

“... exquisite ... delightful ...

REAL CLASS!”

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*“The Monitor 7’s beat the competition hands down ... a perfect balance of clear and detailed sound ... you feel like listening for hours.”*

by Marcin Krupski

**A**t first glance, they give the impression of massive monsters entirely capable of killing with sound. One wonders, with trepidation, how will the ears react upon first contact with the Monitor 7’s?

#### SWEET WEIGHTS

We have reviewed Paradigm speakers previously. Paradigm is a company that has been often (and abundantly) showered with awards. Once again this year *Inside Track* gave its annual award for #1 in the Price/Value category to Paradigm, for an *unprecedented twelfth year in a row!* At DVD we know why! Not only are Paradigm’s speakers well priced, but they are also solidly built and engineered to last. At first glance it is apparent that the highest quality materials are used in manufacturing and the finished products reflect excellence.

Since the Monitor 7 is not a lightweight model, it is important that the materials and components are solidly constructed.

The biggest impression left on us by the Monitor 7 was the amazing performance of the speaker’s bass/midrange drivers. The Monitor 7 integrates two of these drivers per speaker. Construction is a 2-way, bass reflex design (although 2-1/2- and 3-way designs are also available in the Paradigm speaker line). As for the superb sound, it is a direct result of the high quality materials used in the drivers—ICP™ injection-moulded co-polymer polypropylene cones—manufactured by Paradigm. The co-polymer is semi-transparent and offers a view of the

Monitor 7



spider and basket. While a number of component parts have changed in this speaker, what about in terms of the sound? Did improvements to the speaker yield any refinement in sound quality? We shall see, shortly.

*“Sound reproduction is amazing, regardless of whether one is listening to rock music, classical music or movies in a home theater environment.”*

High-frequency drivers have a titanium dome cooled by ferro-fluid. The center speaker, the CC-370, utilizes the same drivers as the Monitor 7. The frequency response of this speaker necessitates it be set to the “Small” (or “Normal”) position on the amplifier for best results.

For the actual review process we received a set of surround-sound speakers—Stylus® 350's. The speakers' enclosures are PolyGlass™ mineral-filled and reinforced. This is the same material Paradigm uses for its successful Cinema™ speakers. Mounting brackets were also supplied.

It was no surprise to me that the manufacturer stated in the information package included with the speakers that the speaker was technologically perfect: perfectly insulated, stabilized, etc. All speaker manufacturers claim this. On the other hand, I found it surprising that there should be information included about the grilles. Paradigm claims that grille construction is done in such a way that it assists in the phenomenon of sound refraction. Our conclusion—for best results, leave the grilles on while listening.



CC-370

*“The PS-1000 subwoofer is unyielding ... descends so low, so easily ... responded with a concert-like kick!”*

The mere sight of the PS-1000 subwoofer is enough to make your heart start pounding. Of noteworthy interest is the subwoofer's enclosure. What Paradigm refers to as the “high-velocity, low-noise ports” and “dual-cavity bass-shaping enclosures” can move a large mass of air, ensuring every bit of the bass is made to count! Similar set-ups are often found in the larger subwoofers used in nightclubs.

#### SET-UP

Paradigm's directions for set-up suggest that the Monitor 7's be positioned so that they face forward, rather than turned toward the listener. When used in home theater this positioning is an added advantage since it guarantees clear, balanced sound across a wide listening area. Having followed the set-up directions I must admit I was surprised by the results. The Monitor 7's reacted exactly as they were supposed to. As I moved from one area of the room to another the difference in sound was negligible. The directional characteristics of these speakers deserve the highest praise. In accordance with my expectations at this point, set-up of the remaining speakers was just as simple.

I positioned the Stylus® 350 speakers on either side of the couch, turned at a 45-degree angle toward the couch, in accordance with Pawlowski's recommendations in an earlier review (see *DVD Home Theater* #3, 2000). The brackets, as well as the shape of the speakers allow for a variety of mounting possibilities. Mounting can be done horizontally, vertically, or even on an angle, thereby utilizing different set-up possibilities

with proper consideration given to the listening position. Set-up of the subwoofer actually took me the longest. Not because it was difficult, but simply because I wanted to be sure I was positioning it to make the most of its full bass potential. Again, Pawlowski's recommendations proved to be the soundest advice. The sub/sat phase alignment regulation in connection with the THX test CD produced excellent results. Since the heatsink is located at the rear of the subwoofer it is advisable not to position the PS-1000 close to a wall. I recommend it be set up at least one metre from each wall.

