

ESTELON YB MK II

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Wow!

With a presentation of over 10 years in the industry, Estonian Afred Vassilkov's company is far from being just another unknown small manufacturer. His speakers are not only perfectly recognisable, they make an impression, comfortably claiming the title of show stopper wherever they appear. An example is the Extreme Mk II at this year's Munich. The company's "small" three-way is a first-class opportunity to see the company's views and how they work in practice.



When you hear "three-way flooring" you are preparing for something big. Often, big, and uncomfortable, something that will impose itself on the space with its physical presence and the truth is that in many cases, this is what both sides of the equation, that of the designer and that of the user, are looking for. None of this applies in the case of the YB. The speaker is, of course, large, with a height of over 1.2m and a respectable weight. Uncomfortable you can't call it and its bulk doesn't show at all. It disappears into space and while it doesn't go unnoticed, unless the observer suffers from aesthetic cynicism, it's one of the most eye-friendly speakers I've seen. It's clear that the Estelon YB Mk II wins you over on first impression.

From Follows Function...

The YB is the epitome of "non-parallel sides". In fact, there aren't even any flat surfaces on the speaker as, apart from the base, the cabinet is created by something resembling spherical sections where you can't even see a straight edge. This, in addition to the extremely interesting aesthetics, sets the stage for a construction with very limited standing waves, particularly good stiffness characteristics and very good control over diffractions, as what we might call "baffle" for mid and high speakers is very small in width, with no parallel edges.

With such a shape, you don't expect, of course, the construction material to be some kind of timber, and it isn't. The YB is made by casting and the synthetic material used is marble based. The result, says Estelon, is very low chromaticity, a behavior aided both by the transverse reinforcements and the fact that the woofer, the mid/tweeter head and the speaker electronics are in separate chambers.

In a move not often seen, Estelon has opted to use a closed-back cab, apparently choosing better control and speed over a "richer" voicing low end. To help the speaker in this area, Vassilkov follows a relatively old recipe, placing the woofer very low, close to the floor. This ensures better behavior in the very low frequency range, as the proximity of a boundary gives a natural boost, but my personal assessment is that most manufacturers don't go this route because, visually, it creates an imbalance. This, of course, applies mainly to the classic parallel booths. In the case of the YB it not only doesn't bother at all, contributes to the overall picture.

Additionally, the speakers have mirror symmetry, in terms of the position of the woofer, creating a dual placement scenario, with the respective loudspeakers facing either the inside or the outside of the set-up. The choice is based on the size of the room and the distance of the side boundaries from the speakers. Estelon's general advice, however, is to place the speakers with the woofers on the inside.

Megaphones: A classic recipe!

Do not translate the term "classic" as "ordinary". I'm referring to the quite logical tendency of many manufacturers to base their designs on top-of-the-line units when aiming for the top performance (and price) category. Estelon loves ceramic baffles and diamond domes, but these are options we see on their larger models. The YB, being the company's smallest speaker, can't use such units, but the choices made here are also top-notch.

The high frequencies are delivered by an inch tweeter, Scan-Speak's Illuminator, with a beryllium dome, the midrange is delivered by a 5.8-inch unit, Revelator, also from Scan-Speak, while the woofer is an eight-inch unit owned by Seas. The three loudspeakers are driven by a filter with third-order cutoff characteristics between woofer and mid and second-order cutoff between mid and tweeter. The filter materials are of very high quality, hardwired, to the company's own specification, and the internal wiring is done with Kubala-Sosna conductors.

The package is complemented by magnetic protectors and an interesting range of finishes, which includes black and white gloss, white matte, red (Red Racing) and a "limited" gold version (Champagne Gold).





In practice...

The YB is a relatively small speaker in terms of its space requirements as its base measures just over 33x39 cm. This means that one won't find it difficult to position it correctly in one's space, a process which is also facilitated by the possibility of choosing the position of the woofers in relation to the side walls, which is offered by the mirror symmetry of the speakers. In our case, the 'inside' position for the woofers was chosen. From there you only need to make small movements to optimize the performance, especially of the image.

