



Pure Audio FR65-100

The loudspeaker market is a crowded one, with end users spoilt for choice across all price points and applications. Which makes the launch of a new, South African-produced loudspeaker brand a brave move.

Pure Audio is a KZN-based enterprise that up to now has focussed on a range of interconnects and loudspeaker cables. The launch of the FR65-100 floorstander marks the brand's first move into loudspeaker design and manufacturing.

To its credit, the rather prosaically named FR65-100 isn't your average hi-fi loudspeaker, although it looks quite conventional at first glance. The enclosure is slim, with a compact footprint that should make it simple to locate in most rooms.

The cabinets feel robust and well damped, and are finished in a low-sheen black, which adds to their smart appearance. Coupling spikes are provided, but could have been located closer to the edges of the enclosure to improve stability.

Removing the magnetically located black cloth grilles reveals a 165 mm Kevlar mid/bass driver, a 25 mm soft dome tweeter... and, quite unusually, a close-mounted planar magnetic tweeter. The latter assumes the role of a super tweeter in this design, assuming upper treble duties at above 18 kHz.

The rear panel shows off a high-mounted rectangular port for the transmission line, and a single pair of gold-plated binding posts.

So, what is a transmission line loudspeaker? As configured here, it uses an extended, folded and often tapered tube (the transmission line) inside the enclosure to boost bass response from a relatively small driver by careful tuning and damping of the tube.

The objective is to improve bass response by maximising the use of the driver's low-frequency energy while addressing standing waves, resonances and other artefacts that compromise more common ported loudspeaker designs.

Transmission-line protagonists believe ported loudspeakers are lacking transient response, while sealed-enclosure, infinite baffle designs fall short in low-frequency response, unless the enclosures are big.

Transmission line speakers, they say, address both issues succinctly.

In its application here, the transmission line has been configured as one-quarter of the wavelength of the drive unit's fundamental resonant frequency, deemed to be 40 Hz.

The one-quarter ratio also means that the sound waves emanating from the front of the speaker cone, and those exiting the

transmission line port, are 90 degrees out of phase. According to Pure Audio, this phase difference leads to constructive interference, while boosting low-frequency response.

The FR65-100s were hooked up to our Primare PRE32/Parasound Halo A21 pre/power amp combination. The source signal was supplied by a Marantz SA-KI Pearl Lite CD/SACD player, as well as from an Olive One network player accessing high-res audio



files from a Synology NAS, and delivering those to a Bryston BD-3 D/A converter. The speaker cable was TelluriumQ Blue.

The FR65-100s were already well run in by the time we received them for review, but we still gave them plenty of time to settle into the system. We used that time to experiment with positioning them in our listening room.

While they seemed to be quite comfortable when placed close to walls or even corners, I found the tonal balance at their optimum in a free-standing position, about 60 cm from the side walls and well away from the rear walls and corners.

The speakers were toed in towards the listening position, as this seemed to provide the most succinctly focussed image, but a fairly generous sweet spot means they will tolerate more straight-ahead placement too – it all depends on personal preference, and finding the most pleasing balance between width, depth, focus and transparency in a particular setting.

Listening to ‘The Rain Falls’ from Eleanor McEvoy’s *Snapshots* (Moscodisc 96/24 FLAC), the FR65-100s delivered a very clear, clean and expressive sound. Their ability to expose loads of fine detail created a pervasive sense of accuracy that added credibility to the performance.

The floorstanders were quite meticulous in their presentation, and specifically with regards to the high frequencies, allowing good insight into and engagement with the music. At the same time their penchant for creating a finely focussed sonic image benefitted imaging and dimensionality.

Tonally, the approach of the Pure Audio floorstanders was neutral rather than rich – an almost pared down sound that some might consider on the clinical side. The piano on this set has plenty of stature and an almost liquid flow, but the tonal character here was bright and breezy, with not quite the weight and substance of the real thing.

McEvoy’s breathy vocals sounded vivid and compelling, and the electric bass showed off loads of urge, pace and control. The percussion was delivered with incisive punch, and the overall sound was as exciting as it was engaging, with thrilling pace and

an overriding sense of precision.

The low-frequency response of the FR65-100s appeared to easily achieve the 40 Hz target, adding authority and foundation to the sound. However, I suspect that these speakers are not quite as efficient as the 90 dB rating in the supplied specs suggest: they enjoyed the muscle of our Parasound Halo A21, but weren’t as expressive with more modest amplification.

The acoustic versions of Seal’s hits on the second disc of *Best: 1991-2004* (Warner CD) are in many ways more evocative, more soulful than the originals, assisted also by a stellar production.

The Pure Audios revelled in the fine detail and atmospherics of ‘Prayer For The Dying’, completely disappearing as point sources, while weaving a wide, deep and smooth-hued tapestry of sound.

Seal’s vocals sounded almost chillingly real, with the speakers faithfully tracking and exposing every inflection, every intake of breath. The acoustic guitars sounded clear and lively, while the piano had a huge, regal presence.

The ambience of the recording was generously portrayed, affording the individual performers ample air and space. At the same time, the speakers always retained their composure, never allowing the music’s substantial dynamic swings to unsettle them.

On Jennifer Warnes’ ‘It’s Raining’ from the magical *The Well* (BMG 96/24 FLAC), the FR65-100s made the most of the singer’s liquid, easy vocals, soaring over the almost conversational bass line and the fine-picked guitar, while the piano provided a succinct but melodic backbone.

When the strings make a surprise appearance, you realise that there is a lot going on here, and the speakers did well to faithfully represent both the broad, bold strokes and the fine strands and nuances of the performance.

Tonally, the sound remained on the clean, revealing side, with a smooth but neutral midrange and an eloquent, well-weighted bass. The vocal delivery was fantastic, capturing the charming, almost boisterous reading of the song with true integrity.

The Pure Audio FR65-100 floorstanders

are open, inviting and revealing performers that are as accurate as they are musical. However, those attributes also demand quality ancillaries: these are speakers that will reveal shortcomings with an unwavering honesty that may not please all listeners.

While on the lean side, the tonal balance is both smooth and linear, while the punchy, athletic bass contributes real substance and pace. Add a seamless soundstage and that penchant for transparency, and the Pure Audio floorstanders emerge as an intriguing addition to the local loudspeaker arena.

Deon Schoeman

VITAL STATS

Enclosure type... Two-way transmission line, floor-standing
Drive units.... 165 mm Kevlar mid/bass driver, 25 mm soft-dome tweeter, planar magnetic super tweeter
Bi-wiring No
Impedance 8 ohms nominal
Sensitivity 90 dB
Frequency response 41 Hz – 22 kHz
Crossover points..... 3 kHz, 18 kHz
Power handling 100 watts RMS
Dimensions (HxWxD) 925 x 200 x 250 mm
Weight 15 kg each

Verdict

Detailed and engaging delivery from these compact transmission-line speakers. A talent for transparency adds a seamless immediacy to the music. Demand ample power to show off their best, though.

Price R27 000 (pair)

Supplied by High-End Audio
031-783-4509

e-Mail highend@telkomsa.net

Website www.highendaudio.co.za

OUR RATING: 82/100

