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## Recommended Reference Component: Focal Electra 1008 Be 2 Loudspeakers



Focal, of France, was established in 1979 by Jacques Mahul. The company's first products were loudspeakers for the home, sold under the brand name JMLab (for Jacques Mahul's laboratory), and drive-units, branded as Focal. Since then the company has branched out into car audio, pro audio, and, most recently, headphones, and a few years ago decided to sell *all* their products under the Focal name.

Focal's current line of home speakers is vast, starting with the Chorus 700 V series and topping out with the Utopia III models. Not surprisingly, given the company's age and the sheer volume of speakers they produce, we've reviewed a number of Focal models over the years, but Philip Beaudette's February 1 review on this site of the [Electra 1008 Be 2](#) stands out from the rest -- based on that review, the speaker earned a Reviewers' Choice award, and is now being included in this list of Recommended Reference Components.

The Electra 1008 Be 2, a bookshelf model, retails for \$5499 USD per pair, measures 15 3/16"H x 10 3/8"W x 13 3/4"D, and weighs 33 pounds. Its cabinetwork is superb, and its styling is as attractive as it is distinctive. This two-way design's two drivers are both made by Focal: a 1.25" inverted-dome tweeter with a beryllium diaphragm, and a 6.5" midrange-woofer with a cone made of the company's proprietary W material. (The Electra 1000 Be 2 series, directly below the Utopia III series, also includes two floorstanding models, the Electra 1028 Be and Electra 1038 Be.)

Our measurements of the 1008 Be 2 in the anechoic chamber of Canada's National Research Council revealed a relatively flat frequency response on axis, and well-controlled dispersion. The distortion at 90dB was commendably low, so the speaker was tested again at 95dB (at a distance of 2m, which is equivalent to 101dB at 1m), a level usually reserved for robust floorstanders. Our tests also showed that the 1008 Be 2's impedance stays mostly above 4 ohms, meaning that the speaker won't be too tough for most amplifiers to drive. Its sensitivity under our test conditions was 86.5dB (2.83V/m), which is a little lower than Focal's spec of 89dB, but about average for a speaker of this type.



Philip found the Electra 1008 Be 2 to perform remarkably well, and that its sound had certain characteristics that he whittled down to three words: “*precise, full, and clean.*” He was also impressed that these stand-mounted speakers had an authority that belied their size. When he played “Caught a Lite Sneeze,” from Tori Amos’s *Boys for Pele* (CD, Atlantic 82862-2), “The stage they created was immense, populated by larger-than-life, in-your-face aural images that were unapologetically immediate. The percussion was delivered with power and poise, and Amos’s voice, the centerpiece of the cacophony, was vividly present and detailed.”

There was also the matter of 1008 Be 2’s resolution, which Philip found first-rate, allowing him to hear even small differences among components upstream: “The Electra 1008 Be 2 was pretty revealing of what the other components in my system were doing, its transparency making it easy for me to hear the character of both the electronics and the recordings themselves -- such as ‘Pink Matter,’ from Frank Ocean’s *Channel Orange* (CD, Def Jam/Island B001578802). Through the Simaudio [Moon Evolution] 650D’s DAC, Ocean’s voice sounded clear and sweet, if a bit distant in terms of its place at the front of the room. When I switched over to the Hegel HD20’s DAC, Ocean’s voice seemed to jump out of the mix, the overall sound becoming more forward and immersive. The 1008 Be 2 proved useful for uncovering the personality of each DAC, and would likely be an educational tool for those who want to better understand what the upstream components of their system are contributing to its sound.” Obviously, the 1008 Be 2’s revealing nature would help to make it a great reviewing tool.

The \$5499 commanded for a pair of Focal Electra 1008 Be 2s is not insignificant, but this speaker justifies its asking price by delivering build quality, styling, technical innovation, and sound that are all a cut above those of most of its competition, and that make it a reference against which to judge other bookshelf speakers. What Philip said toward the end of his review is something we not only stand by, but want to emphasize by repeating here: “If you’re in the market for a reference bookshelf speaker, you’d be making a terrible oversight if you didn’t include the Electra 1008 Be 2 on your audition list. Highly recommended.”

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