

“ ... sound that was

OUT OF THIS WORLD! ”

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by Marcin Krupski

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

Paradigm is not one to lag behind when it comes to innovative speaker design and manufacturing. I would presume that in Paradigm’s labs they are constantly working on innovative new ideas to improve the sound of their speakers. To date, their efforts have been spent on perfecting their classic designs. At the moment it appears that Paradigm engineers are moving in territory previously reserved for the Bose clan. And what’s more—Paradigm is doing it with class! The philosophy behind Cinema™ sales in the Polish market is slightly different than in North America. In North America the PDR-8 subwoofer is recommended as a match for this system. Polish distributors separate the set so that each of the speakers is sold separately and recommend the PDR-10 subwoofer as a match. For this review, I received four identical palm-sized™ Cinema™ satellite speakers for

Cinema™ satellites



the left/right front and surround channels, the Cinema™ CC (center channel speaker) and the PDR-10 subwoofer. More on the choice of subwoofer later in the review.

HOOK-UP

Hooking up these speakers was easy. The satellites connect to the amplifier’s speaker outlet; and the subwoofer through the RCA (a cinch) to the subwoofer outlet ... and it plays! To give it its due, it plays very well. However, with the help of Paradigm’s distributor in Poland we experimented a little with a new connection method. Our goal was to see if we could improve upon the integration between satellites, center channel and subwoofer. Basically, we connected the subwoofer by speaker cable to the amplifier and front speakers. The rest of the connection is as per

Paradigm's recommendations. The front columns were set to full band (Front – Large), and the subwoofer was set to Off (Sub – No). The center and surround speakers stayed small (Centre – Small, Rear – Small). During Dolby® Digital listening, the LFE channel remained directed toward the front speakers which cooperated with the subwoofer and we lost nothing in terms of sound quality. I suggest experimenting with set-ups; but in our experience, the method we tried resulted in really astonishing effects. In fact, the sound from these Cinema™ speakers fooled everyone. Everyone who came into the testing studio was convinced that they were listening to far more expensive speakers.

THE THIRD OPTION

Some things are uncanny! The fact that I inadvertently fooled others with these Paradigms was one thing. But the fact that this Cinema™ system completely amazed me is another story. I had been listening to speakers from a number of manufacturers. Then along came the Paradigms. I was so astonished by their sound, I listened to them ten times more before writing this review, certain I had never before heard sound like this. Writing about “plastic” speakers with comments such as “they sound not too bad” results in a fairly relative review. If a small plastic box “plays well” it usually means cabinet resonance, coloration, etc., was relatively low considering the fact that it was plastic. Until now! Now, Paradigm has set a new standard. Forget comparisons to other “plastic” speakers. Let's even forget comparisons to other small speakers. Of course, we are not, at this point, suggesting that these Cinemas can be compared to floorstanding speakers. As Allen L. Sung of *Ultralink* said during an interview, “we cannot manipulate the rules of physics.”



Cinema™ CC

Paradigm probably thinks along the same vein, although they produce floorstanding models, the company also produces smaller speakers such as the Mini Monitor.

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But back to the Cinema™ system. For obvious reasons, we were not anticipating much in the way of bass from the Cinema set-up. What a surprise! The Cinema™ speakers paired with the PDR-10 produced sound that was out of this world! It was uncanny! Reproduction of both the midrange and high frequencies was comparable to that of a speaker at least three times more expensive! Unlike typical “plastic” speakers, overall sound was never shrill! There was a complete absence of coloration! Integrated with the subwoofer, the Cinemas played like a true floorstanding system. It's obvious that Paradigm took the matter of home theater sound very seriously.

The Cinema™ CC is the largest (excluding the PDR-10) speaker in this system. And, as we expected, a large portion of the movie's dialogue was carried by the CC. The Cinemas and the PDR-10 dispersed sound beautifully across a wide listening area. Would the PDR-8 have been capable of this? We're not sure. In smaller enclosures the PDR-8 would definitely provide enough woof! However, one thing is certain—the Cinema™ system, paired with the PDR-10, performed like a much larger—and more importantly—much more expensive set of speakers. This was an absolute revelation to me because

until now, buyers had only two choices. The first choice was to purchase large, floorstanding, space-eating speakers in order to enjoy really good sound. The second option was to purchase smaller speakers that looked pretty good and “pretend” that they also sounded good. Fortunately, for all of us, there is now a third option—Cinema™—small speakers that look good and sound great!

INSTEAD OF A SUMMARY

Usually, the summary is the paragraph in which I weigh the virtues and faults of a speaker, then decide if it is worthy of my recommendation. This time it's different. What is there to weigh? The Cinema™ speakers have accumulated nothing but praise from me! They offer great sound! Equipped with solid connectors they accept banana tips, forks



PDR-10

or bare cables up to 4-mm gauge. It's possible to purchase bases from Paradigm for the satellites and the center speaker. Speakers can also be mounted on Premier stands, or on the wall with mounting brackets (included). Since the Cinemas are an acoustic suspension design, it is quite safe to position the speakers in corners. We should also mention colors. Attention interior designers! The Cinema™ speakers, available in White or Black, will work well with basically any décor. From my point of view, given the facts, there is only one conclusion I can come to—a fervent recommendation!