

Boenicke

W5 £5,915



▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT
Boenicke W5

ORIGIN
Switzerland

TYPE
3-way standmount loudspeaker

WEIGHT
3.5kg

DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)
104 x 293 x 231mm

FEATURES

- Rear-firing ambient tweeter
- 75mm flared alloy cone wideband driver
- 120mm side-firing long-throw bass driver
- Quoted sensitivity: 84dB/1W/1m (4ohm)

DISTRIBUTOR
Whole Note Distribution

If there can be such a thing as a curve ball from the leftfield in a *Group Test*, the Boenicke W5 from Basel, Switzerland is surely it. Ridiculously small, densely woody, absurdly cute and £5,915 in standard form (there are more expensive SE and SE+ variants also available), its inclusion here gave us a serious case of the wobbles when drawing up this cohort of ostensibly high-end heavy hitters. We could almost hear John McEnroe yelling the inevitable accusation – you know, the one about being serious... Understandable. The KEF Reference 1 Meta stands 440mm tall and weighs 18.2kg, only a little larger and heavier than the group norm. The W5 posts 293mm and 3.5kg. An especially weedy David to take on these standmount Goliaths.

When Sven Boenicke founded his eponymous company in 1999, he

vowed to embark on a unique journey. In his own words: “To do things no one else does”. He wasn’t kidding. From the five-strong W series family, the entry-level W5 is deliberately, unfathomably, deliciously dinky given its sonic ambition and it expresses his maverick methodology to the letter.

By any conventional measure, 2.8-litres of cabinet volume is nine-tenths of a burst party balloon and not much good if the intention is to generate convincing bass. Not unless your generator is a 127mm, side-firing bass driver with 18.5mm of excursion and a claimed response

It’s characterised by a lightness of touch, smoothness and freedom from grain

down to 50Hz with the help of a rear-firing, slot-style reflex port near the base of the of the solid wood enclosure. Seems unlikely, even so. Mids and highs to fill an expansive soundstage with air, ambient detail and palpable, believably scaled performers? That’s down to the contribution of the baby 76mm ‘widebender’, alloy-coned driver only slightly narrower than the speaker’s raked front baffle and the diminutive rear-facing supplementary ‘ambient’ tweeter peeping out from just above the classy WBT NextGen binding posts. Crossover arrangements are as minimal as you might expect, both drivers being tailored to acoustically blend. A titchy *tour de force*.

Sound quality

Yet something of a leap of faith. Not only needn’t have we worried, the weeny W5 fully justifies its attendance in this high-achieving group, even if it is difficult to find sometimes, obscured by one of its comparatively hulking rivals. Yes, the pair looks positively lost positioned to the outer edges of my Slate Audio stands, side drivers on the outside firing towards the perimeter wall (slimmer, more aesthetically

appropriate supports are available from Boenicke). But then it only makes what follows more wondrous.

We’re all familiar with small speakers sounding much bigger than they look. It’s one of a well-designed standmount’s party tricks. The physical and sonic disconnect achieved by the W5, however, is on another level entirely – not just for the scale and space it can muster, but also the sense of body and tonal realism and, perhaps most extraordinary of all, the quality and quantity of bass. Full, sumptuous, supple and agile, that it’s emanating from what looks like the tiniest speaker you’ve ever seen set into a small block of solid wood defies belief.

At higher frequencies, the W5’s sound is characterised by a lightness of touch, smoothness and freedom from grain and fatiguing artefacts. Gabriel and Bush duetting through *Don’t Give Up* are particularly beguiling with a seductive warmth and wonderfully easy-breathing delivery. The faster, busier and more tightly knit jazz fusion stylings of *Evening News* are handled without fluster or muddle, but pace and conviction. It’s a mini miracle ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

EASE OF DRIVE
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: Unfathomable size-to-sound ratio; size; looks; quality

DISLIKE: Lacks ultimate heft; needs plenty of power

WE SAY: Mini but magical, a leftfield gem

