



## Test compact speaker Epos 14N: „N” for highest naturalness



epos

With the Epos 14N Karl-Heinz Fink enriches the 4,000 Euro class with a wonderfully cultivated sounding speaker system (Photo: D. Hoffmann)

Karl-Heinz Fink is one of the busiest and most successful loudspeaker developers in the world, working for many well-known brands - currently AVM, Castle, Peak Consult or Quad, among others. And for many more his work is subject to secrecy. Nevertheless, you always have to ask yourself what the result would be if he were free to develop to his heart's content and his own taste. This can now be seen and heard very nicely in the example of the Epos 14N. Fink bought the brand in 2020 and is now reviving it - but in a completely different way than I would have thought...

In 1983 Robin Marshall founded the British loudspeaker manufacturer Epos. Marshall, a really fun and bright guy, had a few ideas that he wanted to use to freshen up the graying British hi-fi sound a bit. Probably his greatest idea was the Epos 14: On the one hand, because it was quite large for a compact speaker (dimensions W x H x D: 48.8 x 22.6 x 29.0 cm), on the other hand, because it actually sounded refreshingly different, which is why it still has its fans today.

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Robin Marshall's Epos 14 had extremely clear features, and the straightforwardness of its design also inspired Mordaunt Short, which bought Epos in 1988

Marshall relied on the then rarely used metal dome tweeter and a bass-midrange driver with (the almost universally used) high-damping polypropylene cone. His highlight, however, was the absence of a crossover. Only in front of the tweeter was a capacitor as a filter and a resistor for level adjustment. He had chosen the mid-bass driver so cleverly that it did not need a crossover and was connected directly to the amplifier - the Epos 14 was virtually a partially active speaker.

Then as now, such designs are rare; **LowBeats** had in recent years only a few "Totem Acoustic" models (such as the [Element Metal V2](#)) in the test, which are connected in the same way. In

terms of character, these speakers do not always necessarily play „beautifully“, but always very direct, dynamic and impulsive. This was also true for the Epos 14.

But let's bring the short Epos story to an end: Already in 1988 Marshall sold the company to Mordaunt Short, who didn't do much with it. Consequently, Epos was sold again in 1999, this time to amplifier specialist Michael Creek, who also launched only a few speakers under this label with modest success. How does the Brit say? „Nothing to write home about.“

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# The different nature of the Epos 14N

Things really picked up speed again only about two years ago. Karl-Heinz Fink bought the brand in 2020 and probably needed some time to figure out what the reincarnation should look and sound like. The result of his deliberations he showed at the previous HIGH END in 2022. And as so often when Fink presents a speaker, the hi-fi community is quickly euphoric. Especially since ambitious Fink engineering was offered here for 4,000 euros per pair; with its other brand, the FinkTeam (see [Borg](#) and [Kim](#)), the whole thing becomes noticeably more expensive right away.

However, not much of the original Epos 14 is recognizable in the modern Fink design. One can literally see the struggle with which Fink initially tried to adopt as much of the old Epos 14 as possible, only to realize at some point, annoyed, that such a loudspeaker would no longer be built in this form today according to the latest findings. Above all, the master despaired of the mega-simple crossover. Quote Fink: „It can't be done that easily. Well, I certainly can't.“

In the end, Fink - according to my impression - threw all ideas of a resurrection of the original Epos 14 overboard and did what he does best: A really good compact box without any preconceptions in mind. However, two reminiscences can be found: The metal dome tweeter and the polypropylene cone of the bass-midrange driver. These are both materials that Fink does not necessarily favor, but uses as a nod to the old Epos 14. This is not detrimental to the sound ...



The crossover of the Epos 14N is a highly complex 12 dB circuit with all kinds of additive filters - for example, to linearize the dome resonance occurring at 30 KHz. So there is no trace of flat filters anymore...



The metal dome offers a rather large diameter of 28 millimeters and an - for tweeters - unusually strong ceramic coating, which shifts the usual breakup resonance of metal domes to a good 30 kHz



The also quite large bass-midrange driver (diameter almost 19 cm) has a polypropylene cone and an elaborate drive with a two-layer wound 36-millimeter underhang voice coil, which is further linearized by the additional magnetic ring

(Fotos: H. Biermann)

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The veneer of the test box was without fault, the double baffle (black) has a different resonance behavior than the 2-layer panel behind it.



The view with the bass-midrange speaker removed: The baffle has a total thickness of 4.5 centimeters. So, nothing will wobble anymore...



