

£1,549 per pair ☎ 0845 660 2680 🌐 www.focal-fr.com

# FOCAL CHORUS 836V

The largest of Focal's 800V-series sports five drive units

The Chorus models have long been Focal's (budget) entry-level range. In introducing the third generation, this leading French manufacturer has adopted a new initiative. There are now two distinct Chorus ranges; the simpler, less costly and more traditional looking 700Vs; and the more stylish, expensive and more substantial 800Vs.

This £1,549 per pair Chorus 836V is the largest of five 800V-series stereo pairs, two rungs further up the ladder than the £1,000 per pair 816V reviewed in HFC 288, with three drivers operating in a two-and-a-half-way configuration. The much taller 836V has five drive units and is a full three-way design, delivering its bass output from a substantial triple-ported, triple-driver array.

The styling, based on contrasting synthetic laminates, is distinctive. Tapering side panels, finished in ebony or mocha woodprint, mean the speaker is slightly narrower at the back than the front, and reflect the fact that the internal faces are not parallel, to avoid



focusing standing waves. The front, back, top and base are a contrasting high gloss black, and all the panels are 20-25mm thick, with further stiffening provided by internal bracing. The whole thing sits on a very substantial alloy plinth, increasing the footprint to ensure good physical stability; the chunky if rather blunt spikes are top-adjustable, but lack lock-nuts.

Focal claims it doesn't trust others to make its drive units, and therefore continues to manufacture all drivers it uses in its French factory. All four cone drivers have 165mm cast alloy frames and 115mm diameter paper cones coated with 'Polyglass' glass 'micro-spheres'. The midrange unit has a different dust-dome treatment from the three bass units, to improve performance towards the top of its operating range, while the triple bass driver arrangement gives a total cone area roughly equivalent to a single 240mm dedicated bass unit.

The familiar inverted-dome Focal tweeter now has an aluminium/magnesium alloy diaphragm and new suspension. This is mounted in a rigid-cast chassis at the top edge of the enclosure, and is unobstructed by the V-shaped grille. It features three ports, (one firing downwards above the plinth) provide bass loading, and the signal is applied to a single terminal pair.

## SOUND QUALITY

Straight from the box, the 836V delivers a thoroughly impressive performance. Given the imposing array of bass drivers on view, one might have anticipated some bass excess here, but in fact, the bass alignment turns out to be very well judged indeed, provided the speakers are kept well clear of walls.

More than any of the others assembled for this group test, this large Focal design makes a real stab at delivering genuine dynamic drama and tension. As such, it's particularly well suited to unravelling and portraying the layered complexities of large-scale material, whether orchestral or electronic in origin.

Besides its liveliness and grip, the 836V has a convincing warmth, richness and body, to a degree that eludes most of the others. However, it can sound thick and heavy in coloration terms; it does lack smoothness; and the top end can be coarse and obvious.

As is always the case, compromise is involved, and while the Chorus 836V is neither the prettiest, cleanest nor sweetest model in our group, it is one of the most involving and entertaining dynamically speaking, as well as one of the least expensive. **HFC**

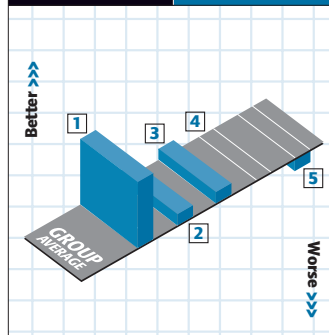


## LAB REPORT

The manufacturer claims an unusually high sensitivity of 91.5dB, and this is more than borne out in our tests. While such a high figure is creditable in itself, it's also substantially compromised here by an impedance that drops below 4 ohms around 120Hz, a zone where plenty of amplifier current will be required.

With the complex porting tuned to 39Hz, bass extension is effectively limited to 30Hz under in-room conditions, and free-space siting is mandatory to avoid excessive mid-bass output. From 40Hz up to 300Hz, output is strong and well balanced, though there's a drop of about 4dB above that point. Things hang together well thereafter, with output a couple of dB shy through the presence zone (1.2-4.5kHz), with some recovery 5-10kHz. In truth, the 836V's averaged far-field in-room response is pretty well ordered overall, though not particularly smooth.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +50%
- 2] Bass extension >> +10%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +10%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> 0%
- 5] Response smoothness >> -10%

## SPECIFICATIONS

| Measurement                     | Rated    | Actual     |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V          | 92dB     | 92dB       |
| Impedance (nominal/minimum)     | 8/3 ohms | 5/3.5 ohms |
| Estimated bass extension (-6dB) | 33Hz     | 28Hz       |

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 89%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 85%**

**BUILD >> 85%**

**VALUE >> 91%**

Beefy three-way is not pretty in its synthetic laminate clothes, but it's sharply priced. Bass alignment is good, and the sound has genuine dynamic expression and grip, though it could be smoother and sweeter.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 90%**

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