SWEET LITTLE SISTER



Arendal surprised last year with its flagship 1528 Tower 8 – and aims to achieve similar success with the downscaled 1610 Tower 8 for around 30 percent less budget.

Text: Tom Frantzen



The new midrange-tweeter unit as well as three long-throw woofers sit in the ventilated HDF cabinet.

Downsizing naturally means trying to achieve similar, possibly identical (sound) quality with reduced effort, so that the price can be lowered from around 10,000 to 7,000 euros – almost 30 percent, after all. This intent also becomes quite understandable when the pallet carrying the Arendal 1610 arrives and you compare it with the oversized, 200-kilogram double pallet on which the Arendal 1528 once arrived in our office in Euskirchen. The difference is enormous.

It's easy to imagine that the latter can sometimes pose a logistical challenge – or even an unreasonable burden – in direct sales to individual customers. In addition to logistics, the scaling is also intended to facilitate adaptation to the room environment. The 1610 should be able to adequately fill living spaces averaging 20 or 25 square meters, while the 1528 feels at home and can really let loose in larger rooms of perhaps 40 m² or more. While the top-of-the-line Tower 8 model in the 1528 series is clearly a prestige item designed to demonstrate what is possible for around 10,000 euros, the 1610, priced at 6,900 euros, appeals to high-earning enthusiasts and is perhaps the speaker that remains just within realistic reach for many. Not something you buy on a whim, but a goal for saving up.

STEREO VIDEO TO THE ARTICLE

short.falkemedia.de/arendal-1610

Potential Savings

That the more expensive HDF (high-density fiberboard) is still used instead of MDF (medium-density fiberboard) surprises us somewhat. Here we would have suspected potential for savings and, above all, reducing weight. Officially, HDF has a density from 800 kg/m³ and MDF from 500 kg/m³ – that is 60 percent more mass. But they did not want to push the compromise that far.

The baffle thickness in the 1610 series is nearly five centimeters; in the 1528 Tower, it is as much as eight cm. The walls of the Tower remain 25 millimeters thick, while those of the smaller models are still 18mm thick. Inside, the cabinets are reinforced at critical points.

In both tower models, the HDF is glued in layers to allow it to be bent into an arch shape; furthermore, it is CNC-milled on a five-axis machine at the factory. The reason for this is a driver arrangement that provides passive, acoustic-mechanical time alignment, perfectly synchronizing the sound from all drivers at a distance of approximately four meters. Incidentally, the listening distance does not have to be strictly adhered to; distances of just under three or a good five meters work just fine.

Let's take a look at the dimensions: at 1.42 meters tall and weighing 79 kilograms, the flagship model towers 22 cm above its still impressive „little" sister, the 1610, which weighs just over 45 kg. This actually makes the 1610 easier to handle.

Although both are true three-way designs, the drivers in the two models dif-

TEST DEVICES

CD player: T+A MP 3100 HV

Integrated amplifier: Accustic Arts Power III

Preamplifier: Accustic Arts Preamp V

Power amplifier: Accustic Arts Amp VI

Speakers: Arendal 1528 Tower 8, DALI Rubikore 8

Cables: Cardas, In-Akustik, JIB

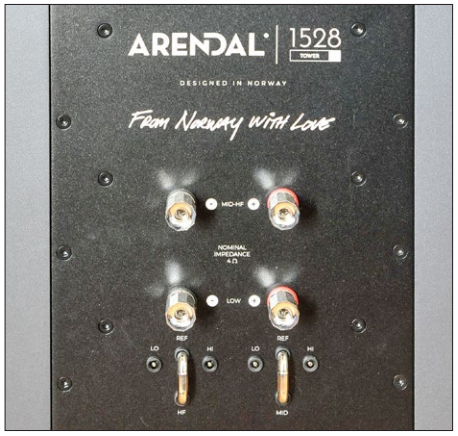


The metal dome combined in the waveguide with a 5-inch carbon cone was modified.



As is typical for the manufacturer, floor-friendly, lightly damping rubber feet form the standing points.

Photos: STEREO, manufacturer



The connection terminal of the big 1528 allows bi-wiring/amping and sound adjustment.



The significantly simplified copper terminal of the 1610 is designed for single-wiring.

fer significantly from one another. In the 1528, we find an elliptical waveguide with a 28mm lithium-magnesium dome and a neodymium drive, whereas the simplified version in the 1610 uses an aluminum alloy instead of lithium, but also features a slightly modified waveguide optimized for the new crossover and an expensive neodymium motor. The 28mm driver delivers excellent dynamics even in its lower ranges, i.e. the upper midrange and lower treble. Additionally, a small correcting lens is positioned in front of the dome.

