

# “TRUE HIGH-FIDELITY REPRODUCTION”

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**The audiophile voice**

*“... I was impressed with their clear, accurate and full sound ... the Mini Monitors delivered true high-fidelity reproduction via these top-class components. ... How do they make them so inexpensive?”*

by John Gatski

Canadian speaker manufacturer Paradigm has always had a knack for making good performing speakers at very reasonable prices. Although known for its tower speakers and recently the Reference series home theater ensemble, its small speakers “ain’t no slouches either.” Case in point is the Paradigm Mini Monitor.

The Mini Monitor, bargain priced, sports a 6-1/2-inch injection molded, co-polymer woofer; 1-inch, titanium-dome tweeter, and has a rated frequency response of 42 Hz to 20 kHz,  $\pm 2$  dB. That claimed response is impressive, considering that the box only measures 13 inches tall by 8 inches wide and 10 inches deep. (Of course, there is no free ride when trying to squeeze extended bass out of a little box with little drivers; see *Audition* subsection). However, there’s no arguing with the fact that for a remarkably low price, you get a speaker that is made with top-quality materials.

## The New Mini Monitor

*(Improved over version reviewed for even better sound.)*

The Paradigm sports an ash-finish on its 3/4-inch high-density hardboard cabinet, is graced with some nice binding posts, has magnetic shielding to protect TV screens, and has a removable grill. The power handling is not listed, but I assume 125 to 150 watts peak is the limit.

## SET UP

I installed the Mini Monitors in two configurations. The first was with my classic hi-fi system. In this listening room, I used a vintage Macintosh MC-275 amplifier driven by a Rogue Audio Model 66 tube preamplifier. The Mac amp likes simple wire schemes, so the speakers were connected via short lengths of 16-gauge Monster Cables zipcord; Esoteric Audio interconnects linked the preamp to the amp. The source was a Panasonic A300



DVD player, which doubles as a very good sounding CD player, that was connected to the Rogue by Monster Cable interconnects. The speakers were positioned about six feet apart and about 30-inches from the rear wall. The grills were left on. My listening position was just over eight feet from the speakers.

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Listening to a variety of CDs including Deena Carter’s *Did I Shave My Legs for This* (Capital), Phil Keaggy, Wes King and Scott Dente, *Invention* (Sparrow), and Sarah McLachlin’s *Surfacing* (Arista), I found the Mini Monitors to do a nice job with the ol’ Mac. The high-end was present without being too emphasized, and imaging was excellent. Midrange sounds, such as vocals and piano, were accurate and without the boxy coloration I have heard too often from speakers with undamped cabinets.

Since the Mac has a tendency to be “slow” in its bass speed in comparison with more modern amps, the bass was more plump sounding on some pop recordings. Moving the speakers out another foot from the backwall lessened this effect, but did not remove it entirely. At the time, I figured that the bass emphasis was likely to be the result of the box’s tuned resonance and estimated the boost to be around 80 Hz to 100 Hz.

With my reference, I drove the Mini Monitors with a Legacy High Current solid-state amp using 10-gauge Goertz AlphaCore Silver cables. A Pass Aleph P preamp was linked to a Denon DCD-1015 CD player,

which transmits its digital data to a Parasound D/AC 2000 D/A converter using AlphaCore interconnects.

Again with the Mini Monitors set up on Apollo stands, I was impressed with their clear, accurate and full sound in the midrange and in the treble. On the Telecaster-punched energy of Wylie & The Wild West Show *Get Wild* (Cross Tree Records) and the jazz violin ensemble of Johnny Frigo’s *Debut of a Legend* (Chesky), the Mini Monitors delivered true high-fidelity reproduction via these top-class components.

As with the Mac system, however, I still heard some bass plumpness. So I set up a basic measurement of one of the Paradigms just to satisfy my curiosity. I fed the pink noise output of an Audio-Control SA3050 RTA (real time analyzer) and set up the stand-mounted measurement mike one meter from the speaker (results were changed only a little with grills off). Now my reference listening room, sitting in my director’s chair at eight feet, is relatively flat, except for a slight bass emphasis at 40 to 50 Hz right at the back wall and only at that position. At the spot where I measured the Mini Monitor, other speakers have shown fairly flat bass response.

Interpreting my basic room measurement results, I noted about a 4-dB boost from 80 Hz to about 200 Hz with the Mini Monitor. Since the speaker was not near a wall, there was relatively little bass under 60 Hz. I also saw a peak at 16 kHz, often a characteristic of titanium dome tweeters. I would guess that Paradigm designed the Mini Monitor so that it had a broad bass boost, so it can be used as a full-range speaker if desired. (By the way, the midrange to lower and middle treble frequencies were very flat.) The bass measurements did not change my high regard for the Mini Monitor one bit. Making this small box measure flat would result in a generally skimpy sounding bottom end.

All in all, the Paradigm Mini Monitor is an easy speaker to listen to and as part of

a low-buck, quality high-fidelity system, you will be listening to some very good sounding tunes. Crossover the Mini Monitor with a subwoofer, like the Paradigm Reference Servo-15 I just reviewed and you got a giant killer. How do they make them so inexpensive?