

# Kudos Titan 707 floorstanding loudspeaker

by Steve Dickinson

**T**his review has been a while in the making – I first started talking to the Kudos guys at shows about a decade ago. In the loudspeaker equivalent of the ‘snog, marry, avoid’ game (which as a reconstructed male, I hasten to add, I haven’t played) Kudos has always seemed to me to occupy ‘marry’ territory. There’s always been plenty to like and admire, but they impress by their steadiness and honesty, rather than getting your attention with fireworks. Time, then, to see if this could be ‘the one’?

The £15,000 Titan 707 sits just below the flagship Titan 808 in the current Kudos line-up and, apart from being a slightly more accommodating size and configuration, it also represents a saving of some £10,000 over the larger model. It eschews the Titan 808’s 2½ -way, four-box layout for a more conventional two-way floorstanding design, though it uses the same tweeter, and retains Kudos’ isobaric and fixed boundary reflex bass loading arrangement. This puts two of Kudos’ bespoke SEAS 220mm bass/mid drivers back to back in a sealed chamber and wired out of phase so the pressure in the chamber remains pretty much constant. The front-facing driver fires into the room in the conventional way, while the rearward facing unit fires into another chamber within the cabinet, which exits in a downward-facing flared port onto a fixed boundary panel at the base of the speaker. Custom-designed spiked feet, courtesy of Track Audio, complete the speaker-floor interface.

Kudos explains that the isobaric loading produces the frequency response you’d expect from a cabinet of twice the volume, and the port arrangement is much less room-dependent than a conventional reflex port design. I can attest to this, despite being a fairly large loudspeaker in a fairly modest room this hasn’t presented any real issues and the Titan 707 doesn’t seem to object to being put fairly close to the wall. The tweeter is another bespoke SEAS unit, broadly a hybrid of their Beryllium tweeter’s motor with the Sonomex dome of the SEAS Crescendo unit, and with a newly-designed magnet system. The low-order crossover (first

order for the mid/bass, second order for the tweeter) gets similar close attention to detail and top quality componentry, and the speaker can also be configured for active operation. The whole sits in a fresh, modern cabinet with beautifully finished wood veneer side cheeks, elegantly chamfered top and bottom which quite effectively reduces the visual mass of what is actually quite a large cabinet, and also helps define the shape of the downward-firing port.

The thing that has always appealed to me about the Kudos designs is their sense of ease, and natural tonal colour; first impressions of the Titan 707 quickly reinforce that notion. There’s a sense of honesty in the warmth of their presentation, a limpid fluency that is both beautiful, and entirely reassuring. Openness and freedom abound, but without any hint of looseness, there’s no concern that they might, at any moment, give up the struggle for control and simply blurt the music at you. These are not going to be some wayward, rollercoaster ride of a speaker that exhilarates and enervates in equal measure. Rather, they exhibit the calm, professional air of a skilled artisan; “relax,” they seem to say, “we’ve got this”.

And they have. There’s an almost electrostatic-like sense of transparency and fluency, but with a heft and drive that panel designs just don’t manage to emulate. Timbres are rich, colourful and fully fleshed-out. I’ve found myself seeking out solo piano material, just to revel in the sense of a properly-sized instrument fully resolved in a convincing acoustic space. So, ‘January’ from Iiro Rantala’s *my finnish calendar* (ACT) was at once darkly brooding, yet curiously uplifting, the richness of Rantala’s tonal palette beautifully set off by the sensitivity of his touch and phrasing. The textures and woody tones of Evelyn Glennie’s marimba were made all the more real by the quick, clean attack and effortless timing in ‘Mexican Dance No. 2’ from *rhythm song* [RCA Victor] and showed, if there was any doubt, that the Titan 707s aren’t one of those loudspeakers that majors on beauty but goes a bit vague and apologetic when it comes to timing. This was the 707s in their element. Percussion is another strength, partly because of that timing, but mostly because it’s full of tactility, texture and impact. ▶







*“So often it’s the little things that make the biggest difference. Gross errors are relatively uncommon.”*

- Whether sticks, skins, brushes or bits of old angle iron, the 707s paint a richly-resolved picture of the instrument and how it is being played. Jaura Jurd’s ‘The Lady of Bruntál’ from *Landing Ground* [Chaos Collective] switches in an instant from a wistful string opening to an urgent and compelling dash, the percussion working subtle but remarkable magic in the speed and delicacy of touch, but also the variety of textures and shapes conjured up.

