too", he explains. The bass-reflex port was tuned to 35Hz, because "that was the best compromise". The company says that the speaker's steep-slope crossover filter uses audiophile-grade components, such as MKT capacitors and metal oxide film resistors.

The large cabinet is more solid than you would expect at the price. It is a medium density fibreboard box, with internal strengthening brackets. The front baffle is double layered and lacquered, with two panels of differing thicknesses glued together, and the cabinet gets a decent quality vinyl wrap. Round the back, bi-wireable speaker terminals are specified, suitable for taking bare wire or banana plugs. Finishes include black, walnut and white. A removable base is supplied with each speaker (pictured), and, of course, spikes for use on carpeted floors. The largish, front-firing bass port means that placement is a little easier than some rivals; the Prestige Facet 14F can sit closer to boundary walls than many speakers of this size. I find it works best around 60cm out in my room.

This loudspeaker has pretty impressive claims made for its measured performance; frequency response is quoted at a wide 38Hz to 25kHz ( $\pm 3$  dB), and power handling is a solid 150W RMS, with nominal impedance being a reasonable 6ohm. The star attraction is the claimed sensitivity figure of 92dB/1W/1m, which should make it work well with low-powered Class A solid state and valve amplification; my listening tests confirm that it is able to go a good bit louder with the same power than many rivals.

This is a big, warm, comfortable-sounding loudspeaker – one that belies its price in many ways. It's obvious from the off that it isn't the

### DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Elipson Prestige Facet 14F

**ORIGIN**  
France/China

**TYPE**  
2.5-way floorstanding loudspeaker

**WEIGHT**  
20.5kg

**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
238 x 1,026 x 351mm

**FEATURES**  
• 1x 25mm silk dome tweeter  
• 1x 165mm paper cone mid/bass driver  
• 1x 165mm paper cone bass driver  
• Quoted sensitivity: 92dB/1W/1m (6ohm)

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most forensically accurate design, but that doesn't detract from how nice it sounds. In this world of cold, hard and ultra-detailed floorstanders, spraying information at the listener, some might like to seek solace in something as smooth as the Elipson Prestige Facet 14F.

### Sound quality

I kick off the listening session with *Ace Of Wands*, a classic slice of progressive rock from one-time Genesis guitar virtuoso Steve Hackett. It's clear that the Elipson isn't your average entry-level floorstander. It has real quality in some respects, although isn't quite as accomplished in others. Although made during the glory days of analogue in the mid-seventies, this recording can sound a bit thin; not here though. The Prestige Facet 14F gives a large, confident and full sound that is slightly coloured – especially in the bass. This is no criticism given its price point, and some will think it rather welcome. It adds a touch of extra heft to bass guitar and drums and helps to push the song along. This effect is slightly exaggerated by a very smooth midband; indeed you might even call it subtly recessed. I find myself listening into the speaker ▶

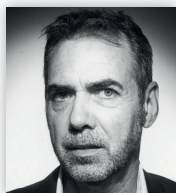
Those distinctive silicon surround rings are claimed to aid sonics



## Q&A

### Philippe Penna

R&D manager, AV Industry



#### DP: What type of buyer does this series appeal to?

**PP:** The flexible Prestige Facet series has been developed to provide hi-fi quality products to every music listener and multi-channel enthusiast. The loudspeakers recreate the original essence of the music you're listening to for a very reasonable price, with attention to the design to make sure they fit with all interiors. The analysis of our social networks and sales tells us that our customers are generally aged between 25 and 65+ years old.

#### What is special about the design?

The rubber facet rings act to minimise the baffle effect and ensure a perfect symmetrical polarisation of high frequencies in all directions. The sculpted edges around the mid/bass driver ensure optimal coverage with the tweeter, but for the bass drive unit it is purely aesthetic because of its low cut off frequency.

The glossy front panel looks good aesthetically, but also has acoustical benefits with two panels of different thickness glued together to aid vibration cancelling and also makes the cabinet more inert. We use three different types of internal damping with three levels of absorption to control and reduce standing waves. Our bass reflex port is large and three times thicker than usual to avoid any port noise when playing high level bass frequencies.

