



...if you have space, these speakers offer excellent value for money
if you are after this retro 70s monitor look and sound.

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ELIPSON HERITAGE XLS 15

by Simon Wilce, HF&MS HiFi Review

Hifiandmusicsource.com was approached to take some time with these Elipson Heritage XLS 15 and with delight, we accepted. These are substantial 3 way 'compact' (Elipson's description) standmounted speakers. I am calling them a standmount but given their bulk, these are as big as standmounts get I would suggest.





Design

Let us cut to the chase, these Elipson Heritage XLS 15 are big and wide, they are bigger than the Klipsch Heresy IV, reviewed here a few weeks ago on HF&MS, and bigger than the similar looking JBL L100s with whom they share that retro 70s laid back monitor style that seems to be popular at the moment. The speakers are 420 x 730/700 x 339 mm (WxHxD) and weigh in at 28kg, each. The height varies by the angled plinth included in the package but there is also an optional 7 degree angled stand available separately from sister company Norstone that reclines the speaker a further 190mm off the floor at the front.

I personally like this style of speaker, they are relatively easy to move or slide around despite their bulk, and the low-slung look is quietly contemporary.

The Elipson Heritage XLS 15 speakers have a 3-way design with a large front facing circular flared bass reflex port. They are comprised of a 2.2 cm silk dome tweeter, a 5.5cm coated dome midrange that has a 'slight coating' of butyl latex to smooth the frequency response and an impressive looking 30cm cellular pulp woofer.

Philippe Penna the R&D Manager at Elipson comments on the midrange that 'because we use a neodymium magnet and this dome drive unit offers high-sensitivity we could add a small mass (butyl latex) without losing efficiency. Such are the fine details in speaker design!

The crossovers are set at 700Hz and 5kHz internally and this combination can be tweaked with two dials that can modify either way an extra 1dB on either side depending on the size of the room and your ears, etc. Additionally, the bass can be calmed down with substantial spongey bungs if needed.

These elements combine to deliver a good frequency range of 40Hz up to 25kHz and the speakers are relatively easy to drive with a sensitivity of 92dB/m/W.

They are retailing at a competitive MRSP of £1,999.99. The Norstone stand, which I would certainly advocate, is a further £199.



Quality

The speakers seem physically very nice and have an all round good finish, the wood feel is smooth and the edges are sharp. The cabinets are made of 21mm thick MDF with a Walnut vinyl wrap. They are braced in two places, once at mid height and again behind the woofer's magnet with a damped pad involved. The binding posts are angled upwards making for easy cable management. I am using the Norstone stands for reviewing purposes and they just lift the speaker slightly higher off the ground directing the sound directly towards my ears, they are a good 3m away from me and nearly 3m apart.

There are substantial magnetic grilles that cover the whole face of the speakers, in my view, they seem excessively thick and I have largely ignored them, save for taking photos. Given the very competitive price of this speaker, I can find no hint of cost saving in the cabinet or finish.

Performance

I am listening to these speakers with an array of amplifiers but mainly using a Synthesis Soprano tube amplifier with a Rega RP3 turntable source. I am using Kudos KS-1 speaker cable. Alternatively, I have been using a Chord Etude power amplifier, which is sublime, with an Oppo BDP CD player as a source.

With a Synthesis Tube Amplifier

These Elipson Heritage XLS 15 with the Rega turntable are delivering a really easy going sound that I have spent a lot of time with whilst relaxing and reviewing. The soundstage is fairly wide in my view but not excessively so and review standards like Miles Davis' So What offers plenty of space between the instruments. With background lighting and the curtains closed all I really need is a glass of whisky and smokey fug and I could be at the recording session chatting with Bill Evans and Davis himself.

Dynamically and with this 12W Class A integrated amplifier the speakers are calm and certainly not noisy but they seem very easy to drive, there is plenty of volume if you want it. Another reviewer standard, Stevie Ray Vaughan's Tin Pan Alley, is a dynamically tricky track but the XLSs cope with a lingering warmth to the quick bursts of guitar heroics. In respect of tone, switching to a Bluesound Node 2i source, Hans Zimmer's 2049 (Qobuz, 16-bit/44.1kHz), which is my goto bass extender has just enough depth and rumble to keep me interested and a check in with the bass heavy Billie Eilish collaboration with Rosalía from the TV Series Euphoria, called Lo Vas a Olvidar (Qobuz, 24-bit/96kHz) reveals there is a solid bass response here.

To check in with the midrange I turn to Ryan Adams' Gold on vinyl (Lost Highway, the label before PaxAm) and my favourite album bounces along with energy and delight. Here, the vocals are clean and pleasantly centred.

With a Chord Electronics Étude Power amplifier

I have had a bit of a fiddle with the $\pm 1\text{dB}$ switches on the front of the speakers but they do not really do a great deal for me if I am honest, but I am in a slightly larger listening space that is relatively well damped, but certainly not dead and is responsive to sound in the room. There must be something here, however, as I seem to have ended up increasing the mid range switch by a dB and leaving the treble switch untouched on both speakers.

The resolution and depth in the soundstage are improved on switching the amplification to the Chord Étude, I suspect this is a function of the source being the Oppo BDP CD player in the first instance and the Étude having a ton of Class AB power (150W in 4 Ohms) behind it versus the Class A Soprano (12W into 4 Ohms). Nonetheless, I have really enjoyed the Synthesis Soprano but the step up in class is evident and the XLS15s can respond appropriately, which is to their credit.

Latterly in the review cycle, I have had a play with a Bluesound Powernode 2i streaming amplifier (60W/ch) and the performance has again been very engaging. The speakers are capable of adapting seamlessly to their amplification whilst revealing detail and control from the source.



Overall

I have to say that these Elipson Heritage XLS 15 have been very enjoyable speakers, particularly complemented by this terrific Synthesis Sporano tube amplifier. As a feature, the speakers have frequently attracted comment based primarily on their size but also their laid back style and neo-contemporary look. I feel if you have space, these speakers offer excellent value for money if you are after this retro 70s monitor look and sound.

Love

Great value

Flexible on amplification



Like

Laid Back Style

Warmer Sound

Wish

The grilles were a bit lighter

Some funky colours for the grille?