PRODUCT review

CINEMA™ 90 • CINEMA™ CC
CINEMA™ ADP • PDR-10

Paradigm®

"... SIMPLY WONDERFUL ...

superb, tangible, three dimensional images with detail and subtlety."

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Best Buys
SPEAKERS AMPLIFIERS AND RECEIVERS

"... frequency response of the Cinema 90s was excellent ... extremely smooth ... virtually ruler-flat ... natural ... uncoloured ... extremely accurate little satellites."

Some of us here at *Best Buys* truly aren't huge enthusiasts for the newer 6.1/7.1 surround systems. Useful as they are in cinemas where many people are, of necessity, far off centre, few homes gain much benefit from a centre rear channel. But after encountering this 7.1 channel speaker system from Canadian firm Paradigm, we're inclined to change our minds.

EQUIPMENT

At first glance this appears to be just another subwoofer/satellite surround system. But closer examination reveals two major differences. First, rather than the usual 5.1 system, this Cinema system package provides all seven channels, plus the subwoofer. Second, the four satellites supplied to cover the four surround channels are dipole speakers, each having a pair of tweeters and bass/midrange drivers, firing in opposing directions, so as to spread the surround field and reduce the ability of the ear to precisely localise the sound source.

Cinema™ ADP

Cinema™ 90

Cinema™ CC

PDR-10

Front stereo duties were performed by a pair of Cinema 90 satellites. Each stands 197 mm tall, 118 mm wide and 146 mm deep, and carries a 25 mm pure titanium dome tweeter and a 115 mm co-polymer cone bass/midrange driver. Paradigm rates the sensitivity of these satellites at 88 dB, their power handling at up to 50 watts continuous, and their frequency response as 75 to 20,000 Hz at ±2 dB.

"… impressive performance from such a compact subwoofer."

The Cinema CC centre channel shares the same tweeter, but uses two 90 mm bass/midrange drivers in a cabinet 305 mm wide, 108 mm tall and 143 mm deep. Paradigm rates its sensitivity at 89 dB, power handling at up to 50 watts continuous, and its frequency response as 85 to 20,000 Hz at ±2 dB.

The Cinema ADP satellites fill in the other four positions. Each uses two of the same tweeters, and two of the bass/midrange drivers from the Cinema CC. The tweeter tops the bass/midrange on one side, and the order is reversed on the other. This was specified by Paradigm similarly to the other satellites, bar a higher sensitivity of 90 dB and a bass response of 100 Hz within the ±2 dB measurement envelope.

All the satellites are magnetically shielded. The enclosures seemed to be made of a sturdy plastic material, and all the enclosures were sealed. Standard binding posts were provided for connections, and key-slot type mounting points were included on the enclosures (brackets were also available). The Paradigm PDR-10 subwoofer features a 254 mm driver, backed by a bass reflex enclosure and powered by a 120-watt amplifier. This measured 401 mm by 300 mm by 394 mm. It accepts its signal via either a single line level socket, or a pair of speaker level inputs. Paradigm rates its bass limits at 27 Hz at the -3 dB point.

PERFORMANCE

The frequency response of the Cinema 90 front left and right speakers was excellent. Extremely smooth in the upper bass, mid and treble bands, it reached from 100 Hz to 21 kHz within our regular, unsmoothed, 16 dB envelope. But that understates the smoothness which, ignoring room effects, was virtually ruler-flat from 200 to 10,000 Hz.

"It was with surround work that this system proved a revelation … a peerless surround field … diffuse, yet full … [the speakers] disappeared acoustically … only the sound originally placed on the soundtracks remained."

With its absence of broad areas of boost or attenuation, the result was that the sound was extremely natural and uncoloured. These were, within their bass limitations, extremely accurate little satellites. At the bottom end, the sealed enclosures delivered a very gentle roll off, just nine decibels per octave. With this commencing at around 140 Hz, we would suggest that if your home theatre receiver has an adjustable bass crossover frequency for 'small' speakers, it be set at 120 or 150 Hz, which will also cater for the Cinema ADP surround speakers.

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We measured the in-room frequency response of the PDR-10 subwoofer at 30 to 149 Hz at 16 dB, which was an impressive performance from such a compact subwoofer.

The higher end allowed a good merging with the satellites with our crossover frequency set at 150 Hz. The Cinema CC centre channel and ADP surround speakers gave a tonally very similar result to the front speakers.

As to how the system worked all together, we found it simply wonderful. With stereo music the Cinema 90 satellites, supported by the PDR-10 subwoofer, did what Paradigm generally does extremely well: it delivered superb, tangible, three dimensional images with detail and subtlety.

But it was with surround work that this system proved a revelation, with a peerless surround field thanks to the diffuse, yet full, sound produced by the four rear Cinema ADP speakers. They were ably driven by a suitably configured processor with the THX 6.1 channel Ultra2 enhancements, which made them even better. Basically, they disappeared acoustically, and only the sound originally placed on the soundtracks remained.

CONCLUSION

This 7.1 channel satellite/subwoofer system from Paradigm threatens to make us converts to centre rear channels. Try it for yourself.