



Ferguson Hill FH009 review

Manufacturer: [Ferguson Hill](#)

Our Rating: ★★★★★

By [Andrew Harrison](#) | PC Advisor | 09 July 12

The Ferguson Hill FH009 is a stereo 2.1-channel speaker system for home theatre that works as well as a great self-powered stereo music system.

it reproduce music further into the bass end of the frequency range.

The original FH001 horn speaker can reproduce a decent part of the audio spectrum, down to around 150Hz anyway, although to be truly full-range they deserve to be joined by a sub-woofer to cover the low notes.

In the case of the Ferguson Hill FH009 system here though, the horns have been scaled down to around one-tenth the size – a modest 17cm high – and really need a separate box to reproduce bass.

In fact, these are the same transparent horns that feature in the company's FH007 desktop speaker system, which instead takes a spherical table-top bass bulb.



Ferguson Hill makes loudspeakers like no other specialist audio brand. Its first product was the FH001, a high-end speaker that resembles the clear horns of this Ferguson Hill FH009 system – only those speakers stand 1.65m tall. More speaker reviews.

The large size was once crucial, as these kind of high-efficiency speakers rely on coupling the small transducers at the back of the horn to the air in the room through a large surface.

That's achieved by a mathematically calculated profile of the elliptically shaped horn – a larger horn makes the system not only more efficient, and thereby louder for a given amplifier volume setting, but also lets



The Ferguson Hill FH001 was the original clear horn, standing 1.65m tall and here joined by a pair of spher-

ical subs.

The difference between the FH007 and the Ferguson Hill FH009 system lies in the supplemental speaker box, which here has twin forward-facing 130mm bass drivers in a rectangular cabinet.

This system is marketed as a two-channel home-theatre speaker system. Home cinema fans may mistake the bass unit for a centre-channel speaker in a 5.1 system – but this box is what most of the world would call a ‘sub-woofer’ unit, used here to underpin the horns’ limited bass response.

Ferguson Hill’s FH007 is a desktop PC speaker system using similar horns as those in the FH009 system. This cabinet of the Ferguson Hill FH009, available in white or black high-gloss finishes, includes two 32W amplifiers for its own bass drivers, each driver having its own amp; and another 32W stereo amplifier to power the satellite speakers.

transconductance type amplifier is used. These have been found, designer Timothy Hill told us, to give a more extended and smoother frequency response with the semi-fullrange speakers that make up the horns.

Ferguson Hill FH009: Features

The main speaker housing the amplifiers is a solid-feeling cabinet, lacquered to a very high standard. On the front is a USB port for direct connection of a flashdrive holding audio files, below a small LCD display that shows input source and volume on a 0-50 scale.

Up to four different sources can be connected – through two line-in inputs at the back, a 3.5mm minijack and the USB port on the front. Additionally, there’s another pair of phono sockets behind to connect to a sub-woofer if required.



Importantly, all these amps are not the now-familiar Class D (so-called ‘digital’ amplifier) used in most iPod docks and cheap speaker systems, but full-blooded Class AB designs.

In the case of the horn amplifiers, a relatively unusual

The horn speakers are crafted from clear acrylic, finished off with machined metal components that support the little drive units within. These horn speakers are mounted on metal cylindrical poles and solid metal bases. You can hide the speaker cables by running the included wires through the centre of the poles.

A power switch at the back of the speaker/amp box and a standby button on the front brings the system to life. Thereafter, you'll need the baby credit-card size remote control to operate this system.

In the context of the quality engineering found throughout this system, the remote is a little disappointing. It has clicky membrane buttons that don't quite echo the high-end feel of the rest of the Ferguson Hill FH009 speakers.

And without any useful controls on the cabinet front, you'll be doomed if you lose this little remote down the sofa.

You can cycle through the four inputs with its Source button, change volume and even relative bass level. Pressing the Bass button lets you step bass up or down by four steps from the volume keys. With the box sited on the floor of our lab (where proximity effect will augment bass output) we found we needed to drop to the -4 point for a relatively even sound.