(Fotos: H. Biermann)

The bracing is quite deliberately only selective at those points that are particularly prone to vibrations. Large-area stiffeners have proved to be rather disadvantageous in tests

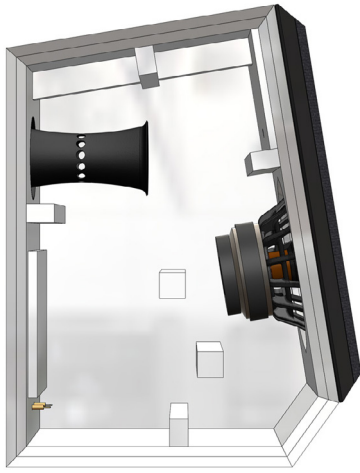
The cabinet is what one might expect from an ambitious Fink construction of the upper price range: all walls are made of two-layer MDF boards, held together by means of highly damping glue. This is firmer and „quieter“ than a continuous MDF panel with the same wall thickness. The baffle is glued using the „double-up“ method, six braces hold the cabinet precisely still and the three slopes in the structure prevent standing waves.



The ports are particularly likeable because they are so small and flat. By dispensing with a large connection tray, nothing wobbles on the back panel of the Epos 14N. The assembler's personal signature on the rear panel confirms the impeccable function

All this was done for the sole purpose of making the cabinet as low in vibration as possible. Fink's development office has a whole phalanx of lasers and analysis devices for this purpose, the results of which are put into elaborate simulations. Only the automobile industry can afford a similar effort. Or, to put it another way, this is something you rarely find in other loudspeaker manufacturers.

Above are some impressions of the cabinet:



The walls are made of double-layered MDF, and the baffle, which is twice as thick at 4.5 centimeters, is slightly slanted towards the rear. The overall construction weighs a proud 16 kilograms. That's quite a word for a compact speaker (Graphic: Epos)

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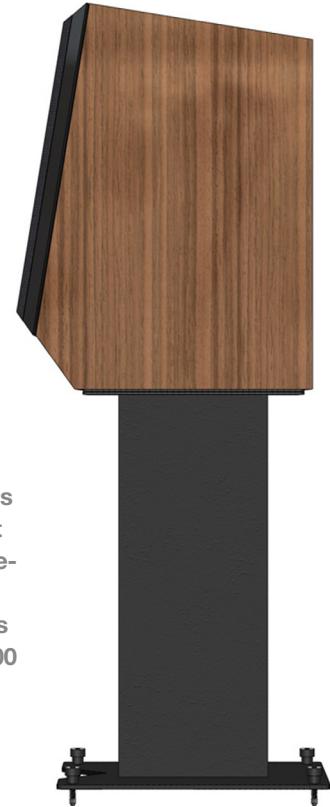


# Practice

So, the ingredients are all of the finest. But before we hear how well the master put it all together, let's take a look at the practicality of the Epos 14N. First of all, there is the sheer size, which makes placing it on the sideboard look strange and is also not recommended in terms of sound.

Instead, the quite bass-strong Epos requires free placement - preferably on the stand, which was tailored by Fink optically / acoustically to the body. Its price of 600 euros - compared to other stands of this quality - is really moderate.

The stand has to be screwed to the Epos and is not only visually fitting but should also have been integrated into the sonic concept. The price for a pair is pleasantly affordable at 600 Euros (graphic: Epos)



Technische Daten	Epos 14N
<b>Concept:</b>	2-way passive speaker (bass reflex)
<b>Equipment:</b>	HT: 1 x 28 mm metal dome, TT: 1 x 18.5 cm polypropylene cone
<b>Efficiency:</b>	85 decibels
<b>Maximum level (continuous):</b>	102 decibels
<b>Min. power for max level:</b>	> 80 watts
<b>Set-up tip:</b>	free, on stand (600 euros extra charge)
<b>Colors:</b>	Walnut, White, Black
<b>Dimensions (H x W x D):</b>	49,1 x 25 x 38,5 cm
<b>Weight:</b>	16 Kilo

[Link to all technical data](#)



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The placement close to the rear wall, like here in the picture, is only the second-best choice for the Epos 14N. The distance to the rear wall had to be larger, at least in the LowBeats listening room (photo: D. Hoffmann)

So, it makes no sense not to use the stand, especially since the Epos 14N already wanted a distance of at least 50 centimeters from the rear wall in our listening rooms. The esteemed colleague Bernd Theiss wrote in his informative and readable test in the German hifi-magazine „stereoplay“ 6/2023, that the Epos 14N initially lacked sovereignty in the bass. One should not draw any false conclusions here, because this speaker has unquestionably enough bass. In our small listening room (16 square meters, SI) it was almost a bit too much for me, which is why I moved with her to the large listening room (70 square meters, SI). And even that she knew how to fill without any problems.

