

“THE MONITOR 9
EXCELLED”

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“Paradigm has done it again ... one of the most natural speakers of its size that I’ve heard, combining the delicate precision of bookshelf models with the full-bodied but measured bass of a high-end tower.”

by Mark Fleischmann

You probably think etown’s founding gadget gurus don’t pay heed to a word you say on the Message Board. Not true. Round about this time last year, when I was casting around for stuff to review for a big story in a music mag, Paradigm was the most oft-mentioned speaker-maker on the board. Recalling my fondness for the Paradigm Titan—which spent several years at the foot of my bed—I gave the folks at Paradigm a call. They told me about the new Monitor series (not to be confused with the British speaker maker of the same name). Shortly afterwards two large boxes came through the listening-room door.

Paradigm’s Monitor 9 is the top model in the Monitor series (BTW, Paradigm’s high-end line is the more costly Reference product). This 37-inch-tall tower comes with three drivers, including twin eight-inch polypropylene woofers and a one-inch fluid-cooled titanium tweeter. The two startling transparent woofers are identical and are crossed over at the same point, so

this is actually a two-way design. A large port appears on the front baffle below the bottom woofer. Paradigm’s “Quiet™” enclosure contributes to clean sound by using considerable internal bracing to reduce boxy-sounding resonances.

Power handling is 15 to 200 watts into eight ohms. The Paradigm people—presumably aware that I was writing my original review for a rock magazine—suggest keeping it under 150 per channel for maximum safety, and I suggest outfitting the biwire/biamp-ready binding posts with dual leads of generic 12-gauge cable for maximum bandwidth. (Premium cable didn’t help this time.) The system in which I reviewed the Monitor 9 included an Onkyo A-9911 integrated amp, Marantz CC-65Se and Rotel RCD 930AX CD players, and NAD 533 turntable, all of which will be reviewed here in coming weeks.

The New Monitor 9
(Improved over version reviewed for even better sound.)



Onkyo's 80 wpc "Anniversary Edition" amp was a far better stereo performer than the Onkyo A/V receivers routinely trashed on the Message Board, so it was a fair review, but to be sure I also listened briefly through my Jeff Rowland Model One and whatever preamp was sitting around that week.

"... soundstaging became a perpetual delight. Bass, too, was amazingly disciplined ... overall balance was superb."

The Monitor 9 excelled. It was a little bright the first few days—as speakers with titanium tweeters often are—but as the drivers softened, the slightly forward midrange receded back into something more reasonable, and soundstaging became a perpetual delight. Bass, too, was amazingly disciplined. I'd thought those two big woofers would lead to midbass bloat, as with the Snell CV, but Paradigm evidently anticipated that point during the extensive tweaking that accompanies its design process. The company boasts that it is one of the few to use exhaustive double-blind listening in its product testing. Overall balance was superb, neither too hard on CD's or too soft on LP's (played through moving-magnet cartridges). On the whole the Monitor 9 is one of the most natural speakers of its size that I've heard, combining the delicate precision of bookshelf models with the full-bodied but measured bass of a high-end tower. I used them for weeks without tiring of them—listening to everything from Joan Osborne belting *Right Hand Man* to orchestral, chamber, and folk music, plus plenty of Billie Holiday—and was genuinely sorry to see them go.

The following is more of an afterthought than a review: If you want to adapt these towers into a surround system, add the Paradigm CC-350 center speaker and a pair of ADP-350 rear-surrounds. While a subwoofer is not strictly necessary in a system with a total of four eight-inch woofers, those who love dinosaur feet and ballistics may wish to add the PS-1000 130-watt sub.

Paradigm has done it again.
Many happy returns.

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