

CELESTION SL12Si

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Celestion's *SL6* was one of the most influential loudspeakers of the current decade – the box that launched a hundred metal dome tweeters. Late '88 sees a major update to most of the range, which now sport *Si* suffixes, plus the introduction of the larger *SL12Si* reviewed here.

The cabinet volume is increased by 50 per cent, but the width remains the same and depth increased only marginally, so the new box presents a very different overall appearance. An additional bass/mid driver is added beneath the first, and this is designed to operate in tandem with the main bass/mid unit up to its 500Hz crossover. Each has its own 'sub-enclosure', though the isolation at DC is not as great as expected.

The loudspeaker is certainly reassuringly heavy, and very well built. The stands too are a model of simple self assembly, very professionally presented. Each driver has its special square alloy basket faceplate that fills (and determines) the width, and again adds to the impression of expensive quality.

The front grille has a decidedly thick and unchamfered frame which significantly compromises the acoustic performance. The box itself is built from medium density fibreboard (MDF), with 18mm baffle and 15mm carcass.

Drivers are Celestion's own, and similar to those used in all *SL* series models. Effectively identical – bass and bass/mid units have 130mm Cobex cones terminated in elaborate two-piece surrounds and driven from 32mm 16ohm voice coils. The tweeter is of course a metal dome – 32mm diameter aluminium to be precise. A complex crossover provides second-order low pass arms nominally turning over at 500Hz and 2.8kHz, and a third-order high pass at the latter too. Bi-wiring or bi-amping is available, Celestion providing two pairs of nice Michell type gold-plated screw-socket/binders.

LAB REPORT

The *SL* series has always had low sensitivity, and although the *12Si* adds a couple of dB, it's still 2dB or so below average. Furthermore, the impedance sits at around 4.5ohms over much of the lower midband, so a generously rated amplifier is doubly useful, and further encouraged by low distortion.

Notwithstanding the high tech drivers, the frequency responses are decidedly uneven. On the 1m reference response the 85dB sensitivity relates to 500Hz and represents a pretty fair average, but the whole area from 100-300Hz is more than 2dB. The 2.5kHz notch is certainly partly a function of our chosen measurement axis, and is less obvious off-axis at 2m. But it's still there, even in the room averaged response.

SOUND QUALITY

Whether consequently or coincidentally, the *12Si* proved a disappointment to the listening panel, and in fact suffered much the same affliction as the Ariston *Image*, which may be no coincidence since both share broadly similar response characteristics. The sound was dominated by the mid and upper bass over-richness.

The blind panel test procedure did not permit changes of stands as well as speakers (*HBS1s* were used throughout), so subsequent sighted listening was conducted on Celestion's own stand, with and without lead shot fill. Certainly this brought a significant improvement in the overall coherence, enabling the speaker to demonstrate some of its strengths to advantage – notably the stereo precision. But the over-warm balance remains, the bass still lacks precision and 'speed', and listening becomes something of an effort of concentration – rewarded by good mid and treble detail and definition, but an effort nonetheless. Compact disc was signifi-

cantly preferred to vinyl.

CONCLUSIONS

Had the *12Si* measured as well as a £600 speaker should, I would be tempted to excuse the disappointing auditioning results on grounds of system/wiring/placement/room incompatibilities (good speakers tend to be much more sensitive to such subtleties than cheaper models). But it didn't, so I won't, even though I'm sure there's a good loudspeaker lurking in there somewhere.

TEST RESULTS

Size (height x width x depth)	53 x 20 x 27cm
Recommended amplifier power	25 – 150 watts
Recommended placement	on matching stands well clear of walls
Frequency response (± 3 dB, 2m)	55Hz – 20kHz*
Low frequency rolloff (-6 dB/1m)	50Hz
Sensitivity (ref 2.83V-1W/8ohms; 1m)	85dB
Impedance characteristic (ease of drive)	adequate
Forward response uniformity	fairly good
Typical price per pair inc VAT	£580

* ± 5 dB limits needed to accommodate crossover notch

