

“ ... **EXCELLENT**

audio imaging

across all five channels... ”

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by Gordon Meyer

Paradigm's original Cinema™ home-theater speaker package, which we reviewed last year, impressed us with its clarity but lacked some low-end punch. The new Cinema™ 90 package comes with a 10-inch subwoofer to add some real power to a smart-looking set of very small speakers. The result is clear, enveloping music, with a bottom end that brings action movies to life.

A SMART-LOOKING SET

The four speakers for the front left and right and surround channels in the Cinema™ 90 system are comparable in size to mid-sized external PC speakers (7-3/4 high x 4-5/8 wide x 5-3/4 inches deep). We liked the sleek yet elegantly simple D-shaped design of the main speakers, which are available in black, white, and silver. Between the 60-mm bracket holes on the rear and the mere



4.2-pound weight, you can easily and unobtrusively wall-mount these speakers. The center channel is styled like the other four speakers but is longer, measuring 4-1/4 high x 12 wide x 5-5/8 inches deep. All the speakers are magnetically shielded,

so you can place them near your TV without worry, and they have gold-plated binding posts that accept bare wire, spades, and banana plugs.

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Although the main speakers in the Cinema™ 90 system are tiny, we can't say the same for the 10-inch PDR-10 subwoofer. Measuring 14-1/4 high by 13-1/2 wide by 16-1/4 inches deep and weighing a hefty 33 pounds, this is definitely full-sized. Like many subwoofers on the market, the 300-watt amp built into the jet-black box senses when an audio signal comes through and turns itself on and off automatically to save electricity.

When we fired up the Cinema™ 90 speakers to begin our listening tests, the first thing we noticed was their efficiency. We didn't need to turn the volume knob up very far in order to make these speakers play loudly. If you have a modestly powered home-theater receiver (60 to 80 watts per channel into 8 ohms), this speaker system is a good match.

WHAT ABOUT SOUND QUALITY?

Whether we were listening to a Beethoven symphony or Arnold Schwarzenegger demolishing the research lab in *Terminator 2*, we felt completely enveloped by the sound, as if we were right in the middle of the action (or the concert hall). The 10-inch sub not only reproduces the rumble in action movies such as *Saving Private Ryan*, it adds real richness to music. The whole system works well together, with the sub able to clearly define

bass notes and low-frequency effects without obscuring the higher-frequency sounds from the satellites. Music in general sounded especially clear and alive.

The Cinema™ 90s also have excellent audio imaging across all five channels, making it easy to hear exactly where each sound comes from. This means that in the *Fantasia 2000* segment where Mickey Mouse opens the door to Daisy Duck's dressing room, you will clearly hear her scream coming from behind you on the right side of the room. We did, however, notice a bit of flatness in the midrange tones and a slightly harsh, almost metallic undertone when we really cranked up the sound. But in fairness to Paradigm, that was at volume levels much louder than we would normally listen to music or movies. At normal room listening levels, we were quite satisfied with the sound of this package.

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Though it's not exactly cheap, we like the Cinema™ 90 system for its compact size and clear, full sound. If you're putting together a medium-sized home theater and want some discrete-looking, high-quality speakers, this set is definitely one that you should consider. If your room is smaller, you might also take a look at the Cinema™ 70 system, which comes with an 8-inch sub and slightly smaller speakers.