## 66 ... the Legends are

# SUPERIOR PERFORMERS"

Reprinted with permission from

## QUÉBEC•AUDIO

"To say that I was pleasantly surprised and impressed by this Paradigm set is an understatement. ... The speakers filled my listening room with musical intensity and no distortion. ... finish and presentation is first class."

Legend

by François Lemieux

### WHERE BALANCE, BRIGHTNESS AND VERSATILITY MEET

aradigm, the Ontario company that makes speakers, is so well known in Québec that it doesn't need any lengthy introduction. Who hasn't, at least once, noticed their ad in a specialized publication here or elsewhere? Using proven design and engineering principles, Paradigm concentrates on producing products that offer excellent value for the money. Samples tested here are very representative of the line.

Paradigm features two separate speaker line-ups: Paradigm® Reference, and Paradigm® which includes the budget-priced Performance Series. For this review the following Performance Series models were tested: the Legend, as main speaker, CC-270 as centre, ADP-170's as rears, and the PDR-10 subwoofer.

The Legend is a tall, slim floorstanding speaker with a 25-mm high-frequency dome tweeter made of ceramic/metal

composite (CMC). In contrast to the earlier version of the Legend, which contained an amplified subwoofer, the new version has three 165-mm woofers manufactured by Paradigm, with metallescent polymer cones (MPC). Drivers feature a glass-reinforced injection-moulded (GRIP) chassis made up of a number of thin ribs, perpendicular to the metallescent polymer cone. Apart from giving the speaker rigidity, the design reduces flexing. A fairly large port is located between the

lower drivers. A large quantity of acoustic damping material is found inside the enclosure.

To my amazement, the Legend uses a unique 2-1/2-way crossover setup instead of a 3-way configuration. Below 600 Hz, the frequencies are handled by all three woofers, and between 600 Hz and 2,500 Hz by the two top ones!



The cabinet is clad in cherry vinyl, a popular finish nowadays. It has a pleasing contemporary look and comes with adjustable spikes. The Legend is also available with magnetic shielding for a minimal additional cost.

"The PDR-10 performed so well that it ranks much higher than its price would suggest. ... plenty of well-rounded bass ... deeply felt ... without saturation ... even at high volume."

The 2-way CC-270 centre speaker follows a more traditional design. It uses a tweeter between two woofers; all three drivers are identical to those found in the Legend, but magnetically shielded. At the rear of the cabinet, one finds the port and fiveway binding posts. Five-way binding posts appear on all speakers in this group. Inside the large cabinet one can see the acoustic damping material, but there is no crossbracing for rigidity. Because of its size, the CC-270 is better suited for use with a rear projection unit rather than a small television set.

The ADP-170's are a combination bipole/ dipole design with two 19-mm CMC dome tweeters and two 140-mm MPC cone woofers with die-cast chassis and sizeable magnets on either side of the trapezoidal case; a heavy, inert acoustic suspension design. The left/right markings must be followed to ensure proper phasing of the front and rear speakers. ADP-170's come with wall brackets and all necessary hardware.

The PDR-10 is in the middle of Paradigm's line-up of affordable powered subwoofers.



Respectable in size, it is equipped with a 255-mm low-frequency driver with a 38-mm voice coil, 100 watts of amplification, soft clipping circuit and high-velocity, low-resistance port. At the front, one can see the automatic-on LED through the fixed grille that protects the speaker. The back of the cabinet features a line-level input facility through a mono RCA input, subwoofer level control, and subwoofer cut-off frequency control continuously variable from 50 Hz to 150 Hz. Also found on the back are speaker level inputs with spring plugs, heat sink, and power cord. The external finish is the same as that of the Legend; internally, Paradigm uses only acoustic damping material to absorb unwanted vibrations.

"... the soundtrack is overflowing with sound, but the Paradigms came out on top. The shouts of the crowd came across very realistically from the rear speakers, which also excelled in outdoor scenes such as those in the Naboo Forest and the movie's underwater segments."

Already, the quality-to-price ratio is very impressive, especially considering that more than twenty quality drivers are included in this setup for a lower cost than those mini speakers that, very often, have only four drivers!