#### What materials are used for the drivers and can you explain why they were chosen?

For the mid/bass and bass drivers our aim was to get efficient drivers with a high velocity for a quick response time, dynamics and resolution even when playing at low levels. Our drivers are equipped with powerful magnets with high drive unit motor strength for low distortion. We could get higher sensitivity, but we wanted to offer low bass extension with the best control possible. The drivers in each of our models are different even if they look similar to one another. Essentially the main drivers use paper cones partnered with a silk dome tweeter.

## IN SIGHT



- 1 165mm paper cone mid/bass driver
- 2 25mm silk dome tweeter
- 3 Bi-wireable speaker terminals
- 4 Forward-firing bass port



**Q Acoustics' £999 Concept 40 (HFC 385) is one of the best small floorstanders around at the price, and gives the Elipson Prestige Facet 14F a headache on the showroom floor.** The little Briton is undeniably smaller and less gutsy in terms of its sound, yet has a finesse and an accuracy that the French-designed rival lacks. In truth, both are really good and offer a type of sound that's like the choice between tea and coffee. The Q Acoustics is clean and more subtle, while the Elipson delivers a bigger punch and feels more peppy. Classical music aficionados should look to the former, whereas rockers are advised to try out the latter.

and allied to a delicate, gentle treble, the overall effect is of a very pleasant offering that's quite euphonic. It might not be the best for getting the last ounce of detail from a pristine classical recording, perhaps, but it's very good for playing back pop and rock music – this speaker certainly doesn't flaunt the imperfections.

Manix's *Hypnosis* is a case in point. Although a brand new mini LP release, the music is pure early nineties retro electronica, designed to sound like it was playing out of a Kilburn pirate radio station at the turn of that decade. It's grimy and dirty, but also has great big break beats that any fan of the genre can't help but adore. The Elipson proves brilliant at this sort of material; it doesn't set out to prove a point, preferring instead to sit back and deliver an involving, gutsy rendition of the sound. It is a big speaker, and solid too. Even with the volume cranked right up on my Arcam C49/P49 pre/power amplifier (HFC 409), this speaker has great fun – churning out large tracts of bass with relatively little compression, and commendable extension too. Some budget rivals sound like the music is being squeezed out of a toothpaste tube, and require lots of watts to get the

joint jumping. The Elipson, however, is the opposite, it's happy to saunter along with only a modicum of power yet still sounds quite animated. It plays to its strengths all the time – smoothness, physical heft and the ability to shift air easily.

You can trip it up, though. Kate Bush's *Hounds Of Love* is a seminal slice of mid-eighties rock; much of the track uses sampled sounds on a Fairlight CMI, with sequenced Linn drums. In truth it's technically clever, but doesn't have as big a sound as her earlier analogue work and can sound a little opaque through less revealing hi-fi systems. The Elipson sort of gets caught out here; it isn't really transparent enough to get to the heart of the recording and ends up

## The front-firing bass port means that placement is easier than some rivals

sounding a bit vague and plummy, with some extra warmth added that lessens the impact of the drum track. At the same time, however, there's no criticising its handling of Kate's sublime vocals; these sound smooth, even and intimate – and project very well. Indeed, in terms of sound staging this speaker does better than I would expect at the price.

## Conclusion

I like the Elipson Prestige Facet 14F. It has a certain self-confidence, and doesn't overreach itself as a result. It delivers a big, warm and sweet sound that's always enjoyable, fills the room and has no small amount of physical presence. If you don't expect it to give you exceptional levels of clarity, you'll find it a pleasing listening partner – and it's also really good value for money, too ●

## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

#### SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★

#### VALUE FOR MONEY

★★★★★

#### BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★

#### EASE OF DRIVE

★★★★★

#### OVERALL

★★★★★

**LIKE:** Big, smooth, sweet, animated sound

**DISLIKE:** Midband is opaque; some cabinet boom

**WE SAY:** Highly likeable, great-value floorstanding speaker