PRODUCT review

MONITOR 3 • MINI MONITOR
CC-170 • PDR-10

Paradigm

"... crystal clear ... a marvellous transparency ... TRULY SPECTACULAR ..."

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DVD MAGAZINE HOMETHEATER

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The Canadian firm Paradigm has been manufacturing speakers for almost twenty years. For this particular review we placed speakers from the company's Monitor Series side by side with home theater speakers from other manufacturers. Although the appearance of the Paradigm speakers didn't leave us with any particularly strong impressions their sound quality was extraordinary!

Included in this review were the Monitor 3 and the Mini Monitor, bookshelf/stand-mounted speakers from Paradigm's Monitor Series, the CC-170 center-channel speaker from the Performance Series and the PDR-10 subwoofer. For review purposes we used the Monitor 3s as fronts and the Mini Monitors as rears. Both models were finished in black ash imitation woodgrain. The front panels were a silver color, pleasingly consistent with the semi-transparent cone material. Cloth-covered grilles were constructed of MDF board with cut-outs that ensured drivers fitted flush with the edge of the grilles. The top portion of the grille, positioned over the high-frequency driver, was beveled at a 30-degree angle softening the edges and helping to minimize diffraction. The high-frequency driver in both speakers was a classic—a 25-mm (1-inch) pure titanium dome.

The construction of the bass/midrange driver in the Monitor 3 was very interesting. Its 210-mm (8-inch) cone is made of semi-transparent, milky-white polypropylene, suspended on a solid aluminum basket. The high-pressure, die-cast basket construction eliminates unwanted vibrations that would adversely affect the speaker's overall performance. The bass-reflex opening sits directly below the bass/midrange driver, its interior displaying a flared port tube. The high-density hardboard enclosures of both speakers are filled with plenty of insulating/damping material. We considered the Mini Monitors to be the "little brothers" of the Monitor 3, the cabinet of the latter being a fair bit taller and somewhat wider than that of the Mini Monitor. The Mini's bass/midrange driver was also smaller at 165-mm (6-1/2") in diameter and its bass-reflex port was on the rear wall, directly above the amplifier panel. The Monitor 3 and Mini Monitor are similar in terms of high-frequency and midrange performance. However, one area in which the Monitor 3's performance was superior to all other speakers tested was in the quantity of bass output.

The CC-170 center-channel speaker also belonged to Paradigm's Performance series, differing from the Monitor speakers in driver construction. A 19-mm (3/4-inch) diameter CMC™ (ceramic-metal-composite) dome is responsible for high-frequency performance. Two bass/midrange drivers are made of black polypropylene. The CC-170 is magnetically shielded for use on top of a television or next to a computer.

CC-170

The PDR-10 subwoofer, equipped with a 255-mm (10-inch) bass driver and a 300-watt/100-watt RMS high-current, hybrid output amplifier, completed our review set. Both the port and amplifier panel with subwoofer control facilities, including speaker-level and line-level inputs (to allow connection of two sets of speakers), volume controls and frequency cut-off regulators are positioned on the subwoofer's rear wall.

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The sound quality produced by Paradigm's Monitor speakers was the most interesting encountered during our comparison testing. We suspect that the incredibly "natural" aspect of these speakers, audible throughout the entire frequency range, was a result of the clarity of the titanium dome combined with the softness of sound produced by the polypropylene cones. High frequencies were crystal clear with a marvellous transparency and when called for were capable of a quick assertiveness. The clean high end was nicely balanced by the rich, yet neutral midrange. Bass lacked nothing in power or control, a perfect complement to the overall sound. However, at the lowest registers, the areas that typically produce deep, rumbling special effects such as explosions or earthquakes, we noticed a slight bass deficiency. However, on DVD movies the speakers integrated beautifully presenting us with a new dimension in sound reproduction—strong musicality, extremely natural and articulate dialogue and truly spectacular reproduction of sound effects.

The Monitor 3 handled music CDs beautifully. Sound held all of the positive attributes we have accorded these speakers throughout this review and the slight deficiency in bass described earlier was hardly noticeable.

Large symphony orchestras and small jazz bands sounded equally splendid. Vocals were natural and full, relaying all of the emotion in the original recording.

These speakers sing with the voice of a nightingale. In our opinion, their only drawback is an unassuming appearance.

PDR-10