

Sourcepoint 8 for precision imaging

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Mofi Sourcepoint 8 loudspeakers

The Mofi Electronics Sourcepoint 8 and its larger sibling the 10-inch Sourcepoint 10 are the progeny of British designer Andrew Jones, who is known for his concentric driver designs developed during his tenure as chief engineer at KEF in the 70s and 80s and refined through similar roles at Pioneer, TAD and Elac. In 2022 Jones was invited to join Mofi to lead the development of a new line of concentric speaker designs dubbed Sourcepoint. Launched in November 2022, the 10-inch Sourcepoint 10 created a lot of excitement amongst audiophiles, the only downside being its large size, appearing especially oversized within smaller European rooms. Says Jones: “we always had the intention of releasing a smaller Sourcepoint, but our first priority was demonstrating just how good a large diameter 2-way concentric speaker could sound when we were not so much size constrained.” Enter the Sourcepoint 8, developed to provide a smaller alternative without sacrificing audio performance.

But before we explore the SourcePoint 8, here’s a little background to explain why successful concentric drivers, cited by some as the Holy Grail of driver design, deserve that epithet. With very few exceptions, it’s inconvenient but necessary to use at least two drive units to cover the entire audio range. However, the inevitable physical separation, together with the electrical crossover required to blend their sounds, introduces time and phase differences which disturb the distribution of sound around the loudspeaker, resulting in unwelcome variations in off-axis frequency response, power response and stereo perception. We’ve all noticed the effect of standing up or moving about the room when music’s playing, when we’ve moved away from the speaker’s sweet spot.

Also, a large disparity between the on-axis and off-axis responses can affect the tonality of sound reflected back to the listener from the room’s various surfaces. So, while the on-axis response may look great, if things are not right, the in-room sound may not be so good. This is

just one reason why the design of multi-way speakers should consider way more than just the on-axis frequency response.

All aspects of the design should be optimised and, ideally, all the drive units in a multi-way speaker should be in the same place – not so simple in practice, but one way of achieving this is to position the tweeter concentrically (in the middle of) in the woofer cone. We've had concentric drive units for many years – going back to the famous Tannoy Dual Concentrics – which were once prevalent in recording studios – and various newer designs by KEF, Fyne Audio and others over the years.



They are not easy to design, as solving one set of problems introduces a whole lot more – but the benefits to stereo imagery and consistency of tonal balance, particularly when listening near field, (as in small recording studios) can be tangible.

Mofi's Sourcepoint 8 speaker is basically a scaled down version of the Sourcepoint 10 but requiring extensive re-engineering. The 1.25 inch diameter soft-dome tweeter uses the woofer cone as a waveguide (horn), to enable a crossover frequency a little lower than would otherwise be possible. In this case, it's at 1.6kHz, which is ideal for crossing over to an 8-inch woofer. A common problem when blending drivers of different size is the sudden change in directivity with frequency (sound dispersion) at the crossover frequency, due to the way that sound naturally propagates away from different diameter drivers. This can result in a dip in the off-axis and power responses, which would not be apparent on axis, and this is often a problem when crossing over from larger woofers to small tweeters.

Placing the tweeter at the apex of the woofer cone, as in the Sourcepoint 8, confines the tweeter's sound into a narrower beam in its lower range, better matching it to the woofer's dispersion and helping them to blend around crossover and thus provide better handover consistency. However, the woofer's profile is critical to the frequency response of the tweeter. It's also critical to the way the cone vibrates and produces sound, so it has two jobs to do well. The woofer-cone waveguide, if shaped correctly, also boosts the tweeter's low-frequency sound output, improves efficiency and reduces the input power required, maximising the sound pressures it can generate in this region. So, all round a win-win if done well.

When this is achieved sounds above the crossover area are focussed into a narrower beam, meaning less energy is put into the room over this frequency range. The off-axis frequency response should be more consistent with the on-axis response than from a conventional 8-inch two-way with a similar crossover frequency and this should benefit in-room tonality.

Another challenge is to squeeze two sets of motor systems into one space, and with the Sourcepoint 8, Mofi has achieved this with a twin-drive high-flux neodymium magnet system



with a fully symmetrical magnetic field, designed to reduce distortion introduced by the motor structure itself. They claim that this has resulted in extremely low intermodulation and harmonic distortions.

