"... the Studio/20s CLOBBERED the competition."

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HI-FI & Music Recommended

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The New Studio/20
(Improved over version reviewed for even better sound.)

Until now we've reviewed speakers from Paradigm's Performance and Monitor series only. Our conclusions for each speaker were always the same—an excellent product in its price range, and for the Monitor 3 in particular—Hi-Fi & Music's award for Best Speaker of the Year.

Only the less expensive Micro, for which we had some criticisms, was left on the sidelines of this otherwise glowing track record. This review deals with Paradigm's higher-end speakers, the Studio Series, sold under the name Paradigm® Reference. Despite the Reference designation, when it comes to price they're still a bargain. And, according to the manufacturer, they're based on different technology than other speakers from Paradigm.

Although the smallest and least expensive model in the series, the Studio/20 is equipped with a powerful magnetic structure. Compared to other speakers in our test, the differences in the Studio/20s were overwhelming. The bass/midrange driver was made of mica-polymer. The voice coil was a multi-layer construction and the basket was high-pressure die-cast aluminum. The high-frequency dome was pure aluminum, suspended on a soft spring. Both drivers were manufactured in-house by Paradigm.

The finish of the cabinet was not particularly striking, but solidly built and well damped so cabinet resonances and vibrations did not adversely affect the sound quality. Put simply—good work, but no fireworks yet.

A note about the switches—fairly complicated, but boasting high-quality materials. However, by this point our curiosity had been aroused, after all, good quality materials usually equate to good quality sound.

SOUND

Five seconds was enough to confirm that these speakers dramatically outperformed

all rivals. To be blunt, the Studio/20s *clobbered* the competition. Their LARGE open sound reinforced our belief that sometimes small speakers *can* compete with floor-standing models. In truth, it was the Monitor 3 that originally proved the size of a speaker is not always the most important element in sound quality. Despite being the smallest speaker in the Studio series, the Studio/20 stood its ground in terms of dynamics and bass extension. Was this due to the large magnets? In the final analysis that's not really important. What counts is the musical "effect," and the musical effect of this speaker was instantaneous!

> *"The Studio/20s descended deeper than any of their competitors while maintaining tempo and resolution."*

When it came to the bass it was impossible to find any weakness. The Studio/20s descended deeper than any of their competitors while maintaining tempo and resolution. Dynamics were delightfully surprising. Symphony orchestras came across with tonal accuracy, and all the vigour and energy of operatic overtures was charmingly reproduced, right down to the smallest musical details. The colour and rich warmth of the midrange gave clarity to rock music. What more can we say? Dynamics and bass were terrific, and as for the rest—there was simply nothing to object to! The piano? The best again. Clear and well-defined with strong bass support. We could "hear" what the piano player was trying to say through the music.

Even in smaller musical compositions overall sound remained open. Eileen Farrell came across in all her warm vocal splendour while the accompanying background instruments helped weave the musical tale, and throughout it all, the Studio/20s preserved the integrity of the original performance. While listening to the speakers playing Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* strong words came to mind—scope, power, space, energy and impact.

CONCLUSION

After packing up the review systems for the return trip our arms needed a rest. We did not return all boxes to Paradigm however. The Studio/20s remained in our editor's office and undoubtedly you will see the name Paradigm in our magazine on many occasions in the future. Fexible and adaptable, the Studio/20s are ideal partners when *Hi-Fi & Music* is reviewing electronic equipment.