The first impression you get when listening to the small Estelon is that of an uncompressed, detailed, fast and lively speaker, which, it is true, immediately wins you over with its immediacy and its presence/absence in the room. It fills a small or medium space in an imposing way (the company gives a range between 16 and 45 square meters, personally I find 45 square meters a bit too much) and you immediately understand that you are facing something serious, but it disappears very easily acoustically, probably because of the small dimensions of the baffle around the tweeter and the midrange.

The very low frequency range was rendered with remarkable balance, very good sense of range and without the slightest hint of exaggeration. The YB sounds commanding when the recording calls for it, but not in a way that will draw attention in the wrong way. Probably the choice of closed cab plays its part here, but the clarity I got at the lower limit is some of the best I've

heard in recent years. The result is full, fast and creates a sense of fullness that is rarely found.

The rhythmic parts appeared balanced, with very good speed, and the large acoustic instruments (double bass, cello) had correct dimensional scaling and top-notch pulse performance, qualities that make YB an excellent case in my opinion. The very good behavior in the low end and the absence of compression often lead to exaggerations on the part of the user who should not forget that the YB is a relatively small speaker (despite its 1.30 height) with an eight-inch woofer. If he forgets, that's okay, the Seas reaches the end of its journey and politely reminds him...

The middle range was one of the best I've ever heard. I got an excellent sense of transparency, very good layering and extremely balanced brightness and sense of presence. The voices were rendered in an excellent way, with the right timbres and articulation, and the listener has the feeling of being in the same room as the soloists, enjoying the air and dimensions of a large stage and very soon catching himself immersed in the composition and, simply, enjoying the listening. The speaker never sounds harsh or projective, but neither does he adopt detachment, as a mannerism, creating a generic, "natural" image. The focus of the scene is at the right distance for a detailed description, without being overwhelming. An exercise in balance solved in an exemplary manner by Estelon.

The stereo image also follows the term "exemplary". There is a sense of discipline, with clear description of the dimensions of width and depth, very good focusing capabilities of individual

sources and very good description of movement and air. The YB clearly places itself in monitor area when it comes to these matters and with a good recording you can get excellent results, both with small ensembles and individual instruments and with large orchestras, where the position and movement of instrumental groups and choirs is accurately and unusually dynamic.


High up, the speaker has excellent air, with, also, an excellent sense of range. It is fast, with impeccable body description and very good damping characteristics, skilfully balancing between the necessary punchline and the expected, evocative, presence. It never sounded harsh, but if you're expecting an euphonious, rounded "forgiving" character, YB will not satisfy as it's clear that accuracy has been prioritised over character and opinion. The harmonic richness is impeccably delivered, and the overall sound is as warm as it should be.

The little Estelon is just that: A small Estelon, i.e. a miniature speaker of the company's large models (as we have seen and heard them at various shows), without unnecessary compromises. The sonic result delights with its balance and precision, and Vassilkov knows the art very well. He has managed to bring his ideas down to a smaller scale, dimension, and price, without changing his basic design principles. Of course, we are dealing with a very high price range speaker and our demands must be high. Even so, however, the YB Mk II surprised us, pleasantly. And that is a rarity. If you are among those looking for something top of the line, give it a listen. Maybe it's your speaker!



OVERVIEW

INFO **Element Audio**
Tnλ.: **210-491.8790** | www.elementaudio.gr


estelon

Description:
Floor speaker

Roads/Mixes: 3/3

Speakers: 1x 1" tweeter (Scan-Speak Illuminator),
1x 5.8" midi (Scan-Speak Revelator),
1x 8" woofer (Seas).

Charging: Closed type.
Sensitivity: 86dB SPL/1m/2.83V

Rated impedance:
6Ω (minimum 3Ω/52Hz)

Frequency response:
30Hz-40kHz

Other features:
Magnetic protective grids,
choice of finishes

Dimensions:
332x1260x394 (WxWxH)

Weight: 45kg

Price: €24.900

