

“ ... nearly

SEAMLESS integration
from speaker to speaker.”

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“ ... a great value ... the system has many strengths ... enjoyable to listen to, involving and never fatiguing. ...hard to beat for the price.”

by Brian Kahn

Paradigm has long been known for quality speakers at reasonable prices. This tradition is kept alive with this new Paradigm system. The individual speakers are available separately, so the consumer can pick the speakers best suited to the individual's needs.

The system is comprised of Phantoms for the main channels, the CC-170 center, ADP-170 surrounds and the PS-1000 subwoofer. The Phantoms are small tower speakers with two 6-1/2-inch drivers and a 3/4-inch dome tweeter. The review samples were finished in rosenut; light cherry and black ash finishes are also available. The ADP-170 surrounds are available in white as well. The Phantom's entire front panel is covered with a non-removable black grille, with a small Paradigm logo near the bottom. The simple grille, along with the Phantoms' demure 32-inch height and narrow profile, will allow the Phantoms to fit unobtrusively into a variety of rooms. The CC-170 is solidly built and comes in black graphite only.

Phantom

The center uses a horizontal D'Appolito configuration. The driver complement consists of two 5-1/2-inch woofers flanking a 3/4-inch dome tweeter, with the woofers venting through a rear-firing port. The CC-170's black grille is removable, featuring a small Paradigm logo. The ADP-170 surrounds utilize a dipole/bipole configuration that is designed to maximize spaciousness without sacrificing lower frequency strength. The ADP-170s come with wall-mounting brackets and the back of the cabinet is grooved for speaker cables, allowing the ADP-170s to mount flush on the wall.

Rounding out the system is the PS-1000 subwoofer. The PS-1000 is a powered subwoofer with a 130-watt amplifier and a 10-inch driver. The subwoofer utilizes a dual cavity system and vents through



three rear-firing ports. The PS-1000 comes with a variety of connections and adjustments to allow it to work with almost any system.

"The Phantoms threw a surprisingly large soundstage with a wide variety of material. ... natural rendition of female vocals ... the lows are tight and accurate ..."

THE MUSIC AND MOVIES

I was initially skeptical of the Phantoms' abilities in a two-channel music system. While a rap on the side of the cabinet indicated minimal bracing, cabinet resonance was not overly pronounced in listening. The Phantoms threw a surprisingly large soundstage with a wide variety of material. They did a good job in portraying female vocalists, with only the slightest bit of sibilance. While listening to Janet Jackson's *Velvet Rope* album (Virgin Records) and Macy Gray's *On How Life Is*, my listening impressions remained fairly consistent. On both, I noted a spacious soundstage and natural rendition of female vocals with only a hint of sibilance. The Phantoms, while forward in their presentation, seem to have a slightly rolled-off top end. On the other side of the frequency range, the lows are tight and accurate but do not extend low enough for aficionados of rap or pipe organs. With male vocalists, the Phantoms have a tendency to exhibit a bit of chestiness, but this may be a by-product of the cabinet resonance.



CC-170

"The CC-170 center channel does a great job reproducing vocals ... the PS-1000 has no problems reaching down low and doing it loudly."

I also spent a fair amount of time listening to the Paradigm system with some DTS discs, including the Police's *The Singles* and Lyle Lovett's *Joshua Judge Ruth*. I have found both of these albums to be very well recorded tools for getting acquainted with new systems. The CC-170 center channel does a great job reproducing vocals and may actually be a bit clearer than the Phantoms. The PS-1000 has no problems reaching down low and doing it loudly. I was quite impressed with the system's ability to belt out the low notes with both the Police's *Don't Stand So Close To Me* and Lyle Lovett's *Church*. The major notable shortcoming was the subwoofer's lack of accuracy. It was low, it was loud, but it lacked the tightness and tonal accuracy I crave. This is most likely due to the ported design, which often sacrifices smooth response for increased output. I found the PS-1000 to be a bit boomy, leaning toward a one-note quality. I would imagine that this is caused by a frequency response bump around the area of the port frequency. Unfortunately, when designing a subwoofer at the lower price points, one often has to make sacrifices and choices. Here the designers went for prodigious output down to the lowest frequencies, but had to sacrifice some accuracy to do so.

I decided to see if the Paradigms could put their money where their mouth is with the opening battle scene of *Saving Private Ryan* from the DTS DVD version. I was immediately impressed by their ability to create an enveloping soundstage. I felt that I was in the middle of the battle. Even at obscenely loud volumes, the Paradigms did not audibly distort or breakup. I can definitely say that the PS-1000 shines on movie action sequences. Explosions and other monumental effects are easily handled at all reasonable volumes without strain.

"... an enveloping soundstage ... Even at obscenely loud volumes, the Paradigms did not audibly distort or breakup. ... the PS-1000 shines on movie action sequences. Explosions and other monumental effects are easily handled ..."

I also spent some time watching *The Iron Giant* and *Analyze This*. The Paradigm system was constantly able to provide a nearly seamless integration from speaker to speaker. The ADP-170s work quite well in providing rear channel effects and their low frequency response is quite extended for speakers of their size.

DOWNSIDE

The system is fairly well matched and the complaints are few. The Phantoms are not able to image as precisely as I would have liked and there was a touch of chest-iness on male vocals. My other complaint is the one I found most bothersome, the subwoofer. No matter where I placed it, or how much I manipulated the controls, there remained some boominess. This is an area of choices and sacrifices. Boomy and loud, or tight and not quite as loud? These are choices that designers and purchasers both have to make. Paradigm has chosen to go for extended lows at high volumes with a sacrifice of accuracy. Those who will be using this system with a modern processor can use the bass management to switch out the subwoofer for music and utilize it only for movies and 5.1 music. This system may be a good choice for those who intend to use the PS-1000 mainly for movies. The bass is not grotesquely bloated but, if you use the PS-1000 mainly for listening to music, it is a bit bothersome.



ADP-170

CONCLUSION

This system from Paradigm is a great value, a complete speaker system for so little. If your music listening tastes do not require a great deal of low frequency extension, the Phantoms are a good choice. The entire system works well together for those needing a full 5.1 system. Careful placement and adjustment will be greatly rewarded. While the bass boominess is unlikely to completely disappear, the system has many strengths that weigh heavily in its favor. Owners of the Paradigm system will be unlikely to suffer from lack of low end extension or compression at high volumes. Most importantly, the Phantoms are enjoyable to listen to, involving and never fatiguing. The Phantoms, CC-170, ADP-170 and PS-1000 are hard to beat for the price.



PS-1000