

Mission

796

Floorstanding Loudspeakers

\$3999

tone ★★★★★

It seems the days of loudspeaker companies producing boring black boxes are dwindling. Creating different shapes and finishes is becoming easier as manufacturing technology becomes more and more sophisticated.

The last few years have seen a shift away from vinyl wrap and the conventional speaker shape; enclosures are becoming sculpted to avoid internal standing waves, while the increasing use of real timber veneers and better, more sophisticated internal bracing have resulted in a less resonant box.

Mission is another darling of the 1970s British hi-fi industry. During this era the company also made Cyrus electronics but sold off that business in the 1990s. The early '90s saw the birth of the now legendary Mission 753, a sophisticated medium-sized floorstanding design with a revolutionary transverse-folded reflex enclosure and no fewer than five drivers per box. It was a huge sales success for Mission and was well regarded by the extremely critical English hi-fi press. The 753 was the forerunner of the popular 783 flagship speaker, which added a side-firing bass driver instead of the multiple driver concept of the earlier 753, but kept the excellent build quality and funky aesthetic.

With Mission finally retiring the 78 series, it was time for an update both in terms of technology and sound quality. Enter the 79 series, and the flagship 796 – a substantial floorstanding statement of loudspeaker elegance.

Standing at just under a metre tall, the slim pedestal shape of the 796 should find favour in most homes because of looks alone. These are real beauties. The review sample pair were immaculate in their real rosewood gloss veneer, while everything from the classy plinths and rubberised speaker front baffle to the finely turned speaker floor spikes just oozed class.

Although the speaker appears very slim, a 200mm bass driver is concealed behind a non-removeable grille. This driver then crosses over to the 165mm bass/mid unit and tweeter on the front fascia, which is a fairly common arrangement these days.

Armed with my trusty Korus v8I amplifier, Raysonic CD128 CD player and the very nice Opera-Consonance Ping, it was time to experience the 796s in my listening room.

I left the Missions playing *Ultra Lounge* for a few days to run them in before serious listening commenced.

It was apparent early on that the 796s were very accomplished performers, with all the hallmarks of the early 75 and 78 series: excellent detail, good extended bass and a sweet upper register. One attribute of the 796s I really liked was the ability to sit in front of them and listen to music for extended periods, as they are very non-fatiguing. Tracks from Miles Davis's classic *Kind of Blue* compelled me to just sit there and take this masterpiece in, while 'Bouncing Off Clouds' from Tori Amos's *American Doll Posse* album grooved along in an infectious manner. I'm not one for dancing with myself, but if I were so inclined, I may just have done it while listening to this track via the 796s.



They don't quite convey the attack and sheer dynamism of my Wharfedale Opus 1s, but on the other hand I was able to sit and listen to the 796s for much longer periods, which all means that it finally comes down to personal taste. And according to my personal taste, they're brilliant. ■ GARY PEARCE

A plethora of new technologies has been ushered in with Mission's new 79 series. The cabinet is formed from a substance called 'Granitech' – a stone-like material with standing wave-resistant properties, producing an almost inert enclosure free from vibration. The tweeter domes are made of woven Viotex, a fabric that is incredibly light and capable of moving at extremely high speeds without distortion, thus improving the upper frequency band and detail. Think better living through technology and you're there – in a musical kind of way.

DETAILS

SPECIFICATIONS

ENCLOSURE TYPE: Three-way reflex

COMPONENTS: Bass – 200mm; bass/mid – 165mm; tweeter – 25mm

FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 38Hz – 20kHz

SENSITIVITY: SPL/M @ 2.83V – 90 dB

IMPEDANCE: 8 Ohms compatible (min 4 Ohms)

RECOMMENDED

AMPLIFIER: 50 – 200W

DIMENSIONS: 998 x 206 x 318mm (H/W/D)

PROS

- ✦ Gorgeous aesthetic and build
- ✦ Seriously good sonics

CONS

- ✦ My other half won't let me buy them

VERDICT

Mission accomplished