But a lot and deep bass from a (still) comparatively small cabinet leads to expect only a low efficiency.

And indeed: More than 85 dB (per watt and meter) it does not bring to the trapeze. This is still a decent average value, but it indicates that the new Epos likes to have amplifiers of the 100-watt class behind it.

A Soulnote A1 (in the picture in front) or a [Rega Elicit](#) would be a top recommendation here also in terms of character. Or, if it should sound even more open, a [Yamaha A-S 2200](#) or its derivative with built-in streamer, the [R-N2000A](#).

But because the Epos 14N also has - as you would expect from a Fink design - a squeaky clean impedance/phase response, tube amps also come into question: Even Fezz Audio's 300B Mira Ceti amplifier made music with the

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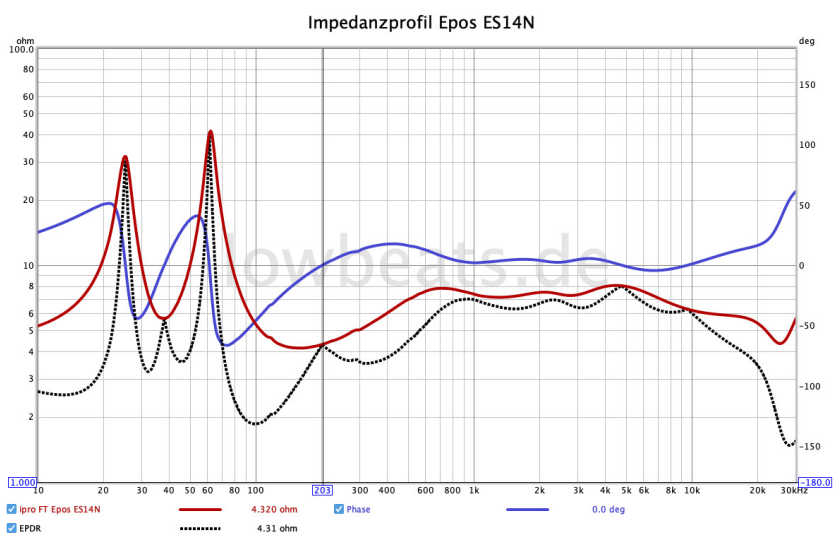


(Photo: H. Biermann)

Soulnote A1 and Rega Elicit in a group picture with the Epos 14N. Because of its electrically flawless behavior, the Epos 14N also plays with 10 watt amplifiers without any problems - just not deafeningly loud...

new Epos in a charming way and at a considerable volume.

Tententially, however, if the inclined Epos-14N owner is flirting with tube amplifiers, I would rather aim at the somewhat more powerful models. With the Cayin CS-55A, for example, an absolutely audiophile and still affordable super pair could be created...



(measurement: J. Schröder)

The impedance (red curve) never falls below 4 ohms and runs like the phase (blue curve) wonderfully linear. Amplifiers like that

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## Listening test

I had already been able to hear the Epos 14N extensively at the HIGH END 2022 and knew roughly what was coming. But in the large LowBeats listening room, connected to the large Canor electronics, it impressed me even more. Because with a lot of space around it and with such a sonically high-class amplifier in the cross, it made music in a most natural way and also went to work in the bass much firmer and more structured than still in the small listening room on the Rega Elicit.

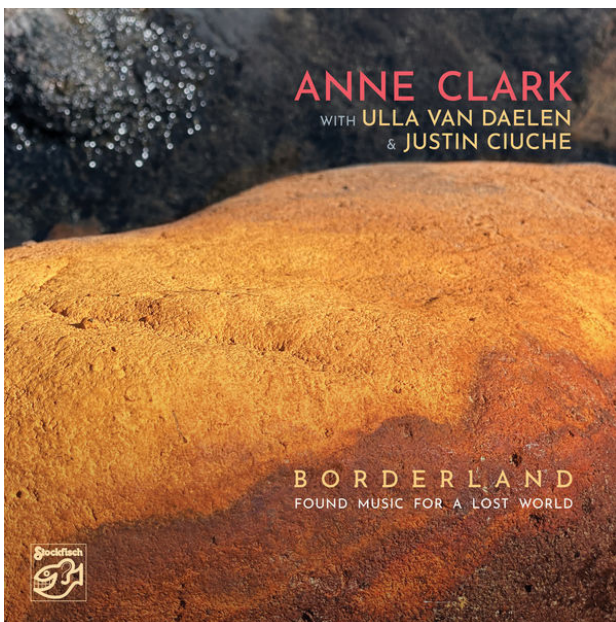
The sound of the Epos 14N is tuned minimally dark and thus seems rather discreet and relaxed. Nevertheless, the details are wonderfully finely resolved and vividly reproduced, but any hint of sharpness is missing - which speakers with such a credible imaging tend to bring as a disadvantage. And in general: for all those who have not

