

“GIANT KILLERS”

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“... open and clear ... articulate ... detailed and refined ... silky smooth and unflustered ... a full bodied musical approach with room filling dynamics.”

by William Kelly

The New Monitor 7
(Improved over version reviewed for even better sound.)

IGNITE THE NIGHT

Having reviewed a number of Paradigm speakers, it's become a matter of extreme irritation to me that I continually have to give the range good reviews. By now I am deliberately looking for flaws to prove that I have no bias or bonus cheques in my possession from the importers.

We'll start with the front baffle. With the cloth grille removed, there is a high-tech grey clad baffle housing one tweeter and two semi-transparent mid/bass drivers, together with a large front firing bass reflex port. They look extremely modern and fashionable, and my only comment is that the looks of the speaker (with the grilles off) are probably going to date quickly.

Now if that isn't nitpicking ...

The Monitor 7s are just an outwardly ordinary pair of speakers that have been built with ordinary components and designed by ordinary people for ordinary listeners. Right? No, I'm afraid not.

Set up correctly in the listening room and warmed up (they had already been

run in), the Paradigms demonstrated that cheaper does not mean lesser in terms of sonic performance. True they're not as accurate as a Thiel or a Sonus Faber, but take a look at the asking price.

One day, it would be nice to own a set of Thiel 3.6s, or B&W Silver Signatures or whatever, but the price is prohibitive for most of us mere mortals.

The Monitor 7's performance would wipe the floor with some other similar priced floor standers, and with room to take on bigger stuff confidently. Giant killers is the term that should probably be employed here, although the speakers are not physically small.

They are very easy to drive however. With the relatively high sensitivity of 91 dB it is possible to generate frightening volume levels that the 7s just seem to revel in. Dial in more power and the performance tightens up a bit but remains under control. They just don't run out of steam.



“... the sonic performance is impressive ... Soundstaging is accurate and uncompressed ... neutral.”

As a party speaker they have the ability to get hammered and take it—although it’s not advisable to go too overboard, since any high fidelity speaker worth its salt will cook itself (or its amp), long before its audience appreciates just how loud it is actually playing.

These are not speakers that have 25” drivers and 25% distortion built in as a standard feature, so typical of the boom boxes found in night clubs.

On the whole, the sonic performance is impressive rather than critical. That the Paradigms present a full bodied musical approach with room-filling dynamics is beyond question. The crux of the matter is the word musicality, and the Paradigms seize it convincingly.

Soundstaging is accurate and uncompressed, and the frequency response across the spectrum was neutral. There is a slight touch of coloration on the lower end where the speakers could be accused of sounding warm, but this is easily corrected through cable matching and positioning.

Bi-wiring the speakers is a must—the gold plated terminals accept most forms of speaker cable—and the sonic benefits are immediate. If you can bi-amp them so much the better. Once bi-wired, the units sounded more open and clear, and simply more articulate. The already pacy punch of the speakers improved to a degree, whilst still maintaining a believable presence.

The upper end of the frequency spectrum was detailed and refined. The Paradigms had no tendency towards sibilance, and became unreasonably harsh only right at the limit of their volume range.

All through they were silky smooth and unflustered, and though the height of the soundstage was a trifle higher than I would have preferred, the tweeters performed faultlessly.

The mid/bass range of the speakers, as mentioned earlier, was full-bodied and inviting. Although the Paradigms are not an overly forward sounding speaker, they do tend to make themselves and their presence felt to a much greater extent than was the case, say with the AE120s, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

“... difficult to find fault with the Paradigms ... solid performance ... engaging ... an enticing proposition.”

In achieving this, naturally they will sound different, and only your ears will tell you which speaker works for you. To the sceptics who can’t tell the difference between speakers, take a listen to these two for radically different performances.

It’s once again difficult to find fault with the Paradigms. They offer a solid performance, and engaging approach from back to basics design, and the price tag makes them an enticing proposition. Audition closely.