

Review: Davis Acoustics Balthus 50 & Balthus 70

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This week we tested the [Davis Acoustics Balthus 50](#) and [Davis Acoustics Balthus 70](#) loudspeakers. The French brand sent us two of the three floorstanders from the Balthus range. The only speaker we didn't get to test was the Balthus range's flagship model, the [Davis Balthus 90](#). If you are curious about the difference an extra woofer can make between two similar speakers, the answer lies within this review.

Founded over 30 years ago, [Davis Acoustics](#) is an acclaimed speaker driver manufacturer. In its early days, the company specialized in the design and manufacture of drivers before expanding its offer to include speaker kits and speakers. Today, the brand's catalog features many different models: compact speakers, floorstanders, in-wall speakers and car speakers. Davis Acoustics also manufactures drivers as a subcontractor for speaker companies. Davis Acoustics offers an exhaustive range of drivers, from 4" to 15" models and wideband drivers to tweeters with ferrite or Alnico magnets.

Davis Balthus 50 et 70: presentation

The Davis Balthus 50 and Davis Balthus 70 are 3-way floorstanding speakers. The Balthus 50 features three drivers while the Balthus 70 is loaded with 4 drivers and displays a higher sensitivity rating on paper. In other words, for the same amount of electrical current, the Davis Balthus 70 delivers a higher sound level. Moreover, the Balthus 70's frequency response is extended by 5 Hz in the lows for a tuning frequency of 40Hz, while the Balthus 50 reaches down to 45 Hz.

- Davis Balthus 50: 45 Hz to 20 kHz, 91dB sensitivity rating, 8 Ohm impedance (5 Ohms min).
- Davis Balthus 70: 40 Hz to 20 kHz, 92dB sensitivity rating, 8 Ohm impedance (4 Ohms min).



The Balthus 50 and 70 speakers' 6.7" bass driver.

Davis Balthus 50 et 70: drivers

The Davis Acoustics Balthus 50 is loaded with a bass driver, a medium driver and a tweeter. The bass driver is a 6.5" cellulose cone model with a half-roll surround loaded in a bass-reflex enclosure with a circular, flared front-firing port. This classic transducer's cellulose pulp cone ensures a neutral sound restitution and good damping properties. Particularly fitting for the reproduction of low frequencies. The Balthus 70 benefits from an extra woofer, loaded in the same bass reflex enclosure.

The Davis Balthus speakers' bass driver covers low frequencies down to 40/45 Hz and low-mids up to 400 Hz. Beyond this point, a driver specially designed to handle mids takes over.



The Davis Balthus 50's 5" Kevlar cone driver.

The two Balthus speakers we tested use the same kevlar cone midrange driver, one of Davis's specialties which has been tried and tested over several decades. This small 5" driver and its yellow braided cone is known for its tight, energetic and precise restitution of medium frequencies. It covers frequencies from 400Hz to 4kHz. Fitted with a strong motor and loaded in the same enclosure as the woofer(s), this medium driver is thus also loaded in a bass reflex enclosure for both these floorstanders (an uncommon trait for a midrange driver).



A large motor for such a small midrange driver. In other words, the guarantee of a very energetic musical experience.

