



# One for all

Cyrus says we haven't heard the best of its entry-level amp and has made a matching speaker to prove it. **David Vivian** has a listen

**A** smart, half-width, Class D integrated amplifier is the Cyrus ONE (HFC 420), and I don't mean 'smart' just because of those crisp, icy black, minimalist good looks. Hang your speakers of choice from one or indeed both sets of binding posts provided on the rear panel and, when you switch on, the ONE wakes up SID. It stands for Speaker Impedance Detection, a neat little routine that measures the impedance of the connected speakers and optimises its output to suit. It's a kind of handshake to ensure that amp and speakers get on and are reading from the same page – not always the case with some Class D designs. We like the ONE. Whatever the speakers, it sounds fresh, spry and detailed with plenty of power and insight.

But Cyrus reckons its entry-level amp can do better than that. Without disrespecting its clever SID function, the company has designed a speaker specifically to show the world just what the modestly priced ONE is

capable of. Yes, the impedance handshake is still present, but it's just a formality in this case. The ONElinears you see here is a two-way standmount speaker intended to synergise with its name-bonded amp like no other. The beauty of this, says Cyrus, is that in designing the £350 ONElinears it has endowed it with all the core abilities necessary to set a lofty standard at the price, whatever amp sits on your kit rack. And I have a few lined up...

The 'linear' part of the name refers to the speaker's frequency response curve, described as "classically British" – with the objective being "complete neutrality enabling the full character of the music played to be revealed". Cyrus asserts that this can only be truly perfected if the speaker has been optimised for the amp that's driving it – to wit, the ONE's hybrid Class D topology and its talent for reproducing leading-edge detail.

A key requirement for the drive units, therefore, is speed and accuracy. The mid/bass driver seems

well equipped to meet the challenge. It uses a double-wound, copper-coated aluminium voice-coil that, as well as being light, generates a strong magnetic field, which helps with grip and control at lower frequencies. The voice-coil is bonded to a critically profiled Kevlar cone, chosen for its responsiveness, shape rigidity under dynamic conditions and lightness. The result, claims Cyrus, is remarkable bass speed and accuracy for a speaker of the ONElinears' modest size.

The tweeter is a textile soft-dome type protected by a mesh grille and is claimed to reach up to 24kHz, having kicked into life at 2.1kHz. As for the crossover itself, it employs classy electrolytic capacitors for a smoother phase response during the handover between drivers.

Apart from being quite deep with radiused corners and nicely finished (in gloss black for the review pair, though gloss white is also available) the rear-ported enclosure looks neat and unremarkable. You could never accuse the cramped, single binding posts of being over-engineered. But this rather belies the work that's gone into the enclosure's design and construction.

Computer modelling with 'Delayed Cumulative Spectral Analysis' was used to reduce the contribution of cabinet noise to levels claimed to be more than 35dB below the driver output. The same computer modelling was also used to fine tune the crossover to ensure a consistent performance, even when you are listening 'off-axis'.

Although rear-ported, the ONElinears can be positioned quite close to a rear wall – between 10 and 30cm is recommended to balance bass response and midrange presence, though as ever, experimentation with placement is advised.

## Sound quality

Naturally, Cyrus sent along a ONE amp with the ONElinears speakers, and not just for the family photo. It doesn't take long to hear exactly where the company is coming from with this made-in-heaven marriage. In a nutshell, the ONElinears speaker allows the ONE amp to sound as it does at its best driving other speakers, only more so. For example, a Cyrus ONE and Russell K Red 50 (HFC 422) make a very strong team – especially when fed by a Cambridge Audio CXC CD transport (HFC 401) and Chord Hugo 2 DAC (HFC 428). The resulting sound is superbly transparent, finely detailed and agile – sufficiently so that you can almost

make a judgement call on Billy Cobham being the fastest and most technically accomplished jazz-fusion drummer of them all. Sideline the Russell K for the ONElinears and you're left in no doubt. The combo is so blindingly fast and up for it, it might even be guilty of giving Billy a helping hand. There's potent synergy at work here, just as Cyrus promised. If there's such a thing as a 'Cyrus sound' – brilliantly agile, lucid and transparent – this is it. Yet change the amp to a Rega Elex-R (HFC 420) and it's quickly clear the Red 50 is the superior speaker, as you'd hope given the £650 price difference. The ONElinears is far from disgraced,

## The Cyrus pairing sounds faster, more open, articulate and beautifully balanced

though, transparent to the Rega's rhythmic dexterity and innate musicality, if ultimately lacking the uncanny precision and believability of the Russell K offering.

To be honest, I have a lot of fun pitting team Cyrus against ostensibly more exotic (certainly pricier) permutations. I put the speakers on the end of significantly more expensive and powerful amps and don't feel substantively short-changed. I feed the amp a diet of speakers from known £350 standmount over-achievers to multi-thousand-pound three-way floorstanders and it always sounds remarkably at home either way. I play Rachmaninoff, Bruno Mars, Billy Cobham, Tracey Thorn's new album, *Record*, and the orchestral soundtrack from Oscar-winning movie *The Shape Of Water*. And the one thing that emerges, time after time, is that the Cyrus ONE/ONElinears combo is greater than the sum of its parts. The



With its black trim, the white finish is very stylish indeed

amp has ample reserves of Class D grunt to engage even demanding loads with verve and vivacity. Its stab at driving Focal's £7k Kanta N°2 (see p16) to party levels in my larger listening room with Bruno Mars' soul and funk storm, *Chunky*, from *24K Magic*, borders on the heroic with genuine quality and bandwidth on display as well. But not the finely wrought sense of performance and musical coherence that typifies the all-Cyrus setup and makes it such a compelling, high-value proposition.

Bottom line: the Cyrus ONElinears is a fine £350 standmount that will go toe-to-toe with, say, Wharfedale's excellent, identically priced and significantly larger Diamond 11.2 (HFC 430) in any system context, bar the one that includes the Cyrus ONE. In broad terms, the Diamond sounds bigger and bolder, hits a little harder and digs deeper in the bass. The ONElinears counters with greater midband refinement and a leaner but

more responsive and tuneful lower register. It's a close call, take your pick. On the end of the Cyrus ONE, however, the ONElinears simply flies, sounding faster, more open and articulate and beautifully balanced top to bottom. The ONE-driven Diamond takes on some of the amp's attributes, but now suffers in comparison with the ONElinears, suddenly sounding a tad lethargic and distinctly lacklustre.

## Conclusion

If you already own a Cyrus ONE amplifier and are thinking about upgrading to a pricier model and keeping it in the family, I'd urge you to consider the ONElinears before you do anything else. I'd be surprised if you thought it wasn't the most cost-effective route to better sound. If you're thinking of buying a Cyrus ONE amp, the choice of speaker has been made for you. It's quite simply the no-brainer of the year ●

A match made in heaven? The ONElinears has been designed for the ONE amp

### DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Cyrus ONElinears  
**ORIGIN**  
UK/China  
**TYPE**  
2-way standmount loudspeaker  
**WEIGHT**  
7kg  
**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
200 x 305 x 295mm  
**FEATURES**  
● 25mm soft dome tweeter  
● 125mm woven Kevlar cone mid/bass driver  
● Quoted sensitivity: 86dB/1W/1m (8ohm)  
**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Cyrus Audio  
**TELEPHONE**  
01480 435577  
**WEBSITE**  
cyrusaudio.com



## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

**SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** The minefield of separates system synergy banished  
**VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Binding posts look budget and are closely set  
**BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A fine standmount that becomes a great one when paired with the Cyrus ONE amp  
**EASE OF DRIVE** ★★★★★

### OVERALL

★★★★★