

“A PERFECT MATCH FOR PLASMA”

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Vol. 5, No. 5

“... consistently strong ... very realistic ... detail was also superb ... bass was heavy without being too throaty ... ADP surrounds gave the music a full-room ambience ... Mahler’s Symphony No. 4 in G Major, was absolutely gorgeous.”

by Grant Clauser

So you’ve got, or plan to get, a flashy new plasma TV to hang on the wall. The space they save is great, but what about all the floor space taken up by tower speakers? (Let’s hope you’re not one of those people who think the big picture is all home theater is about.) You could go with the trend toward small satellite speakers, or you could punch holes in your walls for a set of in-wall speakers but if sound quality is at least as important as fashion then you should look a little further.

Paradigm has a very attractive solution for flat panel lovers. With their On-Wall Monitor series the company takes the expertise they put into their traditional Monitor loudspeakers and packages them in a format that can be hung on a wall as a complement to a plasma or large LCD TV. While in-wall speakers satisfy people’s need for the low-profile effect, they can often compromise sound quality. In-wall speakers’ sound is very dependent on the wall they’re mounted in based on factors like wall material, air space, insulation and such. Paradigm’s On-Walls are built with

cabinets acoustically designed to sound good when hung on a wall. They’re only six inches deep, which is about the depth of most plasma TVs attached to a wall mount.

The system Paradigm sent E-Gear consisted of two OW-Monitor 5 speakers with a one-inch tweeter and two 6.5-inch mid and bass drivers each for the front, an OW-CC-370 center channel with a one-inch tweeter and two 6.5-inch midrange drivers (magnetically shielded), a pair of ADP-370 dipole/bipole surrounds and a PW-2100 subwoofer to round it out.

For best soundstage, Paradigm suggests you hang the speakers farther apart than the width of your TV. In our test room I set them against the wall on stands which would approximate their placement if actually screwed onto the sheetrock. Since you can’t move them once they’ve been installed (unless you want to start drilling again), be careful about measuring the the distance from you to the speakers, to make sure they’re installed in the optimum location. The fronts’ drivers are designed



OW-Monitor 5

to allow for higher mounting than typical high-frequency drivers so you can place them in line with your plasma TV. Note that placing these speakers in corners will create an unpleasant abundance of bass.

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The center speaker was placed above the TV and the surround speakers on the side walls with the drivers aiming both forward and backward of the listening position. The speakers come with all the mounting hardware to install them flush against the wall, unlike most wall-mounted speakers that extend from a bracket of some sort.

Driven by a Marantz receiver, a Yamaha DVD-A/SACD player and a Monster Power HTPS 7000 power signal enhancer, I set out to listen to some music. First up was Neil Young's DVD-A release of *Reactor*, one of my all-time favorite rock albums. Immediately it was clear that most in-wall speakers are also no match for the Paradigm On-Wall system. Neil's grungy guitars were very realistic. Bass was heavy without being too throaty, though I think the subwoofer was a bit overpowering for the small room I used. I ended up moving the sub around a couple times before finding the placement that produced the sound I liked best. After Neil, I moved to the DVD-A recording of T-Rex's *Electric Warrior* because I like so much the way the surround tracks were used. In my own home theater I use direct radiating speakers for surrounds, but the Paradigm ADP surrounds really gave the music a full-room ambiance without being too localized (something that can be bothersome with direct radiating speakers). Most people will prefer the ADP effect. Detail was also superb, particularly



ADP-370

noticeable on the track “Jeepster,” where the vocals and tambourines sounded precise. Moving onto more serious music, Mahler's Symphony No. 4 in G Major, was absolutely gorgeous.

For movies, the On Wall Monitors were consistently strong, performing with much more authority than the little satellite systems many dealers sell with plasma TVs. I listened to the *Master and Commander* DVD, which is full of power special effects. Dialog from the center was clear, and the roaring canon fire in the rear channels was quite convincing.

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As audio and video gear becomes more of a fashion statement, some audio companies will sacrifice performance for good looks. The Paradigm On-Wall speakers sound every bit as good as a traditional speaker system, but won't mess up the minimalist effect of a thin on-wall TV.



OW-CC 370



PW-2100