

Grant Fidelity MBS-1 Speakers

By Jake Montzingo

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Specifications

Frequency Response: 45 Hz to 22 kHz, -6db @ 40 Hz

Efficiency: 88db

Impedance: 8 ohm

Recommended Power: 10 to 75 watts

tube, 20 to 150 watts solid state

Dimensions: 13" D x 8.3" W x 16" H

Weight: 12kg / 26 lbs each

MSRP: \$1280

www.grantfidelity.com

What do I want in a monitor loud-speaker? Let us start with high quality construction materials and workmanship. If the production company uses industry proven drivers and crossover components that is a plus. As far as the production company itself, how about one with a respected and proven history in the audio industry? Without actually listening to the speakers themselves, those criteria would allow you to include many top companies in your search for a quality pair of monitors. When I initially contacted Grant Fidelity about the possibility of a review,

I was interested in their Jungson JA88D(09) class A amplifier. After a few minutes with Ian on the phone, he convinced me that I also need to get my ears on his MBS-1 bookshelf speakers. I figured that I could always use another speaker review in my rig, and boy did I make the right choice; more on the Jungson JA88D(09) amplifier next month. All of your favorite speaker companies aside, let me suggest to you Grant Fidelity ¹ as an offering that more than exemplifies the above criteria.

The Grant Fidelity MBS-1s (Monitor Bookshelf Speaker) were developed jointly over three plus years by Jungson Audio and Grant Fidelity. Jungson is the largest manufacturer of audio gear in China with a bevy of high-end audio products that they make in house. Having an extensive background in audio can be very advantageous in the development of new product, especially if you a great set of drivers to work with. The MBS-1 was designed using Jungson's own Vifa built drivers and with a custom first order crossover. Each component in these speakers are matched to less than 1% tolerance for better matching of the stereo pair, as well as to eliminate sound-stage drift and smearing. The curved cabinets of the MBS-1 are constructed out of multi-layer MDF which gives them non-equidistant interior dimensions to minimize bass coloration.

The exterior of the speakers are as beautiful as the technical bits. The Grant Fidelity MBS-1 is covered on most sides with a flawless, beech colored veneer that glows in the sunlight. The rear of the enclosure is semi-gloss black, while the front is wrapped in a supple black leather, accentuated by a woven grill. Beneath the grill sits the flush mounted, custom Vifa drivers nestled into that black leather like they were born there. On rear of the enclosure is the single port, with a pair of insulated and gold-plated five-way binding posts, and a gold Grant Fidelity plaque differentiating the model. The fit and finish of the speakers is high in the audio market, topped only by speakers that have auto-esq price tags. Better looking speakers have never cost so little since Grant Fidelity.

If you think the MBS-1 speakers look good, you ain't heard nothing yet, literally! After putting the speakers through their burn-in paces, I decided to lend my ear to a couple albums and get an idea of what Grant Fidelity and Jungson have to offer. My evening started with an assortment of songs from Michael Buble. With the music playing, I was initially hit by the detail of the radiated sound. The MBS-1 monitors produce an overall sound that is very detailed and



exact, yet slightly laid-back; just enough to be able to run them with almost any upstream electronics. This tendency gives the MBS-1 a greatly detailed top end, without the brightness that some monitors can have. However, with all the detail that high quality drivers in a well designed two-way, two driver can give, the MBS-1 monitors also produce bass that I consider a two-driver segment leader. For a monitor speaker on a generic speaker stand, they produce deep bass that has good extension and yet is still is well defined. However, a subwoofer may be wanted by some listeners as the monitors do not have “hit you in chest” bass; nor would I want them to as I feel that style of bass can be unmusical as times. The best bass a speaker can produce is effortless yet omni-present, and the Grant Fidelity MBS-1 does both in spades.



The MBS-1 has a first order crossover that is not seen in too many speakers. I am not sure the reason that the first order is not used by more speakers designers, but it is wonderfully executed in this offering from Grant Fidelity. As I was listening to *Give Up* by The Postal Service, I was very quickly made aware of how coherent the sound of the speakers were, and how well blended the tweeter and woofer were to produce a seamless sound. From 22 kHz all the way down to 45 Hz, the MBS-1 speakers reproduced music in a fashion that was difficult to hear the crossover point and any weaknesses of the drivers themselves. However, it also helps that Grant Fidelity uses high quality, audiophile grade components in its crossovers; the same kind you would use if you were building your own speakers. Plus, having a minimal number of crossover components doesn't hurt either. I believe that the shorter the signal path, the better in audio. Grant Fidelity seems to have the same philosophy in their MBS-1

monitor, and the work has paid off. Ben Gibbard's vocals in "Nothing Better" are fantastically present and breathy; I can almost hear him breathing his desperation into the microphone. Also, the sound stage presented by the song is as good as anything on that album, and that is not an easy task for any pair of speakers with the bevy of electronic sounds and left-right stereo shifts recorded by The Postal Service. The MBS-1 was able to take a difficult song to project and make it feel like it had a real sense of body in three dimensional space. Between their musicality, uncolored tone, and their holographic abilities, the Grant Fidelity MBS-1s rock.

The Grant Fidelity MBS-1 loudspeaker is a serious contender for the +/- \$1K award. They are great in all size rooms, but sensitive enough to be enjoyed at high or low volumes. The MBS-1 presented no listening fatigue in my listening sessions, nor could I sense and loss of detail or accuracy that can sometimes be present in budget monitors. Not only does the MBS-1 offer quality drivers and a high build quality, but it has the refinement of sound and product not usually offered at this price. If name recognition is something that holds you back with Grant Fidelity and Jungson, just trust your ears.

¹ Grant Fidelity also offers their RBS-1 (Reference Bookshelf Speaker) which is also a two-way monitor. It is truly the big brother of the MBS-1 as it uses solid wood with clear piano liquor finish for the cabinets, as well as Morel drivers for a truly reference level monitor that can be used in the studio or otherwise. With an MSRP of \$2200 and Grant Fidelity's In-Home Audition Program on all their products, you have nothing to lose but lesser sound quality.

Associated Equipment

Music Server
 Jungson JA88D(09) Amplifier
 Forte 1A Amplifier
 Luminous Audio Axiom Preamplifier
 Musiland Monitor 01 USD USB DAC
 Neko Audio XLR Interconnects
 Luminous Audio Renaissance II Interconnects
 Canare 4S11 Speaker Cables
 Monster Cable HTS 2500