#### **INSTALLATION**

For more details about the installation of Paradigm speakers, please refer to the *Snell Test (Québec Audio, Vol. 9, No. 2)*. The ADP-170's have been slightly relocated towards the front, in order to place the listening position at 90 degrees from the front plane of the speakers to obtain a maximum dipolar effect. A 20-hour break-

in period was allowed in my living room, in the open, before moving the whole setup to the basement. Since the upper floor of my home is oak, sound was much better at the lower level.

"... excellent, lively balanced performance ..."

### LISTENING TEST

With the grilles taken off, my home theatre looks terrific. I started testing the Legend in stereo, alternating full range with woofer only (speakers filtered at 80 Hz). First stop, Sweet Georgia Brown, under the Opus 3 label. Given its importance, and with six woofers, the bass produced by the Legend was not obtrusive, but rather dry and well controlled with a somewhat limited range. Tonal balance was very natural. Drums appeared a bit closer to the other instruments, thus limiting, to a certain extent, the depth of the stage. The midrange was a bit forward and emphasized the vibraphone more than is usual, but showed good articulation. The musical quality is definitely there, but a certain congestion was noticeable at a high volume. In any case, the Legends are superior performers thanks to their very lively sound.

Second stop: *Together Again* by Janet Jackson. Once again, the bass was right there with rhythm, punch, and a rather surprising definition. Her voice was omnipresent and powerful, and the synthetic character of the percussion was well rendered. The resonance was rather two-dimensional and certainly very representative of this type of recording. Adding the subwoofer allowed a better extension of the bass, although, at first, it seemed to lag behind, as if detached from the rest of the performance. It's not the first time that I have noticed this, especially with a vented enclosure design. All in all,



an excellent, lively, balanced performance from a relatively affordable product. But the best was yet to come.

"... bass was right there with rhythm, punch, and a rather surprising definition. ... voice was omnipresent and powerful, and the synthetic character of the percussion was well rendered."

Now for the home theatre test, with all the speakers controlled by the bass circuit. First at the bottom of the spectrum with *Toy Story 2.* The PDR-10 performed well with plenty of well-rounded bass. The effect was felt deeply, without saturation, even at a high volume. Voices were well defined although at times somewhat tinny. At a certain point at a high volume, congestion could be felt from the centre channel, probably due to resonance in the enclosure —but nothing serious. Treble was mellow and unfatiguing which is the way it should be in a home theatre. The Paradigm speaker group provided superior results. The speakers filled my listening room with musical intensity and no distortion.

Next came Star Wars: The Phantom Menace. During the breathtaking pod race, the soundtrack is overflowing with sound, but the Paradigms came out on top. The shouts of the crowd came across very realistically from the rear speakers, which also excelled in outdoor scenes such as those in the Naboo Forest, and the movie's underwater segments. However, the rears couldn't precisely reproduce the rear center images of certain sound effects mixed in Dolby\* Digital EX. I listened again to some of the segments in 6.1 mode, using a rear monopole speaker. The results convinced me that this configuration is perhaps the solution to the dipole/monopole dilemma. The French version of this DVD is encoded in Dolby® Surround and I must admit that the use of dipole speakers greatly improved the surround effect and is virtually indispensable with this type of equipment. Quite a seductive power!

Of course, this type of speaker has been specifically designed for this kind of surround encoding.

The music soundtrack was well defined and easy to follow. However, the centre speaker's resonance was different from the others and conveyed, somewhat irregularly, the movements in the foreground. This phenomenon accentuated the sensation that the voices had been recorded separately from the music, which is generally the case in movies using ADR (Automatic Dialog Replacement). In the final confrontation, the laser sabre impacts were well emphasized by the subwoofer, making these weapons come across powerful and threatening. I found the reproduction so exciting that I listened to the film again to the end, with my two kids. What a show!

"I found the reproduction so exciting that I listened to the film again to the end ... What a show!"

To say that I was pleasantly surprised and impressed by this Paradigm set is an understatement. The finish and presentation of these speakers is first class. Moreover, their efficiency is such that they perform extremely well even at high volume levels. The PDR-10 performed so well that it ranks much higher than its price would suggest. Performance can best be described as balanced and lively. Paradigm's designers, in keeping with the reputation of the brand, have reached a perfect balance between the strengths and weaknesses of the various speakers, and between home theatre and strictly music listening, thus creating a product with exceptional value for the money. An absolute must!



PDR-10