The 5-inch midrange driver, which also features a powerful motor in a sealed basket, retains a carbon cone – though in this case, it is a three-layer design without the expensive graphene additive. Copper shorting rings optimize distortion characteristics and inductance in the tweeter and midrange drivers, and are also designed to minimize compression effects. All drivers are highly robust and achieve high maximum sound pressure levels. To prevent the drivers from appearing too technical, fabric covers are included.

One woofer less

The 1528 features four 8-inch woofers with lightweight aluminum cones, while the 1610 has three, whose dust caps and surrounds also look more conventional. In fact, however, these surrounds are optimized with internal ribs designed to positively influence resonance and distortion characteristics. The reasons for using several smaller woofers instead of one large one are the faster response and the ability to use a narrower baffle, which benefits the soundstage. Cost savings were explicitly achieved in the design of the crossover network, which is evident on the exterior of the solid copper terminal, not least because the 1610 does away with tone control and bi-wiring.

By contrast, no savings were apparently made on component quality. We see wire-wound resistors on aluminum heat sinks, air-core inductors, and polypropylene capacitors. The high-frequency section employs a 4th-order filter, which provides strong protection against overload with a slope of 24 dB per octave starting at 2.6 kHz. At 380 Hz between the low- and midrange as well as the midrange and high-frequency sections, however, second-order filters (12 dB per octave) are used. Arendal places great emphasis on avoiding ferro-

„TWIN TOWERS“ IN DETAIL

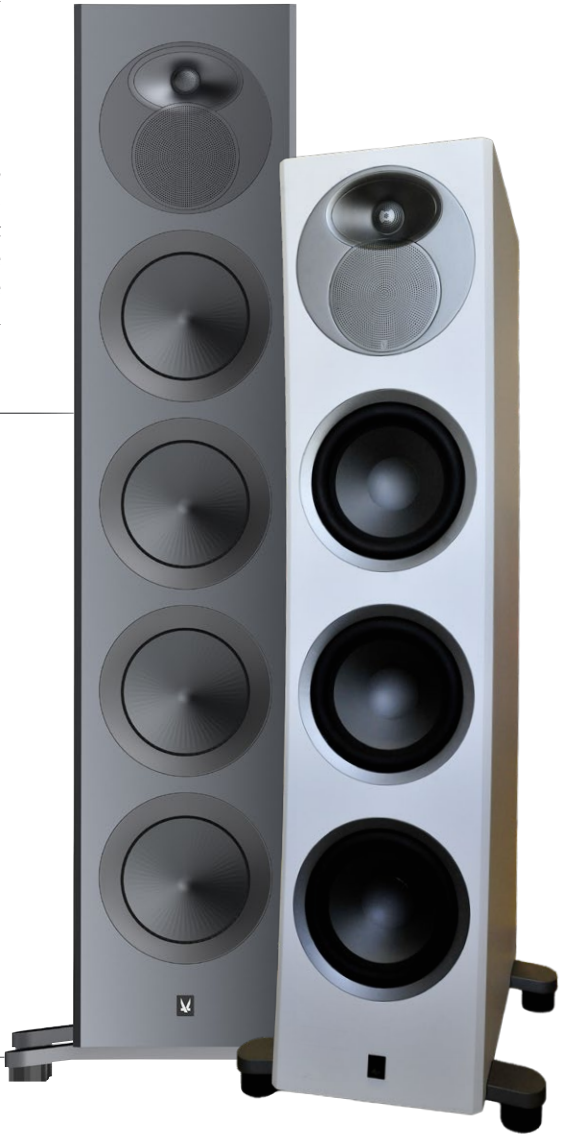
Arendal's flagship 1528 and the new, more compact 1610 model are technically very similar – where are the differences?

ARENDAL 1528 TOWER 8

- ⊕ Confident, effortless sound even in large rooms.
- ⊖ Unpacking/transport/setup very demanding.
- ⊖ At around 10,000 euros, a bigger investment.

