ESPRIT/BP, CC-450, ADP-450, PS-1200

PARADIGM REFERENCE

"I surrender to these babies — An OUTSTANDING EFFORT."

"Paradigm's bipolar designs offer outstanding performance, with a superspacious, natural, non-fatiguing presentation."

PARADIGM SURROUND SOUND SPEAKER SYSTEM

TONALITY.....**85**
Full, smooth and lifelike. The non-fatiguing presentation is a joy.

DYNAMICS.....**84**
Sounds erupt from the system with ease; subtle inflections enhance emotional impact.

RESOLUTION.....**84**
Plenty of detail, yet never unnaturally highlighted.

IMAGING.....**85**
Well-developed, rounded and stable. Huge soundstage and excellent surround effects.

TIMING.....**82**
Boogies on rock and jazz; smooth integration with subwoofer.

OVERALL.....**84**
I surrender to these babies. An outstanding effort.

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AudioAdventure

by Greg Petan

ESPRIT/BP

"Gentlemen, we're at defcon 3 – war is imminent!"
Gene Hackman, Crimson Tide

Isn't that how we all felt when home theater began to fracture the high end into opposing factions? The two-channel audio-only camp snarled across the moat at the upstart home-theater rebels wielding the sword of surround sound. Most audiophiles dug into the trenches with their two-channel comrades and vowed a battle to the death.

Hyperbole? What in Audioland? Don't deny it. Just recall the great Analog-Digital conflict that pitted audiophile against audiophile, with its several million casualties.

WELCOME TO CAMP DAVID

In any war, there are always neutral parties who help bring hostilities to a close. So it is no surprise that peace-loving Canada is home to Paradigm, a company whose home-theater speaker system has done much to bring this conflict to a peaceful resolve.

The mediators sent to Fort Petan were the Reference Esprit/BP Bipolar front channels, the CC-450 center channel, the ADP-450 surrounds and the PS-1200 subwoofer with its X-30 high-pass control unit. (Paradigm sent two subs in case we needed the muscle.)

" … convincing. The bipolar design threw a huge soundstage. Images were fleshed out and rounded. Timbre was excellent, as were the dynamic capabilities. Details were clear … "

The Esprit/BP is a 45 x 8.5 x 13.25-inch speaker clad in a black sock-like grill that fits snugly around the cabinet, eliminating the need of a grill frame and cutting down

on defraction distortions. Though it looks like a conventional forward-firing speaker, the front and rear of the cabinet house identical sets of drivers, thus giving the Esprit/BP its Bipolar moniker. The rear driver's output is at the same level as the front driver's. The resulting reverberant sound adds a sense of space. The CC-450 center channel is magnetically shielded, so putting it on top of the TV works well. The ADP-450 surround speakers are a reverberant soundfield design in a stand-or wall-mounted configuration. The PS-1200 subwoofer houses a 12-inch driver and its own 130-watt amp. Construction, design and ease of use are excellent.

" … the Esprit/BP's remained unscathed! Driver-shredding guitar riffs, a minefield of tweeter-destroying cymbals and atomic drum whacks were handled beautifully by these calm statesmen."

BRING IN THE TROOPS

The home-theater system used to evaluate the Paradigms included: Onkyo Integra TXSV919THX receiver, Pioneer CLD79 laserdisc player, Carver CT26v AV preamp/processor, Carver 505 five-channel amp. Interconnects and speaker cable were from AudioQuest. The Esprit/BP also did a tour of duty in my reference rig: Krell KPS20i CD player, Jeff Rowland Design Group Coherence preamp, Krell 300S amp and Avalon Radian speakers. Interconnects and speaker cable from Cardas and Synergistic.

" … synchronization of voice to picture was excellent. This important quality probably stems from the CC-450 center channel's speed and microdynamic ease."

CC-450

READY, AIM …

The persuasive powers of the Paradigm speakers, like those of any great arbiter, can be subtle, their effects sublime. They can also be powerful and clearly defined. These qualities drew me into my favorite movies: *The Lion King's* synchronization of voice to picture was excellent, increasing the stylization of each character. This important quality probably stems from the CC-450 center channel's speed and micro-dynamic ease. The Esprit/BP front channels were also convincing. The bipolar design threw a huge soundstage. Timbre was excellent, as were the dynamic capabilities. Details were clear, yet not unnaturally highlighted. This system may be a little "dark," but with the typical home-theater gear and bright source material, dark can be a virtue.

IN THE TRENCHES

The home-theater evaluation went so well, the two-channel soldier in me was roused. "Throw them into the front line!" I cried. So – with 35 K worth of fire-power backing me up – I connected them to the reference system, loaded up Extreme's bombastic Three Sides To Every Story and hit them with the blistering "*War Heads.*" I was all set to yell, "Medic!" when the Esprit/BP's emerged unscathed! Driver- shredding guitar riffs, a minefield of tweeter-destroying cymbals and atomic drum whacks were handled beautifully by these calm statesmen. And loud. Next I put on Take 6's *Join The Band*. "*You Can Never Ask Too Much Of Love*" has some beautifully recorded vocals that scale the dynamic ladder. If the dynamics and timbres are flattened, this song loses its emotional power. The Esprit/BP – though not up to the ultra-standard of the Radians – maintained the essential nature of this number. Incredible for a speaker so much less expensive than the ($10,500) Radians.

" … the ADP-450 surround speakers continued to break down my resistance. The reverberant surround design will immerse you in the soundscape."

SURROUNDED! PETAN'S LAST STAND

Hard pressed, I switched back to the home-theater set-up. Ambient and surround effects through the ADP-450 surround speakers continued to break down my resistance. The reverberant surround design will immerse you in the soundscape. The shuddering of the sinking sub in *Crimson Tide* was way outside the speakers' edges and smack dab between front and rear channels, creating a feel of the length of the sub. On *"Prince Ali"*, from *Aladdin*, a parade of elephants and camels make their way across the loft. I'm not sure this enhanced space is accurate, but it sure is fun! Sounds panned seamlessly from one speaker to the next. Timbre matching for all the channels was quite good. I did note a (very) slight hollowness to the center channel, which may come from the fact that the center, unlike the other speakers, is not bipolar.

ADP-450

"The PS-1200 completed the peace treaty. Be afraid, be very afraid. Extension and heft are this subwoofer's strength. Pitch and speed are good … the X-30 high-pass external crossover allows excellent control and room-placement flexibility."

The PS-1200 subwoofers completed the peace treaty. The level 12 shock-wave that chases the Enterprise-B out of the solar system in *Star Trek: Generations* nearly destroyed my loft. Be afraid, be very afraid. Extension and heft are this subwoofer's strength. Pitch and speed are good, but do not quite reach foundation-rattling power. The X-30 high-pass external crossover allows excellent control and room-placement flexibility.

SURRENDER – IT'S GOOD FOR THE SOUL

Okay, raise the white flag. The superb performance of the Paradigm system has convinced me that audio and home theater can coexist harmoniously. Paradigm's Bipolar designs offer outstanding performance, with a super-spacious, natural, non-fatiguing presentation. Put away your uniforms, trade in the tank and head to your local Paradigm dealer. Throw on some Beatles or maybe *Woodstock* on laserdisc and give Peace a chance!

PS-1200