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**Epos ES14N**



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# TRADITION, RETHOUGHT

By Roland Schmenner. Photography: Ingo Schulz, manufacturer

FinkTeam's reinterpretation of the legendary EPOS 14 is a powerhouse of dynamics and a flagship loudspeaker in terms of sonic fidelity.





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## ACCOMPANYING EQUIPMENT

**Turntables:** Thorens TD 126 MK III, Technics SL-1210 MK2 | **Tonearm:** Koshin GST 801  
**Cartridges:** Sumiko Blackbird, Ortofon Concord Century | **Phono preamplifier:** Innovative Audio Ultimate 2b, Thel Phono M | **CD player:** Naim CD 5i | **Streamer:** Naim CD5XS | **Integrated amplifier:** Naim SuperNait | **Speakers:** Gamut Phi 7 | **Headphones:** Beyerdynamic DT 1770 Pro | **Accessories:** Wireworld, Sommer, Creaktiv



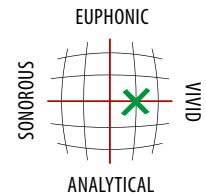
— Around 2020, Karl-Heinz Fink acquired the Epos line from Michael Creek. He seized this opportunity to establish an independent brand called “Epos made by FinkTeam” in a price range below the Borg and Kim models. His driving question was how to balance between tradition and innovation, or whether a balance should be maintained at all? After all, Epos – and the Epos 14 in particular – still had many followers of Robin Marshall’s ideas.

The brand was founded by Robin Marshall in 1983, and he had differentiated from the traditional British method established by the famous BBC-influenced designs. Marshall used a rarely used metal dome as a

tweeter, and the widely used high damping polypropylene cone for a mid-bass driver. But his special feature was dispensing with a conventional crossover. Only a capacitor was inserted in front of the tweeter as a filter, with a resistor for volume adjustment. In our conversation, Karl-Heinz Fink told us that he was unenthused about following the rules in the 1980s. However, by chance he discovered an old interview with Robin Marshall in which he was anything but a conservative traditionalist. The interviewer clearly wanted confirmation from Marshall that all his work had been magical. Surprisingly, Robin Marshall’s answer differed: he explained that the speakers had been developed from

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Karl-Heinz Fink and his team have done a terrific job: Rarely has a standmount loudspeaker combined unbridled energy, fidelity and musical enjoyment so unanimously.



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The standmount (yet anything but small) ES14N harnesses the incomparable precision and dynamics of two ways. Incidentally, the unwieldy name stands for “Epos Speaker 14 Neo”, or “New”, whichever you prefer.

the knowledge and ideas available at the time, and that these were not set in stone. This seemed to be the way to push the boundaries without “betraying” the former brand essence and not simply copying the past.

## More innovation than tradition

Anyone who is as familiar with the original Epos speakers as they are with Karl-Heinz Fink’s current products will quickly realize that the Epos made by FinkTeam is closer to a Kim or Borg regarding its basic tuning than to the English original. And that’s a good thing! Here I

follow Fink’s development philosophy to the letter: why revive a sound and an associated sound level that set standards in its day, but in 2023 is technically and sonically long outdated? And yet, from a technical perspective, some design ideas have remained that FinkTeam decided not to throw overboard. In addition to the metal dome in the tweeter and the polypropylene cone of the bass-midrange driver, there is above all the typical hybrid size – too large to place the Epos compactly on a shelf, and too small to be a floorstanding speaker. This is why both the old and the new model must be placed on stands. The cabinet has essentially the same volume as the original ES 14. This is no great ▶



The tweeter uses an aluminum-ceramic dome tweeter, and, at 28 mm, it is slightly larger than normal. The flat driver sits in its own volume, which can hardly be called that: apart from the driver, not much else fits into the shell.

