



"A SUPERB SUBWOOFER AND A NOTABLE BARGAIN"

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in [this]
group."***



Paradigm's subwoofer is expensive in group terms, costing more than all the others, except the Celestion, but it is far and away the biggest subwoofer in the group. But this is not what makes it the most interesting.

***"The output is tuneful...
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audible band to the region
where the wavefronts can
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The Servo-15 is unique, in several ways. Fitted with an enormous 15 inch driver in a fully sealed enclosure

(it is more usual to use a port or other bass reinforcement measure), this highly damped system is controlled by a proprietary Closed Loop Servo system. This uses an accelerometer on the driver to provide a high-speed feedback signal which is compared to the input and corrected in real time as necessary, reducing distortion, compression, and overhang. These are endemic failings with subwoofers, especially those with large cones. The enclosure is impressively non-resonant, even when doing its best to blow windows out of their frames at 20 Hz.

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Controls only include a low level input phono socket and a level control. Everything else is taken care of by the outboard X-30 control unit/interface box, which somehow became parted from the test sample en route. The amplifier has the usual sharp and suspiciously compact heatsink, though we haven't been able to over drive it in our tests.

We used the Servo without the adjustable low pass filter, but the sub's own integral filtering, although it operates late (above 300 Hz), it is remarkably effective when it does kick in.

*“a thoroughly capable subwoofer...
high-end, high-tech, all-purpose”*

Both test systems worked with a scale and authority unmatched in the group. The output is tuneful and with careful room positioning, fairly even, though rooms always impose their own unevenness on low bass, which is often best addressed by using two subwoofers. Output extends smoothly below the audible band to the region where the wavefronts can practically be counted rather than being audible as a note with a definite pitch.

This is a superb subwoofer and a notable bargain. Ostensibly it is best adapted to life with large home cinema systems in big rooms, but there is

clearly a place for it in music-based stereo systems.

*“...a system for big systems and big
rooms, but given the wherewithal this is
an unusually hard act to follow.”*

The Verdict:

The Paradigm Servo-15 model uses powerful in-house technology and some powerful parts, including a massive 15 inch driver and a 400 watt amplifier, and a box big enough to accommodate both. Hardware of this kind is extremely hard to control but Paradigm's sophisticated Closed Loop Servo helps prevent unexpected overhang, and the cabinet construction is itself unusually well controlled. This is a subwoofer for big systems and big rooms, but given the wherewithal this is an unusually hard act to follow.