

# AUDIOENZ

## New Zealand's hi-fi magazine

## Image 414 mk2

### Re-imaged

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### Image 414 mk2 loudspeaker. \$2200

[Image Loudspeakers](#) are just about a New Zealand hi-fi institution. They make speakers that sound and look good, at prices that typically beat imported products by a significant margin. The company's 400 range consists of two stand mount monitors and five floorstanders - the 414 model occupies the middle of the range in terms of size, frequency extension, and power handling. I've [written about the 414s before](#), but this model features internal differences that should count as improvements, so this is by way of a comparative review.

### On view

The pair supplied for review was finished in what I took to be a Rimu veneer - very nice, at any rate. Standing almost a metre tall on their custom-made brass spikes, they certainly look the business - especially with the grills removed and the drivers on display.



Not very much has changed externally about the 414. It's a ported 2-1/2 way speaker, which means the upper mid-bass cone, by Morel, rolls in to take over from the Morel soft dome tweeter at 2400Hz. The lower cone starts wobbling at around 250Hz to add oomph to low frequencies. The box itself is solidly braced and its base is sand-filled to tighten the sound up in the bass. At the rear of the enclosure is a flared reflex duct, so it pays to have a little room behind this model - I found a good metre from room boundaries paid off in terms of evenness and balance.

What I'd really like to see is a plinth to bolt to the base of the 414 - a tall, top-heavy speaker that can't be tucked away against a wall needs a bigger footprint. It could be an optional extra so as not to unduly stress those who live in a children, pet, and drunken flatmate-free environment. I'd wager they'd look

pretty good on matching plinths, as do the similarly dimensioned [Linn Ninka](#)'s.

I don't know if I can take credit for this, but I note the long-headed allen bolts that secured the drivers to the front baffle have been replaced by more discrete fasteners. I wasn't keen on the earlier choice and said so. Power of the press? We may never know. Important? Not especially.

### **What's new?**

Image's Chris Ball has revised the 414's crossover, the internal circuit consisting of inductors, resistors, and capacitors that controls the distribution of frequencies to the tweeters and woofers. You can't just feed a full-range audio signal from your amp to every driver in the loudspeaker - that would entail tweeters going 'pop!' as they tried to reproduce big bass-notes, and frantic bass cones trying to buzz and fizz like a tiny treble unit. The net result is a sonic mess and sometimes an electrical fire.

The exact changes made to the crossover are a trade-secret, but the intention has been to reduce anomalies in the crucial frequency ranges where one driver hands over to another. Chris has paid particular attention to the tweeter-to-upper midbass crossover, where the greatest potential harm can be. So, has it worked?

### **Getting an earful**

In my previous review I found the 414 sound to be neutral, detailed, and full-bodied. This new version retained all these characteristics, with a greater sense of dynamism. To be honest, I found nothing much to fault with the crossover in the earlier model and once the latest review pair had broken in, the upper registers were natural and well-resolved.

Intriguingly, I found these new 414s to be more sensitive to placement, not so much in the bass, where all floorstanders pose challenges, but in the midrange. This may be a result of the crossover revision, or perhaps just a side-effect of changes made to my listening room. I suspect it comes of real improvements in the clarity of the upper-mids, which meant female vocals were particularly believable. I also discovered the 414s have a special fondness for funk-ed-up soul/jazz, but if you prefer thrash metal they'll oblige until your big hair drops out

As before, the 414's voltage sensitivity - which seemed a little higher to me in these new models - enables them to go nice and loud. They played basslines in a tuneful and agile fashion, and a subwoofer would be left with little to do but fill in the very bottom end for the sake of atmospheric. While I had hoped for some improvement in imaging, this remained firmly in the realm of satisfactory. For some reason the 414s wouldn't throw an image beyond their inner edges, but when they're two or three metres apart - as such speakers should be - that can be forgiven.

### **The verdict**

Once again, the Images did a fine job with everything thrown at them. They let you know if your programme material was recorded inadequately, which puts them very much in the hi-fi category. While they'd serve well as front speakers in a home-cinema set-up, they'd be wasted there in a full-time capacity. All in all, a good speaker, and a local one at that.

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