#### A WINTER DELIVERY

Winter ... a season that teaches us temperance. During the unpacking of the speakers my hands were “stuck” to them from the cold; my fingers were stiff (too bad delivery trucks are not heated in the cargo area). I could hardly wait until my set warmed up to room temperature to plug it in. But finally, the moment came. ... WOW! The first feeling from listening to these speakers can best be described as happiness! This feeling remained with me at all times while listening to these speakers. In my opinion, this is the most important feature of any piece of electronics. It can have thousands of virtues, but if it doesn't make the owner feel happy and truly satisfied then nothing else counts.

After a while, as I listened, other feelings emerged, supported by an in-depth analysis of the sound. The sound from these speakers was amazing. It was never persistent or pressing. It didn't attack, it flowed! I compared them to the KEF Q series and FRX's Mirage speakers, but there is no comparison. Alas, these other speakers lack the important attributes possessed by the Monitor 7's. The Monitor 7's beat the competition hands down—they delivered a perfect balance of clear and detailed sound together with listening comfort. These speakers handled any sound given to them with ease, at least

within an area of 30 to 50 square meters. In some respects, this is a result of the PS-1000's capabilities, although the Monitor 7's play a very substantial role.

Test # 1: *Gladiator* - the premiere stage of battle in the movie. Each detail, from the rustle of the grass to the roar of the catapult is reproduced with detail and accuracy to a point where it seems as though one is actually listening "live." Even so, the music always remains under control. It doesn't matter whether the music is in the forefront, or merely a backdrop to the bloody battle that Maximus sets forth for the Germans, the PS-1000 is unyielding. At times, the subwoofer descends so low, so easily, that it makes us clutch at our throats with fear as we wonder whether our home will endure the attack, and if we ourselves can withstand it! I would not be surprised to discover that someone, somewhere, while watching *Gladiator*, has inadvertently ripped out the easy chair's armrests.

Test # 2: Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*. Acoustic guitar, pipes, synthesizers, etc. In this particular concert we are treated to the sounds of a wide variety of instruments. The Monitor 7 reproduced each particular sound with authenticity.

Stylus® 350



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There is only one aspect of these speakers that I have reservations about ... the name! In my opinion, "Monitor" is not necessarily the most suitable term to describe the character of the sound these speakers reproduce. Classic studio monitors play harder, more selectively and provide a different range of sounds. This is not a criticism of the Monitor 7. Under normal home conditions the "studio" range would satisfy only a narrow group of listeners, those partial to this type of sound. Rather, the name "Monitor" does not reflect the wonderful way in which sound is reproduced through the Paradigm speakers. The entire sound spectrum yields an exquisite effect—you feel like listening for hours. In *Tubular Bells*, the PS-1000 subwoofer responded with a concert-like kick! Stereo music sounded delightful through these speakers. Much like the music from DVD (5.1 recordings), the entire musical spectrum flowed easily to the ears. I tried listening to numerous musical compositions with the speakers set to "Small," while using the subwoofer to assist. I quit. The Monitor 7's bass is so balanced that, in truth, absolutely nothing is lacking.

#### VERDICT

This system boasts excellent showmanship and one has to admire the speakers' appearance as well as their sound! Within the higher-priced crowd this system may not be considered a pearl by some, but it will never get lost in the crowd. I am confident that it will find many buyers (and many fans) who will be proud to claim ownership. Sound reproduction is amazing, regardless of

whether one is listening to rock music, classical music, or movies in a home theater environment. Without exaggeration, I can easily recommend this system for larger areas of a home. Electronically, it is without blemish—I connected it to standard electronic equipment without any problems. Mind you, I don't suppose anyone would like to use these terrific speakers with just any amplifier. Hooked up to a high-quality amplifier, the speakers sounded wonderful. As usual, specific testing was done at the editor's office ending on the strength of *Cinenova Grande*. And here, the speakers once again proved their musical ability, playing with real class.

As usual, I recommend you listen to see if the sound suits your personal music tastes. There are a number of speakers to choose from within this price range. However, the Monitor 7 should leave you more than just pleasantly surprised—I was!



PS-1000