

# FinkTeam KIM

UNUSUAL IN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION, AND AGAIN NAMED AFTER A *STAR TREK* CHARACTER, THE LATEST ARRIVAL FROM THE SPEAKER-CONSULTANTS-TURNED-MANUFACTURER IS ITS SMALLEST – AND MOST AFFORDABLE – YET. HAVE THE MORE COMPACT PROPORTIONS BEEN ACHIEVED WITHOUT COMPROMISING PERFORMANCE? MARTIN COLLOMS INVESTIGATES IN-DEPTH

**We much enjoyed the challenge presented by the Borg, an earlier design from FinkTeam, (HIFICRITIC Vol13 No4, Oct-Dec 2019). That was the second in-house loudspeaker from the Karl-Heinz Fink design team, following their big three-way design skills demonstrator, the WM-4. About a year later FinkTeam has delivered KIM to the market – a more compact design with a two-way bass reflex enclosure, supplied complete with an integral, square, hollow section steel stand of distinctive ‘slant back’ geometry, intended to aim the optimum treble unit axis at the listener.**

Named, like Borg, after a character from the *Star Trek* TV series, and selling for £8900/pr, KIM is a classic concept, with more than a hint of reference to the BBC monitor LS 3/6 of nearly half a century ago. That circa 1968 design comprised an advanced eight-inch/200mm bass/mid driver (with a surface damped moulded co-polymer cone), working with an unusual, pistonic 38mm primary high frequency unit. By original design, this tweeter was acoustically front-loaded by a distinctive equalising grille.

The LS 3/6 monitor was exemplified in large commercial volumes as the standmount Spendor BC1, manufactured by the designer and Spendor founder Spencer Hughes, and later augmented with a 19mm super tweeter to extend the range to 25kHz. KIM differs in that while it has a 200mm bass-mid driver, the single high-frequency unit is an AMT air motion transformer, a form of Heil ribbon.

Often speaker makers are not too keen on stands, and floorstanding designs have become more popular in recent years. If not supplied by the manufacturer, stands are an unwelcome variable which can affect sound quality; if they are supplied, they may be viewed as adding more complication and expense. Yet there is a certain quality to a standmount loudspeaker design, with sounds in the broad midrange frequently seeming better able to free themselves from the acoustic effects of the local reflective environment especially the floor boundary.

The stereo image can gain a natural sense of elevation, with improved focus and better definition while the lower midrange may pick up speed and articulation, often making up for a possible loss in lower frequency weight. Vocalists and musicians rarely lie on the floor, but almost invariably perform standing or seated. When recorded programme is thus reproduced off the floor by employing a stand at nearer to conventional performance height, the

result may well sound more natural and show a more convincing spatiality.

The early prototype KIM looked rather ungainly with its original semi-integral, part-cabinet support, the latter aspect associated with the front elevation, but now two distinctive features have emerged. These comprise a new, separately constructed but integral lightweight stand: almost vestigial, with hollow slim welded box steel sections, the design also gives the speaker a gentle upward tilt, this orientation providing a less symmetrical – and thus more neutral – radiation envelope.

## The tilt advantage

The tilt back also aids the time alignment, thus optimising the overall sound output arriving at the listener. Differential adjustment of the front and rear spikes provides some accommodation for distance and seated head height. Initially I found its appearance disconcerting but got used to it during the evaluation.

Primary specifications include overall height (with stand) of 85.4cm, plus width 30cm and depth 31cm, the latter increasing to 42cm including the projection resulting from the stand tilt back. Each assembly weighs 25.1 kg complete, evidence of quite a dense construction, and KIM comes with adjustable rounded point floor fixtures and floor engaging spikes these in a 6mm thread format.

There's a rectangular, low noise, low frequency 'reflex' tuning port on the rear panel upper section. Connection is for single wire cables, made via heavy duty, nicely ergonomic Mundorf 4mm socket/binding posts turned from solid copper. Also, like its big brother Borg, KIM includes some valuable electrical user adjustments to help fine tune the loudspeaker parameters to better match both listening room and amplifier.