

ELEMENTI AUDIO FIRE

HOME CINEMA SYSTEM

What is cinema? We can really do no better than quote the award-winning designer of the 'Fire' home cinema system reviewed here. Says David Moseley, of Elementi Audio: "Cinema is a transformative experience. An escape. A place where time briefly stands still and you can be immersed purely in the moment. It's also deeply personal. Whether you watch movies to laugh or cry, to be inspired or be amused, when the lights finally dim, and the screen comes to life, you're in your element." And the reason he designed the Elementi Fire System? "Elementi was created to give you the immersive, premium cinema experience you love, in the comfort of your own home."

THE EQUIPMENT

We have not included any images of the multiple front-channel, surround, subwoofers and amplifiers that comprise an Elementi Audio 'Fire' home cinema system for the simple reason that when they're installed in your home, you won't be able to see them — they will be hidden away and/or totally integrated into the room you've chosen to install them — so what they look like is immaterial.

This is great news for you (and likely your significant other) not only because it means that you will not have unwanted cabinets cluttering your living space, but also because the fact that the hardware delivering your experience can't be seen. Elementi Audio has not needed to spend any money to ensure that the exterior of its products is aesthetically pleasing. So no crafted wood, stone or steel finishes, or multiple colour options — all the money goes direct to performance. In this modern world, where the cost of building a loudspeaker cabinet often exceeds the cost of the electronics and drivers it contains, that's a significant saving.

There are also savings to be made because all Elementi Audio loudspeakers are fully active, with separate amplifiers being used for each driver, and the amplifiers are not contained within the cabinets, but kept separate from them. This means that once you've decided which Elementi Audio speaker best suits you in terms of sound quality, you can then select the best amplifiers to drive the speakers in your room, so that the correct sound pressure levels can be achieved without clipping.

The Elementi system we review here is made up from several of the company's 'Fire' series loudspeakers, in which all the

high-frequency tweeters are not your typical design — ribbon, dome, etc — but high-power compression drivers that are the exact same types used in commercial suburban cinemas. The unique design of the compression drivers means they can generate extremely high sound pressure levels, have precisely controlled dispersion patterns and deliver extraordinary transient response. That's because the diaphragm that produces the sound has almost no mass, so it can start and stop instantly; unlike most drivers used to deliver high frequencies with mass such that their inertia means sound continues to be delivered even after a music signal has ceased.

The component parts of our review system comprised three Elementi 'Fire Dragon' speakers across the front three channels, each powered by a Titanium 3 three-channel amplifier, whose total power is rated as being 2,200 watts. The driver complement in each Fire Dragon is two 31.2mm diameter bass drivers, which cross to a 90mm midrange compression driver at 500Hz and then to a 45mm high-frequency compression driver at 6.5kHz. Crossover is all done in the digital domain, and all drivers are equalised for both frequency and phase via FIR (finite impulse response) filters.

Surround (front-wide, rear and surround) duties were taken care of by six Elementi Firebird two-way active loudspeakers using dual 165mm diameter cone drivers to deliver the bass and midrange frequencies, and a 25mm compression driver to deliver the high frequencies. Each of these speakers was powered by a Tungsten amplifier rated at 1,000 watts, with one channel being used to power the two cone drivers and the other the compression driver. Crossover was at 1.5kHz and, again, the cross is done digitally with all drivers equalised for both frequency and phase.

Deep bass for our review system was supplied by two subwoofers — an Elementi Audio Earth Obsidian being powered remotely by an Elementi Titanium power amplifier rated with an output of 2,000 watts, and an Elementi Earth Onyx 'Slim' subwoofer that was also powered by a Titanium power amplifier rated at 2,000 watts. The Obsidian has a 458mm (18-inch) driver with a 100mm (4-inch) voice coil and a Neodymium magnet. It's rated with a frequency response flat from 150Hz down to 30Hz, after which roll-off is "minimal down to 20Hz"

The Onyx subwoofer has a 381mm (15-inch) driver with a 100mm (4-inch) voice coil and a Neodymium magnet. It, too, is rated by Elementi as having a flat response from 150Hz down to 30Hz, after which roll-off is "minimal down to 20Hz"

