"... spacious surround sound ... distortion free ... eminently SUCCESSFUL ..."

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"... definitely a great value for the money ... more than competitively priced ... hard to beat ..."

by Barry Brenesal

The late comic actor/research chemist Jack Oakie once had the only memorable line in a completely unmemorable film: "What we have in this pill, gentlemen, is what our country has needed for generations—a good ten-cent drunk." And, in a way, that sentiment broadly outlines the philosophy underlying Paradigm's new Cinema™ satellite/subwoofer system. These speakers are designed to provide the cheapest access to surround-sound technology, without diluting the experience into the audio equivalent of lite beer. In this, they are eminently successful.

Lifting the six boxes that house the system (including two cartons of heavy mounting gear), one flashes on images of Cold War-era Bulgarian weightlifters performing similar tasks to win coveted Olympic medals.

Despite this, the individual unit dimensions are pretty compact—about 7" x 4" x 6" for the four satellite speakers. All units are charcoal black and attractively spare in a style common to all Paradigm products. Mounting instructions are supplied through a few tiny illustrations that rely a bit too much upon a saint's patience and a psychic's intuition. By contrast, hooking the speakers up was a snap.

" … excellent spatial representation, even when faced with some deliberately rough aural terrain … bass is strong and tight … high ends have a gleam that brings out the brass like sunlight after a storm."

Expecting the kind of clean performance that comes with Paradigm's Performance series, let alone the precise imaging of its higher-end Reference Studio speakers, would seem to be a pipe dream. Amazingly, though, the bookshelf-sized Cinema™ satellites, augmented by the PDR-8 subwoofer and Cinema™ CC center channel, come pretty darn close. Together they deliver excellent spatial representation, even when faced with some deliberately rough aural terrain that included Berlioz' expansive "Symphonie Fantastique," and hot, salsa-inflected, big-band jazz from the late, great Tito Puente. The bass is strong and tight, and the high ends have a gleam that brings out the brass like sunlight after a storm.

"Assuming you haven't invested in surround sound before, the Cinema™ system is a surprisingly pleasant way to take the plunge, without losing your wallet as you dive in."

Cinema™ CC

These comments, of course, should be taken in context. The Cinema™ system does not produce sound comparable to that of higher-end speaker systems from Paradigm, but they are definitely a great value for the money. Assuming you haven't invested in surround sound before, the Paradigm Cinema™ system is a surprisingly pleasant way to take the plunge, without losing your wallet as you dive in.

SUMMARY

PROS
Distortion-free; spacious surround sound; space savers; more than competitively priced; easy to install.

CONS
Poor assembly instructions.

VERDICT
For the price, this entry-level satellite/subwoofer system is hard to beat, though novices may scratch their heads looking at the setup instructions.

Cinema™ satellite