ARENDAL 1610 TOWER 8

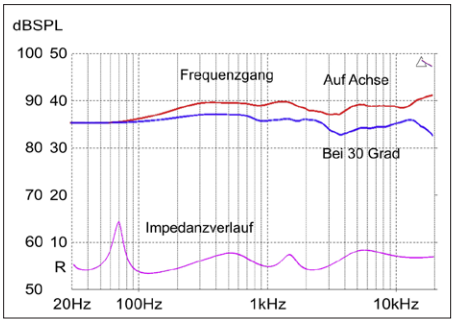
- ⊕ Relatively a lot of speaker for the money, great for medium-sized rooms.
- ⊕ Logistics/setup also possible in average living rooms.
- ⊖ Bi-wiring/amping and sound adjustment omitted.



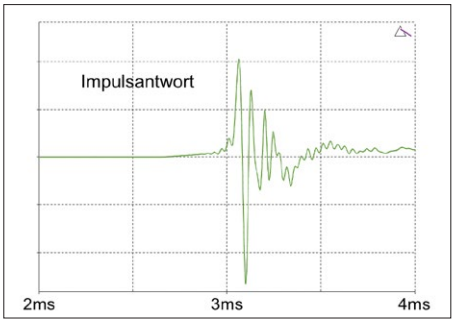
Arendal 1528 Tower 8 (left) and 1610 Tower 8 compared: Between them are around 22 centimeters in height, 3,000 euros and just under 34 kilograms, but only a few sound points.



The entire 1610 series is tonally matched; there is also a center speaker.



The frequency response of the Arendal is balanced apart from the slight roll-off in the upper mids.



For a three-way loudspeaker, the impulse response is good, with slight ringing.

magnetic materials such as steel screws to eliminate any source of distortion.

In both models, the powerful woofers fire into a large down-firing bass reflex port located in the base, where their impact is most noticeable. Arendal notes that these ports can be sealed using the included plugs. The cast aluminum base crossbars prevent the tall speakers from tipping over, while the Arendal-typical, floor-protecting rubber feet also cushion bass impulses in a neighbor-friendly manner.

In the STEREO listening room, we awaited the family showdown with anticipation and, based on the manufacturer's specifications and the technical similarities, expected the outcome to be a close one. But the larger Arendal ultimately showed its sister model who's boss.

The flagship handled our large room (40 m²) better and delivered a compelling performance, particularly in the physically present bass; the less voluminous Arendal 1610 was able to match this in part with its slightly higher, more defined kick bass and a relatively similar tonal character – and perhaps even better in rooms of 20-25 m². We had been warned, but the dry, pounding kick bass is a particular strength of the „small" Arendal.

It doesn't sound as big, cohesive, and confident as the 1528 does on Alan Parsons' „Gold Bug," for example. However, in terms of rich detail and dynamic, powerful midrange, the 1610 is definitely reminiscent of its big sister; the two are tonally similar, as heard in Bonnie Raitt's distinctive voice on her Grammy-winning hit „Luck Of The Draw" – and both deliver a truly joyful listening experience.

The goal of downsizing their top-of-the-line speaker and offering it at a lower price without sacrificing too much quality has been partially achieved. The larger model remains the top choice, but the new Arendal from Norway also offers great value for the money! ■

TEST RESULT: PROFOUND. CRITICAL. TRANSPARENT.	
ARENDAL 1610 TOWER 8	
Product type	Floorstanding loudspeaker (passive)
Website	www.arendalsound.com
Price in euros	6.900
Dimensions (W x H x D) in cm	40.5 x 120 x 47
Weight in kg	45,5
German distributor	Arendal
Phone	+47 377 15300
Principle	dynamic, 3-way, bass reflex
Terminal	Single-wire
Recommended placement	free-standing, close-to-wall possible (bass plugs)
MEASUREMENTS 40 %	**good 2.4**
Frequency response	very good
Sensitivity (in decibels)	good (89)
Impulse response	good
Minimum impedance	satisfactory (2.6 ohms at 80 Hz)
Distortion at 63 / 3k / 10k Hz (in percent)	satisfactory (0.75 / 0.61 / 0.18)
Combination capability	satisfactory
FEATURES & HANDLING 60 %	**satisfactory 2.8**
Setup	easy
Quality of the manual	English only
Initial setup	easy
Tone control possible	no
Cabinet finishes	2
Scope of delivery	satisfactory (grille, rubber feet, plugs)
Haptics & workmanship	good
Warranty (in years)	10
PRACTICALMARK	**satisfactory 2.6**
Sound description	balanced, confident, vivid, with good kick bass
SOUND SCORE	**66 / 100**