Elac FS247 Sapphire Edition (£3000)

The first of two German speakers reviewed this month, the elegant Elac delivers a fine sound that’s ‘genre agnostic’

Review: Richard Stevenson  Lab: Keith Howard
ELAC’S EVOLUTION

While Elac might not be a very common name in the UK, Electroacoustic was founded in Germany in 1926 – coincidentally the very same year Tannoy was founded in the UK. The company started off building military application echo-sounding equipment, but the end of the second World War saw the factory slim down from 5000 staff to less than 300. Rather limited as to what it could use its acoustic engineering experience for in post-war Germany, the company began building radio receivers for Siemens. Throughout the next three decades Elac specialised in radios, consumer electronics and turntables, until it went bust in 1978. The hi-fi heydays of the 1980s saw the company re-launched and producing a successful range of cartridges, tuners and, by 1985, its first high-end loudspeaker. By the mid 1990s the brand acquired its JET tweeter technology from another speaker company, A.R.E.S, and has concentrated on loudspeaker manufacture ever since. Elac’s philosophy is one of designing and building product in-house at its Kiel factory, giving the company’s speakers unique components and features throughout its various ranges.

The grille out of sight. A shame then that the mounts front and rear are traditional lug-and-sockets rather than hidden magnets, which would have made that unique driver array look even better.

Down at the base the Elac’s plinth is fully lacquered to match the cabinet and each unit is supplied with an innovative foot pack. This has both stainless steel spike cones and tough silicone inserts made for hard floors, interchangeable without demounting the feet from the plinth. The feet nuts have a wide plastic outer grip that protrudes beyond the plinth making levelling the FS247SE’s far easier than the normal crawling on your tummy with spanner exercise. I didn’t personally like the plastic-chrome spacers between the plinth and the cabinet, but that really is being picky.

THE JET SET

The first thing anyone will notice when hearing Elacs for the very first time is the sound of that JET tweeter. It is breathtakingly sweet and articulate. Suddenly metal domes sound hard and ‘ringy’ in comparison to the JET’s sophistication and detail. It sounds clean, crisp and seamlessly well balanced throughout the top end of the spectrum with wide, wide, projection.

Clearly the design of the tweeter’s baffle will encourage a considerable horizontal dispersion and the result is a soundstage you can measure in acres with a very generous listening sweet-spot.

The hard acoustic guitar on ‘Liar’s Dance’ from Robert Plant’s Manic Nirvana was delivered with lightning-fast leading edge attack and the track filled the room with genuine three-dimensional presence. The sound of fingers sliding over the strings was immaculately detailed and built on the song’s passion and intensity. You could slide from one end of the sofa to the other with barely a change in tone or focus, with parts of the soundstage projected so far into the room they created an almost surround-sound effect. Plant’s dulcet tones joined the mix at the front of the stage, making up for slightly loose focus with power and a wonderfully dynamic edge.

Even on compressed pop the Elacs seemed to dig into the music and project it into the room with superb air and space. Bat For Lashes’ Fur And Gold was delivered with festival passion and an infectious rhythm throughout. Natasha Khan’s sumptuous Kate Bush-esque vocal was wonderfully rich and breathy. On the virtually a cappella ‘Sad Eyes’, the Elacs delivered every detail right down to the movement of Khan’s tongue in the saliva her mouth – which sounded a whole lot better than it reads!

As expected from the tweeter’s aluminium baffle-grille arrangement, the dispersion pattern is very wide but limited vertically. If you stand up, the balance noticeably changes, losing some of the JET’s magic and clarity. Being prone to standing up boogieing behind the sofa this proved something of a caveat for me. There was not quite enough latitude in the screw-in feet to give the FS247SE sufficient backwards tilt to counter this dispersion issue, but a couple of large floor-cups under the front spikes saved the day. So long as you can tilt the speaker perpendicular to your listening height, Elac’s tweeter is truly magical. So much

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Moreover, the Elac is not just a

so it rather detracts from the
very well balanced mid and lower
frequency reproduction which in
any other speaker would be the talk of
the show. This is a very neutral
sounding and well-balanced speaker
and I suspect it will measure like a
ruler [see Lab Report, opposite].

RIDDING HIGH
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With The King, by Eric Clapton and
BB King, the Elac simply lapped up
this well recorded traditional blues
album. The very old-school 'Ten Long
Years' powered into the room with
weighty and infectious bass rhythm
and with King's unmistakable voice
rendered in superb detail.
The punchy 'Hurting Kind' from
the same Clapton/King CD has a
swift, substantial beat that was
tightly controlled by the Elacs. The
dynamic range does not go massively
depth but it was driven and potent
with a tangible richness. Through
to the mid-bass the LF reproduction
was a real toe-tapping head-bobbing
experience, with more grunt than
any speaker of this size has a right
to produce. My notes say 'nicely
fruity yet never overbearing', which
sums it up perfectly. Even as the
volume raised, the speaker's overall
composure – given that this is quite a
complex track – remained impressive.
The whole sound from the
properly three-dimensional imaging
to the driving rhythm was incredibly
cohesive and enjoyable. Elac's
gorgeous FS247 Sapphires are simply
masters at capturing the whole
picture, from the inflections in BB
King's accent to the smooth slide
guitar and warm ambience of the
recording studio.

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT
The FS247 Sapphire Edition
combines the sweetness and
ultra-wide imaging of Elac's
proprietary JET tweeter with pace
and neutrality across the rest of
the spectrum. Impressive from
the outset it is about as music-
genre agnostic as loudspeakers
get and very easy to live with.
The sumptuous good looks, fine
attention to detail, accessories
and superb finish make this sleek
German speaker excellent value.

Sound Quality: 85%

![Graph 1] shows a fast initial energy decay at all frequencies but
response. The cumulative spectral decay waterfall [Graph 2,
below] shows a fast initial energy decay at all frequencies but
low-level midrange driver and tweeter breakup is visible. KH

![Graph 2] above shows a fast initial energy decay at all frequencies but
low-level midrange driver and tweeter breakup is visible. KH

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity (6/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)</td>
<td>88.6dB/87.9dB/87.6dB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz–20kHz)</td>
<td>3.4ohm @ 213Hz/13.7ohm @ 76Hz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impedance phase min/max (20Hz–20kHz)</td>
<td>-18° @ 94Hz/42° @ 32Hz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pair matching (200Hz–20kHz)</td>
<td>±1.28dB</td>
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<tr>
<td>LF/HF extension [-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz]</td>
<td>47Hz/40kHz</td>
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<tr>
<td>THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)</td>
<td>0.7%/0.2%/&lt;0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions (HWD)</td>
<td>1021x220x320mm</td>
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ABOVE: Above these chunky bi-wire terminals the FS247SE offers mounting lugs on
the rear panel to store the grille safely, if you prefer listening naked at the front.

ABOVE: The slightly ‘hot’ upper treble may be tamed
by listening a little off-axis. Frequency
response errors of ±2.7dB and ±2.9dB attest to the essential
flatness of the response. Pair matching error is good at ±1.2dB
(also 20Hz-20kHz) and would have been even better but for the
disparities between 2kHz and 4.5kHz. The difference in bass
extension with the rear port open or plugged may seem small
(47Hz vs. 54Hz for –6dB re. 200Hz) but the nature of the two
alignments is quite different. The former response is essentially
flat before a precipitous roll-off, whereas the latter rolls off
more gradually and will certainly have a superior transient
response. The cumulative spectral decay waterfall [Graph 2,
below] shows a fast initial energy decay at all frequencies but
low-level midrange driver and tweeter breakup is visible. KH

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JULY 2011 | www.hifinews.co.uk | 33