From: **Brian Maddern** enquiry@decibelhifi.com.au
Subject: Decibel Hi Fi Newsletter February 2018
Date: 11 February 2018 at 8:30 am
To: Brian bmaddern@bigpond.net.au

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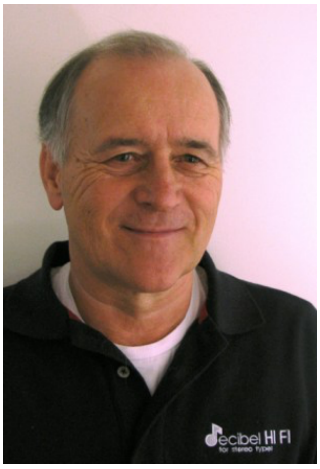
Vinyl Revivalists for Stereo Types

Decibel Hi Fi Newsletter No. 61 February 2018

***Dear Brian***



*Last months Gold Note records specials produced the most immediate response I have ever experienced from my newsletters. All the Pink Floyd LPs were sold within an hour of the newsletter being sent out. Fortunately, I have been successful in securing the last 25 copies of the "limited to 500" pressings of the Beatles "Sgt Peppers" LP so we still have about 20 of those in stock. I was also able to get a few more of the Weavers LP. Both LPs have now been added to the webstore so can be ordered online. There's also a couple of the Stevland LPs left. For those of you didn't know, that is Stevie Wonder's real first name.*

*I have been a keen speaker builder for over 46 years, and over that time have built speakers ranging from 15 cubic foot horn loaded monsters to 140mm cube satellites for home theatre. I always encourage music lovers to consider undertaking a speaker building project because you can achieve a high quality sound for a fraction of the cost of commercial models. To that end I have made speaker kits available on the webstore over the last 15 years. But unfortunately the number of people willing to undertake this has been very small. However, I am determined to make them available for that small group that are willing to give it a try. There's some sound financial reasons for doing it yourself - see below.*

*And I have developed a new entry level, easy to assemble, kit based on the popular Sonab OD11 speakers from the 70s - see below.*

*Musical regards*

*Brian Maddern*
*Decibel Hi Fi & Soundring*

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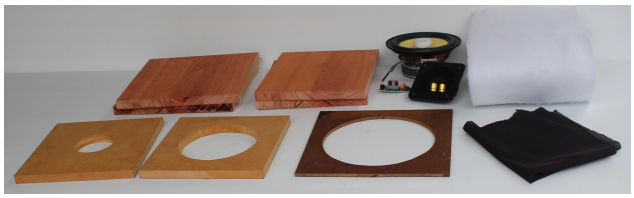
**Why Build Your Own Speakers?**

If you were to spend $1000 on a pair of speakers the ex-factory cost of them is probably about $200. Freight, duty, distributor and dealer markups, and GST account for the difference. Of that $200 usually more than half the manufacturing cost is in the construction and finish of the cabinets. So, the value of the drivers and crossovers in those $1000 speakers is probably about $100.



Let's say you spend $300 on some speaker drivers and crossover components and then build the enclosures yourself, say for $200 in materials. You'll finish up with a pair of loudspeakers that are probably the equivalent of those that retail for several $1000s. So that's the financial argument for DIY speaker building. Then there's the emotional feeling of pride in completing a DIY project that is successful.

However, there's a few obstacles to that success. Many people don't have the woodworking equipment or skills to make their own cabinets. That's why I have made enclosure kits available for the last 15 years. So that all you need to assembly them is glue and a screwdriver. But there's still the matter of finishing them to an acceptable standard as usually the enclosure kits are made of plain MDF.

I have now solved that problem by using solid timber panels, which can simply be coated with a satin finish enamel for a very attractive finish - and there's a variety of timbers available.

There are currently three kits available and I intend to add a couple more over the course of this year.

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## The OD11 DIY Speaker Kits

In the 1970s the Swedish brand Sonab was quite popular. They had a range of speakers that were omnidirectional in that the sound was radiated


upwards rather than directly towards the listener. This provides a spacious live sound that fills the listening area and avoids the "hot spot" characteristic of forward facing speakers.

Their most popular entry level model was the OD11, a little 26cm cube that could be positioned on the floor in between furniture, or on top of a cabinet, facing upwards or on their side. The drivers in the OD11 were angled such that they pointed towards the ceiling between the speakers. Our Omni speaker kits are similar, but the cabinets are larger and quite tricky to have made because of the angles involved.

I have come up with a much simpler design that looks very similar to the OD11s and is a less expensive kit. I've used fingered jointed Karri timber panels, simple butt joints, a sealed enclosure, and high quality drivers which have tweeters that can be angled.

Costings aren't finalised but I expect the kit price to be under $300. The drivers are available separately ($120 a pair) for anyone who wishes to make the cabinets themselves from scratch (or from different material).

If you are interested but concerned about what is involved in assembling them have a read of the instructions.

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## Icon Audio LS3/5A bookshelf monitor speakers

It may seem incongruous to do a writeup of the Icon Audio LS3/5A bookshelf monitor speakers after talking up the idea of DIY speaker building. However, many people don't have the time, inclination or facilities to build their own speakers. The designs for DIY speakers are necessarily simpler, particularly the enclosures, so that they are easy to assemble. And the drivers and crossovers are also selected to be relatively inexpensive. In fact our most successful kits over the last 15 years have been based on Jordan wide range drivers which don't have crossovers.

With more expensive commercial speakers you have the results of many years of design and testing. They usually have complex crossover and enclosure construction. The end result is superb looking and sounding speakers, but they can be very expensive.

The story of the BBC LS3/5A is interesting. There's even a Wikipedia page about them. The LS3/5A was the result of many years of research by BBC engineers to produce a studio monitor that was small enough to be used in outside broadcast vans.

The product name is derived from BBC naming convention: the "LS3" designation meant it was a loudspeaker intended for outside broadcasting, as opposed to the "LS5" loudspeaker, intended for studio monitoring. The number after the stroke is the model number, the LS3/5 is "number 5" outside-broadcasting loudspeaker. The letter that follows denotes alterations to the original specification, of which there was only one in this instance after the LS3/5, thus the "A".

This latest version, from Icon Audio, is true to the original design and performs as well as any other versions I have ever heard. I think these speakers will appeal to music lovers who live in apartments where space is limited and also the proximity to neighbours is a consideration and speakers that have huge bass output will not be acceptable. So if you are lover of any music that doesn't have to be played at rock concert levels to be appreciated, like chamber music, choral, folk, country etc these little speakers are a great option. There have been numerous reviews of the various versions over the last 40 or so years and there's an enthusiasts website. The original white paper of their design is available to download from the BBC website.

Because of their diminutive size, one option we can offer is to ship them for evaluation to anywhere in Australia for reasonable freight costs. So if you are interested in auditioning a pair and are not near Brisbane please email to discuss.

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## Malpa - our company's charity

We are very pleased to be a supporter of an organisation which has implemented a program to address the incidence of otitis media (glue ear) in indigenous communities. Please visit their website to find out about their Young Doctors program.

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