Ferguson Hill FH009: Sound Quality

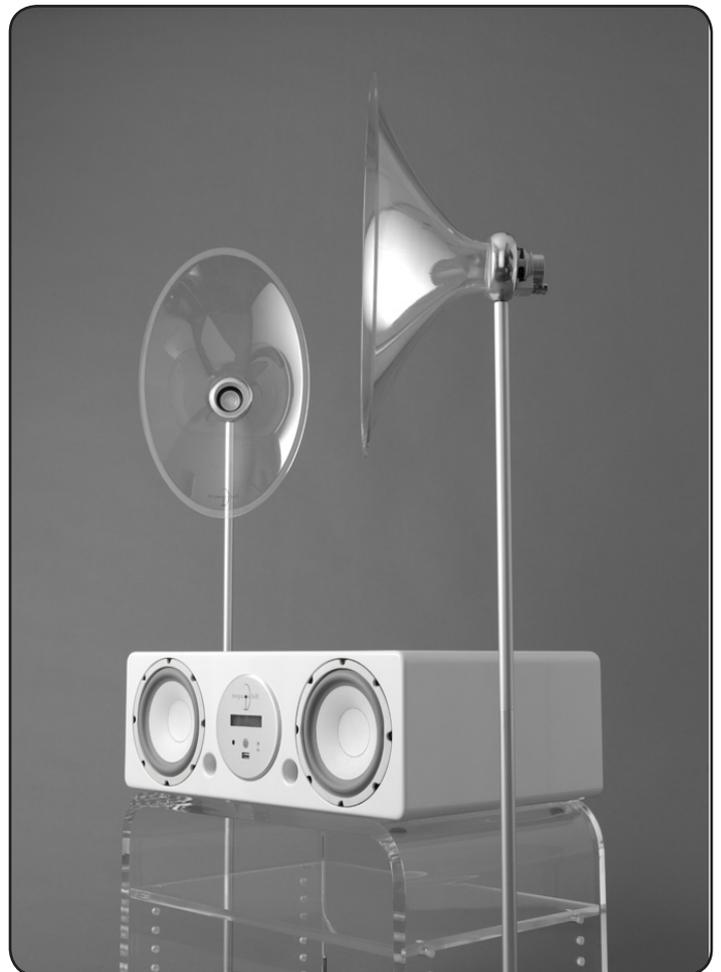
And it's not just the looks that can turn heads. We found the sound of the Ferguson Hill FH009 to be as refreshingly appealing.

Where almost every modern speaker, indeed since the 1950s, has relied on the classic two-way woofer/tweeter arrangement, Ferguson Hill's semi-fullrange setup allows for an altogether more natural effect.

The problem with regular speakers is the enforced split between midrange and treble that typically occurs around 2 or 3kHz. This is the crossover region where sound is being filtered by a crossover network, to ensure that no bass is fed to the tweeter and no high frequencies are sent to the bass driver. One of several problems is, the filters here can corrupt the time accuracy of the sound, a phase distortion that subtly disrupts the 'naturalness' of real sound.

As problematic is that the ear is at its most discerning in this frequency area – this is the band used by the human voice, both talking and singing, and our ears and brains have evolved to be very sensitive to the nuances of sound in this area.

In the case of the Ferguson Hill small horn, a single drive unit with no phase-changing filters is now reproducing the entire spread of important frequencies,



from around 500Hz to 18kHz. And the crossover split around 500Hz is achieved in the FH009 with active filters, which typically introduce less distortion as they work on low-level audio signals before the main amplification stages.

It was little surprise, then, to discover in the Ferguson Hill FH009 system a compelling, open sound, bereft of high-frequency tizz. And a sound reproduction quality that lapped up the sound of the singing voice. We used a mixture of sources to test the Ferguson Hill FH009, headphone jacks from [smartphones](#) as well as the analogue output from an ADL GT40 USB DAC.

In marked contrast to speaker systems with metal-dome tweeters, for instance, the Ferguson Hill FH009 had a smooth-as-butter top end. Some horn speakers can be a little quacky, but that was not so evident here. There was just some mild thickening of sound in the lower midrange and upper bass area. You can experiment with bass speaker positioning to tune out this added warmth.

Thanks to the foundation-setting bass cabinet, the system sounded full-blooded and even visceral when required.

Lana Del Ray's second album *Born To Die* majors on plenty of deep-down bass instrumentation, layered with wet reverberation as a backwash to her schizoid voice. The FH009 captured the little-girl voice well, hanging vocals ethereally in the air; Ray's darker, vamp voice was as captivating if a little coloured by the low-mid opacity mentioned earlier.

Some upbeat Pink Floyd confirmed the system's credentials for rock, the driving echoed bass guitars of 'One Of These Days' showing this system could play loud, play clean and play tight.

We tried some sparser acoustic material, Michael Nyman on BBC Radio 3 AAC, as well as extracts from Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* ripped from CD. Playing such acoustic instrumented pieces truly highlighted the wide open soundfield and the unforced phase-coherent sound you can expect from these horns.



Our Verdict

Build Quality: ★★★★★
Features: ★★★★★
Value for Money: ★★★★★
Performance: ★★★★★
Overall: ★★★★★

We tried to guesstimate the price of this system before learning its retail price – and were wrong by nearly a factor of two. Craftsman engineering and beguilingly smooth and natural sound led us to peg this system at £1500, not the £795 it is currently being sold for. If you want to hear the magic of old-school horns mashed up with modern-day materials and production techniques can do, we urge you to listen to the Ferguson Hill FH009 speaker system.

Read more at:

<http://www.pcadvisor.co.uk/reviews/audio/3368689/ferguson-hill-fh009-review/#ixzz20E19QCGN>