LISTENING SESSIONS

The very first thing we checked when auditioning the Elementi Audio Fire system was to see if we could hear any background system noise. With the volume turned up and no signal of any kind, was there any hiss, hum or buzz audible at the listening position? This is a crucial test that any home cinema system must pass, because unlike music systems, where any small background noise will be obscured by the music that will be playing more than 99 per cent of the time, most movies have long periods during with no music or dialogue at all, and almost no background noise — the producer is trying to build up tension and suspense. In order to deliver this, a cinema system must be totally silent. We're pleased to be able to say that the Elementi Fire system passed this test.

Our next test was for the realism of dialogue because it's absolutely imperative that you can understand everything the actors are saying. Auditioning *A Star is Born* (the recent Bradley Cooper/Lady Gaga version, not the 1976 Streisand/Kristofferson version), we could immediately tell from the opening scenes that we'd have no issues here because the voices and murmurs from audience and backstage crew were so easy to understand.

The rendering of tonality was also totally impressive. Listen, for example, to the difference in the sound quality of Lady Gaga's voice when it

switches from using one microphone to a different type of microphone when she's singing. What you're hearing here are the differences in the microphone design. It's rare to find any cinema system that's able to reveal differences as small as this.

Later, when we were listening to conversations between Cooper and Gaga, the crispness of the vocal delivery was incredibly impressive but, unlike many systems that use compression drivers to deliver this high level of performance, the crispness was not accompanied by any undue sibilance.

We confess we replayed some of *A Star is Born's* concert sequences several times to experience not only the power and heft of the lowest frequencies, but also the incredible dynamics the Elementi Fire system was easily capable of delivering. Listening to *Black Eyes*, we were totally enraptured by the power of the kick drum sound and the visceral energy of the bass guitar. The sheer amount of low-frequency force was totally awesome. We certainly had time to admire the lack of sibilance, because Cooper sings 'by the wayside' over and over, along with the very aspirant and sibilant word 'testify'. The sound also remained perfectly balanced, even when we increased the volume levels to way above what we experience at a live concert.

But the Elementi Audio Fire can also do delicate beautifully. Listening to Cooper's six-string on *Maybe It's Time* we could hear absolutely everything — no blurring, no slowness, no overhang — and everything preserved in a perfect acoustic. The sense of being there was uncanny. The guitar sound on *Shallow* was equally exceptional, but this time we also admired the system's ability to reveal the decay in the echoes of the venue — there's a beautiful fade to imperceptibility, rather than the usual unrealistic sharp cut-off when levels gets too low.

But movie sound is also about explosions, gunfire, and car crashes, so a system needs to be able to deliver these authentically as well — at any volume level — so it was time for *Ready Player One*. The Elementi Fire system delivered everything it had, in spades, at any volume. Yet at the same time the movie's background sounds... the computer beeps, the sound of the dashboard, the fades of horns — not to mention the screeching of tyres — were also delivered with aplomb. Before we knew it we were being sucked into the movie experience and moving the review process to the backburner.

CONCLUSION

The Elementi Audio 'Fire' home cinema system we auditioned for this review was, in our minds, a game changer. It revolutionised our concept of what is possible to achieve in a home cinema system because, quite frankly, we have never heard any other system that came even close to delivering this high level of performance. £



SYSTEM DETAILS

Despite us identifying the components in the specific system we auditioned, Elementi Audio customises each system individually for each customer, so although there's a basic underlying structure, you can mix and match different amplifiers, loudspeakers, subwoofer shapes and more. So each system is essentially unique to each customer, which prevents us from specific pricing. But as a rough guide, the price of three front LCR speakers alone can range from around \$20,000 to around \$70,000. Fire, however, is Elementi Audio's flagship system. There's also a more economical 'Air' system available that's similarly customisable. And just in case you were wondering, although all the systems use imported components, everything is individually assembled here in Australia in order to facilitate the high level of customisation that is integral to Elementi Audio's philosophy.

For more information, contact Elementi Audio distributor Cogworks, on (07) 5415 0337 or visit <https://cogworks.io>