



Not knowing a lot about ELAC, when the courier truck dropped off a pair of FS77 floor-standing loudspeakers for review, I was keen to open the boxes and see what would be revealed inside. ELAC products haven't been readily available in Australia for some years, but distributor [Synergy Audio Visual](#) have recently announced they're now available once more from authorised dealers.

I removed a pair of lovely satin white pair of speakers and hooked them up to my AV system to give them some playing time before I have a closer, more critical listen to them. It was immediately obvious that I was going to like these speakers. The sound was high quality, honest, mature and with very reasonable bass extension. And that's with them not run in as yet. Over the next couple of weeks they continued to improve, smoothen out with more macro and micro detail, and dynamics being most evident. In the mean time I also thought that I would do some investigation on the company making this speaker.

ELAC

ELAC the company was founded back in 1926 in Kiel, Germany, originally researching sonar technology and signal channels in air and water. They made their first turntable in 1948 and started designing loudspeakers in 1984. Nowadays, they solely manufacture loudspeakers and accessories, with virtually everything including the magnets and their unique drivers made in-house. That in itself is something you don't come across all too often today. They firmly believe that by making the whole speaker in a continuous production chain at a single location, you will achieve a much better result than those that outsource the individual production steps to third party companies. The fact that it's "Made in Germany" the way that it is, by a passionate team of employees, is something that the company is very proud of. Who am I to argue? I discovered that the range of speakers that ELAC manufacture is quite large; with various wall, bookshelf and floor standing models, home theatre, subwoofers etc. with a vast range of products all the way up to a large \$22,000 flagship model.



Product Overview

The FS77 is ELAC's entry level floor-standing loudspeaker with a retail price of \$1,499. Aesthetically, I think they look great; attractively elegant and slender, being only 170mm wide, 970mm high and 309mm deep. The cabinet is a 2 way bass reflex design with a rear firing port. The driver configuration consists of 2 x 150mm mineral-filled paper cone woofers and a 25mm polyester dome tweeter, crossing over at a frequency of 2,600 Hz. The quoted frequency range is 42 -28,000 Hz with sensitivity of 89 dB / 2.83 V / m. Internally the cabinet's bracing has been optimised by the factory to be resonant free and the use of air core inductors and film capacitors have been fine tuned for critical crossover points. The speaker has a nominal impedance of 4 Ω and has been designed as suitable for amplifiers rated for 4 - 8 Ω with a recommended amplifier power range of 20 - 150 W / channel. The speakers comes in a choice of either satin black or satin white, with a lacquer finish and weigh 15.5 kg each. All ELAC speakers carry a ten year warranty covering full parts & labour.

Setup

The FS77's proved easy and straight forward to setup. I placed them in my usual positions, about 40 cm away from the front wall and about 50 cm from the side walls with the usual amount of toe-in alignment, aiming them to the outside of each ear when sitting in the centre position. They didn't seem very demanding as far as positioning goes. Included in the packaging were a small set of metal cone spikes suitable for carpet along with metal coins for hard floor surfaces. They were effective in raising the speakers just off the floor a centimetre or so, to tighten up the bass and reduce boom. I would have preferred something with a little more lift from the floor but they were ok. Connection to the speaker leads is via 5 way binding posts with a reasonably large locking nut.



Listening

This setup in my listening room immediately proved very effective. What I could hear was a large open soundstage with a smooth full range sound. The full frequency range is well catered for, with a smooth and extended top end, a midrange that doesn't draw attention to itself and a solid foundation to the music from an extended bottom end. The sound is rich and well proportioned. I'm most impressed with the amount of ambient information available with plenty of musical detail.



Removing the cloth driver covers added a little more top end energy and ambient information, resulting in a soundstage that sounds natural and addictive. Let me give you some examples. An old classic from **Cream**; '*Strange Brew*', has a heavy and distorted short and sharp guitar strum every 4 seconds that had just the right amount of treble bite and then a decay into silence. I hadn't noticed before how good that track can sound when played right. The soundtrack to '*The Hot Spot*' stars many excellent musicians including **John Lee Hooker**, **Taj Mahal** and **Miles Davis**. In '*Blackmail*', the track starts slow and deliberate with a simple bass line and snare/kick drum in perfect unison, overseen by a guitar that carries the tune. It sounds clean and very well timed. On the '*End Credits*', **Miles'** trumpet sounds right with his distinctive sharp piercing trumpet that cuts through the air into a black background and a jumping beat that makes you want to leave it on repeat play. The whole album sounds like it was made for the ELAC's.

The FS77's have a habit of laying a great musical foundation to the track, with clean bass notes that give a natural extension making a track sound enjoyable and gets the foot tapping away in time. **Neil Young's** '*Greendale*' album contains lots of foot tapping music as his raunchy lead guitar plays tightly with the bass guitar and drums, to form an intoxicating and pleasurable sound mix that demands that you listen from start to finish. **Trentmøller's** 2006 Album '*The Last Resort*' features electronic music with incredibly deep bass lines that the FS77's

had no trouble with. In fact the floor and whole room shook with the tight and very subwoofer worthy track 'Vamp'. There is no doubt that these speakers can be driven to realistic volume levels and push out a lot of air from a diminutive looking speaker with only a couple of 150 mm drivers. All of the speaker's components, the drivers, crossover, enclosure and tuned port have been chosen with care and attention as they are more than the sum of their individual parts, creating a great sounding, musical speaker.

I tried a variety of power amplifiers and felt that the FS77's handled themselves with versatility. The best sound seemed to come from clean and powerful amps. I had on hand for a future review, the Auralic Merak 400W (into 4 Ω) mono blocks and they really allowed the speakers, even at moderate volume levels, to drive fast and clean, with very good bass extension. This combination made the speakers sound much larger than they appear, although I would admit that they seemed to do that, more or less with any of the amps I used, even with only 70W/Channel. With a quoted minimum impedance of 3.9 Ω / 240 Hz it should in theory, be easy to drive them with a wide variety of amplifiers and my listening tests certainly back that up.



Alicia Keys' albums (I prefer her earlier ones) sounded great on the FS77's and had no trouble conveying emotional context to her passionate singing and piano playing. These speakers seem to excel at laying a musical foundation by means of well-timed bass notes, with drums and bass guitar sounding natural and realistic. '*Hard Believer*' is the sixth studio album by British band **Fink** and this album also plays to many of the strengths of the FS77's. The Pace Rhythm and Timing of music is often subconsciously communicated to the listener and sometimes when it is only slightly out of sync do you get the sense that something is wrong. This never happened with the FS77's. When listening to a classical piece like **Mozart's** '*Requiem*', where the larger, heavier instruments of an orchestra hold the undertone and tempo allowing the strings and massed voices to carry the tune, you get the all the important timing information conveyed, holding the musical tempo steady and making it most enjoyable to listen for long periods of time.

Conclusion

I have been very happily surprised by the ELAC FS77 loudspeakers. They are an attractive loudspeaker that delivers a bigger sound than one would expect from a compact floor standing model of this size. The frequency extensions are well catered for, and of special mention is the bass quality, which allows the musical flow and timing of your favorite tracks to be enjoyed and relished.

I looked, but really can't find any serious fault with these speakers, especially at the asking price. And speaking of price, at only \$1499 they are extraordinary value. I would really like to hear the more expensive speakers in the ELAC lineup, as I'm sure that they also would be quite special.

The Germans really are passionate about their products and seem to really live by their own marketing words "Quality is more than just a word to us, next to music it is also our passion." I would heartily agree. Recommended.