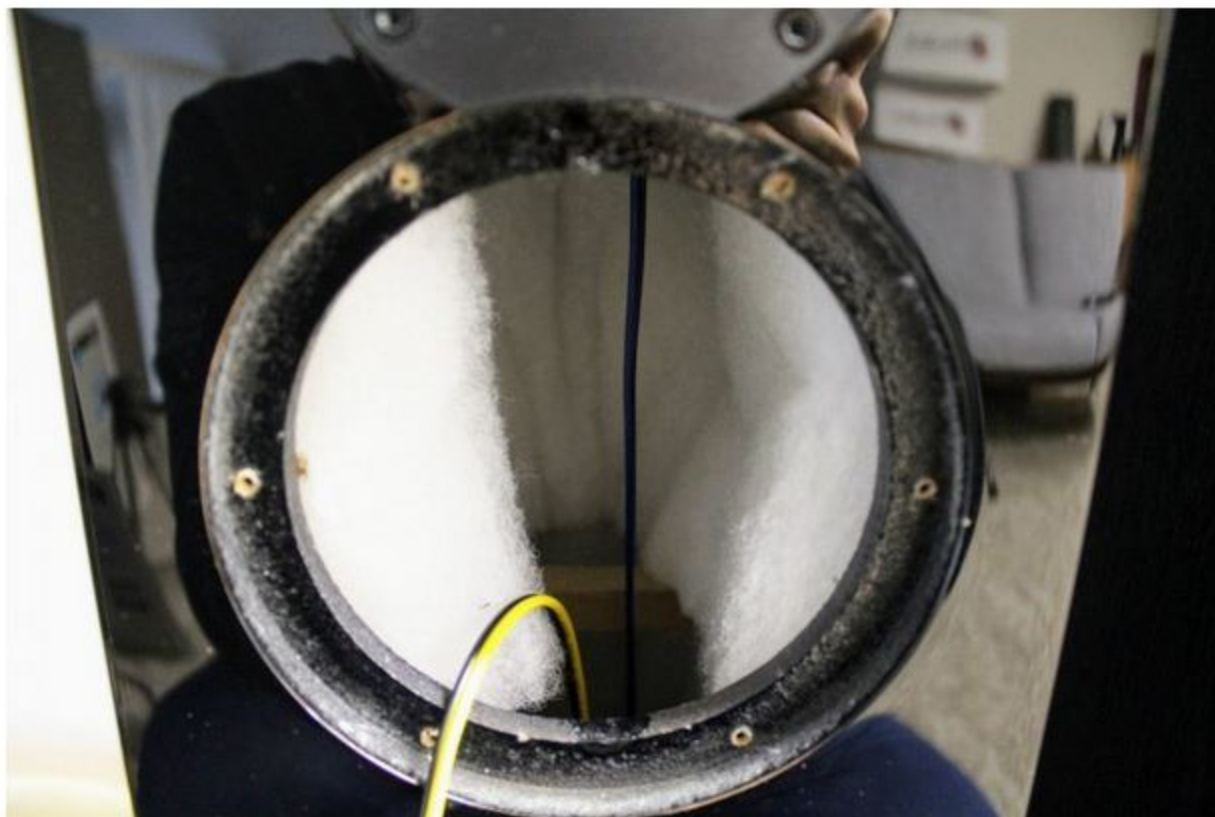
The tweeter is a 1" soft dome model with coated fabric and can deliver frequencies from 4kHz to 20kHz.



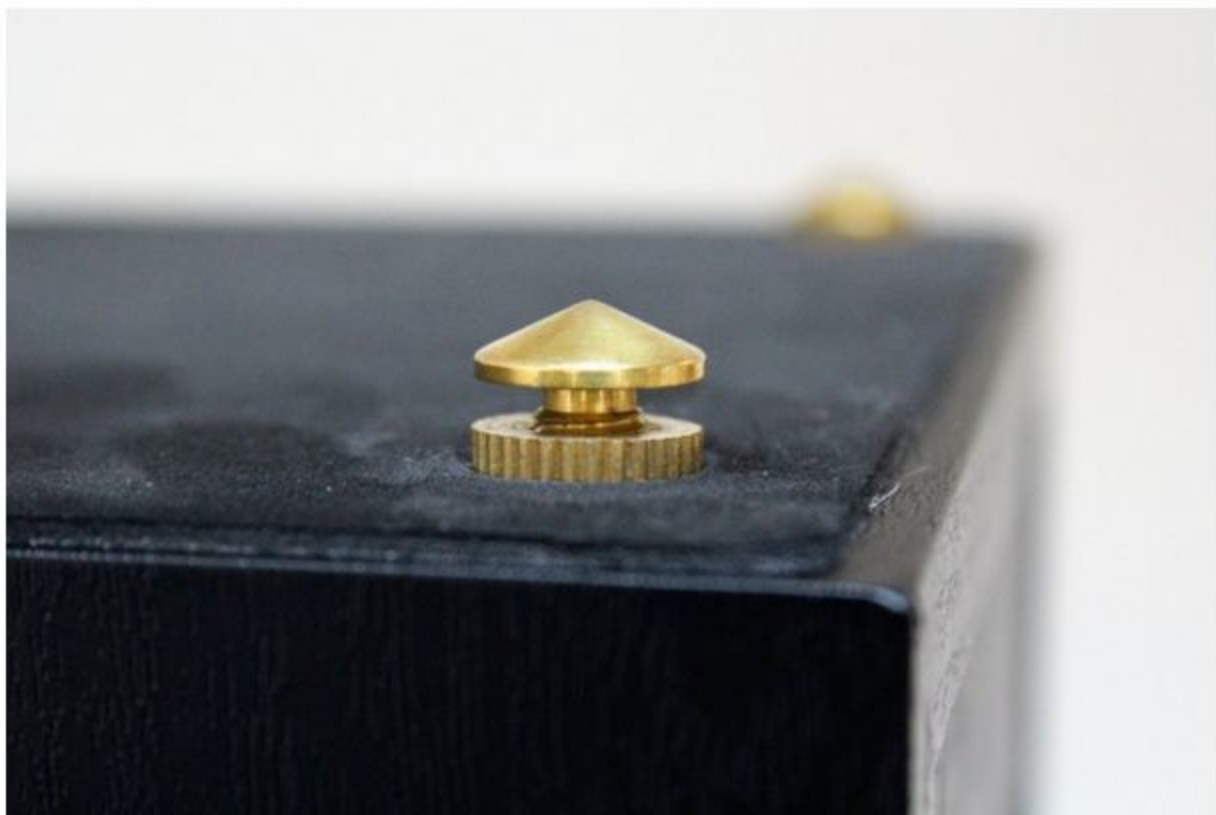
The Davis Balthus 70's soft dome tweeter.

