

ACTIVE/450-LR, ACTIVE/450-C,
ACTIVE/450-ADP, SERVO-15

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MIX

"IN PRECISE SCIENTIFIC JARGON, THIS SYSTEM RULES!"

"How do they sound? Well, after my first movie on this setup, I lost all measurable desire to even hear any more 5.1 systems. I simply didn't see any point to it. Still don't. They are great!"



THE EYES HAVE IT, BUT WE DON'T GET IT

We have two eyes, yet 99.9% of all images are still mono. Freaks talk about stereo imaging, engineers that never see the light of day work on it until funding dries up, then other engineers give it a try until their funding dries up... and so on.

So far they have come up with red/blue, red/green, polarized, LCD shutter, LCD shutter IMAX, holography, density delta (persistence) and jigglevision (the camera constantly moves up and down a small amount, giving the brain what it needs to construct a 3-D world as long as the proper moving cues exist in the film) as 3-D solutions. Mmm.

Still-image technology includes the old standard red/blue 3-D, red/green and polarized glasses, the old stereoscopes from the dawn of technology, holography, and zography (vertical lenticular surface).

Yet we basically never get to see much of this, as it is all just too inconvenient or expensive. Oh well.

HE NOSE IT'S TWO, BUT...

We have two nostrils. Why don't we have stereo odor entertainment? Granted, though some animals can't even locate food without stereo odor sensing, humans don't seem too dependent on it. But still, if we are talking about entertainment properly and completely addressing the sensory organs of the intended recipient, this is a bit lame.

"these are... high-quality studio monitors with specialized matched rear and center versions for the purpose of providing the most natural speaker-to-speaker image transitions possible. It works. They work. Go hear them."

I HEAR YOU.

NOW I HEAR YOU BEHIND ME.

NOW I FEEL YOU.

We have two ears. One would expect, given the current state of technological development for our other senses, to be listening to one audio channel. Yet we have had two for some time, one for each ear. This actually sort of makes sense. But now it seems *we suddenly need five audio channels, and even a real big sixth* playing at the same time. Still two ears, but six separate audio channels. How did this come to pass?

BY

STEPHEN ST.CROIX

I DON'T KNOW

Well, I *don't*. Why all this attention to elaborate audio imaging while we are still watching a flat, nondimensional visual? Well, whatever the business decisions were that got us here, it looks like we are here. Personally, I am amazed at two aspects of this: first, that "they" actually got us to buy into the idea that we need to completely upgrade our pitifully inadequate stereo systems and stereo TVs to surround, and now 5.1, or we won't have any idea of what is going on; and second, that they may be right.

"I love a good active monitor! These things are ridiculously time-aligned and have frequency-response curves that are so flat that they would be pronounced dead in any self-respecting emergency room."

SO WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

Almost a year ago, I decided that I had better look into all this a bit, so I did some worldwide shopping. I decided almost immediately that imaging and spectral consistency were going to be important for proper audio imaging for film, so I concentrated on systems from manufacturers that could offer entire integrated 5.1 solutions. From the cold north came a *very* integrated and complete solution, and at a fraction of the price of some of the other countries.

I liked it right away because all of the HF and mid-drivers were identical, so imaging and spectral integrity were amazing. Then I liked it because it was impressively neutral. Then I noticed how accurate it sounded. Then something came along and woke up the subwoofers, and I was sold. I set up the following: two Paradigm Active/450-LR's for the front left and right, two Active/450-ADP's for the rear left and right, an Active/450-C for center, and two Servo-15 subwoofers (with an X-30 control unit) for the neighbors and any local seismographs. In precise scientific jargon, this system rules!

The front and center units each have two 6.5-inch mid-low drivers and an aluminum ferrofluid tweeter. They are actively bi-amped, and, of course, all the new crossover optimization tricks – along with all the cool phase correction and frequency-response optimization that becomes possible when the designer knows exactly what drivers will be used (and how they will be used) with his amps and preamps – are in there as well. I *love* a good active monitor! These things are ridiculously time-aligned and have frequency-response curves that are so flat that they would be pronounced dead in any self-respecting emergency room.

The rears also have two 6.5's each, but they have two aluminum tweeters, as they are dipolar. Each of these five ported speakers has EQ tailoring, shelving and other

miscellaneous buttons and knobs, and generates over 100 watts for the bottom, over 50 watts for the top.

Each sub has about 400 watts interacting via a very, very nice servo setup with a 15-inch woofer in a sealed cabinet. A little box called an X-30 handles sub-crossover with all the desired adjuster knobs. You know what all these controls are – you don't need me to actually do a real review and list every screw and connector, do you? All specifications subject to change if I am wrong, or if I decide at some later date that I hate the system (not very likely, actually).

"And as for two subs? Always use two subs, even if you don't need the SPL, just to give yourself a fighting chance at controlling the big, the bad and the ugly room nodes down there."

So how does all this integrated hardware sound? Well, if you have actual 14-karat golden ears, you won't like them too much at first – they need to be broken in. Let me repeat that for you. *They need to be broken in.* Loan them to a drummer for ten days when they show up. The drummer will play them loud and hard, you won't have to hear them before they are ready and, of course, the drummer won't be able to tell the difference at all and will just think it was a cool friendly move that you loaned out your brand-new toys to play with before you even opened them. Everybody wins, and besides, it's not a bad idea to have a favor to call on a drummer.

Okay. Now that they are broken in, how do they sound? Well, after my first movie on this setup, I lost all measurable desire to even hear any more 5.1 systems. I simply didn't see any point to it. Still don't. They are great!

But like women and microphones, you can't take another man's word any further than as a recommendation for you to try them yourself. (And lest Mix's PC lawyers frantically rush to the phone to push the speed dialer button with my name on it, let me add that like men and microphones, you can't take another woman's word for it any further than as a recommendation for you to try them yourself.)

Keep in mind that these are not only consumer speakers, but high-quality studio monitors with specialized matched rear and center versions for the purpose of providing the most natural speaker-to-speaker image transitions possible. It works. They work. Go hear them.

And as for two subs? Always use two subs, even if you don't need the SPL, just to give yourself a fighting chance at controlling the big, the bad and the ugly room nodes down there.

