



Full circle

Neat goes back to where it all began with its reworked Petite. **Ed Selley** decides if this is all shameless nostalgia or progress

Mining your back catalogue is all the rage at the moment and Neat Acoustics is the latest to get in on the act. The Petite was the first Neat speaker; originally a dealer exclusive, but after being demo'd at a show the response was so good Neat set up as a speaker company. The Petite continued to evolve before production ended in 2016.

The Petite Classic is a return to the original and something different again. The cabinet is the same size as the original, which makes it feel shallow compared with more modern standmounts. It is rear dual ported, with one venting the tweeter with a foam filter while a second with no filter aids the mid/bass driver. Around the back is a single set of small but sturdy terminals.

Where things deviate significantly from the original is the tweeter. This is an Air Motion transformer, offering an upper frequency response of 22kHz. The 150mm polymer mid/bass driver is in keeping with the original Petite

as well as being related to more recent designs. Having handed over from the tweeter at 3.8kHz, Neat's aim is for the Petite to have usable output (with roll off) down to 30Hz.

Neat quotes sensitivity of 87dB/W with a nominal impedance between 4 and 6ohm. There are almost certainly speakers that are easier to drive at the price, but none of the amps I try show any signs of struggling. The cabinets also seem to be unfussed about positioning. Neat offers a choice of black or white sheen finishes. The overall levels of build and finish are very good, although some people may lament the absence of a grille.

Sound quality

Those ambitious bass extension claims are not the first thing that most people notice when listening to the Petite Classic. The company's experience with ribbons and air motion transformers is put to good use here, meaning Marina Diamandis' haunting performance in *Soft To Be Strong* is the centre of a stereo image

that extends well beyond the cabinets' placement. This is not simply perceivable as width, there is appreciable height too.

The bass response also impresses. The opening beats of Yello's *Desire* have a heft that is quite a surprise from a cabinet this svelte and the low-end is reached via a very linear response rather than feeling tacked on. The integration between the drivers is exceptionally good and they combine to give a tonal presentation that is refined without feeling smoothed over or softened. There are speakers that can manage to extract a little more fine detail, but few are as consistently even-handed as this.

That's not the best bit, though. What shines through every aspect of the performance is an unburstable sense of fun. 'Fun' is not a measurable construct, but I'd be very surprised if you didn't put on a piece of music you were innately familiar with and crack a smile after a few minutes. The Neat makes use of the excellent integration between the drivers, negligible cabinet colouration and seriously impressive transient speed to take pretty much any time signature you can envisage and deliver it with the precision of an atomic clock. An extremely spirited run through Bloc Party's *Silent Alarm Live* is a near-perfect combination of that technical ability to create space and depth and a more primal ability to get you wanting to sing along.

Conclusion

What this means is that the Petite Classic perfectly captures the spirit of the original without compromising the technical attributes we should expect from a standmount at this price point in 2022. It is a beautifully executed balancing act that should slot into a variety of systems and delight in every one of them. Neat's take on nostalgia might be a little different to some other companies, but it is absolutely perfectly judged ●

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Neat Acoustics
Petite Classic

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
2-way standmount
loudspeaker

WEIGHT
7kg each

DIMENSIONS
200 x 300 x 180mm
(WxHxD)

FEATURES
● Air Motion
transformer tweeter
● 150mm
mid/bass driver
● Quoted sensitivity:
86dB/1W/1m

DISTRIBUTOR
Neat Acoustics

WEBSITE
neatacoustics.com

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★

FEATURES

★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★

LIKE: Outstanding blend of realism, detail and out-and-out joy; well made and highly attractive

DISLIKE: No grille

WE SAY: Sensationally combines the joy of the original with some modern talents