"INCREDIBLE!"

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SCENE™ ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

by Tony Thomas

The New Titan
(Improved over version reviewed for even better sound.)

"I was astounded … These speakers are fast … definition and imaging is incredible. Listening to recordings of acoustic instruments like pianos and guitars was a joy, and vocals were intimate and alive … "

While scanning various audio magazines, I kept hearing about a great sounding bookshelf loudspeaker from a Canadian company called Paradigm. Dubbed "the Titan" (someone at Paradigm must have a sense of humor), this inexpensive speaker is a two-way bass-reflex design with a resistive rear port and is only about a foot high, 7″ wide and 9″ deep.

Since I am in the process of evaluating the best low-cost components I can get my hands on, I thought I'd take a look at a pair of Titans. After a few months of phone tag, a pair of Titans arrived at my door complete with a pair of their Premier S-70 stands. A day later, another pair arrived with another pair of stands! I immediately faxed the company. "It's raining Titans in Cleveland!", I emoted. Thankfully, they promised to hold their fire. After all, I live in an apartment, not a warehouse!

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

As I unpacked the first pair of Titans, I immediately admired their handsome oak finish. Since the '70s, most manufacturers have cheaped out in the finish department, offering either some type of flat black painted or epoxy finish or a cheap looking laminate. By contrast, you can order the Titans in handsome Oak vinyl (my favorite), Black Ash or in White with a matching white grille. While not real oak, these speakers are very easy on the eyes and remind me of vintage Advents and ARs.

Unlike most current models, the Titans don't have removable grilles, making it impossible for me to check out the components first hand. As a result, I had to go by the photos and spec sheet to find out what's inside. According to the information I was sent, the Titans employ

a 6.5″ custom polypropylene woofer and a European Vifa D 19 .75″ ferro-fluid damped and cooled polyamide dome tweeter. The same tweeter has reportedly been used in various expensive audiophile speakers for years. A second order (12 dB/octave) crossover and a rear resistive port complete the design. Paradigm offers a five year limited warranty on the Titans.

LISTENING TESTS

According to the spec sheet, the Titans can accept anywhere between 15-100 watts at 4-8 ohms and deliver 75 Hz-20 kHz ±2 dB. Impressive specs for such a tiny speaker, I thought. However, since I just finished reviewing the RDL Black Golds last month, I knew what was possible from a small, inexpensive speaker. I decided to hook up the first pair to my ancient Kenwood KR-2600 receiver to see how they perform with such a modest (about 15 watt/channel) amp. On that system, they sounded a bit reserved compared to the Black Golds. The imaging was precise and the midrange and high end were quite smooth, however. The low end, while not thundering, was quite natural sounding.

> *"… precise … smooth … natural … no noticeable smearing in the midrange or treble ranges … excellent definition and sound staging."*

I hooked up the other pair of Titans to my "big" system, the JVC RX-315 100-watt-per-channel receiver for some really critical listening. Since my expensive Audix studio monitors are connected to that receiver, I decided to use the "B" speaker outs, permitting direct A/B comparisons with the Audixs. I started out my listening tests with Bill Meyer's *IMAGES* (Spindletop SPT 9114), a great "torture test" CD which is long out of print.

As soon as the CD began, I was astounded by the way the Paradigms performed on that system. These speakers are fast with no noticeable smearing in the midrange or treble ranges. They exhibited excellent definition and sound staging. In fact, it was hard for me to believe that what I was hearing was coming from such a small pair of speakers. In addition, they had a mid-bass "warmth" and a high-end "sweetness" which was quite endearing.

> *"… an uncommon audio bargain. … the Paradigm Titans are the loudspeakers you are looking for."*

I listened to a wide variety of material on the Titans, from opera to synthesized dance music. In almost every case, they compared quite favorably to my expensive Audix monitors which cost three times as much. I did detect a bit of boominess on some pop and rock recordings that was not duplicated on the Audixs, but I think that could be reduced or eliminated by changing their placement. They seemed very flat over the entire audio spectrum, making them great for critical listening and reference monitoring applications.

FINAL THOUGHTS

If you are looking for a compact loudspeaker that will honestly reproduce what is on your tapes and CDs, the Paradigm Titans are the loudspeakers you are looking for. While they don't have a "hyped" low or high-end like many speakers do, their definition and imaging is incredible. Listening to recordings of acoustic instruments like pianos and guitars was a joy, and vocals were intimate and alive on the Titans. I especially liked their clarity and warmth.

The Paradigm Titans are an uncommon audio bargain.