IMITATIONS?

A number of imitations of ours and other manufacturers' loudspeakers crop up from time to time.

I'll pick a sample, which I'll call "Brand X" or simply X.

From the sales sheet, X is a folded corner horn, made of high-density particle board. My comment: Ratio of density of flakeboard to that of fir plywood is approximately 1.3. "High density" is not a virtue. Particle-board will not hold a screw driven into the edge grain. Breaking strength of test samples in bending is 4 lbs. for particle-board vs. 17 lbs. for plywood. Thus, the strength weight ratio of flake-board is only about 1/6 that of plywood. We feel it is being penny wise and pound foolish to use inferior materials in a speaker system costing nearly $1,000.00.

Again from the sales pitch, the midrange horn is "fiber-glass, giving greater internal damping than metal horns." I point out that the damping in a horn system should exist because the horn acts as a proper acoustic coupling to the diaphragm, and the damping should be due to radiation resistance, not due to dissipative "damping" in an absorptive horn.

Reading specifications is as much a black art as writing them. When a point is made, for example, of "internal damping", an informed reader may reasonably assume the writer of the specification was ignorant of the true function of the horn.

Further in the data sheet is the statement that the midrange driver covers 85 to 7000 Hz. I wonder why he didn't use it for a woofer!

The price of $800 should almost cry out Caveat Emptor. The "saving" of a couple of hundred dollars (compared to our KLIPSCHORN®), may turn out to be a loss of about 8 times that much.

John Ruskin said:

"There is hardly anything in this world some man cannot make a little poorer — and sell a little cheaper — and the people who consider price only — are that man's lawful prey."

How about Quality Control? One such "manufacturer" had a multimeter for "test equipment".
One erstwhile licensee had all the necessary instrumentation and skills to produce a good speaker, plus our own specific help. Yet the product was inferior.

Please don't get the idea we are "crying". Our business, based on 29 years of making a quality product, has grown close to 40% per year for quite a few years. If we cry a little it is due to growing pains.

What I'm trying to get across is that the quality of the product of a company may be on a par with the company's research facilities, quality control, qualifications, and integrity. Merely copying a product should be easy, but the copies so far witnessed fall far short of really being copies. What bugs me is the high price for such a loosely approximate copy. It doesn't look like a bargain.

Paul W. Klipsch

P.S. From Bob Moers: This was written by the inventor of the most copied loudspeakers in history.

"Shade tree" infringers are copying so poorly and offering such deep discounts, there seems a possibility they will not be around to make good any guarantees which they may offer.

Also remember that a Brand Name (Registered Trademark) is connote of the source. Merely copying a general style and type doesn't make a Granada a Mercedes, or a collection of lumber a KLIPSCHORN®.