

“...spatially satisfying...

THUNDEROUSLY

DEEP...”

Reprinted with permission from

E-GEAR

“... the kind of dual-identity reproduction that both audiophiles and videophiles treasure – a system that sounds as good for music as it does for movies – and at a price that keeps everyone wondering how Paradigm does it.”

by Ron Goldberg

AN OLD FAVORITE IMPROVES WITH AGE

It’s hard being a speaker manufacturer these days. On the one hand, the slow-growing popularity of high-resolution audio means you’ve got to offer a superior transducer in order to be a relevant brand for audio lovers. But on the other hand, today’s market is being driven by lower resolution sound from MP3 files, Dolby Digital and whole-house networks. Some manufacturers meet this challenge by constantly retooling their product lines. Others, like Paradigm, stick to their guns and keep refining, rather than reinventing, their products.

Paradigm’s Monitor line is a good example. At the middle of the series in size and cost, the Monitor 5 is a stand-mounted design which mates with the shielded CC-370 center speaker and ADP-370 surrounds to form a timbre matched surround complement. The company offers several subwoofers; I evaluated the massive PW-2200 along with the rest of the system, which Paradigm thoughtfully groups as “Recommended System #6.” Together, the speakers created the kind of dual-identity reproduction that both

audiophiles and videophiles treasure—a system that sounds as good for music as it does for movies—and at a price that keeps everyone wondering how Paradigm does it.

The Monitor 5 features a three-driver, two-way bass reflex design. It sports a 1-inch titanium dome tweeter, accompanied by a 6.5-inch midrange/bass driver, and an identically sized, carbon-reinforced woofer; the enclosure is ported at the top rear of the cabinet. The tweeter is ferro-fluid cooled, which accounts in part for the speaker’s high power-handling capability of 120 watts. Not that you need much power to drive these puppies, as sensitivity is rated at 92 dB under room-listening conditions. According to Paradigm, the Monitor 5s will happily perform with as little as 15 watts of music power. Frequency response is rated at 58 Hz to 20 kHz, measured on-axis.

Monitor 5



The matching center channel CC-370 is a horizontally oriented speaker with two of the same mid-bass drivers as the mains, which flank the identical titanium tweeter. The system, which is ported at the rear right, has an on-axis frequency response of 100 Hz to 20 kHz, and Paradigm claims low-frequency extension down to 57 Hz in real-world performance. The ADP-370 surrounds match the system acoustically, if not visually, and feature a dipole design that incorporates the same midbass and tweeter drivers as the other speakers.

"The PW-2200 handled [Charlie] Haden's acoustic bass down to the lowest lows, but was supple enough to catch the tiny harmonies."

While the aforementioned speakers are capable of credible bass performance on their own, it's the subwoofer that's going to give you the whomp you need for movies and bottom-octave musical performance. The PW-2200 is a cube of low-frequency energy, powered with a 250-watt amplifier that reaches 750 watts on musical peaks, which drives a 12-inch woofer with a tuned rear port. Variable adjustments are provided for cutoff response (50–150 Hz), subwoofer output level and phase adjustment. Under real-world conditions, Paradigm claims usable response down to 18 Hz.

I configured the system to work with an 80-Hz cutoff for low frequencies routed to the subwoofer. The mains were mounted on stands that Paradigm provided, which brought the titanium tweeter up to



ADP-370

approximately ear level in my listening space. The electronics I used were what would probably be most representative for a speaker system in this price range—an upper-end AN receiver (in this case, Pioneer's mighty VSX-TX49TXi), and a good quality DVD player capable of DVD-A output (Panasonic's DVD-XP50).

"... a completely coherent, unified soundfield that effortlessly moves from the upper end to the lowest octaves ... you don't listen to the soundstage or the microdynamics, you simply hear your music."

Properly placed and balanced, the Monitor system creates a completely coherent, unified soundfield that effortlessly moves from the upper end to the lowest octaves. To see how low the system could go while still delivering musical nuance, I used my usual reference bass torture tests, starting with Hank Jones and Charlie Haden's duet of "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" from the *Steal Away* recording. The PW-2200 handled Haden's acoustic bass down to the lowest lows, but was supple enough to catch the tiny harmonies.

The mids and upper ends are no slouches, either. Paradigm's signature sound has always been about clarity, and a laid-back quality that doesn't call attention to itself. With these speakers, you don't listen to the soundstage or the microdynamics, you simply hear your music.

For the money, you get a pair of mains that, along with the sub, makes for a very credible entree to true high-end stereo music. When you add the timbre-matched center and surrounds, you get the same sound writ large, which would do credit to the new high-res surround formats. For movie playback, you get a surround setup that's not only spatially satisfying but thunderously deep through the PW-2200.



CC-370

Many speaker-makers would have been happy to leave well enough alone with an established model like the Monitor 5. Others would have dropped it from the line, simply to come up with another new model for its own sake. Paradigm has taken a popular product and refined it; for this, it deserves kudos, and a close listen.



PW-2200

(Improved over version reviewed for even better sound.)