

# FIRST IMPRESSIONS

TIM BOWERN AND DAN GEORGE PICK THE FRESHEST FINDS FROM THE NETS OF THE HI-FI TRAWLER



**EDITOR'S CHOICE**  
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine  
★  
"THIS NEW HARLECH IS CAPABLE OF PURE, UNADULTERATED MUSICALITY."

## CASTLE HARLECH S2 LOUDSPEAKERS



**F**or many, the Harlech has been the jewel in Castle's crown for the past few years. An elegant floorstander available in a range of real wood veneers, which was a speaker capable of filling even large rooms with music and captivate listeners with the range of its expression.

Alas, the Harlech is dead, but here's its successor. Castle has jiggled its component parts and built a newer, stronger specimen, considerably more costly than the original but undoubtedly more meaty in terms of its specification.

Look at it, and you'd be hard pressed to know it's a different speaker. But remove the grills and the most obvious change is apparent – there are still two mid/bass drivers, one firing forward and the other upwards from the top of the main enclosure, but their cones are now made from woven carbon fibre instead of polypropylene. These also feature a new die-cast chassis and a 30mm dual-layer voice coil for improved handling and dynamics. Elsewhere, the crossover has been tweaked and the tweeter is now a fabric

dome rather than aluminium.

Despite these comprehensive changes, the Harlech S2's sound is reminiscent of its predecessor. That includes its foibles: it's a touch bright on occasions, and lacks a little authority in the bass. But for all this, the new version is capable of pure, unadulterated musicality. It's a dynamic and slightly forward performer; its top-firing driver contributes to a soundstage of ample proportions, but it's also nimble in the midrange, with a degree of delicacy few floorstanders can manage this side of a grand.

It works particularly well with acoustic instruments. It adroitly plucks the individual strands of an orchestral recording, or the delicate licks of something more contemporary, and places them in a vivid and dexterous whole.

More driving material, like rock or dance, shows the S2 in slightly less favourable light, missing the authority in the bass though they remain agile and expressive. But overall, it deserves our undoubted praise. The jewel in Castle's crown now shines ever brighter. **TB**

### DATASTREAM

**MEASURES** 20x94x32cm (WxHxD), 2x130mm mid/bass drivers with carbon fibre cones, 28mm fabric dome tweeter, sensitivity rated at 88dB, Impedance rated at 8 ohms, nine standard wood veneers plus Santos rosewood or yew for an extra £200.

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