Furthermore, the Sourcepoint 8s have very solidly constructed cabinets with mirror-image-grained real-wood veneers. The deeply sculpted, multiple-faceted baffle scatters and minimises the harmful effects of diffraction. Moulded plastic-framed grilles, provide a degree of domestication, held on by powerful magnets, but most serious listeners will prefer to listen with them off. They are easy to fit, but strong fingers are required to prize them off. The review pair were finished in black ash, (with the black grilles) but they are also available in walnut and satin white.

Listening

To kick off the review process, I popped the Sourcepoint 8s onto a pair of well-loaded and damped 63cm stands. The first and over-riding impression of the Sourcepoint 8 speakers is the way they form very precise and stable stereo images without a sharp stereo sweet spot. These are certainly benefits of the co-axial design. The soundstage created was deep, focussed and full of detail. It's a drier, denser sound than anticipated. On occasions, I'd have liked the sound to have opened out more and filled the room with a greater sense of space and air, but there was an undeniable sense of focus due to the reduction in mid and treble reflections from the side walls.

It was possible to alter the tonal balance slightly by angling the speakers in, straight ahead or pointing outwards. The differences were marginal, confirming the success of the coaxial design. Sometimes they could sound a tad hard, depending on the source material. However, the tonal balance seemed more even and mid-treble sweeter off the main axis, which was no surprise given the few quick tests I took afterwards with Clio Pocket.

Music through Sourcepoint 8

Taking just a few musical examples of those played: the live recording of Stacey Kent's Postcard Lover, starts with sounds of the audience's applause and whistles. The sound of their clapping was naturally reproduced, seemingly separate, and not blending together in time or space, as can so often happen. When she starts singing, her velvety voice was intimately and sweetly portrayed. Her backing band's instruments were located with pin-sharp clarity. Piano had natural body, sax was rich and fruity, cymbals rang out clearly and upright bass was full and easy to follow, helping to drive the bossa nova rhythm along briskly. All in all, this, and the other tracks on this album, were simply a delight, and I'm playing this 44.1kHz/16 bit recording in the background as I'm writing this.

Mofi Sourcepoint 8

The Police's *Tea in the Sahara* from their *Synchronicity* album (44.1kHz/ 16 bit) produced an even bigger and deeper soundscape, with Sting's velvety vocals hanging ethereally behind the speakers. Every instrument in this mix: synths, bass, guitar and so on, was located with pinpoint precision, with every tiny detail and harmonic texture evident.

Switching genres, I played Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 2* with Byron Janis at the piano and Antal Dorati conducting the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. It's a tricky recording, which can sound a bit flat and distant – even mushy and uninteresting on some systems - and



the strings can sound wiry. However, *via* the Sourcepoint 8s, string tone was lush and rich – no sign of thinness or harshness. Byron's piano had presence and clarity, with notes cascading beautifully. Double basses were rich and full, and the horns sounded like they should. This was a full-fat performance, rich and romantic. So, these speakers really brought out the best in this recording.

As one would expect, well recorded higher resolution files sounded even better. For instance, on a 2.8MHz DSD file of Miles Davis' *So What* from *Kind of Blue* (from my Sony HAP-Z1ES streamer *via* an Auralic Altair G1.1 used as a USB DAC) Miles' horn rasped with brassy, breathy clarity, upright bass notes were full and distinct, with a fine sense of pitch, and the sax was fruity and richly toned in an all-enveloping reverberation.

Conclusion

Having played several tracks of different genres and vintages to get an overall view of the Sourcepoint 8's capabilities, bass was judged to be powerful, generous and well timed, providing the speakers with quite a full tonal character – not reaching as deep as a larger floorstander, of course, but quite impressive for their size. This was coupled with an uncanny ability to set up precise stereo images within an almost holographic soundstage.

It was clear that the Sourcepoint 8s are well-engineered and built speakers revealing subtle textures, harmonic structures and details in each mix, regardless of musical genre, clearly revealing differences between recordings, file qualities and DAC/streamer capabilities, etc. They can bring out the best (or, sometimes, the worst) in recordings, which provides a very engaging listening experience. It should also make them excellent as mixing monitors, due to their forensic analysis of production, mixing and mastering, which will no doubt win many friends.



The ear is all about great music and great sound. It is written by hard bitten audio enthusiasts who strive to find the most engaging, entertaining and great value components and music of the highest calibre. This really is what living is all about.