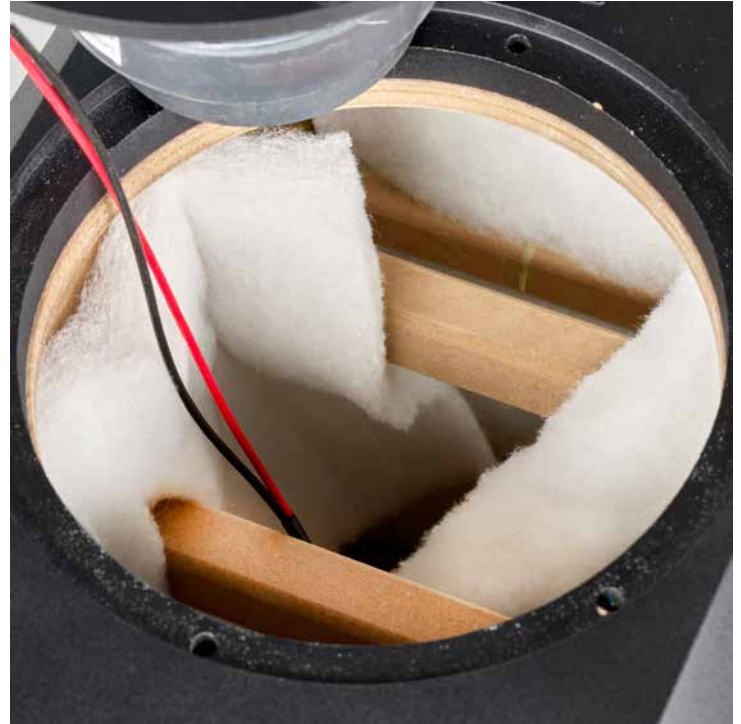


surprise, as the cabinet volume results from the driver configuration and the defined bandwidth of the speaker. However, the cabinet shape differs. The front baffle is tilted backwards to time align the woofer and tweeter and support the standing wave between the front and rear. The reflex system opening is at the rear of the cabinet, and the shape of the opening was chosen to minimize airflow noise. Here, FinkTeam has taken inspiration from the Borg and Kim model designs, and more or less imported the reflex system from there. The additional front panel is glued and screwed onto the main enclosure. It has a 45-degree chamfer to control the diffraction effect in the two to three kilohertz range. The binding posts are four-millimeter banana jacks mounted on a metal

plate. These banana jacks use very little metal internally to ensure the best sound – one of the nice ideas of the original design and better than using expensive “high-end” terminals with little metal but a high price tag. As always with Karl-Heinz Fink and his team, it’s the result is more important than the external aura.

## Music and only music

As for sound, the Epos immediately strikes a big impression. Nothing reminds you that we’re officially dealing with a “standmount speaker”, neither in terms of image size nor dynamics. In my nearly 30 square



The bass driver basket is entirely plastic so as to prevent magnetic effects. The chassis sits in an insulated enclosure. Not visible in the picture (even to the naked eye) is the fact that the cone is injection molded and has a “variable thickness”. Therefore the reinforcement is already included. Speaking of reinforcement: note the unusually high baffle thickness of around four and a half centimeters, as well as the elaborate internal bracing.

meter floor space listening room, I can't tell any difference to the full-size floorstanding speakers that have been playing here recently. However, the Epos is anything but a slim lifestyle product in terms of volume and overall design. The four members of the New World Saxophone Quartet, led by Oliver Lake and David Murray, fill the stage at a large scale, the baritone saxophone rumbles mightily in the bass cellar and then the soprano and alto saxophones climb crystalline heights. The Epos throws this live performance into the room so casually, oscillating between experimental shreds of sound and kitschy Hollywood sequences, that you immediately sense a touch of club atmosphere. However, what's special is that the musicians are not directly in the

listener's face. Instead, at first it seems the four saxophonists are taking a step backwards, only to move more freely, relaxed and, if necessary, to push forward dynamically. Admittedly I first found this sound aesthetic somewhat unusual, albeit very harmonious. Most loudspeakers that I associate with a dynamic live sound play to the front, stepping towards the listener. This can make longer listening sessions exhausting. But it is completely different with the Epos, as liveliness and suitability for long listening sessions are not contradictory here. Perhaps this is also the reason why I liked Yello's “The Expert” so much. With its crisp, precise bass, Boris Blank's synthetic sound concept filling the room and Dieter Meier's sonorous yet uncolored voice, the track grooved ▶

