

Focal Chorus 807V Loudspeaker

by Paul Messenger



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The final sentence in my review of Focal's little floorstanding Chorus 714V in the last edition of *Hi-Fi+* read: "The one unanswered question lurking in the background is whether the stand-mount Chorus 706V, with its solitary but larger 165mm main driver, might not have greater purist appeal."

Well, I didn't get to play with the \$379 706Vs after all, or the \$500 806Vs for that matter. Instead a pair of \$629 Chorus 807Vs arrived. This model is quite similar to, but a little larger and heftier than either the 706V or 806V, and costs \$50 more the 714V – and that's without including anything for the obligatory stands: Focal can supply some MDF ones at \$125, with neat retractable spikes, a decent footprint, and the facility to bolt the speakers in place.

Focal-JMlab is France's number one hi-fi speaker brand, and a major player on the international scene. Just twenty-five years old, it's still run by founder Jacques Mahul in St. Etienne, France's equivalent to Sheffield. The core engineering heart of Focal has always been its drive unit technology and Jacques was previously head of the development department at France's leading driver manufacturer, Audax.

The budget sector of the speaker market has been somewhat depressed (or should that be "depressing"? Ed.) in recent years, so Focal's decision to create and launch ten stereo pairs (plus AV add-ons) in two separate ranges during 2006 was a brave move. All the stereo pairs from both ranges feature distinctive V-shaped grilles, and tough, tapered enclosures. All use main drivers with paper cones coated with glass 'micro-sphere' damping – or Polyglass in Focal speak. The type-TNV tweeters have a version of Focal's familiar inverted dome, here made from an aluminium/magnesium alloy, with a claimed bandwidth to 28kHz. The drivers used in both new Chorus ranges are still made in France.

But the 807V stands apart from ▶

► the other Chorus designs in one significant respect: it is the only model of the ten to use a 180mm main driver. The crossover networks of the 800-series also use superior components over the 700-series models and the enclosures look and feel more substantial too, with a high gloss laminate finish.

Whereas the 807V's Polyglass cone is 125mm in diameter, giving a cone area of around 4000 sq mm, the twin 100mm cones used in the 714V add up to 5000 sq mm, so the difference is significant but not all that great. Interestingly, the 807V actually has about 2dB more low bass output than the 714V, presumably because its port is tuned to 47Hz rather than 54Hz. What is less surprising is that the two-and-a-half-way floorstander, with its smaller driver operating up in the mid-band and presence region, has a rather smoother output as it approaches the tweeter crossover point.

Sensitivity is pretty similar for both models, the 807V having a slight advantage, though 90dB looks a more realistic figure than the 92dB claimed. The load falls to a fairly demanding 4.5 Ohms in the bass region and also presents a fairly complex impedance characteristic, while the pair-match is pretty good.

The 807V is best kept a little way out from the wall – a 70cm gap behind the speakers worked best in my room. There's not a lot of bottom octave bass below 40Hz, but the upper bass and lower mid-band, where many rivals tend to have weak output, is powerful, which ensures decent tonal warmth and richness.

The speakers were mostly auditioned on the end of my regular Naim-based system, with Chord Company Anthem interconnect and Signature speaker cable. Although Focal's attractive matching MDF-based stands were tried, they did perceptibly

'soften' the sound; more rigid metal affairs such as my regular Kudos S100s offered significantly improved precision. I also kept the 714Vs on hand

for direct comparison between these two speakers



with somewhat similar ingredients arranged in different configurations.

No less interesting is the fact that the comparison closely follows what theory and measurement might lead one to expect, and that in turn means that the stand-mount holds most – but not all – the high cards.

The 807V sounds dynamically more expressive, more open, and has less time-smear and a smoother treble than the 714V. And probably because there's much less enclosure, with clear fresh air underneath as well as above and to the sides of the speaker, you get to hear more of the music and less of the box.

The cabinet is very well controlled for an inexpensive speaker, though some mid-band coloration is audible on speech, adding a degree of nasality and a slightly shut-in and 'pinched' effect. However, good dynamics give speech enough realism and expression to more than compensate for a bit of extra colour. The laid-back, almost muffled vocal style found on the Be Good Tanya's excellent *Hello Love* album makes it quite difficult to

decipher lyrics, but the 807V showed very good intelligibility, thanks in no small part to the excellent tweeter. This sounds very clean and sweet, while adding the fine detail and coherence that makes vocals easy to understand.

Deep bass isn't really on the agenda here, as I found when digging out Massive Attack's *Protection* for a spin. But although there's some lack of weight and authority compared to a full-bandwidth speaker, the 807V drives the music along really well. It definitely knows how to swing, bringing a fine sense of purpose and direction to rhythmic music.

This is a fine compact speaker with good freedom from boxiness and an exceptional top end. Its bass alignment worked really well in my room, making a very strong case for the stand-mount option in preference to an equivalent floorstander. Since the marketplace seems determined to opt for the latter, isn't it about time some clever designer came up with an integral stand that really works. ➤+

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type:	2-way ported stand-mount
Drivers:	180mm Polyglass bass/mid 25mm TNV Al/Mg inverted dome tweeter
Frequency Response:	50 Hz - 28kHz \pm 3dB 41Hz (-6dB)
Sensitivity:	92dB (measured 90dB)
Nominal Impedance:	8 ohms
Minimum Impedance:	4.2 ohms @ 160Hz
Dimensions (HxWxD):	448x237x333mm
Net Weight:	10.1kg
Price:	£629

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