been able to overcome their reservations about metal domes, the Epos 14N is the perfect antidote: no metal dome has ever sounded so little like „metal“ in the LowBeats test.

The longer I listened to the new Epos, the more it captivated me. Because at some point it became clear that it sounds really „beautiful“, but also incredibly realistic. An example: In the meantime „Borderland“ by Anne Clark has established itself as a fixed part of my listening tests. The atmospherically dense interplay of violin, harp and Anne Clark's sonorous voice was mixed by the sound engineers of Stockfisch Records to an audiophile masterpiece in terms of transparency, fine dynamics and physicality.

So, I sat in the listening room, let „Borderland“ play and almost couldn't believe the intense plasticity with which the harp stood in the room. And the speakers seemed to have nothing at all to do with this experience, so effortlessly did the sound image detach itself from the Epos. But also the sound of the struck harp string I have not yet heard so „real“ in this price range. In terms of natural timbres, this large compact speaker should have no equal in the near future.

This is even true for our compact speaker reference. The [Dynaudio Heritage Special](#), itself an embodiment of high naturalness, was able to keep the Epos 14N at bay with its slightly greater liveliness and higher precision in bass and fundamental. But not for long: The Epos still showed a bit more melting, gave the vocal ranges a little shot more warmth on the way and also therefore sounded a bit more „beautiful“ and relaxed. Especially for friends of classical music and well-made singer-songwriter recordings, this new Epos should be at the top of the wish list.



Anne Clark „Borderland“ was released by Stockfisch / in-akustik as hybrid CD/SACD as well as HiRes download (FLAC 24Bit/88kHz with pdf booklet) or DMM double LP with four-sided inlay sheet (Cover: Qobuz)



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The rather large Epos 14N vs. the comparatively dainty Dynaudio Hertoge Special, here still in the small listening room (Photo: H. Biermann)

## Summary Epos 14N


Karl-Heinz Fink has revived the Epos brand. But nothing remains of either the straightforward looks or the impulsive, direct sonic character of the iconic ,80s designs. Which need not be a disadvantage: Because this new Epos

14N is almost certainly one of, if not THE most coherent loudspeaker in its class, and in terms of naturalness it is likely to simply outperform many other, many times more expensive speakers. Those who value authentic timbres, vivid sound images and a very fine, never sharp reproduction will be richly gifted with the Epos 14N. An exceptional talent that is not expensive compared to what is offered. Overall



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## EPOS 14N



**LowBeats®**  
**OUTSTANDING**

**4,5**  
RESULT

## EVALUATION

SOUND	★★★★★★
PRACTICE	★★★★★
PROCESSING	★★★★★
IN TOTAL	★★★★★

2023-06-09

The rating always refers to the respective price class.

### Pro & Contra:

- ⊕ Wonderfully harmonically fine, audiophile sound.
- ⊕ Astonishing bass fullness, great depth staggering
- ⊕ Good workmanship
- ⊖ Needs free placement, stand is almost mandatory

### Pair price:

(manufacturer's recommendation)

**Epos 14N:** € 4.000,-

**Epos 14N Stands:** € 600,-

### Mit- und Gegenspieler:

[Test Streaming-Receiver Yamaha R-N2000A](#)

[Test 300B-Röhrenverstärker Fezz Audio Mira Ceti](#)

[Test Vollverstärker Rega Elicit Mk5: der perfekte Flow](#)

[Test Röhren-Vollverstärker Cayin CS-55A: Evolution und Emotion](#)

[Test Dynaudio Heritage Special: in der Tradition der großen Sondermodelle](#)

### Vertrieb:

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### Verwandte Themen:

• EPOS

• KARL-HEINZ FINK

• LINEARE IMPEDANZ



### Lowbeats-author: Holger Biermann

Editor-in-chief with a penchant for the finest loudspeaker and amplifier technology, good wine and travel: most of the trade fair and dealer reports also come from his pen.