Davis Balthus 50 et 70: design

The Davis Balthus 50 and Davis Balthus 70 boast a similar finish. The front panels are covered with a glossy finish while the other sides of the speakers are covered with vinyl wood veneer. The box is made of standard one-centimeter-thick MDF panels, but the speaker is reinforced with internal bracing to ensure a stronger cabinet. In order to limit the echo effect, each speaker is padded with acoustic wool. As for the speaker's crossover filter, it is directly attached to the wire terminal of each speaker. The speakers are shipped with a base, detachable decoupling spikes and damping foam.



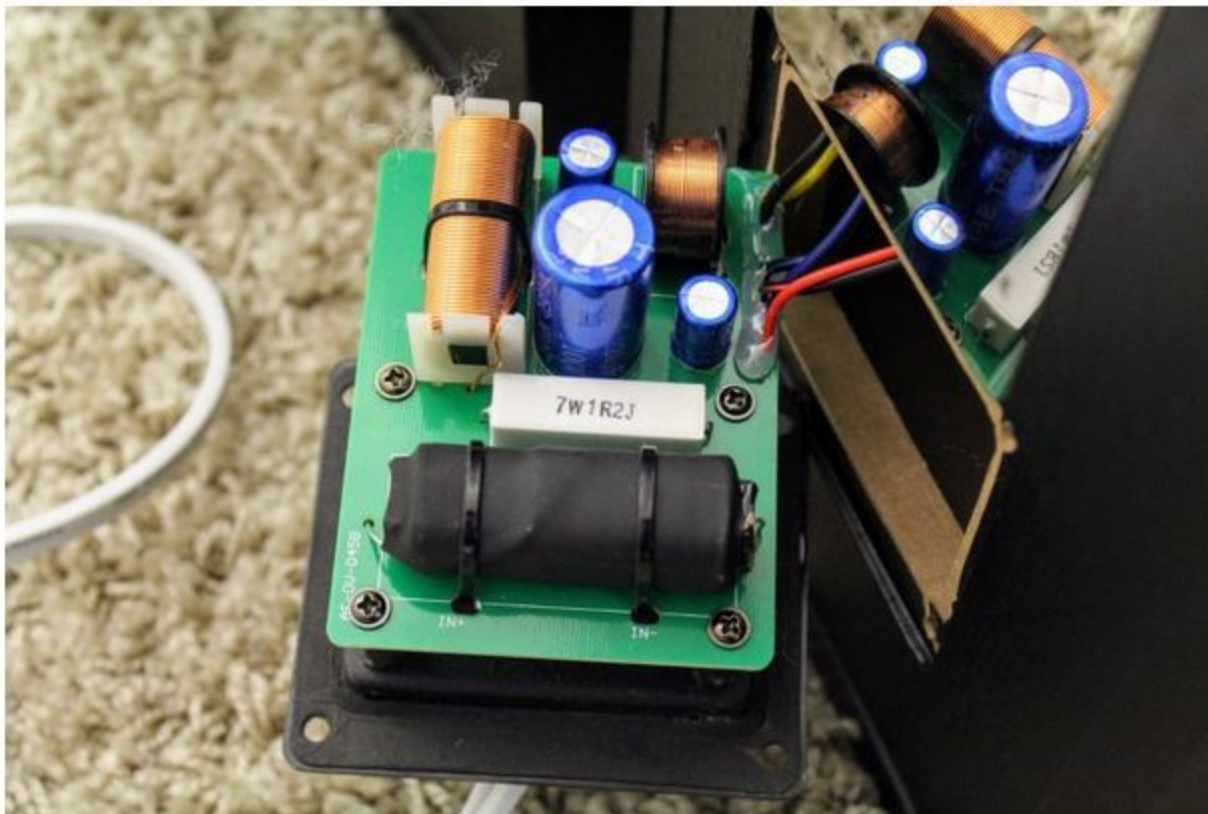
The inside of the Davis Balthus 50 is padded with acoustic wool and reinforced with internal brackets.



