"I couldn't believe that such small speakers could produce such a BIG SOUND."

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AUDIO VIDEO

by Joel Kopping

Cinema™ Satellite

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Little BIG Speakers

One never knows what to expect when being given a set of Lifestyle home theatre speakers to review. The question that often begs to be asked is how 'lifestyle orientated' the speakers are? Too much emphasis on the style side and not enough on the sound side often leaves one with stylish boxes that at a push can provide some form of sound. In boxing parlance, they float like butterflies and sting like them too.

You wouldn't be mistaken after reading the above to believe that I, traditionally, have not been a fan of lifestyle systems. Fortunately the past few I have reviewed are slowly starting to make me change my mind.

The Paradigms reviewed here also go a long way to reversing my notions on Lifestyle speakers.

The front and rear speakers are the same — the cabinets are good to look at and are manufactured out of mineral filled polymer. The bottom of the small cabinet is concave and the top convex, with the sides tapering towards the rear. Inside the cabinet you will find a magnetically shielded 3-1/2-inch woofer with polypropylene cone and a 5/8-inch polymer dome tweeter. The built in crossover is a 3rd order type. The front and surround/rear speakers may be stand or shelf-mounted, and feature mounting points for wall mounting.

The centre speaker is moulded with a built in base for placing above a TV and features two of the little woofers, one on either side of the tweeter. A really nice feature on the speakers are the binding posts. They are top quality and accept banana and spade terminals, or you

could even strip some wire and tighten the binding post down on the cable. These binding posts are most welcome and unexpected at this price point. The speakers are available in black or white.

The supplied sub was Paradigm's PDR-10, a 10-inch subwoofer which features all the usual features such as phase, frequency and level adjust and has auto power on and off and soft clipping.

The only small complaint I had prior to setting up the system is that I couldn't find specs for any of the speakers. I'm sure the specs were there, I just couldn't find them. This was of minor importance as I downloaded the relevant information off Paradigm's website after the review.

I first set the speakers up in the review room at the office and let them run in as recommended by Paradigm. Once the speakers had played for a while I moved into the room with a selection of DVDs and CDs and proceeded to make final settings, including speaker, sub level and cut off frequency. I set the sub frequency to roughly 120 Hz as I felt this gave the best integration between it and the satellites. Interestingly, only after the review did I find out that the satellites are rated to play down to 115 Hz ± 2 dB, so my sub setting by ear was spot on.

On listening to the system, I couldn't believe that such small speakers could produce such a big sound. On DVD movies, the front stage was virtually from wall to wall and effects seemed to move virtually seamlessly from front to rear. The dynamic impact of the speakers was equally impressive for such small speakers and although there was always a small gap between the low end response of the satellites and the sub, this was barely noticeable on movies, with the sub doing its ground-shaking job really well.

Cinema™ CC

The speakers also worked well with stereo music, although at higher volumes the tweeters tended to overpower the mids to a degree. The speakers lacked depth on some tracks that on dedicated stereo systems display a fair amount of depth. On balance though, the speakers strike a fine balance between the requirements of over the top home theatre sound and the more subtle stereo music requirements.

I still can't believe that such small speakers could deliver what the Cinemas did. The question that I am now starting to ask myself is, for the average home theatre fan, do you need more than something like the Paradigm Cinema™ Lifestyle speakers?

The super home theatre user would probably want larger speakers that can handle more power and play a little louder, but for the majority of people who aren't willing to make the sacrifices that a dedicated room requires, the Paradigm Cinemas float like a butterfly and sting like a bee.

PEAKS

VERDICT

Paradigm have long been known for producing speakers that are affordable and sound good. With the Cinema™ range they have managed to package their traditional values in speakers that are small and unobtrusive.

PDR-10