

AUDIOENZ

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Image 412

Wouldn't it be nice?

By Michael Jones

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Image 412 loudspeaker. \$1499

“Wooden it be nice” to start a review with a bad pun? Actually, mentioning wood is a fine place to start when discussing **Image** loudspeakers, as they come with superb real wood finishes. But the finish is only a beginning. The Image 412s are a superb sounding speaker and, at their price, represent something of a bargain.

The 412 is the smallest floorstanding speaker in the Image range and is the baby brother to the [well reviewed 414](#). The 412 is a smaller speaker, with a smaller cabinet and only one mid-woofer driver, compared to the 414s two.

“Elegant” is a word to describe the Image 412. The speaker stands 900mm high and, with a width of only 180mm, do anything but dominate the room. The fabulous real wood veneers help here too.

There are two drive units in each speaker. The tweeter is quite something. The Morel MDT33 tweeter comes in pairs, matched to an incredible 0.25dB tolerance. The tweeter weighs in at 1.2kg (that's very heavy for a tweeter), due to the triple magnet assembly that drives the tweeter.

Below the 2500Hz crossover point, the Morel 160mm mid-woofer takes over. A plastic cone, the woofer includes a large 75mm voice coil for high power handling. The cabinet is vented by a port on the rear.

The cabinet itself is braced internally, which reduces colourations caused by the walls singing along with the music. There's a 25mm cavity at the bottom of the cabinet. The cavity is pre-filled with sand to reduce the centre of gravity and further reduce the effect of the cabinet on the sound.



The 412 has a rated sensitivity of 88dB/1 Watt and a nominal 8 ohm impedance. Power handling is specified at 100 Watts. In practise, the 412 prefers a solid amplifier behind it to properly control the woofer. I'd suggest a minimum of a [Rotel RA-01](#) amplifier. My [Plinius 8150](#) had no problems with the 412, as it shouldn't. A wimpy lightweight AV receiver may struggle with the 412, but such a receiver wouldn't sound any good any way!

Then we wouldn't have to wait so long

Some speakers sound great out of the box. Others benefit from a couple of hours use to loosen up. The 412s need hours – forty or more – to reach their best. At first the 412s sounded lean in balance and a bit peaky in the upper midrange. Gradually the speakers warmed up to become better balanced and the upper midrange peakiness reduced.

And wouldn't it be nice to live together...

I mentioned at the beginning that the 412s are something of a bargain, as sound this good normally costs a lot more.

It's a sound full of dynamic and tonal subtlety. Gil Evans is probably best known for his work with Miles Davies (*Sketches of Spain* being their most famous collaboration) but his work under his own name was equally as good. His 1961 album [Out of the Cool](#) employs a wealth of instruments to create a sound of tonal and dynamic shadings.

I have not heard a speaker near this price reproduce music like this to such a standard before. Most speaker in this price range smear the sound through the use of cheaper drivers and (particularly) the cabinet "singing" along with the music.

Early in my auditioning I believed that the 412s were tonally lightweight, but as they run in this improved. Towards the end of my time with the 412s I was listening to some Michael Jackson, ranging from his relatively sane days (around the *Off the Wall* album) through to his more recent completely loopy period. Jackson likes to use some serious bass in some of his tracks. I was surprised and delighted at the solidity and power of the bass coming from this relatively small speaker.

You know it's gonna make it that much better...

There are a few caveats before you rush off to you image dealer and listen to the 412s. The first is that the 412 needs lots of running in. If the speaker sounds lean or edgy, then it requires more hours on it before it's worth listening to.

The second point is to consider what type of listener you are. If you're after a sound with lots of kick in the bass or need to fill a large room (or both) then the Image 414 will be a safer bet.

But for tonal and dynamic subtlety, I think that the 412 is the better speaker.

And after having spent the day together...

Chris Ball, the developer of Image speakers, has a winner on his hands with the 412. This is a delightful speaker, full of rewarding subtlety in its sound and makes for an easy recommendation for audition.

For your [nearest Image dealer](#)