So often it’s the little things that make the biggest difference. Gross errors are relatively uncommon these days, so once you’ve got the basics right, it’s all about how far you can go with the rest. Spoken voice is often telling, because we all know what it sounds like. Shawn Mullins, ‘Twin Rocks Oregon’ from *Soul’s Core* (Columbia) is a bit of a favourite for this, because there’s a lilt and cadence to his voice, but it still sounds conversational. Get it wrong and much of the magic evaporates, poetry becomes mere anecdote. Happily the 707s pitched it just-so; there’s a subtle rhythm and an unforced rhyming structure that isn’t always evident, but when you get it right, as here, it weaves a little spell of its own.

It’s this ability to resolve down to the intimate little details that comes out time and again. If, like me, you think Brian Blade is one of the greatest drummers at work today, then listening to him through the Kudos simply removes all doubt; or hear the variety of tonal shades Laura Jurd draws from her trumpet on ‘Flight Music’, also from *Landing Ground*. It’s not detail for detail’s sake, either – the various components and complexities, whatever the music, are fully resolved and entirely cohesive. ‘Flight Music’ is a particularly revealing piece, at one moment lyrical and sweet, the next, angular and spiky; here, the Titan 707s brought out a real sense of actual musicians, at the top of their game, exploring the possibilities of their instruments and we’re invited to share in the sheer joy of their music-making. Some systems suggest you keep a respectful distance, lest someone get hurt, but with this version you can’t help but be drawn in. In point of fact, I got so drawn in, I let the entire CD run through...

There’s a slight foible, I won’t call it a flaw because everything else is so well-resolved I’m sure this is intentional. The upper midrange is very slightly recessed, which has the effect of putting a little more distance between the listener and the performance. My Albany M1108s were entirely comfortable ►

*“The 707s pointed out, almost in passing, how the percussion sometimes echoes the rhythms in the melody.”*

▶ driving the Titan 707s, perhaps not quite so ‘forward’ as some other British designs of their ilk, their quick, lively and engaging character was nonetheless put to excellent use here. It’s a sense of physical separation, not by any means putting the music at arm’s length. Charlie Haden and John Taylor’s ‘Song for the Whales’ from *Nightfall* [Naim], places the piano back somewhat behind the double bass; but the piano textures and weight, and the tonal variety Haden draws from his bass, are simply extraordinary. Sinatra, ‘One for my Baby’ [Capitol] has the familiar intimacy of his voice, but the piano and Nelson Riddle’s orchestra are set a little further behind. Sinatra’s exquisite timing is still there, you just have to compensate ever so slightly for the deeper soundstage. It’s like sitting five or ten rows further back. Perhaps if your ideal concert seat is front row centre the Kudos Titan 707 is not for you, though I recommend you try it anyway, but if you like the broader balance of rows 5 to 10, then that’s what the 707s gave me. And speaking of cavernous soundstages, the Ramirez *Missa Criolla* [Naxos] showed the phenomenal transparency of these loudspeakers; aside from the vivid portrayal of the enormous acoustic space, there was a rhythmic cohesiveness that is often overlooked. The 707s pointed out, almost in passing, how the percussion sometimes echoes the rhythms in the melody, especially in the ‘Sanctus’.

You have a right to expect a remarkable loudspeaker at this sort of price, but ‘remarkable’ comes in different forms. This particular form of remarkable is the one that constantly reminds you that behind the music there are real people playing real instruments, and doing it because they love to make music. It’s transparency, detail, and honesty, but it’s also warmth, textures and a very natural way with shape and form. Music flows, phrasing is easy and unforced, colours are vibrant without undue emphasis. The Kudos Titan 707s make it very easy to get drawn into the music and just forget about the hifi. +

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Type:** 2 way, isobaric and bass reflex-loaded floorstanding loudspeaker with downwards firing fixed boundary port

**Driver complement:** 2 × SEAS-Kudos 220mm double coated paper cone mid/bass units, 39mm voice coil with copper shorting ring and aluminium phase plug; 1 × SEAS-Kudos Crescendo K3 29mm fabric dome tweeter

**Power handling:** 25–300W (recommended)

**Crossover frequency:** 2.6kHz

**Crossover type:** Single-wired, 1st order low pass, 2nd order high pass, point-to-point wired using Mundorf air-cored inductors, Mundorf wire-wound resistors and ICW polypropylene capacitors

**Frequency response:** (in-room, typical) 25Hz–30kHz

**Impedance:** 6 Ohms nominal

**Sensitivity:** 89dB for 1 Watt at 1 Metre

**Dimensions (H×W×D):** 1,050 × 298 × 370mm

**Weight:** 50 Kg each

**Finishes:** Piano Gloss Black/Piano Gloss White (premium options); Black Oak, Natural Oak, Tineo; Walnut

**Price:** £15,000/pair

**Manufacturer:** Kudos Audio

**Tel:** +44 (0) 138 841 7177

**URL:** kudosaudio.com