Each Davis Balthus speaker is fitted with a polyurethane foam base and removable decoupling spikes.

Davis Balthus 50 et 70: test conditions and listening impressions

We listened to the Davis Acoustics Balthus 50 and Balthus 70 with the [NAD C388 amplifier](#), and we used the [Panasonic DMP-UB900](#) UHD Blu-ray player as a source. We connected the source and the amplifier using an [Audioquest Cinnamon Optical](#) cable, as well as [Viard Audio Premium RCA-RCA](#) audio cables. The speakers were connected to the amplifier with [NorStone W250](#) cables. We listened to FLAC digital files and watched a few movies.



The Davis Balthus 50's electronic filter.

The main difference between the Balthus 50 and 70 is the additional bass driver, which adds an extra decibel to the sensitivity rating and extends the frequency response by 5Hz in the lows. Moreover, the extra driver has a significant influence on the Balthus 70's overall performance. Nothing abnormal or peculiar here: the use of two bass drivers instead of one fundamentally changes the sound restitution.

” When comparing the listening experiences offered by the Balthus 50 and Balthus 70, the first thing that caught our attention is that the 70 packs a lot more punch in the lows while offering a much wider sound stage. The vertical restitution of the sound is clearly extended, which immediately pleases the ears.

Moreover, it seems that the Balthus 70's tweeter can reach higher frequencies, which is certainly due to the speaker's impedance curve.

Davis Balthus 50: the listening experience is characterized by rich and organic mids, notably in the middle and lower sections of the range. The small yellow driver gives a generous amount of space to voices and extracts loads of micro-details from the recordings. String instruments benefit from clear attacks and of a lot of substance. Yet, some tracks did suffer from a little bit of harshness. In the lower end of the spectrum, the focus is put on energy rather than frequency response. The high-lows are therefore lively and the speaker displays an interesting knack for timing. The highs are well integrated and slightly set back, which gives a pleasant depth to the sound stage. Properly situating and orienting the speaker is an essential step toward obtaining an accurate placement of instruments and voices within the listening area.

Davis Balthus 70: The comments regarding the sound of the Balthus 50 apply to the Balthus 70 as well. Nevertheless, the listening experience is more “reassuring” with the 70, and there are several reasons for this difference: more solid lows (better extension, more expansive high-lows) and smoother highs. The sound is thus more flattering to the ear and more relaxing. The medium range is more spacious and articulated, which results in an improved layout of the sound stage. In short, the sound restitution is more coherent and enticing (notably with jazz and classical music). We tried turning up the NAD C388’s volume and we noticed that the Balthus 70 neither lost its consistency nor became aggressive. The impact in the high-lows is spot on for a home cinema experience.



Davis Balthus 50 et 70: conclusions

With their substantial mids and punchy high-lows, the [Davis Balthus 50](#) and [Davis Balthus 70](#) have inherited hints of the famous French sound, which was a defining characteristic in hi-fi 30-40 years ago. The speakers are in no way old-fashioned and are a perfect fit for modern music, films and series. Their ability to reproduce details is ideal for complex sound takes, and the French brand has already announced the release of the Davis Balthus 10 (center speaker) and Balthus 30 (compact speaker) in the near future. The Balthus 50 and 70 can be paired with an entry-level or midrange stereo amplifier or home cinema receiver without any difficulty and still offer convincing results.

What we liked: the tonal balance, the organic mids, the punchy high-lows, the breadth of the sound stage with the Balthus 70.

What we would have liked: an even more lively listening experience with the Balthus 50.

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